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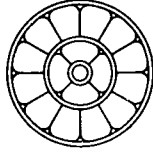
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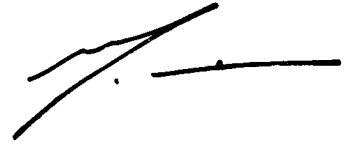
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. L

No. 9

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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## THIS SCRIPTURE OF JOY

A MORN that seemed a new creation's front,  
Bringing a greater sunlight, happier skies,  
Came, burdened with a beauty moved and strange  
Out of the changeless origin of things.  
An ancient longing struck again new roots  
The air drank deep of unfulfilled desire;  
The high trees trembled with a wandering wind  
Like souls that quiver at the approach of joy,  
And in a bosom of green secrecy  
For ever of its one love-note untired  
A lyric coil cried among the leaves  
Across the deep urgency of present cares,  
Earth's wordless hymn to the Ineffable  
Arose from the aident heart of the cosmic Void..  
Again the mighty yearning raised its flame  
That asks a perfect life on earth for men  
And prays for certainty in the uncertain mind  
And shadowless bliss for suffering human hearts  
And Truth embodied in an ignorant world  
And godhead divinising mortal forms . .  
But dim in human hearts the ascending fire,  
The invisible Grandeur sits unworshipped there;  
Man sees the Highest in a limiting form  
Or looks upon a Person, hears a Name  
He turns for little gains to ignorant Powers  
Or kindles his altar lights to a demon face.  
He loves the Ignorance fathering his pain.  
A spell is laid upon his glorious strengths  
He has lost the inner Voice that led his thoughts,  
And masking the oracular tripod seat  
A specious Idol fills the marvel shrine.  
The great Illusion wraps him in its veils,  
The soul's deep intimations come in vain,  
In vain is the unending line of seers,  
The sages ponder in unsubstantial light,  
The poets lend their voice to outward dreams,  
A homeless fire inspires the prophet tongues.  
Heaven's flaming lights descend and back return,  
The luminous Eye approaches and retires;  
Eternity speaks, none understands its word;

Fate is unwilling and the Abyss denies;  
 The Inconscient's mindless waters block all done.  
 Only a little lifted is Mind's screen  
 The Wise who know see but one half of Truth,  
 The strong climb hardly to a low-peaked height,  
 The hearts that yearn are given one hour to love,  
 His tale half-told, falters the secret Bard;  
 The gods are still too few in mortal forms. .

But like a shining answer from the gods  
 Approached through sun-bright spaces Savitri.  
 Advancing amid tall heaven-pillaring trees,  
 Apparelled in her flickering-coloured robe,  
 She seemed burning towards the eternal realms  
 A bright moved torch of incense and of flame  
 That from the sky-roofed temple-soil of earth  
 A pilgrim hand lifts in an invisible shrine.  
 There came the gift of a revealing hour.  
 This intimation of the world's delight,  
 This wonder of the divine Artist's make  
 Carved like a nectar-cup for thirsty gods,  
 This breathing Scripture of the Eternal's joy,  
 This net of sweetness woven of aureate fire.  
 Her brow, a copy of clear unstained heavens,  
 Was meditation's pedestal and defence,  
 The very room and smile of musing Space,  
 Its brooding line infinity's symbol curve.  
 Amid her tresses' cloudy multitude  
 The long eyes shadowed as by wings of Night  
 Under that moon-gold forehead's dreaming breadth  
 Were seas of love and thought that held the world,  
 Marvelling at life and earth they saw truths far  
 A deathless meaning filled her mortal limbs,  
 As in a golden vase's poignant line  
 They seemed to carry the rhythmic sob of bliss  
 Of earth's mute adoration towards heaven  
 Released in beauty's cry of living form  
 Towards the perfection of eternal things

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 370-373)

## SADHANA THROUGH THE MANTRA

THE japa is usually successful only on one of two conditions—if it is repeated with a sense of its significance, a dwelling of something in the mind on the nature, power, beauty, attraction of the Godhead it signifies and is to bring into the consciousness,—that is the mental way, or if it comes up from the heart or rings in it with a certain sense or feeling of bhakti making it alive,—that is the emotional way. Either the mind or the vital has to give it support or sustenance. But if it makes the mind dry and the vital restless, it must be missing that support and sustenance. There is, of course, a third way, the reliance on the power of the mantra or name in itself, but then one has to go on till that power has sufficiently impressed its vibration on the inner being to make it at a given moment suddenly open to the Presence or the Touch. But if there is a struggling or insistence for the result, then this effect which needs a quiet receptivity in the mind is impeded. That is why I insisted so much on mental quietude and not on too much straining or effort, to give time to allow the psychic and the mind to develop the necessary condition of receptivity—a receptivity as natural as when one receives an inspiration for poetry and music. It is also why I do not want you to discontinue your poetry—it helps and does not hinder the preparation, because it is a means of developing the right position of receptivity and bringing out the bhakti which is there in the inner being. To spend all the energy in japa or meditation is a strain which even those who are accustomed to successful meditation find it difficult to maintain—unless in periods when there is an uninterrupted flow of experiences from above.

\*

OM is the mantra, the expressive sound symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolises and is supposed indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above now superconscious to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence. The last is usually the main preoccupation with those who use the mantra.

In this yoga there is no fixed mantra, no stress is laid on mantras, although sadhaks can use one if they find it helpful or so long as they find it helpful. The stress is rather on an aspiration in the consciousness and a concentration of the mind, heart, will, all the being. If a mantra is found helpful for that, one uses it. OM if rightly used (not mechanically) might very well help the opening upwards and outwards (cosmic consciousness) as well as the descent.

\*

As a rule the only mantra used in this sadhana is that of the Mother or of my name and the Mother's. The concentration in the heart and the concentration in the head can both be used—each has its own result. The first opens up the psychic being and brings bhakti, love and union with the Mother, her presence within the heart and the action of her Force in the nature. The other opens the mind to self-realisation, to the consciousness of what is above mind, to the ascent of the consciousness out of the body and the descent of the higher consciousness into the body

\*

The name of the Divine is usually called in for protection, for adoration, for increase of bhakti, for the opening up of the inner consciousness, for the realisation of the Divine in that aspect. As far as it is necessary to work in the subconscious for that, the Name must be effective there

\*

Namajapa has a great power in it.

\*

Whatever name is called the Power that answers is the Mother. Each name indicates a certain aspect of the Divine and is limited by that aspect; the Mother's Power is universal.

\*

I did not encourage the name with the breathing because that seemed like pranayam. Pranayam is a very powerful thing, but if done haphazardly it may lead to the raising of obstructions and even in extreme cases illness in the body.

\*

The power of Gayatri is the Light of the divine Truth. It is a mantra of Knowledge.

\*

The Gayatri mantra is the mantra for bringing the light of Truth into all the planes of the being.

\*



It is not necessary to give up Gayatri japa or the process which you are following at present. Concentration in the heart is one method, concentration in the head (or above) is another, both are included in this yoga and one has to do whichever one finds easiest and most natural. The object of the concentration in the heart is to open the centre there (heart-lotus), to feel the presence of the Divine Mother in the heart and to become aware of one's soul or psychic being which is a portion of the Divine. The object of the concentration in the head is to rise to the Divine Consciousness and bring down the Light of the Mother or her Force or Ananda into all the centres. This movement of ascent and descent is implied in the process of your japa and it is not therefore necessary to renounce it.

There is a level corresponding to the Satya Loka in the head but the consciousness has at a certain stage to rise above the head freely to meet the same level in the universal Consciousness above.

\*

It [Pranava japa] is supposed to have a force of its own although that force cannot fully work without the meditation on the meaning. But my experience is that in these things there is no invariable rule and that most depends on the consciousness or the power of response in the sadhak. With some it has no effect, with some it has a rapid and powerful effect even without meditation—for others the meditation is necessary for any effect to come.

\*

Verses of the Gita can be used as japa, if the object is to realise the Truth that the verses contain in them. If X's father has taken the salient verses containing the heart of the teaching for that purpose, then it is all right. Everything depends on the selection of the verses. A coherent summary of the Gita's teaching cannot easily be put together by putting together some verses, but that is not necessary for a purpose of this kind which could only be to put the key truths together—not for intellectual exposition but for grasping in realisation which is the object of japa. I have not gone through the book, so I don't know how far it fulfils the object.

\*

When one repeats a mantra regularly, very often it begins to repeat itself within, which means that it is taken up by the inner being. In that way it is more effective.

\*

Naturally, whatever name one concentrates on will repeat itself, if any does. But the

calling of Mother in sleep is not necessarily a repetition—it is the inner being that often calls to her in difficulty or in need.

\*

Mantras come to many people in meditation. The Rishis say in the Veda that they heard the Truth by vision and inspiration, “truth-hearing seers”, *kavayah satyaśrutah*—Veda is *śruti* got by inner hearing

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 23, pp 745-49)

## DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of July 1997)

*My dear Mother,*

*The condition of the vegetable market is exceptionally poor. Nothing can be found in quantity for us. Prices have gone up more than double and for certain vegetables 5 or 6 times. Should we pay so much money for vegetables?*

FOR the money we must accept the necessity of the expense, but we must be strict about the quality of the food. We cannot give bad or spoilt things.

13 November 1934

*My dear Mother,*

*B told C: "Why not ask the Mother to get biscuits prepared for your son in our Bakery?"*

*C told me: "Will you ask the Mother and take her permission to get the biscuits prepared for the boy? I shall pay you the money." I did not answer him.*

*I told B: "Do not make such statements. We do not do such things, it is altogether new. We shall have to write to the Mother first before we take up such things."*

It is quite impossible to tax the Bakery people with such extra work and to do business with their work.

14 November 1934

*My dear Mother,*

*You have told us "I have come to fight and conquer."*

*Accept me, my dear General, as Your humble soldier. I carry Your banner of Truth and Light. I accept no defeat.*

*A decisive Victory is crowned upon You, my dear Mother. Divine Love is the Victor.*

Yes, my dear child, you are my good warrior and you will have your share in the Victory.

With love and blessings always

16 November 1934

*My dear Mother,*

*The last two days, when I was on the footpath of Aroumé, I got a rising of temperature in my body and a bad head; this morning it was worse and I was pushing and pushing it out.*

*Today I cleaned D's bottle for keeping sweets and was bringing it to You from Aroumé. I held it tight with a consciousness that it must not fall. It did not slip, but jumped out of my hand, twice I grabbed for it and the third time it went out of my hand onto the stone steps of Aroumé and broke into pieces.*

*The bottle itself has no importance, but why these attacks on me when I go to Aroumé? It did not stop there. Some hostile force wanted to send me away from the Ashram, it wanted me to tell You 'Mother, I want to retire; make me free from Aroumé and the Aroumé workers.'*

*My dear Mother, the hostile forces are taking a little pleasure in troubling me, but I accept no defeat, I do not become weak, I am up and up and on and on, forward with full strength, zeal and confidence in myself and in You and in the final Victory of the Divine Light.*

Yes, fear not.

The attack is not on you only but on the whole place, because of the approaching darshan.

We have only to say—in perfect peace—to these adverse forces: what you are trying to do is perfectly useless—you can in no way interfere with the victory of the Divine

All love and blessings to you, my dear child

19 November 1934

*My dear Mother,*

*This evening I wished and wished for a being to come, a being who has risen above all lower nature, and is completely merged in the Divine. My dear Mother, there are such beings somewhere above, may they come down and serve You and manifest Your Love and Consciousness*

If they took a body, they would at the same time take upon them the human nature and all its difficulties.

27 November 1934

*My dear Mother,*

*Mother, my Mother, may the Divine Peace descend upon earth. May the Divine Peace descend into each heart. It is only in Peace that the Divine shall manifest and spread the glory of His Divinity*

*My Mother, I ask for Peace, Peace and Peace*

Yes, Peace is the indispensable basis. Our peace, love and blessings are always with you

30 November 1934

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO IT

*(Continued from the issue of August 1997)*

(c)

ARE there any data which convincingly contradict what we have called "a negative answer"? An extremely lively exchange of letters in August 1935 between Nirodbaran and Sri Aurobindo topples the whole massive structure of seeming certitudes forming the negation. Here is the exchange <sup>1</sup>

MYSELF Today I shall request you to 'stand and deliver' on a different subject. What is exactly the significance of the day of your siddhi? Different people have different ideas about it. Some say that the Avatar of the Supermind descended in you.

SRI AUROBINDO Rubbish! Whose imagination was that?

MYSELF. Others say that you were through and through overmentalised

SRI AUROBINDO. Well, it is not quite the truth but nearer to the mark.

MYSELF: I myself understood that on that day you achieved the Supermind.

SRI AUROBINDO. There was never any mention of that from our side.

MYSELF: Some people, I think, declared at that time that you had conquered sleep, food, disease, etc. Was there any truth in that statement?

SRI AUROBINDO I am not aware of this gorgeous proclamation. What was said was that the Divine (Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like) had come down into the material. It was also proclaimed that I was retiring—obviously to work things out. If all that was achieved on 24 November 1926, what on earth remained to work out, and if the Supramental was there, for what blazing purpose did I need to retire? Besides, are these achieved in a single day?

MYSELF If you did not achieve the Supermind at that time, how was it possible for you to talk about it or know anything about it?

SRI AUROBINDO Well, I am hanged. You can't know anything about anything before you have achieved it? Because I have seen it and am in contact with it, O logical baby that you are! But achieving it is another business.

Good Lord! And what do these people think I meant when I was saying persistently that I was trying to get the Supermind down into the material? If I had achieved it on Nov. 24th, 1926, it would have been there already for the last nine years, wouldn't it?

But really what a logic! One must become thoroughly supramental first (achieve supermind) and then only one can begin to know something about supermind? Well!

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1954), pp 89-92

However, if I have time one day, I will deliver—for evidently with such ideas about, an *éclaircissement* is highly advisable.

MYSELF. You say that it was something like the descent of Krishna in the material. Some say that the descent took place in you. But you are not matter, are you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? Why can't I be matter? Or represent it at least? At least you will admit that I have got some matter in me and you will hardly deny that the matter in me is connected or even continuous (in spite of the Quantum theory) with matter in general? Well, if Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent descended into my matter with an inevitable extension into connected general Matter, what is the lack of clarity in the statement of a descent into the material? What does logic say?

MYSELF. By your 'trying to bring down the Supermind', we understand that the ascent is done and now the descent has to be made. Something like one going up to you at Darshan and getting all the bliss, joy, etc. and trying to bring it down and not lose it as soon as one steps out. And what is this again? You say you are in contact with it and then again that you are very near the tail of it, sounds queer! Contact and no contact?

SRI AUROBINDO: But, supposing I reached supermind in that way, then under such conditions would it be possible that I should come down again at the risk of losing it? Do you realise that I went upstairs and have not come down again? So it was better to be in contact with it until I had made the path clear between S and M. As for the tail, can't you approach the tail of an animal without achieving the animal? I am in the physical, in matter—there is no doubt of it. If I throw a rope up from Matter, noose or lasso the Supermind and pull it down, the first part of [it] that will come near me is its tail dangling down as it descends, and that I can seize first and pull down the rest of it by tail-twists. As for being in contact with it, well, I can be in contact with you by correspondence without actually touching you or taking hold even of your tail, can't I? So there is nothing funny about it—perfectly rational, coherent and clear.

The three decisive features in Sri Aurobindo's replies are: (1) he and the Mother never declared the Supermind to have descended, (2) Datta's proclamation was not known to him and never had his support, (3) his retirement would not have come about if he had believed or proclaimed that the Supermind had descended. The impression on the sadhaks of its descent had obviously resulted from the pronouncement by Datta and the mention by him and the Mother that there had been the descent of the Divine. Since the Supermind's descent had frequently been spoken of and eagerly expected as we may note from Rajani Palit's account<sup>1</sup> of the Victory Day, Datta was inspired to utter those words, and the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were misinterpreted.

What these words signified was explained in the letter cited in the preceding section—namely, that Krishna the Anandamaya Being, the supreme Deity, working through the Overmind plane (the plane of the great Gods), had come down into Sri Aurobindo's body. Krishna's identification with the bodily presence of Sri Aurobindo was taken to prepare the subsequent embodiment in him of Supermind. Sri Aurobindo

1 "24 November 1926", *Mother India*, December 5, 1962, p. 27

and the Mother never mistook the event of 24 November as the initial advent of the Supramental Divinity. This implies that the plane which got the title "Overmind" had already been known as distinguished from the Supermind.

The straightforward reading of the Mother's words at the commencement of her talk of 10 July 1957—"he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness"—is perfectly justified on Sri Aurobindo's own evidence.

The only point for which we lack direct testimony from his replies and from her talks is whether the title itself for the plane through which Krishna had manifested in the past and which now descended with him had been fixed upon in the period before the Day of Victory or even on that momentous Day.

As we saw, nowhere in the "Evening Talks" copiously recorded from memory by Purani and Chidanandam do we find the designation nor, when the records are scrutinised *as wholes*, do we discover any decisive sign that the world of the true Gods was categorised as non-supramental. How the latter situation has arisen must remain a riddle in view of Nirodbaran's correspondence. But, after looking at the correspondence, a careful consultation of Chidanandam's notes paralleling a passage in Purani from the talks in November 1926, prior to the 24th, inclines one to suspend one's doubt of the single passage where the Gods are put below the Supermind. The argument based on some other passages of his cannot still be satisfactorily met, yet Chidanandam's more elaborate record in this context leads us to qualify seriously all negative contention. From the record the following excerpts are the most relevant<sup>1</sup>

The Supreme is beyond description. That manifests as Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). This is triune, but it also forms three worlds. In the world of Sat, the beings are not separately individualised but have a divine universality. There Consciousness-force and Ananda are held back and subordinated in the manifestation. In the world of Chit, Consciousness-force becomes prominent and determines everything. In the world of Ananda, Bliss is the determinant.

Then there is the Supramental world, with the four Maha-Shaktis, aspects of the Divine Mother: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. Below the Supermind and behind the universe of Mind, Life and Matter is the world of the Great Gods. They receive light from the Supramental. It is they that govern our universe. Hindu culture represented these Gods as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva in the Puranas. What the Puranas describe as the Gopi Rasalila, the play of Krishna with the Gopis who are his devotees, is not a fact of the physical plane but of the higher and deeper planes. In the Puranas we have mental representations of truths about the Gods, but these representations point yet to the real world of the Gods. These Gods have their Ganas, the hierarchical beings.

Then comes the lower universe and with it the Devas and Asuras—the Devas

1 "Sri Aurobindo at Evening Talk", *Mother India*, July 1970, p. 332.

or Gods leading the manifestation towards its goal, and the Asuras or Demons obstructing it. It is their interaction that is described in the Puranas as the battle between the powers of Light and Darkness

The Ganas of the Gods are partial manifestations of them . .

A positive pointer to the Overmind plane as other than the Supramental cannot help being discerned here. As regards the absence of the name familiar to us, we are tempted to suppose that it was not yet coined. In Nirodbaran's correspondence itself Sri Aurobindo simply writes "Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like" in explanation of the words "the Divine" used by him and the Mother for the Power that "had come down into the material" he refrains from listing "Overmind" as what he and she could or might have "said". It is as if on a back-look rather than in reference to their *verba ipsissima* he mentions "Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent" May we not then presume that the designation was wanting not only before the Victory Day but also on that very occasion? At least its earliest available occurrence in Sri Aurobindo's writings is in an unpublished note of his, dating around the end of 1926: "Many things have still to be done before the divine gnosis can manifest in the nature It is the gnostic overmind in different forms that is now current there, it has to be transformed into the true supermind gnosis.. "

*(To be continued)*

AMAL KIRAN  
(K D SETHNA)



## THE VOICE OF A PROPHET

“To his contemporaries, his voice was that of a prophet” The prophet was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, of whom the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* further writes “His valiant Hindu heroes aroused their patriotism and pride of race. He taught that orthodox Hinduism, cleansed of excesses, was undeniably the religion of India. In him, nationalism and Hinduism merged as one, and his creed was epitomised in the song, *Bande Mataram*—Hail to the Mother.” Bankim’s Mother was none other than his Motherland. To Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram* was “the public and universal cry of awakened love of Motherland”—a song that inspired freedom fighters for over half a century from 1896 to 1947.

As a prophet, Bankim talked of socialism, equality of man and a just social order. That was more than a century ago, when Europe had also woken up to the plight of the miners, the chimney-sweepers and the rest. Europe enjoyed independence, while India lay prostrate after the failure of the 1857 uprising. Nineteen years old in 1857, Bankim witnessed the people’s suppressed feelings. *Bande Mataram* was not only an expression of those feelings but also an attempt to resurrect the people’s drooping spirits through revolutionary writings, especially his trilogy—*Anandamath* (1882), *Devi Chaudhurani* (1884) and *Sitaram* (1886)—which projects a revolt against a decadent socio-political order, often turbulent and always oppressive. If *Anandamath* was for a revolt against the East India Company sepoys, *Devi Chaudhurani* was against the rulers as they indulged in oppression in league with Company officials, while in *Sitaram*, Bankim hankers for a just social order.

As a socialist, Bankim lamented over the peasantry’s “miserable condition” with the “passion of a reformer.” He described their plight in such graphic words: “They are the people who, toiling under a mid-day sun and wading through knee-deep mud, with a pair of all-rib bullocks and a borrowed, blunted plough, are raising the crop. Are they coming in for a share of prosperity? I would say, ‘No’ Not a bit, they are not coming in for a particle of prosperity.” His biographer, S. K. Bose, says that “an advanced socialist of today might evince the same sympathy for the peasantry as Bankim did a century ago”

Bankim’s was “a most daring socialist doctrine preached in the mid-19th century in his advocacy of equality among all human beings, with birth being accidental and a man born low as much entitled to happiness as the one born rich or aristocratic. His journal, *Samya* (1879), fearlessly preached equality among castes and classes. He openly asserted ‘Equality of rights must be ensured the doors of progress must be open to all.’”

Bankim wrote *Bande Mataram* in 1875 in “a moment of patriotic inspiration” His was the voice of an angry young Indian who had seen and experienced the suppression of nationalist aspirations for the past 18 years. It was, however, three decades later that *Bande Mataram* burst into a soul-stirring call to sullen, sulking Indians to fight and liberate their mother from the British bondage. The call became a

battle-cry first under Tilak and Sri Aurobindo and later under Gandhi. In Bengal, especially during the Partition agitation, the cry of Bande Mataram filled the hearts and minds of freedom-fighters with courage, confidence and hope. This was particularly so with the revolutionaries during the Bengal Partition agitation of 1905 and after

Irrespective of caste or creed, all were injected with bubbling nationalist spirit; and many a brave soul mounted the gallows with the two words—Bande Mataram—on his lips. These words proved so magical as to have “a highly stimulating effect upon a society lying lifeless and decadent under foreign rule”.

Sri Aurobindo called Bankim “a seer and nation-builder”. He was not an active politician like his illustrious contemporary, Surendranath Banerjee. He was a great inspirer, who kept aloof from politics. To him the politics of his times was goody-goody, even petitioning and begging, about which he argued: “I can by no means say that I have no sympathy for the Congress. That it has a noble objective is beyond question. But its method of working is such that it has not become fit for mass participation. All its agitations seem to have an ephemeral look and lack in inner strength.” Bankim saw far beyond his times; and his radicalism became the precursor of the emergence of militancy under Tilak and of mass participation under Gandhi.

The Indian National Congress adopted Bande Mataram as its national anthem in 1896 at its Calcutta session. Rabindranath Tagore sang it in his “sweet but powerful voice” which “reverberated in the whole pandal, moving the audience visibly and transporting them to a higher plane of patriotism”. And for the next half a century, Bande Mataram remained the undisputed fountain-head of patriotism.

Bande Mataram (1875) preceded by a year Surendranath Banerjee’s political organisation, the Indian Association, established in 1876, and by seven years Bankim’s *Anandamath*, published in 1882. Though Bande Mataram was part of the novel, the two were unrelated to each other in the years of origin and purpose.

Equally wrong is the belief with some that Bande Mataram is idolatrous. Bankim was “no idolater”. He believed that “Idolatry was the least advanced form of worship”. His conception of the country as Durga was only symbolic: one that should have “an instinctive appeal to the Bengali mind” and suggest that God’s incarnation was “necessary only for the popular representation of his divinity”.

*Anandamath* too is “a patriotic tale of revolt solely dedicated to the country’s deliverance from foreign despotic rule”. R. C. Majumdar, a leading historian, has written: “The movement was initiated by anti-British activities of two different groups—Hindu sannyasis and Muslim fakirs, but they gained momentum from the support they received from the starving peasantry, dispossessed zamindars and disbanded soldiers.” Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal looked upon Bande Mataram as a mantra, but the mantra, Pal said, was “not a mere sound but a force”. For that, Bande Mataram has earned Bankim an immortal name.

Bankim was not a poet, but a great novelist whose fame travelled far beyond India. He was called the “Sir Walter Scott of Bengal”. R. W. Fraser considered him “the first great creative genius of modern India”. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

his novels “firmly established prose as a literary vehicle for the Bengali language and helped create in India a school of fiction on the European model.” Bankim’s greatness as a novelist rests on three achievements. First, he brought the Bengali language “down from the plane of pedantry to the plane of the people.” Second, he boldly exposed the socio-political problems of his times. And third, he “moved and moulded people through his writings.”

Bankim’s first novel, *Durgeshnandini* (1865), gave birth to the Bengali language. The second, *Kapalkundala* (1866), was a poem in prose. His *Bishabriksha* dealt with widow remarriage, while *Rajsinha* was a story of Rajput heroism and Muslim oppression. Bankim’s *Krishnacharitra* (1886), according to Fraser in *Literary History of India*, was “the crowning work of all his labours.” J. N. Farquhar, in his “Modern Religious Movements in India”, considers it “by far the most influential book of the neo-Krishna literature. a magnificent synthesis of Eastern erudition and Western scholarship a monument of his profound learning as well as religious perception.” Bankim, on his part, regarded the Gita as the holiest book in the world, and Hinduism as “basically monotheistic.”

Bankim was a staunch but a liberal Hindu. To him religion did not mean “formal adherence to outward show and ritualism.” But he inspired revival of neo-Hinduism in the advocacy of “assertive Hinduism.” By that he did not mean anti-Muslim or anti-Christian Hinduism. Because of its pacific traditions, secular character and belief in non-conversion of others to its faith, Hinduism could not have class conflict with non-Hindus. By “assertive Hinduism”, Bankim perhaps believed in the Hindus’ asserting their right to hold up their heads with dignity and honour, as he himself practised, even as a magistrate in the British Government, without fear. One day he was returning from office in his palanquin when a ball hit its door. Some European soldiers were playing cricket under Col. Duffrin, the Commanding Officer of the cantonment. Bankim jumped out of the palanquin and reprimanded the colonel. Being challenged by a native, Duffrin caught hold of Bankim’s hand and turned him back. Bankim sued him and made him apologise in the open court.

As a battle-cry during the Bengal Partition agitation, *Bande Mataram* roused overnight the people from all classes to a new consciousness of their political status and they rose in ‘revolt’ seething with anger and with a do-or-die determination. The day Partition came into effect—16 October 1905—“no hearth-fire was lit in Bengal as a mark of protest. batches of volunteers went about singing the exalted song.”

Motilal Nehru was so impressed with this spontaneous upsurge that he called it “a wonder of the age”. Will Durant was no less appreciative in his evaluation that the Partition agitation was the beginning of the Indian Revolution. The Muslims were as much a part of it as the Hindus. They joined their Hindu brethren in shouting *Bande Mataram* while marching in protest “side by side and facing oppression” together. Maulana Syed Fazlur Rahaman made it clear that *Bande Mataram* did not “smack of idol worship”; it was “an expression of love for the Motherland.”

Yet, to appease the fundamentalists, a heated controversy took place in the

Congress Working Committee in October 1937. A compromise was reached in the decision that only the first two stanzas be sung. Earlier the CWC had admitted that *Bande Mataram* was ‘‘a living and an inseparable part of our national movement’’, also, that ‘‘innumerable instances of sacrifice and suffering all over the country have been associated with *Bande Mataram*’’. In vain did Gandhi and Nehru make bold statements in support of *Bande Mataram*. The compromise, instead of settling the controversy for good, aggravated matters in the post-independence years. For many years *Bande Mataram* was not allowed to be sung in the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

To Gandhi, *Bande Mataram*, ‘‘apart from its wonderful associations, expresses the one national wish: the rise of India to her full height’’. Nehru too admitted that ‘‘the whole song and all the words in it are thoroughly harmless and nobody can take exception to their meaning’’. Nehru further admitted: ‘‘The *Bande Mataram* song, officially speaking, has become a far greater part of our national movement than it was at any time before.’’ He repeated in August 1948 that *Bande Mataram* was ‘‘obviously and indisputably the premier national song of India with a great historical tradition, it was intimately connected with our struggle for freedom. That position it is bound to retain and no other song can displace it.’’ And yet it had to yield that position to ‘‘*Jana Gana Mana*’’; it was even placed on a par with Iqbal’s ‘‘*Sare Jahanse Accha Hindustan Hamara*’’.

Bankim’s song was given the pride of place it deserved at the midnight hour of 14-15 August 1947 when, sung by Sucheta Kripalani, it ushered in India’s independence. Tagore’s song, as also that of Iqbal, could not have had that claim. Both had a somewhat murky past. Although he sang his song at the 1911 Calcutta Congress, Tagore had composed it for the Delhi Durbar, held during the same year, in appreciation of the King’s annulment of the Bengal Partition. Iqbal had drawn inspiration from the burning patriotism of Lala Hardayal, the great intellectual and revolutionary. But the song changed its colour from pure nationalism to Pan-Islamism in the Twenties under the influence of the Khilafat movement. The new song breathed the Islamic spirit of religious dominance. Its opening lines read: *China-Arab hamara, Hindustan hamara, Muslim hain hum, watan hai sara jahan hamara* (from China to Arabia the whole territory is ours, India is ours; we are Muslims; the whole world is ours)

Since the Bengal Partition agitation of 1905, *Bande Mataram* had become ‘‘a symbol of a new movement not only in Bengal, but all over India’’. Tilak stated that ‘‘it has been adopted by the Marathas and new words can now be found inscribed on the temple of the great Shivaji at Raigarh’’. Far in the South, Subramania Bharathi was so inspired that he wrote a Tamil version of *Bande Mataram*. In the North-West, the people were equally moved, and many responded to the call of the leaders by boycotting foreign cloth. *Bande Mataram* thus forged a sense of common identity among the Indians from east, south, north and west and there were hopeful prospects of Indians binding themselves into a single nationhood: One Country, One People in Free India

A many-sided genius, Bankim gave us not only his immortal song—Bande Mataram—but many more things. His novels had patriotic heroes who moulded people's thoughts and characters. As an ardent socialist, he believed in a new socio-economic-political order, very much revolutionary for the times he lived in.

As a model administrator, he was a magistrate for 33 long years, delivering justice fearlessly as a no-nonsense judge. And as a neo-Hindu, he practised what he preached. "assertive Hinduism". He bravely challenged proud, haughty English bureaucrats. Since he strictly adhered to truth and right action, the Government could never find fault with his actions against the erring British. After his clash with Collector Baker in 1888, he sought early retirement, which was granted reluctantly in 1890. He was only 52.

Four years later, this great son of India passed away at the age of 56 in April 1894. His greatness and popularity brought about "an upsurge of sorrow not easily to be matched". The magic of his pen had kept millions spellbound for two and a half decades; his reputation as a bold, courageous magistrate earned him the respect of all—the Government and the people alike. On his death, this "shining star" set, but its blazing trail continued to illuminate the path of many Tilakites and Gandhites. Today, when many of the Indian leaders have started retreating into the pages of history, Bankim continues to live and shine, and shall do so as long as Bande Mataram lives.

Bande Mataram's magical appeal emerges from its being a hymn, not a sermon, in praise of the mother—the Motherland—which touches and elevates the soul. A parallel is the recent experience of some American Protestants, for whom "the best-loved Church book is not the Bible, but a hymn from an inspired writer who speaks directly to the soul." Bankim and his Bande Mataram play exactly the same role

B KRISHNA

(Courtesy, *The Hindu*)

## DURGA IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

In Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri, passing onwards in her spirit's upward route after meeting the Mother of Sorrows, meets the Mother of Might:

on a boulder carved like a huge throne  
A Woman sat in gold and purple sheen,  
Armed with the trident and the thunderbolt,  
Her feet upon a couchant lion's back  
A formidable smile curved round her lips,  
Heaven-fire laughed in the corners of her eyes,  
Her body a mass of courage and heavenly strength,  
She menaced the triumph of the nether gods

(*Savitri*, p 508)

Obviously it is the Durga-aspect of the Divine Mother.

A halo of lightning flamed around her head  
And sovereignty, a great cestus, zoned her robe  
And majesty and victory sat with her  
Guarding in the wide cosmic battlefield  
Against the flat equality of Death  
And the all-levelling insurgent Night  
The hierarchy of the ordered Powers,  
The high changeless values, the peaked eminences.

(*Ibid*)

So that is Durga, the Slayer of the Asuras. She is there on the cosmic battlefield, engaged in the continuous fight between the Gods and the Asuras, between the armies of Light and the armies of Darkness. Revealing herself, she speaks in a voice 'like a war-cry' or 'a pilgrim chant'

I smite the Titan who bestrides the world  
And slay the ogre in his blood-stained den  
I am Durga, goddess of the proud and strong,  
And Lakshmi, queen of the fair and fortunate;  
I wear the face of Kali when I kill,  
I trample the corpses of the demon hordes.  
I am charged by God to do his mighty work

(*Ibid*, p 509)

In God's mighty work Durga tolerates the opposition of none, not even of the Gods. Says she

Uncaring I serve his will who sent me forth,  
 Reckless of peril and earthly consequence  
 I reason not of virtue and of sin  
 But do the deed he has put into my heart.  
 I fear not for the angry frown of Heaven,  
 I flinch not from the red assault of Hell,  
 I crush the opposition of the gods,  
 Tread down a million goblin obstacles  
 I guide man to the path of the Divine  
 And guard him from the red Wolf and the Snake

(*Ibid* , pp 509-10)

Durga is also the Saviour in the physical world. She delivers us from tyrants: that is the aspect in which She was called by Sri Aurobindo in the days of India's struggle for independence early this century. In his *Hymn to Durga* written in that period, he invoked Durga who tramples tyrants and oppressors with 'the armed heel of Fate'.

(*Ibid* , p 509)

Here are her words of assurance in *Savitri*:

My ear is leaned to the cry of the oppressed,  
 I topple down the thrones of tyrant kings.  
 A cry comes from proscribed and hunted lives  
 Appealing to me against a pitiless world,  
 A voice of the forsaken and the desolate  
 And the lone prisoner in his dungeon cell  
 Men hail in my coming the Almighty's force  
 Or praise with thankful tears his saviour Grace

(*Ibid* )

In the dawn of the destined date when Satyavan had to die, Savitri gazed into her past, and

Then silently she rose and, service done,  
 Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved  
 By Satyavan upon a forest stone  
 What prayer she breathed her soul and Durga knew.

(*Ibid* , p 561)

Her prayer and Durga's answer we can guess and confirm when the momentous day is over. Savitri does not accept the decision of the Lord of Death to snatch Satyavan away from the life on earth and, finally, Satyavan is given back to her and to the world. Savitri descends from the higher regions with the soul of Satyavan.

In the return journey, although the names of Krishna and Kali are not mentioned, they are the godheads looking after her Krishna, the ever delightful, and Kali, “the dark terrible Mother of life”, the “World-Puissance on almighty Shiva’s lap”, and the one whose enormous dance steps on Shiva’s breast are these

Pursuing her in her fall, implacably sweet,  
 A face was over her which seemed a youth’s,  
 Symbol of all the beauty eyes see not,  
 Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue  
 Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile  
 Insatiably attracted to delight,  
 Voluptuous to the embraces of her soul  
 Changed in its shape, yet rapturously the same,  
 It grew a woman’s dark and beautiful  
 Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds,  
 A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,  
 Turbulent in will and terrible in love  
 Eyes in which Nature’s blind ecstatic life  
 Sprang from some spirit’s passionate content,  
 Missioned her to the whirling dance of earth

*(Ibid , p 711)*

SHYAM SUNDAR JHUNJHUNWALA



## THE WAGER OF AMBROSIA

(Continued from the issue of July 1997)

### V. OBEISANCES TO THE DIVINE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

THE tree of literature was planted by the great Seer and now it is bearing rich and ripe fruits of sweetness. And what a wonder this book of the Gita is! Praise be to it, all praise – *bāpa bāpa grantha gītā*, as Jnaneshwar says. The Lord himself is the revealer of the supreme creative-formative Truth which even the Vedas cannot seize, the Word that ushers divinity in a tranquil poise of unfolding phenomenalilty of this creation. But when the Lord comes, he comes not only as a Teacher with the executive Word; his dynamism is there in full operation of an active person who can accomplish the world-fulfilling task. The Avatar takes directly the charge of all the thousand forces raging here in a complex play of possibilities pulling in every direction. He stands on the battlefield in his winning might. The Wielder of the Wheel of Right Seeing, *sudarshana chakra*, as a weapon of sure victory, he is in the midst of warring nations to decide their fate and the fate of the world. When in the cycles of Godward march Time arrives at an epoch-making moment, he indeed assumes a terrible form to destroy the past standing in the way. But the Lord is also a Friend and a Comrade-in-Arms. He can be very intimate and obliging to the one who is his favourite, who loves him unreservedly, who identifies himself with him, as in oneness of sunshine with the sun. Arjuna would address him in endearing terms as “O Krishna, O Yadava, O Comrade”; he would speak to him in jest and be informal “at party, on the couch, and the seat and the banquet” Now he makes himself bold and asks him to show him his universal Form. No doubt, he is present in essentiality and in every detail in this creation and there is nought but he,—as the inner experience recognises it to be so. But at this crucial stage that experience does not seem to be sufficient; it ought to become perceptible and concrete as a working proposition; it is necessary that the giver of the experience becomes visible to the seeing eye as well.

हे सर्व ही सर्वेश्वर । ऐसा प्रतीतिगत जो प्रतिकरु । तो बाहेरी होआवा गोचर । लोचनासी ॥

*Jnaneshwar:* 11 29

Arjuna has already been told about the Power that upholds dynamic omnipotence in the manifold nature of its being, he knows also about the Vibhūtis, the special souls, who take birth to accomplish special works in this world, transient and unhappy, full of sorrow and suffering as it is. But now it is imperative that Arjuna should see the supreme Person; the Time-Spirit should stand in front of him, in great glory, ready to strike and destroy all that is wicked

and evil, the one aim being the establishment of the Law of Righteousness. The Avatar also considers that there is, in a way of speaking, a certain necessity to fulfil the wish of the accepted soul for the good of the work itself. Of course, and more importantly, there is an occult dimension to it and whatever is to be done bears in it its connotation and its significance. In the interest of that work the command to the chosen instrument to go into world action has to come from the world-active spirit itself. In fact, it will be a supreme command and the revelation of its absolute supremacy will thus prove its undefeatable inevitability; then only will it turn out to be a direct action of the Transcendent. Such a moment has now arrived for the high involvement and only in that high involvement will this world be carried forward in a decisive way. The Transcendent's action is going to yield the Transcendent's result. Arjuna is called, explains Sri Aurobindo,

. . . to self-knowledge; he must see God as the Master of the universe and the origin of the world's creatures and happenings, all as the Godhead's self-expression in Nature, God in all, God in himself as man and as Vibhuti, God in the lownesses of being and on its heights, God on the topmost summits, man too upon heights as the Vibhuti and climbing to the last summits in the supreme liberation and union. Time in its creation and destruction must be seen by him as the figure of the Godhead in its steps,—steps that accomplish the cycles of the cosmos on whose spires of movement the divine spirit in the human body rises doing God's work in the worlds as his Vibhuti to the supreme transcendences. This knowledge has been given; the Time-figure of the Godhead is now to be revealed and from the million mouths of that figure will issue the command for the appointed action to the liberated Vibhuti. (*Essays on the Gita*, SABCL, Vol 13, p 362)

When the battle was about to begin Arjuna had succumbed to an unusual infirmity, had fallen into the Slough of Despond; in that state of dolour he wanted to renounce everything, flee from the terrible action of killing his own kith and kin and his elders and his preceptors who had taken their positions in the opposite camp. But the divine charioteer first rebukes him and then, putting him gradually in a proper frame of mind, exhorts that he cannot run away from the dharma of his soul, the dharma of the individual in which alone is his true salvation and his fulfilment. Arjuna has come around and the delusion in which he was trapped has been dispelled. He says so, that by the profound utterances of the Teacher he has regained his original sense of proportionality, recovered his native consciousness; he has become *adhyātmasanjnavāna*, aware of the spiritual basis of things and actions. Arjuna, in the words of Jnaneshwar, says:

O rich Treasure of Graciousness, you have for my sake spoken what is

beyond speech. Where the great senses dry up, in the Eternal, and where the central being and the first executive power stay without activity, in that supreme Person indeed is the last form to be seen. Until now it was held back from view, like a miser's hoard in the region of the heart; it was kept away even from the Word of the Veda, for which Hari gave up all his rich and splendid royalty; that precious thing, O Lord, you have given me without another consideration. It was boastful, and egoistic, of me to have said that even if the heavens were to fall, and the universe to sink, or the seven seas mingle and merge into one another, I would not take weapons against my own kindred and relations. But you have woken me up and I have come to my senses. Now, entering into the sanctum sanctorum of your Temple, I am getting the true and full experience of the Delight of Existence, *brahmarasa*. It is your victory and fame, your glory that the Vedas wear as a piece of strong and durable cloth. Presently, a keen desire has possessed me and for its fulfilment if it is not to you, then to whom do I turn? to whom else can I frankly express it? Can a fish feel shy of water, or does a babe have embarrassment in suckling from the mother's breast? So let me request you to show me your form eulogised by the Upanishads, from which you come to remove obstacles in the paths of the gods, the form which can be likened to capital, *muddal*, out of which is paid their interest, two-armed or four-armed as you come I am impatient to behold that shape of yours which is indeed a fathomless mystery to all.

In a sequel to this supplication of Arjuna, Jnaneshwar writes:

And lo, the wonder! As if an ocean rose up in waves under the full moon, the Lord let himself surge in divine love to satisfy the wish of his fond and very dear friend, exceptional as he was amidst others. When a person leaves behind the waking condition and enters into a dream state, he identifies himself in it with all its objects; in the same manner the Avatar on the battlefield became all that is, *brahmakatāha*. That is the richness, the plenty, the luminous opulence of his Yogic action, *yogardhī*, and Arjuna had the good fortune to be given a glimpse of it.

In brief, that is how Jnaneshwar expounds, in about one hundred and twenty-five *owis*, the first four shlokas of the eleventh chapter of the Gita. While the presentation runs smoothly with calm unperturbed spontaneity, and there are at a number of places Yogic-intuitive flashes caught in perfect language, we cannot say that the poetry is throughout "Overhead" In fact, one starts wondering whether the text did not get corrupted in the hands of lesser composers or reciters. This is an aspect which needs to be further looked into and researched.

Take an example. The last shloka of the chapter is an invitation to Arjuna

and so to us, for complete surrender to the Lord who resides everywhere and in everything. When a bhakta sees me in such a manner, assures the Teacher, he finally comes to me. Jnaneshwar expounds upon it and says that the devotee, even as his three elements disappear at the end, attains oneness with me, becomes me:

ऐसा जो भक्तु होये । तयाचे त्रिधातुक हे जै जाये । तै मीचि होऊनि ठाये । पाडवा गा ॥

*Jnaneshwar*: 11 699

Commentators take the word *tridhātu*, the three elements constituting the bodily existence, in the Ayurvedic sense of phlegm, wind and bile. Not that this is totally baseless; but it cannot be the whole spiritual or occult sense intended by the poet who is also a Yogi. Mere dissolution of the chemical substances of the body can never be sufficient for such a high attainment as oneness with the supreme Person. There are a number of sheaths of the human body and these have to be abandoned before that state is reached. Behind the gross physical form, *sthūla*, is the subtle body, *sūkshma*, and then is the causal body, *kāraṇa*. When the evolutionary soul merges into the Eternal these forms have to go away and it is this fact which Jnaneshwar must have intended in the use of *tridhātu*. The term *tridhātu* has a Vedic connotation also; it describes the Transcendent in the triple state of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Sachchidananda, but that cannot be the sense in the present context. The problem of editing *Jnaneshwar* is therefore still an open issue. Homogeneity of style, the character of high spiritual substance, the freshness of idiomatic form, the revealing power of the phrase and the symbol, all these will have to be perceptively recognised if we are to expunge what is weak or goody-goody, or immature, lacking the vigour of the breath of the spirit. We should of course bear in mind that the young author had never revised his work at any later stage – he lived only for six years more after the composition was completed – and what we have is only whatever had come in the first flush of the inspiration. At present let us, however, take a few examples of the great poetry that we have in this chapter

The Lord of the universe has presented himself in his universal Form. Arjuna is given the divine eye, *divya chakṣu*, to behold its splendour, proverbially put as brighter than that of a thousand suns. The infinite Godhead's endless and middleless and beginningless majesty is everywhere in its magnificence and in its beauty, and in its terrible aspect too. All the wonders of existence grow in his wideness, in the likeness of his own person. Arjuna wishes to know who this person is and what his will is in this present working. Whatever that will be, he knows, it will bear the full charge and will have the power to achieve the intended result, the purpose of divinity in the Time-process. It may forebode destruction; but it will be a "reassuring reality behind this face of death and this destruction,"—avows ŚRĪ Aurobindo. Arjuna bows down and offers his prayers to the Lord, to whom the gods and the fulfilled beings and the Rishis give praise,

chant hymns of benedictive glory, with the *swasti*-utterances. Even as the Vision in front of Arjuna grows more and more wide in its transcendent dimensions, we also hear in Vyasa the ring of Overmind poetry manifoldly expressing that unseizable Greatness:

स्थाने हृषीकेश तव प्रकीर्त्या जगत्प्रहृष्यत्यनुरज्यते च ।  
 रक्षासि भीतानि दिशो द्रवति सर्वे नमस्यति च सिद्धसंघाः ॥  
 कस्माच्च ते न नमेरन्महात्मन् गरीयसे ब्रह्मणोऽप्यादिकर्त्रे ।  
 अनन्त देवेश जगन्निवास त्वमक्षरं सदसत्तत्पर यत् ॥  
 त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराणस्त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।  
 वेत्तासि वेद्यं च पर च धाम त्वया तत विश्वमनंतरूप ॥  
 वायुर्यमोऽग्निर्वरुणः शशांकः प्रजापतिस्त्वं प्रपितामहश्च ।  
 नमो नमस्तेऽस्तु सहस्रकृत्वः पुनश्च भूयोऽपि नमो नमस्ते ॥  
 नम पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व ।  
 अनतवीर्यामित विक्रमस्त्वं सर्वं समाप्नोषि ततोऽसि सर्वः ॥

Rightly and in good place, O Krishna, does the world rejoice and take pleasure in thy name, the Rakshasas are fleeing from thee in terror to all the quarters and the companies of the Siddhas bow down before thee in adoration. How should they not do thee homage, O great Spirit? For thou art the original Creator and Doer of works and greater even than creative Brahma. O thou Infinite, O thou Lord of the gods, O thou abode of the universe, thou art the Immutable and thou art what is and is not and thou art that which is the Supreme. Thou art the ancient Soul and the first and original Godhead and the supreme resting-place of this All; thou art the knower and that which is to be known and the highest status; O infinite in form, by thee was extended the universe. Thou art Yama and Vayu and Agni and Soma and Varuna and Prajapati, father of creatures, and the great-grandsire Salutation to thee a thousand times over and again and yet again salutation, in front and behind and from every side, for thou art each and all that is. Infinite in might and immeasurable in strength of action thou pervadest all and art every one. (*The Gita*, Chapter 11, Verses 36-40; *Essays on the Gita*, SABCL, Vol 13, p. 374)

We very briefly present, by way of illustration, relevant verses from *Jnaneshwari*, verses that so feelingly and superbly render these shlokas into Marathi, in which poetry rises to another grandeur of the gracious and felicitous spiritual:

O Lord, the living world, even livingly instinct as it is with life, does hold you endearingly in adoration; and more and more you destroy them, those

who are evil-minded and wicked. There is a great fear of you, O Hrishikesha, in the heart of the demons of the three worlds and, because of it, beyond the ten directions are they fleeing. And others, the gods and human beings, the celestial musicians, the realized souls, the sages and seers, as well as all that is fixed or moving, every object and creature,—I see that they are very exultantly bowing to you.. From where issue forth manifold universes, in various lines, spreading out as creepers of the great formative elements, in that primal existence has the Will of the Divine conceived. Lord, you are the measureless Quality, without an end in any extension; Lord, you are the calm and even Spirit, the same in each and every aspect, in all the aspects; you are indeed the supreme God of gods. You are the abode of the three creations, you are the ever-auspicious and benign, you are the imperishable substance and cause of what is; you are the Being and the Non-Being; verily, you are beyond the reach of them all. In you is the origin of Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, what defines the creative principle in its power of manifestation, that you are; you yourself are without a beginning, O Ancient of Days. You are the life-breath of this entire universe, in you is the manifold treasure of the human soul; the knowledge of the past and the future, and the works of Time, all that is at your command. Pleasing and happy is your person to the eye of the revealed Scripture, O Indescribable, O Undifferentiable, and in you repose those three worlds, O you its splendid Abode. That is why at the end of the cycles of creation she, the Executrix, the most Excellent, withdraws into you, her retreat and her dwelling place. In other words, O Lord, you are the originator of this whole cosmos, one in infinite forms, and therefore who can really extol your vastness and your grandeur and majesty? Is there a thing in which you are not, or a piece of ground or stead or site vacant of you? Therefore, in whatever way you be and in whichever manner you abide or conform, it is to you that such a praise do I offer. O Lord, unbounded and eternal, you are Vayu the All-Pervasive and you are Yama the Ordainer and, living in creature-kind, you are Agni. Varuna the Ruler over the Waters you are, and Soma the Moon-God. You are the Creator as Brahma and even beyond him, that Supreme, you are; you are yourself the begetter of the great Grandsire. O Master of the Universe, besides this existence, all that is visible or invisible, all that has taken shape or is without it, to you I offer my obeisances.

Continues Jnaneshwar:

In this way, and with a heart full of devotion, and with loving respect, did Arjuna bow and express his feelings, saying “Obeisances to you, O Lord, my obeisances, again and again.” Looking at that gracious incarnate form

in every detail, he repeatedly said, "Obeisances to you, O Lord, my obeisances, again and again." One by one as he beheld the several parts of the deity, and with a pleased and calm unperturbed mind, he said once more, "Obeisances to you, O Lord, my obeisances, again and again." Seeing the entire creation in him, inanimate and animate beings in a like manner, he said, "Obeisances to you, O Lord, my obeisances, again and again." Amazed, such wonderful forms as he saw in the Infinite, to them, to them, marvellingly, he said, "Obeisances, obeisances." He could neither gather memory to praise more nor, dumbfounded, could he just remain quiet, without uttering a single word; instead, in a strain of fond affectionate intimacy, he simply sang, proclaiming that glory and that greatness. Or else, in this emotion-filled state, he bowed a thousand times and said, again and again, "Obeisances to you, O Srihari, whom I see standing before me, face to face. It perhaps serves no purpose to know if there is anterior or posterior, that God has front or rear, and therefore, O Master, my obeisances to you that you are at my back. It may so happen that you would be behind me and hence I would speak of it that way; but it cannot be really said that there is a front or rear for you in the world. It is impossible indeed to enumerate your several limbs and parts and aspects and that is why, yet making a count, obeisances to you residing in all. You are the ardour and the forward-moving will, O Almighty, and your triumph is interminable; you are the same essentiality, always and in all, and obeisances be to you, O one having all forms. It is in the wideness of the sky that the sky itself becomes space, at the same time pervading it fully; in that way are you present here in every respect. Or else, like the ocean of milk that bears only the waves of milk, so in all, or in the whole, there is nothing but you. That is why nought is there different from you, O Lord; you cannot be separate from what is. My good sense now recognises that, indeed, you are everything.

देवा जियालेपणे जग । धरी तुझा ठायी अनुराग । आणि दुष्टा तया भग । अधिकाधिक ॥  
 पै त्रिभुवनींचिया राक्षसा । महाभय तूं हृषीकेशा । म्हणोनि पळताती दिशा । पैलीकडे ॥  
 येथ सुर सिद्ध किन्नर । किंबहुना चराचर । ते तुज देखोनि हर्षनिर्भर । नमस्कारित असती ॥  
 जेथून नाना सृष्टींचिया वोळी । पसरती भूतग्रामाचिया वेली । तया महद्ब्रह्माते व्याली । दैविकी इच्छा ॥  
 देवो नि सीम तत्त्व सदोदितु । देवो निःसीमगुण अनतु ॥ देवो नि सीमसाम्य सततु । नेरद्र देवांचा ॥  
 जी तू त्रिजगतिथे वोलावा । अक्षर तू सदाशिवा । तूचि संतासत देवा । तयाही अतीत ते तू ॥  
 प्रकृतिपुरुषाचां आदी । जी महत्तत्वा तूचि अवधि । स्वये तूं अनादि । पुरातनु ॥  
 सकळ विश्वजीवन । जीवासि तूचि निधान । भूतभविष्याचे ज्ञान । तुझ्याचि हातीं ॥  
 जी श्रुतींचिया लोचना । स्वरूपसुख तूं अभिन्ना । त्रिभुवनाचिया आयतना । आयतन तू ॥  
 म्हणोनि जी परम । तूते म्हणजे महाधाम । कल्पाती महद्ब्रह्म । तुझा अंकी रिगे ॥  
 किंबहुना देवे । विश्व विस्तारिले आहे आघवे । अनतरूपा वानावे । कवणे तू ते ॥  
 जी काय एक तूं नव्हसी । तू कवणे ठायी गा नससी । हें असो जैसा आहासी । तैसिया नमो ॥

वायु तूं अनंता । यम तूं नियमिता । प्राणिगणीं वसता ॥ अग्नि जी तूं ॥  
 वरुण तूं सोम । स्रष्टा तूं ब्रह्म । पितामहाचाही परम । आदिजनक तूं ॥  
 आणीकही जे जे कांहीं । रूप आथी अथवा नाहीं । तया नमो तुज तैसयाही । जगन्नाथा ॥  
 ऐसैं सानुरागे चित्तें । स्तवन केले पाडुसुते । मग पुढती म्हणे नमस्ते । नमस्ते प्रभो ॥  
 पाठी तिथे साद्यते । न्याहाळी श्रीमूर्तीति । आणि पुढती म्हणे नमस्ते । नमस्ते प्रभो ॥  
 पाहतां पाहता प्रार्तें । समाधान पावे चित्ते । आणि पुढती म्हणे नमस्ते । नमस्ते प्रभो ॥  
 इथे चराचरीं समस्ते । अखडिता देखे तयाते । आणि पुढती म्हणे नमस्ते । नमस्ते प्रभो ॥  
 ऐसीं रूपे तिथे अद्भुते । आश्चर्ये स्फुरती अनते । तव तव नमस्ते । नमस्तेचि म्हणे ॥  
 आणिक स्तुति नाठवे । आणि निवांतुही न बैसवे । नेणे कैसा प्रेमभावे । गाजोचि लागे ॥  
 किंबहुना इयापरी । नमन केले सहस्रवरी । की पुढती म्हणे श्रीहरी । तुज सन्मुखा नमो ॥  
 देवासि पाठी पोट आथि कीं नाही । येणे उपयोगु आम्हा काई । तरि तुज पाठिमोरेयाही । नमो स्वामी ॥  
 उभा माझिये पाठीसीं । म्हणोनि पाठिमोरे म्हणावे तुम्हांसी । सन्मुख विमुख जगेसी । न घडे तुज ॥  
 आता वेगळालिया अवेवां । नेणे रूप करूं देवा । म्हणोनि नमो तुज सर्वा । सर्वात्मका ॥  
 जी अनंतबळसंभ्रमा । तुज नमो अमितविक्रमा । सकळकाळीं समा । सर्वदेवा ॥  
 आघवां अवकाशी जैसे । अवकाशचि होऊनि आकाश असे । तूं सर्वपणे तैसे । पातलासि सर्व ॥  
 किंबहुना केवळ । सर्व हे तूचि निखिळ । परि क्षीरणवीं कल्लोळ । पयाचे जैसे ॥  
 म्हणोनिया देवा । तूं वेगळा नव्हसी सर्वा । हैं आलें मज सद्भावा । आता तूचि सर्व ॥

*Jnaneswari: 11.504-536*

If we compare the original Sanskrit verses with the Marathi *owis*, we at once recognise the new element that has entered into spiritual poetry. There is sublimity in both. But one is solid and luminously dense, the rhythm coming from the oceanic movement of sound, infinitely widening in its gleaming surges of meaning and sense with their massiveness yet remaining subtly fluent in its greatness and in its gracefulness; the other is lyric-delightful. In one is the spiritual force, Tapas Shakti; in the other the upward winging of the happy psychic, the soul of adoration freely breathing the ethereality of deep blue spiritual skies. To the language of the Spirit has now been made available the beautiful song of the Psychic.

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE



# “SUNDERING OF THE HEART STRINGS”

## PART II

(Continued from the issue of July 1997)

I LEARNT about “Sundering of the Heart-Strings” first from Amal Kiran. The importance of this step he has described beautifully in some of his personal letters to spiritual aspirants. Many of these have been published in *Mother India* under the title *Life, Poetry, Yoga* and later in two books under the same title. Whatever Amal Kiran writes in his personal letters is always, as he has himself said, based on his own experience. I give now excerpts from his letters on this subject

15.10.1995:

From a letter written to a sadhak who had recently lost his spouse.

To be free has two aspects. One is that you are not any more under her guiding and cheering eye; you have to be your own beloved. The other aspect is that the personal attachment has to change into an intense giving up of the beloved into the Mother’s arms. You may remember I spoke of the knot of the heart-strings being rent asunder, so that the mortal, set free from himself and thus from all claims and clutches, may partake of the Vast that is Bliss and the Bliss that is Immortality

3 3.1986.

Your mention of loneliness and aloneness calls forth a few distinctions in my mind. The former (loneliness) involves a strong sense of the physical absence of the loved ones, the latter (aloneness) the feeling of freedom from bondage to even these and at the same time the glad recognition of their ever-presence of soul along with oneself in the depths of the Divine. Loneliness carries a bitter-sweet of memory, aloneness an entry, small or large—into an inner realm where one loses all loss not because one is oblivious but because there is no need to recall anything: one touches or penetrates a wideness of all-possession within a more-than-human reality

19.3 1988:

In another letter he explains the same theme recounting his own experience of bereavement many years ago and continues to state his present experience following the death of someone very near to him

When Sehra died, one of the results was the rending of the knot of the heart-strings, which is said in the Upanishad to enable a mortal even in this body to enjoy immortality. But the heart-strings have a tendency to come together once more—to form at least little knots here and there even if the central one is rent. For quite a time I

was feeling them on certain occasions. They did not cover up the vast tranquil background in which the being stands with the self-offered soul in front facing the personal godhead. Neither was any interference felt between the luminous inspiring infinity above and this double stance below. But vaguely, dumbly a sense of something missing, the lack of a finishing touch haunted me and often a prayer would arise: "Make me completely free." The prolonged inward going of the last nine days have brought a quietly keen and effortlessly sweet knife to those small stray entanglements. It is as if in a fundamental manner Dhun's tragic and mysterious death has made me die into a new life, not making me cold or self-centred or even really distant but giving me in the midst of all relationships and all commerce with common things a boundless liberty which the very body has the sensation of enjoying.

15.3 1989.

While further elucidating this subject Amal Kiran says

The Upanishad's saying is "When the knot of the heart-strings is rent asunder, the mortal, even in this body, enjoys immortality." The rending takes place either by a spontaneous growth of the being—a calm detachment from the world and a happy devotion to the Divine—or by a stroke of circumstances, causing keen disappointment and deep distress. The first way is naturally straight, the second may be quite winding. For the stroke may not drive home the Gita's high liberating world-pessimism: "Thou that hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and worship Me." It may make one yearn for a better experience with one's fellow-creatures or with Life's chances. Then it takes long to "enjoy immortality"—that is, to come into close warm touch with one's psychic being or into a wide cool contact with the single Self of selves and thus experience something within one that is for ever and participates in the Ultimate Reality. Of course, this experiencing may not be full at once, but even a hint or glint of feeling.

Rapt thoughtless, wordless, into the Eternal's breast

is enough to make one know the world of difference between the grip of the world's illusion and the breakthrough into a Beyond.

With most of us, the way to inner freedom is a mixture of a sincere attempt to walk without crutches and a forcible taking away of crutches by "fate". Yes, our attempt is sincere, but we are not prepared for quick results. We want a slow independence of props. The Spirit presiding over yoga is not averse to giving us time, but when it notes that the central part of us is ready for a leap and that only peripheral parts are holding us back it lets circumstances so shape themselves that we get pushed into crutchlessness and are forced to find the needed balance or unaided walking. The state into which we are thrust is not easy to cope with, but if we attend to the call with which it comes—the call to take our consciousness deeper in order to draw the necessary strength to meet the new outer situation—the going on without comfortable props will be less painful than it

is likely to be on account of the sudden push towards developing stronger legs

Are you answering sufficiently the more inward pull which would make this push more bearable? Here some relevance may be discerned of my comment “Not to think of living but only of loving will take you out of the world where life problems exist.” For a turn of events may be such as to put you ill at ease and someone you love may do things you never expected and may thus take on an unlovable aspect. At this crisis-point of the heart, the soul’s capacity to love without demand has to come to the fore, replacing the emotional self’s demand that the one you love should prove worthy of being loved, as then alone living would be worthwhile. If you can get beyond wanting such a rationale for life and let the psychic being’s “joy without a cause” relate itself to your immediate circle in the form of “love without reason” you will get out of the grip of the world of life-problems. To effect the change one’s personal effort is required, but it must mainly be directed towards putting one’s various personalities—mental, vital, physical—more and more into the Mother’s ever-stretched-out hands of help. In other words, the effort is towards becoming free of effort—towards getting those hands to come closer and closer and catch hold increasingly of all one’s personalities. This would be the dynamic, active surrender which I have spoken of—the constant happy cry to be at all moments the Mother’s child

In another letter, after saying, “Then it takes long to ‘enjoy immortality’—that is, to come into close warm touch with one’s psychic being or into wide cool contact with the single Self of selves and thus experience something within one that is for ever and participates in the Ultimate Reality”, Amal Kiran explains what happens when one comes into “close warm touch with one’s psychic being”:

Yes, the heart-strings are rent asunder again and again till the dawn comes when the Sadhak starts realising with increasing intensity and fullness what the Mundaka Upanishad describes in the last three verses of chapter two, the awareness of the glory of glories.

These I quote as translated by Sri Aurobindo.

Verse 10. “In a supreme golden sheath the Brahman lies, stainless, without parts  
A Splendour is That It is the Light of Lights, it is That which the self-knowers know.”

Verse 11 “There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind, there these lightnings flash not, how then shall burn this earthly fire? All that shines is but the shadow of his shining; all this universe is effulgent with his light.”

And that most marvellous of all, Verse 12

“All this is Brahman immortal, naught else; Brahman is in front of us, Brahman behind us, and to the south of us and to the north of us (or to the right and the left of us) and below us and above us; it stretches everywhere. All this is Brahman alone, all this magnificent universe—*Brahmaiva idam sarvam varishtham.*”

Finally, and as concluding remarks, this is what Amal Kiran says:

The wisdom of the Upanishad has laid down “When the knot of the heart-strings is rent asunder, then the mortal, even in this body, enjoys immortality ” (For the ancients, Greeks like Aristotle and possibly in the Vedic period also, it was the heart and not the brain that was the seat of not only feelings but also thoughts.)

In the ancient Indian idea, the mortal is not simply one who undergoes mortality, the death of the body, nor is the immortal merely he who survives the body’s dissolution. Ancient India always knew that something survived when the body dissolved. This something underwent a series of births and deaths. repeated birth and death constituted mortality. To be immortal meant reaching a state of consciousness which was free from this cycle—a state beyond both birth and death, no matter if one were still in a body subject to them.

What made one subject to mortality was “the knot of the heart-strings”. The image used here is meant to suggest the many ways in which desires and attachments and preferences (subjection to the instruments of body, vital and mind) keep one tied within the bounds of the human earthly life (the ‘I’-ness, the ego). When these are given up, when one is cut off from them, one rises above the need of birth and the consequent subjection to death. One lives in a wide serene freedom of consciousness. This freedom was the immortality of the Upanishadic Seers

The way to it is of two kinds. To get out of the complexity of circumstances in which one is caught, one can draw deep within to the true soul in us, what Sri Aurobindo calls “the psychic being” which is a spark of the Divine come down into the cycle of birth and death in order to grow to its full potential of divinity on earth through varied experiences—physical, vital, emotional, mental—and divinise also the instruments of experience. To realise the psychic being all the time is to be in a condition of ever-aspiring happiness, a constant flow of deep yet calm feeling from a smiling depth, as it were, within our heart towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There is also a relationship—vibrantly peaceful, sympathetically wide-poised—with our fellow beings, silently upraising them, towards our Guru’s presence.

The other kind of passage to the Upanishads’ “Immortality” is *via* a move towards the “Atman” which they often speak of. Here is the infinite Self of selves intrinsically uninvolved, unbound, a vast of consciousness which is a background to all beings and things, a non-participant in the cosmic drama, in some respects

An awful silence watching tragic time,  
and  
A wide unshaken look on Time’s unrest.

*(To be continued)*

## TWO DEVOTIONAL MUSINGS

### THE DIVINE

THE DIVINE is the ‘‘Present’’, therefore he is always present. For man there is no constant sojourn possible in the past, because the Divine would not be satisfied by being only a memory, however exalted, intense or sacred it might be. He strives mightily to bring us back into the present because he is the ‘‘Present’’. He does not let go of us in any past because he loves us so totally that he wants to have us always with him in the ‘‘Present’’. This ‘‘Present’’ takes a particular form for each individual consciousness, a more or less different scenario is unfolded for each one and the more developed the individual, the more sharply etched and different is the scenario. For the consciousnesses which have not yet made their individual connections with the Sachchidananda secreted in differentiated Jivatmans, there might be a collective destiny; but for those on a higher rung of evolution with well-formed Jivatmans he is ever present. In such beings he would allow neither the pull of memory, nor the opium of anticipation. For the elite the future has to be the present and he is that ‘‘Present’’.

O ye evolved souls! Try not to linger. It is no use to slink away from the Caravan Route. His omnipresent eyes will pry you loose from behind the bushes of success as well as failure. He would not let you sit, he would drag you constantly, untiringly on to the road of the present, into the ‘‘Present’’ that he himself is. Self-accolade or self-commiseration is taboo in the scheme of the ‘‘Present’’ for they lead away from the All-Pre-scient ‘‘Presence’’. The memories of the past are simple journeys into action-fields which have no more any utility for the ‘‘Present’’. Shirk not your duty, says the Gita. And duty is always in the present. Obviously it cannot be in the past and any preparation for the future lands us squarely in the arms of the ‘‘Present’’.

O Lord of all Time! Be merciful and make me wary of the past and unmindful of the future. Let me act in the present and thus live in Thy arms, O Ever Present!

### SHAME

Shame cannot be mine, O Lord! Now that I have joined Thy side

There might have been many instances, lives galore, when I ranged with the Opposite Camp, when I was the shield-bearer of the Asura and the Titan, when I was the Asura and the Titan, but no Karma can touch me now that I am on Thy side. All my dark deeds, and there must have been countless such through the ages, are done with and annulled. For, now I march under Thy victorious banner, behind Thy Standard of Truth. Thou art cruel because once Thou hast let the Maid burn, though she did Thy bidding, held Thy banner. I am clever. I search for no glory and hold not any cause very dear. I am content to follow in Thy army, out of Thy sight. Too much glory leads to the stake and the cross. For my small capacity it is enough labour, supreme effort to remain

in Thy ambience and Thou knowest how easy it is to lag behind, to get deliberately left behind.

With all my might I will run in the grooves etched by Thy flaming chariot on the routes of Time and, my sweet Lord, that is enough for me Ask not for greater efforts from my tiny strength Unseen, let me walk in Thy shadow, and let no one know my name To be a shadow of Thy bright light is greatness enough for me Try not to cast me in the mould of heroes A modest touch of Thy Truth will redeem my past and illumine my future and Thy sweet Face, O Beloved, will keep me walking in Thy Wake

Say "Amen", O Love

SHYAM KUMARI

## SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

(Continued from the issue of July 1997)

### ON SHAKESPEARE

SETHNA has made serious investigations into Sri Aurobindo's views on Shakespeare. In doing that, he has also projected his subjective views as a consciousness researcher. At many places, Sri Aurobindo chooses to be apophthegmatic, obviously because he lacked time to be exhaustive. It is in such places that Sethna lights up his own torch to examine the clues offered by the Master. Long before Srinivasa Iyengar, Sethna had the rare distinction of knowing both Sri Aurobindo and Shakespeare very intimately. The difference between the two poets is not hard to find. Shakespeare is a poet of life, Sri Aurobindo is both a poet of life and a poet of the cosmos. Sethna keeps in mind this basic distinction and, naturally, he wishes to find in Shakespeare what he can get in him, and not what he can't get in him. By and large, Sethna follows the critical method of Sri Aurobindo. The method depends on knowing the inner motives and impulses of a character. Sethna explains the approach:

Sri Aurobindo sees all the subtle forces at work within or behind Shakespeare, but he does not lose sight of the man through whose transcribing mind the divine afflatus found its way to our earthly air. In the midst of modern criticism which is often either too fanciful and flighty or else too word-bound, page-pinned and does not even allow us to speak of a Shakespearean character beyond the limits of a play's verbal or symbolic scheme, it should be a healthy as well as instructive pleasure to review briefly Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

This is the essence of consciousness approach. Sethna, while using this approach, discovers a kind of poetic structure, which is both poetry and logic. He quotes Macbeth's famous outburst on life (*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow...*) from Act V, scene iv and records his own observation in a style which blends logic and poetic inspiration of a superior variety.

This kind of vigorous many-motioned passionate language is beyond Chaucer: a complexity is present; yet no mere complexity differentiates the Shakespearean cry from the Chaucerian: this complexity is not a quiet one, it is tempestuous, a surge of wide waves, each wave leaping with a sharp zest and pushing its fellow and mixing with it to create a further movement: the imagery is dynamic and multiple. Chaucer's thought seems to trouble our inner being by putting, as it were, the outside of our reflective self into a painful posture. Shakespeare does it by penetrating our reflective self to the quick, so that it suffers a sort of revelatory violence to its nerve-shot inside. In brief, the thinking life-soul and not the thinking subtle-physical is gripped.<sup>2</sup>

Any serious reader will notice that this is not a passage from Sri Aurobindo: We have yet another commentator trying to see what Sri Aurobindo would have seen here. The effort at clarification brings in the new critic. *Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare* is primarily a book on style. Sethna is reinforcing his Master in search of the inspired styles used by Shakespeare even as a very vital poet. His supplementary notes indicate that here is another Shakespeare scholar in search of those five inspired styles. Let us see again where the point of originality lies.

Sri Aurobindo considers this style of absolute inevitability as unanalysable. He means, according to me, that although it may have affinity to any of the other styles, in the turn of its vision and of its word, it breaks through the bounds of excellence possible to all of them by their own acmes. I do not think he means that we can give no analysis of the conditions under which it performs its expressive miracle in this or that example.

Later in his life, Sethna has written a book independently on the sonnets of Shakespeare. The book is entitled "*Two Loves*" and "*A Worthier Pen*": *The Enigmas of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Here we have the pure English style which is shaped out of a dense logical argument.

Sethna seeks to find out the dates of writing of the sonnets through a system of internal chronology. The conclusion he arrives at is that Shakespeare wrote the sonnets over a period broadly of 9 years, from 9 April 1598 to 9 April 1607, "with perhaps a few sonnets preceding the former mark and very probably a few succeeding the latter and one solitary piece with a psychological turning-point some months after them." Sethna's identification is also noteworthy.

1. The Friend—popularly designated "the Fair Youth" by Shakespeareans but actually called by the poet "fair friend" (104)—is, as many scholars have opined for reasons outside internal chronology and therefore inconclusively, Lord William Herbert who was born in 1580, became the Third Earl of Pembroke in 1601 and is known to have been associated with both Shakespeare and his plays.
2. "The dark lady" is none of the candidates so far discussed but a woman most probably of Italian extraction with perhaps two Christian names, the chief and definite one being "Anastasia". She was a citizen of London who once figured characteristically though namelessly in association with Shakespeare in John Mannigham's Diary.
3. There were three rival poets and not only one. But two were minor competitors: Francis Davison and Samuel Daniel. The major competitor was—contrary to the beliefs of almost all scholars but in consonance with several literary traditions of a general order—Ben Jonson.

The thesis which runs to about 300 pages shows the authentic scholarship of a man



who has never been in touch with our university seminars or teaching. The reading list at the end is no show business. A careful reading of the book shows that Sethna is quite aware of the recent trends (the book came out in 1984) in the Shakespeare sonnet criticism. Sethna argues strongly how the sonnets are self-dated, searches for the ‘‘Fair Friend’’ and the ‘‘Dark Lady’’, investigates into the whole situation where even the minor rival poets, along with Jonson, were involved.

It is a surprise for us that Sethna totally ignores the presence of Marlowe in the sonnets. But, we have to remember that Sethna’s date-span starts from 9 April 1598 and ends roughly in 9 April 1607. His time-bracket leaves no chance to Marlowe who died of a head-wound in a Deptford tavern on 20 May 1593.

The seriousness that Sethna has shown as a Shakespeare critic should be a lesson to many university teachers like us. He is not just one of the leading Shakespeare critics of India; his works should be ranked with the greats in this field.

*(To be continued)*

GOUTAM GHOSAL

#### *References*

- 1 K D Sethna, *Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare*
- 2 *Ibid*

## SINCE THE HOUR I MET THE MOTHER

SINCE the hour I met the Mother  
These eyes have never been wet  
With idle tears of loneliness,  
Of sorrow and vain regret,—  
For the Mother's eyes have gazed on mine  
And made them realise  
That Her Loveliness can only live  
Through the calmness of my eyes!

Since the hour I met the Mother  
These lips are ashamed to be stirred  
To a scarlet phrase of anger  
Or the sound of an ugly word  
For the Mother's lips have spoken  
A language of tenderness,  
And how shall these lips express themselves  
In a language that is less?

Since the hour I met the Mother  
These fingers have ceased to crave  
The touch of less than the Mother's Feet  
Whose Touch hath passed like a wave  
Into every tingle and fibre  
Of these fingers that never tire  
Of touching the dust of the Mother's Feet  
Which responds like an angel's lyre!

Since the hour I met the Mother  
These feet of mine have trod  
The commonest lanes and roadways  
As though they lead to God  
For the Mother's Feet are sounding  
A rhythm which seems to brim  
Each print of mine like a nectar,  
"Lo, all roads lead to Him!"

Since the hour I met the Mother  
My life has learned to gaze  
With a wonderful tranquillity  
On the anguish of bygone days:

For, indeed, I know that the Mother  
 Is the safe and eternal One  
 In whom all life like a dream of joy  
 Forever is just begun!

11-25, Night, 9-2-34

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: It is exceedingly beautiful.

## REBIRTH

I AM thy child renewed in thy arms of light—  
 A flame awakened to thy flame-omnipotent,  
 Thou art the redeeming holocaust infinite,  
 The voyager-sun, the messenger-firmament.

My body has touched thy shore of occult gleam  
 And the soul has sensed the descending wonder-day,  
 That came god-thrilled like an unburdened stream  
 In the awaiting infant-life of my clay

All source in thy largeness is now revealed,  
 All sky in thy pinions is unbarred;  
 With one rapture my fountain-heart is sealed,  
 With one passion my destiny is starred

Progeny of thy endless towering noon,  
 My life shall be thy white altar immune

24 11 1961

ROMEN

(From the unpublished diaries of the late poet)

## SOME POEMS OF W. SZYMBORSKA

[The 1996 Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to a woman poet from Poland, W Szyborska—now in her seventies. Marta Guha, who has lived in Pondicherry for many years, and whose own collected poems are about to be published, is also originally from Poland. She has translated a few of Szyborska's poems, which we are confident will be of interest to readers of *Mother India*. We are publishing one below —Editor]

### SKY

To begin with—the sky  
A window without a frame, sill, panes  
An opening and beyond it nothing,  
but it's wide open

I needn't wait for a serene night  
or stretch my neck  
to have a look at the sky.  
It's behind my back, under my hand, on my eyelids.  
The sky hugs me tight  
and from below supports me

Even the highest mountains  
are not closer to the sky  
than the deepest valleys  
There is not more of it in one place  
than in another  
A cloud is as absolutely  
weighed down by the sky as a grave  
The mole, and the owl flapping its wings  
know the same heavenly bliss  
An object falling into the abyss  
falls from sky into sky

Powdery, liquid, rocky,  
fiery and airy  
stretches of sky, crumbs of sky  
whiffs of sky, and stacks of it  
Sky is omnipresent  
even in the obscurities under the skin

I eat sky, evacuate sky  
 I am a trap in a trap,  
 a tenanted tenant,  
 an embraced embrace,  
 a question in answer to a question.

The division into earth and sky  
 is not the right way  
 of thinking about this whole  
 It only allows one to live  
 at a more precise address  
 that is quicker to find  
 if anyone is looking for me  
 My distinguishing marks—  
 ecstasy and despair.

W SZYMBORSKA

## THE FULL STRAIN ENCOMPASSES...

(A Poem in Greek Logaoedics Metre)

THE full strain encompasses harmony of earth and heaven,  
 High splendours bearing the envelopment's furtherance of light,  
 Revealing out of the obscurity's resonance the chords  
 That bind freely, raising the powers of the true creation

The soul drowns the rhythmic monotony and lifeless measure,  
 The droning pressure of the mind in its governance of form  
 Narrowly given to the scheme and the pattern of the flow;  
 Aroused, overspreading the limits on its course it charges

No clog halts him; flush to the lines of his expressive throbbing  
 The steed impassioned in the power and grandeur of the word  
 Burns fiercely forward to establish the boundaries of peace,  
 The pure substance living the order of the free supernal

Aloft sheerly rolling the currents in their massed effulgence  
 To the assumption of the temporal gathering are sound,  
 And work the tensors of unfolding, the factors of the weave,  
 That all features live in the merger of the spheres perfected.

The earth's grain is fired in the dragon of the whole acceptance,  
 Meeting himself he is the living fulfilment and the breath  
 Dark sweeping infinite the luminous majesty abroad,  
 One large voice of endless complexity the diapason.

JESSE ROARKE

## FORTUNE-TELLERS

CONSTELLATIONS of the Zodiac, Thy stars!  
 Nothing in autumn nights their beauty mars.  
 Greatly they shape time, richly they adorn

Gems of light, pearls of delight, supreme sources,  
 Seers luminous of wild sapphire forces,  
 Fortune-tellers of fortunes unborn.

AKASH DESHPANDE

## THE MAGIC MEMORY

You have sown  
 In me a seed  
 Of Your memory  
 That sprouted timely  
 And called softly  
 Leaf after leaf,  
 Bough after bough  
 And then smiled  
 With fragrant  
 Unfamiliar blooms.

Those lovely clusters  
 Perpetually whisper to me  
 Of Your deepest love  
 Even when I am far away  
 And in life's chill sway  
 Their fragrance intoxicates me  
 With Your never failing warmth  
 And carries me safely  
 Through uneven times

ASHALATA DASH

## AWAKENING

I FELT myself a tiny seed  
 That ached to sprout and grow,  
 But lay there in the earth so deep  
 That none could ever know.

I saw myself a tender sprout  
 That pushed and hewed its way,  
 And thrust a tiny tendril out  
 To greet the light of day.

I was by now a little plant  
 That soaked the rain and sun,  
 And swayed my branches tall and gaunt  
 And shook my leaves for fun.

I grew to be a giant tree;  
 Flowers of joy I made,  
 And shared with beast and bird and bee  
 My fruits, my sap, my shade.

I know myself for what I am  
 A child of heaven and earth;  
 To be a god while being man,  
 For that I've taken birth.

SRADDHALU RANADE

## THE HOUR OF GRACE

SOMETIMES bad weather brings forth a richer grit,  
 A deeper vision opens in its wake,  
 The will like a meditative bee  
 Concentrates on the mission assigned,  
 Then each night seems  
 A laborious sculptor of dawn,  
 Each pang points to a joyful front,  
 Misfortunes and misadventures whisper some truth,  
 The memories of lost battles become a spur  
 Then the Night fears to sleep  
 Lest the Day's army invade it unawares  
 Such hours come as the spurt of thunder  
 But with a lightning flash,  
 To show us for a brief moment  
 The face of the Ever-smiling,  
 Then fear is abolished, time extinguished;  
 It is the hour of Grace full of possible infinities

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

## OUR GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

(In Sri Aurobindo's 125th Birth Anniversary Year)

'I AM absolutely thine . thine without reserve' —the melody sings  
From the core of Mystery that knits cosmic life,—  
The Mother of Harmony in a golden influx brings  
Divinest symphonies into our toil and strife!

Each immortal year gleams in a garland of 125 years  
Replete with music from the depths of the Unknown,  
The illumining footfalls of the Lord invade life-spheres,  
Limned on the horizon shines His ineffable new Dawn!

Two Divinities made us rise at the Summit's Call  
Kindling in us eternity's million adoration-flames  
And on our heart's wakeful altar instal  
The Presence of the Shining One, the two Magic Names!

Lo! the Manifestation's diadem-vision we behold,  
God's redeeming Whiteness on this frail earth,  
Infinity's love-suffused Twin-Face in heaven-gold  
And never-dying smiles of the immortal Birth!

O Wonders, from Time's dark ravages make us free  
That we may bloom to Thee in Thine own delight  
Where all throbs in immaculate felicity  
And tranquil Moon-Glory is the soul of Night!

T PRASAD



## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of August 1997)

SRI AUROBINDO considers the Upanishads as the continuous thought-seeds of Vedic heritage. The Rishis of the Upanishads took up the truths intuited by the earlier Seers and sought to verify them in their own experiences. The truths envisioned are not based on reason but are intuitions which helped them to proceed in their illumined experiences. In Sri Aurobindo's own words "The Upanishads are the creation of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experiences, and all their substance, structure, phrase, imagery, movement are determined by and stamped with this original character"<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo does not agree with the modern scholars who treat the Upanishads as a revolt against the Veda; he holds that they restate the wisdom of the Veda in a language more suitable to a later mentality

Sri Aurobindo's commentaries on the Isha and Kena Upanishads first appeared in the *Karmayogin*. Both the renderings were revised and given along with his commentary in the *Arya* in May 1914 and June 1915 respectively. They are complementary essays in interpretation that are relevant to the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's thought as much as to the understanding of the Upanishads

R. S. Mugali read the Isha commentary of Sri Aurobindo and came to the conclusion that Sri Aurobindo "might have obtained in this Upanishad the thought-seed which later grew up into the vast tree of his perfect life-vision" and became *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo has written several commentaries from different standpoints on the text of the Isha and one of them is even entitled 'The Life Divine'. The Isha has provided the groundwork for the massive edifice of his philosophy expressed in *The Life Divine*

The Isha has eighteen stanzas. "Every verse in the Isha Upanishad reposes on a number of ideas implicit in the text but nowhere set forth explicit, the reasoning also that supports its conclusions is suggested by the words, not expressly conveyed to the intelligence. The reader, or rather the hearer, was supposed to proceed from light to light, confirming his intuitions and verifying by his experience, not submitting the ideas to the judgement of the logical reason"<sup>2</sup> "The central idea of the Upanishad, which is a reconciliation and harmony of fundamental opposites, is worked out symmetrically in four successive movements of thought"<sup>3</sup>

"The First Movement—

The inhabiting Godhead: Life and Action" (Verses 1-3)  
The Basis of Cosmic Existence

God and the World, Spirit and formative Nature are confronted and their relations fixed

Cosmos: All world is a movement of the Spirit in itself and is mutable and transient in

all its formations and appearances; its only eternity is an eternity of recurrence, its only stability a semblance caused by certain apparent fixities of relations and groupings.

### Spirit.

Spirit is lord of its movement, One, Immutable, Free, Stable and Eternal

The movement with all its formed objects has been created in order to provide a habitation for the Spirit who, being one, yet dwells multitudinously in the multiplicity of His mansions

### Transitional Thought

#### Avidya

The object of habitation is enjoyment and possession, the object of the Spirit in the Cosmos is, therefore, the possession and enjoyment of the universe. Yet, being thus in his essence one, divine and free, man seems to be limited, divided from others, subject to Nature and even its creation and sport, enslaved to death, ignorance and sorrow. His object in manifestation being possession and enjoyment of his world, he is unable to enjoy because of his limitation. This contrary result comes about by Avidya, the Ignorance of oneness and the knot of the Ignorance is egoism.

Ego . . The cause of ego is that while by its double Power of Vidya and Avidya the Spirit dwells at once in the consciousness of multiplicity and relativity and in the consciousness of unity and identity and is therefore not bound by the Ignorance . The movement of Mind in Nature is thus able to conceive of the object as the reality and the Inhabitant as limited and determined by the appearances of the object. It conceives of the object, not as the universe in one of its frontal appearances, but as itself a separate existence standing out from the Cosmos and different in being from all the rest of it. It conceives similarly of the Inhabitant. This is the illusion of ignorance which falsifies all realities. .

. Enjoyment of the universe and all it contains is the object of world-existence, but renunciation of all in desire is the condition of the free enjoyment of all.

. The renunciation demanded is not a moral constraint of self-denial or a physical rejection, but an entire liberation of the spirit from any craving after the forms of things

The terms of this liberation are freedom from egoism and, consequently, freedom from personal desire. Practically this renunciation implies that one should not regard anything in the universe as a necessary object of possession. . . This attitude is founded on the perception of unity. For it has already been said that all souls are one possessing self, the Lord; and although the Lord inhabits each object as if separately, yet all objects exist in that Self and not outside it.

### The Justification of Works

This freedom does not depend upon inaction, nor is this possession limited to the enjoyment of the inactive Soul that only witnesses without taking part in the movement . .

Action is shunned because it is thought to be inconsistent with freedom.... The Energy that drives is itself subject to the Lord, who expresses Himself in it with perfect freedom. . The chain of Karma only binds the movement of Nature and not the Soul which, by knowing itself, ceases even to appear to be bound by the result of its works''<sup>4</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

*References*

- 1 Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads (Texts, Translations and Commentaries)*, Part One, p 4
- 2 *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol 12, p 71
- 3 *Ibid*
- 4 *Ibid* , pp 73-76

# THE EMERGENCE OF BIG SCIENCE

*(Continued from the issue of August 1997)*

## 5. The Manhattan Project

THE Manhattan Project to develop atomic weapons was launched as a War necessity. The Germans had already initiated such a programme with the intention of world domination. To counteract this imminent threat measures had to be taken by the Allies. Thus the Project was aimed at understanding the process of nuclear fission and, ultimately, exploiting the awesome power that is stored within the uranium nucleus for producing bombs more destructive than chemical explosives.

Initially, this required the realisation of a controlled self-sustained nuclear chain-reaction. The production of sufficient amount of fissile materials, uranium and plutonium, had to be considered next. The nuclear energy as a weapon was set as the final goal of the Manhattan Project.

These three basic stages that made up the Project required not only the contributions of physicists; they also called for the expertise of civil engineers, technical engineers, explosives experts, chemical engineers, metallurgists—just to name a few classes of the professionals who would be involved. And, most importantly, we should not forget that the Project aimed at constructing something that had no precedence—an atom bomb. Thus, it needed a set of new laboratories and equipment to conduct scientific as well as technical research. To be able to convert this scientific knowledge into an efficient military weapon was the set task. The handling and testing to assess the performance of the bomb asked for knowledge and skill of another group of men. Besides the research and development aspect of the Project, affiliated administrative and military bodies to provide financial and logistical support had to be set up. The grouping of these various experts, allotment of their respective responsibilities, and ensuring a smooth progress of the various departmental activities of the Project was indeed a task on a gigantic scale. It should also be remembered that all these had to be done in the context of a war situation, this implied that secrecy and speed were of the highest priority.

Secrecy was of prime importance as it was a military scheme and there was constant spying and counter-spying. Thus the basic principle termed as 'compartmentalisation' governed the workings of the Organisation. Compartmentalisation consisted simply of allowing each person or group to know only as much as was necessary for him or for that group to do the job. In fact, initially, not more than a dozen members of some 6000 experts involved in the Project were fully aware of the actual purpose behind the entire enterprise. Another way by which internal communications were restricted, to preserve the secrecy, was by geographical separation between the numerous research installations. These were set up in different parts of the country. For example, in the north-western state of Washington, in Hanford, scientists were working

on the production of plutonium; on the eastern coast, in New York, the development of gaseous diffusion process for the separation of  $U^{235}$  was underway, down south at Los Alamos, in New Mexico, research was focused on the design of the bomb. But it should be noted that, in later stages of the Project, in order to improve the efficiency between the workings of different research groups, a necessity for exchange of data and expertise was felt. This was to avoid much unwanted delay owing to the repetition of research activities. Therefore, a compromise between military standards of secrecy and requirement of the give-and-take process amongst the scientists had to be made. Actually it was this that led to the selection of the site for the experiment in Los Alamos, here all those involved in designing and assembling of the bomb were brought together. They were allowed to exchange as much information as they wanted, however, they were completely secluded from the rest of the world.

Exchange of information between various research groups was by itself a new concept. This is particularly so when we remember the fact that previous to such a large-scale joint venture, scientists, laboratories and institutions would refuse to exchange ideas—because of the fear that they might lose the race in getting recognition in the respective fields of their research.

With regard to speed, which was as important as security and secrecy, it was achieved by introducing a new concept in the method of management. The Department of Defence was always alive to the several issues involved and altered itself suitably to meet all contingencies. To avoid any sort of delay arising from the otherwise conventional method of board meetings and other decision-making procedures, powers were delegated to the in-charge on the spot. General Groves was appointed for this purpose and given complete freedom and authority. In fact, a War Department directive ordered him not to lose even a single day, and gave him unusual plenary powers, overriding all other decisions and regulations.

This delegation of authority to a single individual did play a crucial role in a more efficient and better management of the project. On one occasion, during the early stages of the Project, there was a proposal for the formation of a Military Policy Committee with an overall supervisory authority over the Project. The suggestion was to include seven to nine officers from the military and science departments. General Groves exercised his powers to bring down the number to three. His argument was essentially to circumvent hindrances such a large number of members would cause in taking quick decisions so necessary during those times. But, perhaps, the best example of the usefulness of this authoritative power is that of the appointment of the nuclear physicist Oppenheimer in the Project. There were counter-intelligence reports against him because of his socialist connections. General Groves, however, overruled this decision with a telegram to the War Department. It said,

It is desired that clearance be issued for the employment of Julius Robert Oppenheimer without delay, irrespective of the information which you have concerning Mr. Oppenheimer. He is absolutely essential to the Project.

The success of the bomb is perhaps enough of a justification in support of General Groves's decision for having insisted on the participation of Oppenheimer in the Project. And what an irony of fate that Oppenheimer is now identified with the bomb while General Groves has been refused his due recognition in spite of the key role he played in the entire organisation! Men of stern determination who really deliver the goods seem to get relegated to history in the face of competent professionals.

*(To be continued)*

ANIRBAN DEB

## MY RELATIONSHIP WITH BIRENCHANDRA

HERE I write about Birendra but side by side I shall have to write also about Protima Das who helped him till the end in all types of work. And about Mani who looked after the smutty work of the Ashram. I used to look after the garden and Volleyball-Ground. Birenda was looking after a variety of work like book-binding, preparing plastic materials, doing massage, teaching boxing, swimming, gymnastics, body-building, etc. and also organising picnic tours often and many more things which I do not know. He used to write poetry also. He had direct access to the Divine Mother. He was an expert at massage. He had a very good and kind heart. He used to help anyone who went to him. Everyone liked him very much. He used to act from the heart and not from the mind. That was his greatness. Such was our Birenda. If anyone asked him about his age he would simply laugh loudly and show in action by raising both of his hands that he was still young and strong, though some called him in affection 'Budo' meaning old man.

Birenda, Protimadi, Mani and myself were like one unit—like one family. Our stories are also intermingled because of many picnic tours in which we four were leaders and organisers.

Now I start with how I came first in contact with Birenda. After leaving Surenda's Dairy, I started working in Ambabhikshu's Garden with Dahyabhai. They were looking after three small gardens. I was told to look after the new garden which was a rented municipality property.

I do not remember the year. One afternoon I was sitting in the garden and looking after the work. At that time my friend Mani came to me and said, "Birenda is arranging a tour for a day to Gingee Fort. We have to give only Rs. 5/- for everything per person. With that money we will have food for the whole day and also coming and going charges." Then he gave me ten rupees and said, "Please go to Birenda at once and give our names and money, otherwise we will miss the opportunity if there is no place. Moreover, without you, I will not go as I will not have company like yours." So, I went and gave our names for the Gingee Fort Tour which was extremely cheap.

Let me digress a bit here. From my childhood, I was fond of having an outing and seeing new places. When I was at college, I wanted to tour the whole of India on cycle. For that I read two or three books from those who had travelled on cycle and had various experiences. I asked some of my friends also but no one was prepared to leave his studies. So I dropped my idea. Only Birenda, Protimadi and Mani remained with me. Truly, in their company and friendship, all my old ideas and ambitions were fully fulfilled.

I saw the whole of South India nicely. Not only I, but many in the Ashram had a chance to see several places with Birenda. Every year we used to arrange for a bus and see new places. Sometimes, the tour was of four days or of seven days or even of eleven days, according to the programme. We used to have our own food. With little money and all facilities the Ashram people have enjoyed themselves and seen many

places So no one can forget Birenda

Because of Birenda, Protimadi and Mani, I could see even Kedarnath, Badrinath, Haridwar, Mathura, Brindavan, the Taj Mahal, Delhi, etc —an experience which will always remain deep in my heart Otherwise, I would not have seen these places in my whole life, as I had no money. Even in the Ashram many people saw several different places in South India with Birenda. To start with. first we saw Gingee and Ramana Maharshi's Ashram Also we saw the Satanur Dam, Hognakal Fall, Jog Fall, Courtallam Fall, Mettur Dam, Annicut, Ooty, Kodaikanal, Munnar, Periyar Lake, Kanyakumari, Rameshwaram, Trivandrum, Madurai, Trichy, Kanchipuram, Mahabalipuram, Velangan Then, we saw Bangalore, Mysore, Hampi, Goa, Coorg, Mangalore, Udipi, the Shankaracharya Math We also went up to Hyderabad, Nadiad, the Ajanta and Ellora caves, Aurangabad, etc We saw Tirupati several times and many more places all over South India

We had different types of experiences in these places which are interesting to read about. I am writing of these experiences separately, one by one, which you can read later on Now, I come to the original story

So, when Mani came to me and talked about the tour, my old ideas at once came in front of me, as I too was fond of outings and tours I went at once to Birenda and he wrote down our names Truly, I had no money in those days. Mani knew this very well and he gave me money too. He liked me very much and without me he would never go anywhere

Udar's sister Millie gave her Jeep with a trailer to carry food and other things. As more people wanted to go, two other cars were arranged Sri Satyakarma was our Cashier at that time Krishnamma was his wife She arranged the tour with Birenda and helped him also Birenda got some things from the Ashram as well, so it was a cheap tour

Early morning, we started for Gingee and reached the Tourist Bungalow in Gingee which is near a river We took out our eatables for breakfast and started preparing tea. As soon as we got down many went away to see the new places When we both saw them going away, we remained there to help Mani prepared tea and I cut bread and applied butter and jam and kept them ready for all We did this work nicely without anyone's asking, though we were quite new and had gone for the first time with Birenda and Protimadi. After some time all came back to have breakfast. After that we all went to see the Fort There are many peaks and hills They are called by different names like Rajgiri, Krishnagiri, Ratnagiri, Chandragiri, Napoleon's Peak, Horse Peak, etc., etc Rajgiri is the biggest one, while Napoleon's Peak is very steep There are many places to see and Gingee is a very famous fort

Though our programme was upto Gingee only, Krishnamma decided to go to Ramana Maharshi's Ashram which is in Tiruvannamalai So, we packed everything quickly after tea in the evening and went there While coming back it became night We both helped Birenda a lot in this tour He was so pleased with us that he said, "I will take both of you first, whenever I make a tour "



Like this, we put our stamp on Birenda's heart and so whenever he arranged a tour he wrote down our names first and then informed us. Mani and myself were very happy, as we both were fond of tours and it happened so naturally. Every time we went with him and saw many new places and in that way we both became his assistants. Now, we four were leaders. Birenda was our main leader—Commander Protimadi was in charge of food. Mani looked after bus-affairs and routes. I myself helped them in everything from the beginning to the end. Thus, we became very close friends, like members of one family, and remained so to the last.

Before I bring an end to this article, I will narrate one very interesting and important incident which happened to Birenda with the Mother and which he told us during one of our tours. In that tour, we had gone very far, up to the Ajanta and Ellora caves. We had a programme of eleven days at that time.

There is a Sri Aurobindo Centre in Aurangabad. Prof. Rati looked after it at that time. He arranged our stay there and showed us many places. At night, he arranged a meeting and called many people. He asked Birenda to make a speech. At first Birenda refused, but after some time he told us of a very important talk with the Mother.

In the Ashram, after the 1st and 2nd December programmes of the School, the picnic days start. All groups go to different places one by one. Birenda had also arranged a tour for two to three days. He had booked a bus and some food was prepared. Money was collected from people. Everything was ready. This was in December 1950. Birenda went to the Mother on the 3rd to inform Her about the tour. I shall quote Birenda's words to us:

“Mother caught my hand and said, ‘Biren, you cancel your tour this time. I know you will feel disappointed. I will arrange everything for you and give you a bus also at some other time, but this time cancel the tour.’ ”

Birenda came back and cancelled the tour. On 5th December Sri Aurobindo left his body. After this, everyone knew why the Mother had told Birenda to cancel the tour. What a Grace! How can one forget this?

Birenda told this in the meeting. Everyone was so pleased with him, that they gave him many thanks. He had several talks with the Mother on different occasions. No doubt he was a Great Soul.

MAHENDRAKUMAR

## HIS FATHER—THE HAPPY HEADMASTER

[This story by Tarun Banerjee was broadcast by the *BBC World Service Short Story Programme* on 14, 15 and 16 March 1997 It was read by Juliana Massy and produced by Elizabeth Edwards.—Editor]

“RANI-MA, where is my beautiful Rani-ma? I have come,” came the enthusiastic voice of the retired headmaster of eighty-one

Mrs Rani Ghosh, lovingly called by the headmaster Rani-ma, was his new-found student of sixty-one

It was the month of May. The heat of the sun was about impossible and the headmaster’s was a sad state Holding the folded umbrella in one hand and supporting himself on the rail with the other he was climbing the staircase eagerly but heavily, often looking up in the hope of seeing his Rani-ma at the landing

Rani had indeed hurried to the landing at his call but at the sight of him she stopped As the headmaster looked up, his tired face glistened with perspiration As he looked down, which he did often in order not to miss the steps, his bald head glistened Mrs Ghosh couldn’t stand it anymore She burst out

“Haven’t I told you times without number that you should not come here in such white heat of noon?”

“Don’t be cross with me, Rani-ma,” the headmaster interrupted “I have added a new passage to the first chapter How can I rest without at once reading it out to you? Isn’t it awaiting the approval of my Rani-ma, hum?”

Then began the delivery part of the session, that is to say, the headmaster reading out and the student hearing; the master sitting in an enormous easy-chair, the disciple sitting on her cot; the master reading with all his lung power as though his student was sitting in his lecture hall, the student sitting a meter in front as though the very angel of obedience and attention

After clearing his throat noisily and adjusting the distance of the paper from his nose, he began

“Our soul, the inmost soul, the real soul is hidden within the inmost recesses of our being and totally . hum. .yes .got it.. got it. totally invisible to us.”

Apparently he had reached the end of the first sentence of the new paragraph and therefore he looked at her for approval

The disciple didn’t gasp She didn’t dare His eyes were fixed on her. She smiled instead and then nodded a tentative nod

She got away with it. The headmaster’s face brightened After adjusting his distance from the paper and clearing his throat he resumed noisily

“This invisibility is the very nature of our soul, and yet it is not invisible like the air, for the air is tangible, the soul is not even that Rani-ma, you are not hearing me!”

And it was true. She was *not* listening. She was lost in reverie; mother that she was, everything of herself was with her son. He was working with the Railways What a

darling he was. how hardworking...what a lovable child....

She came back with a startle, “No. .or.. it is so hot . it is really wonderful .so true everything is so clear... ”

Actually the headmaster had no need to teach. He was living on a pension and he was also engaged in the voluntary task of proof-reading for a large Press where his practised eye was appreciated by the Manager

But man is a slave to his habit He was restless without a student Besides, he was writing a book He couldn't do it without at least one person's appreciation

Mrs. Rani Ghosh too had no reason to pretend. Her daughter was happily married and her son was busy with his work. Besides, she was living on her late husband's pension

But now here was the same situation as the headmaster's All her life she had served, first as a wife, then as a mother. Now with all gone, she too was restless If only she could be of some help to somebody....

In the restless headmaster she had found a match for her restlessness

Thus had started the tedious reading sessions she, stifling her yawns but happy in the thought that he was pleased to have found an audience. And he, writing endless pages, happy at the thought that he had written something wonderful because she was listening with such attention.

Had it gone no further than these reading sessions all would have been well But that was not to be

One day the headmaster revealed his plan.

“Rani-ma, now that you have liked my writing I have decided to publish it in book-form ”

“In book-form!” she exclaimed incredulously “You mean a fully printed book?”

“Yes, yes, that is what I mean,” said the headmaster, excitedly “You won't believe it, Rani-ma, everything is arranged. The Manager of our Press has asked for ten thousand rupees for printing a thousand copies. Inquire, from where can I get the money? Hum! My son, Rani-ma, yes, he has agreed to give the whole sum. Don't you think it is wonderful, hum?”

“Why go in for publishing it in book-form? It was all for us . . ”

“No, Rani-ma, no You have liked it You have said so Now everybody must read it All must know *that* which *you* have known ”

Rani realised that the headmaster had reached the point of no return, that the publication of the book had become a fever with him and that from then on she would be only a helpless spectator

At this time the headmaster's son, Ronojoy Dey, met the Manager of the Press The Manager told him in confidence that he didn't think that the book the headmaster wanted to print would sell. “That being so,” the Manager concluded, “if you still insist on getting the work printed, we will do so, but instead of sending the copies to our publisher we will be forced to send the whole lot to your father's place.”

Ronojoy was a man of common sense. He knew his father well and all along had held the same opinion as the Manager. But he was kind-hearted and full of compassion. Thus he answered:

“I understand you, but I have not been able to fulfil any of my father’s wishes. Now, on the eve of his departure, if ten thousand rupees is all I need to pay to make him happy, that is the little I can and would like to do for him.”

From that day the headmaster’s life was a hectic one. Come rain or shine he would be present at the Press early every day to collect the latest galley-proof of his book. With what triumph he would roll the sheet and gallop to his Rani-ma’s house, hot and steaming. His face flushed with excitement, he would unroll the sheet on her table and, fixing the thick pince-nez to the bridge of his nose, he would look at it importantly. Holding his pen close to the paper he would go over the sheet word by word, sometimes blurting out, “See, Rani-ma, how careless they are! They have omitted a vowel here completely!”

One day, in a flurry of excitement, the headmaster told his pupil that the Manager wanted to know what price the headmaster would like to fix for his book.

“Twenty-five rupees for each book I fixed without hesitation,” the headmaster said with an air of authority. “Rani-ma, isn’t it just? What do you think? Shouldn’t people be ready to pay twenty-five rupees to learn profound truths? Besides, twenty-five rupees will bring us twenty-five thousand rupees for these thousand copies! Rani-ma, do you understand what it means? We will make fifteen thousand rupees as sheer profit! Just imagine, fifteen thousand! What shall we do with so much money, that is the question. Think, Rani-ma, think. Give some idea. Unless you say something I just don’t get any inspiration.”

Poor Rani-ma! With a lump in her throat she looked at the headmaster, blankly.

One morning in a flash the headmaster had an idea of how best he could use the fifteen thousand rupees of profit. He was just leaving the house in a hurry, face flushed, umbrella clutched in the right hand, to give the news to his pupil when he noticed two young boys trundling a trolley towards his house. He knew the boys. They worked in the delivery-section of the Press. He also knew what was on the trolley, packages of books neatly wrapped up in thick brown paper and tied round with beautiful nylon strings. However, one thing he didn’t understand. He didn’t understand why they were trundling the heavy trolley towards him and asking him to stop.

The head-porter, the elder of the two, approached him saying, “Your books, Sir, the Manager has sent them for delivery to you.”

Suddenly the sunlight seemed to dim in front of the headmaster’s eyes and irrelevant stars of many colours danced and swivelled in that darkness. His face became ashen. He looked from the porters to the packs and from the packs to the porters and then he felt that he was tired and that the weight of his body was too much for his legs to bear.

He knew that it was useless to ask the porters any questions. They were only carriers.

In the meantime the boys had started removing the packets, one by one, and dumping them below the staircase of his apartment. This done, they left, pulling the trolley behind them.

For a long time the headmaster kept looking at the departing porters. Then, thoughtfully, with his head cast down, he entered his apartment.

It took him some time to recover but he did recover. Then carefully, very carefully, he untied the knot of the string of the top packet. Then with equal care he unfolded its wrapper. Then gently he removed the top book and caressed it as tenderly as he had caressed his son Ronojoy in the cradle.

That his books would not sell he had grasped as soon as he had understood what the packs on the trolley contained, but only now did he understand what the books were for. He fixed the pince-nez carefully on the bridge of his nose, took his old fountain-pen from his bag and opened the hard cover of the book. Then he wrote on its flyleaf gently, very gently.

To my Dear Son—with Love and Blessings  
from your Father

With that started his marathon labour of love. One after another he removed the books and offered them to the students whose names he could remember. The naughty ones came first to his mind: Subroto, Yogin and Bapi and Dara and then face after face started crowding in front of him, the good ones, the weak and the slow ones, the tall ones and the fat boys, the meek and the brags, all, and the headmaster's happiness knew no bounds. It was an unending flow of Shankar and Debu and Robi and Ratan and Krishna.

Indeed his compassionate son was right. With a mere ten thousand rupees he had made his father, on the eve of his departure, the happiest man on earth.

TARUN BANERJEE

## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

### 108. A COIN A DAY WILL DRIVE YOUR POVERTY AWAY

Pugazh Thunaiyar led a blissful life by serving Lord Siva at Seruvilliputhur, a little distance away from Kumbakonam. Every day, he would bale out a potful of water from the temple well, carry it with all sanctity on his right shoulder to the *sanctum sanctorum*, tilt the pot a little above the top of the Siva Lingam and pour the blessed water slowly and carefully, guiding it with his hand to fall on the head first and then on its body. After giving such a nice cold water bath, he would rush again to the temple well, bale out another potful, mix it with the holy turmeric powder and carry it to the *sanctum sanctorum* to pour it as before on the Siva Lingam. After the bath, he would deck the Image with beautiful and sweet-smelling flowers and ready it for worship.

Seruvilliputhur was once plagued by a famine and everyone was in the grip of poverty. As days passed, many people died of hunger and many moved out of the place for the betterment of their prospects. But Pugazh Thunaiyar continued to do service to the Lord, for he was sure that Lord Siva would not let him down.

Poverty and hunger didn't deter his interest in the Lord, even though he felt that he was losing weight and growing weak. But his mind was very strong.

One morning he felt as if he had no strength left in his body even to stand up. But who would bathe the Lord, if he lay down in bed? His will to serve the Lord, his determination to reach the temple gave him the strength he needed, and he found himself baling out a potful of water from the temple well.

He carried the pot on his shoulder and struggled to reach the *sanctum sanctorum*. But as he tilted the pot, he lost his balance. The pot slipped from his hands and fell on the Image, thereby breaking itself into shreds. Pugazh Thunaiyar fell at the feet of the Image.

Fear gripped him. He swooned. He had a vision.

"I'll place a gold coin here every day till the famine is driven out by prosperity."—It was Lord Siva who spoke to him in his vision.

Pugazh Thunaiyar came back to his senses. He opened his eyes and there he saw a glittering gold coin. He got up and looked at it with a gleeful face.

"A gold coin every day! My Lord, how can I ever repay the love you have for this poor soul!" Pugazh Thunaiyar said as he picked up the coin. He knew that the coin held a bright future for him.

### 109. BUILD A TEMPLE IN THE AIR

The Kailasanathar temple at Kanchipuram was to be consecrated. Kadavar Kon, the Pallava king, had expended his vast wealth on its construction. The date of the consecration was also fixed. Invitations were sent to all kings, princes and chieftains of

far and near lands. People from various parts of the Tamil country gathered in Kanchipuram and the Pallava capital was crammed with festivities

On the night of the day previous to the consecration, Lord Siva appeared in the king's dream and said: "Postpone the consecration by a day at least, for I have to enter the Temple dedicated by Saint Pusalar of Thiruvarur tomorrow without fail."

The king woke up perturbed. "Who is this Pusalar, to whom the Lord gives more importance? I've spent all my riches in the construction of the temple. Is Pusalar richer than me? Is his love for the Lord more pure than mine?" He asked himself and spent the rest of the night without a wink of sleep.

On the morning of the next day, King Kadavar Kon rushed to Thiruvarur to participate in the consecration of the temple built by Pusalar. But to his dismay, he found no such temple existed in the place. He asked several brahmins there and everyone pitied the king and said: "I think you are mistaken, your majesty! Some mischief-maker must have given you wrong information."

"Wrong information? No! Lord Siva is no mischief-maker and he can never be wrong," said the king to himself

He then asked the brahmins "Well then! Who is Pusalar? Tell me whatever you know about him"

"Pusalar! He is a poor brahmin. He is a native of this place. He is a day-dreamer What more can be said of him?" answered a brahmin.

"Only the Lord knows what he is. He must be something more than what we think of him, for his service is acceptable to God Where can I meet him?"

"Meet him! What do you mean, your Majesty! We will send word and he will be at your doorstep."

"No! He is more blessed than myself So I must go to meet him. Guide me to his place," commanded the king.

Confused, the brahmins led the king to Pusalar's abode

To the shock of the brahmins, the king prostrated himself before Pusalar, briefed him on the dream, and then repeated the words of the Lord.

Pusalar was bewildered Tears trickled out of his eyes For a minute he ran short of words He then began to speak amidst tears of joy

"Your Majesty! I am a devotee of Lord Siva and love to spend my life in the service of His devotees. I am a poor brahmin, yet I entertained a great desire to build a temple for Lord Siva I tried through all possible means to collect the amount required for the construction of the temple, but in vain What then could a poor brahmin like me do other than construct the temple of my choice in the air?"

"I did construct the temple without any difficulty for I did it with sincerity and devotion But it was not built in a day I gathered all the wealth required for this purpose and then chose an auspicious day for laying the foundation stone. Then the temple rose slowly day after day I started with the foundation and after several months reached the gopurams After that I built the compound walls, then the tank, the well and all that was required of a temple. The construction work was over. And today I

performed the consecration. But I never knew that the Lord had honoured my temple by His visit.”

King Kadavar Kon looked admiringly at the great devotee and went back to Kanchipuram fully convinced as to why the Lord preferred to visit the temple built by Pusalar rather than the temple built by him

*(More legends on the way)*

P RAJA



## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India**, compiled and edited by Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1995), pp 288  
Price: Rs 200.

RECENT years have witnessed a series of compilations of Sri Aurobindo's writings, each carefully designed and focused on a theme of psycho-spiritual or socio-cultural importance, aimed at the students of Sri Aurobindo and the general public alike. And yet some volumes become more topical on account of their appropriateness to our milieu and times. *Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India* is one such book that should reach the hands of every school-going Indian child and every right-thinking Indian adult.

There are many reasons—most of which are plain and obvious—as to why the book under discussion has more than historical or archival significance. The Indian nation today is at the crossroads. It lacks consensus and direction in major areas of our national life. Its key institutions such as the legislature, its system of parliamentary democracy, its largely colonial educational system, its bureaucracy and its system of governance, and its judiciary are under severe strain. We lack the comforting days of a single party rule and there is the uncertainty of coalition politics. We also face the menace of secessionism from Kashmir to Bodoland.

While many international factors such as Capitalism, big power rivalry and collapse of cherished ideologies like Soviet Socialism are responsible for our present plight, it has to be admitted that much of the malaise and the mess that we find ourselves in are unfortunately of our own making. Gynnar Myrdal in his celebrated *Asian Drama* thought that India's problem is that it is a "Soft State". What the Swedish sociologist of course meant was that India lacks a solid system of rule of law and that its administration is peculiarly vulnerable to subversion, most notoriously by what is known as "speed money" to grease the palms of a corrupt oligarchy. Its command economy has generally meant commandeering the economy and its scarce resources under a pernicious licence-quota system. Worst of all, we Indians have taken our freedom for granted. We lack self-respect. Our image in the international sphere has reached rock bottom. Our leaders have no compunction in bartering our national interests and pirating colossal amounts of public money. While smaller nations like Korea and Japan that were totally devastated during World War II have bounced back as Asian Giants, we stand with begging bowls before international agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We flaunt our spirituality, but in practice our materialistic longings and penchant for the consumer culture put to shame our pretentious claptrap.

It is against such a bleak national scenario that we see the importance of the present book. For the moral of the volume is that those who do not heed the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it!

Divided into thirteen chapters, the present book covers nearly the entire ground Sri Aurobindo on Mother India, Sri Aurobindo on the New Nationalism, Sri Aurobindo's Advice to the Young, Sri Aurobindo's Plan to Free India, Sri Aurobindo "My Last Political Will and Testament", Sri Aurobindo on His Life in Prison, Sri Aurobindo on the Sanatan Dharma, Sri Aurobindo in the Eyes of the Nation, Sri Aurobindo on His Reasons for Leaving Politics, and Sri Aurobindo on His Five Dreams.

Part Two of the book offers a moving account of the young revolutionaries of Bengal. The highlights here are a rare conversation of Mona Sarkar with the Mother on India's revolutionaries and a profile of some of the most notable revolutionaries of our land. Complete with an appendix, the book supports its claims with historical and archival records.

The main strength of this book, as I see it, lies in the remarkable manner in which it is able to bring together known and unknown facts related to India's militant struggle for freedom. You have here extracts from nine articles under the series "New Lamps for Old" in *Indu Prakash* which rejected the earlier moderate policy of "prayer, petition and protest." We hear of Pramathanath Mitra, barrister of Calcutta High Court, founder of the Anushilan Samiti, an early revolutionary society. There is also the important declaration of Sri Aurobindo that secret action by itself is not likely to pay dividends unless it is backed by a wider popular movement of patriotic fervour, something that has become today an elementary gospel-truth among revolutionaries everywhere. Similarly, in "My Last Political Will and Testament" (pp. 79-81) Sri Aurobindo spells out the principles of Swaraj, self-help and passive resistance which guided the Indian freedom struggle in subsequent decades. We also find seminal and soul-stirring passages where Sri Aurobindo explains the meaning of patriotism such as those in the chapter where he gives advice to the young.

There are relatively unknown details too, such as Subhas Chandra Bose's tribute to Sri Aurobindo. "Aurobindo Ghose," declared Subhas, "is to me my spiritual Guru. To him and to his mission I have dedicated my life and soul. My decision is final and unchangeable." (p. 193)

The profile of the young revolutionaries, a number of whom perished from the rigour of penal labour in the Andamans, is an eye-opener to all Indians who enjoy today the fruits of freedom. Take the instance of the reminiscence of Barindra Kumar Ghose. As Barindra Kumar recalls

[In the Andamans] our sorrows were many. The greatest of them was the want of company. The orders were strict that we should not talk to each other, even though we might be close together and in the same block. What a wail we smothered in our hearts when we walked together, ate together and worked together and yet could not open our mouths. (p. 205)

Similarly, we see the noble instance of Ullaskar Dutt who gave up a lucrative career

and slapped Mr Russell, a philosophy professor at Presidency College, for making disparaging remarks against Indians. His was the first bomb used in Bengal (in December 1907) for revolutionary purposes.

The most appealing part of the book is the aspect that captures moments that have a profound human interest. We see, for instance, how in the Alipore Jail Sri Aurobindo puts his adversity to advantage. He recalls:

One plate and bowl used to adorn the courtyard. Properly washed and cleaned, my self-sufficing plate and bowl shone like silver, it was the solace of my life. .. The bowl was free from all caste restrictions, beyond discrimination. Serving all my worldly needs, the bowl became an end in my spiritual discipline too. Where else would I find such a preceptor to get rid of the sense of disgust? (p. 88)

Note the irony in the last sentence. Similarly, look at his use of it regarding the facility he had.

Attached bathrooms are, I know, often a part of Western culture, but to have in a small cell, a bedroom, dining room and W.C. rolled into one, this is what is called too much of a good thing. We Indians are full of regrettable customs, it is painful for us to be so highly civilized. (p. 86)

In the Jail, Sri Aurobindo became extraordinarily sensitive and alive to the slightest signs of life. He spent hours watching the fights of red and black ants, for instance. As he remarks.

The solitary confinement at Alipore was a unique lesson in love. Before coming here, even among people, my affections had been confined to a rather narrow circle, and the closed emotions would rarely include birds and animals. .. At Alipore I could feel how deep can be the love of man for all created things, how thrilled a man can be on seeing a cow, a bird, even an ant. (p. 93)

Similarly, we see Sri Aurobindo's humility when he publicly accepts even juniors like Sudhir Kumar Sarkar as his friend. (p. 254)

A signal service that this book renders is to take the generation born in post-independence India to the earlier period of revolutionary fervour. One can easily identify with the thrill of sacrifice and the spirit of dedication to the cause of the motherland.

In a research that looks at a relatively obscure aspect of India's Freedom Struggle, it is hard to collect evidence. In many cases records are completely missing. The editors have done their best. One hopes that the existing gaps can be filled in later efforts.

It seems to me that a longer critical introduction reviewing the titles published in recent years in the context of contemporary socio-cultural movements would have enhanced the value of this book.

On the whole, however, *Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India* is a good critical compilation with a potential for a wider audience. The editors certainly deserve our compliments for placing this aspect of Sri Aurobindo before us. Mona Sarkar's biography of Sudhir Kumar Sarkar was very well received and we look forward to seeing similar productions from him and his colleagues in future.

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY