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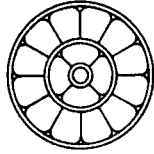
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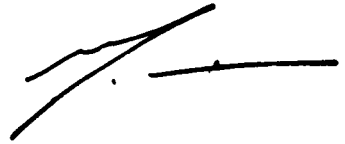
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. I

No. 4

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE SCOUT OF VICTORY

EVEN when she bent to meet earth's intimacies
Her spirit kept the stature of the gods;
It stooped but was not lost in Matter's reign
A world translated was her gleaming mind,
And marvel-mooned bright crowding fantasies
Fed with spiritual sustenance of dreams
The ideal goddess in her house of gold
Aware of forms to which our eyes are closed,
Conscious of nearnesses we cannot feel,
The Power within her shaped her moulding sense
In deeper figures than our surface types.
An invisible sunlight ran within her veins
And flooded her brain with heavenly brilliancies
That woke a wider sight than earth could know
Outlined in the sincerity of that ray
Her springing childlike thoughts were richly turned
Into luminous patterns of her soul's deep truth,
And from her eyes she cast another look
On all around her than man's ignorant view
All objects were to her shapes of living selves
And she perceived a message from her kin
In each awakening touch of outward things
Each was a symbol power, a vivid flash
In the circuit of infinities half-known;
Nothing was alien or inanimate,
Nothing without its meaning or its call
For with a greater Nature she was one
As from the soil sprang glory of branch and flower,
As from the animal's life rose thinking man,
A new epiphany appeared in her.
A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god,
And when the slow rhyme of the expanding years
And the rich murmurous swarm-work of the days
Had honey-packed her sense and filled her limbs,
Accomplishing the moon-orb of her grace,
Self-guarded in the silence of her strength
Her solitary greatness was not less
Nearer the godhead to the surface pressed,

A sun replacing childhood's nebula
 Sovereign in a blue and lonely sky.
 Upward it rose to grasp the human scene.
 The strong Inhabitant turned to watch her field,
 A lovelier light assumed her spirit brow
 And sweet and solemn grew her musing gaze;
 Celestial-human deep warm slumbrous fires
 Woke in the long fringed glory of her eyes
 Like altar-burnings in a mystic shrine.
 Out of those crystal windows gleamed a will
 That brought a large significance to life.
 Holding her forehead's candid stainless space
 Behind the student arch a noble power
 Of wisdom looked from light on transient things
 A scout of victory in a vigil tower,
 Her aspiration called high destiny down;
 A silent warrior paced in her city of strength
 Inviolate, guarding Truth's diamond throne.
 A nectarous haloed moon her passionate heart
 Loved all and spoke no word and made no sign,
 But kept her bosom's rapturous secrecy
 A blissful ardent moved and voiceless world
 Proud, swift and joyful ran the wave of life
 Within her like a stream in Paradise.
 Many high gods dwelt in one beautiful home;
 Yet was her nature's orb a perfect whole,
 Harmonious like a chant with many tones,
 Immense and various like a universe.
 The body that held this greatness seemed almost
 An image made of heaven's transparent light.
 Its charm recalled things seen in vision's hours,
 A golden bridge spanning a faery flood,
 A moon-touched palm tree single by a lake
 Companion of the wide and glimmering peace,
 A murmur as of leaves in Paradise
 Moving when feet of the Immortals pass,
 A fiery halo over sleeping hills,
 A strange and starry head alone in Night.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp 356-358)

VAMADEVA'S MYSTIC HYMN OF PRAISE AND THE WORD OF CREATION

RIG VEDA IV. 50

यस्तस्तम्भ सहसा वि ज्यो अन्तान् बृहस्पतिस्त्रिषधस्थो रवेण ।
तं प्रत्नास ऋषयो दीध्यानाः पुरो विप्रा दधिरे मन्द्रजिह्वम् ॥१॥

1. He who established in his might the extremities of the earth, Brihaspati, in the triple world of our fulfilment, by his cry, on him the pristine sages meditated and, illumined, set him in their front with his tongue of ecstasy.

धुनेतयः सुप्रकेतं मदन्तो बृहस्पते अभि ये नस्ततस्त्रे ।
पृषन्तं सुप्रमदन्धमूर्ध्वं बृहस्पते रक्षतादस्य योनिम् ॥२॥

2. They, O Brihaspati, vibrating with the impulse of their movement, rejoicing in perfected consciousness wove for us abundant, rapid, invincible, wide, the world from which this being was born. That do thou protect, O Brihaspati.

बृहस्पते या परमा परावदत आ त ऋतस्यृशो नि षेदुः ।
तुभ्यं खाता अवता अब्रिदुग्धा मध्वः श्रोतन्त्यभितो विरष्णम् ॥३॥

3. O Brihaspati, that which is the highest supreme of existence, thither from this world they attain and take their seat who touch the Truth. For thee are dug the wells of honey which drain this hill and their sweetnesses stream out on every side and break into overflowing

बृहस्पतिः प्रथमं जायमानो महो ज्योतिषः परमे व्योमन् ।
सप्तास्यस्तुविजातो रवेण वि सप्तरश्मिरधमत्तमांसि ॥४॥

4. Brihaspati first in his birth from the vast light, in the highest heavenly space, with his seven fronts, with his seven rays, with his many births, drives utterly away the darkneses that encompass us with his cry.

स सुष्टुभा स ऋक्वता गणेन वलं रुरोज फलिंगं रवेण ।
बृहस्पतिरुन्निया हव्यसूदः कनिक्रदद् वावशतीरुदाजत् ॥५॥

5. He with his cohort of the rhythm that affirms, of the chant that illumines, has broken Vala into pieces with his cry. Brihaspati drives upward the Bright Ones who speed our offerings; he shouts aloud as he leads them, lowing they reply.

एवा पित्रे विश्वदेवाय वृष्णे यज्ञैर्विधेम नमसा हविर्भिः ।
बृहस्पते सुप्रजा वीरवन्तो वयं स्याम पतयो रयीणाम् ॥६॥

- 6 Thus to the Father, the universal Godhead, the Bull of the herds, may we dispose our sacrifices and submission and oblations, O Brihaspati, full of energy and rich in offspring, may we become masters of the felicities.

स इद् राजा प्रतिजन्यानि विश्वा शुष्मेण तस्थावभि वीर्येण ।
बृहस्पति यः सुभृतं बिभर्ति वल्गूयति वन्दते पूर्वभाजम् ॥७॥

- 7 Verily is he King and conquers by his energy, by his heroic force all that is in the worlds that confront him, who bears Brihaspati in him well-contained and has the exultant dance and adores and gives him the first fruits of his enjoyment.

स इत् क्षेति सुधित ओकसि स्वे तस्मा इळा पित्वते विश्वदानीम् ।
तस्मै विशः स्वयमेवा नमन्ते यस्मिन् ब्रह्मा राजनि पूर्व एति ॥८॥

- 8 Yea, he dwells firmly seated in his proper home and for him Ila at all times grows in richness. To him all creatures of themselves submit, the King, he in whom the Soul-Power goes in front.

अप्रतीतो जयति सं धनानि प्रतिजन्यान्युत या सजन्या ।
अवस्यवे यो वरिवः कृणोति ब्रह्मणे राजा तमवन्ति देवाः ॥९॥

- 9 None can assail him, he conquers utterly all the riches of the worlds which confront him and the world in which he dwells, he who for the Soul-Power that seeks its manifestation creates in himself that highest good, is cherished by the gods.

इन्द्रश्च सोमं पिबतं बृहस्पतेऽस्मिन् यज्ञे मन्दसाना वृषण्वसू ।
आ वां विशन्तिवन्दवः स्वाभुवोऽस्मे रयिं सर्ववीरं नि यच्छतम् ॥१०॥

- 10 Thou, O Brihaspati, and Indra, drink the Soma-wine rejoicing in this sacrifice, lavishing substance. Let the powers of its delight enter into you and take perfect form, control in us a felicity full of every energy

बृहस्पत इन्द्र वर्धतं नः सचा सा वां सुमतिभूत्वस्मे ।
अविष्टं धियो जिगृतं पुरन्धीर्जस्तमर्थो वनुषामरातीः ॥११॥

11. O Brihaspati, O Indra, increase in us together and may that your perfection of mind be created in us; foster the thoughts, bring out the mind's multiple

powers, destroy all poverties that they bring who seek to conquer the Aryan

*

BRAHMAN IN THE VEDA

Bṛihaspati, Brahmanaspati, Brahma are the three names of the god to whom the Rishi Vamadeva addresses this mystic hymn of praise..

Brahman in the Veda signifies ordinarily the Vedic Word or Mantra in its profoundest aspect as the expression of the intuition arising out of the depths of the soul or being. It is a voice of the rhythm which has created the worlds and creates perpetually. All world is expression or manifestation, creation by the Word. Conscious Being luminously manifesting its contents in itself, of itself, *ātman*, is the super-conscious, holding its contents obscurely in itself it is the subconscious. The higher, the self-luminous descends into the obscure, into the night, into darkness concealed in darkness, *tamah tamasā gūlham*, where all is hidden in formless being owing to fragmentation of consciousness, *tucchye-nābhvapihitam*. It arises again out of the Night by the Word to reconstitute in the conscient its vast unity, *tan mahinājāyataikam*. This vast Being, this all-containing and all-formulating consciousness is Brahma. It is the Soul that emerges out of the subconscious in Man and rises towards the superconscious. And the word of creative Power welling upward out of the soul is also *brahman*.

The Divine, the Deva, manifests itself as conscious Power of the soul, creates the worlds by the Word out of the waters of the subconscious, *apraketam salilam sarvam*,—the inconscient ocean that was this all, as it is plainly termed in the great Hymn of Creation (X.129). This power of the Deva is Brahma, the stress in the name falling more upon the conscious soul-power than upon the Word which expresses it. The manifestation of the different world-planes in the conscient human being culminates in the manifestation of the superconscious, the Truth and the Bliss, and this is the office of the supreme Word or Veda. Of this supreme Word Bṛihaspati is the master, the stress in this name falling upon the potency of the Word rather than upon the thought of the general soul-power which is behind it. Bṛihaspati gives the Word of knowledge, the rhythm of expression of the superconscious, to the gods and especially to Indra, the Lord of Mind, when they work in man as “Aryan” powers for the great consummation ...

Bṛihaspati is he who has established firmly the limits and definitions of the Earth, that is to say of the material consciousness. The existence out of which all formations are made is an obscure, fluid and indeterminate movement,—*salilam*, Water. The first necessity is to create a sufficiently stable formation out of this flux and running so as to form a basis for the life of the conscient. This Bṛihaspati does in the formation of the physical consciousness and its world,

sahasā, by force, by a sort of mighty constraint upon the resistance of the subconscious.. Brihaspati forms by sound, by his cry, *raveṇa*, for the Word is the cry of the soul as it awakens to ever-new perceptions and formations “He who established firmly by force the ends of the earth, Brihaspati in the triple seat of the fulfilment, by his cry ”

On him, it is said, the ancient or pristine Rishis meditated, meditating, they became illumined in mind, illumined, they set him in front as the god of the ecstatic tongue, *mandra-jihvam*, the tongue that takes joy of the intoxicating wine of Soma, *mada, madhu*, of that which is the wave of sweetness, *madhumān ūrmiḥ* (IX.110.11), hidden in the conscient existence and out of it progressively delivered. . Brihaspati in them became able to taste for them the bliss of existence, the wine of Immortality, the supreme Ananda. The formation of the definite physical consciousness is the first step, this awakening to the Ananda by the bringing forward in mind of the intuitive soul as the leader of our conscious activities is the consummation or, at least, the condition of the consummation

The result is the formation of the Truth-Consciousness in man. The ancient Rishis attained to the most rapid vibration of the movement; the most full and swift streaming of the flux of consciousness which constitutes our active existence, no longer obscure as in the subconscious, but full of the joy of perfected consciousness,—not *apraketam* like the ocean described in the Hymn of Creation, but *supraketam*. Thus they are described, *dhunetayah supraketam madantah*. With this attainment of the full rapidity of the activities of consciousness unified with its full light and bliss in the human mentality they have woven for the race by the web of these rapid, luminous and joyous perceptions the Truth-Consciousness, *rtam brhat*, which is the womb or birth-place of this conscient being. For it is out of the superconscient that existence descends into the subconscious and carries with it that which emerges here as the individual human being, the conscious soul. The nature of this Truth-Consciousness is in itself this that it is abundant in its outflowings, *ṛsantam*, or, it may be, many-coloured in the variety of its harmonised qualities; it is rapid in its motion, *srpram*; by that luminous rapidity it triumphs over all that seeks to quell or break it, it is *adabdhham*; above all it is wide, vast, infinite, *ūrvam*. .

The Truth-Consciousness is the foundation of the superconscient, the nature of which is the Bliss It is the supreme of the supraconscient, *paramā parāvat*, from which the being has descended, the *parama parārdha* of the Upanishads, the existence of Sachchidananda. It is to that highest existence that those arise out of this physical consciousness, *atah*, who like the ancient Rishis enter into contact with the Truth-Consciousness. They make it their seat and home, *kṣaya, okas*. For in the hill of the physical being there are dug for the soul those abounding wells of sweetness which draw out of its hard rigidity the concealed Ananda; at the touch of the Truth the rivers of honey, the quick pourings of the wine of Immortality trickle and stream and break out into a flood

of abundance over the whole extent of the human consciousness.

Thus Brihaspati, becoming manifest first of the gods out of the vastness of that Light of Truth-Consciousness, in that highest heavenly space of the supreme superconscious, *maho jyotisah parama vyoman*, presents himself in the full sevenfold aspect of our conscious being, multiply born in all the forms of the interplay of its seven principles ranging from the material to the purest spiritual, luminous with their sevenfold ray which lights all our surfaces and all our profundities, and with his triumphant cry dispels and scatters all powers of the Night, all encroachments of the Inconscient, all possible darknesses.

It is by the powers of the Word, by the rhythmic army of the soul-forces that Brihaspati brings all into expression and dispelling all the darknesses that encompass us makes an end of the Night. These are the "Brahma"s of the Veda, charged with the word, the *brahman*, the *mantra*, it is they in the sacrifice who raise heavenward the divine Rik, the Stubh or Stoma. *Rk*, connected with the Word *arka* which means light or illumination, is the Word considered as a power of realisation in the illuminating consciousness; *stubh* is the Word considered as a power which affirms and confirms in the settled rhythm of things. That which has to be expressed is realised in consciousness, affirmed, finally confirmed by the power of the Word. The "Brahma"s or Brahmana forces are the priests of the Word, the creators by the divine rhythm. It is by their cry that Brihaspati breaks Vala into fragments .

Vala is not himself dark or inconscient, but a cause of darkness. Rather his substance is of the light, *valasya gomatah*, *valasya govapusah*, but he holds the light in himself and denies its conscious manifestation. He has to be broken into fragments in order that the hidden lustres may be liberated. Their escape is expressed by the emergence of the Bright Ones, the herds of the Dawn, from the cavern below in the physical hill and their driving upward by Brihaspati to the heights of our being whither with them and by them we climb. He calls to them with the voice of the superconscious knowledge.

This self-expressive Soul, Brihaspati, is the Purusha, the Father of all things, it is the universal Divinity; it is the Bull of the herds, the Master and fertilizer of all these luminous energies evolved or involved, active in the day or obscurely working in the night of things, which constitute the becoming or world-existence, *bhuvanam* ..

By that energy he [the human being] throws himself upon and masters all that comes to him in the births, the worlds, the planes of consciousness that open upon his perception in the progress of the being. He becomes the king, the *samrat*, ruler of his world-environment.

For such a soul attains to a firmly settled existence in its own proper home, the Truth-Consciousness, the infinite totality, and for it at all times Ila, the highest Word, premier energy of the Truth-Consciousness, she who is the direct revealing vision in knowledge and becomes in that knowledge the spontaneous

self-attainment of the Truth of things in action, result and experience,—Ila grows perpetually in body and richness. To him all creatures of themselves incline, they submit to the Truth in him because it is one with the Truth in themselves. This is the ideal state of man that the soul-force should lead him, Brihaspati, Brahma, the spiritual light and counsellor, and he realising himself as Indra, the royal divinity of action, should govern himself and all his environment in the right of their common Truth, *brahmā rājani pūrva eti*.

Indra and Brihaspati are thus the two divine powers whose fullness in us and conscious possession of the Truth are the conditions of our perfection. Vama-deva calls on them to drink in this great sacrifice the wine of immortal Ananda, rejoicing in the intoxication of its ecstasies, pouring out abundantly the substance and riches of the spirit. Those outpourings of the superconscious beatitude must enter into the soul-force and there take being perfectly.

So let Brihaspati and Indra increase in us and that state of right mentality which together they build will be manifested. Soul-force and mental-force increasing together, destroy all. poverty and insufficiency. Together they bring man to his crowning and his perfect kingdom.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10, pp 303-313)

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of March 1997)

Dear Mother,

I do not find it difficult to deal with X I believe that I can exert a good influence upon her and bring her back to You Arrange that we may come in contact with each other under the pretext of work or anything You like I know that if I go, I am surrounded with Your love and protection I dare to do so because You have kept me in the protection of Your love

It is true that the Divine Protection is always around us, but it works completely only when we are faced by dangers which were *unavoidable*; that is to say, when doing some work for the Divine if dangers suddenly rise on the way then the protection works at its best But to take up some work that is, after all, not at all indispensable and not even surely useful and which is *extremely dangerous*, counting on the divine protection to save us from all possible consequences, this is a movement which is like a challenge to the Divine, and the Divine will never agree to it

I will explain myself—if it were indispensable that you should learn her work (which is, in fact, not only not indispensable but absurdly useless) and if X was the only person who could teach you (which is not the case, because Y knows almost as well as she does) then we could overlook the very real dangers that await you by meeting X regularly, and this meeting could perhaps, with the Divine's help and protection, have some good results for X.

But to pretend to learn the work only with the purpose of acting on X's character, is putting a worm of insincerity in the very seed of the action and can only have disastrous results

With love and blessings

10 June 1934

Dear Mother,

The work at the Dining Room is being done and it will always be done, the cupboards, floor and cloths there are cleaner than at any other place But something else must be done now: we must rise above falsehood and our false nature

Yes, this is the important thing Once falsehood is conquered, all these difficulties will go

22 June 1934

Mother,

Today I was threatened with clouds, dark clouds, but now all that has passed

away quietly Mother, forgetfulness of Your Loving Presence, even for a few minutes, brought such a death-like condition—it was quite unbearable I felt so relieved when it passed away.

I do not understand how clouds can come to you now and am quite sure that they cannot remain at all You must have caught it from somebody. Be careful to always keep the living Presence and Protection around you when you speak to people

With all love always.

26 June 1934

Mother,

I worked with Z or rather I replaced him for a few minutes I felt so happy to see him. You have joined us as friends for Your work and taken us to such a state of conscious understanding, knowledge and love that misunderstanding, disharmony, intolerance and anger have no place.

What you say is quite true. There is a deep and true Consciousness in which all can meet in love and harmony

28 June 1934

My dear and beloved Mother,

Today I was very badly disturbed—the disturbance of all those ladies was rushing upon me. I refused to listen to anything; I said to myself: ‘The Divine is the Truth, the same Divine element is in all See that, live that Harmony, love, peace and happiness is the life of the Ashram ’

I am happy to see that you have kept the right attitude and remained unshaken by these superficial and silly storms

Always with you in the love and the protection.

6 July 1934

Mother,

The serving room has become a place to read the newspapers. Can it be allowed? Had there been the works of Sri Aurobindo or Your ‘Prayers’, it would be all right. But novels, monthlies and dailies—how can they be read there?

I suppose it is difficult to interfere in this matter If the readers don't feel we cannot impose it upon them.

7 July 1934

Dear Mother,

It has always seemed to me that I do not know the meaning of Bhakti. But like a river, my entire being flows and flows towards You. This is all that I know, Mother, and I wish that it may flow more and more, rise in floods, break all limits and disappear once and for all into Your Love

This is bhakti and nothing else.

10 July 1934

(To be continued)

UNEQUAL AND EQUAL

UNEQUAL and equal
 unequal in time
 equal in eternity
 unequal in space
 equal in infinity
 All things I am
 none I am
 So many bodies I have
 and none is mine
 How confusing to be
 here and beyond
 inside and outside
 unequal and equal

Rose
 is not simply
 the name of a flower.
 It is a verb,
 a way of being

Medhananda
 is not a name—
 it is a verb
 an adjective, an adverb
 and a proverb

MEDHANANDA

A BORN POET AND A GENIUS

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Bengali people say that they like my English verses better than my Bengali ones, for they find there something new

ISN'T that because "people" are less accustomed to English poetry than to Bengali? You have written two good poems in English, and certainly it is early to have done that But the circumstances are exceptional

This brings me to Nishikanta's poem. I wonder how, with such poor knowledge of English, he can write such beautiful poems with striking images and expressions

Images and expressions come to him in English because they are there pressing behind, but his imperfect knowledge prevents their getting the right form and arrangement

Is it something like a wide opening into these planes?

Yes, of course It is the same thing. One opens to or into a plane of creative expression Everything is there; it is only the transcription that has to be *réussi*

Comparing Nishikanta with Dilip, I find that though Dilip writes very well, his expressions do not fuse with the thoughts and feelings They are something like bright gems standing out strikingly from the rest of the flowers in a garland.

Do you mean the expression as a whole is not so beautiful as the thought and feeling? I don't quite catch the metaphor of the gems and the flowers. Please clarify Is it particular expressions you refer to or the expression as a whole?

It strikes me as if he has not yet found that alchemy by which a miraculous harmony can be created out of whatever one touches, while Nishikanta has and knows

Well, I suppose Housman's theory comes in there D's poetry is more mental. N's comes straight from the vital vision and knocks you in the pit of the stomach.

He does not repeat his images so much as D—and they are exceedingly striking and forceful. They are of one type, but that I suppose is the case with most poets.

From all this I conclude that a born poet and genius combined, is something quite different from one made by yoga And there will be always a difference between the two

Can't say I understand. Nishikanta himself had done nothing worth doing in poetry when he came here—all the signs were that he would be at the best only a Tagorean poetling like so many others. He got a touch here which brought out in him some powerful force of vital vision and word that certainly had not shown any signs of existing before. It may have been there latent, but so was the poet in D. What then exactly is meant by a combination of born poet and genius? A born poet is usually a genius, poetry with any power or beauty in it implies genius.

You wrote to Harin that richness of image comes from an openness to occult planes, which Harin and Nishikanta have. Dilip does not have it yet, it seems to me.

Richness of image is not the whole of poetry. There are many "born poets" who avoid too much richness of image. There are certain fields of consciousness which express themselves naturally through image most—there are others that do it more through idea and feeling.

What do you think of my criticism—right or wrong?

It will have to be more clear, precise and specific before I can assess its value.

What about Nishikanta's big poem? No remark?

Read it. Very good—no remark needed.

And what about his notebook, then? Have you made it a point of reading one poem every day as a mantra?'

Very little chance of his getting it back before the February non-correspondence vacation.

*Another poem by Nishikanta: The Cat and the Rats.**

Very strong and original.

NIRODBARAN

(Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, pp 489-492)

* See overleaf

THE CAT AND THE RATS

Ash-dull and grey
 Is the life of the rats of the earth,
 Free air and light they cannot breathe,
 Blind is their way
 The rats of the earth!
 They thrust in the ground their red blood-oozing teeth
 Mad the shadows work writhing a shabby tail
 Storing clay-crumbs with crooked miser nail,
 Rat-lives of the earth,
 In darkness they play
 Imprisoning Time in their self-seeking's bars
 In the dungeons beneath

A sleepless goldfire
 Are the eyes of the cat crystal-white
 She guards the dark holes
 through Time's long nights and days
 A sun-silver dire
 The cat crystal-white
 Bares her flame-teeth with the blue lightning rays,
 If from the holes of the everlasting night
 A single soul aspiring peeps out for the light,
 The cat crystal-white
 Like a burning desire
 Sets her blazing nails in its breast and breaks the bars
 From the life of dark ways

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

My heart, as always, goes out to Sh in her movement from one distressing condition to another. Being literary I am reminded of Dryden's lines:

In liquid burnings or in dry to dwell
Is all the sad variety of hell.

But Sh differs in one basic respect from the denizens of Dryden's underworld. She has unflinching courage and what is more profound is the sense she has that in all experience the presence of the Divine Mother is at work and that through everything She is leading one to Herself. I think Sh echoes in her life the truth I have tried to express in some stanzas of my *Triumph is All*:

For ever in my heart I hear
A time-beat of eternal bliss.
White Omnipresence, where is fear?
The mouth of hell can be Thy kiss.

The whole world is my resting-place
Thy beauty is my motherland.
Sweet enemies are wounds of age—
My body breaks but by Thy hand.

The essence of the feeling behind these stanzas is also behind your poem, "The Kiss that never sates." It seems to catch up the inmost being of yours and sums up all that you have realised of the Mother's Yoga. It goes home to me very much because the predominant movement in me these last few months—as hinted several times in my letters to you—is towards the fulfilment of

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme Delight

and of

I would see only thy marvellous face,
Feel only thy kiss.

The suprasensuous to be experienced in the very body but without any impoverishment—rather with a new richness which is yet a perfect purity, a total rapturous dedication of every limb, as it were, to the Divine by an initiative of that limb itself: this is the urge at present.

As for my health about which you have inquired, I have been a home-keeping guy for the last four days, with a badly wrenched right ankle which is now on the way to getting more right than it is

At the end of your letter you want me to tell you whether you have reached in your inner life "the point (and beyond) of no-return" My answer is "Yes" (8 9 1984)

*

Your poem *The Kiss That Never Sates* is going to appear in the next February issue, and your piece on Sadhana, which was kept with my papers for future *Mother Indias* will make its debut in the number now under preparation

Use of debut sends my mind to the two French girls attending on Sh. I am not surprised that about one of them you say "Only 22 and amazingly calm and with a joyous disposition." Such a disposition is natural to the typically French temperament: the French life-force is in touch with the universal Delight that has made the worlds, not quite in a spiritual way but still with a subtle radiance catching something of this Delight in a direct form through a fine exuberance that overflows the limits set up by the imperfections of earth and the shortcomings of the "all-too-human" The characteristic French *joie de vivre* is not a delusive sense that "it's roses, roses all the way" and that there are no thorns pricking one when one goes in for the roses. It is the sense that the thorns too are part of the fascinating pattern of earthly existence and, if one bleeds by them, the pain is offset by the discovery that even the blood is rose-red. Some sort of masked mysticism is here. And when, along with the joyousness, there is a calm that amazes one, the mystic secret breathes out through the mask, for it is the soul's serenity that allows one to recognise a strange caress in every wounding contact

Sh must be super-French, for all that I have written above applies to her in the highest degree. The all-transmuting soul is openly at work in her and because of it she has been able to sustain all the distress the body has been going through. No wonder the other French girl who is a nurse and massages Sh feels energised herself. The soul's immortal strength passes into her from the massaged body whose very frailty helps this strength to come through with the least hindrance (31 12 1984)

*

Sri Aurobindo's poem *The Fear of Death**, in which he speaks of the changing of our robes, is well-worded and well-rhythmed but it has never really appealed to me except for the felicitous phrase in answer to the question why one fears death:

Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?

As a whole the poem has always struck me as a bit of the Master's juvenilia. The

* See at the end of this article

thought seems to be on the over-romantic side, a kind of happy make-believe. Your desire to dress in new clothes together with those you love and thus stand undivided “in wedding garments at the Eternal’s gate” reminds me of the prayer I used to make every night when I was in my early teens. Fervently I used to appeal to God to let the ceiling of our bedroom fall down during the night so that papa, mamma, brother and sister might all be totally crushed together with myself and all of us be spared the agony of separation in death.

I am sorry to get a rather negative report of Sh’s condition. I say “negative” in ordinary parlance, but what may seem to be a falling apart on one plane may mean a building up on another. Commonly one makes a sudden transition. In the falling-apart experience one can become aware of a concrete transference of the being elsewhere, a slipping into a new world through the gaps, as it were, made by the dispersion of the physical parts, so that one exists on two levels simultaneously. The faint feeling as of an end here is matched by a faint feeling as of a beginning there. In this way one is more confident of one’s existence beyond the body and can better carry over whatever is of value in one’s present life, in addition to the psychic being’s quintessence of the life-experience. Of course it is not a pleasant process, but if there is a hero in one all the trying moments can yield a glow of satisfaction as of a labour well done. (12 1985)

*

The opening of your letter reminds me of George the Third’s remark to Gibbon when that historian presented him with a new volume of his great *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: “What, Mr. Gibbon, another fat volume? Always scribble, scribble, scribble, eh?” My reaction to your scribbling is much more appreciative than the English King’s of Gibbon’s masterpiece. For, it touches me directly, your theme being the feared decline and fall of the Parsi poet and would-be yogi whom you have befriended these many years.

The fall which hurt the tail-bone is now more a matter of the past than the Rome of Caesars. The pain is as good as gone. The fingers of the left hand have been thoroughly examined by more than one doctor and are therefore well taken care of.

February 21 was a fine occasion. I found that a special force was acting both from above the head and behind the heart. A wider and deeper opening was felt—and still goes on.

I am sorry that Sh is having, now and again, a worse time than before. But her spirit is irrepressible. With such a spirit she will reap the full benefit of whatever suffering she has to go through. Most people lose much of the secret touch of the Divine in the hurts of life because they are lost in moans and groans. A never-failing smile is like a ray subtly penetrating the depths of existence and awaking into our surface life the sense of the benediction hidden even in the worst vicissitudes of man’s world. It is a sign of the soul’s unquestioning gratitude to its supernal Source and the response it draws from that Source is not only the grace of God’s love but also a

revelation of the transforming truth that is at work through every seeming twist of time's many-motioned run from eternity to eternity. (24 2 1985)

K D SETHNA
(AMAL KIRAN)

THE FEAR OF DEATH

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death
Is busy with each intake of our breath
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face
All rosy with the light of jocund grace!
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light
Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull
And ghastly now that was so beautiful?
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?
Death is but changing of our robes to wait
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p 54)

A LETTER OF THE MOTHER TO KISHORE GANDHI

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry 12-1-46

My dear child,

In answer to your letter of the 13th instant I shall quote some sentences quoted from the "Words of the Mother". I propose them to your meditation with the hope that they will bring relief to your present condition.

"Without the Divine life is a painful illusion, with the Divine all is bliss".

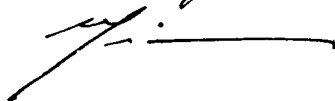
"Turn towards the Divine, all your sufferings will disappear."

"It is in a sincere consecration to the Divine that we can find relief from our too human sufferings."

"To love truly the Divine we must rise above attachments".

"Let this be our one need in life, to realise the Divine."

With my love and blessings



DOWN MEMORY LANE

“A smile acts upon difficulties as the sun upon clouds—it disperses them”¹

“If you can always smile at life, life also will always smile at you”²

“KISHOR-BHAI spoke so softly,” recalls one of his students, “that even the first row in his class could not hear him clearly” As it was a big batch of forty-five students, his first batch way back in 1958, a sound system had to be installed so that the whole class could hear him Lately as the classes became smaller, the sound system was not needed, but in the last four decades not much change had taken place in his voice In fact, today the name Kishor-bhai has become synonymous with a person who speaks very softly and who never smiles

Kishor-bhai not only spoke very softly but hardly ever smiled and this made it very difficult in the beginning for the students to interact with him But as the students became familiar with him things changed At this point we may recall an incident which was recounted by one of his students Once, just as he was coming up to the classroom, one of the students fancied to play a musical toy-gadget She wound the toy and placed it on the amplifier cupboard in front of the mike Just as he entered the classroom, the music was played The students found to their disappointment that Kishor-bhai was not only very serious but went and sat at his desk with an irritated look Seeing the grim expression on his face, the students did not dare to venture further in their mischievous experiment Without making any comment Kishor-bhai started his class As months passed by, and the session was coming to a close, the students had the brilliant idea of playing the musical toy once again As he was on his way to the classroom, the music was played on the sound system, loud and clear. It was only when he entered that he realised it was the same music that was played a few months earlier, he also understood its significance The students watched anxiously his reaction. To their utter surprise they found a smile blossom on his face!

It was a great day for the students because this incident proved that they had succeeded, though unknowingly, in building up a closer relationship with Kishor-bhai When the music was over, the students presented him bouquets of flowers At the end, a young girl presented him a small bunch of “Detailed Surrender”, flowers which so moved him that he spontaneously expressed, “Even this for me! All this for me!” This spontaneous gesture of the students moved him very much Even after several years his words still echo in their memories when he said, “Well! This was a very good experience I had with you”

This was Kishor-bhai!

In later years the students would discuss amongst themselves how many times did Kishor-bhai smile in the class In fact, it had become a matter of great privilege to have

seen Kishor-bhai smile. In course of time, Kishor-bhai learnt to smile more frequently in his classes

Therefore we see how Kishor-bhai's smile till the last day had always been a source of great mystery for those who tried to understand his personality. We had always tried to judge and understand his character through his smile, but we had seldom tried to unveil what lay behind his smile. Here is an interesting unpublished poem, written by Norman Dowsett on 10 July 1954, on Kishor-bhai's smile.

KISHOR'S SMILE

Some thoughts are so expressed
 That action seems
 Something only guessed—
 'Such stuff as dreams
 Are made of'—yet today
 'Twas action pure .
 You smiled in such a way
 That I felt sure
 Her Smile rose from your heart
 And by Her Grace
 In that so rare a part
 You won the race

ARVIND AKKI

JAGANNATHA VEDALANKARA

JAGANNATH-JI was born on 15 September 1913 in Multan, now in Pakistan. A brilliant student and a gold medallist, he graduated as Vedalankara from Gurukul Kangri, Harwar, U.P., in 1937. After graduation he taught the Vedas and Chemistry in the same institution for some years, he was also the Hostel Superintendent.

Although born in a Vaishya family, he was awarded the title 'Sharma' according to the custom of Gurukul for his *sattwic* temperament.

When the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press was started in 1945, the Mother asked Acharya Abhayadev of the Sri Aurobindo Niketan (now the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch) to arrange for a Sanskrit scholar. Thus Jagannath-ji came to Pondicherry in 1945.

He stayed here and worked in the Ashram Press for 25 years, proof-reading as well as translating Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings into Sanskrit and Hindi. He also took Sanskrit classes in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.

In 1970 he became the head of the Department of Sanskrit at the Centre of Education. The purpose was to give a concrete shape to the Mother's message on Sanskrit, given on 11 November 1967.*

Nolini Kanta Gupta once remarked: "I consider Jagannath's knowledge and understanding of Sri Aurobindo's writings, as well as Indian Philosophy, the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Sanskrit language as being unsurpassed in the Ashram. I doubt whether there are many like him in India."

His works include the following commentaries and compilations from the Vedas:

Jyotiṣām Jyotiḥ,
Bhargo Devasya Dhīmahī,
Kuntāpasūktam

He also authored the following translations

Agnimantramālā (a part of *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Sri Aurobindo),
Vedarahasyam (portions from *The Secret of the Veda*, Sri Aurobindo),
Cintanāśca Cidurmesāḥ (*Thoughts and Glimpses*, Sri Aurobindo),
Mahābhagavatī Śrīmātā (*The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo),
Dhyānaprārthanāpīyūṣam (some *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother)

* So I would like to have a simple Sanskrit taught here, as simple as possible, but not "simplified"—simple by going back to its origin—all these sounds, the sounds that are the roots of the words which were formed afterwards. I don't know whether you have anyone here who could do that. In fact, I don't know whether there is anyone in India who could do it. Sri Aurobindo knew. But someone who knows Sanskrit can. I don't know.

we would need someone who knows it rather well. Once I spoke to Jagannath. He told me that he was preparing a simplified grammar—I don't know what he has done—for a language that could be universal throughout the country. I don't know. Perhaps, after all, Jagannath is the best. (On Education, CWM, Vol 12, pp 417-18)

which were translated by Sri Aurobindo into English),
Kathāmañjarī (*Tales of All Times*, the Mother),
Satkathāḥ (Stories from different sources retold in simple Sanskrit).

He was the chief editor of *Lokasamskritam*

He passed away on 14 January 1997, at 11.25 a.m., in the Ashram Nursing Home.

NARENDRA

VISIONS

- The Divine – What child is this,
 Making and breaking his toys,
 In an endless aeonic game,
 Playing out some mystery,
 Silent, alone?
- Birth – Waking from a slumber deep
 The adventurous spirit
 Gathers himself
 And sets forth once more,
 On his journey
 Into the green world below.
- Life – Scattered waterdrops
 In a vast green field
 Shine like pearls in the golden dawn—
 Then quietly disappear
 Into the unknown.
- Death – Beautiful and terrible
 The leopard stalks;
 Shadowlike it follows life;
 Suddenly it leaps—
 Then drags its prey into the dark.

JYOTSNA MOHANTY

THE WAGER OF AMBROSIA

I. INTRODUCTION

It is said that when the Sanskrit version of Jnaneshwar's *Amritanubhava* was shown to Raman Maharshi he danced with joy. He would have gone into deep ecstasy had he read in Marathi the Yogi-Poet's work on the Gita, commonly known as *Jnaneshwari*. The composition is not exactly a commentary, but it takes the Gita only as a precious occasion to create poetic magnificence in yet another medium. Profound spiritual philosophy and spiritual experiences are described in the language of a mystic and not that of a metaphysician. Seven hundred *shlokas* of the scripture have been rendered into nine-thousand *owis* in a mood as if a whole aesthetic world were spread out for the spirit's free and wide-ranging enjoyment. In it the luminous density and dignity of Sanskrit turns into lyrical felicity of a new Prakritic dialect which is also revealingly true to the warmth and meaning of the original's substance. With it arrives the dawn of a new literature.

An *owi* is a three-and-half line verse-unit with the first three lines rhyming with one another and the last half making a brief completing statement. There are generally eight to ten syllables in each line and the whole presents a poetic argument in a swift and terse but vivid fashion. The terse and the swift in these verses actually mean composed definiteness and subtle suggestive many-sidedness of sense in which poetry is neither crammed nor allowed to disperse in a facile uncontrolled manner. Though pretty ornate, this poetry is highly reflective and throughout there is a spiritual atmosphere. In its calm arrive mysterious sounds whose source is hidden in the depth of silence that upholds everything. Though not quite mantric, the Word unmistakably carries in its gleaming contents what Sri Aurobindo calls the overhead rhythm. Its beauty and charm are persuasive and the poet delights in piling simile upon simile to make his point. It is not infrequent to see a dozen illustrations given to elucidate a single proposition. These illustrations abound in glimpses of nature, in truths and facts of life, in shades of human psychology as much as they touch upon aspects of Yogic disciplines. While we may get an impression that Jnaneshwar has a leaning in thought somewhat towards the Shankarite Advaita, it cannot be said that he considered the world to be illusory. The unborn and yet taking birth and the actionless and yet active in his dynamism—such is the divinity of the Supreme in this world and it is in it that we are enjoined to live. It indeed is the true and great liberation, *param mukti*, *mukti* from the littleness, from this "transient and sorrowful" existence.

The composition of *Jnaneshwari* is in the manner of a discourse in which the speaker is explaining the Gita to a mixed audience; in the group there are also well-qualified and competent listeners, though perhaps fewer in number. But the exhortation transcends the immediate context and goes beyond the local-temporal to gather the infinite. The method of discourse gives an easy happy fluency to the presentation, and the sustained audience is indicative of its success. This can happen only when the

narrator is clear in mind about the ideas and thoughts he is going to expound. Nowhere is there any hurry, nowhere does the inspiration sag to rob poetry of its charm. There is a joyous awareness of truth and beauty entering into another enterprise of aesthetic experience. The essence of delight, *rasa*, is everywhere. In fact it is that which weathered the seven centuries with their stormy vicissitudes. The thirty-thousand horsemen of Malik Kaffoor, Alauddin Khilji's rapacious commander, had not yet descended on the country in the Deccan and there was still the wise and noble king Ramadevaraya reigning from Devagiri to lend wisdom and nobility to life. There was peace and plenty in the land. This prosperity and peace also encouraged artistic and literary activities with the king himself as their high patron. Jnaneshwar belongs to this period. It is to such a class of the élite that he is reciting the Gita recreated in his Marathi. Eloquence and elegance of the poem bespeak well of it. Prior to this there was hardly anything of value in Marathi and whatever little was there was essentially Sanskritic and metaphysical. But *Jnaneshwari*, the magnum opus of the Yogi-Poet, gave birth to a new language, offering to the creative spirit a new world of delight. In it, to use a phrase from the magnum opus itself, the ineffable and the effable, Para and Vaikhari, the supreme and the spoken tongues join together, in it the secular and the esoteric lose all essential distinction and there is only one single urge. Indeed, while the Yogi-Poet prepared a lustrous body for the language, he also gave to it, more importantly, a gleaming soul even if more thoughtful and meditative than exuberant and emotional. In an obvious reference to Jnaneshwar, Sri Aurobindo speaks of him as the "first Marathi poet at once a devotee, a Yogin and a thinker." All the three elements, with a stronger intellectual *élan*, are characteristically present in *Jnaneshwari*.

Jnaneshwar completed his work in 1290, at the age of fifteen. It was in the temple of Mhālsā, in Newāsē, on the southern bank of the Pravara, that he discoursed on the Gita for about three years. The simple folk of the village would gather there regularly and drink of the nectarine poetry as fresh as the water of the River. The rapt crowd consisted of young men and old men, women and children, and the expounder, while unravelling the mysteries of the scripture, had to take them along with him. But, then, in the audience were also learned people and exceptional people, great souls, who remained spellbound as the honeyed words flowed from the lips of the young speaker. The water of the river Pravara is famous for its sweetness and so too flowed this holy sanctity in a broad crystalline stream, about to join the sacred Godāvari. It was for the first time that people were hearing such words in their language, Marathi. Through it directly the voice of the Lord reached the devotee-heart and it felt blessed. They did not know Sanskrit and until then they were deprived of this blessedness, but with *Jnaneshwari* a whole new world of devotional life opened out for them. The first Marathi poet combined in himself the lyrical mysticism of Valmiki and the spiritual classicism of Vyasa to build the foundation of a larger collective social order. The method of the poet is reiterative, emphasising each idea or concept with the help of several examples. It does amount to a kind of poetic fervour, but it is meant for the listeners to understand what is being presented. Explanatory-exhortative is the technique which makes sure

that the author is sure of what he is speaking about. The commentary therefore, instead of becoming a *darshana* or metaphysical tract on abstruse systems, acquires the status and dignity of a literary creation which is revelatory in its knowledge and substance. In fact, the author's title of the book is *Bhāvārtha Deepīka*, 'The Purported Sense Illuminator', which offers fair freedom to elaborate upon the meaning of the original. Thus the poetic work also becomes a spiritual guide-book. Its melliflence is haunting and there is the sublimity of Himalayan altitudes, yet the narrator requests the indulgence of the audience. Not that there is diffidence, but he is conscious that what he is trying is something quite unusual which will be considered scandalous by the traditionalists and the purists. Social humiliation the family—his parents and with him his two brothers and one sister—had to suffer; maybe it is a thing of the past now, but such were the cruel realities of the time and Jnaneshwar had to face them as aspects of the lifeless spirit. However, we should also be fair to the learned Brahmmins who diligently preserved the Shastric textual body for the benefit of the common kind. The moment they recognised that Jnaneshwar was not an ordinary person but possessed supernatural Yogic powers, they admitted that the documented scriptural stipulations could not be applied to such highly evolved beings. Incidentally Sachidananda, who was brought back to life by Jnaneshwar and who became later his devotee and disciple, copied the verses as the composition proceeded. The poet acknowledges this debt in the epilogue of the poem. Very little is known about the author and his works—as far as historical details are concerned—and much has assumed the form of astounding mediaeval myths.

The version of *Jnaneshwari* which we have at present was edited by Sant Eknath, the sixteenth-century householder poet and devotee. In the course of the intervening three-hundred years *Jnaneshwari* had got greatly corrupted with misinterpretations and interpolations and the text had to be salvaged. There is a belief that Jnaneshwar himself, in his subtle form, told Eknath to undertake the work of preparing an authentic text of the original. It is the authority of this critical edition that we accept for all our religious-philosophical and literary references. However, we have no idea of the method the bhakta adopted in carrying out this research. Yet the standard text is fairly dependable and, more importantly, the spiritual contents are genuine. We can breathe in it and grow in it, as would a flame in the tapas-force of a Yogi. That is a great gift indeed.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

THE UNLIT LAMP

THE small kerosene lamp waited in one corner—forgotten. The familiar hand had not come to light it as it did every morning. At a distance, a gas lamp burnt and the devotees thronged to it to light their incense sticks. The kerosene lamp's era was over.

It felt sad and tried in vain to console itself. Hasn't it served more than forty-five years, passed long ago the retirement age? Why not make way for a new generation? "The old order changeth yielding place to new"

But here in the Ashram, there is no retirement. One goes on serving and serving, and gets the joy out of service, which in its turn gives more energy to serve! Nothing can be more absurd than the thought of retiring from Her Service.

During these past forty years and more, hasn't it seen the hand of a child lighting the incense stick grow vivacious and youthful as time passed, and later become strong and manly? The already strong hands became matured with years and it could feel the ardent aspiration rising up, as the smoke from the incense sticks. Then as time flowed the hand became unsteady, shaky—the skin no more shining but crumpled and creased. But that was only a physical infirmity. Within, it could feel the spark, as tiny as the lighted incense-stick-head, grow and become "like a flame that burnt in Silence, like a perfume that rises straight upward without wavering"—as if its own image being reflected—steady in faith, devotion and service. Then, one day, the all-familiar hand ceased to come forever. In time it was replaced by other trembling hands.

Many a time it has heard the tinkling of gold bangles, and recognised the shy face of a new bride, and has witnessed the bride and the bridegroom with lighted incense sticks in their folded hands praying to the Mother. It felt their love for each other blend in one single love for the Mother and the fragrance carrying it up, up to the Mother's Room.

The new gas lamp has a bright red round-bellied cylinder. It is clean but not as sleek as the old kerosene lamp. Well, the old lamp is sticky and black, but does not the lotus bloom in filthy, dirty mud?

The gas lamp is too frivolous—the kerosene lamp thought. It flickers incessantly. Not sturdy like my flame that rises straight, with one-pointed aim to serve. The old lamp steadied the wavering hands. But the new one makes them vacillate with it. That's not the way to serve. If it is not steady itself, in its service, how could it make others steady?

A few days later it was shifted to one corner of the room. The sadness was replaced by thoughtful words: "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Then a day dawned when it was brought out and lighted. The new lamp stood nearby unlit—the gas being exhausted. The old kerosene lamp brightened up. The devotees surrounded it as before. The Darshan Day was approaching. It met again all those familiar hands, and more new hands, and then in the evening the utter joy in a child's voice rent the air: "Ma, look! the kerosene lamp is back. Everything here is as it was last year, when we had come, except for the new lamp. The old one is now back. I

recognise everything. I am so happy ”

The lamp glowed with joy. It could feel the spark in the child’s heart. Unconsciously the spark would grow without the child knowing it. Maybe years later one day, when he would be resting “in vacant or in pensive mood”, the hidden flame would shine and a hundred lighted incense-stick-heads dance before his inner eye, like fireflies in a fairyland, and for a moment awaken him to his childhood days. That fleeting remembrance perhaps would be instrumental for a decisive turn from his busy hectic life in a new direction—the enlightened path.

A look, a turn decides our ill-poised fate.

Next day again it was back to one corner of the room. An inner reflection made it wise enough not to be depressed or gloomy—gloom and depression being the devil’s instruments with sadness as the most handy tool. Slowly the spark of wisdom grew into an inner flame. It dissipated the darkness of depression and gloom. Its inner spirit was the inexhaustible fuel. Its benevolence was the sustaining oxygen. Its all-compounding aspiration was its undying companion. The “Alone” was its lonely strength—

In moments when the inner lamps are lit
 And the life’s cherished guests are left outside,
 Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.¹

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

1 *Savitri*, Cent Ed, Vol 28, p 47

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of February 1997)

How did Sri Aurobindo discover the “Secret of the Veda”?

SRI Aurobindo took up the Veda in the original with a double interest: partly to weigh its value as prehistory, but chiefly to get at the heart of its meaning. And what were the results of this close and sustained inquiry? Sri Aurobindo wrote: “...it seems to me advisable to explain the genesis of the theory in my own mind so that the reader may the better understand the line I have taken or, if he chooses, check my prepossessions or personal preferences which may have influenced or limited the right application of reasoning to this difficult problem. Like the majority of educated Indians I had passively accepted without examination, before myself reading the Veda, the conclusions of European Scholarship both as to the religious and as to the historical and ethical sense of the ancient hymns. In consequence, following again the ordinary line taken by modernised Hindu opinion, I regarded the Upanishads as the most ancient source of Indian thought and religion, the true Veda, the first Book of Knowledge...”¹

“My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga, which, without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves, and among them there came the figures of three female energies, Ila, Saraswati, Sarama, representing severally three out of the four faculties of the intuitive reason,—revelation, inspiration and intuition. Two of these names were not well known to me as names of Vedic goddesses, but were connected rather with the current Hindu religion or with old Puranic legend, Saraswati, goddess of learning and Ila, mother of the Lunar dynasty. But Sarama was familiar enough. I was unable, however, to establish any connection between the figure that rose in my mind and the Vedic hound of heaven, who was associated in my memory with Argive Helen and represented only an image of the physical Dawn entering in its pursuit of the vanished herds of Light into the cave of the Powers of darkness. When once the clue is found, the clue of the physical Light imaging the subjective, it is easy to see that the hound of heaven may be the intuition entering into the dark caverns of the subconscious mind to prepare the delivery and outflashing of the bright illuminations of knowledge which have there been imprisoned.”²

“ .I took up the Veda in the original, though without any intention of a close or serious study. It did not take long to see that the Vedic indication of a racial division between Aryans and Dasyus and the identification of the latter with the indigenous Indians were of a far flimsier character than I had supposed. But far more interesting to me was the discovery of a considerable body of profound psychological thought and experience lying neglected in these ancient hymns.”³

“I was helped in arriving at this result by my fortunate ignorance of the commentary of Sayana. For I was left free to attribute their natural psychological significance to many ordinary and current words of the Veda, such as *dhī*, thought or understanding, *manas*, mind, *mati*, thought, feeling of mental state, *manīṣā*, intellect, *rtam*, truth; to give their exact shades of sense to *kavi*, seer, *manīsī*, thinker, *vipra vipaścit*, enlightened in mind, and a number of similar words and to hazard a psychological sense, justified by more extensive study, for words like *dakṣa* which for Sayana means strength and *śravas* which he renders as wealth, food or fame. The psychological theory of the Veda rests upon our right to concede their mutual significance to these vocables

“Sayana gives to the words *dhī*, *rtam*, etc., very variable significance. *Ṛtam*, which is almost the key-word of any psychological or spiritual interpretation, is rendered by him sometimes as ‘truth’, more often ‘sacrifice’, occasionally in the sense of water. The psychological interpretation gives it invariably the sense of Truth. *Dhī* is rendered by Sayana variously ‘thought’, ‘prayer’, ‘action’, ‘food’, etc. The psychological interpretation gives it consistently the sense of thought or understanding. And so with the other fixed terms of Veda. Moreover, Sayana’s tendency, is to obliterate all fine shades and distinctions between words and to give them their vaguest general significance.”⁴

Sri Aurobindo saw the link between the Veda and the Upanishad on the one hand, and on the other between the Vedic world of dynamic symbolism and his own inner world of aspiration and spiritual effort

In the long past, the Rishis had no doubt seized the whole sense of the Veda but this sense has survived, not as a coherent or integral whole, but either as a “congeries of forms” in the Brahmanas or as scattered illuminations in the Upanishads without any systematic correlation.

“The Brahmanas labour to fix and preserve the minutiae of the Vedic ceremony . . . The Rishis of the Upanishads... used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions, or else the Vedic Word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered the truths in new forms. What they found, they expressed in other terms more intelligible to the age in which they lived”⁵

Sri Aurobindo wrote in his book, *The Secret of the Veda*,

“As the Veda had passed from the sage to the priest, so now it began to pass from the hands of the priest into the hands of the scholar. And in their keeping it suffered the last mutilation of its sense and the last diminution of its true dignity and sanctity.”⁶

The commentators, the annotators, the grammarians, the rhetoricians join, as it were, to create a world of confusion. Far from getting an access to the sanctum we get lost in wandering mazes. That is why we have been deprived of getting the firsthand knowledge of the Vedas. The commentators may be at most helpers. But if we attach too much importance to their commentaries, it will inevitably turn them into an obstacle. First, it is of paramount importance to know the central idea of the Vedas, the viewpoint of the Rishis. The help of the commentations and the annotations may be

necessary later on when we go into details. Needless to say that if we get into the bitter controversies of commentators, we are sure to be badly confused

Sri Aurobindo lucidly describes his views about the pre-historic Indian scholars. According to him, it is untrue that the attempts “.. beginning from the pre-Christian centuries, have been altogether a record of loss. Rather it is to the scrupulous diligence and conservative tradition of the Pandits that we owe the preservation of Veda at all after its secret had been lost and the hymns themselves had ceased in practice to be a live Scripture. And even for the recovery of the lost secret the two millenniums of scholastic orthodoxy have left us some invaluable aids, a text determined scrupulously to its very accentuation, the important lexicon of Yaska and Sayana’s great commentary which in spite of its many and often startling imperfections remains still for the scholar an indispensable first step towards the formation of a sound Vedic learning”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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- 3 *Ibid* pp 36-37
- 4 *Ibid* , p 37
- 5 *Ibid* p 12
- 6 *Ibid* , p 14
- 7 *Ibid*

I GAVE TO HER AS OFFERING...

I GAVE to Her as offering
A body full of pain.
She kept it with Her for a while
And gave it back again.
Then when I looked at it I felt
That something in its substance dwelt
Which inly flowered and faintly smelt
As new earth after rain!

I gave to Her as offering
A soul that had grown mute
Dim-trampled day and month and year
Beneath Time's heavy foot;
Tending each little hole and crack,
She blessed my soul and gave it back.
And now upon my traveller's track
It soundeth like a flute.

I gave to Her as offering
A spirit sad and dry,—
Upon Her palm of peace She placed
Its cup and held it high.
She cherished it with love and care
And out of it wrought Beauty rare;—
And now it dwells wherever there
Is colour in the sky!

I gave to Her as offering
A being spent and old,
Which at red market-squares of pain
So often had been sold:
She took it gladly and recast
Its shadow-image of the past,
And now it has become at last
A deathless dream of gold

I gave to Her as offering
A heart that had grown dull
With many years of suffering
And years of deadly lull,

Since it had travelled league on league
 Of storms and sorrow and fatigue;—
 But now again through Her Intrigue,
 It is God's merry gull!

I gave to Her as offering
 A life of shattered hope
 Haunted by poison cups and threats,
 A neighbour to the rope.
 My life, whose progress seemed to bar
 At every step the Dream afar
 Accepting it She changed each star
 That hurt its horoscope!

And now you see I fear no more
 Menace of sin or strife,
 Nor all the million sufferings
 With which the world is rife,
 For I have nothing left of mine
 Since all things offered at Her Shrine,
 Come back divine from the Divine,
 Body and soul and life!

5-5 Afternoon
 30th January, 1934

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: This is exceedingly beautiful.

HEAVE THE HAMMER

THERE'S so much to shatter, strike hard, O my arm!
To break, to batter, heave thy hammer!
Innumerable layers of inert eroded ages
Shroud man's mind and heart and acts,
Pound there thy blows, pound and again pound

The earth may quake, the quarters quiver,
The hollow heavens may shake and shiver,
Let every single heart be burnt in fear,
The universe itself may rock and drown,
Sledge-hammer, O arm, the creation stun!

Crack all these aeons of crusted coatings!
Tear all the nether worlds!
Buried in the earth's cavern heart,
A colossal mass of dormant light,
By a dreadful snort expelled, let shine
In sunny splendour and cheerful reign

Rend and rupture all the old,
All the sundered, melt and mould,

Hit, beat, flatten and forge newest, choicest forms,
Keep striking, O arm, keep wielding the sledge,
With constant shocks the world reshape

6 June 1934

SUNDARAM

(Translated from the original in Gujarati, *Vasudha*, p 67, by Dhanavanti)

THE GIFT OF THE MUSES

LET us begin our song with the Heliconian Muses
who dwell in great and most holy Mount Helicon,
and dance with delicate feet round the dark spring
and the altar of the most powerful son of Cronos
It was they who once taught Hesiod how to sing beautifully,
as he was shepherding his lambs under most holy Helicon.
These words the goddesses first told me,
the Muses of Olympus, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus:

“You shepherds, who live in the fields, evil,
disgraceful creatures, mere bellies, we know
how to tell many lies, as though they were true,
but we know, when we wish, how to speak the truth ”

So spake the ready-voiced daughters of great Zeus,
and they cut a staff and gave it to me, a branch
of blooming laurel, a thing to marvel at And they
breathed into me a goodly voice that I should celebrate
the things to come and the things of the past, and
ordered me to sing of the race of the blessed gods
that live for ever always to celebrate them at the
beginning and at the end.

HESIOD

(From *The Penguin Book of Greek Verse*, edited by Constantine A. Trypanis)

A HOMELESS TRAVELLER

I AM alone
Gathering pebbles
On the sandy beach
Of the boundless sea

And I am lost
Amidst the wild winds
Of the limitless space

I fly
From bough to bough
Of Time.

I run
From dale to dale
Of desire.

I am tired.

The eastern sky is getting golden
The sun is about to rise

Here is waiting a homeless traveller
To have a sun-bath
On the other shore
Of the earth.

SURYAKANTI MOHANTY

THY WORD

FROM the crags of the sun descends the bird
With a diamond word
Breaking the din of time with its sweep
Sublime, unheard.

Like a flash of gnostic ray its leap
In the flood from the steep
Unreachable horizons of delight
Breaking earth's sleep

With quick voiceless passion of might—
The cascade of light
Revealing secrecies far unfound
From God's pure height.

Thy word becomes the hidden sound,
Echo unbound
From the sovereign infinite
Midday-crowned

12 10 1958

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries.)

IN GRATITUDE, WITH LOVE

MOTHER, oh Mother, what you've done
 for me
I'll always be grateful to you just
 to be

You've shaped me and moulded me and
 filled me with light.
I've learned from you, Mother, to do
 everything right

You are all that I want and I'll love
 you forever
We are linked by a cord that no one
 can sever

The wisdom and power and strength
 that you give
Are gifts from you, Mother, which help
 us to live

Your work and perfection are our
 ultimate goals,
But your love for us, Mother, will
 remain in our souls,

MARY (ANGEL) FINN

(Written for the Mother's Birthday)

THE INDIAN VISION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

CHATURVARNA AND NATION-BUILDING

IN our modern age, the development policies of a nation are based on mental dogmas like socialism, capitalism, etc. But the Indian approach to development is not based on fixed mental ideas, it is based on a comprehensive vision of Dharma, the inherent and natural Laws of Life and human nature. The Indian philosophy of development is founded not on the outer laws of economics or sociology or the ecology of physical Nature but on the inner laws of the psychology of human nature. And the focal point of the development strategy is not “socio-economic development” but “human-resource development”. The original principles of Chaturvarna can provide such a psychological and humanistic basis for national development. Sri Aurobindo explains the Indian vision of national development based on the principles of Chaturvarna:

“There is no national life perfect or sound without the *cāturvarṇya*. The life of the nation must contain within itself the life of the Brahmin,—spirituality, knowledge, learning, high and pure ethical aspiration and endeavour; the life of the Kshatriya,—manhood and strength, moral and physical, the love of battle, the thirst for glory, the sense of honour, chivalry, self-devotion, generosity, grandeur of soul, the life of the Vaishya,—trade, industry, thrift, prosperity, benevolence, philanthropy, the life of the Shudra,—honesty, simplicity, labour, religious and quiet service to the nation even in the humblest position and the most insignificant kind of work.”¹ “It is only when these four great departments of human activity are all in robust and flourishing condition that the nation is sound and great.”²

We must remember here that in the above passage Sri Aurobindo is explaining some of the basic principles of national development from a human development perspective using the Indian terminology and it has nothing to do with caste. Words like Brahmana, Kshatriya, etc. are used in the sense of the original Indian conception—that is, referring to the four types of human personalities—and not in the sense of birth and heredity.

The thinkers of ancient India conceived an ideal society as the one in which the Brahmana who stands for religion, science, scholarship and higher morality provides the thought-power, ideals and values to the society and forms its higher thinking sections and shapes its culture, the Kshatriya who stands for war, politics and administration provides the will-power, driving force, and the enforcing authority and forms its ruling, warrior, policing, administrative class; the Vaishya who stands for trades, professions and industries, provides the organising, co-ordinating and harmonising force and forms the economic, commercial, technical and professional class of the society, and the Shudra who stands for work and service forms the working-class.

This Indian ideal is revealed in the Purusha Sukta of the Veda in a striking image, which conceives human society as a living organic being with the four orders imaged as the organic parts of his body—the Brahmana as his Mouth, the Kshatriya as his Arms,

the Vaishya as his Thighs, and the Shudra as his Feet.

Let us look deeply and closely at the meaning and significance of this ancient Indian image of the human society. The Brahmana according to the Purusha-Sukta is the Mouth of the Purusha symbolising the Word of Knowledge, the Brahmana is the seer, prophet, sage and thinker who provides the creative vision, thought and ideals and values for the progressive evolution of society. The society will sink into darkness and inertia if there is not the constant influx of light into its fabric by the Brahmanas. But it is not enough for the society to be illumined with great ideas by the Brahmanas, the effectuating power, strength, and energy of the Kshatriya are needed to drive the idea into the social structure; so the Kshatriya is imaged as the arms of the Purusha symbolising dynamic energy. Then the Vaishya is conceived as the thighs of the Purusha. The thigh is the middle portion and the balancing limb of the human body and symbolises the harmonising force in Man and Nature. The natural temperament of the Vaishya is that of mutuality and harmony, his inherent capacity is a keen intuition into the rhythms of the universal vital force which expresses itself in society as a rhythmic movement of mutual interchange of physical and vital energies and utilities among human beings. Is this not the essential basis of the economic, social and commercial life of man? This is the reason why the Vaishya is considered as the right person to organise the economic and commercial life of the society. And, finally, the Shudra who is imaged as the feet of the Purusha—feet symbolising a firm anchorage and stability in the material foundation and visible mobility and progress. Brahmanas may provide the creative ideas, Kshatriyas may provide the driving energy and will to these ideas and the Vaishyas may provide the organising rhythm and harmony, but these ideas cannot take a visible material form in society without the Shudras' patient labour, dedicated service and minute skill in the details of execution. Can there be a more holistic, organic and humanistic vision of society?

Thus in this Indian vision of society the four orders of the society are viewed as the expression of the four fundamental types and powers of the human soul and nature in the collective life of Man, forming the four limbs of the social body of the Universal Man, Virat Purusha. They can also be viewed as four distinct and fundamental social energies or the four forces, modes or aspects of the indivisible energies of the human social organism. They are, in fact, four inseparable functions of all human life and endeavour. For our life itself is at once the inquiry after truth and knowledge of the Brahmana, the struggle for control and mastery over the self and the environment of the Kshatriya, the constant production and mutual adaptation and harmonisation with others and with life of the Vaishya, and the sacrifice and service of the Shudra.

This means that a lack of health in any one of these organs or energies or disharmony or conflict between them can adversely affect the whole of human society, sound health of each and a harmonious interaction among them is indispensable for smooth progress in society. A clear examination of the practical conditions of these social energies, the extent of harmony between them, and the nature of their interaction will give a fairly reliable measure of the social condition of a society or of humanity in

any particular phase or cycle of evolution. For the social and political thinker, analyst and researcher, the Indian scheme of Chaturvarna provides a useful conceptual basis for thinking, analysis and research; it helps to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various sectors of the society and the nature of their relation and suggests suitable remedial measures for the policy-makers.

One of the logical consequences of this Indian vision of development is that, if the human society is a living organic whole, then a "competitive strategy" based on the competitive self-interests, rights and privileges of individual and collective egos cannot lead to any lasting or sustainable harmony or progress. The right path for the further evolution of society must be based on a unitive and complementing strategy with an emphasis on the responsibility and contribution of each individual and collectivity to the common good of all.

The original intention of the Indian social order was to create an ideal condition for realising "equalised and harmonised distribution of functions, each part of the community existing for the good of all and not struggling for its own separate interests which will give humanity as a whole the necessary conditions in which it can turn its best energies to its higher development."³ This will minimise the wastage of the precious time and creative energy of human beings in strife or in the over-indulgence of physical and vital enjoyment and help in raising humanity beyond the "excessive stress on the economic adjustments which are the means, and teaching them to fix their eyes constantly and clearly on the moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection of mankind which is the end."⁴

We must note here that this Indian conception is not merely co-operative but organic. It is based on the "systemic" view that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and each part is nothing but the entire organic whole itself performing a unique function. For example, the Brahmana function or system of the society is not a "part" or "sub-system" of the "social system", but the whole of the organic social being doing the thinking function. This is so with every section of the society. In an organic system the parts of the whole not merely co-operate but work in a state of spontaneous, interdependent and complementing harmony with other parts (and the whole) and the total creative contribution of the whole, both in terms of quality and quantity, works out to more than the sum total of the contributions of each part. Interestingly some of the latest developments in the Western management thought are moving towards this ancient Indian vision. The new crop of business thinkers are becoming increasingly aware of the "mounting evidence that reliance solely on competition as a mode of relationship is destructive"⁵ and are searching for an alternative mode of relationship. The concept of "co-creation" is emerging as the new way of doing business. An article on this new concept in a latest book published by the World Business Academy says

"There is a fine line between co-operation and co-creation. Co-operation can generate some form of creativity. But it appears that in co-operation creativity is within rigid boundaries, while with co-creation the boundaries are open. As Don Yates pointed out, co-operation is forces operating in parallel; co-creation is forces fusing together

Another way of saying it is that co-creation is synergistic. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, $1+1=3$ co-creation combines the best of competition and co-operation with a balance between goal and process orientation. In some sense co-creation seems to be the necessary mode of relating in the emerging paradigm, just as competition seems to be the fundamental assumption of the old paradigm''⁶

Thus the Indian social philosophy believes neither in the competitive struggle of capitalism nor in the ‘‘class struggle’’ of Marxism as the right way to the progress and well-being of the society. A balanced, harmonious and mutually supportive or ‘‘co-creative’’ progress of all the four organs of the society—Culture shaped by the Brahmana, Polity led by the Kshatriya, Economy managed by the Vaishya and Labour-force constituted by the Shudra—is the Indian way to social development, well-being, harmony and progress.

(To be continued)

M S SRINIVASAN

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PHYSICS OR PHILOSOPHY?

WHAT IS the world that we see really like? Is it mental. is it material? This is a question, we know, philosophers are familiar with, and they have answered and are still answering, each in his own way, taking up one side or other of the antinomy. There is nothing new or uncommon in that. The extraordinary novelty comes in when we see today even scientists forced to tackle the problem, give an answer to it . .

Physical Science in the nineteenth century did indeed develop or presuppose a philosophy of its own; it had, that is to say, a definite outlook on the fundamental quality of things and the nature of the universe. The view was. materialistic and deterministic .

The scientific view of things thus discovered or affirmed certain universal and immutable facts—axiomatic truths—which were called constants of Nature. These were the very basic foundations upon which the whole edifice of scientific knowledge was erected. The chief among them were: (1) conservation of matter, (2) conservation of energy, (3) uniformity of nature and (4) the chain of causality and continuity. Above all, there was the fundamental implication of an independent—an absolute—time and space in which all things existed and moved and had their being.

The whole business of experimental science was just to find the absolutes of Nature, that is to say, facts and laws governing facts that do not depend for their existence upon anything but themselves . .

Now, the constants or absolutes, which were the bedrock of Modern Science, were gradually found to be rather shaky—very inconstant and relative.... We find not the exact measures of things, but only the probable measures. Indeed, not fixity and accuracy, but probability has become the central theme of modern physical calculation ...

In radioactive substances, for example, there is no ground or data from which one can determine which particle will go off or not, whether it will go off the next moment or wait for a million years. It is mere chance that seems to reign here. In radiation too, there is no formula, and no formula can be framed for determining the course of a photon in relation to a half-reflecting surface, whether it will pass through or be reflected. In this field of infinitesimals what we know is the total behaviour of an assemblage of particles, and the laws of nature are only laws of average computation. Statistics has ousted the more exact and rigid arithmetics. And statistics, we know, is a precarious science: the knowledge it gives is contingent, contingent upon the particular way of arranging and classifying the data. However, the certainty of classical mechanistic knowledge is gone, gone too the principle of uniformity of nature.

The second element brought into the indeterminacy picture is the restoration of “subject” to its honoured or even more than the honoured place it had in the Mediaeval Ages, and from which it was pulled down by young arrogant Science. A fundamental question is now raised in the very methodology of the scientific apparatus. For Science, needless to say, is first and foremost observation. Now it is observed that the very fact

of observation affects and changes the observed fact . . . The trouble is, as the popular Indian saying goes, the very amulet that is to exorcise the ghost is possessed by the ghost itself.

So the scientists of today are waking up to this disconcerting fact. And some have put the question very boldly and frankly: do not all laws of Nature contain this original sin of the observer's interference, indeed may not the laws be nothing else but that? Thus Science has landed into the very heart—the bog and quagmire, if you like—of abstruse metaphysics. Eddington says, there is no other go for Science today but to admit and declare that its scheme and pattern of things, as described by what is called laws of Nature, is only a mental construct of the Scientist. The “wonderful” discoveries are nothing but jugglery and legerdemain of the mind—what it puts out of itself unconsciously into the outside world, it recovers again and is astonished at the miracle. A scientific law is a pure deduction from the mind's own disposition. Eddington goes so far as to say that if a scientist is sufficiently introspective he can trace out from within his brain each and every law of Nature which he took so much pains to fish out from Nature by observation and experiment. Eddington gives an analogy to explain the nature of scientific law and scientific discovery. Suppose you have a fishing net of a particular size and with interstices of a particular dimension; you throw it into the sea and pull it out with fishes in it. Now you count and assort the fishes, and according to the data thus obtained, you declare that the entire sea consists of so many varieties of fish and such sizes. The only error is that you could not take into account the smaller fishes that escaped through the interstices and the bigger ones that did not at all fall into the net. Scientific statistics is something of this kind. Our mind is the net, and the pattern of Nature is determined by the mind's own pattern.

Eddington gives us absolutely no hope for any knowledge of an objective world apart from the objectification of mind's own constructs. This is a position which a scientist, *qua* scientist, finds it difficult to maintain. Remedies and loopholes have been suggested with what result we shall presently see.

Einstein's was, perhaps, the most radical and revolutionary solution ever proposed. Indeed, it meant the reversal of the whole scientific outlook, but something of the kind was an imperative need in order to save Science from inconsistencies that seemed to be inherent in it. The scientific outlook was vitiated, Einstein said, because we started from wrong premises; two assumptions mainly were responsible for the bankruptcy which befell latter-day Science. First, it was assumed that a push and pull—a force (a gravitational or, more generally, a causal force) existed and that acted upon isolated and independent particles strewn about; and secondly, they were strewn about in an independently existing time and an independently existing space. Thus a scientific law became a sheer mathematical formula; it was no longer an objective law that governed the behaviour of things, but merely a mental rule or mnemonics to string together as many diverse things as possible in order to be able to memorise them easily.

Again, the generalised law of relativity . . . that sought to replace the laws of gravitation did away also with the concepts of force and causality. It stated that things

moved not because they were pulled or pushed but because they followed the natural curve of space (they describe geodesics, i.e., move in the line of least distance). All this means to say that the pattern of the universe is absolutely geometrical and science in the end resolves itself into geometry: the laws of Nature are nothing but theorems or corollaries deduced and deducible from a few initial postulates. Once again, on this line of enquiry the universe is dissolved into abstract and psychological factors.

Apart from the standpoint of theoretical physics developed by Einstein, the more practical aspect as brought out in Wave Mechanics leads us into no less an abstract and theoretical domain. The Newtonian particle picture, it is true, has been maintained in the first phase of modern physics which specialised in what is called Quantum Mechanics. But waves or particles—although the questions as to their relative validity and verity still remains open—do not make much difference in the fundamental outlook. For in either view, the individual unit is beyond the ken of the scientist....

So it is frankly admitted that what Science gives is not a faithful description of actuality, not a representation of material existence, but certain conventions or convenient signs to put together, to make a mental picture of our sensations and experiences. That does not give any clue to what the objective reality may or may not be like. Scientific laws are mental rules imposed upon Nature. It may be asked why does Nature yield to such imposition? There must be then some sort of parallelism or commensurability between Nature and the observing Mind, between the pattern of Nature and the Mind's scheme or replica of it. If we successfully read into Nature things of the Mind, that means that there must be something very common between the two. Mind's readings are not mere figments, hanging in the air; for they are justified by their applicability, by their factual translation. This is arguing in a circle, a thorough-going mentalist like Eddington would say. What are facts? What is life? Anything more than what the senses and the mind have built up for us?

Jeans himself is on the horns of a dilemma. Being a scientist and not primarily a mathematician like Eddington, he cannot very well acquiesce in the liquidation of the material world, nor can he refute successfully the facts and arguments that Science itself has brought forward in favour of mentalism. He wishes to keep the question open for further light and surer grounds. In the meanwhile, however, he is reconciled to a modified form of mentalism ...

But Jeans's position is remarkable and very significant in one respect. When cornered in the process of argument, feeling that the world is inexorably dematerialised and mentalised, he suggests an issue which is natural to a philosopher, a mystic philosopher alone.

When we view ourselves in space and time, our consciousnesses are obviously the separate individuals of a particle-picture, but when we pass beyond space and time, they may perhaps form ingredients of a single continuous stream of life. As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life, the phenomena may be individuals carrying on separate existence in space and time, while in the deeper

reality beyond space and time we may all be members of one body. In brief, modern physics is not altogether antagonistic to an objective idealism like that of Hegel.²

À la bonne heure! That runs close to Upanishadic knowledge. It means that the world is objective—it is not the figment of an individual observer, but it is not material either, it is consciousness in vibration....

Jeans is not alone to have such a revolutionary and unorthodox view. He seems to take courage from Dirac also. Dirac too cannot admit an annihilation of the material world. His proposal to save and salvage it follows a parallel line. He says that the world presented or pictured by physical science may not be and is not the actual world, but it posits a substratum of reality to which it conforms, the pattern presented by subjective laws is so composed because of pressure, an impact from an analogous substratum. There is no chain of causal relation in the pattern itself, the relation of causality is between the substratum reality and the pattern that it bodies forth. Here again we find ourselves at the end of physical inquiry driving straight into tenuous spaces of spiritual metaphysics. We have one more example of how a modern physicist is metamorphosed into a mystic. What Dirac says is tantamount to the very well-known spiritual experience that the world as it appears to us is a vesture or symbol of an inner order of reality out of which it has been broadcast—*sa paryagāt*—and the true causes of things are not on the surface, the so-called antecedents, but behind in the subtler world called therefore the causal world, *kāraṇa jagat*.

Even Eddington is not so absurd or impossible as it may seem to some. He says, as we have seen, that all so-called laws of Nature can be discovered from within the mind itself, can be deduced logically from psychologically given premises: no empirical observation or objective experimentation is necessary to arrive at them; they are found *a priori* in the subject. Now, mystic experience always lays stress on extra-sensory knowledge: it declares that such a knowledge is not only possible, but that this alone is the right and correct knowledge. ..

That seems to be the burden, the underlying preoccupation of modern physical science: it has been forced to grope towards some kind of mystic perception; at least, it has been put into a frame of mind, due to the crumbling of the very fundamentals of the past structure, which is less obstructive to other sources and spheres and ways of knowledge. Certainly, we must admit that we have moved very far from Laplace when we hear today a hard-boiled rationalist like De Broglie declare:

The idealisations more or less schematic that our mind builds up are capable of representing certain facets of things, but they have inherent limitations and cannot contain within their frames all the richness of the reality.³

The difficulty that modern Science encounters is not, however, at all a difficulty: it may be so to the philosopher, but not to the mystic,—the difficulty, that is to say, of

positing a real objective world when all that we know or seize of it seems to be our own mental constructions that we impose upon it. Science has come to such a pass that it can do no more than take an objective world on trust..

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Abstracted from Nolini Kanta Gupta's *Collected Works*, Vol 1, pp 310-320)

References

- 1 *Physics and Philosophy*, by Sir James Jeans
- 2 *Ibid* , p 204
- 3 *La Physique Nouvelle et les Quanta*, by Louis de Broglie, p 12

LEIBNIZ

(Talk delivered in the Calcutta Mathematical Society on 11 September 1996
in a Seminar on René Descartes and G W Leibniz)

1 The great German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was born in the city of Leipzig, in Germany, in the year 1646 and died in 1716 at the age of seventy. Like his predecessor René Descartes (1596-1650), Leibniz was equally great as a mathematician and as a philosopher. Here we shall be concerned with Leibniz, the philosopher.

Bertrand Russell, in his *History of Western Philosophy*, writes:

Leibniz was one of the supreme intellects of all time, but as a human being he was not admirable. . . His best thought was not such as would win him popularity, and he left records of it unpublished in his desk. What he published was designed to win the approbation of princes and princesses. The consequence is that there are two systems of philosophy which may be regarded as representing Leibniz: one which he proclaimed, was optimistic, orthodox, fantastic, and shallow, the other, which has been slowly unearthed from his manuscripts by fairly recent editors, was profound, coherent, large, spinozistic and amazingly logical.

We need not much value this valuation-mixture of Russell on Leibniz. We propose to view Leibniz in our own way.

2 After the above long statement Russell added: "It was popular Leibniz who invented the doctrine that this is the best of all possible worlds." We need not however look into the matter in this way. We should be aware that the greatest minds have pondered over the question. Einstein often engaged himself with the question whether the world could be created in a better way, but he could not come up with a solution. Everything is surely not pleasant and perfect in this world. But is not the pleasant as trivial as its opposite? It is the sublime that man must aspire for, and the sublime not only inspires reverence in us, but also inspires awe. About perfection also, should we claim a readymade perfect world to be a gift of God? Wherein would then lie the glory of man? The world is no doubt a beguiling and resisting medium, but passing through that man has to attain his goal. The problem of evil is also to be understood in the same spirit. Sri Aurobindo in his poem *Invitation* invites all to be kinsmen to danger, and in his poem *To the Sea* we find him hearing in the roar of the wild sea the call to come down and know what rapture lives in danger and overthrow. Like him in yet another poem *Life* we should also be able to say: "High I triumph when down-trod, / Long I live when slain." So if we want to pass any judgment on this world or its fabric we have to do so with a view to the nature of evolution of man in it that would be the most glorious for him. And if we look upon things from this deeper standpoint we shall understand that Leibniz's viewpoint was not a shallow one, nor anything flippant.

3. Be it said that in 1675-76 Leibniz, then in Paris, invented the infinitesimal calculus, in ignorance of Newton's previous but unpublished work on the same subject Leibniz's work was published in 1684, and Newton's in 1687. The consequent dispute as to priority was unfortunate and not creditable to either. We mention this invention of Leibniz only to bring his intellectual prowess to light. Otherwise, we shall be concerned only with Leibniz, the philosopher.

4. Leibniz was well-acquainted with the philosophies of Descartes, Gassendi, Malbranche and Spinoza. Descartes thought that mind and matter are unrelated and independent of each other, and that in a living creature mind acts on the body through the medium of what he called 'vital spirits'. Malbranche and Gieulincx (both of them pupils of Descartes) rejected the idea of vital spirits, and maintained that the mind and the body were only providentially parallel. Gieulincx supplied the famous analogy of the two clocks. By looking at a clock and hearing another, we may find that whenever one is marking four, the other is striking four, and we may conclude that the two clocks are interconnected. But actually they are parallel only through an outside cause. The clock-paradigm caught, as we shall see later, the imagination of Leibniz also.

Spinoza said that neither is mind material (as held by the materialists), nor is matter mental (as held by the idealists); they are the two aspects of one and the same thing. Spinoza said that the ultimate reality is one. He was a monist: in fact, a pantheist, holding the view that God is the only reality and that this world is the creation of God out of himself. Spinoza's monism was thus dialectical in nature, in the sense that consciousness and matter, according to him, were two aspects of one and the same ultimate. Spinoza said that the ultimate reality can think and has extension in space. We intend here, at the cost of a digression, to say that the Spinozistic viewpoint of the 'dialectical' oneness of the ultimate matches perfectly well with the viewpoint of the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rigveda where it is said that the one who was covered by a paltry sheath energized himself and expanded himself (*tuchyena āvu apihitam yadāsū tapasastanmahimā ajāyata ekam*). It may be recalled that Sri Aurobindo described the ultimate as 'Conscious Force' (*The Life Divine*, Book I, Ch. X) which clearly shows that he was aware of the extra-consciousness part of reality, which according to him (and according to modern science), is more force-like than matter-like in its depth. Now, while we fully agree about the double aspect of the ultimate one, we do not think that the ultimate in its own being is extended in space. To have extension in space means to be plural and limited. Both are unimaginable about the ultimate in its own self. We would like to think that space itself is a creation. It is a creation immediately prior to or concomitant with the creation of physical objects in space. It may be mentioned that this is precisely what the Rishi of the Prashna Upanishad says in his explanation of the sixteen features (*sodaśa kalā*) of the ultimate.

5. We are now in a position to study Leibniz's Monadology which is developed in his book bearing the same name.

Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz called any ultimate reality 'substance'. For Descartes, the substances are three in number—God, mind and matter. For Spinoza,

there is only one substance, namely, God For Leibniz, the things were rather different Since matter has extension and extension means plurality, Leibniz did not accept matter as a substance, *i.e.*, as an ultimate reality. For Leibniz, thus, a substance has only one attribute, that is thought. A substance was called a monad by Leibniz, which literally means 'one thing' But for Leibniz there is an infinity of monads. Leibniz at first conceived of a monad as having only consciousness, being without spatial existence Afterwards he granted, as it appears, his monads point-existence in space, so that they may fill up the universe. Leibniz said that God, out of his goodness, disliked a vacuum and liked to see that space is a plenum (completely filled).

Leibniz granted an infinity of monads, as already stated. He called them an infinity of souls or egos. Monads are unrelated to one another and do not interact among themselves. They have, for this reason, been described as windowless. Though the monads do not depend upon or interact with fellow monads, they go on doing their work in a harmonious manner under a pre-established harmony established by God Being an ultimate, God is also a monad. In fact, Leibniz admits a hierarchy of monads, and regards God as the supreme monad The harmony laid down by God gives a false appearance, Leibniz says, of interdependence and interaction amongst the various monads. Here Leibniz could be asked a very simple question. The harmony or, technically speaking, the uniformity of Nature does very well lead to the notion of one mind (and exactly one mind) behind creation. But why should the countless monads, who are also ultimates, be at all obliged to bow in obedience to that one mind? Actually this point has not been dealt with by Leibniz The matter remains unconvincing unless we agree that the many are also the creation of the supreme one out of its own stuff. Thus a coherent way of thought leads to pantheism of the Spinozistic kind or, say, of the kind of Advaita Vedanta. What Leibniz developed is called spiritual pluralism and it is this pluralism that is the most unconvincing part of his ontology.

However, the Leibnizian theory of the monads is not without merit. We think that it solves the problem of holism in not a bad way. According to Leibniz, all monads are not of the same category or level. Most of them are very ordinary, while a few are superior, with gradations of superiority, and God is supreme. A human body is composed of millions of monads, each having consciousness and ego. It is not understandable that a plurality of egos will merge to form one ego. It cannot be like individuals forming a club. A man is not a club of egos, but a single ego. This is well-explained if we accept the Leibnizian viewpoint of a single ego dominating over other egos, which dominant ego is the ego of the man. Of course, we have to accept that the millions of ordinary egos are specially assembled together in groups by providence to serve some special purpose for the dominant ego. Any holistic problem can be explained in a similar manner

6 Now the question of freedom or free-will Sometimes it appears that Leibniz allowed freedom or free-will in his system, specially granting them to human beings. But at other times we find him to be as deterministic as Spinoza. However, God was granted full freedom. In fact, Leibniz maintained that God cannot act contrary to logic,

but can do whatever is logically possible For Leibniz, God is omnipotent in this 'correct' sense of the term As regards omnipotence of God the present author holds a very similar view. The matter was dealt with, at length, in the article *Creation and My Inner Feeling* (*Mother India*, Sept-Oct, 1993). The question of freedom was also dealt with in the same article. However, we would like to present it here in some more detail. Creation is to be judged as an evolution It is indeed being so judged, at least in its material plane, by science itself This becomes clear to us from our study of the universe from its beginning. From this study it also becomes apparent that the creative evolution culminates in the evolution of consciousness. But evolution of consciousness becomes a meaningless term if we deny freedom or free-will to consciousness The freedom of a creature is no doubt limited within its range of capabilities and this freedom is no doubt freedom granted by the Supreme But freedom limited and gained through a grant is also freedom in its own sphere. Sri Aurobindo visualises creation as a divine experiment If freedom is not granted to living creatures, the experiment reduces to a puppet-show. In fact, denial of free-will to living creatures would make meaningless the difference between matter and consciousness. There is a line of thought holding the view that freedom or free-will of creatures will be denial of monism We think that the real mystery lies in the process of one consciousness giving rise to many However, if plurality of consciousness is accepted as coming from the one through its self-deployment, then there should not be any further difficulty in admitting free-will for individual consciousnesses.

(To be concluded)

ASHOK KUMAR RAY

ADWAITA: A DUTCH VEDANTIC POET

(Continued from the issue of March 1997)

I am Brahman

WE shall now try to see how Adwaita expresses this Brahmic experience to which he arrives after rejecting, on the one hand, the irrational religious faith and, on the other, reason and erudition

Adwaita disavows the Christian mysticism of pain, but he knows that pain is a reality in life. And in his case, as in the case of many seekers, pain opens the door to the highest truth by breaking the resistance in the heart ⁶

When the resistance breaks, when he is “cured forever”, he wants to praise, says he, his greatest sorrow

That, to the transient I, came to show the Self
In the wide view of the unique Reality

Here we see stated the Vedantic experience of the unity of the Self (*ātman*) and the absolute reality (*brahman*). The transitory I is the phenomenal ego. When this ego, the source of pain, that hides the real Self, drops, one becomes the true Self and knows oneself as Brahman

This shedding of the veil of ego is expressed by Adwaita as the chrysalis leaving the cocoon to become a butterfly. It can also be seen as the transmutation of the lower ignorant self, unconscious of its true nature, into the higher Self. The Self, *ātman*, is often symbolized in India by the swan; it is the light in man, the golden Person, the solitary swan, *hīranmayah puruṣaḥ eka-ḥmṣah* (*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.3.11). Elsewhere the possessor of the body, *dehin*, the Self, is said to be the swan, *hamsa*, that sports outside in the world

Adwaita has appropriated this image of the swan and in a sonnet develops it significantly to evoke the idea of the transformation of the lower self, the ugly duckling, into the wonderful swan. Adwaita says:

And I always had, whenever I read the tale,
A strange feeling that I myself was such a swan.

And in the next poem he continues.

Yes, I discovered late: I am a swan.
Out of the pool of lustreless painful life
The silently-grown feeling of God has raised me.
I have got rid of the earthly attachment,

My wings are again white and fit to beat
In Brahman's light

He knows that the Self is in Brahman, is in essence Brahman, even though he is in the phenomenal world Adwaita says

My soul, a drop of God, for ever freed
From hovering between earth and eternity

The Upanishadic seers speak of the sparks of the Supreme Self, *ātman-brahman*, that becomes everything

As tiny sparks spring forth from the fire, even so all life-principles, all worlds, all gods, all creatures spring forth from this Self

And Adwaita too says addressing Brahman, "I am a spark of the radiance of your glory "

It is the same Self that is transcendental and subjectively individual Our souls are drops, sparks of that transcendental Self

And when he has this experience of the essential identity of oneself with the Brahman, he knows that the phenomenal form of life is transitory, he is a

Short-living plankton in the sea of Brahman.

Yet in his soul he is free; he knows the past, the present and the future. When he is lifted on the top of the waves of the Brahmic sea he feels that he is the future, he is what once he will be, and when he is drawn downwards to the depth of the abyss he seizes his past.

In another poem he sees himself as a small phosphorescent animal, a noctiluca, undulating in Brahman, shining with the "sparks of art and the feeling of eternity". But Brahman is changeless And we, living in this world, can only experience him beyond speech and mind It has clearly been said by the Upanishadic sages: "From there words, accompanied by the mind, come back without having attained It."

And Adwaita too says:

The immutable in Brahman's self-contemplation,
Silent witness of Its eternal unfolding,
Is experienced here in ineffability

So the experience of identity cannot be expressed in words. Only one can perhaps exclaim, as does Adwaita

Oh, oh, the glory of my Brahmanhood!

and repeat the Upanishadic formula, *aham brahmāsmi*, I am Brahman (Ik ben Brahman).

Yājñavalkya, who is mentioned several times in Adwaita's poems, speaks of this ineffability. When duality between the subject and the object vanishes, there can be no question of knowledge in the human sense. Yājñavalkya says:

But if all this has verily become the Self then whom should one smell and with what? Then whom should one see and with what? Then whom should one hear and with what? Then whom should one speak to and with what? Then whom should one think of and with what? Then whom should one know and with what? With what should one know that by which all this is known? With what, say, should one know the Knower? (*Bṛihadāranyaka Upanisad 2.4.14*)

And there remains only the ineffable experience of "I am"

In order to express this non-dual experience Adwaita uses a common image of love. He writes:

He who so caresses and kisses the girl he loves
That he forgets himself, the world, God and even her,
He seeks, without his ecstasy knowing it,
The peaceful unity of desireless repose.

Thus disappears the duality of he and she, only the subject remains. This, according to Adwaita, is the sacred "I am", which is "Brahman in the earthly being", that

Embraces God and the world in one circle of light

Adwaita's heart is in Brahman. And when one has placed his heart in Brahman there is no fear; one's self, the highest spiritual treasure, is safe:

But I know where my heart is, my treasure is there;
In Brahman is my heart, my treasure is safe

This experience of Brahman, one may ask, is it real or just a fiction of the mind? In the mind of Adwaita too, sometimes a doubt creeps up. And he wonders, returning to the work-a-day reality of life

Is it perhaps a delusion,
That I think I am Brahman's prophet?

The intellectual is awake again. Is all this the remains of a primitive magical shamanism? Is it not just a poetical-mystical stance? Several questions of this sort assault his mind, as they assault the minds of all those who aspire to rise beyond the rational and material existence into the fullness of the Spirit. But Adwaita knows that he is no hypocrite:

I always thought, I wasn't a hypocrite.

Further he thinks that what he considers to be a real experience may only be a memory of things read:

I often thought that I was afloat on the Brahmic sea:
 But was it not a puddle left by my memory
 Of what I had read? Or was it sorrow
 That sought for sham happiness when the real left me?

But this doubt soon vanishes And he knows again, says he, as he has always known:

Yes, yes, yes, yes: I am the World-Self.

(To be continued)

RAHAJIT SARKAR

Reference

6 Sri Aurobindo writes

Pain is the hammer of the gods to break
 A dead resistance in the mortal's heart

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 29, p 443)

POLITICAL VEDANTISM—ITS CONCEPT AND PRACTICE

(Continued from the issue of March 1997)

Chapter III (contd)

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION TO CREATE FREE INDIA

IN all contexts we must remember that whatever Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bande Mataram* was not his mental ideas nor was it his personal explanations to vindicate his stand in the New Party. These words came from above or from within. Later (13 April 1923) he commented during the evening talks: "All that I wrote in the *Bande Mataram* and the *Karmayogin* was from this yogic state. It used to run down to my pen while I sat down to write. I always trusted the inner Guide even when it seemed to be leading me astray."⁸

On 23 August 1935 in a letter to one of his disciples Sri Aurobindo stated, "As for calm and silence, there is no need of the supramental to get that. I got these things in 1908, 27 years ago, and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough in all conscience without any need of supramentality to make it more so. A calm or silence that is what I have had—the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande Mataram* for 4 months and wrote 6 volumes of the *Arya*, not to speak of all the letters and messages etc. I have written since."

Yet modern men of politics may like to have more clarification in regard to the nation-idea and nationalism as expounded by Sri Aurobindo. For indeed they were quite different from those conceived of by the political thinkers of the world.

According to Sri Aurobindo India never had the political idea of a nation, what she had was the cultural and spiritual idea of a nation.

In reply to a question put by one of his disciples during the evening talks, Sri Aurobindo stated: "The modern political consciousness of the national idea has come to Europe recently. It arose either by a slow growth as in England and Japan on account of their insular position more or less, or in response to outside pressure as with the French who got it after their conquest by the Britons. Practically the French began to be a nation after the appearance of Joan of Arc. Up to that time England found always some allies among the French nobles. Italy got it not more than a century ago, and the Germans as late as the time of Bismarck."

"This consciousness," he continued, "is more political than anything else and it aims at the organisation of the national forces for offence and defence. If you accept the ideal of a nation going on fighting and destroying for ever, then you have to give up the cultural and spiritual free growth of the nation and follow in the footsteps of European nations..

“The present-day national spirit and the centralised mechanical organisation of the state are logical conclusions or consequences of ‘nations’—or ‘armed nations’. . . But there is no reason to suppose that the present-day idea of nationhood which is only aggressive and defensive, would last for ever. If this state of affairs lasts for ever then you can give up all hope for humanity.”¹⁰

Earlier while arguing on the impossibility of a healthy national development under foreign rule, Sri Aurobindo emphasised in the *Bande Mataram* on 30 April 1907, “The foreign domination naturally interferes with and obstructs the functioning of the native organs of development. . . If a nation were an artificial product which could be made, then it might be possible for one nation to make another. But a nation cannot be made,—it is an organism which grows under the stress of a principle of life within. . . The nation-builder, Cavour or Bismarck, is merely the incarnation of a national force which has found its hour and its opportunity,—of an inner will which has awakened under the stress of shaping circumstances. A nation is indeed the outward expression of a community of sentiment, whether it be the sentiment of a common blood or the sentiment of a common religion or the sentiment of a common interest or any or all of these sentiments combined. Once this sentiment grows strong enough to develop into a will towards unity and to conquer obstacles and make full use of favouring circumstances, the development of the nation becomes inevitable.”¹¹

Now let us see what Nationalism was to Sri Aurobindo.

The word Nationalism has lost its real meaning and sense in the vocabulary of present-day politics. In modern times Nationalism is nothing but an aggrandisement of national egoism. It is used only to mean an ‘ISM’ to safeguard the national interest even at the cost of destroying other nations. It has no deeper inlook or wider and forward outlook. Yet, paradoxically, all the political parties of the modern world—whatever may be their national identity and whichever political philosophy—fascism, communism, socialism or capitalism—they may pursue—are nationalists, more or less radical.

Sri Aurobindo was a nationalist, led a nationalist party and preached nationalism.

In a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Bombay National Union by Sri Aurobindo to a large gathering at Mahajan Wadi, Bombay, on Sunday, 19 January 1908, Sri Aurobindo asserted:

“Nationalism is not a mere political programme, Nationalism is a religion that has come from God, Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live. Let no man dare to call himself a Nationalist if he does so merely with a sort of intellectual pride, thinking that he is more patriotic, thinking that he is something higher than those who do not call themselves by that name. If you are going to be a Nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of Nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. You must remember that you are the instruments of God.”¹²

In this context we may recall another article entitled ‘New Nationalism’ written for the *Bande Mataram* which assumed historical significance because of its seizure before publication and its production as an exhibit at the Alipore Conspiracy Case. It

was first published in the *Hindusthan Standard* of Calcutta on 14 August 1938 and included in the Centenary Volume 1 as its last article. Clarifying the distinction between 'extremism and nationalism' Sri Aurobindo in this article expounded: "The forward party [Nationalist Party set up and organised by Sri Aurobindo himself] is the party of Nationalism, but what is Nationalism?..."

"The New Nationalism. . is a negation of the old bourgeois ideals of the nineteenth century....

"... The ordinary Congress politician's ideas of Nationalism are associated with wasted discussions in committee and Congress, altercations at public meetings, unsparing criticism of successful and eminent respectabilities, sedition trials... To him the Nationalist is nothing more than an Extremist, a violent, unreasonable, uncomfortable being whom some malign power has raised up to disturb with his Swaraj and boycott, his lawlessness and his lathis the respectable class and the safety of Congress politics . .

"Nationalism cannot be so easily dismissed, a force which has shaken the whole of India, trampled the traditions of a century into a refuse or irrecoverable fragments and set the mightiest of modern empires groping in a panic for weapons strong enough to meet a new and surprising danger, must have some secret of strength and therefore of truth in it which is worth knowing. To get at the heart of Nationalism we must first clear away some of the conceptions with which its realities have been clouded We must know what Nationalism is not, before we ask what it is.

"Extremism in the sense of unreasoning violence of spirit and the preference of desperate methods, because they are desperate, is not the heart of Nationalism The Nationalist does not advocate lawlessness for its own sake; on the contrary, he has deeper respect for the essence of the law than anyone else, because the building up of a nation is his objective and he knows well that without a profound reverence for law a national life cannot persist and attain a sound and healthy development . Farther, the Nationalist never loses sight of the truth that law was made for man and not man for law. Its chief function and reason for existence is to safeguard and foster the growth and happy flowering into strength and health of National life. Nationalism refuses to accept law as a fetish or peace and security as an aim in themselves; the only idol of its worship is Nationality and the only aim it in itself recognises is the freedom, power, and well-being of the Nation... It asks of a method whether it is effective for its purpose, whether it is worthy of a great people struggling to be, whether it is educative of national strength and activity; and these things ascertained, it asks nothing farther The Nationalist does not love anarchy and suffering for their own sake, but if anarchy and suffering are the necessary passage to the great consummation he seeks, he is ready to bear them himself, to expose others to them till the end is reached.... The Nationalist knows what he asks from fate and he knows the price that fate asks from him in return.... If he embraces anarchy, it is as the way to good government .. If he has sometimes to disregard the law of man, it is to obey the dictates of his conscience and the law of God.'"¹³

Here is yet another interesting instance of how Sri Aurobindo tactfully, satirically and logically as well, dealt with the opinions and the interpretations of the *London Times* anent the *Bande Mataram*. The paper complained that the Nationalists were spreading racial hatred and disaffection against the ruling race. The *Bande Mataram* replied:

“... But Nationalism is no more a mere ebullition of race hatred in India than it was in Italy in the last century. Our motives and our objects are at least as lofty and noble as those of Mazzini or of that Garibaldi whose centenary the *Times* was hymning with such fervour a few days ago. The restoration of our country to her separate existence as a nation among the nations, her exaltation to a greatness, splendour, strength, magnificence equalling and surpassing her ancient glories is the goal of our endeavours and we have undertaken this arduous task in which we as individuals risk everything, ease, wealth, liberty, life itself it may be, not out of hatred and hostility to other nations but in the firm conviction that we are working as much in the interests of all humanity including England herself as in those of our own posterity and nation. That the struggle to realise our ideal must bring with it temporary strife, misunderstanding, hostility, disturbance,—that in short, it is bound to be a struggle and not the billing and cooing of political doves, we have never attempted to deny. We believe that the rule of three hundred millions of Indians by an alien bureaucracy not responsible to the nation is a system unnatural, intrinsically bad and inevitably oppressive, and we do not pretend that we can convince our people of its undesirability without irritating the bureaucracy on one side and generating a strong dislike of the existing system on the other. But our object is constructive and not destructive, to build up our own nation and not to destroy another. If England chooses to feel aggrieved by our nation-building, and obstruct it by unjust, violent or despotic means, it is she who is the aggressor and guilty of exciting hatred and ill-feeling. Her action may be natural, may be inevitable, but the responsibility rests on her, not on Indian Nationalism.”¹⁴

No doubt, *Bande Mataram* stirred the imagination of the youth of the entire country from Kashmir to the Cape. Its voice indeed aroused interest in the thinking minds across the seas as is evident from Manoj Das’s comments on what he discovered while studying certain papers relating to the Alipore Conspiracy Case at the National Library, Scotland:

“Recently while studying the original Minto Papers at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, this writer saw some correspondence between Theodore Roosevelt and Lord Minto. For some mysterious reason Roosevelt had desired to see a copy of *Bande Mataram* and Minto had obliged him. Roosevelt observed that it was an interesting paper!

“After the paper ceased publication some of its admirers brought out a journal with the same title from Geneva. The Government of India, needless to say, promptly banned its entry into India...”¹⁵

(To be continued)

References

- 8 A B Purani, *Evening Talks*, third edition, pp 101-02
- 9 *SABCL*, Vol 26, p 163
- 10 A B Purani, *Evening Talks*, third edition, p 283
- 11 *SABCL*, Vol 1, p 309
- 12 *Ibid* , pp 652-53
- 13 *Ibid* , pp 906-10
- 14 *Ibid* pp 499-500
- 15 Manoj Das, *The First Decade of the Century*, pp 42-43

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

101. EVEN THAT IS FOOD FOR ME

SOMETIME in A.D. 642, Paranjothi, the commander-in-chief of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman's huge army invaded the Western Chalukyan kingdom, and destroyed its capital city, Vatapi. His victory not only checked the Chalukyan advance towards the Pallava capital, Kanchi, but also put the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II, in his place.

The Pallava king, Narasimhavarman I, was greatly impressed by his commander-in-chief who had brought with him the spoils of war—a bevy of beauties, a herd of elephants, a hoard of precious stones, innumerable caskets containing golden ornaments and, above all, erected the pillar of victory with an inscription that told us about the invasion by the Pallava king and the fall of Pulakesin.

“Vatapi's plenty is here,” applauded king Narasimhavarman I, hugging Paranjothi with love and gratitude. Then, looking deep into his eyes, he said, “This is real accomplishment. It would have been quite an impossibility for anyone other than you to accomplish such a task.”

“True, your Majesty,” said a minister “Paranjothi is a devoted *bhakta* of Lord Siva. And so who can oppose and defeat this blessed being?”

A chill came over the king. For a moment he felt he was frozen. Seconds later he whispered, “I've committed a sin.” He then bent low to touch Paranjothi's feet and said, “Pardon this great sinner, O saint! I have made you a killer. I never knew of your piety and so was foolish enough to send you to the battlefield.”

“Killing is no sin, if it is one's duty to kill. I have done only my duty as commander-in-chief,” said Paranjothi, holding the hands of the king.

“By employing a *bhakta* in war, I have only added to my sins,” grieved the king. After a pause, he added, “Lord Siva will never pardon me, if I continue to send you into battles. And so I would advise you to desert your sword and shield and to continue in the service of God.”

Paranjothi explained to the king, justifying killing as the duty of the soldiers. But the king didn't allow him to continue in service. Granting him land and riches that would last several generations, the king requested Paranjothi to keep away from all sins.

Paranjothi retired to his native town, Thiru Chengattankudi, and devoted all his waking hours to the service of the Lord. He made it his daily duty to eat only after feeding the Lord's devotees. His gentle manner, polite words and humility won him the title *Sirutthondar*, meaning a humble devotee.

To assist him in performing the sacred duties, *Sirutthondar* married a like-minded lady named Thiru Vengattu Mangai. They were a happy pair and the Lord blessed them with a son. The parents named him Sirala, nurtured him and sent him to school at the appropriate time.

Life moved smoothly for the couple, till one day a Kapalika ascetic set foot in Thiru Chengattankudi

“Where is Sirutthondar’s house?” the ascetic inquired of passers-by

They showed it to him

Knocking on the door, the ascetic shouted, “If this is the house that feeds God’s devotees, is Sirutthondar here?”

Santhana Mangai, the maid, busy in the kitchen heard the ascetic’s voice and rushed to open the door. Bowing before him she said, “Come in, divine Sir! The saint has gone in search of bhaktas. Please come in and take rest.”

“No! I can’t enter a house where women dwell alone,” responded the ascetic

For fear that the ascetic might leave, Santhana Mangai rushed back and fetched the saint’s wife

“My husband will be back soon. Please come in, O Sage, and take rest,” entreated Thiru Vengattu Mangai.

“I have come from the North. I have heard ascetics speak highly of the loving service rendered by your husband. And so I am here to see him. But I can’t stay here in his absence. I’ll wait for him in the shade of the *Attu* tree at Ganapathisvaram temple. Please inform him.” So saying the ascetic left.

Sirutthondar returned home with a sorrow-stricken face. His wife, sensing his fruitless search, told him of the arrival of the ascetic from the North. His face brightening up, Sirutthondar ran towards the temple and prostrated himself before the ascetic.

“Are you Sirutthondar?” asked the ascetic.

“That’s what they call me.”

“I’ve heard of your glory and cherished a desire to see you in flesh and blood. My desire is fulfilled. I’ll take leave of you.”

“Before you leave, please come home and share with me the food that is ready.”

“Food!” guffawed the ascetic, “I take food only once in six months.. And I eat only flesh.”

“Flesh! We’ll cook flesh for you. What flesh would you like to have? Chicken? Goat? Cow? or.”

The ascetic roared like thunder and said, “No. you can’t cook the flesh I want, for I eat only human flesh, well cooked.”

“We will cook it for you,” Sirutthondar readily agreed.

“Now listen to my conditions. The flesh to be cooked for me must be that of a five-year-old boy’s. The boy must be the only son of his parents. The father must cut him when held by the mother. And my dinner must be cooked by the parents in joy,” cautioned the ascetic.

“It will be done,” said Sirutthondar. “But please consent to stay for the dinner.”

The ascetic nodded his head and smiled.

Sirutthondar hastened to his house and related the ascetic’s desire to his wife.

“Well then! Buy a child of this description at all cost,” suggested the wife.

“But will the parents consent to kill the child as required?”

“Oh, no! What shall we do now?”

“We can find a solution to this problem only through our son,” hinted Sirutthondar

Thiru Vengattu Mangai readily agreed and told her husband to fetch their little darling son from school.

Back home the child was given a bath and adorned with flowers. Their faces laden with joy, they performed the rare operation.

Thiru Vengattu Mangai handing the head of her son over to the maid, said, “This may not be food for the ascetic. And so do whatever you want.”

The parents then cut the rest of their son’s body and prepared several dishes out of it. The dinner was ready.

Sirutthondar hastened to the temple and invited the ascetic.

Thiru Vengattu Mangai received the honoured ascetic and offered him a seat. She then washed his feet and sprinkled the water all over their persons and house. Spreading the dinner in front of him, Sirutthondar and his wife prayed to him to partake of it.

The ascetic smiled broadly at his dinner and asked if every portion of the child had been prepared.

“I have rejected the head as unfit for your dinner,” admitted Thiru Vengattu Mangai.

“Even that is food for me,” the ascetic said a little loudly.

The ascetic’s words troubled the couple. But the maid came to their rescue. “The head too is well cut and cooked,” said she serving the dish.

“Good!” said the ascetic. “Now I can eat. But I cannot eat alone. I want a devotee of the Lord to sit with me and share the dinner. Go out and find someone.”

“I’ve tried to find a devotee. Unfortunately I couldn’t find one today,” said Sirutthondar.

The ascetic laughed and said, “Why do you search for a devotee, when you yourself are the best of all devotees? Sit beside me.”

Greatly honoured, Sirutthondar sat next to the ascetic. His dinner was served.

In an attempt to persuade the ascetic to eat, Sirutthondar took a handful of food.

“Wait!” said the ascetic. “I eat once in six months, whereas you eat everyday. Are you so hungry to eat before I start eating? Well then! Call your son here if you have one and let us all eat together.”

“My son won’t be of any use here,” said Sirutthondar.

“I won’t eat unless you call your son here,” asserted the ascetic.

“But he won’t come,” said the couple in unison.

“He will! .. Both of you go out and call him. And he will come.”

The couple went out and called out together: “O Sivala! Come home. Come quickly. The ascetic is waiting for you. Hurry up.”

To their surprise, they saw the little boy running towards them as though he was coming from school.

The parents embraced him and showered kisses all over his face. They carried him inside with great jubilation. Another surprise awaited them there. The ascetic had vanished and with him the dishes.

They rushed out of their house and ran hither and thither in search of the ascetic.

They raised their heads towards the heavens and saw the Lord with his consort seated on the white bull.

Blessed are those who give up their desire for the flesh to merge with the Divine.

102. THE MOST AFFLUENT FISHERMAN

The seaport town of Nagapattinam housed several communities of traders, each one affluent in their own way. Since the produce from the sea was in no way smaller than the rest, the community of fishermen was equally rich, though the folks lived in hamlets close by the sea.

The fisherfolk called their chief Adhipatthar, meaning the great *bhakta*, for he was a devotee of Lord Siva. Every day before he went to the sea with his fishing net, he prayed to the Lord for a good catch and also for pardoning the sinner in him who was destined to make a living by killing so many lives in the sea.

The fear of retribution drove him to make a small offering to appease the Lord. Every day as he hauled up his net, he selected the biggest fish he had netted and said, "This is for you, my Lord." Then he let it go into the sea.

Lord Siva, as we all know, delighted in making his devotees go through dreadful ordeals.

Day by day, Adhipatthar's business began to dwindle steadily and he had a row of unsuccessful days. But he never nurtured a second thought about his offering to the Lord. As a result his resources dried up and he found it extremely difficult to make ends meet.

Hard times were ahead. His friends and relatives gave him financial help. But one day when they learnt their chief was foolish enough to let go in the name of God even the one fish he had netted, they withdrew all their help.

Adhipatthar struggled in vain to keep the wolf from the door. One night when his wife and children wept over their fate, and slept on empty stomachs, he went to the sea and rowed his fishing boat far out into the stream with the great hope of having a big catch. On and on he rowed for several hours and when his hands became tired he cast his net and took rest.

The early rays of the sun shook him from his sleep. Luckily he still held the ropes of the net in his hand. He drew them and tried to haul in. He couldn't. He tried again but failed. Mustering up all his strength he made a final effort. It was of no use.

"This means that the harvest is beyond my expectation," he said in all jubilation. "The Lord has blessed me with a school of big fish perhaps."

Zippering up the mouth of the net with the ropes he held in his hands, he tied their

loose ends to the boat.

The big catch had boosted his energy and he began to row back the boat with such speed that he reached the shore when the sun was still rising.

The absence of Adhipatthar greatly disturbed his wife. She stood anxiously on the shore along with her children. Many friends and relatives stood around and consoled them

The presence of Adhipatthar put their anxiety to flight. They all ran towards him and helped him drag the net to the shore.

Everyone's eyes grew large, as they saw the biggest fish they had ever seen in their lives.

“Adhipatthar's hard times are over. The fish he has netted will fetch him a fortune in the market,” the fisherfolk said, looking at the happy family.

“This is no mean fish. It is worth its weight in gold and diamonds,” commented an old fisherman.

Adhipatthar looked at the fish and said, “A good catch indeed. . And therefore a fit offering to God.” To everyone's dismay, he cast the fish back into the roaring waves.

“Incorrigible fool! He will kill all his family members by starving them to death,” raved many.

“Foolish devotion,” a few reprimanded.

But Lord Siva, who had had enough fun with his devotee, appeared before him and said. “That's true devotion. You have lived up to my expectation. And so prosperous times are ahead. You will have enough wealth to last for several generations.” And Adhipatthar became the most affluent fisherman in Nagapattinam.

(More Legends on the way)

P RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

An Ampler Ether, by G Viswanathan Published by Emerald Publishers, 135, Anna Salai, Madras 600 002, 1996. Pp 52, price Rs 45

APPROPRIATELY, the collection begins with an address to Vighneshwara, a unifier of 'fissioning faiths' (*Vighneshwara*) The first few poems have a definite religious ring to them with the poet paying homage to the Sage of Kanchi, Sri Aurobindo, Adi Sankara and Ramana Maharishi The poet accentuates the aura of each of these personages and his poetic glance captures just those qualities which make them unique The Sage of Kanchi is

. a mystic whose very smile annuls
An Iliad of ills (*The Sage of Kanchi*)

But if the reader concludes that the poet is inspired only by saints and sages, the next few poems come as a happy surprise, they depict persons as disparate and divergent as Shakespeare, P V Narasimha Rao and Gorbachev. The unexpected death of Maharajapuram Santhanam in a road accident leaves music 'orphaned' by lying in 'noteless agony' The poet has perfected the right word, and uses it with telling accuracy.

The poet has chosen to articulate himself through the rather demanding sonnet-form, in an age which has seen the freest of verses At the same time, the hunger of the reader for free verse is also satisfied as we find in the collection a mixture of both forms of versification. The themes which have fed these poetic musings have sprung from sources as diverse as religion, politics, personal friendships and matters of topical interest.

The poet has a predilection for metaphors borrowed from science, especially atomic science Gandhi's ahimsa emits 'soul-active rays' whose 'fallout' frees India from foreign domination (*Gandhi*). When Shakespeare reveals 'the secrets of our psyche' he is doing a kind of 'depth-sensing' (*Shakespeare*) And Vighneshwara could heal 'fissioning faiths' (*Vighneshwara*)

The poet's approach to the matter in hand is marked by a level, cool gaze, the emotions restrained and articulated by a thoroughgoing intellectuality. Even a subject as painful as the death of a sister gets evoked through the discipline of a sonnet (*On the Death of My Sister*) It is the poet's way of maintaining a measure of detachment even while writing on matters that are painful to him Another noticeable trait is the sheer Hopkinsian delight the poet takes in the sound of words, happily coalescing sound and sense Nehru is 'A prince of paradox and a pagan pure' (*Nehru*) Bertrand Russell uses reason 'To scan a star or scorch a sham' (*Bertrand Russell*)

If poetry were to avoid becoming stale, the poet must remove the film of familiarity clouding our vision To achieve this end, he must perceive the strangeness in

objects and events that are ordinary and routine. The sudden shock delivered by the novelty of phrasing not only cures the mind's ennui but gives a sense of liberation which still remains the prerogative of all good poetry. And Viswanathan's poetry contains an abundance of such delights. The Adyar Banyan Tree is struck by a 'Vandal volt' from the skies (*The Adyar Banyan Tree*). The career woman keeps her baby at 'Creche length' and her harried antics in the kitchen are 'cuisine-cabaret' (*The Career Woman*). The white man's sense of superiority is born out of his 'dermal ego' (*Nelson Mandela—A Tribute*). Apart from the novelty of coinage, the poet comes out with statements which impress the reader with their epigrammatical vigour. The addictive television cannot hold people in its thrall forever, because,

In the beginning was the word, not Baird (*Television*)

The Moon's mystery and magic persist as

No probe can ever unscramble your self (*The Moon*)

Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi is

A clinic unique for all ills of life.

The rapacious goat's

Stile-vaulting ambition
Makes a Sahara of all Edens. (*The Goat*)

The image of the poet as inferred by the reader is that of a humanitarian, an individual whose sympathies encompass and extend even to objects as lowly as a stray kitten or a lightning-struck, age-old tree. At the same time he could relentlessly excoriate fanatics with a holier-than-thou attitude, as brought out by *The Jesuits of India* in which the Jesuits have sin on their lips and conversion in their minds.

Sin sings on their lips with fuss
of fanatic fury. ..

He underlines the spiritual fact that

To win a soul one too should be a soul (*The Jesuits of India*)

without allowing bigotry to destroy one's essential humanity

It can be said in conclusion that though the flower has bloomed a little late in the garden of the poet, its fragrance is not any the less sweet