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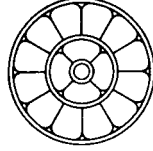
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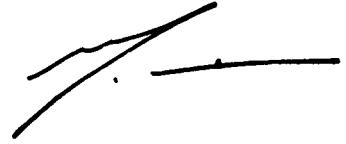
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. L

No. 3

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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## ONCE MORE THAT WILL PUT ON AN EARTHLY SHAPE

A SILENCE in the noise of earthly things  
Immutably revealed the secret Word,  
A mightier influx filled the oblivious clay.  
A lamp was lit, a sacred image made  
A mediating ray has touched the earth  
Bridging the gulf between man's mind and God's,  
Translating heaven into a human shape  
Its brightness linked our transience to the Unknown  
A spirit of its celestial source aware  
Descended into earth's imperfect mould  
And wept not fallen to mortality,  
But looked on all with large and tranquil eyes  
One had returned from the transcendent planes  
And bore anew the load of mortal breath,  
Who had striven of old with our darkness and our pain;  
She took again her divine unfinished task:  
Survivor of death and the aeonic years,  
Once more with her fathomless heart she fronted Time  
Again there was renewed, again revealed  
The ancient closeness by earth-vision veiled,  
The secret contact broken off in Time,  
A consanguinity of earth and heaven,  
Between the human portion toiling here  
And an as yet unborn and limitless Force  
Again the mystic deep attempt began,  
The daring wager of the cosmic game. . .  
Once more that Will put on an earthly shape  
A Mind empowered from Truth's immutable seat  
Was framed for vision and interpreting act  
And instruments were sovereignly designed  
To express divinity in terrestrial signs.  
Outlined by the pressure of this new descent  
A lovelier body formed than earth had known  
As yet a prophecy only and a hint,  
The glowing arc of a charmed unseen whole,  
It came into the sky of mortal life  
Bright like the crescent horn of a gold moon  
Returning in a faint illumined eve

At first glimmering like an unshaped idea  
 Passive she lay sheltered in wordless sleep,  
 Involved and drowned in Matter's giant trance,  
 An infant heart of the deep-caved world-plan  
 In cradle of divine inconscience rocked  
 By the universal ecstasy of the suns  
 Some missioned Power in the half-wakened frame  
 Nursed a transcendent birth's dumb glorious seed  
 For which this vivid tenement was made  
 But soon the link of soul with form grew sure,  
 Flooded was the dim cave with slow conscient light,  
 The seed grew into a delicate marvellous bud,  
 The bud disclosed a great and heavenly bloom  
 At once she seemed to found a mightier race  
 Arrived upon the strange and dubious globe  
 The child remembering inly a far home  
 Lived guarded in her spirit's luminous cell,  
 Alone mid men in her diviner kind  
 Near was her spirit to its parent Sun,  
 The Breath within to the eternal joy  
 The first fair life that breaks from Nature's swoon,  
 Mounts in a line of rapture to the skies;  
 Absorbed in its own happy urge it lives,  
 Sufficient to itself, yet turned to all

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 353-355)

\*

### YOGA FROM THE AGE OF FOUR

I started contemplating or doing my Yoga from the age of four. There was a small chair for me on which I used to sit still, engrossed in my meditation. A very brilliant light would then descend over my head and produce some turmoil inside my brain. Of course I understood nothing, it was not the age for understanding. But gradually I began to feel, "I shall have to do some tremendously great work that nobody yet knows."

†

When I was five, even three years old, I was *conscious*. The beginning was made in the womb

THE MOTHER

(*Glances of the Mother's Life*, pp 13-14)

## A VEDIC EXPERIENCE

### FROM A LETTER OF THE MOTHER TO SRI AUROBINDO

THE entire consciousness immersed in divine contemplation, the whole being enjoyed a supreme and vast felicity

Then was the physical body seized, first in its lower members and next the whole of it, by a sacred trembling which made all personal limits fall away little by little even in the most material sensation. The being grew in greatness progressively, methodically, breaking down every barrier, shattering every obstacle, that it might contain and manifest a force and a power which increased ceaselessly in immensity and intensity. It was as a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Being, and it gave itself, it abandoned itself to It in an ecstasy of peaceful bliss. Then it felt that its body was absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it; the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, immobile in its totality, moving infinitely in its internal complexity. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine in an ardent aspiration, a perfect surrender, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being standing on a many-headed serpent whose body coiled infinitely around the universe. The Being in an eternal gesture of triumph mastered and created at one and the same time the serpent and the universe that issued from him, erect on the serpent he dominated it with all his victorious might, and the same gesture that crushed the hydra enveloping the universe gave it eternal birth. Then the consciousness became this Being and perceived that its form was changing once more, it was absorbed into something which was no longer a form and yet contained all forms, something which, immutable, sees,—the Eye, the Witness. And what It sees, is. Then this last vestige of form disappeared and the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable.

The return towards the consciousness of the individual body took place very slowly in a constant and invariable splendour of Light and Power and Felicity and Adoration, by successive gradations, but directly, without passing again through the universal and terrestrial forms. And it was as if the modest corporeal form had become the direct and immediate vesture, without any intermediary, of the supreme and eternal Witness.

26 November 1915

THE MOTHER

### SRI AUROBINDO'S REPLY

The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense, though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves Yogic. It is the union of the "Earth" of the Veda and Purana with the divine Principle, an earth which is said to be above our earth, that is to say, the physical being and consciousness of which the world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.

31 December 1915

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Mother*, SABCL, Vol 25, pp 471-472, 384)

### THE NEW MANTRA

WE used the Mantra *Bande Mataram* with all our heart and soul, and so long as we used and lived it, relied upon its strength to overbear all difficulties, we prospered. But suddenly the faith and the courage failed us, the cry of the Mantra began to sink and as it rang feebly, the strength began to fade out of the country. It was God, who made it fade out and falter, for it had done its work. A greater Mantra than *Bande Mataram* has to come. Bankim. gave only the term of the initial and public worship, not the formula and the ritual of the inner secret *upāsana*. For the greatest Mantras are those which are uttered within, and which the seer whispers or gives in dream or vision to his disciples. When the ultimate Mantra is practised even by two or three, then the closed Hand of God will begin to open; when the *upāsana* is numerous followed the closed Hand will open absolutely.

It is a national *ātmasamarpana*, self-surrender that God demands of us and it must be complete. Then the promise will come true: I will deliver thee from all evils, do not grieve.

(*SABCL*, Vol 2, p 432)



## DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of February 1997)

*Mother,*

*This auspicious Darshan day has given me a new life, a new consciousness and a new aspiration I feel that a force of transformation has gathered and it will transform me I bow down to Thee, dear Mother, and with Your Love and Blessings I begin the new life*

YES, a special protection accompanies my blessings today and a certitude of Victory is included in my love

24 April 1934

*Mother,*

*I am happy to be working again All Your Love, Grace and Protection are with me. Your Presence is in me, and, Mother, surely the Divine Grace shall manifest*

Keep this quietness and this faith, let *nothing* disturb them If there are things to be changed, do it slowly, not in a hurry—*time* is a great helper when we know how to make use of it—and change only what is quite indispensable. Rules must not be too rigid—the Divine's working needs suppleness and plasticity—and for the workers, a too rigid rule is a big strain for the nerves It is only when the liberties taken are dangerous and harmful that they must be checked

And be sure that all will be all right

With love and blessings.

24 April 1934

*O my beloved Mother,*

*Surely You are giving me a bath in Your Love*

*Whatever people may say of me—good or bad—I have my dear Mother in my heart holding me close to Her bosom I know also that when dangers are outside, when there is bad will, my Mother keeps me under Her wings and then nothing can touch me, nothing can affect me*

Yes, my child,

You are always in my arms, bathed in my love which must be the strongest protection against all attacks of any kind Keep your entire faith and confidence: we shall cross victoriously through all difficulties.

13 May 1934

*Mother,*

*X asked for less curds, but Y served her the ordinary cup. She began to return the cup, but he would not take it, so she left it on the table. Then he asked her to get Mother's sanction if only half a cup of curds was required X complained to me about all this. I said "I shall see tomorrow "*

Truly we cannot interfere in such petty things Those who constantly forget that they are not here to lead the most silly ordinary life cannot expect us to deal with their stupid quarrels

27 May 1934

*O Lord Buddha, the force of Mara attacked You, but You were unshaken, concentrated, calm, quiet, peaceful, then the Light descended, the hostile forces disappeared and there was peace on earth*

*O Mother, let us all remain consecrated to the Truth, always peaceful, calm, quiet and unshaken, unmoved by any circumstances, and the hostile forces shall vanish.*

Yes, this is excellent It is by a quiet, strong and persistent peace that the true victories can be won.

With love

28 May 1934

*Dear Mother,*

*Let my entire being remain turned only towards You*

Be very careful to remain always calm and peaceful and let an integral equanimity establish itself more and more completely in your being Do not allow your mind to be too active and to live in turmoil, do not jump to conclusions from a superficial view of things, always take your time, concentrate and decide only in quietness.

My love and blessings are always with you

30 May 1934

*Mother,*

*I am tired of my nature. I must rise above it if I want to fulfil the work Again and again it knocks me down and tries to drag me into an unquiet state full of doubt, lack of confidence, and ego*

*Mother, lift me once more out of this turmoil in my nature and let me breathe in the free and vast air of Your infinite Love.*

It is not in one day that one can overcome one's own nature But with patience and enduring will the Victory is sure to come.

1 June 1934

*Dear Mother,*

*I actually see the waves of hostility against me, yet I am quiet, my being remains firm, poised and concentrated in Your Love and Presence.*

Yes, be quiet. We have only to work patiently without being disturbed by anything and keep unshaken the faith in the inevitable Victory

With love and blessings

6 June 1934

*Mother,*

*Z and I have a nick-name now: Pagal, which means madcap*

Do not mind the stupidity of others

8 June 1934

*Dear Mother,*

*The Divine Consciousness descends, fills the earth and penetrates deeply It is sure to bring about the complete recovery of the earth*

*You have worked out many things in me within these few days, You have given me Your patience, quietness and peace, an energy that works and works and a firm faith in the infinity of time*

Yes, the certitude of the Victory gives an infinite patience with the maximum of energy

Always with you

9 June 1934

*(To be continued)*

## AN INSPIRED DOGGEREL

### NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*What thinkest thou of this anapaest poem, Sir,  
Written by my humble self? Pray, does it stir  
Any soft feelings in thy deep within  
Or touches not even thy Supramental skin?*

So soft, so soft,  
I almost coughed,  
then went aloft  
To supramental regions,  
where rainbow-breasted pigeons  
Coo in their sacred legions

N B. This inspired doggerel is perfectly private. It is an effort in abstract or surrealist poetry, but as I had no models to imitate, I may have blundered.

*I had to show that doggerel to Amal as I couldn't decipher. Amal suggests that your "perfectly private" is a joke after all.*

No, sir Quite serious Can't afford to play jokes like that in public.

*Is it "Coo in their sacred legions"?*

Yes, the cooing is the supramental zenith of the softness and the surrealist transformation of the cough

*You have made me very happy by your comment on my poem I had sent you But I doubt if the same sustained level will be maintained Amal says that he too is not able to do it.*

Very few poets can The best poetry doesn't come by streams, except in periods of extraordinary inspiration It usually comes by intermittent drops, though sometimes three or four drops at a time Of course there are exceptions—Shakespeare etc—but that kind of spear doesn't shake everywhere

*(Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, pp 489-490)*

## LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

### SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

AFTER going to Sri Aurobindo's room X wants to come to me for what she calls my "Ashirwad" Who am I to give blessings to her? But I shall certainly offer her with all my heart to the Divine Mother's love and protection.

Talking of "Ashirwad" or "Ashish", I remember Sri Aurobindo once receiving a telegram: "Pray send you ashes." Sri Aurobindo said with a mixture of matter-of-fact and paradox "How can I send my ashes before I am dead?"

If a similar telegram had come during the early days of Sri Aurobindo in Pondy when a cigar used to be a constant companion, he could have collected the result of a whole day's puffing it and posted it to the poor fellow in need of blessings (*ashish*)!

I have received several letters from Y—in rather a confused order—the later ones arriving earlier and *vice versa*. They are all typical a blend of seriousness and frivolity They have an appeal for me because I myself am such a mixture. This remark of mine reminds me of a remark made by Chandulal, the Ashram's engineer in the old days, about Janet Mcpheeters, the first American woman to settle in the Ashram A number of us were in the Prosperity Room before the Soup Distribution downstairs and the Mother was in our midst Chandulal attempted a character-reading of Janet He said to her "You are frivolous in the face but serious in the back " She was rather taken a-back She could not make head or tail of it. I think Chandulal was making a translation of something in Gujarati which would make sense. We all laughed—including the Mother

I was extremely glad to get your letter—your warm letter with its double note of spiritual aspiration and human affection. I have always recognised a true friend in you and felt you close to me in spite of the great disparity between our ages From the beginning a spark has leapt from my heart to yours and a scintillation has passed from your heart to mine Besides the spiritual aim which we share, there is some affinity on which I am not yet able to put my finger. There is a turn in me towards God as Beauty and Bliss, an aspect of Him without which even His Light, which can open up realm after realm of knowledge and truth, would prove for me insufficient

You have not been very lucky as regards retaining friends It is not through any fault of yours. You are a lovely being and nobody would want to leave you Only circumstances have severed you from your loved ones You are afraid that I, being past 90 years, might suddenly say "Good-bye" to the earth Though my physical disability—being confined to a wheelchair for 17 hours a day—some-

times irks me, I am not at all overwhelmed by it. The inner sense of the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is—in the words of *Savitri*—

A continent of self-diffusing peace,  
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire

It tends to make up for my inability to move about physically at will. I believe I shall be present when you decide to settle in the Ashram or at least make long stays I look forward to many hours of happy profitable association with you What exactly are you looking forward to doing here? In what direction does your zest for work lie?

Before you come to settle for good, why don't you make a stay of some length, just to see what the final settlement will be like?

Are you preparing yourself to cope with the conditions of ultimate or even intermediate stay here? You have to practise equanimity—not getting upset by what people say or do or even by your own failures in the work you attempt And there has also to be the practice of remembering the Mother and offering to her your actions

(25 3 1995)

Thanks for the sweet remembrance of me which got symbolised by the delicacies you have sent with Nandalal in addition to the tapes for my recitations. Your little note in the picture-postcard strikes a sad chord apropos of the theme of my replying or not replying to a letter If I haven't answered you, it is not because you have exhausted my patience You are ever a "steady gemlike flame" à la Walter Pater in both my mind and heart The evocation of Pater is not inapposite: "beauty" was the flag under which his life moved to its exquisite ends To speak of a flag is pertinent because true beauty-lovers are ready to fight for their resplendent cause You and I are always armed when anybody falls short of responding whole-heartedly to the challenge of even a star-twinkle or a rose-petal's flutter

My writing career is at a peculiar pause On the one hand I am somewhat tired after driving my pen ceaselessly till past my 90th year On the other, I stand dumbstruck on confronting more and more the unutterable I feel like St. Thomas Aquinas when, while once passing an image of the Virgin, he saw "the Mother of God" come alive. Face to face with that glory, he cried out: "All I have written is like straw!" After this, there were no more masterpieces of argumentative acuity like *Summa Contra Gentiles* flowing from his quill

No doubt, poetry is the art *par excellence* of evoking by means of words the presence of the Mystery which no words can penetrate So there need be no ultimate contradiction in pursuing it in the service of the unutterable

A felicitous stroke of “accident” has brought up a question I would like to put to you. Udar phoned to me, drawing my attention to a passage in *Savitri*. It is on p. 375 of the 1970 Centenary edition. Here we read about the Mantra, starting with the line “As when the mantra sinks in Yoga’s ear” and ending with “An equal greatness in her life was sown.” A long comparison is presented. The latter line is clearly the completion of the passage initiated by the “As”-line. So there should be no full-stop or even semi-colon before it in the passage. Unfortunately, in the original MS there is a full-stop at one place and a semi-colon at another. But these anomalies are not my subject now. What concerns me is that the old version of Aswapati’s experience—

Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body’s self  
Are seized unalterably and he endures  
An ecstasy and an immortal change

now reads with its “unalterably” altered to “unutterably”. What can “unutterably” signify? Surely the point intended is “utterly”, except that this word does not fit in metrically.

To turn to prosaic matters. I am said to be suffering from Herpes Zoster on the right side of my face. It is a strange visitation—true to its perennial character that it affects only one side of the body but completely betraying it by bringing neither of its supposedly inevitable effects: much pain and burning. Only a rash on a very small scale has come. Shouldn’t we honour this new mysterious avatar of the disease by saying “Hermes” instead of “Herpes” and, in consideration of my being a Parsi, “Zoroaster” instead of “Zoster”?

Am I indulging in dangerous levity, if not even over-confident brag? Mischievous spirits are said to be all about, ready to strike down any boasting by this miserable creature miscalled *homo sapiens*—man with developed intelligence. Sometimes the adjective is abbreviated. Perhaps then the formula sounding half Latin half English gives the correct description of a creature looking wise but essentially foolish: *homo sap.* (23 8 1995)

\*

Please forgive my delay in replying to you. I know that you leave me free whether to reply or not. But when questions of some importance have been asked, how can I keep absolutely mum? I am glad that whatever I have written has proved of help to you and your worthy associates. Nina had an important problem in regard to her father’s health. I have replied to her but I did not add ME15 8JU in her address. I hope this omission won’t bring the letter back to me. I have known in the past some such trifle coming in the way. Our Indian postal service seems more clever. Thus the well-known journalist Khushwant Singh

has confided to us in one of his weekly columns that a letter addressed to “The Greatest Bastard in Delhi” was unhesitatingly delivered to him and the contents of the letter later confirmed that the Sardarji was indeed the addressee so saucily intended

Now for your “enigmas” I feel that the girl concerned (in process of being an old lady) is meant to be in the Mother’s fold and the only harmonious way to be so is as your companion. Hence, to the neo-Hamlet soliloquy—“To be or not to be (married) that is the question”—give the simple Elizabethan-English answer: “YEA ” I say “simple”, meaning that you should not enter into complicated introspection in the classic Hamletian manner. Do not trouble the grey matter: just lift “the crimson-throbbing glow” to the Divine Mother and putting the whole problem into her hands go ahead with a sweet yet calm affirmative to the long-standing query in those yearning eyes

As regards your job as manager of an accounting department, I think you underrate your capacity. You have unnecessarily made a sharp contrast between the demands of your job and your own personal traits. You are not by nature a brooding self-absorbed person. You have a smiling open active temperament. Such a temperament is quite reconcilable with a serious purpose in life. I remember the story of a fellow who said to Dr. Johnson: “Sir, I have often tried to be a philosopher, but cheerfulness is always breaking in.” You seem to have set up a mind-made Yogi figure to live up to. A peace that is not passive, an inwardness that is radiant, a heart offered to the Divine Presence not only within and above but also around: such is the state expected of one who bears the name “Yogesh” which means “Yoga-lord” “Flamboyant” and “aggressive” you need not be but I am sure you can be a joyous, friendly, competent and confident personality

(20.1.1993)

\*

I am glad you have “honoured” yourself, as you say, in writing to me, for it is a pleasure to hear from you—particularly since you have a question on Yoga. Let me first quote you back to yourself and then reply. You have written: “I understand that the most important aspect of this Yoga is that it is the Divine who is the sadhaka and the sadhana, and that you have to be open to the Mother and feel Her doing the Yoga. If one is not conscious of the Mother doing this, how can one increase one’s consciousness of it? And how necessary is it—to become conscious of the Mother as working—in order to make progress?”

To get the consciousness of the Mother’s working in us, we have to put more and more into practice the formula “Remember and offer.” Not only the circumstances of our life have we to offer to her but also our own selves so as to feel our very souls to be in her hands and becoming a part of her—a simple child completely committed to her care. A deep intense devotion needs to be deve-



loped, so that her presence is felt in one's heart and then all inner and outer movements will get inspired by that presence. Here is what I may dub "the Yoga of the Presence" With the perception of this Presence ever growing, one will get from it the initiative for every turn of the being and be more and more an instrument of the Divine All one's actions will arise from a profound peace which carries in it a great guiding force A new stance will develop in the inner being One will not feel that one is living on the surface of one's consciousness There will be no instant leap in response to outward touches Out of some great silence the springs of action will be seen working, and a sense of the sacred pervade every reaction to outer calls. One will feel some great Being at toil while one is inwardly lying at that Being's feet

As to making progress in sadhana, there is no single set rule nor perhaps one master method However, to put the Mother's infinite energy in operation upon the numerous points of one's imperfection seems the nearest we can conceive of as a short cut But this method has to be persistently followed if it is to get converted into a swift passage forward Persistence is everywhere a *sine qua non*

You have inquired about the marked changes taking place in the world: "To what extent are they attributable to the working of the Supermind?" We have to remember that the Supermind is working not directly but through the Overmind. Certain radical events may be traced to the Supermind's outbreak through the Overmind in a rather definite manner, perhaps the most evident is the collapse of Stalinist Communism in Russia We may legitimately put our finger on this event because Sri Aurobindo had been concentratedly at work for it as would be clear from the trend of thought in the editorials of *Mother India* in the first year and a half of its career which coincided with the last year and a half of Sri Aurobindo's life The two outstanding falsehoods were Stalin's Russia and Jinnah's Pakistan. There was a chance of Pakistan coming to an end by war before Sri Aurobindo left his body, a war provoked by Yahya Khan's brutality in Bengal, but Lady Mountbatten reined back Liaquat Ali from his baiting of Nehru's India and thus prevented Pakistan's suicide

You are asking me to give you—"a particularly Western sadhak"—advice. Let me first assert that the Mother's Force can work as fruitfully in the West as in the East and then that it can always save you—Michael Zucker—from being a spiritual sucker

(13 9 1995)

K. D. SETHNA  
(AMAL KIRAN)

THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS  
TO KISHOR GANDHI

5-3-63

Give up trying  
Give up the will to progress  
Give up the aspiration for  
Realisation

Give up everything  
and say to the Lord  
in all sincerity,

Let Thy will be done.

with love and blessings

## THREE LETTERS OF KISHOR GANDHI TO THE MOTHER AND HER REPLIES

KISHOR GANDHI I have been very scrupulous in my use of things, taking particular care not to turn anything taken for work to my personal use. But it seemed to me that beyond a certain limit there may be an exception to this rule [using the top of an almirah for personal use when the almirah had been taken for purposes of work]. But also I have a very strong sense of guilt—and the question still comes to my mind as to what is precisely the right thing to do from the strict standpoint of truth Does it mean equivocation or misuse of things?

THE MOTHER No, not at all What you have done is quite all right and the sense of guilt must be coming from a troublesome vital “censor”, to whom you need not listen. With blessings

\*

KISHOR GANDHI: During my speech, a few days back, at the Youth Camp of Orissa-visitors, I have spoken about India’s leadership of the future humanity, and in that connection I explained to them Sri Aurobindo’s conception of the soul of India. At the end of the meeting one person from the audience asked me, “How can one become conscious of the soul of India?”

THE MOTHER Become conscious of your psychic being Let your psychic being become intensely interested in India’s Soul and aspire towards it, with an attitude of service, and if you are sincere you will succeed

\*

In his letter to the Mother dated 3 3 69, Kishor Gandhi states the stress and conflict in his sadhana that so much mental work gives him.

THE MOTHER You seem to forget that Sri Aurobindo wrote for so many years the whole of the *Arya* in perfect mental silence, leaving the inspiration from above to go through and manifest through his hands on the typewriter.

## THE TEACHER WHO NEVER SMILED

It was not long after the inception of the International Centre of Education in Pondicherry. The East-Wing classroom thronged with students both young and old. Mostly they were sadhaks working in different Departments of the Ashram. So the class would take place after 5 p.m. twice a week. The time was suitable for the sadhaks.

I was one of the students. Our teacher was well-known for his erudition, sincerity and seriousness in his work. He was absolutely methodical and a lover of discipline. I also noticed that he would not smile in any circumstances. As I said, our classroom was full with students at the beginning but soon the number started decreasing and within a few months it came down to a dozen or so.

Still I was one of them and continued for more than a year (June 1955 to October 1956). Then I also had to leave the class. After so many years I do not exactly remember the cause of my quitting. It might be the increase of work in my Ashram Department or I failed to maintain interest in the subject or I got involved more and more in the Physical Education activities. Whatever it might be, I had no means of knowing in what light my teacher took my sudden departure from the class. I could not know if he was offended or not. We knew that he was reserved, uncommunicative and a man of few words except when he would lecture on his subject.

Moreover, after I left the class I had no occasion to meet him anywhere outside. In the class he was neither indifferent to me nor very intimate either. He used to observe the golden mean. After some years I came across him on an Ashram footpath. We simply exchanged glances of recognition, no words, no smiles. I had the impression that perhaps he did not know how to smile. So I refrained from smiling, thinking that it might go unreciprocated. Henceforth occasionally we would meet either in the street or inside the Ashram and used to exchange silent looks of recognition.

Years passed by, and that practice of exchange also stopped without our knowing it. Now we would meet as strangers as if we had never known each other. At the outset of the year 1996 something exceptional took place between us. One day, at about 9.30 a.m., I was going from the Ashram to the Playground. A few feet ahead of me I saw my teacher slowly moving forward. Soon I overtook him, not intentionally of course, but automatically as my pace was quicker.

He saw me, hesitated, and then asked me gently, "Do you know the place where I can collect the permanent token for the Darshan?" I was very pleased and joyously showed him the easiest way to the Store Room of the Playground. I did not feel like resuming my natural pace and leaving him alone. So we silently walked together side by side. He broke the silence abruptly, "Do you remember once you were my student?"

“Yes Of course I remember Not only that, I have preserved very carefully the thick notebook of my writings with your corrections and valuable remarks ” Instantly his face brightened with an uncommon light of joy and satisfaction I tried to detect any trait of smile in his face but failed. I departed

However, his satisfaction satisfied me also to a great extent and I decided not to miss any chance to talk with him thereafter After a few months, on my way to the Ashram one afternoon, I met Jugal Kishore He seemed to be somewhat morose and perturbed He informed me in a deep emotional voice, “Chunibabu, Kishor Gandhi has just passed away.”

“Passed away?” I was shocked, beyond expression. I hurried towards his house to see him for the last time and entered there for the first time He was quietly lying on his bed with three or four persons sitting on the floor nearby. Probably it was not long after the doctor had declared him dead and left the place I neared his bed and, as I observed his extremely emaciated figure, a sensation of sorrow, sympathy and ‘all-gone’ feeling welled up in me I stooped to have a clear view of his face My God! What I saw was unbelievable I saw a heavenly smile on his slightly parted, poised, thin lips.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## ARCHAKA—HE INVOKES THE LIGHT

WHEN I wrote a note to Amal asking him to reserve some pages in *Mother India* for a piece of writing on Archaka who had left his body on 7 February 1996, he wrote back saying that he certainly would but that he hadn't heard about Archaka's departure and adding, "Surely he wasn't old enough to die "

That is certainly true Archaka was 53, which is no great age, specially in the Ashram where so many go well into their 80s and even their 90s before shedding their bodies. Archaka was in many ways much younger than his half-century with the wonder of a little child at the world and everything in it, and anyone who had heard his outrageous and irrepressible laughter would know that it belonged to someone eternally young in spirit At the same time he was much older than his age in wisdom, as those who have read his long essays know There is an ageless all-encompassing wisdom in them which never fails to astonish and enrapture me. They are as much as anything long lyrical poems, canticles of joy and celebrations of the universe

Though Archaka repeatedly speaks of Sri Aurobindo as his source, he never rehashes and seldom quotes directly. His essays sing the evolutionary process and his Master's basic ideas in his own voice and in his own images

Like Amal, there may be others who did not know of his departure and even more who knew little of what lay behind his smiling eyes and friendly face which we all saw when he rode by on his cycle or took his daily walk along the beach, or sat teaching in the common room at Knowledge

In the introduction to his *Le Dieu de Dieu* he gives us some glimpses into his life.

I belong to the generation of genocides: the one which came to birth during the Second World War and awoke to the awareness of the world as a perpetual battlefield. On the bombardments in Europe there soon followed the explosion of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, while the liberated countries learned with at least as much of a sense of devastation about what happened in the concentration camps In an instant, a whole town could be destroyed under the stupefied eyes of the nations Within a few years a whole race almost disappeared without the other nations knowing about it.

To the genetic code inscribed in our cells was added in our subconscious the most formidable horror of all times Too small to know what had thus entered into us, we reacted blindly and declared war in every possible way on the adult world

I was twelve years old when I scribbled my first book. Having broken with his family the hero, hardly older than myself, went to live in the slums I was sixteen when I signed my first contract for a novel, without much literary value probably, but somehow I did write these words which were

later at the heart of all my activities: 'I have killed death I have not killed but destroyed, not death but the idea of death in me.'

Fortunately I did not become famous...

Archaka explains that those of his generation belong to a sort of fraternity or rather an underground religion whose message was God is everywhere.

God and not one religion or another, for we had rejected the religion of our fathers. We wanted to see God face to face, we felt ourselves to be bearers of a divine future

Like so many others who would not accept the old values, Archaka became part of what was to be known as the flower-power movement:

I wrote a book, *The Song of Eternity*, whose real meaning I did not know: I am all that is I am all that surrounds me as much as that which I know to be myself. I am the rain of stars which streams down my brow. I am the air which I breathe and the fire which dwells within me, the earth which carries me and the water with which I wash. And I am the seed which generated my form and those which are part of the days where I rediscover myself. I am that which I am and I am being itself. ..

Less than two years later, in Tangiers, something happened to Archaka which transformed him His heart stopped. He had, as he says, never known such suffering He felt his arteries becoming blocked and his body turn to stone He did not know that at that point, when in Africa he was coming face to face with death, the centenary of Sri Aurobindo's birth was being celebrated in India, in the Ashram, which was to become Archaka's future home.

He didn't know either, as he says, that it was indispensable for him to pass through death in order to reach India, that country which he did not see as situated elsewhere geographically but as in a different dimension. It was an arrested heart that opened wide for him the doors of this dimension. For him it was the sudden and absolute proof that death does not exist:

The consciousness that I had had of the modalities in my body were proof of this. . . Six months later, on my 30th birthday, I gave up everything: career, love, adherence to the consciousness movement. I returned into an inner desert. Of that period of rigorous asceticism I do not need to speak, nor of the spiritual experiences that came out of it. The only thing that I can say about it is that, day after day and night after night, uprooting from my consciousness all my thought habits, I struggled to see and to know—and to understand what I had thus learned All quests are quests for the Grail. I

mean for the eternity which in us is translated by the sense of immortality

Archaka then made his way to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and a few days after his arrival, on his 33rd birthday, Nolini gave him the name Archaka—"He who Invokes the Light " And that is what in all his later books he did Archaka says of himself that, born in the hour of universal carnage, he inevitably carries in himself the vow of universal harmony In his introduction to his book *Le Dieu de Dieu* Archaka dedramatizes death and attempts to show, by means of the scriptures of the world, that in fact all of them are based on a belief in eternal life All his books are lyrical unfoldings of the truth of the world to come They are works which he wrote effortlessly, receiving them from a plane above the mind They were as though dictated to him, and are rife with knowledge and erudition He shares with us his understanding of Eastern and Western thoughts, paleontology, history, astrophysics and the arts To read him is to find oneself lifted irresistibly towards the future of which he speaks.

Archaka wrote in French, and it is a shame that his books have not been translated, for his readers are thereby limited His books were published here in Pondicherry, by Mira Trust, in France some of his long essays were brought out by major French publishing houses

I was in the middle of writing this piece on Archaka when his last book, *Promenade en Inde* published posthumously in France under his pen name Alexandre Kalda, came into my hands It testifies, as one can imagine, to his deep abiding love for India and is full of originality and insights. It is dedicated to his great friend Christine de Rivayre, the French writer who visited him nine times in the twenty years that he spent in India, and to his adopted Indian son. Christine gives us, in her introduction, more glimpses into the early life of this young rebel who at sixteen adopted the Jewish name of Alexandre Kalda, setting aside the name of his family whom he found all too anti-Semitic, declaring his solidarity with a people that had been almost exterminated, as he says, without the world seeming to notice Christine reminds us that compassion is another keynote in Archaka's writings Even in his earliest works he writes about the outcasts of society with the living identification of a saint He also had a deep knowledge and interest in the Jewish tradition which he must have researched thoroughly in order to write his book on Christ, whom he portrays as a young Jewish rabbi.

Right up to the time that the one who was to become Archaka arrived at the Ashram, his books were a series of challenges to a world and life which could never be his; and yet at the root of it all was his great capacity for love He writes, "I felt a pressure which was love floating on the air, a physical tenderness which, all over the earth, united those pariahs whom we had chosen to be. Having rejected my background, I rejected my career "

Yes, he had even stopped writing, that gift which was so natural to him that,



later in his long essays, it was to flow from him like sap. He literally never stopped to think and, sometimes, had himself to read what he had written in order to understand it. This is, of course, what gives his writings their extraordinary quality that carries you as though on great waves. I despair of conveying that sense of surfing along almost intoxicatingly towards the shore of another dimension, which characterizes his style.

In her introduction Christine quotes from a letter of 1978 from Archaka:

I begin to become myself. Here in India, here in the Ashram. I begin to resemble the one whose image has haunted me and which the West could not reveal to me—of which it could only inspire an obstinate, even irremissible nostalgia.

Ten years later he writes to her:

I work and enjoy myself and all is hope to me. Nothing weighs on me. Everything is essential. Oh, the Indian taste of things! How was I ever to live in the West! The word limbo often came to my lips, amongst other more sombre ones. Here what dominates is the impression of light. At last I see the light of day.

What were the ways in which Archaka enjoyed himself? At first he translated the works of Sri Aurobindo and Nolini Kanta Gupta from English into French. For ten years he taught at Knowledge where he encouraged the students to choose their own ways of progress, anything which might stimulate their thirst for knowledge. Archaka himself loved Plato, loved the theatre, loved music and played Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Schubert and Berlioz for his students. To say that Archaka was appreciated by his students is an understatement. Again to quote Christine:

To say that Archaka was happy under the intense blue sky that he had chosen for himself is but a pale approximation. Here he became reconciled to himself, a quiet and serenity which transpired in his visage, in his eyes which were the colour of the sea which washes against the beaches of Pondicherry where he swam each day.

And there finally he was found on the 7th of February. On the twelfth day after this some of his friends and some of the "Golconde-family" gathered in the silence of his room for meditation. I for one felt the presence of his spirit, his delight, his hope and his celebration of all things. Looking at a book which he presented me with, I find this inscription: "This dream—our dream, this hope—our hope." This is what all his books were, his dream, his hope which he

wished to share with all humanity through his writings.

This passage I choose to translate is from his book *Bénédictions de l'Abîme*, published by Mira Trust. In this one his inscription for me is in words which define it: "This descent into hell in order to bring light and love to it." This is what Archaka from his earliest books, which dealt with what we think of as lost souls, did so well, portraying them with a redeeming love and compassion. For Archaka who grew up in a world of double standards, hypocrisy and moral judgments one of Sri Aurobindo's great gifts was the affirmation of what he had already sensed: there is no such thing as sin, but only that which clings to us from our evolutionary past. We are beings of transition and our ignorance will be forgiven. It is already forgiven. Of the sage, the realised man, the man of God he speaks thus:

He knows beyond all words, since the sacred tremor flows in him, that he must communicate it, for that is what is meant by blessing. It is to transmit to those that his hands touch the wave of truth, of light, of immortality of which his own body is the jewel casket.

Laying his hands on our heads, our foreheads, our hearts he awakes in us the divinity which we blindly seek outside ourselves. And that is the new degree of love which he discovers little by little. He is no longer God, who simply loves all men. He is he who sees God in all men. He dares the inexpiable, he invokes the spirit in the worst of us. He is not driven by compassion. It is no longer abnegation nor obedience to an order perceived from within, to console the afflicted and to redeem the sinners. In his eyes there is no longer a difference between himself and ourselves. We are no longer creatures chained to ignorance and distress. We are pure light and liberty. We are God. And it is God that he loves in us and that he greets when his hands meet ours and instil in us the waves of solar energy which make a god of him.

What greater ecstasy than to know God in what is apparently opposite to us? Seized by love, the sage embraces the reprobates, the damned who cheat him.

His hands infuse into our flesh an immaterial serum which sets hope alight. It may take years, it may take lives, but the day will come when, nourished by this serum, a being will awake in us who will wipe out and without concern for what we have been, whether good or bad, all former memories, leaving but the memory of this blessing.

Perhaps the most vivid memory I have of Archaka comes from the time when I too taught in Knowledge in the big common room. There was always a feeling of light and delight about his table. The faces of his students glowed, infected by his enthusiasm. There was a liveliness and joy about them all. Some-

times there was such merriment in his eyes that one was sure he was holding in it shouts of laughter.

He was one of the “Golconde-family” and every morning he would visit a particular friend there, Dimitri, and spend half an hour chatting with him, discussing French and Russian literature about which, Dimitri says, he knew a great deal. In fact he knew a great deal about many things. He was a man of parts. As well as being a writer, he was an artist and an astrologer. When he went to see Dimitri as usual he told him that according to his own chart something wonderful would happen to him at last. On the last day he left Dimitri with an extra energetic wave of his arm. A few hours later his body was found on the beach where he swam every day. Indeed, something wonderful must have happened to Archaka. The knowledge, for it was more than faith, that there is no death, must have allowed him to step out of his body into another dimension as though it were his home.

MAGGI

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## THE LANGUAGE OF THE BLUE

THE blue was expanding and expanding,  
 Passing from wonder to wonder  
 The heart was no more  
 A poor throbbing machine,  
 It had learnt to jump great heights  
 The familiar sky looked like some unnamable beyond  
 Slowly approaching, enclosing  
 The fields of one's renewed vision,  
 And again growing in size and essence  
 Till it reasserted itself as an almighty calm.  
 It was not the onset of dull eventide,  
 Though a homeward quietness prevailed,  
 A different time-frame ruled  
 As if all things were ever-complete.  
 Was it a closeness to the Supreme Power  
 Responding in the language of the blue,  
 A seed sown long ago in the sterile land  
 Beginning to sprout?

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

## A BHAKTI-HYMN OF DELIGHT

### RENDERING OF A MARATHI COMPOSITION OF SANT TUKARAM

THE Veda speaks of the intoxicating wave of delight. For Rishi Vamadeva the tranquil spirit is a honeyed surge of luminous sweetness, *madhumān ūrmih*. The Seer of the Taittiriya Upanishad tells us that this whole creation is a chant of triumph of the benedictive Bliss, the Bliss that is present everywhere “He knew Bliss for the Eternal. For from Bliss alone are these creatures born and being born they live by Bliss and to Bliss they go hence and return.”—So announces the enraptured poet. The Bhakti-movement of later centuries in India saw a great and sudden outpouring and overflowing of this joy that became intimately homely in thought and feeling and action. Spiritual truth and realisation found another expression in this Song of the Divine, the Divine embodied as Person, with name and form, recognisably closer to fulfil the heart’s longing and aspiration. Singer after ecstatic singer sang, in love’s mellifluence, of the oneness he experienced with the God of his Adoration. Of one such singer we shall take, by way of a brief example, a significant composition, mainly to participate in the delight of his Bhakti-sadhana. By it we are at once put in contact with the Infinite.

Tukaram was a seventeenth-century Marathi saint-poet in whom the tradition of spirituality of another time was reborn, but with a new vigour, in fullness of the creative word, both emotional and intellectual in its gleaming contents. It is said that it was in a dream he had received instructions to write devotional poetry for which the measure was already made by his Initiator Lord Vitthala himself. Simple in its style and easily lucid and spontaneous, it also lends itself to the true and inspired utterance of the spirit. In him the directness of description, in spite of the charged and vehement nature of Godward passion and its preoccupation, never suffers. The lyrical poignant is vivid and has the power to keep away all that is facilely exciting and sentimental. This is further aided by the logic of apt suggestive metaphor, as much consonantly as by the revelatory phrase and idiom. There is nowhere any literary embellishment just for the sake of embellishment and the domestic vocabulary comes out with a kind of occult density which makes the distant and abstract sensibly real and tangible. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: “... it is the penetrating truth and fervour of a thought arising from the heart of devotion that makes the charm and power of Tukaram’s song.” That the Bhakti-poetry can acquire the Upanishadic perception and penetrativeness, and yet remain with all its exquisite sweetness and lyricism in soul’s delight intact, is a new creative achievement; we owe it greatly to this God-drunk singer of the divine glory. In his songs we breathe truth and we experience oneness in all things. The song itself is called *abhaṅga* which literally means something that cannot be fissured. Tukaram’s Bhakti-hymn of

delight intuitively expresses the delight of existence present everywhere, in its unbroken continuity, asserting that there is no real difference between the creator and his creation. Self-manifesting Bliss is all-pervasive in its essence and in its details.

In the wave of Bliss is the stir and movement of Bliss, embodied Bliss has the very substance of Bliss,—that is how the confident monist-devotee sees things and to that effect gives utterance to his realisation. This bright song of Bliss is brief and makes a neat and compact composition, in the original vernacular it has its own enchantment and warmth, with the simplicity of intimate diction that is yet profound, aphoristic yet vibrant and blithesome, colloquial in tone riding the native rhythm of the expressive soul. Any rendering of the verses in another language, perhaps even re-expressing them in the same vernacular, would be ruinous, as always, the aesthetic element of delight would suffer and the free associative suggestions of thought vanish. Which means that every word and every illustration in the poem is irreplaceable and that the voice is livingly true to the inspiration. It has mantric inevitability and exactness, with sense and sound coming from some far-off source. Notwithstanding these exceptional demands, let us yet make an attempt to enter, through English, into its creative spirit and appreciate it and enjoy it to the extent possible.

The *abhangā* which we have chosen for our discussion here has just four verses, with each verse consisting of 12-10 syllabic parts, the two parts are tied together using a pair of internal rhymes. Quite often the structure remains grammatically hanging but never does the meaning become obscure. The poetry always moves with assured rapidity and arrives at its aimed conclusion without frittering itself away anywhere. One possible rendering of the Bliss-*abhangā* could be as follows:

### THE DEEP OF DELIGHT

In the deep of delight  
     delight the surge,  
     As though delight's urge  
 born in a body of delight

O the puzzlement—  
     and of it how to say?  
     All lost like a wild way  
 and nothing there to choose

In the foetus's liking  
     ardent the wish of the mother,—  
     Mirroring each other  
 the completing oneness

Tuka tells—this the seal,  
                   and what he lived poured  
                   In trueness of the word  
 firming it readily

Tukaram is standing on the bank of Indrayani and is absorbed in the steady flow of the stream. Ripples of experience arrive unhurriedly from the upper region and bear him in their happy sparkling mood. But then everything disappears, and there is only the deep of calm crystalline profundity, and the waves rising on it gleam with the same calm crystallinity. Joy rushes in joy and into joy. What is, is everywhere. The transcendent Spirit is also the All-existent. The stir and ripplelessness are indeed the delight of that single manifest One. The absolute quiescent Brahman is full of activity and the dynamic Absolute reposes in its own depth of quiet. What embodies the Self of Bliss is the Body made of Bliss. The two are congruent. The totality of Bliss in every respect is complete. It is then wrong to say that Brahman alone is real and the World false.

But the Bhakta is not concerned with metaphysical questions. On the other hand, he is bewildered and he has lost the sense of distinction and discernment. He has no more any preferences and for him all choices are as good. In the green pasture-land of Bliss everything is green, and glistening, and wheresoever he turns it is essentially again the same green of Bliss he sees. To have left no personal liking and disliking is an astonishment and a puzzle to the seeker. The perceiver-soul is now unable to take any decision, for he has lost the faculty to choose. The Bhakta has handed himself over to Bhagawan. The relationship between the two is one of reciprocity, though it is a bit one-sided, coming more from the other than from this side. A great step is taken by the sadhak of the Bhakti Yoga.

He has now become a foetus in the womb of the Mother-Soul. The pregnancy-wishes and cravings of that mothering divinity are actually the little wants and needs of the growing being she is carrying within her. Of these she knows, but it has no knowledge. It is from her rich and nourishing life-breath that the forming soul draws energies to come into the light of the day, living inside her and fed by her, made in her own flesh and blood, it prepares itself to enjoy the bliss of existence. In this respect they mirror each other which is the occultly significant mutuality of delight holding everything together. There is in them the completing. In this urging does the full luminous birth of the individual take place, birth in the world of bliss and benignity. To the Saint of Dehu this has now happened. His immortal birth has occurred in her.

Tukaram asserts this wonderful birth by claiming the efficacy of the word. The way molten metal is poured and the stamping seal prepared, so have all his actions and his thoughts and feelings, all his experiences, taken a firm shape. He has given tongue to them and established them with the ease that natural speech

gives to us These remain now fixed as realised gains. Such is the consolidate word, *abhanga*. No wonder it cannot be drowned—as people had thought when, at the command of the village Brahmin, Tukaram's *Collected Songs* were thrown in the Indrayani river The wholesome manner of the hymn is sufficiently indicative of such a miraculous possibility. In the deep of calm bliss surged the devotee's song of bliss The boon of bliss got fulfilled in him

Tukaram's experience of bliss is as deep and living as the deep of bliss he is describing All is bliss, bliss is all, bliss is in all. This "transient and sorrowful world" has become a place of happy dwelling for the soul that has discovered the unity of all existence; it is no more a Keatsian "nest of pain", but a house of the spirit where the hearth-fire gives warmth and life-enriching energy To live in Being and to experience that living in Becoming is the precious joy of the Bhakta rendered possible only by the fullness of the Yoga of Devotion In fact, in its complete siddhi all relations are divinely retained, these being the aspects and parts of the supreme Person whom the Bhakta adores. Thus, when Tukaram speaks of the wave of bliss bearing the wave of bliss he, in one move, dismisses the Mayavadin's sophistry of an illusory creation emerging, by some inexplicable process, from the omnipresent Reality Indeed, whence this hallucination if "Ananda is the creator and begetter of all becoming"? The quintessential Advaitic realisation put in the thrilled vibrant language of a devotee has the advantage of making it more palpable and delightfully endearing Tukaram's song is a remarkable example of how Bhakti can lead to Jnana By seeing our God of Worship present everywhere, we also see that the path of devotion does arrive at the path of knowledge But then there is also a difference. The household language of the ardent devotee-poet has a simple, revealing and gripping quality which we shall never get in a metaphysician's tracts on spirituality By setting forth just a few propositional statements Tukaram easily brings closer to us the lofty aloofness of the Self of Knowledge His straightforward metaphorical assertions are poetically vivid and experientially exact More in the nature of Vedic intimacy with the gods than the sublimity of the Upanishadic mysticism, we have here the psychic-lyrical lifted to the sweet and marvellously felicitous While there is the honey's viscous brightness in the description, Tukaram's poetry has light blue wings of a singing bird who in a joyous chant flies from sky to heavenlier sky. The bird of bliss swooping down from the sky of bliss soars again to the luminiferous ether of bliss. Such indeed is the Hymn of Affirmation of the wondrous Delight in all that is

आनदाचे डोही आनदतरंग । आनदचि अग आनदाचे ॥  
 काय सागो झाले काहीचियाबाही । पुढे चाली नाही आवडीने ॥  
 गर्भाचे आवडी मातेचा डोहळा । तेथीचा जिव्हाळा तेथे बिंबे ॥  
 तुका म्हणे तैसा ओतलासे ठला । अनुभव सरिसा मुखा आलस ॥

## PAIN AND PLEASURE

I SAW the other day that beautiful film on Bernadette of Lourdes, who had a vision of Mary in a grotto and found the spring whose waters have cured devotees since that day in the 18th Century

The Mother saw this film but I have not been able to find out what she said about it. There is one scene in the film which gives a clue, a key to the secret of how to deal with pain and suffering

When Bernadette is a nun, nearly at the end of her short life and after the Bishops and even the Pope have admitted the validity of her vision, there is an encounter with a senior nun who thinks that Bernadette is limping to get attention. The nun takes Bernadette to a room and questions her saying, "Even though so many others agree, I do not believe in the validity of your vision. You have hardly suffered while I have tortured myself for years in hard work. I should have been chosen by the Lord and not you who are so young and have hardly had any suffering."

"True," says Bernadette, "I have not really suffered. But I did see Her!"

We the spectators believe her, for, indeed, up to now there has been no indication of her ever having had any intense suffering, even the asthma she had was relieved after she ate some grass as asked by the visioned Mary. And indeed she saw the Vision

The nun then says to her, "I want to believe you. Can you give me some proof of your vision, some proof that you have suffered?"

Bernadette says, "No "

Then the nun repeats, "Please help me understand and believe you as I am burning with hate "

Bernadette replies "Yes, I can help," and pulls up her skirt baring her right knee. What the nun sees is not shown but next there is a doctor who having examined Bernadette tells the nun that she has been suffering for long from tuberculosis and tumour of the knee which he knows to be excruciatingly and horribly painful. The doctor then inquires, "Hasn't she complained of pain?"

The nun says, "No "

And in the next scene the nun is in the church fervently telling the Lord to forgive her for all the hate and lack of understanding she had for this wonderful Bernadette, the Lord's favourite

The whole thing is a revelation to the spectator and then a great understanding dawns, that suffering is subjective and need not be felt, need not be perceived the way others would expect. What should have been great suffering and pain is transmuted by a lover of God into an endurable and low-valued situation.

How?

We find some clues in the character of Bernadette in the film:



1 Bernadette is, as the Mother wants us to be: simple, childlike, and ever smiling

2 The great joy when Bernadette visions Mary The great joy when she remembers the vision The great overwhelming joy, overwhelming anything and everything, all other inputs

3 Her quietly and happily accepting the menial jobs in the kitchen, as a cleaner, as a servant, as a wood-gatherer

4 Her ever quiet joyful demeanour.

Why does she not complain of pain? It is because she takes it in her stride and hardly feels it Because there is nothing particular to complain about

5 She accepts whatever the Lord gives especially after the visioned Mary assures her by saying, "I cannot give you happiness in this earthly life but surely in the next " The ease and expression of joy mingled with a kind of sorrow at the predicament shows the wonderful way in which Bernadette accepts what the Lord decides for her

What is the process of this transformation of pain?

First, it is not a transformation but an altered interpretation of pain and suffering by all parts of our brain and personality. The inputs of painful impulses continue to reach the brain but it is the interpretation and response to it that are altered

Maybe it is difficult to say what this process is, but I have seen indeed many examples of this being done even today There is the potential in everyone to do this and more so in a yogi, even an aspiring yogi

Examples are in the books on pain, e.g., *The Healing Path The Soul Approach to Pain* by Mark I Barasch, wherein ordinary people have been recorded to have achieved this The accounts given by various persons helping people with chronic pain and the pain of terminal illness tell the same story, a story of success not in necessarily curing the condition but in coping with it with a smile I have myself seen cases with the unimaginable pain of cancer, of renal colic, nerve pain and fracture pain where the person has coped with it by inner strength Change of psychological perspective is the main means and also asking for help from a superpower, whatever name one may give to it

I have observed similarly how some sadhaks here in their various illnesses, which included bone pain because of fracture and nerve pain and pain of cancer, have coped with and have hardly felt any affects or effects of pain In these individuals, objectively, there had to be quite severe pain but my observations of the sadhak, his/her expression, activities, behaviour and what the sadhak subjectively felt and underwent showed clearly the wonderful way in which the interpretation and value given to the pain succeeded in easy endurance I could indeed say that there was hardly any pain! Very little analgesic, if at all, was used

And in all these cases the normal analgesic mechanisms in the human

nervous system most probably get activated in favour of analgesia and the higher power accelerates the healing process, the healing of pain and not necessarily of the illness.

I found an interesting passage in Sri Aurobindo's writings on this subject. What he says here about pain applies equally to suffering, whatever be its nature.

Sri Aurobindo says, "Pain itself is obviously not Ananda, neither is it in itself anything positive, real and necessary. It has only a negative reality. It is a recoil caused by the inability to command pleasure from certain contacts which becomes habitual in our consciousness and, long ingrained in it, deludes us with the appearance of a law. We can rise above transitory pleasure, we can get rid of the possibility of pain."

Later in the same passage he says, "If we make pleasure the object of life, then we also make pain the condition of life. The two go together and are inseparable companions. You cannot have one for your bedfellow without making a life-companion of the other. They are husband and wife and, though perpetually quarrelling, will not hear of divorce."

How very true! But could we persuade them to live separately in these modern times of increasing freedom and respect? I wonder.

I have observed, in both ordinary persons and those on the spiritual path, that there are times when pain and pleasure are both as good as absent, pleasure not being then an objective of life. However, this state is not permanent but often a specific defence, as it were, for a particular life-situation. After some weeks or months of a semi-*vairagya* the person again seeks pleasure as an object of life and once more the shadow of pain is not far away. I have known in some friends how sometimes repeated unpleasant episodes in life repeatedly teach them how to get rid of the possibility of pain. It is not a sudden happening but a process, often rather slow but wonderful in its promise and in its unfolding. And this is available, I believe, to each and everyone of us humans who have in the cave behind the heart the constantly growing, sweet loving little Krishna. This is available whether one knows about yoga or not. I believe that this is slowly becoming increasingly common knowledge.

The intensity with which one pursues pleasure is reflected in the intensity of pain one perceives. The less the value or intensity or need of pleasure in one's life the less is the sensation and effect and affect, the less the *meaning* of pain and suffering one goes through in this journey of life. What one needs is a real purpose in living—real in the sense that nothing else competes with it.

DINKAR D. PALANDE

(Quotes from *SABCL*, Vol 17, p 173)

## AN INDIAN VIEW OF *THE BOOK OF JOB*

*The Fourth Gospel* is considered to be the most spiritual of all the *Gospels*. With no less justice could *The Book of Job* be called the most spiritual of all the Books in the entire *Old Testament*. The *Book* is normally praised for its sublimity and supreme poetic quality. All its qualities that have attracted readers for ages arise from the rare spiritual vision that the *Book* presents.

At the start of the *Book* we meet the perfect and upright Job, deeply religious and intensely moral, who yet cannot walk and talk with God, as Abraham could, for example. His knowledge of God is purely mental, gleaned from what he has heard *about* Him. He has no direct vision of the Lord nor has he any true understanding of His Infinity. It is at the end only that he can declare,

I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see Thee

What happens between the two stages brings about the evolution and makes him ready for the awakening of his depths when he can see God with his own eyes. When we first see Job not only with his riches that make him “the greatest man of the east” but in his state of perfection, we rightly feel that he has arrived at a peak of attainment. But we tend to mistake God’s praise of that state to Satan as His seal of approval of Job’s “perfection”. If God really thinks that Job has actually arrived at the peak he could scale in life, there is no need for Him to draw Satan’s attention to him—it is often forgotten that if God had not mentioned Job to Satan he would never have thought about him—and provoke him to inflict on him all the terrible suffering, both physical and psychological, by stages. The scene in heaven is not properly understood unless we see that God is deliberately enacting a drama bordering on Tragedy to bring about a Divine Comedy in the truest and highest sense of the term. The Divine Comedy consists in the evolution of Job’s soul to a state when it could have *viśvarūpa darśana*, a Cosmic Vision of the Lord as the creator whose work is beyond the conception of human reason and understanding. The British poet and Blake scholar Kathleen Raine compares the theophany in Job to the Cosmic Vision that Arjuna has on the battlefield in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The idea of God enacting the drama of human life is a commonplace among the Hindus. God is called the *jagan-nātaka-sūtradhāra*, the holder (and puller) of the strings of the puppet-show or drama of the turning world. The experience of pleasure or pain that God causes or allows to each human being accords with the stage of development of his personality. Seeing that Job has arrived at a great height, God thinks that a rung higher would make it possible for him to have a vision of Himself and realise His Infinity.

In the Hindu parlance Job, as he is introduced to us, is a *sāttvic* personality, a person governed by *sattva guna*, a state of poise and balance. The state is

possible when one is ruled by the intellect and reason which direct the person to the highest ideals of the race. Job's "fearing God and eschewing evil", his following the highest moral and religious principles, including the offering of the burnt offerings to God on his sons' behalf, are part of a pursuit of a life of highest possible mental conceptions. Job successfully keeps under check the other *gunas* of *rajas* and *tamas*, the qualities of kinesis, drive and passion and of darkness, ignorance and inertia respectively. What God seeks for Job is the achievement of the state of *gunātīta*, a transcendence of the three *gunas* when one could live in one's deepest depths and have a direct vision of the Lord.

In the scene in heaven we see God creating circumstances that lead to Job's evolution from *sattva guna* to the state of *gunātīta*, from the peak of religious and moral perfection to the spiritual state of the direct vision of God. God sees that the only means of such an evolution is an exceptional suffering that drives a human being to his very depths. One's consciousness has to be churned totally through the physical and psychological suffering and thinking and feeling in all possible ways to transcend thinking and feeling and to be able to *see* from within. We have a remarkable passage in the Hindu Purana which is deemed almost a Scripture, the sublime *Mahābhāgavata* (1.8),

May calamities be ours, O World Teacher!  
Through them alone we have a vision of Thee

Seen this way the question of human suffering, the so-called "innocent" suffering, gains a new meaning and significance.

The great modern Seer, Sri Aurobindo, makes the Mother of Might say in his epic, *Savitri* (p. 510),

I rend man's narrow and successful life  
And force his sorrowful eyes to gaze at the sun  
That he may die to earth and live in his soul

Suffering and pain are no more than God's means to plunge a man to his depths. In the *Book of Job* Satan is just His instrument to inflict the purposive suffering on Job. The remarks of Satan are often made to appear more important than they are, his question whether Job fears God for nought is given a philosophical significance which it does not have. God does not bother to prove that Job does so because he has far higher purposes. That Satan disappears after his function is over is a clear indication of God's way of enacting his supreme drama. Incidentally Satan is of *rajasō-tāmasic* type combining drive and passion with darkness.

The first two chapters which constitute the Prologue bring before us a *sāttvic* Job as we have seen already. Not only his so-called perfection and

uprightness, not only his burnt offerings on behalf of his sons when they hold banquets,<sup>1</sup> but Job's immediate reaction to the two visitations of suffering reveals his ability to maintain his balance and poise in the face of the worst suffering. His words to his wife that one must receive from God good and evil with the same attitude shows his ability to check the nether forces of the personality from a wrong reaction.

It is when we turn to the third chapter that we witness a sudden change in Job's nature. Exegetes sometimes speak of two Jobs—a patient Job of the Prologue and an impatient Job of the succeeding chapters. The only explanation that is offered for the change is that the earlier Job is a character of the legend on which the Prologue is based and the later Job is a live creature of flesh and blood. Perhaps the change is best explained by the fact of one's *sāttvic* nature depending completely on one's mental check and control over the other qualities. Job, who could retain his poise and balance till after the second visitation of evil, undergoes an impossible physical and mental torment as he sits on the ash-heap for a long time till the arrival of his friends. He sits silent for full seven nights and days. That makes it impossible for his mind to check the intrusion of the dark *tāmasic* quality of utter despair. Pathetic as his condition is and deserving all our sympathy and understanding, we should never lose sight of the fact that the perfection and uprightness which characterise him in his best days are of no avail when the real crisis comes to him in life. Morality and religion are great and even absolutely necessary in normal life but are not enough to know God and His purposes.

It is therefore that poor Job,—poor in every sense of the term, having lost his riches, his seven sons and three daughters, his sound state of bodily health and comfort and, above all, his highest achievement of a total balance, making him consequently poor in the sense of being pathetic in the extreme,—who shrieks out in agony cursing the night and hour of his conception and wishing he had died before he was born. He imagines that if he had not been born or had died before his birth he would have slept in a world of rest and peace. He regrets that man should live in misery. He says that he always feared his present state.

His friends who respond to his agonized cry cannot sympathise with Job for the simple reason that they are shocked by what appears to them as gross impiety. They have *their* mental notions of God and His ways. By no means *sāttvic* like the earlier Job—they are actually *rājasic* with a dash of *tamas*—they have their conceptions of *dos* and *don'ts*. They could be said to represent a kind of "wisdom", limited and human though it is. All of them, though for different reasons, believe in retributive justice. In spite of all their harshness they cannot be denied the best intentions for speaking to Job.

<sup>1</sup> The description of the sons reveals their being in a *tāmasic* state without the fear of God that characterises their father and with a craving of the pleasure of eating (though the brothers coming together and inviting their sisters seems to suggest a silver lining in their dark natures).

But their very harshness helps Job to rise in the scale of *gunas*. His indignation is roused and therefore his *rajas*. He meets their passion and force with his own passion and force. If they believe in retributive justice he believes in the other side of the same coin. Because he is innocent how can he suffer? He asserts his innocence as they believe he must have sinned. As far as Job is concerned what matters is not the rightness or wrongness of what he says but the gradual effect of the discussion on his evolution. As commentators note,—we must make a special mention of Gustavo Gutiérrez,—Job gradually begins to think along with his own suffering of the suffering of men in general and his heart goes out in sympathy for “the poorest, the lowliest and lost” to use Tagorean words. There are other indications to show that Job touches his old *sāttvic* state more than once. But we should never forget that in the course of the discussion he swings from one state to another till at last he falls silent when Elihu begins to speak. Whether he is influenced by Elihu’s speech or not it is difficult to dogmatize. The fact remains that in the state of silence as a consequence of what we have called churning having taken place in his consciousness he is able to transcend the three *gunas* and becomes thoroughly ready for the final theophany.

Returning to the friends who seek to correct the “erring” Job, we see that they seem to differ widely in their approaches to God and life. Their differences appear pronounced in the first cycle of debate. In the second cycle their similarity becomes more obvious and we are not sure if the distribution of speeches in the third cycles is in order and if Zophar speaks at all. Eliphaz bases his “wisdom” on a visionary experience. Visions and dreams could certainly intimate to man truths beyond the normal comprehension. What inclines one to question the validity of his vision is that it leads to the idea of retributive justice which the Lord Himself does not approve of at the end. Bildad speaks in the voice of the ages, the traditional wisdom. Zophar in the opening of his first speech seems to be on the verge of a truth beyond the reach of his friends, including Job. He presents what Terrien calls “reverential agnosticism” as distinct from the Huxleyan agnosticism. According to Zophar, God and His ways are far above the finite and limited human reason and understanding. Do not the Upanishads declare, *aprāpya manasā saha* (He is beyond the reach of the mind)? But Zophar soon speaks as though he knows what God intends. He also presents the idea of retributive justice as his other two friends do.

The central vision of *The Book of Job* is that God is beyond the reach of the human mind of which our religion, morality and all else are products. Sri Aurobindo declared, “Reason is a help, Reason is a bar.” Reason does help us to rise above our impulses and the lower movements of the human consciousness. It does make us move towards the Truth, towards Knowledge. But Truth and Knowledge can be reached only by powers in us which are deeper and higher than the reasoning mind. The structure of the whole *Book* points to the central

vision. If the visitations of evil on Job are the initial action of the Divine Comedy, God enacts to evolve Job's soul, the debate with all its intellectual arguments and passionate outbursts constitutes the "Complication" of the drama. The "Complication" also reveals to us what the Mother calls "the complications of the so-called human wisdom." She says,

Above all the complications of the so-called human wisdom stands the luminous simplicity of the Divine's Grace, ready to act, if we allow It to do so.

Job is often regarded as one of the Wisdom Books of *The Old Testament*. It illustrates to us in all their multitudinous forms the complications of the so-called human wisdom. The luminous simplicity of the Divine's Grace is seen from the moment God initiates his Divine Comedy. The Divine Grace asserts itself and brings about a Comedy, not only in the happy ending of the restoration of all that Job has lost but in the fulfilment of God's purpose of awakening Job's depths that can witness the *viśvarūpa-darśana*.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

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## SURRENDER

NOT the upward strain  
The heave and sigh  
The passion and pain  
The eternal why—  
Surrender, the key  
To the heart's mystery!

Give all yourself  
Entirely  
Belongings and want and self  
That whatever be  
Be a flame-call to ecstasy  
You will find within  
In the heart of sweetness

Love so small  
And yet so bright  
That it would win  
A joyous completeness,  
The amaranth of light.  
Give to it your all  
When comes at last the call

O the unfading day,  
Delight in the delight's way!  
When opens the cavern-shrine  
Greet the fragrant divine  
And sing ever its song  
As to it you truly belong.

VIKAS BAMBA

## ABOUT MATTERS OF SCIENCE

### GRAIN OF SAND

To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour

—*William Blake*

WHEN we pick up a handful of sand from the beach and watch it sift through our fingers, we are seeing the product of millions of years of geologic history. Much of this history can be uncovered by examining the particles under magnification, where they give up the secrets of their origin and subsequent travels. Most sand starts life in mountainous areas as continental rock—primarily as quartz and feldspar. Mechanical breaking (by the movement of glaciers, by cycles of freezing and thawing) produces boulders and pebbles. Then chemical assault (by vegetation and rain) combines with mechanical disintegration to eat away at these boulders and pebbles, eventually giving birth to individual grains.

(*Scientific American*, August 1996)

### HOMEOPATHIC SOUP

Take two starved pigeons, hang them up by a string in the kitchen window, so that the sun will cast a shadow of the pigeons in an iron pot on the fire, holding ten gallons of water. Boil the shadow over a slow fire for ten hours, and then give the patient one drop in a glass of water every ten days.

(*Scientific American*, August 1846)

## ABOUT THE HOMEOPATHIC THEORIES

You may say what you like about the homeopathic theories, but I have seen R work them out detail by detail in cases where he had free and unhampered action and the confidence of the patients and their strict obedience and have seen the results correspond to his statements and his predictions based on them fulfilled not only to the very letter but according to the exact times fixed, not according to



R's reports but according to the daily long detailed and precise reports of the allopathic doctor in attendance After that I refuse to believe, even if all the allopaths in the world shout it in unison, that homeopathic theory or R's interpretation and application of it are mere rubbish and nonsense

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p 695)*

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### MATHEMATICS

NIRODBARAN I have given you my timetable so that you may concentrate on me at the exact time I hope the mathematical figures won't give you shock!

SRI AUROBINDO No fear. Mathematics are more likely to send me to sleep than give a shock

*(Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p 400)*

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### ALL ARE VEILS

A SEED is a veil to a seed,  
A joy to a far delight;  
A thirst has screened a need  
To be thy miraculous height

To tear all veils of light,  
To rend the veils of the bliss  
That our sheath may become the height,  
The unexhausted release

A ray has covered a ray,  
A sun a wonder-sun,  
The sapphire heat of a day  
Has veiled thy dominion.

And the sun of God may grip  
The mire and life and soul  
And time and space may slip  
To become the dateless whole.

Beyond the bliss and force,  
Beyond the gates of the moon  
There is a diamond source,  
There is a looming Noon

29 1958

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries )

## I WILL CRY OUT TO THEE

I WILL cry out to thee from the depth of my soul,

I will cry out to thee,

By crying to thee I will reach the goal,

I will cry out to thee.

Alone at thy door, O Divine, will I stand

With wounds on my feet and blooms in my hand,

Thou wilt deal me delight or wilt deal me dole,

I will cry out to thee.

Though the dawn be bright or the night be black,

I will cry out to thee.

Though the sky be blue or the rainclouds crack,

I will cry out to thee

I have journeyed, Beloved, mile after lone mile,

A pilgrim who seeks but a glimpse of thy smile,

And my journey has been o'er a broken track,

I will cry out to thee

I have cried out to thee, my Love! from the first,

I have cried out to thee

But my life in the past has been lonely and cursed,

I have cried out to thee.

I wanted to come to thee so long ago,

But my coming to thee has been sorry and slow,

So the thirst that I bring thee is no new thirst,

I will cry out to thee

I will cry out to thee through all things that appear

I will cry out to thee

I will cry out to thee through all music I hear;

I will cry out to thee

Hereafter for me all ocean and sky

Shall be but a wonderful wandering cry,

Be the meeting with thee either distant or near,

I will cry out to thee

I will cry out to thee in day-breaking light,

I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee in the deepening night,

I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee in the glow-worm and star,

In all shadows that brood and all colours that are;

In the sunseting red and the moonrise-white,  
I will cry out to thee

I will cry out to thee even when thou art dumb,  
I will cry out to thee

I will cry out to thee though no answer come,  
I will cry out to thee

It may take but a moment for thee to engage  
My soul in thy service, or, perhaps, an age,  
But to cry out to thee is not wearisome,  
I will cry out to thee.

Whatever the hour of night or of day,  
I will cry out to thee.

Through the noonday's gold, or the evening's grey,  
I will cry out to thee

But my cry will not ever be stormy or wild,  
It will always contain the true note of a child,  
Of a child who but cries and has nothing to say,  
I will cry out to thee

Though ages and ages may pass me by,  
I will cry out to thee

Though centuries bloom in thy gardens and die,  
I will cry out to thee.

Though nobody listen, I will cry still  
From the depths of my being, my God, until  
My cry is a silence, my silence a cry,  
I will cry out to thee.

Whatever may happen, whatever betide,  
I will cry out to thee

I will cry out to thee from deep down inside,  
I will cry out to thee

With a cry I will storm thee some day and win,  
Thou wilt open the door and invite me in,  
I will cry out to thee as no man ever cried,  
I will cry out to thee.

## PRAYER TO THE ALL-WONDERFUL, MOTHER OF RADIANCES

ALL-WONDERFUL, may I be like Your child  
the Sun who shines on all alike,  
the Yellow, Black, the Red and White,  
the Brown and Grey, with the same light  
of love that makes us spring and grow  
in every soil that You sow  
May I be like Your child the Sun,  
Your great, all-caring child the Sun

May I rise daily like Your child the Sun,  
All-Wonderful, who never fails  
to rise though hidden from our eyes  
by clouds that cover human skies  
while still through truer realms it sails  
to keep on course. the Ever-wise  
May I rise daily like Your Sun,  
And keep on course till day is done

May I embrace with equal love all-kind  
like Your all-loving child divine  
the Sun whose ardent rays enfold  
with equal warmth the young and old,  
the halt and blind, hearts stony cold,  
the joyous, the sad, the shy, the bold .  
To give all love, like Your own Sun  
whose warmth embraces everyone

May I be aureoled, All-Wonderful,  
in auric rays sent by Your Sun  
Your seven lights to blend as One,  
an armour of protecting light,  
a beacon radiating beams  
of blessing, like Your Sun's delight  
in giving of its healing streams  
at dawn Your beauty's rainbow dreams

May I, appareled in Your purple ray  
     of love, Your indigo of force,  
     imbued with truth of blue, its source,  
     garbed in the green of growing soul,  
     yoked with Your wisdom's yellow-gold  
     in sanctity of orange array,  
     robed in Your red, life's spirit-ray  
 Your Sun my aura, night and day  
 So may I smile, Your child, a sun  
 whose joy envelops everyone

SEYRIL SCHOCHEN

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## RISINGS

SINGLE orange, hung in the blue of the night-sky,  
 Splendid, encircled by sombre hues of a rainbow.  
 Slowly the moon glides upward from the horizon  
 Dropping diamonds of light on the sea to enchant her

Ever serene and broad she stretches below him,  
 Bride eternal, again her yearning fulfilled now  
 But for this light-gift, the waters are wrapped in darkness  
 Stilled by the gentle touch of the night-winds caressing

Solemn peace and sweetest love immortal  
 Fill the silent space with their wondrous presence  
 Lo, meanwhile the moon has turned into lemon,  
 Haloed with silver white between star-lights mounting

But all this splendour's creator, the wonderful sun, now  
 Travels towards the shore of her morning-glory  
 Flooding with marvellous hues the sea at her rising  
 While, still charming, the pale moon nears the horizon

Here we stand on the shore, our eyes wide open,  
 Thrilled with the joy of this beautiful dawn of the future  
 While we let go of all that darkens our vision,  
 Ready to walk unblinded into the Truth-light

RUTH

## ADWAITA: A DUTCH VEDANTIC POET

“ADWAITA” was not just the ‘nom de plume’ of Johan Andreas dèr Mouw (1863-1919) but more of a *takhallus*, poetic name of the Persian and Urdu poets, a name suggesting something essential to the poetic self. When the first collection of his poems, mainly sonnets, was published posthumously in 1919, on the title-page was printed under his worldly name—the name by which he was known in the world of phenomenal reality—his poetic and spiritual name, ‘Adwaita’, Non-dual. This name represents the essence of his poetic personality in contradistinction to his normal or intellectual personality. Adwaita was the poet, dèr Mouw the classical scholar, Sanskritist, mathematician and philosopher.

In the history of Dutch poetry he occupies a unique place. He does not belong to any school or movement. Both his style and his subject-matter are entirely personal. A modern poet and critic, in the introduction to a recent selection of Adwaita’s poems<sup>1</sup>, says that the reader who, for the first time, is confronted with this poetry, must guard himself against dizziness: he has left the solid ground behind him and is drifting on a delirious boat.

To the average Dutch reader his poetry must have seemed disconcerting. Although India and Indian philosophy were not altogether unknown in Holland at the time of Adwaita, yet very few people had any deep understanding of them. By 1919 Rabindranath Tagore was quite well-known to the Dutch poetry-reading public that had tasted of the Tagorean brand of Indian mysticism.

It is interesting to note that dèr Mouw started, most probably, writing poetry in 1913, the year Tagore got the Nobel Prize. He was then fifty. It was really a volcanic outburst of poetic creation during the last six years of his life. Is there any connection between Tagore’s poetry and this outburst? We do not know. Anyway, they are very different poets, there is not the slightest influence of the *Gitanjali* on dèr Mouw. He was, as I have already said, a Sanskritist. He had first-hand acquaintance with Sanskrit literature and philosophy. He had a thorough knowledge of the Upanishads. And it is the Upanishadic Vedanta that we find transmuted into poetic stuff in his poetry.

We will not venture to say what the real nature of his Vedantic experience of non-duality is. Is it only a poetic-philosophic stance? Or is it a spiritual realisation? However, we cannot but wonder at the ease with which he moves in the sublime heights and the grand immensities of the Brahmic experience. There is nothing that is spurious or conceited. Everything seems to flow naturally from the depth, from the true source of things.

The picture that we get from his poetry of his inner personality is that of a perfect Vedantin. He believes that Brahman is one but the world is founded on duality, and the life and nature of man are marked and moved by that duality, that in our natural life we know nothing about the non-dual experience but we, through our quest and sincere aspiration, can realise the One.

In 1919 and 1920 the two volumes of his poems appeared under the title *Brahman I* and *Brahman II*. In the first volume he gives us three short *sūtras* which sum up the contents of his poetry:

1. Thou art That,
2. Ich bin so groß Gott: Er ist als ich so klein,
3. I am Brahman

The first and the third are, as we know, the expression of the supreme experience of the Vedanta, *tat tvam asi* (*Chāndogya Upanisad* 6-8), and *aham brahmāsmi* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad* 1.4.10). The second is a saying of the 17th century German mystic Angelus Silesius: "I am as big as God: He is as small as I." This too expresses a Vedantic experience. It is, in fact, the consequence of the other experience of the identity of Brahman and the individual self. The big and the small are expressions of the same divine Reality, the Self. The *Kaṭha Upanisad* too clearly says:

*anoranīyānmahato mahīyānātmāsya jantornihito guhāyām*  
(*Kaṭha Upanisad* 1.2.20).

Smaller than the small, greater than the great, the Self is placed in the heart-cavern of this creature.

But in order to arrive at this vision, to become Adwaita, Dèr Mouw had to cross two immense barriers, Christianity and Reason.

### Beyond Religion and Reason

Dèr Mouw was born in a Protestant family, but the religious faith of his forefathers could not satisfy him. He was a seeker. Christianity of the Church, Protestant or Catholic, does not have any scope for a free seeking: in order to find the truth one has to pass through Christ, the Bible and the teaching of the Church. Dèr Mouw was unable to accept this lack of personal freedom. He had always looked for the truth independently, free from dogmas, at first in mathematics, science and philosophy. But these could not quench his thirst for true knowledge. He saw that they could not give him the supreme truth, the truth of the Spirit. In the Vedantic vision he finds the inspiration and the opportunity of the full and free flowering of the human soul. As Adwaita he leaves behind both his religion and his intellectuality.

He denounces the Christian doctrine that says that salvation can be attained only through Christ. This must have seemed to his seeking mind something abject. He believes in the human capacity of spiritual growth, in the dignity of the human soul. Therefore he claims for himself—for his true Self, *ātman*—the divine prerogative of fulfilling one's own spiritual destiny. He does not fear any

so-called blasphemy, and boldly reclaims for himself the universal human privilege that was usurped by Christ: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life. no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (St John 14 6) Adwaita in his Vedantic vision dares to write:

I am the way, the truth and the life,  
I myself am the prophets, am the law,  
I don't need any Christ to redeem me,  
I need no God to forgive my sins

In these lines Adwaita retrieves his freedom. He knows that the power of redemption from sins lies in oneself. Sin is a crucial notion in Christianity. It is "the violation of the moral order that God has conceived and willed—it includes not only transgression of an impersonal law, but also offence to the personal Deity, author of this law."<sup>2</sup> Adwaita does not accept either the law or the author of the law. In the true Vedantic spirit he rejects them; and the notion of Christian sin loses all meaning for him.

Another teaching of Christianity that Adwaita rejects, along with that of Christ as the redeemer, is the doctrine of sorrow. In his epistle to the Philippians Paul the Apostle writes: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake . . ." (I, 29) Christianity is a religion of suffering. Christ has suffered for men, he has borne the cross, so everyone should bear the cross of suffering in order to be eligible for redemption.

"Christ," says St Peter, "also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2 21) Suffering is also willed by God, ". . . let them that suffer according to the will of God . . ." (*ibid* 4 19)

From his childhood dèr Mouw had heard that pain is wholesome and prepares one for heavenly bliss. In an autobiographical sonnet he evokes his childhood memory. He remembers his grandmother reading out to him a poem in which it was said that the teaching of Christ was "medicine and balm" for "life's pain and all the sorrow that lies at its bottom . . ." It was also said that

The blessed Yonder makes our earthly suffering light

And the grandmother added that she felt it was so, that it was perfectly true. And although the little boy did not understand everything, he summed up the whole thing in his mind as "het leven was heel naar"—life was very dismal. But already in his childhood he wonders whether he will, when he grows up, wish to be dead when in grief. And he concludes: "Dat kon toch niet"—that is surely impossible.

Adwaita rejects the teaching that only the blessed Yonder is worth striving



for. He speaks in a mildly ironical tone of the faith that was infused in his childish mind. He would think

If I see to it that I never again  
Am naughty, and that I study well at school,  
Then I shall surely be "a child loved by God."

And then, if he died, he would go to Heaven, get wings, fly in the air

And perhaps on Sundays I'll be allowed to stand  
Right near the throne of God, next to Gabriel,  
Jesus will surely not object he knows well  
That I have done my best at school

And also all grief would vanish, the dear dead ones would be found there again. He would think

. if I die, well, I'll then  
Find in the sky beside Our Lord, again  
Those people whom I love, all of them,  
My father, my mother and my friend

The whole idea of the glorification of sorrow seems childish to him. He reacts vehemently to it and in no ambiguous words.

· Would God divinise the soul through sorrow?  
He who said that was either a scoffer or a madman .  
No, sorrow ennoble no one. sorrow hardens

Sorrow changes a person into a "stinking dung-fly", whereas he could be "a butterfly".

Besides the religious doctrines imbibed since childhood, there are other obstacles he has to overcome before he can embrace the Vedantic vision. Reason and erudition have also to be surpassed.

Like Nārada of the *Chāndogya Upanisad* (7.1 1-3) Adwaita realises that through the years he has only accumulated book-knowledge, the knowledge of the lower world, *aparā vidyā*. In a poem of twenty couplets he confesses the failure of erudition

The table is covered with open books:  
I have wasted my life looking for wisdom

He has read and amassed many books But now he sees there nothing but a surge of pages like a snowy chain of mountains, “the bleak summits of human knowing” The lamp sheds its light on this mountain of frozen learning (starre wetenschap). And he sadly notes:

Thus I sat every night, year after year,  
I was rumoured to be rich in knowledge, I a beggar

In that realisation of the worthlessness of all human knowledge, he yet has the feeling that there is something to be found

And it was such as one often sees in dreams:  
You have to find something, but you can't.

Late in life dèr Mouw finds out that reason and philosophy can neither give him true knowledge nor true liberty All his youth he has consecrated himself, neglecting the glitter of the world (wereldglans), to the pursuit of philosophy. “ . I, a caterpillar, crawled through the philosophical jungle, eagerly.” The jungle was vast and covered with “mephitic darkness”, in which no wind blew, “no beauty drove obliquely its sunny lance ”

And like an ever-hungry caterpillar he devours all philosophical texts:

Stringy, sometimes-fragrant German, ever-colourful French  
Filled with fibres my hungry stomach,  
Frightening me often, tempting me often to gnaw:  
Baumgarten, Fichte, Strauss and Rosenkranz

But in the autumn of his life he realizes how dull and futile it all has been And he spins, says he, “from the infinite drab of sorrow”, a cocoon that shuts the world out And he waits patiently in that cocoon of quietness until he is ready to leave the pupa And the wonderful transmutation finally takes place. He is free:

Now I flutter through nature and my own song  
Your swallow-tail butterfly, O Brahman's Sun

Reason binds with so-called knowledge, but that knowledge is the lower knowledge, *aparā* To reach the *parā*, supreme knowledge, one must go beyond reason, leaving the world of learning where the human mind dances, “assiduous and bold”, on the “rope of logic” in order to get Truth's loving favour But repeatedly the mind is “sucked down in empty despair” and repeatedly it clammers up, trying again and again, “proud of self-contempt, sick with disgust”

Adwaita does not find truth through the logic of the human reason He feels

that he must rise beyond mind, he must leave his old intellectual self behind. Sadly he realized that Truth neither looked at him nor at all the other acrobats, so he took, says he, his “old possession, the aeroplane of art”

No philosophy, no mathematics—although he has loved to dance in step with “the mathematical law”—can give him wings. He knows now, “I must fly” (*'k Moet vliegen*). And the first stage of that flight must be on the wings of art. Art is that which rises above reason into the sky of intuition and inspiration. Later he will not need even that: his self will be transformed into a swan, into a butterfly.

Indeed, the frequent images of aeroplane, swan and butterfly that he uses in his poetry have to be considered as extremely significant if one wants to understand the symbolism of the ascension of the mind from the bonds of logic to the wide expanse of intuition.

This art that liberates is symbolized by the aeroplane which is identified with the sonnet: the two quatrains are the two big surfaces of the wings, and the two triplets the two small ones, the empennage. When he flies in that “winged car” the earth recedes.

Poetry frees him from rationality. He writes:

Thus floats my poem in me, myself a part of God,  
And something that scoffs at reason and knowing,  
Hides itself behind artistic translucency,  
And he who reads it feels, for one instant,  
Transported beyond the limits of his ego.  
The vibration of the mystery of his eternity

The word “translucency” is valuable. The true intuition is still hidden behind the artistic translucency. The reader who is open to the truth behind this diaphanous veil can grasp it, and feel the eternal mystery of Being. Here we are reminded of the ancient Indian poetics that says that the experience of poetry is similar to, brother of, the experience of Brahman, *brahmāsvādāna sahodara*. It is still not the real experience. Poetic intuition is not the real light of truth, *vijñāna*, but a precursor to that light. To be really free, to have the absolute experience of Brahman one has to rend the veil of appearances. Art is that in which the thought of Brahman has entered. It can enrich the human being with the cosmic feeling of the Self. Art is then “thought” (*gedachte*) and “feeling” (*gevoel*) of Brahman, a first step towards the Vedantic self-realisation.

Adwaita writes that he seems to hear the inaudible voice of a painting that says:

Brahman’s thought has achieved in me  
What It wants to achieve in your reality

I shall enrich you with the cosmic Self-feeling;  
Plunge through my appearance into the Being and be free.

Again, in another sonnet, Adwaita writes that his soul which is born of Brahman's world-fire reflects Brahman's light in poetry:

Fluttering out from my Brahman's world-fire,  
Floats in Its light through my own nature,  
My soul that reflects It in poetry

The real knowledge of Brahman is not this "thought" or "feeling" or "translucency" or "appearance" or "reflection", but a free ascent towards that which is beyond mind.

In the Upanishads the seers have spoken of the five steps of the soul's evolution matter (*anna*), life-principle (*prāna*), mind (*manas*) are already manifested in man. However, mind is not the highest state of consciousness in him. There are yet two more steps, *vijñāna* and *ānanda* (bliss).<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand Adwaita's quest of true knowledge beyond mental seekings we must understand the meaning of *vijñāna*. It is an intuition purer and fuller than the poetic intuition. It sees directly the truth of the Absolute both in its unity and its diversity. To grasp its true significance we can perhaps quote what Sri Aurobindo says about it.

. Vijnana is intuitional or rather gnostic Idea, not intellectual conception.... [It] sees itself in the Being as well as in the Becoming. It is one with the existence which throws out the form as a symbol of itself and it therefore carries with it always the knowledge of the Truth behind the form. It is in its nature self-conscience of the being and power of the One, aware always of its totality, starting therefore from the totality of all existence and perceiving directly its contents. It is the vision at once of the essence and the image. It is this intuition or gnosis which is the Vedic Truth, the self-vision and all-vision of Surya.<sup>4</sup>

Surya is the Vedic sun-god, the symbol of perfect illumination. It is extremely interesting to note that Adwaita too uses precisely the symbol of the sun: it is the sun that reveals to him Brahman. In his *aeroplane* he rises higher and higher, and

Suddenly a voice—it seemed, from the sun—

rings in his ears,

I keep the account of Brahman's worldly riches:  
No Algol, no electron gets ever mislaid

This book-keeper of Brahman, the Person (*purusa*) in the sun is also Brahman “He who is the fiery immortal Person in this sun is this Self, this immortal one, this Brahman, this All.”<sup>4</sup> But this is Brahman as *Hiranyagarbha*, the World-Soul. And it is through him that one gets the true knowledge of the Supreme; his light is the light of pure intuition, *vijñāna*.

(*To be continued*)

RANAJIT SARKAR

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- 3 For the five evolutionary steps of Brahman see *Taittiriya Upanishad* 3.1-6
- 4 Sri Aurobindo. *The Upanishads*. SABCL. Vol. 12. p. 124
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## AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—V

### ROOPANAGUNTA SUBRAMANYAM PANTULU

*(Continued from the issue of February 1997)*

PONDICHERY—ASHRAM Pantulu frequently visited the Ashram till his retirement in 1942. Even after he retired, the PWD offered him a job as EE (Executive Engineer). They wanted him to take charge of building an airport. Not many Indians were in such high posts in those days of British Raj. Pantulu refused the job. He had his future chalked out. He moved to Guntur with his family, wife and three children, Suniti, Bhavatarini and Narayan. The eldest son Vishnu had joined the RIAF (Royal Indian Air Force) and gone off to War. The next, daughter Prabhavati, was studying. He pooled all his resources and bought some arable land near a remote village named Nedutippa. His younger brother Srinivasulu was to look after the land. After a brief period in Guntur, Pantulu with his wife and three younger children came over for good to Pondicherry in 1944. They went back to Guntur in 1945 for a few days and on their return trip I too was brought over. The Ashram school had just opened. There were a few departments like Dining Room, Building Service, Sanitary Service, Harpagon, Garden Service. I don't know if Pantulu worked in any of these. In 1945 our Printing Press was started. Pantulu was made in-charge of the Binding Section. He was back in his element—work.

Pantulu was a giant in his work. It was difficult for any of us to really satisfy him in quantity as well as quality. The standards and pace he set left many panting. But they had to keep going, for he was usually a step ahead, leading. Punctuality and regularity went hand in hand with him. Parikshit, Pantulu's longtime underling, got his initiation from Pantulu. He avows it was tough going, but rewarding and enriching (to shape iron, you have to heat and soften it and then hammer it). Pantulu would start for his work soon after the Mother's Balcony Darshan, maybe around 6.30 a.m. He would wait in front of the D.R. (Dining Room) in the Park for Parikshit, who was expected to hurry through breakfast and join him. The two would walk down to the Press, the earliest birds. They caught no worms but were caught up in the work. They dusted and arranged all the work-tables of other sadhaks who would be arriving later. When they trickled in, in ones and twos, they had to just slip in between their seat and table and start working—no chance or necessity to talk. Usually there was not much talking. Surface fear and deep respect kept that to the minimum. When all the workers left, Pantulu would rearrange everything, knives, folders, etc.—close the Section and walk back home. Lunch, 1/2 hour rest and back to work, by rickshaw usually. He returned home at about 6 p.m. After putting back everything, he would write a report of the work done and also the work planned for

the next day, close the Section and walk back. He would show these reports to the Mother every day.

Peace and quiet reigned—the deterrent was present. Once in a long while a storm broke loose. It happened like this one day. It was a normal, fine day. The numerous machines (printing, monotype, etc.) were setting up their usual racket (all pre-war models). All of a sudden, above this din a great noise, a shout was heard. All over the Press people felt the shock-wave, switched off their machines and rushed to seek the source of the noise, towards the Binding Section. Someone had blundered—who?—and Pantulu thundered. They arrived in time to see Ravindra-ji making a hasty exit—that was who. And why? Ravindra-ji had the new job of appointing workers to various departments. The same thankless job he is at even now. He was younger then, and used to accompany the new recruit for the introductions. He had just done that, but unwittingly overstepped into Pantulu's jurisdiction and received a well-aimed Pantulu 'broadside'. The Mother was told about the incident, I think, by Ravindra-ji himself. Result—early morning, a knock on Pantulu's house-door and in came Ravindra-ji. Pantulu and he melted into each other's embrace. The past was effaced.

Quiet and peace prevailed at Pantulu's house too, as in his work-place—even when we boys were present. We did whatever boys do at that age, but out of his sight. Some reports must have reached him, but not often did he come down on us. He quietly forgave and forgot. For not only did he have a towering temper, but bore some other towering qualities as well. He earned a pension which he offered to the Mother. She gave him back or permitted him to retain Rs. 20 a month. This sufficed to buy some vegetables (Rs. 2/week), some grocery (monthly) and our yearly quota of clothes. One day his son Narayan, after long self-persuasion and encouragement, asked him if we could ask for butter from the Ashram. In those days every Sunday butter was distributed from the D.R. to those who had the sanction. Pantulu asked, "What are you doing so much or so great for the Ashram, that you want to ask for butter?" There the matter ended.

Biren-da used to come to our house every night after our dinner in the D.R. Pantulu would be home just lying down or teaching astrology to some (like Arun-da of the D.R.) or just talking on any subject with Dr. Nripendra, Sisir-da, etc. They would all go for the night meditation in the Ashram later. He was probably most relaxed during this period of the day. One night Biren-da was at the receiving end of his mood. Biren-da had very recently shown on Dec. 2nd a "rope trick". He was tied up, upper arms and chest, with a stout rope. He was to get out of his bonds. (Actually he failed as the rope was, it seems, dipped in oil and it tightened so well that it cut into the flesh.) But this night Pantulu said, "It seems you showed some rope trick in the Playground?" Biren-da grinned and nodded and said, "Yes, yes." Pantulu called us two brothers. "Okay, tie this fellow up. I want to see how he gets out." We brought a strong rope and started to tie up Biren-da (embarrassed and helpless). We went round the body, but

Pantulu said, "No, no, not like that. Make a figure of eight under each arm each time you go round the body." Biren-da meekly protested, saying the rope has to go just round. Pantulu had a good laugh and said, "Let him go—no need to tie him. Anyone can get out if you tie as he wants."

A batch of us boys used to go on outings to Lal Pahar (Red Hills, what is now Auroville) or Lake or First River (Ariankuppam) with Biren-da. Pantulu was interested—he having seen a good bit of outdoor life as an engineer. One day he told Biren-da, "Let us arrange a two-day outing to Gingee." Gingee was then farther than the Moon, and two days—it was unheard of in the annals of the Ashram. We were feverish with excitement. But how do we get there? A bus was hired for Rs. 90 or 100. It was a steam-driven one (petrol was not available just after the War). The bus was to pick us up early in the morning from the D.R., drop us at Gingee, and return the next day (afternoon) to bring us back home by evening. Next problem—where to get Rs. 100? We boys didn't have ten rupees between us and we wouldn't make a busload. So, others were recruited. Krishnayya (Pantulu's old friend), Niranjan-bhai (Albert-da's brother), Anil Bhatta the artist (Pavan's grandfather), Ardhendu (cat-lover and chemist), Krishnalal (artist), were some of the recruits. They all contributed yet could not make up the Rs. 100. Vishnu, Pantulu's eldest son (RIAF), happened to be there. He made up the shortfall.

We had breakfast in the D.R. and loaded the bus with vessels and food, etc. Off we went, watched by a crowd of Ashramites. It was a great expedition into the unknown. We reached Tindivanam. The bus stopped—we wondered why. The bus-walla said we had to change buses, as he had no permit to go further! Pantulu let go a volley of grape-shot, but was persuaded to make the change. We transferred all the 'saman' and sat in our places. Pantulu was to board last and occupy the front seat. As he was about to get in, he saw a police officer sitting in the front seat. He asked the bus-walla, "Who is he?—Why is he here?" The driver replied that police officers are permitted. Pantulu had had enough of this. He blew up—this time it was heavy artillery. All were hushed. He shouted at us, "Get down—unload—no Gingee. We will take the train back home." We sat still, hoping something would save the trip. The next volley crashed amidst us. We jumped to obey. Seeing all this the police officer was unnerved. He beat a retreat. We all breathed a sigh of relief. We reached Gingee. We were put up in a small school that was closed for vacation. A long shed served as kitchen and dining-room and two rooms for sleeping. Most of the older people stayed to rest, but we boys, with Biren-da, went up Krishnagiri before lunch. And in the afternoon we went up Rajgiri. Rajgiri and Krishnagiri are two of the three hills comprising the Gingee Fortress. It was dusk when we came down and soon it grew dark. We tried a short cut that delayed us longer. Gingee was just a small village and there was quite a scrub jungle around and leopards were rumoured to be there (it was 1946 or 48). Pantulu was filled with anxiety. Biren-da was the



first to enter the camp. He took the full blast as Pantulu opened up. We just melted into the dark corners. There were only the wood fire and a hurricane lamp. Dark corners were aplenty. Biren-da took all the blows quietly (boxer that he was). He was saved to some extent by—literally—a ‘diversionary fire’. Krishnayya, who was cooking, got his “gamcha” (towel) on fire and started a merry jig when the heat reached him (he was at first unaware the towel had caught fire). We were a subdued lot for the rest of the night.

The next year, there was a plan to visit Mahabalipuram by sea! The idea was to hire a motor-launch from Pondicherry Port, chug along the shore and reach Mahabalipuram. Somehow the plan fizzled out—we didn’t hear of it again!

Pantulu was a good cook and scholar (as mentioned in *Nishikanto*, the last article). He was a born teacher and supervisor. He could run a kitchen sitting on a stool. In 1952 Pantulu, my father (Srinivasulu) and I went to Nidutippa to inspect the fields. We went round the fields in the morning, came home and started the day’s cooking (no women-folk, only the three of us). We were getting along. One day the timing went wrong. It was brinjal ‘sambar’, the brinjals were very much under-cooked, hard and tasteless. During lunch my father pushed aside the harder pieces. I followed my father. Then spoke Pantulu, “Who did the cooking today?” “I,” replied my father. “Whose fault that the brinjals are hard?”—was the next question. “Mine,” replied my father. “Why should you then not eat them rather than waste them?” My father pulled back all that he had pushed aside and ate everything. So did I and so did Pantulu!

The D.R. had some problem. For quite a period the rice was not being cooked properly. Several cooks tried and failed. Pantulu took it upon himself to set matters right. He marshalled his forces, i.e. his family members, a few from the Department (Press) and one or two others. He set his stool near the oven (*choola*). In those good old days, no steam boilers and gas ovens. Wood, heat, smoke, soot and sweat were the normal kitchen requisites (the food tasted as good then as now). The D R kitchen felt as if some military manoeuvres were on. We did conquer the rice problem.

Pantulu was a scholar. By training and profession he was an engineer, but his mind was not to be fenced in in that field only. It ranged far and wide in the fields of Sanskrit, Telugu and English literature (of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo). He translated many works of Sri Aurobindo into Telugu and started the magazine *Arka* in that language (printed in our Ashram Press even today). He had read in Sanskrit the Puranas, Upanishads, etc. It is a wonder how and when he and many others of that period did all that they did. The sheer volume and variety of their achievements is astounding — more so when you see the quality of their doings. They imbibed much and let much seep out again. The only limit for Pantulu was the time and tide of his life. 66 years were too short.

We four as children (Bhavatarini, Suniti, Narayan and I) were pulled into

this seepage For a time, during 1942-43, daily after lunch, we sat erect, Padmasan, arms crossed on the chest and repeated or read aloud slokas from Balaramayan or Taittiriyaopanishad (Sanskrit in Telegu script) Pantulu would be sitting or reclining on the cot conducting the proceedings We remember the scene well—Bhavatarini and Suniti do still remember some of the slokas, I none.

Thus days turned into weeks, months and years. Came that fateful year 1950 On December 5 early morning we were all jolted by a rude shock. We were told that Sri Aurobindo had left his body We as children were quite upset But the older people were shaken to their very foundations, completely demolished Their bewildered minds took a long time to settle, to reorient themselves Some could not and left Some did set themselves firmly back on the Path, looked up and found a firm light to guide and sustain them—the Mother Pantulu was one of these He worked on till his body succumbed to the double disease of diabetes and high B P (as did his friend Nishikanto—Kobi) For diabetes Kobi had grown a medicinal plant given to him by a Himalayan sadhu. The leaves were to be crushed and the juice taken with milk The juice was slimy and tasteless Kobi passed on this knowledge to Pantulu. I plucked and brought the leaves from Kobi's house — Santal. Pantulu was fussy and this concoction did not suit his taste buds He made a modification The crushed leaves were mixed with some 'dal' powder and fried into vadas! Kobi had a good laugh and, conceding a point, said, "Pantulu amarché ek kati uporé " (Pantulu has outdone me ) The leaf did not have its desired effect Pantulu's health slowly deteriorated We had to help him even to walk He stopped his work in the Press. As days passed he got worse—he was bedridden The flesh wore away, the cheeks once full were now hollow He lay there for about 10 days—no speech, not much movement, fed spoon by spoon of liquids. Probably the last to fade away was the fire in his eyes. The end came one afternoon—on 29 December 1953. My father was here at the time He wanted to perform the traditional obsequies (mantras, etc). The Mother was asked if such rites could be done She said, "You can if you want." She further added, "These mantras are meant for the good of the departing soul. Pantulu's soul left him ten days back " So departed one more 'not so great', an ancient one who left deep foot-prints on our shifting memories They may be often covered by wayward winds but are too deep to be effaced. Pantulu walked through life unafraid His sword was forthrightness, kept sharp by his temper, and sincerity was his shield He had much to give, but it was often served near boiling hot We had to wait, cool it and then sip Then what seemed a bitter medicine lost the bitterness and slowly seeped into our minds, dissolving there many a stubborn stumbling stone He steeled our minds and spirits (bodies were steeled by another 'not so great' Biren-da, boxer, masseur and outdoors man, now old and disabled) Pantulu and his likes lived by one great motto They always asked themselves: "What can we give?"—(to the Mother and Sri

Aurobindo) They never asked or thought: “What can we get?”—maybe that is the reason they got in great measure. But that too they gave.

### Mrs. Pantulu — Meenakshamma

The Pantulu story would be only half told if Meenakshamma is not brought on the stage from the wings she long—nay, right through her life—occupied. For if Pantulu was a storm, she was the ‘calm after the storm’.

Meenakshamma was a great woman in her own right. Married at the age of ten with just class two education in Telegu, she tackled life unperturbed and was a model wife, housewife and mother. She and her compeers could teach a thing or two to their more modern, educated versions. She worked hard, never rushed around, yet got things done to each one’s satisfaction (even though some were often demanding ones). She was called “Kamadhenu” (the wish-fulfilling Cow) by some neighbours. They never knew her to say, “No, I have not got the item” when they would approach her to borrow some dal, rice, oil, etc. She came to the Ashram along with Pantulu, her husband. She worked at the Servants’ Office—Padmasinamma was her boss. (Arvind Sule continues to sit there daily for a short period.) She picked up enough English, all on her own, to maintain the ‘absence-presence register’. She even learned to read Tamil just looking at cinema posters, equating known names of films to the letters on the posters. She was a cinema buff and that helped her in her linguistic achievements. Sometime in the early sixties she developed cancer. Colectomy followed. She carried on life as usual for more than twenty years. No fuss over plastic bags nor colectomy societies giving helping hints and psychological boosts. Just old-fashioned cotton and bandages and still older-fashioned common sense and grit. Her patience and a strength born of that patience saw her through to the end. The end came of some other complication in her intestines. A few days bed-bound. Doctors said they had to take her to Jipmer. She must have sensed, or at least expected vaguely, the approaching end. She asked us to call Narayan (her son) and my mother (her sister). They arrived. Surgery (supposed to be exploratory) was done. She was a day or two in the IC (Intensive Care) ward. We then decided to bring her home, against the doctors’ wishes and advice. Slowly, with a team of doctors in attendance, we brought her back (drip bottle & all). We brought her home around 5.30 or 6.00 p.m. and made her as comfortable as possible. She was quite conscious. She stayed with us, at home, for a brief hour or so. Then as she had lived her 70 and odd years, so she passed away—in peace. I went to inform Nolini-da immediately. He said “Oh! cholé gèché—kono koshto neyi, kono dukkho neyi.” (Oh! she has gone—no suffering, no sadness.) For a moment I wondered at what Nolini-da said. Who was suffering? Who was sad? It then struck me it was on her, Meenakshamma, that he was commenting. I felt that she

lived, worked and died doing her duty to the best of her knowledge and capacity, lived by her dharma. Then what else matters? What more can one expect of another?

What tributes to pay to such as these? Enough to remember them in our quiet moments, uncovering their footprints on the dust of forgetfulness. It could help to measure our own footsteps with theirs. They are our pathfinders, part of the way. Oblivion cannot be their resting place.

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

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Here is a book — *White Roses* — of great significance. It contains the letters which Huta received from the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during the period 1955-1970. It will bring home with direct intensity to the soul of humanity the light, love, truth and peace that always emanated from the Divine Mother. The book also includes the relevant quotations which she sent to Huta from Sri Aurobindo and herself.

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INDIA

## “THE BEST LACK ALL CONVICTION, WHILE THE WORST ARE FULL OF PASSIONATE INTENSITY”

(Continued from the issue of February 1997)

WHAT of India?

Indian society today is characterised by the sharply rising incidence of all kinds of violence anti-state, inter-group, intra-familial, mob frenzy The wide cult of dowry, cutting across caste, sect, religion, class, region has increased intra-familial violence enormously It has particularly infiltrated the higher civil services where dowry up to a crore of rupees is said to be taken despite legislation which they are duty-bound to implement Here, again, individual rights to have more take precedence over duty Welfare legislation, therefore, remains a paper tiger.

As a consequence of the global village, TV has ushered in a new climate and in its wake a distinct teenage culture has developed, intensely subject to peer-group pressures because of the TV blitz Advocacy of merit is seen as reactionary Centres of learning are cockpits for caste, regional and linguistic conflict and intrigue. Wealth and power, *artha*, have become sovereign, cutting loose from *dharma*, the moral realm, and are used to gratify the basest desires, *kāma*

One impact of the unremitting, relentless media glitzkrieg and urbanisation is the denigration or stifling of the culture of emotions Early in this century Georg Simmel wrote in *The Metropolis and Mental Life* that metropolitan man, bombarded uninterruptedly with rapidly changing stimuli, starts reacting with his head instead of his heart to protect himself against the sweeping currents that would uproot him, until he hardens into the blasé attitude. Comfortably numb, he zeroes in on the one thing that requires no emotional response: the money economy where men and things are all reduced to one question: *how much?* Yet, money hollows out the core of individuality, devaluing the whole, which ultimately drags down one's own personality into a sense of the same worthlessness. One begins to wonder how much one really matters to parents, spouse, children.

It is in this context that the opening up of the country to the global market forces has special implications. While bowing to the much-touted spirit of competitiveness and individual freedom, we need to note that American companies do their best to crush competition and that freedom in the USA means having enough money to exploit others. There we have 6% of the world's population usurping 40% of the earth's non-renewable fossil fuel resources (and, in the process, the average American swallows 225 aspirin tablets a year!). The ideology being welcomed is one that worships the acquisition of wealth because

that ushers in power, which brings perquisites and enables increased gluttony of personal pleasure—the emphasis is squarely on selfishness, competitiveness, individual rights and not on responsibility to society, cooperation and the duties one owes to others. Let us recall what De Tocqueville observed: liberty cannot exist by itself but has to be paired with a companion virtue like morality, common good, civic responsibility.

This approach not only perpetuates poverty but actually intensifies deprivation, both economic and cultural. As Gandhiji pointed out, there is enough on earth for every man's need but not enough for everyone's greed, and poverty is really the other face of the problem of possessiveness. It also leads to the secessionism of the minds of the elite (the bureaucracy, the intelligentsia, the professionals who can manipulate the metropolitan economy). Commitment to the nation is replaced by desire to affiliate with the dominant metropolitan culture. The new elite is turning away from the twin challenges of nation-building and development to international and transnational agencies to bail them out.

The implications for the nation are ominous. A Home Ministry report states that white collar crime—specially bank frauds, forgery—has increased significantly (from 4942 in 1961 to 26891 in 1991, a 600% quantum leap) since the economic liberalisation policy and particularly in those states where industrialisation has been rapid (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka accounted for 73.2% of the increase in such crime during 1988-92).

Nani Palkhivala has painted a grim picture of the existing reality as follows.

In the last four years, India has advanced economically and witnessed virtually a rebirth of liberalisation. But, politically and socially, we have suffered an equally marked regression. Casteism is in the ascendant and has risen higher than ever before since we became free in 1947. Men far below the national average, in point of character, get elected on considerations of caste and creed, region and language. Casteism is the curse of India, even as tribalism is of Africa. India has been paying the highest price ever paid by any country for democracy. This is the inevitable result of our total neglect to give value-based education to our people and to teach them the priceless ethics embodied in our ancient culture. The greatest crime of our government against our people has been the failure to impart education. Politicians have a vested interest in preserving illiterate and unthinking vote banks. According to a report of the World Bank, by the turn of the century India will have more illiterates than the rest of the world put together.

Aldous Huxley graphically portrayed in *Brave New World* the danger that looms before India: pleasure can be made as effective an instrument of subjugation as terror is shown to be in Orwell's *1984*. People, busy satiating their

desires, fail to notice the theft of their liberty, let alone resist it. The consumer culture is the new opium of the people. How have we forgotten that it was the pathology of unregulated market operations that produced the Great Depression in America?

To sum up the *weltanschauung*, what Yeats wrote seventy-five years ago in the *Second Coming*, sounds terrifyingly true of the closing years of the millennium.

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned,  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity

Where, then, do we go from here to meet the future that ominously coincides with the millennium? In the context of the renewed onslaught of cultural colonisation being welcomed in the country, it is necessary to recall Sri Aurobindo's words written in the first decade of this century, but prophetically so very true in its closing years:

We have sought to regain life by following the law of another being than our own. We must return and seek the sources of life and strength within ourselves. We must know our past and recover it for the purposes of our future... read the heart of our religion, our society, our philosophy, politics, literature, art, jurisprudence, science, thought, everything that was and is ours, so that we may be able to say to ourselves and our nation, "This is our dharma". We shall review European civilisation entirely from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge and seek to throw off from us the dominating stamp of the Occident; what we have to take from the West we shall take as Indians.. You cannot cherish these ideals, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First, therefore, become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover them [the Aryan thought, discipline, character, life, the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga] not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world.

Back to the future, therefore! It was Pascal who had remarked that the trouble with the Western man is that he does not know how to be content in an empty room. And there, precisely, lies our strength. In the search for solutions

the West has sought out Indian scriptures, intrigued by a civilization still living after 5000 years. American and European management faculty are enquiring if we teach the Upanishadic, Vedantic or Gita system of management. They are astonished that we are still copying theories and practices they have long discarded and that we have not learnt lessons from their social disintegration. Why are we not returning to our roots for finding answers to our problems? Let us remember the inscription on the Gandhi Samadhi in New Delhi of the Mahatma's concept of the Seven Deadly Sins:

Commerce without ethics; Pleasure without conscience; Politics without principle; Knowledge without character; Science without humanity; Wealth without work; Worship without sacrifice.

However, instead of heeding these words of wisdom, our attitude today uncannily echoes that of Ravana's counsellor Mahodara who scoffed at Kumbhakarna for criticising the king's sacrificing dharma at the altar of desire.

This is the hedonistic path of Charvaka which, united with *realpolitik*, produces the devastating explosions in Bombay, Calcutta, Punjab and Kashmir, spawns the world of narco-terrorism, corruption and disintegrates the polity. How true are the words from *The Rock*:

. men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first Reason And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic...  
.. an age which advances progressively backwards.

Turning to that heritage of ours which Palkhivala urges us to steep ourselves in, it is in the life of Yayati that we find the guidance we need today. For, Yayati remains the archetypal human being driven by desire, as we are eagerly surrendering to the siren song of consumerism. He says,

I have lived in many realms,  
I was adored by the gods,  
I shone like the gods,  
I was powerful like the gods.  
For millions of years I made love  
to apsaras in the Nandana-gardens,  
under clustering, lovely trees  
ornamented with flowers  
shedding delicate scent upon us..  
Then. . Lost! Lost! Lost!  
And I fell from Nandana  
(*Mahabharata, Adi Parva*, 89.17-20, the P. Lal transcreation)



Yayati passes on to us what he has learnt with such great anguish. This earth, he says, is a hell for egotists who are the slaves of greed, pride, anger and fear. Lust, money and power and pride are intertwined. The pursuit of one inevitably traps man in the others. Pursuing this adharmā, man gains what seems desirable, but he perishes at the root.

“Desire never ends,” warns Yayati,  
 “Desire grows with feeding,  
 Like sacrificial flames  
 Lapping up ghee.  
 Become the sole lord of  
 The world’s paddy-fields, wheat-fields,  
 Precious stones, beasts, women—  
 Still not enough  
 Discard desire  
 This disease kills. The wicked  
 Cannot give it up, old age  
 Cannot lessen it. True happiness  
 Lies in controlling it.” (85.12-14)

Besides desire, Yayati warns us against pride and vanity as the destroyer of all merit, all good deeds. But the glitzkrieg of globalisation encourages in us precisely those impulses.

The wise say: Seven gates,  
 Asceticism, charity, serenity,  
 Self-control, modesty, simplicity,  
 And kindness, lead to heaven.  
 Pride cancels all these ..  
 Study, control of speech, respect  
 For ritual, performance of yajna—  
 These remove fear. Mixed with pride,  
 These four create fear. (90.22,24)

The warning is clear. The tragedy is that Yayati should have deliberately placed himself in this predicament despite his father, Nahusha, having gone through a similar experience, much as we keep doing, obstinately refusing to learn from the past. Nahusha-turned-python, holding his mighty descendant Bhīma powerless in his mortal coils, had warned:

the man who gives in to lust,  
 anger, malice and

greed falls from the human level  
to the animal.

(*Vana Parva*, 181)

Alas, we are like Yayatī and scorn learning lessons from our past! That is why the author of the world's greatest epic, Vyasa, is so anguished as to exclaim at the end.

I raise my arms and I shout—  
but no one listens!

From dharma comes success and pleasure:  
why is dharma not practised?

(*Svargarohana Parva*, the P. Lal transcreation)

The Scandinavian countries, with the highest standard of living, have realised it the hard way, but we will not learn from their predicament. If we wish to learn the way out of this consumerist earth-hell we can turn to Yudhishtira, a descendant of Yayatī, as, unperturbed, he answers the mysterious, inscrutable Yaksha across the corpses of his four brothers:

Anger is the unconquered enemy of man

Greed is his persistent frailty...

Exaggerated self-importance is pride..

Self-importance is massive ignorance ..

Renunciation of pride

    makes a man loved

Renunciation of anger

    brings freedom from sorrow.

Renunciation of lust

    makes a man wealthy.

Renunciation of greed

    makes a man happy...

Moral knowledge is the best wealth.

Health is the greatest gift

Contentment is the greatest happiness

The controlled mind means freedom from sorrow.

(*Vana Parva*, 313-314)

How is this controlled mind to be achieved? A reversal of the centrifugal whirl is the answer, a centripetal movement, a drawing-in of the faculties as the tortoise draws in its limbs, as opposed to the frenetic centrifugal whirl fuelled by consumerism that throws ourselves farther and farther outwards from our inner

core In many cases the link snaps and our society has to shoulder the burden of these drop-outs, misfits, youth who have lost their moorings.

The methodology for this is clearly laid down by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutra* and by Vyasa in the *Gita* as a step-by-step psychological discipline for developing holistic being. It is profoundly significant and no mere coincidence that this rediscovery of our past for building our future has already been done for us in India. The way to practise this ancient discipline was re-enunciated for everyone by Swami Vivekananda in the early years of this century. Subsequently, a magnificent synthesis of all forms of yoga with a great leap forward was formulated by Sri Aurobindo who represents perfectly the twentieth century Indian approach: an Indian who was deliberately alienated from his country in childhood and who mastered the European heritage; who taught himself his mother tongue and Sanskrit to rediscover for himself the heritage of his people, made that the foundation of the fight for freedom from colonial imperialism and finally took the yoga to scale new spiritual summits for all mankind. In a different way, at every dawn, simple spiritual truths were brought home to a concourse of students in Shantiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore. These three great sons of India have, as it were, re-excavated the lost treasure of our heritage, cleansed it of the dust of millennia, and placed it ready to hand for us. We have only to turn to them and seize what is ours by right to mould our own future and the future of our country meaningfully.

It is time we stopped behaving like ostriches when globalisation is mentioned and, instead, decided to take on the reality. Here, again, the same absence of vision is in evidence which is symptomatic of a consciousness that lives artificially, drawing only on foreign elements for ideas. Even now our policy-makers shy away from grounding themselves on that heritage to which the occident is turning in the hope of finding remedies for stemming the canker that is destroying its civilization. Instead, we blindly rush to surrender the nation into the implacable tentacles of the cyber-net. T. S. Eliot's poignant query should move us to step back and re-examine what we are about:

Where is the life we have lost in living?  
 Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
 Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

The answer lies within each one of us. The path is well trodden over millennia. We have only to look back in order to forge forward to a new age. The bleak alternative is what T. S. Eliot described as the “bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit”.

(Concluded)

PRADEEP BHATTACHARYA

# POLITICAL VEDANTISM—ITS CONCEPT AND PRACTICE

(Continued from the issue of February 1997)

## CHAPTER III

### POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION TO CREATE FREE INDIA

“THE ideal is that of humanity in God, of God in humanity, the ancient ideal of the *sanātana dharma* but applied, as it has never been applied before, to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realise that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India. She has evolved a religion which embraces all that the heart, the brain, the practical faculty of man can desire but she has not yet applied it to the problems of modern politics. This therefore is the work which she has still to do before she can help humanity...”<sup>1</sup>

— SRI AUROBINDO

We have seen that from the very beginning, when Sri Aurobindo started expressing his political thought in writing, he had been indicating his idea of forming a Nationalist Party for organising the Nationalists’ movement for the liberation of India from the alien administration on its own line. Through a series of articles in the *Bande Mataram* he put forth this idea in no ambiguous phraseology, and was successful in having it constituted by overcoming all sorts of stumbling obstacles created by the Loyalists and Moderates and strengthened by the support of the Anglo-Indian Press. From a study of these articles in the *Bande Mataram* it is understood that the New Party had had its own objectives to be achieved through its own plan and programme worked out on the strong basis of “Nationalism” as expounded by him in some of his speeches also.

Among the topics in which Sri Aurobindo dealt with this issue in the *Bande Mataram*, the one which needs to be discussed, of course briefly, here in this context, is his political philosophy of revolution, that is to say, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, a series of seven articles under the general title of *New Thought* which first appeared in the daily *Bande Mataram* in its issues of the 9th, 11th, 13th, 17th, 18/19th and 23rd April 1907<sup>1</sup>. Later these were brought out in book-form in 1948. It was through these articles that Sri Aurobindo brought forth the light of Vedanta to awaken manhood in the nation.

In introducing the philosophy Sri Aurobindo expounded why the views of the New Party on certain political ideas differed from those adopted by the Congress. He emphasised: “No national self-development is possible without the

<sup>1</sup> A series of articles on the Calcutta Congress of December 1906, referred to in *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, is missing —Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives’ Note

support of *rājasakti*, organised political strength, commanding and whenever necessary compelling general allegiance and obedience.... Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility . The primary requisite for national progress, national reform, is the free habit of free and healthy national thought and action which is impossible in a state of servitude. The second is the organisation of the national will in a strong central authority.. We have to establish a popular authority which will exist side by side and in rivalry with a despotic foreign bureaucracy... This popular authority will have to dispute every part of our national life and activity, one by one, step by step, with the intruding force to the extreme point of entire emancipation from alien control. This and no less than this is the task before us.”<sup>22</sup>

In explaining its necessity he emphasised that passive resistance was necessary because except for armed revolt it was the only effective means that could wrest the control of our national life from the grip of an alien bureaucracy which would culminate in developing free popular Government. Besides, “The mere effort at self-development unaided by some kind of resistance, will not materially help us towards our goal Merely by developing national schools and colleges we shall not induce or force the bureaucracy to give up to us the control of education. Merely by attempting to expand some of our trades and industries, we shall not drive out the British exploiter or take from the British Government its sovereign power of regulating, checking or killing the growth of Swadeshi industries... [by introducing different types of policy of taxation].”<sup>23</sup>

He further indicated. “The present circumstances in India seem to point to passive resistance as our most natural and suitable weapon . Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable,—just as it is lawful for a man who is being strangled to rid himself of the pressure on his throat by any means in his power. It is the nature of the pressure which determines the nature of the resistance.”<sup>24</sup>

He then clarified vividly the difference between the passive and aggressive resistance saying, “ while the method of the aggressive resister is to do something by which he can bring about positive harm to the Government, the method of the passive resister is to abstain from doing something by which he would be helping the Government The object in both cases is the same,—to force the hands of the Government, the line of attack is different. The passive method is especially suitable to countries where the Government depends mainly for the continuance of its administration on the voluntary help and acquiescence of the subject people The first principle of passive resistance, therefore, which the new school have placed in the forefront of their programme, is to make administration under present conditions impossible by an organised refusal to do

anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it,—unless and until the conditions are changed in the manner and to the extent demanded by the people. This attitude is summed up in the one word, Boycott.\* If we consider the various departments of the administration one by one, we can easily see how administration in each can be rendered impossible by successfully organised refusal of assistance. We are dissatisfied with the fiscal and economical conditions of British rule in India, with the foreign exploitation of the country, the continual bleeding of its resources, the chronic famine and rapid impoverishment which result, the refusal of the Government to protect the people and their industries. Accordingly, we refuse to help the process of exploitation and impoverishment in our capacity as consumers, we refuse henceforth to purchase foreign and especially British goods or to condone their purchase by others...

“Such is the nature of passive resistance as preached by the new school in India .

“The possibilities of passive resistance are not exhausted by the refusal of assistance to the administration In Europe its more usual weapon is the refusal to pay taxes .. To refuse payment is at once the most emphatic protest possible short of taking up arms, and the sort of attack which the administration will feel immediately and keenly and must therefore parry at once either by conciliation or by methods of repression which will give greater vitality and intensity to the opposition The refusal to pay taxes is a natural and logical result of the attitude of passive resistance ...”<sup>5</sup>

But the Doctrine had its limits, and Sri Aurobindo took no time to point them out, clarifying the difference between illegal outrage and passive resistance For this purpose he classified the doctrine into three canons:

(a) the passive resister—individuals or in collectivity must always be prepared to break an unjust coercive law and take the legal consequence;

(b) they must be prepared to disobey an unjust and coercive executive order whether general or particular;

(c) they must be prepared to boycott persons guilty of deliberate disobedience to the national will in vital matters.

And then Sri Aurobindo pointed out where lay a limit to passive resistance “So long as the action of the executive is peaceful and within the rules of the fight, the passive resister scrupulously maintains his attitude of passivity, but he is not bound to do so a moment beyond. To submit to illegal or violent methods of coercion, to accept outrage and hooliganism as part of the legal procedure of the country is to be guilty of cowardice, and, by dwarfing national manhood, to sin against the divinity within ourselves and the divinity in our motherland. The moment coercion of this kind is attempted, passive resistance ceases and active

\* The article on Boycott the last in the series, was intended for the *Bande Mataram* but could not be published It was seized by the police and made an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy Case (May 1908)

resistance becomes a duty. If the instruments of the executive choose to disperse our meeting by breaking the heads of those present, the right of self-defence entitles us not merely to defend our heads but to retaliate on those of the head-breakers. For the myrmidons of the law have ceased then to be guardians of the peace and become breakers of the peace, rioters and not instruments of authority, and their uniform is no longer a bar to the right of self-defence. Nor does it make any difference if the instruments of coercion happen to be the recognized and usual instruments or are unofficial hooligans in alliance or sympathy with the forces of coercion. In both cases active resistance becomes a duty and passive resistance is, for that occasion, suspended. But though no longer passive, it is still a defensive resistance. Nor does resistance pass into the aggressive stage so long as it resists coercive violence in its own kind and confines itself to repelling attack. Even if it takes the offensive, it does not by that mere fact become aggressive resistance, unless the amount of aggression exceeds what is necessary to make defence effective....

“The new politics, therefore, while it favours passive resistance, does not include meek submission to illegal outrage under that term; it has no intention of overstressing the passivity at the expense of the resistance.. .

“Moreover, the new politics must recognize the fact that beyond a certain point passive resistance puts a strain on human endurance which our natures cannot endure.. If at any time the laws obtaining in India or the executive action of the bureaucracy were to become so oppressive as to render a struggle for liberty on the lines we have indicated, impossible... or if passive resistance should turn out either not feasible or necessarily ineffectual under the conditions of this country, we should be the first to recognize that everything must be reconsidered and that the time for new men and new methods had arrived. We recognize no political object of worship except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation ”<sup>6</sup>

In concluding the philosophy of revolution of the New Party Sri Aurobindo summed up its objects and explained why politics had to be the true vehicle of the teachings of the Vedanta. He stated, “The object of all our political movements and therefore the sole object with which we advocate passive resistance is Swaraj or national freedom... Swaraj as the only remedy for all our ills... We of the new school would not pitch our ideal one inch lower than absolute Swaraj,—self-government as it exists in the United Kingdom. We believe that no smaller ideal can inspire national revival or nerve the people of India for the fierce, stubborn and formidable struggle by which alone they can again become a nation... For self-development spells the doom of the ruling bureaucratic despotism, which must therefore oppose our progress with all the art and force of which it is the master... Our policy is self-development and

defensive resistance. But we would extend the policy of self-development to every department of national life.. .

“We advocate, finally, the creation of a strong central authority to carry out the will of the nation.. The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *yajña* of which Boycott, Swadeshi, National Education and every other activity, great and small, are only major or minor parts

“Our attitude is a political Vedantism India, free, one and indivisible, is the divine realisation to which we move.. Passive resistance may be the final method of salvation in our case or it may be only the preparation for the final *sādhanā*. In either case, the sooner we put it into full and perfect practice, the nearer we shall be to national liberty.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus the *Bande Mataram* became the exponent of Philosophy of Nationalism of a nationalistic party fighting for the emancipation of its motherland With unflinching candour the paper propagated the policies and programme of the party and the tactics to be adopted for their realisation It upheld with conviction the significance of the teachings of the Aryans of the bygone days in support of its arguments. Since most of its editorials were written by Sri Aurobindo they stood for the ‘voice incarnate of India’s soul,’ or in other words, the voice of the awakened soul and spirit of India

(To be continued)

SAMAR BASU

#### References

- 1 *SABCL*, Vol 1, p 837
- 2 *Ibid* , pp 85-88
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## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

### 100. THE DIVINE MANGOES

PUNITHAVATHI welcomed her husband with a smile. Offering him a small vessel of water, she said: "Lunch is ready. I know you are hungry. Come to the kitchen."

Paramadattan, who had just returned from his shop, stood at the entrance of his house and washed the dust off his feet and hands with water. He walked straight into the kitchen and sat down for lunch.

He greedily looked at the ripe mango kept on his dinner plate made of silver. He took the ripe mango in his hand, and turning it, viewed it from different angles. "Quite big," exclaimed he "Is it one of the two mangoes I sent through my assistant a couple of hours before?"

"Yes," said his wife "Try it and tell me what it tastes like."

Paramadattan sank his teeth into the fruit, bit it open and sucked out the soft sweet flesh. In a trice, everything was over and all that remained in his hand was its seed.

"Is it so tasty?" asked Punithavathi, trying to muffle a guffaw.

"It's really good," said he, still smacking his lips. "I don't feel like eating anything else now," he said and began to run the tip of his tongue against his teeth.

Punithavathi broke into a peal of laughter at the sight of her husband attempting to suck the last drop of juice from the seed. But her laughter came to a stop when Paramadattan said. "Bring me the other mango too."

As she stood motionless, he shouted, "Don't you hear me? I want the other mango. Bring it. That must also be as tasty as the one I have just finished eating."

Punithavathi hesitated a moment.

"I sent you two ripe mangoes through my assistant. These are mangoes offered to me with lots of love by an affectionate friend. Have you eaten one?"

"No," stammered Punithavathi.

"Then bring it to me. What are you hesitating for?" said Paramadattan, driving her out with his looks.

Punithavathi ran into the storeroom. She didn't know what to do. And so she raised her hands towards the Heavens and prayed "O Lord Siva! From my earliest years, I uttered only your name and was in the service of your devotees. Don't you see my plight? Won't you come to my rescue?"

Surprised to see a mango landing on her hand, she remembered the words of her father, said to her when she was a child. "Siva is a giver. You be faithful to Him and sincerely seek His help. He will fulfil all your needs." She had never thought that the Lord would be so kind as to relieve her of all her troubles.

Happy at heart, she rushed into the kitchen and offered the divine mango to her husband.

He snatched the fruit from her hand and took a bite. He munched the flesh and then took another bite... one more bite... Licking its seed, and smacking his lips, he said: "Never tasted such a fruit before .. And I am sure this is not a fruit of this world . My friend told me that both of them were from the same tree. But the second one, I am sure, belongs to the most superior variety. Tell me from where you got it."

Punithavathi had no way but to tell her husband what really had happened.

"It's true that your assistant gave me two mangoes of the same size and variety. But soon after he left, a devotee of Lord Siva begged me for alms. The food was not ready at that time, and I didn't want to disappoint the devotee. And so I offered him one of the two mangoes "

"You must be a supreme ass to waste a sweet and fleshy fruit on a beggar. . Never do that again. . It's a warning—a strict one at that. Well! How did you get the second mango that you gave me just now?"

"By the grace of the Lord, from His hands "

Paramadattan chuckled and said, "From His Hands, eh! . It's a lie."

"No! I never told you a lie... I will never tell you a lie."

"No! I can't believe you. If it is not a lie, then get me one more mango from your Lord, here, right under my eyes."

Punithavathi didn't hesitate for a moment. She prayed to the Lord and begged Him to send a fruit, in order to prove that she was not a liar.

The Lord obliged.

Paramadattan was taken aback to see a mango appear in the air and slowly land on Punithavathi's cupped hands.

"Here it is.. Take it. Lord Siva is great," she said stretching her hands towards her husband.

Paramadattan took the mango, all the time wondering at the miracle worker. The mango remained in his hands for a second, and then it vanished.

"You are no human," he said. His eyes began to betray fear. He rushed back to his shop and pondered for several hours. He then decided not to live with Punithavathi any more.

Back home, he maintained a respectful distance from his wife. Punithavathi couldn't understand what was on his mind and struggled in vain to know why he had grown indifferent to her.

A week or so later, he turned his face away from her eyes and said, "I am going on a business tour. I shall have to voyage to far off countries and so I take leave of you "

"Let Lord Siva be with you," said Punithavathi. "Come back as soon as you can and I will be thinking only of you, and Lord Siva."

Years passed by. But there was no news about Paramadattan. Yet Punitha-

vathi was quite confident that her husband would return one day as a very rich merchant.

Paramadattan did return as a millionaire. But he preferred to stay in a port city in the Pandya kingdom. He married a woman of his choice and lived peacefully in that city. The couple had a child.

It was at that time, a merchant from Karaikal, the birthplace of Punithavathi, visited the port city. He was shocked to see Paramadattan with a woman and a child. Being a well-wisher of Punithavathi, he gathered more information about Paramadattan, and went back to Karaikal.

“I saw your husband in that port city. He is the richest merchant there,” the well-wisher said, and saw joy coming back to Punithavathi’s face. “But there is nothing to feel happy about,” he continued “He is married to a rich man’s daughter there and they have a child.”

Punithavathi turned pale.

“Now it is time for you to fight for your rights. You’ll have to go there and teach him a lesson, for I am told that none in that port city is aware of Paramadattan’s marriage with you. That is to say that your husband has deceived the rich man and his daughter.”

The matter was reported to Dhanadattan, Punithavathi’s father. He sat down in pained silence, staring at the floor as though fascinated by something going on there. The next minute he sprang up like a full-blooded warrior and roared, “A slap in the face is more effective than ten lectures.”

Palanquins were arranged. Accompanied by her father and the well-wisher, Punithavathi reached the port city.

They found their way to the palace of Paramadattan. Seeing Punithavathi and her father entering the palace, Paramadattan collected his wife and child and rushed towards Punithavathi and prostrated himself before her.

Punithavathi moved back.

“What is all this nonsense?” bellowed Punithavathi’s father. “I gave you money, wealth and property good enough to last for several generations. And I presented you with a beautiful house in Karaikal to live peacefully with my daughter. And what have you done to me and my daughter?”

Paramadattan rose to his feet. “I am a human being after all. How can I live with your daughter who is not human at all?” he asked the old man.

“What do you mean?” bellowed the well-wisher

“I mean she is divine,” said Paramadattan and related all that had taken place before “She is a Goddess in human form. I worship her and I have named my daughter after her... If you worship Her, you can also be sure of salvation.”

Punithavathi’s eyes pumped out deluges of tears. Her father and the well-wisher stood blinded by unshed tears

Punithavathi then prayed to Lord Siva “Help me, O Lord, to get rid of my flesh that I had fostered and nourished so far, for the sake of my husband. Now

that he lives with another woman, and considers me divine, bless me with the appearance of a fleshless skeletal body and allow me a place under Your divine feet.”

Lord Siva did as was requested of him. He gave her a body that was so ugly and frightening that, everyone there fell at her feet, offered obeisance to her and scampered away.

Punithavathi, from then on, came to be known as the ‘Divine Lady of Karaikal’. She composed *Arputhat-Thuru-Anthathi*, comprising 100 verses that sing of the glory of the Lord and *Irattai Mani Maalai*, comprising 20 verses describing the woods in which the Lord dances.

Having done all this and gained a pride of place in the History of Tamil Literature, she desired to see the abode of the Lord at Kailasam. Just a walking skeleton she travelled through many regions and, making people take to their heels and shun her very presence, she reached Mount Kailasam.

As soon as she reached the Silver Mountain, she avoided the use of her legs for fear that she would defile the sanctity of the place and ascended the Mountain on her head.

The Lord and his consort were immensely pleased with Punithavathi’s devotion. And the Lord asked her what she desired of Him.

The Divine Lady of Karaikal replied. “Bless me with immortality, O Lord! If by chance I am reborn, grant me enduring love for You And whenever You dance, give me a place under your dancing foot and let me sing your praise.”

“Well then,” said Lord Siva, “Go to Thiruvankadu to watch me dance ”

The Divine Lady of Karaikal retraced her way to Thiruvankadu on her head, where she enjoyed watching the divine dancer dance. His dance inspired her to sing *Mooththa Thurupadhigam*, comprising 22 verses describing the form of his terrible dance which destroys all deadly sins of the world

When she finished singing the last hymn, Lord Siva took her under his anklet-tinkling foot, with her song reverberating in his ears.

*(More Legends on the way)*

P. RAJA

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**On the Loom of Time**, by *Sibylle Sharma-Hablik*. \* Published by the author.  
Price: Rs. 350.

It is a beautiful book with its colour photo of a handmade wallhanging on the laminated jacket. It is hardbound with white handwoven cloth made in the weaving department started by S. D. Sharma and the author thirty years ago. On the cloth cover the German runic trademark of the weaving unit is embossed in gold. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press has won an award for the German version of this book for 'Excellence in Print' at VISION 2001, the South Asia Print Congress 1996 in Delhi.

But it is not a book on handweaving, as you may surmise from the title! It deals with weaving though it concerns the warp and weft of human life and fate. The German author quotes from Goethe's poem *Faust* the words spoken by the Earth spirit.

... so weave I on the whirring loom of time  
The life that clothes the deity sublime.

The first forty years of the writer's life unfold from her childhood and early years to adolescence and professional training until she has to face the great challenge of her life. It is no longer possible to run the inherited parental handloom unit due to change of circumstances. By a twist of fate the problem is solved by an Indian who appears at the most critical moment. He suggests shifting the whole handloom unit to his homeland!

With delight we read about the author's parents. The father was by early training a cabinet-maker, by education an academic painter but by nature a designer, a visionary inspired by global ideals and views. Her equally inventive and energetic mother was the perfect counterpart to her husband through her inner strength and untiring dedicated work. The girl and her sister grew up in an extraordinary environment which brought them in touch with nature's wonders, with the mysticism of art and so they were aware of dimensions not commonly known to their playmates and co-students. The occasional anecdotes are written with gusto and humour making the reader smile and even laugh heartily.

As a whole the book is also a historical document concerning the life and times during the first half of our century. This is reflected in the author's experiences, in the description of the idyllic life in her little home-town.

The book ends with the quotation of an appeal 'to the peoples of the Earth' written by the writer's father in 1905, a text for the 'New Age' printed ninety years ago!

\* The book has 134 pages with 52 illustrations. It is available at the VAK bookshop, Nehru Street, Pondicherry.

A second volume is announced by the author, which is already going to the press. The title is *Thirty Years in India*. This book tells about her life and work as a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, as well as about her travels and pilgrimages. Both the well-illustrated unpretentious books make pleasant reading, for the young no less than for the older generation.

PREM TYAGI

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Eighty-first Seminar

21 April 1996

#### FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SRI AUROBINDO'S AND THE MOTHER'S VISION

Speech by R. Shivashankar

SRI AUROBINDO was not a Yogi who did his sadhana and his life-work for his inner progress alone, but for the progress of the whole of humanity and the world. This work he had begun not only during his present life, it had started from the very beginning of the earth's evolution. It consisted of carrying on that evolution through successive stages which in his present birth he elevated to the spiritual supramental level. It is this which will securely establish the Divine Life upon earth and help to create a new race of Gnostic Beings.

As this was his chief mission, he kept a close watch on world movements and guided them with his yogic power, though not outwardly participating in them. Keeping this in mind let us consider and evaluate the world-situation in the light of Sri Aurobindo's world-vision and his life-work.

At present, evidently, the world-situation doesn't seem to be in a very happy peaceful condition. Nor is there any sign to give us hope and confidence even as we are going to step into the next century. For instance, open a newspaper, listen to the news on the radio, or watch a television news bulletin, you will be told about violence somewhere or other. During this century itself we witnessed two most disastrous World Wars. The Second World War ended in 1945 but it did not mean that the world has been at peace since then. In fact, there have been about two hundred wars around the world since 1945. It is very true that the history of the human race has been, and still continues to be, full of incidents of fighting and bloodshed. But now it has become even more threatening when we know that man has developed the power to destroy all life with his powerful nuclear weapons. Thus we see how the whole world is living in fear and danger, the whole of humanity plunging into a dark abyss.

For Sri Aurobindo, however, this present world-situation, dark though it be, is only a passing phase, like the darkest hour just before the dawn. According to him the world-movements are guided by the divine force and must inevitably culminate in the emergence of the perfect Light of the Spirit. Instead of explaining to you his world vision, let me quote a letter of his:

“The question you have put raises one of the most difficult and complicated of all problems and to deal with it at all adequately would need an answer as long as the longest chapter of *The Life Divine*. I can only state my own knowledge founded not on reasoning but on experience that there is such a guidance and that nothing is in vain in this universe

“If we look only at outward facts in their surface appearance or if we regard what we see happening around us as definitive, not as processes of a moment in a developing whole, the guidance is not apparent; at most, we may see interventions occasional or sometimes frequent. The guidance can become evident only if we go behind appearances and begin to understand the forces at work and the way of their working and their secret significance. It is quite obvious that this world is full of suffering, and afflicted with transience to a degree that seems to justify the Gita’s description of it as ‘this unhappy and transient world’, *anityam asukham lokam imam*. The question is whether it is a mere creation of Chance or governed by a mechanical inconscient Law or whether there is a meaning in it and something behind its present appearance towards which we move. If there is a meaning and if there is something towards which things are evolving, then inevitably there must be a guidance—and that means that a supporting Consciousness and Will is there with which we can come into inner contact. If there is such a Consciousness and Will, it is not likely that it would stultify itself by annulling the world’s meaning or turning it into a perpetual or eventual failure

“This world has a double aspect. It seems to be based on a material Inconscience and an ignorant mind and life full of that Inconscience: error and sorrow, death and suffering are the necessary consequence. But there is evidently too a partially successful endeavour and an imperfect growth towards Light, Knowledge, Truth, Good, Happiness, Harmony, Beauty,—at least a partial flowering of these things.... Whatever guidance there is must be given under these conditions of opposition and struggle and must be leading towards that higher state of things. It is leading the individual, certainly, and the world, presumably, towards the higher state, but through the double terms of knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, death and life, pain and pleasure, happiness and suffering; none of the terms can be excluded until the higher status is reached and established ”<sup>1</sup>

Doesn’t this letter assure the peace more than the politicians who sign peace treaties and never keep them? The assurance given by Sri Aurobindo is not based on intellectual speculation or reason but on experience. One thing, however, must be understood that God’s higher law of peace and love will descend upon this earth only when man outgrows his present egoistic consciousness sufficiently to deserve it, and not before. Any other solution would only result in setting back the forward march of humanity’s progress. But we need not have a pessimistic view of the world’s future; for in Sri Aurobindo’s point of view



there is a purpose and a meaning for the world-movement to pass through such dark phases. He himself says, in the letter just quoted, that "nothing is in vain in this universe". But that doesn't mean that we can sit back and relax forever. If we are to save this world from a calamitous stumble and carry it safely to its divine destiny, the responsibility devolving upon us should be taken up. Let me conclude this article by quoting what the Mother states in most poignant terms about what is demanded of us. She says:

"At the moment we are at a decisive turning-point in the history of the earth, once again. From every side I am asked, 'What is going to happen?' Everywhere there is anguish, expectation, fear. 'What is going to happen?' There is only one reply: 'If only man could consent to be spiritualised.' for this would be enough to change the course of events ... We are faced with this necessity in a very urgent way.

"This courage, this heroism which the Divine wants of us, why not use it to fight against one's own difficulties, one's own imperfections, one's own obscurities? Why not heroically face the furnace of inner purification so that it does not become necessary to pass once more through one of those terrible, gigantic destructions which plunge an entire civilisation into darkness?"

"This is the problem before us. It is for each one to solve it in his own way.. .

"And I add: Time presses... from the human point of view."<sup>2</sup>

### *References*

- 1 *Letters on Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 24, pp 1626-27
- 2 *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 9, p 74