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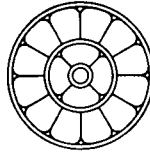
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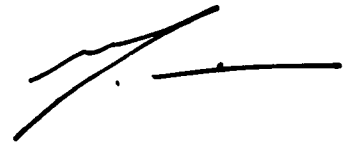


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. LI

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE TOUCH OF TEARS IN MORTAL THINGS

“WHAT stealthy doom has crept across her path
Emerging from the dark forest’s sullen heart,
What evil thing stood smiling by the way
And wore the beauty of the Shalwa boy?
Perhaps he came an enemy from her past
Armed with a hidden force of ancient wrongs,
Himself unknowing, and seized her unknown
Here dreadfully entangled love and hate
Meet us blind wanderers mid the perils of Time
Our days are links of a disastrous chain,
Necessity avenges casual steps,
Old cruelties come back unrecognised,
The gods make use of our forgotten deeds
Yet all in vain the bitter law was made
Our own minds are the justicers of doom.
For nothing have we learned, but still repeat
Our stark misuse of self and others’ selves,
And fallen from his ethereal element
Love darkens to the spirit of nether gods
The dreadful angel, angry with his joys
Woundingly sweet he cannot yet forego,
Is pitiless to the soul his gaze disarmed,
He visits with his own pangs his quivering prey
Forcing us to cling enamoured to his grip
As if in love with our own agony
This is one poignant misery in the world,
And grief has other lassoes for our life.
Our sympathies become our torturers.
Strength have I my own punishment to bear,
Knowing it just, but on this earth perplexed,
Smitten in the sorrow of scourged and helpless things,
Often it faints to meet other suffering eyes.
We are not as the gods who know not grief
And look impassive on a suffering world,
Calm they gaze down on the little human scene
And the short-lived passion crossing mortal hearts
An ancient tale of woe can move us still,
We keep the ache of breasts that breathe no more,
We are shaken by the sight of human pain,
And share the miseries that others feel.

Ours not the passionless lids that cannot age
 Too hard for us is heaven's indifference:
 Our own tragedies are not enough for us,
 All pathos and all sufferings we make ours;
 We have sorrow for a greatness passed away
 And feel the touch of tears in mortal things
 Even a stranger's anguish rends my heart,
 And this, O Narad, is my well-loved child.
 Hide not from us our doom, if doom is ours.
 This is the worst, an unknown face of Fate,
 A terror ominous, mute, felt more than seen
 Behind our seat by day, our couch by night,
 A Fate lurking in the shadow of our hearts,
 The anguish of the unseen that waits to strike
 To know is best, however hard to bear''
 Then cried the sage piercing the mother's heart,
 Forcing to steel the will of Savitri
 His words set free the spring of cosmic Fate.
 The great Gods use the pain of human hearts
 As a sharp axe to hew their cosmic road:
 They squander lavishly men's blood and tears
 For a moment's purpose in their fateful work
 This cosmic Nature's balance is not ours
 Nor the mystic measure of her need and use.
 A single word lets loose vast agencies,
 A casual act determines the world's fate.
 So now he set free destiny in that hour

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 427-29)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

[After his release from the Alipore Jail, and before coming to Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo wrote in Bengali a number of essays on the Gita. These appeared in the weekly review *Dharma* during 1909-10 and were later brought out in a book entitled *Gitar Bhumika*. They were translated into English and first published in the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annuals* about thirty years ago. We are serialising them in *Mother India* at the request of some of its readers. —Editor]

THE DHARMA OF THE GITA

THIS question may arise in the minds of those who have carefully studied the Gita, that though Sri Krishna has repeatedly used the word 'Yoga' and described the state of being in yoga, union, yet this is quite unlike what ordinary people understand as 'Yoga'. Sri Krishna has at places praised asceticism and indicated too that the highest liberation can come through the adoration of the Impersonal Divine. But dismissing the subject in a few words, He has explained to Arjuna in the finest portions of the Gita the majesty of the inner renunciation and the various ways of attaining to the supreme state through faith and self-surrender to Vasudeva. There is a brief description of Raja-yoga in the sixth chapter but the Gita cannot properly be called a treatise on Raja-yoga. Equality, detachment, renunciation of the fruits of work, complete self-surrender to Krishna, desireless work, freedom from the bondage of the three essential modes of Nature and pursuit of one's own law of works. these are the fundamental truths of the Gita. The Lord has glorified these precepts as the highest knowledge and the most secret mystery.

It is our belief that the Gita will become the universally acknowledged Scripture of the future religion. But the real meaning of the Gita has not been understood by all. Even the great scholars and the most intelligent writers with the keenest minds are unable to seize its profound significance. On the one hand, the commentators with a leaning towards liberation have shown the grandeur of Monism and asceticism in the Gita, on the other hand, Bankimchandra, well-versed in Western philosophy, finding in the Gita the counsel to carry out heroically one's duty, tried to inculcate this meaning in the minds of youth. Asceticism is, no doubt, the best dharma, but very few people can practise it. A religion to be universally acknowledged must have an ideal and precepts which every one can realise in his own particular life and field of work, yet which if practised fully must lead him to the highest goal otherwise available only to a few. To carry out one's duty heroically is, of course, the highest dharma, but what is duty? There is such a controversy between religion and ethics regarding this complex problem. The Lord has said, *gahana karmaṇo gatih*, 'thick and tangled is the way of works'. 'Even the wise are perplexed to decide what is duty, what is not duty, what is work, what is not work and what is wrong work, but I shall give you such a knowledge that you will have no difficulty in finding the path to follow,'—in a word, the

knowledge which will amply explain the aim of life and the law which has to be always observed. What is this knowledge? Where can we find this word of words? We believe that, if we look for this rare and invaluable treasure, we shall find it in the last chapter of the Gita where the Lord promises to reveal to Arjuna His most secret and supreme Word.

What is that most secret and supreme Word?

*Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī mām namaskuru
Mamevaisyasi satyam te pratijāne priyo'si me
Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam saranam vraja
Aham twām sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucah*

(Become My-minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me, to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me. Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve.)

In brief, the meaning of these two slokas is self-surrender. To the extent that one can make his surrender to Krishna, the Divine Force comes down into his body by the grace of the All-Merciful, delivering him from sin and conferring on him a divine nature. This self-surrender has been described in the first half of the sloka. One has to be *tanmanā*, *tadbhakta*, and *tadyājī*. *Tanmanā* means to see Him in every being, to remember him at all times, to remain in perfect felicity, being aware of the play of His power, knowledge and love in all works and events. *Tadbhakta* signifies union with Him founded on an entire faith and love. *Tadyājī* means offering of all works big and small as a sacrifice to Krishna and being engaged in doing rightly regulated action to that end, by giving up egoistic interests and the fruits of work.

It is difficult for a human being to make a complete self-surrender, but if he makes even a little effort then God Himself gives him assurance, becomes his guru, protector and friend and leads him forward on the path of Yoga. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*. Even a little of this dharma delivers one from the great fear. He has said that it is easy and delightful to practise this dharma. And in fact it is so, yet the result of the total consecration is an inexpressible joy, purity and acquisition of power. *Mamevaisyasi* (to Me thou shalt come) means the human being will find Me, will live with Me, will acquire My nature. In these words the realisations of *sādrśya*, God-nature, *sālokya*, living with God, and *sāyujya*, identification with God, are mentioned.

One who is free from the bondage of the three essential modes of Nature has indeed acquired *sādrśya*, the nature of God. He has no attachment yet he works, delivered from all sin, he becomes an instrument of Mahashakti and delights in every action of that Power. *Sālokya*, habitation with God, can be realised not only in the Brahmaloaka, abode of the Brahman, after the fall of the body but in this very body. When the embodied being plays with the Lord in his heart, when his mind is thrilled by the knowledge coming from Him, when the intellect constantly hears His words and is

conscious of His impulsion in each of his thoughts, this indeed is living in a human body with the Lord *Sāyujya*, the identification with the Lord, can also be achieved in this body. The Gita mentions 'living in the Lord'. When the realisation of the Divine in all beings becomes permanent, when the senses see, hear, smell, taste and touch Him only, when the being becomes accustomed to live in Him as a portion, then there can be the identification even in this body. But this consummation is entirely the result of an askesis (practice of discipline)

However, even a little practice of this dharma gives great power, unalloyed joy, complete happiness and purity. This dharma has not been created only for people with special qualities. The Lord has said that the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Sudra, man, woman and all beings of inferior birth can come to Him by adhering to this dharma. Even the greatest sinner, if he takes refuge in Him, is quickly purified. Therefore, every one ought to follow this dharma. In the temple of Jagannath no distinction is made on account of caste. Yet the crowning glory attained through this dharma is in no way less than the supreme state indicated in other religions.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Niranjan)

THE POWER OF MONEY

The power of money is at present under the influence or in the hands of the forces and beings of the vital world. It is because of this influence that you never see money going in any considerable amount to the cause of Truth. Always it goes astray, because it is in the clutch of the hostile forces and is one of the principal means by which they keep their grip upon the earth. The hold of the hostile forces upon money-power is powerfully, completely and thoroughly organized and to extract anything out of this compact organization is a most difficult task. Each time you try to draw a little of this money away from its present custodians, you have to undertake a fierce battle.

The Mother

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 3, pp 45-46)

THE PRAISES OF KNOWLEDGE

विद्या नाम नरस्य रूपमधिक प्रच्छन्नगुप्त धनं
विद्या भोगकरी यश सुखकरी विद्या गुरूणां गुरु ।
विद्या बन्धुजनो विदेशगमने विद्या परा देवता
विद्या राजसु पूज्यते न तु धन विद्याविहीनः पशु ॥

KNOWLEDGE IS nobler beauty in a man
Than features: 'tis his hidden hoard of price,
This the long roll of Masters first began,
Pleasure it brings, just fame and constant bliss,
And is a helping friend in foreign lands,
And is a very god with puissant hands.
Knowledge, not wealth in great men is adored,
Nor better than a beast the mind unstored.

(Translated by Sri Aurobindo from Bhartrihari's *Nitishatakam*
The metre of the original is शार्दूलविक्रीडित)

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of November 1998)

My dear Mother,

The D R lady-workers have become such a nuisance. they have begun to spoil the D R in many ways. Any number of ladies are now eating 6 to 8 slices of bread And when they cannot eat them, they take them home, asking for more and more. Then just at the time of work they all fall ill or have some other work, so they cannot do the work in the D R

It is all quite true, but there is only one answer: patience and compassion.

9 December 1935

My dear Mother,

One conviction has always remained unshaken in me: man or no man, sadhak or no sadhak, the Divine shall manifest The Truth exists by itself, the Sun shines because it shines

My dear Mother, may my exterior nature get deepened by my interior faith; may the intensity which is inside come out and remain in the exterior being

Yes, the truth consciousness must pervade all the being, dominate all the movements and quiet the restless physical mind. These are the preliminary conditions for the manifestation

Always with you

13 December 1935

My dear Mother,

B has put forth a proposal to get the milk in the morning in two trips instead of one. The dairy servant would have to carry the milk-can on his head in the dark The Aroumé servants would have to be made free for the first boiling, which would disturb the kitchen work Since it is only a matter of a few days, I do not see why so many people should be inconvenienced permanently

C is much displeased with me because I do not agree with him in his ideas and he is insisting on them

You are quite right in this affair and it is quite unreasonable to ask for these two trips But B is very sensitive—he is getting more and more nervous. He says he has lost his peace He needs affection and kindness I suppose if you approach him in a friendly way, things will become all right

23 December 1935

My dear Mother,

I am puzzled over the relation between the D R workers and me, the whole misunderstanding today burst out after my appearing at the D. R to help them for lunch

You need not bother about what they think or say Do quietly what is to be done and leave the rest to me.

All love and blessings to you my dear child

24 December 1935

My dear Mother,

I take the present circumstances at Aroumé as a test of my confidence in You Under no circumstances must I lose my balance or my concentration on You.

Yes, let us become more and more strong, quiet and patient. All this confusion is bound to come to an end.

Always with you

28 December 1935

My dear Mother,

It seems that the physical mind has now seen how to stand back during attacks in calmness, quietness and peace, given to the Divine alone I wish it would put into practice what it has seen

Yes, when it has understood clearly it is bound to put it into practice

Always with you my dear child

19 January 1936

My dear Mother,

In the beginning of August 1933 the number of inmates was 120 Since then the number has remained between 135 and 150 But the work we used to do in those days we are not doing now. We are not willing to work, so we are obliged to have more and more workers We did not grow within, which brings about the clashes we have with each other If more inmates had worked in peace and harmony, we would have been much nearer to the goal.

It is because the forces are working in the subconscious which is, in its nature, full of unwillingness and laziness We have now to wait patiently until it gets transformed

24 January 1936

My dear Mother,

In the market I generally walk on the foot-path. Several times I have been able to avoid accidents. Our negligence, hurry and carelessness always bring troubles—too many for You. May we learn to be quiet, careful and on guard always.

Yes, we must never give a chance to the adverse forces to do their mischief—they take advantage of the slightest unconsciousness.

Always with you, my dear child

27 January 1936

My dear Mother,

The work of preparing lunch did not trouble me. What troubled me most was to see people who hardly ate anything else, finish all the lunch or, in order to take them home, took slices of bread. That night we decided never to give so much to eat at one time, but to give special dishes as side dishes. Still I do not understand how so many people got sick. For the first time I feel the seriousness of the responsibility of a hundred and fifty stomachs!

If they behaved normally without vital upsettings and greeds their health would be all right

My dear Mother, I am completely given to You with a prayer. Peace, peace, peace in the Ashram, peace in each and every heart.

Yes, peace is indeed a very much needed thing and without peace nothing can be achieved.

Always with you, my dear child

31 January 1936

(To be continued)

MONEY IS A FORCE

money is a force intended for the work on earth, the work required to prepare the earth to receive and manifest the divine forces, and it—that is, the power of utilising it—must come into the hands of those who have the clearest, most comprehensive and truest vision

The Mother

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 15, p 53)

WAKE UP TO THE CONSCIOUSNESS
OF HUMAN UNITY

Shake off all narrowness, selfishness,
limitations, and wake up to the
consciousness of Human Unity.
This is the only way to achieve
peace and harmony.

A stylized handwritten signature consisting of several sweeping, connected strokes.

May 1955

THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO

There is a Power within that knows beyond
Our knowings, we are greater than our thoughts,
And sometimes earth unveils that vision here

Sri Aurobindo

THE spiritual light that shone in this world, to which countless bewildered souls looked for guidance, which inspired men and women to follow the Voice of God and ignore the sly whisperings of the Devil, has gone out. In the passing of Sri Aurobindo India and the world have lost one of the greatest of philosophers, loftiest of seers and rishis. It comes to us as the end of an epoch, for we had always looked upon him as the light that would always be there guiding us. Now that he has gone, the darkness which we feel deep within ourselves is terrifying.

We are all familiar with his life-story, how his father wanted him to be completely cut off from all that was Indian, how he served a ruling prince, how he got out of the lure of the Civil Service and how he plunged into the struggle for India's freedom. We know of the articles in the *Bande Mataram* and the Alipore Bomb Case, which proved to be a turning-point in his career. But not many people seem to remember that he was a very great poet, a very brilliant writer, one of the world's greatest philosophers. And, he used his pen lavishly to send out to the world his message. The world owes an eternal debt to him for this; incidentally he also proved to it that the Indian yogi was not a caricature clad in saffron clothes, always talking the mumbo jumbo of his creed. He rehabilitated the prestige of our rishis in the eyes of the unbelieving West. Above all, he rehabilitated the soul of man everywhere.

The whole world has paid its homage to him. Political leaders, men who are constantly before the footlights, as also those who shun the noise and the bustle of this world for it hampers their thought, have felt the loss and given expression to their grief. The Honourable K. M. Munshi, whose tribute to the Sage of Pondicherry is published in this issue* says, "And so long as the spirit of such masters, living in God, walks this earth, we need not despair of the destiny of man to rise to the dignity of a god." How fortunate indeed are we in this country that in this age of violence and materialism we have had the good fortune to be blessed by two of the greatest spiritual leaders—Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. We cannot ask for more from a benign Providence except the strength—and for this we shall have to strive too, for it cannot be only a gift, it has to be acquired—to follow them.

Did we say that the light had gone out?—No, it seems it cannot go out, for even as we write this we see before the mind's eye the vision of whole generations of men and women in whose hearts the Light Divine of Sri Aurobindo will continue to shine. That light is eternal, for it has been kept bright by a succession of Seers and Prophets and

* See the next article—Editor

Incarnations—that is the light of God If it were to go, mankind would be doomed to perish in darkness And that cannot be, for even in the darkest hours we have been blessed by light-bearers, solitary yet towering, frail yet fearless, sublime yet humble

Sri Aurobindo was one of them. We are proud to have been privileged to belong to his times May his spirit ever watch over this country and the world

A moment passed that was eternity's ray

EDITOR, *The Indian Listener*

(Courtesy *The Indian Listener*, 24 December 1950)

A PRAYER

GIVE me not only gold,
 But the use unwasted
 Of each grain of splendour
 My dazzled eyes behold—
 Or be Thy nectar-cup untasted,
 O Heavenly Lender

Cleanse and furnish new
 This heart receiving
 Till, like a child new-born,
 Its day's unshadowed hue
 Can no more suffer cloud-rack's reiving,
 Sunless, forlorn.

May my thought in some inmost shrine
 Be ever deeming
 Thee as the Taintless Giver—
 In grateful trance shine,
 A soul ensilvered with Thy Gleaming
 Like a moonlit river.

March 16, 1934

ARIJVA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment It is a beautiful poem

SRI AUROBINDO—A TRIBUTE

SRI AUROBINDO IS dead. It is almost unbelievable. A few months ago I saw him in radiant health and listened to the words of wisdom which fell from him. A few days ago he gave darshan to his disciples. We looked forward to celebrating his 80th Birthday in August 1951. Suddenly he has been called away Motherland has lost one of the noblest of her sons

SRI Aurobindo's life, works and views challenge the values of ordinary men In 1893 he returned after 14 years of study in England, where he had a most brilliant academic career and a self-invited failure in the I.C.S. When I joined Baroda College in 1903 he was our Professor; for sometime he was the Private Secretary of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad of Baroda During the Bengal Movement, following the partition in 1905, he emerged as the most powerful apostle of militant Indian Nationalism. Through his journal *Bande Mataram* he gave our political movement a new direction and a new content. He sacrificed his all for the country when the hope of our freedom was but a dim and distant light He defined the goal, the technique and the weapons of redeeming our nation from bondage. In one of his early writings, I remember, he also emphasized the need of non-violent movement to secure independence and even prophesied the arrival of another who would by those means achieve independence.

SRI Aurobindo was one of the great masters of the English language in the world His thundering leaders in the *Bande Mataram* attracted attention as much for their power as for mastery over the language His poetic works have been India's contribution to English literature. His works teem with an aptness of phrase and wealth of imagery.

In 1904 he took to Yoga and gave up his anglicised life In 1907 jointly with Lokamanya Tilak and Lala Lajpatrai, he led the young band of fiery nationalists against Pherozeshah Mehta and Surendranath Banerji at Surat. But soon he ceased to be a mere politician, for he was already on his way to a higher evolution. In 1909 when he was an under-trial prisoner for about a year he spent this year in silence and spiritual experience He summarised his experience thus:

In this seclusion the earliest realisation, the first lesson came to me I remembered then that a month or more before my arrest, a call had come to me to put aside all activity, to go into seclusion and to look into myself, so that I might enter into closer communion with Him.

In 1910 he went into seclusion at Pondicherry This was for him a great period of life, a period of creative interpretation of all that India stood for. His works of the period contain the most comprehensive survey of reintegrating Indian culture. They include his *Essays on the Gita*, his *Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Life Divine*, *The Psychology of Social Development*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Future Poetry* and *A Defence of Indian Culture* He built upon the work of Dayanand and

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, reintegrated Indian Culture, and gave Sanatana Dharma a new worldwide significance. He was thus the prophet of Modern India. Romain Rolland rightly called him "the completest synthesis that has been realized to this day by the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe."

His mind even in matters practical was as clear as crystal. In the Second World War he declared himself unequivocally in favour of the Allies though the whole country was against that view. His view stood justified. Recently he described the invasion of South Korea as the first step in the subjugation of Asia. Some of his remarks on current problems in our recent conversation indicated uncanny shrewdness. He was not a mere idealist, he was a seer who had related idealism to realities. He was a Yogi, and Truth came to him in her naked unabashed form.

He came to be recognised as one of the greatest philosophers of modern times and his discovery of the Supermind is a distinct contribution to human thought and spiritual advance. As I stated, in 1904 he took to Yoga; since then, he scaled successive heights of yogic realisation till on 24th November 1926 he reached the top. He gave to a mad, materialistic world the doctrine of the Descent of Divine Consciousness a living place in the thought and life of men.

His solitary life and spiritual experience in the Ashram of Pondicherry cannot be better described than in his own words. He says.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

When I speak of Sri Aurobindo I cannot forget the other Master Gandhiji at whose feet I sat for so long. Both these masters were the finest living products of Aryan Culture and each in his way was an architect of its modern reintegration.

Sri Aurobindo was a great artist of life. He had risen above the basic limitations, become the vehicle of Divine Will, wise and far-seeing. Gandhiji harnessed the basic limitations, and worked as God's instrument, creative and uplifting.

Sri Aurobindo followed Shri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and was a Yogi—a great living adept of this supreme art. Gandhiji, nearer to Dayananda, was a Karma Yogi—'master of the perfect act', *yogah karmasu kauśalam*, in fact one of the greatest Karma Yogins of all time. Both were the two greatest exponents of the Moral Order. Both were masters of the art of self-sculpture, both were dynamic forces challenging the darkness which is Westernism.

And when I met him in July, I saw in him not my old Professor but something different. It was absolute integration of personality, attachment, wrath and fear in him had been transmuted into a power which was at the same time beautiful and calm, the Central Idea in Aryan Culture, materialised in human shape.

He seemed to say in his own language:

My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
 My body is God's happy living tool,
 My spirit a vast sun of deathless light

The sudden death of so great a master naturally leaves a great void. But his task on earth was done. He lived and had his being in Divine Consciousness as did the Great Masters of old and his shuffling off the mortal coil cannot interfere with the spiritual influence which through calmness exquisite—*param śānti*—he radiated and will continue to radiate in spirit.

And so long as the spirit of such masters living in God walks the earth, we need not despair of the destiny of man to rise to the dignity of a god.

K M MUNSHI

(Courtesy *The Indian Listener*, 24 December 1950)

VISION

THE herbs shone bright
 in the unilluminated caverns
 of your eyes
 and you gasped to see
 the toddling dwarfs
 around your uninhibited soul
 You wanted something,
 some unsubstantial glare
 that would stun you
 to death
 The wandering lover-thoughts
 framed days in famous rhymes
 and mythic passions
 until your fate became a
 monument of unrelenting eyes

RANAJIT SARKAR

OMNI-REALISM

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A KEY TO THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION

(Continued from the issue of November 1998)

WHAT about the philosophy of Kant? Kant thought it obvious that in perception we were actually affected by something other than ourselves, a universe outside the human mind, for our perceptions appear to come to us whether we desire them or no. But, according to him, the aspect in which reality comes to us is wholly an expression of the make-up and movement of our sensory and intellectual consciousness: objective reality is a huge X, something entirely unknown to us save in terms of this make-up and movement. Is Kant more logical than Berkeley? He has been severely criticised for assuming what seemed obvious to him. It has been said with justice that the mere feeling that perception is forced on me by something other than myself is as likely to be a product of my own mind as anything else in my perception. It can just as well be an expression of the make-up and movement of my sensory and intellectual consciousness! To drive a wedge between this perceptual knowledge and all other perceptual knowledge is arbitrary. If you protest: "Why do we have the feeling of an objective reality if no objective reality induces it?"—the answer is a counter-question "Why should we look on everything else in perception as not being induced by a reality which is objective and what can compel us to look on everything else as being mind-cooked?" You may retort. "The sense of an objective reality is universal." Very well, but is not the sense equally universal that actual qualities of an objective reality are disclosed in perception? To believe that anything in perception is a subjective construct is an act of philosophy criticising a universal sense. If we grant this act to be valid, the act of criticising the universal sense that there is an objective reality is just as valid. You may here argue that when a certain organisation of consciousness is changed we have a different world-perception but the sense of an objective reality is constant in all possible organisations and hence it is valid while the sense of actual qualities of an objective world need not be valid. Your argument can easily be met by saying "Nothing except prejudice can make us think that when we have a different world-perception as a result of a consciousness differently organised we do not have actual different aspects of an objective world grasped by each organisation of consciousness. Logically, the sense that there is an objective reality is on the same footing as the sense that objective reality has this or that or any other quality."

Within the Kantian universe of discourse, there is no reason to believe that though there is an objective reality we can never perceive it and that all we perceive as its qualities are impositions by the nature and activity of our own mind. Either there is no objective reality or, if there is, Kant fails to provide any reason to believe that qualities are not just as much "out there" and that what is "out there" is only a noumenon, a

“thing-in-itself”, different in *kind* from the actual objects of my perception. A “thing-in-itself”—different in kind—cannot be inferred along Kant’s line of argument, while a “thing-in-itself” not different in kind takes away the forces of the contention that the aspect in which objective reality comes to me is mind-dictated. Kant’s central thesis is an attempt to eat one’s cake and have it too!

To put the case in other words: if by my perception I never know the true nature of reality but only the nature of reality as shaped by the constitution of my mind, what is there to lead us to posit an objective reality at all? If I never know A except in terms of B, how can I even know that there is an A independent of B? Consequently, scepticism about the existence of an objective reality is inevitable and, on the principle of Occam’s razor (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda*), we must not posit any entity other than what is absolutely necessary within the realm of a particular argument, so that an objective reality whose nature remains totally unknown to my perception is superfluous. Thus even Kantian subjectivism collapses into the doctrine that the existence of everything and everyone lies only in my perception. Once again we have solipsism. Either the nature of objective reality is somehow found by my perception—however small in view of that reality’s omni-qualifiedness may be the degree of finding—or I shall be compelled by logic to doubt that reality’s very existence, and ultimately dégringole into the position of “I alone”.

We have already noted that solipsism cannot logically be entertained. If it cannot, both Kantianism and Berkeleyanism go by the board and the path is perfectly clear for dismissing all subjectivism and setting up the view we have put forward, the view which is best christened Omni-realism since it means that all that is perceived is “out there” and objectively existent. But let us not commit one mistake: omni-realism does not imply that perception is not determined by anything in the mind’s own nature and activity or that by changing our consciousness we do not perceive greater or deeper reality. Whatever the mind perceives is necessarily in terms of the mind’s own constitution and process, the mind’s own sensory and intellectual make-up and movement. It is not just the state of our sense-organs or the angle from which we observe, that determines impressions: there is the specific nature and function of the mind itself. Kant insisted that everything experienced is in terms of two influences: our own past experience and certain fundamental categories or fundamental potentialities of experiencing. Kant’s particular scheme of categories—“*a priori* ideas”, as he called them—may or may not be acceptable in entirety; but we cannot deny that whatever comes into the mind must be conditioned by the mind’s nature and activity. If that nature is changed, a new world perception would result, which could be greater or deeper. But, as already hinted, when we assert this, we do not necessarily open the flood-gates to subjectivism and ultimately to solipsism. It is quite in keeping with the omni-realist position. For, in omni-realism we only affirm that whatever the mind perceives corresponds to something “out there”. The role which the mind’s own nature and activity play is in determining what aspect of objective reality will be known. The aspect known exists outside our mind, but it is known by us because our mind is fitted

to know it and none other. Were our mind differently fitted, a different aspect existing outside would be known. This means that objective reality is such that it has countless levels or degrees, innumerable phases or aspects, and with every change in the constitution and function of the perceiving consciousness we observe a different level or degree or phase or aspect of the objective reality. Objective reality, logically speaking, cannot be thought of as something fixed or definite forever. It has numberless stuffs and configurations, it is all things to all kinds of consciousness. In perception we have a correspondence between a particular status of consciousness and a particular aspect of the reality that is objective. An actual objective aspect of reality is revealed in every perception: whatever we perceive is really "out there". When a status is changed, we perceive another aspect which too is real, "out there", objective. This is the bedrock we reach by philosophical reasoning about perception.

Here an important warning must be given. We may be disposed to imagine that, if there is always a correspondence between our mind's constitution and what is "out there", we can arrive at the general laws of the physical universe by studying the "frames of thought", so to speak, inherent in our consciousness. That is to say, even though objective qualities cannot be denied we do not require to observe them in order to arrive at physical nature's general laws: we can arrive at the laws from *a priori* considerations. But one fact is overlooked by those who pursue this line of reasoning: there has not been a single case of finding a general law of physical nature by exploring only the mind's inherent frames of thought. All attempts to derive general laws from *a priori* considerations are attempts to explain away what has already been found by taking experiment as starting-point: they are retrospective, not anticipative. Eddington has gone to the length of saying that even the numerical constants of nature which modern physics has discovered can be foreseen wholly from a study of inherent frames of thought and he has worked out a brilliant mathematical scheme to substantiate his claim. About this scheme, however, H. T. Pledge records on page 297 of *Science Since 1500*: "It has not met all the technical criticisms levelled against it." Nor are flaws of technique, though serious enough, the only score that goes against Eddington's scheme. The basic defect is that Eddington makes no genuine prediction, he merely handles with intricate ingenuity the results of past experimental discovery. From *a priori* considerations he should have been able to foresee at least one new fact. As both Jeans and Max Born remind us, absolutely nothing has been foreseen and thus the bankruptcy of his method has been exposed.

This does not mean that the history of physics offers no instance of a wonderful leap of the mind, by which a gap in physical knowledge has been filled—a leap which neither experimental evidence could at the time justify nor logical necessity demand, though there was a certain conviction in the formulation of the classical continuity equation. Clerk Maxwell made such a leap when in stating the famous electromagnetic equations he postulated a certain term which was found correct by experiments many years later and whose logical necessity could be seen only by reasoning backward from them. What Maxwellian leaps of the mind philosophically imply we need not stop to

consider in our context: we are concerned only to say “Yes” or “No” to the query “Does study of any inherent frames of thought lead to discoveries such as made by Maxwell?” Clearly, Maxwell made his leap of mind with no study of any inherent frames of thought, any *a priori* conceptions. And even leaps like his have not been accepted as giving physical knowledge until they are verified by observation of the physical world.

The greatest blow to *a-priorism* about the physical world came with the downfall of Euclid’s geometry. Philosophers had long thought that the mind could not but observe in physical nature geometrical properties according to the axioms set forth by Euclid—axioms which they deemed “directly self-evident to the mind”. Kant flourished these axioms as incontrovertible samples of *a priori* knowledge which could not help being corroborated by observation. Yet, even before Kant, the persistent and unsuccessful effort to prove Euclid’s parallel postulate had shown doubts as to its self-evidence. With the advent of the mathematician Gauss, Euclid began to be dethroned. Lobatschewsky, Bolyai and Riemann followed in Gauss’s footsteps and built up strange systems of geometry different from Euclid’s. They admitted that if Euclid’s initial axioms were right all his propositions could be logically deduced. But they refused to admit that his axioms were the only ones conceivable or were given *a priori*. Whole systems of perfectly consistent geometries can be erected with entirely different axioms. Today we regard geometry as pure mathematics utterly divorced from the question: what laws obtain in the physical world? To ascertain what particular system of geometry out of so many equally conceivable applies to the physical world, we cannot do without observation over a wide range of phenomena. According to our greatest scientist, Einstein, a Maxwellian leap is necessary to light upon a fruitful geometrical hypothesis, but observation is the final judge of the rightness or wrongness of the theory. And observation has borne out Einstein’s own theory that the world obeys a geometry that is non-Euclidean, with Euclid’s geometry as a limiting case of it when small expanses of the universe are under scrutiny. Thus is knocked away the strongest support for the belief that there are *a priori* conceptions which can provide necessary truths of the physical world.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE PROPHET OF THE NEW AGE*

SRI AUROBINDO is the prophet of the New Age for which the modern world is in travail, and the comprehensive thoroughness with which he has accomplished his work is without a precedent. His birth in India, his education in England, his extensive studies when he was a Professor in the Baroda College, his activities in the forefront of the freedom movement in India and lastly his unique Yogic Sadhana in Pondicherry prepared him eminently for his great work. When he had a clear and complete vision of the destiny of man on the earth and how it was to be practically achieved, he started the philosophical review, *Arya*, in 1914 to give expression to his vision. There is no important aspect or problem of human life on which Sri Aurobindo did not throw a flood of light in the pages of the *Arya*. All this knowledge he got not by mere thinking or ratiocination, he received it from above in a mind perfectly silenced by Yogic practice. Single-handed he conducted this journal for about seven years. He once told us that if he had to express all the knowledge that he had gained by Yoga it would be necessary to conduct seven *Aryas* like that for seventy years. He suspended the publication of the *Arya* when he had finished saying all that was necessary for the practical uplift of humanity and turned, in collaboration with the Mother, to organise his Ashram to show in practice how man has to advance towards his divinisation. We shall quote here two articles from the *Arya* which will give the reader an idea of the scope of that journal and of the spiritual and cultural work undertaken by him. Afterwards we shall quote passages from *The Life Divine* and other books of Sri Aurobindo (reprinted from the *Arya*) giving in his own words the gist of his spiritual philosophy and his conception of the ideal of human unity and of the coming spiritual age.

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN ROY

* Author's preface to his unpublished book *Sri Aurobindo—The Prophet of the New Age* —Editor

THE WAGER OF AMBROSIA

IX. The Divine Assurance (C)

(Continued from the issue of November 1998)

THE seeker on the path even as of now is merely fumbling and looking around for his way. No doubt he has renounced the little things of life; but his renunciation is still of the indiscriminating kind. He is still in the strange paradoxical condition of fettered liberation, of actionlessness which is yet encumbered with activity, of quietism loaded with intense dynamism. Partial self-abnegation is still the way of his being and the decisive spiritual change has not yet taken place in him. But then with the attainment of the state of silent and passive Brahmic consciousness everything from him will disappear and he will become truly free. When all that had so far appeared to him unapproachable will come closer, then he will not say that there is yet something that exists in the distant beyond, he will rather find that there is nothing which is not reachable. In realisation of that supreme oneness the doer of works will enjoy his works. He will enjoy them the way a well brought-up and beautiful girl enjoys, in natural elation, the young charm and exuberance of her own youth.

यालागी तो कर्मयोगी। मो जालाचि माते भोगी। तारुण्य कां तरुणांगीं। जियापरी ॥

(*Jnāneshwarī*. 18.1147)

Everywhere the wave kisses the water on which it rides; throughout the orb of the sun spreads its own illumination, in the sky there is the all-pervading ether, utterly and in its entirety. "So do you become Me,"—tells the Teacher of the Gita to Arjuna. Does not in every respect an ornament enjoy the gold from which it is made? So should he live in Him. Such indeed is the perfection a karmayogin gets by following the Path of Action.

When you are in such a state you discover that, really, you do not possess words to speak; you become mute, fall speechless. You further recognise that this speechlessness itself is the best form of adoration of the Lord who is there in each and every expression of his. All divisions and differences vanish and you get a sight that goes farther than the objects of sight, even far beyond the very act of seeing. You always remain firm and steadfast in the Self. You may liken this condition of yours to that of a compressed sky which was as if fixed in space, that space itself having become it. The general language of the doer of the work, he thinking himself to be different from the work he is engaged in, is no more applicable there. In fact, such a work or work done in such a state cannot even be called work. *karma*, you are actually engaged in non-work. Your doing nothing then turns out to be a great worship, *mahāpujā*, of the Lord.

म्हणौनि कशीतयाही वोजा। ते न करणे हेचि कपिध्वजा। निफजे तिया महापूजा। पूजी तो माते ॥

(*Jnāneshwarī*: 18 1179)

You move in meditation, you praise him, you see him everywhere, you chant his name.—that indeed is *samādhi*, that is the true *advaita*, self-absorption and non-duality

तो करी तेतुली पूजा। तो कल्पी तो जपु माझा। तो असे तेचि कपिध्वजा। समाधि माझी ॥

(*Jnāneshwarī*: 18 1181)

At this stage, then, to speak of Brahman or Soul or God is to strike incongruity Even the act of refraining from speech or holding back any description, that itself becomes its eloquent description Saying nothing about it is after all an extensive commentary on it and in those very terms do you describe it The notion of knowing as well as non-knowing becomes meaningless It is in such knowledge that you then take your position In it understanding understands understanding, bliss embraces bliss, happy spirit lives in nothing but happy spirit When you are in this state you see that benefit adds to benefit and all gains grow together only to increase and augment them further Wonder and the sense of utter disbelief drown themselves in themselves and lustre gathers itself within itself Peace becomes peace, rest finds rest, experience gets intoxicated with experience It is then that to you comes this pure and blameless I-ness; even as do you attend with proper care the green healthy creeper of Karma Yoga, so does it come to you with its fruit “O Arjuna,” assuringly reveals the Teacher, “just as this karmayogin sets Me like a jewel of sentience in his diadem so do I, in an intimate manner of household exchange of gifts, put this mighty emperor in My crown ” Imagine an immense and spread-out temple, or a majestic palace of Karma Yoga, and you will discover that of it liberation or *moksha* is a high-rising tower, above it stretches only the skylike expanse of this remarkable doer of works

न बोलणेही न बोलोनी। ते बोलिजे तोड भरुनी। जाणीवनेणीव नेणोनी। जाणिजे ते ॥ तेथ बुझिजे बोधु बोधे। आनंदु घेपे आनंदे। सुरवरी नुसधे। सुरवचि भोगिजे ॥ तेथ लाभु जोडला लाभा। प्रभा आलिगिली प्रभा। विस्मयो बुडाला उभा। विस्मयामाजी ॥ शमु तेथ सामावला। विश्रामु विश्राती आला। अनुभवु वेडावला। अनुभूतिपणे ॥ किंबहुना ऐसें निरवळ। मोषण जोडे तया फळ। सेवुनि वेली वेल्हाळ। कर्मयोगाची ते ॥ पै कर्मयोगिया किरीटी। चक्रवर्तीच्या मुकुटी। मो चिद्रत्न ते सोटोवाटी। होय तो माझा ॥ कीं कर्मयोगप्रसादाचा। कळसु जो हा मोक्षाचा। तयावरील अवकाशाचा। उवावो जाला तो ॥

(*Jnāneshwarī* 18.1214-20)

Thus, in this karmayogin, the stream of knowledge and the stream of devotion have joined the stream of work. It will now be soon that the swift triple stream will reach the ocean of the blissful One Therefore, when this simple and easy path of Karma Yoga is available for the Oneness-seeker, there is no need for anyone to undertake harsh austerities, no vows need be made, no elaborate and formalised rites observed, no rituals performed It is through work that the karmayogin worships, out of that worship and devotion comes to him knowledge which in turn further increases his devotion for the supreme Being.

Significant and Yogically charged as these verses of Jnaneshwar are, they also prepare the needed ground for the definitive word or the highest truth the Teacher is

about to give to his chosen disciple. But, before that is done, Arjuna as the doer of the works must give up everything, in carrying out his actions, all the laws of conduct, his will, his egoistic life-motivations, his desires, his ideas and notions of things, personal prejudices and preferences he must abandon. Further, and most importantly, he should simply take refuge in the Supreme Being alone. Solely in it is there for him the deliverance from sin and evil and grief, in it is the Dharma of all the dharmas. This great and salutary helpful Dharma shall undoubtedly prove to him, even in the transactions of the world, most benign, it shall be the righteous and hence the best conduct. This course of action indeed has its own precious reward. Arjuna must constantly live in it, in that inalienable union obtained through Dharma; that is the kind of integral and fulfilling Yoga he must ever practise.

Then, as a happy desirable culmination of this practice, Arjuna is enjoined to renounce all his actions and all the dharmas, all that is prompted by the quick and nature-grown awareness. Instead, he must resort to the Yoga of Intelligence, *Buddhi* Yoga, and in his heart he must ever remain one with the Lord of Yoga, *Yogeshwara*. Grace of the Lord of Yoga shall take him safely through the difficult and perilous passage of life, in it shall be every fulfilment of his spiritual pursuit. In it will disappear all illusion. There will be no more the unavailing egoism. His earlier stupidity and stubbornness, his refusal to do his innate-natural, the appointed *swabhāva*-based work, shall not come in the way of his progress. What Arjuna has to do is to let himself go freely into the activity of his true and fundamental character. He should also feel assured that his whole action is as natural and spontaneous as is the surging of the Ganges towards the sea. It shall give him serenity and supreme peace. He shall forever abide united with the Lady of Tranquillity and, like a person of high and noble bearing, he shall always hold in his possession the kingdom of the Self. Thus shall he come to that place where birth is born, and rest is in the rest, and experience gets further enriched in the experience itself.

Arjuna may think that he would not engage himself in the Battle of Kurukshetra,—as it happened in that sudden and impuissant mood in which he was caught, the enervate mood of despondency and weakness unusual to a warrior and a hero. But then, at the same time, with his *Kshatriya* build-up he would not find it acceptable to stay away from it. His fighter qualities or *prakṛiti dharma* as well as his soul qualities or *swabhāva dharma*, moulded for performing brave gallant actions, would not even allow him to remain aloof from and unconcerned with the demands of society whose one pillar of strength he was. His valour, daring, fearlessness, commitment as an exceptional soldier to what is in hand, his conquering spirit,—these would not let him rest in non-action. It is necessary for him to recognise his own *prakṛiti dharma* and *swabhāva dharma* and accordingly shape the course of his life. Howsoever much he may like not to be concerned about these issues, the imperative of his birth as a warrior he just cannot obliterate or dismiss. Arjuna cannot but fight. Not only the external circumstances of war and life and society, but *Prakṛiti* herself would make him do what he ought to do.

But then what is really important is that, in order to derive full spiritual gains out of it, he must convert this unavoidable situation or this rare excellent occasion, this very action into an opportunity. He must make it an aspect of soul-prompted and soul-guided endeavour. By making the action a spiritual action he would greatly progress on the path of Karma Yoga. The key to it lies in the manner of doing the action, the manner which does not bind one to the mundane nothing, to the daily inconsequential humdrum, not even to the rewards and fruits of action. What is to be well understood by him is that, by performing such an action, in the freedom of the spirit, and by offering it to the Master of Works, Arjuna must become a true karmayogin. He must surrender himself to the Lord of his soul because, very truly, it is at his bidding that for him whatever has to happen is going to happen. The lower Nature under whose sway Arjuna presently is should not be allowed to determine the attitude and disposition, the manner of his work. Instead, he must go far beyond it; indeed, he must take this opportunity to acquire a Yogic poise. Such should be his approach in all the works and in all the dealings.

With this background ready, and as a culminating part of the exhortation, the Teacher of the Gita is now on the verge of disclosing to his chosen disciple the great secret of active life. To receive that secret, the supreme revelation, *paramam vācaḥ*, the disciple has by now been well prepared, in every respect. He is told that he, for his sempiternal good, should attend carefully to what he will be soon advised to do:

Make your attention keen and receptive, amply wide, and hearken to what exactly I am going to tell to you. Get these simple and direct straight words fixed in you. Let their import be determined in a positive and certain manner in you.

तरी अवधान पद्यत् । करूनिया आणि एकवेत् । वाक्य माझे निर्मळ । अवधारी पां ॥

(*Jnāneshwarī*: 18.1341)

The supreme word or *paramam vācaḥ* is going to be spoken. The secret of all the occult secrets, *sarvaguhyātāmam*, the lofty truth of spiritual life in action, the great decisive injunction, the most excellent divine assurance is presently going to be made,—so that the well-prepared disciple, who is actually the ready Soul of Man, establishes himself firmly in the dynamism of the Spirit's multifoldly fulfilling freedom.

But then what exactly does the Avatar of the Gita desire his fond dear friend and brave warrior on the battlefield, his loyal human disciple, to hear that he may so obey him? What is the pre-eminent secret, the secret of secrets, the most esoteric foundation for the Godward endeavour that he asks him to build? After getting the experience of the selfsameness everywhere, of the unique oneness which is sans action, sans duality, sans associations, sans sorrow and suffering, the experience of the ultimate passive Brahman, what indeed can remain there for the liberated soul to achieve? Arjuna is to make his mind and his heart an exclusive home for the dwelling of the Lord. His ears have to be eager and fully attentive to hear his praise and his glories, ever and always.

He should see and experience the all-pervasive presence in his inner and outer dealings, in each and every transaction of life. And all this he should do the way air associates itself, in every respect, with the entire sky. That presence is the shelter or refuge for all creatures, a place of residence, a habitation for each and every thing, *sarva vastuche vasoute*. All the while and in all circumstances Arjuna is to live and move in it, act in it, talk about it. It is likely that he still sees the lurking two-ness between himself as a disciple and his Teacher, between Man and the Supreme Being, between Nara and Narayana. But then that two-ness, he is told, happens to be there only on account of the nature of the bodily existence, *dehadharma*, which, with its dissolution, will also get dissolved. By worshipping the Supreme Being in every creature and in every object, in every sentient and insentient entity, Man will realise that the Supreme Being is indeed present in each and every thing, that there is nothing else but he alone. Man will have the knowledge of the Self; the sense of ego and of me-ness shall fade away from him. Arjuna has already made extraordinary progress and has well qualified himself to receive the supreme word from the Teacher.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(Continued from the issue of November 1998)

II. Prayers and Meditations and the Mother's Yoga

Prayers and Meditations may be regarded as the record of the Mother's Yoga before her meeting Sri Aurobindo. In this book of Yoga the Mother records the essence and the principles of the Yoga of Transformation in the way Sri Aurobindo too has envisaged, although she does not set down any philosophy of this Yoga. She is more concerned with its essence and the method of its practice. In this sense *Prayers and Meditations* is indeed a wonderful practical guide to the new Yoga discovered by herself and Sri Aurobindo.

If we read the prayers carefully, we shall find that they embody the aim and object which Sri Aurobindo has set down for his Integral Yoga. The first aim of this Yoga is the individual consciousness rising upward beyond mind to join and identify with the Divine. Many of the prayers are replete with intense aspiration for this union, also, actual union with the Divine Consciousness has been experienced and recorded in many of the prayers.

In the very first prayer, of November 2, 1912, the Mother records how having "made myself one in identity with Thee", the ego disappears—"for I shall be Thou". Again in the prayer of April 8, 1914, she writes, "I give myself to Thee without reserve and the 'I' disappears in Thee". Sri Aurobindo gives poetical expression to such an experience.

Once sepulchred alive in brain and flesh
She had risen up from body, mind and life,
She was no more a Person in a world,
She had escaped into infinity
What once had been herself had disappeared¹

Perhaps the most marvellous experience of this kind has been recorded in that wonderful prayer of November 26, 1915, and this experience Sri Aurobindo regards as "a material union with the Divine"². How in a phased manner, progressively, methodically, shattering every obstacle, the consciousness of the being grew "that it might contain and manifest a force and a power which increased ceaselessly in immensity and intensity". The experience continues "the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. Then it felt that its body was absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being. Then the consciousness became this Being

and perceived that its form was changing once more, it was absorbed into something which was no longer a form and yet contained all forms. . Then this last vestige of form disappeared, and the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable ” Such is the Ascent to the supreme Splendour, to the Bliss and Power of the Unutterable and the Ineffable.

The prayer has a significant sentence, “the being grew in greatness progressively, methodically, breaking down every barrier, shattering every obstacle, that it might contain and manifest a force and a power ..” The phrase ‘manifest a force and a power’ is similar to the second stage of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga,—the Descent Let us see in that very prayer what the Mother’s experience says of her descent: “The return towards the consciousness of the individual body took place very slowly in a constant and invariable splendour of Light and Power and Felicity and Adoration . And it was as if the modest corporeal form had become the direct and immediate vesture .of the supreme and eternal Witness.” Does this not resemble the manifestation of the transformative power of the Divine Sri Aurobindo spoke of?

The union with the Divine—the Ascent of the Integral Yoga—leads to several other realisations It helps in the disappearance of the ego in the Beyond-ego. And this freedom from the limiting consciousness of one’s ego gives a “sense of relief, the delicious lightness we feel when we are disembarassed of all the anxious care for ourself, for our life, for our health, for our satisfactions and even for our progress ” (August 17, 1913) There is an identification of the individual will with the Divine Will. The Mother records in the prayer of May 11, 1913: “It is by becoming conscious of Thy Will and identifying ours with Thine that there is found the secret of true liberty and all-puissance, the secret of the regeneration of forces and the transfiguration of the being ” In many more prayers the Mother speaks of transformation. On December 16, 1913, she aspires to “inflame my heart with Thy pure love, so that it may burn like a fiery brazier, consuming all imperfections and transforming into a comforting warmth and radiating light the dead wood of egoism and the black coal of ignorance.”

When the being and nature are thus prepared and ready, then the Presence grows within, like a ‘waxing moon’. The ‘divine Centre’ is thus prepared and it “awaits with ecstasy Thy New Manifestation,” writes the Mother on June 2, 1914. She is conscious of her mission and confident of the completion of the work of Transformation In a revealing prayer of January 11, 1914, the Mother records: “I know that a day will come when Thou wilt transform all those who approach us; Thou wilt transform them so radically that, totally liberated from the ties of the past, they will begin to live in Thee with a life quite new, a life solely made of Thee, of which Thou shalt be the sovereign Lord.” Is this not the Life Divine which Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga of Transformation intends to establish on this earth? In the same vein the Mother continues: “And also all troubles will be transformed into serenity, all anguish into peace, all doubts into certitude, all ugliness into harmony, all egoisms into self-giving, all darkness into light and all sufferings into unchanging happiness.” This transformation is not man just rising to a higher and purer height, but something more than that. As the Mother

records on June 14, 1914, "It is a veritable work of creation we have to do to create new activities and new modes of being, so that this Force, unknown to the earth till now, may manifest in its plenitude. It is to this work of a bringing to birth that I have consecrated myself, O Lord, because it is this that Thou demandest from me." The whole of this prayer needs to be read carefully. Two very significant truths emerge from this prayer. First, transformation is a work of creation, to create new modes of being, it is not a mere change in human attitude. Secondly, when the transformative Force will manifest in its plenitude, then the new creation will come to birth. This Force 'unknown to the earth till now' has to manifest in the earth-consciousness. This Force, it is safe to conjecture, refers to Sri Aurobindo's Supramental Force or the Supermind. Listen to him:

There is a being beyond the being of mind.
A miracle of the multitudinous One
There is a consciousness mind cannot touch. .
It has no home on earth, no centre in man,
Yet is the source of all things thought and done,
The fount of the creation and its works¹

These lines from *Savitri* are similar to the prayer of June 14, 1914. The Mother's Yoga as revealed through the prayers is very similar to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Transformation, excluding perhaps the technical and philosophical significance. Yet many readers are sceptical about it. This is so because mostly people think of transformation as physical transformation only. But Sri Aurobindo has so many times cautioned us that physical transformation will be the last outcome of transformation of the consciousness. First our consciousness has to be transformed and transformation of the form will follow it; for in evolution it is the consciousness that adopts a form suited to it. Likewise the Mother in her prayers mostly speaks of transformation of the consciousness, though occasionally she speaks of the creation of 'new modes of being' or marvellous birth of "the shining harvest of a new race." A sadhak in 1933 enquired of Sri Aurobindo: "There are some Prayers of the Mother of 1914 in which she speaks of transformation and manifestation. Since at that time she was not here, does this not mean that she had these ideas long before she came here?" Sri Aurobindo answered very categorically. "The Mother had been spiritually conscious from her youth, even from her childhood, upward and she had done Sadhana and had developed this knowledge very long before she came to India."⁴ After this statement of Sri Aurobindo we are assured of the truth that the prayers of the Mother do have the concept of a divine Manifestation and of Transformation. Let us note in brief what the Mother says about transformation. She writes "We want an integral transformation, the transformation of the body and all its activities. But there is an absolutely indispensable first step that must be accomplished before anything else can be undertaken: the transformation of the consciousness. The starting-point is of course the aspiration for this transforma-

tion and the will to realise it, without that nothing can be done.''⁵ From this statement we should understand why the Mother in her prayers lays more stress on transformation of the consciousness than on the physical transformation. First, consciousness must be transformed, physical transformation comes much later. Because the prayers do not speak much of physical transformation, we should not take it that the concept of this transformation is not in them.

(To be continued)

ASOKA K GANGULI

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- 3 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, p 705
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TWO BEINGS

Two vast urns pour a milky way of light
 Descending gently down my spine;
 Two vast eyes with an inverted sight
 Watch the calm spaces brightening within

I breathe, I speak, I taste, I sleep,
 Yet sleep not nor taste, speak or breathe,
 Ceasing my surface life now deep
 I have withdrawn myself in my luminous sheath.

Not yet in superconscious am I ensconced
 Nor completely in inconscience dwell,
 The bliss of heavens I taste when tranced,
 The joy of a mystic union in hell

Two beings have made me their natural home
 Abiding in my walls and my spacious dome

AKASH DESHPANDE

A LETTER FROM SAINT-PETERSBURG

Dear friends,

We want to compare details of our return to Saint-Petersburg with you

Our common prayers had been heard and we did not have any security or customs troubles either in Delhi or in Moscow airport. The recognition of Their Grace, granted us, made our homecoming very joyful and easy.

We could not dream about another Grace that was waiting for us during our flight from Delhi to Moscow. It happened an hour before landing in Moscow airport. It was 8 a.m. in Delhi.

The white carpet of clouds brightly lighted by the morning sun lay under the aircraft wing. A very beautiful iridescent road emerged at about 100 meters from the wing. It was moving parallel to the course of our aircraft. A little bit later this road turned into a bud of lotus which slowly started to open. When the bud opened it assumed very vivid outlines of Sri Aurobindo's face. Then His features manifested very clearly—His nose, eyes, mouth; His hair fell over His shoulders.

What we saw plunged us into amazement. His image was alive. It was moving near our aircraft. The vision maintained its clearness at least 15-20 seconds. We could not come to our senses for a long time and just prayed and thanked Him for His Royal Grace that He was with us and let us see Him.

This vision was seen by 3 other people—Tcherepanov Ivan, Tcherepanova Irina and Pojilova Tatiana.

In Moscow and Saint-Petersburg the Relics were met with flowers and pleasure in the hearts. After coming to Saint-Petersburg the Relics were put on a specially prepared place decorated with flowers and portraits of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Next day all members of our community gathered together and we told them about our magic trip to India to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Now endless joy and feeling of His living presence are in our hearts and we are very happy to speak of it to everybody who value the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's names.

With love,

Your friends from Saint-Petersburg

NATALY

SRI AUROBINDO—THE YOGI-AUTHOR*

I HAVE been asked to speak about Sri Aurobindo the writer, but how does one speak of the Ineffable and the Indefinable? How does one separate the writer from the Yogi? The Infinite has innumerable aspects but they are all part of a single whole. But for the sake of convenience, it becomes relatively easier to acquaint oneself with one side of so vast a Personality just as one approaches the sea from one direction and enters into it one little step at a time, much before one dares to plunge into its depths and get a full sense of the enormous ocean. Also, many people in the world today have come to know of Sri Aurobindo through his writings. So I suppose it is just as well that I should speak, though humbly and diffidently, of him through his works.

For indeed, Sri Aurobindo has given us an ocean of works—vast in their range as they are in their depth, they express many moods and many meditations, all sparkling with light and delight. The mastery of the form, the perfect phrasing of this great body of knowledge where every word is irreplaceable tell us that we are in the presence of a completely conscious writer. His writing is an expression of his infinitely rich consciousness, and just as he said “All Life is Yoga”, so also could it be said that all his writing is his Yoga, and all his Yoga given to us through his works. Of himself and his writing he said in 1934

A Yogi who writes is not a literary man for he writes only what the inner Will and Word wants him to express. . I am supposed to be a philosopher, but I never studied philosophy—everything I wrote came from Yogic experience, knowledge and inspiration. So too my greater power over poetry and perfect expression was acquired in these last days not by reading and seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of my consciousness and the greater inspiration that came from the heightening.¹

Writing, for him, was an expression of consciousness and since life is an opportunity for the growth of consciousness, one may say that his writing too evolved, with the years, while retaining always the stamp of his fundamental nature and personality. Just as the tree is contained in the seed, so too the early writings already foreshadow the later greatness of the Master’s pen.

Sri Aurobindo had started writing verses in his teens, in England, in which his classical education is evident. The inspiration is often Greek as is his care for beauty of form and craftsmanship. At the same time, there is already an awareness of truths beyond the visible world. For instance, in *Songs to Myrtilla* he says

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool
As to parched lips a running pool.

* A talk given during the celebrations on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo in August 1998

When earth is full of whispers, when
 No daily voice is heard of men,
 But higher audience brings
 The footsteps of invisible things ²

But in the *Envoi* which appears at the end of the same poem, he is already full of the thrill of anticipation of returning to India

Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati
 Has called to regions of eternal snow
 And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,
 Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow ³

Again, in 1892, before he had returned to India, we find him writing in *The Harmony of Virtue*—

Look at the India of Vikramaditya How gorgeous was her beauty! how Olympian the voices of her poets! In those days every man was marvellous to himself and many were marvellous to their fellows, but the mightiest marvel of all were the philosophers What a Philosophy was that! For she scaled the empyrean on the winged sandals of meditation, soared above the wide fires of the sun and above the whirling stars, up where the flaming walls of the universe were guiltless of wind or cloud and there in the burning core of existence saw the face of the most high God ⁴

Even before returning to India, Sri Aurobindo loved and knew about his motherland, as these lines so beautifully reveal

He came back to India after fourteen years in England As he set foot on Indian soil at the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, a vast calm surrounded him, a calm which remained with him for long months afterwards ⁵ He effectively speaks of this experience thus In my end is my beginning, in my beginning is my end. The end of this sojourn to England meant the beginning of the Indian experience which in the fullness of time, was to embrace the two ends of existence and all that lies between them ⁶

Sri Aurobindo spent thirteen years in the Baroda State Service and as a professor at the Baroda College The love he felt for his motherland wanted India strong and free During this time one of his Cambridge friends, K G Deshpande, invited him to write articles for the *Induprakash* of which Deshpande was the editor. He started the series with a remarkable sentence "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch?" Then he exhorted his countrymen that the key to the nation's salvation lay within themselves "Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our purblind sentimentalism" ⁸ Again a call to his fellow countrymen went forth in his piece *Bhavani Mandir* where he describes India as Mother Bhavani

Come then, hearken to the call of the Mother She is already in our hearts waiting to manifest Herself, waiting to be worshipped You who feel Her stirring within you, fling off the black veil of self, break down the imprisoning walls of indolence, worship Her each as you feel impelled, with your bodies or with your intellect or with your speech or with your wealth or with your prayers and worship ⁹

Already in the young Sri Aurobindo we find the dominant inward turn, the foundation of all action being the spiritual consciousness.

It was during these years that he mastered Sanskrit and Bengali sufficiently so as to be able to make very beautiful translations of several pieces from both languages He wrote very many poems as well, one of which was addressed to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who had given to India its national mantra, *Bande Mataram*

The mantra, *Bande Mataram*, was what inspired Sri Aurobindo when he left Baroda to make Calcutta his centre of political activities He translated Bankim's poem

Mother, I bow to thee!
 Rich with thy hurrying streams,
 Bright with thy orchard gleams,
 Cool with thy winds of delight,
 Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
 Mother free ¹⁰

How deep was his love for the Motherland! It was adoration and worship, patriotism was not different from religion or spiritual experience In his own words:

The Mantra had been given and in a single day [the Partition of Bengal] a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism The Mother had revealed herself . A great nation which had had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror ¹¹

The translation of the poem goes on thus:

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
 Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
 Thou the love divine, the awe
 In our hearts that conquers death ¹²

To Sri Aurobindo, India was the Mother Goddess, the Shakti To her he offered his obeisance

He translated a great deal from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well He also made profound studies of Vyasa, Valmiki, and Kalidasa A great many original

compositions, plays and poems were written during these years in Baroda and Calcutta. All indicate his very rich inner life. All the while he was very busy guiding the nationalist movement and inspiring the youth to throw off the yoke of political and psychological slavery. One way to do so, he always felt, was to educate the young and, to this end, he wrote articles and essays about education. One of the essential aspects of the teaching of Sri Aurobindo is the fundamental unity upholding the diversity of manifestation. Each is an expression of the All and, as Sri Aurobindo explains, just as each searches for perfection through the development of his own powers, so also he feels out, though more slowly, for a similar perfectibility of the race. He says:

..the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation ¹³

It enables the individual to grow and the nation to preserve, enrich and strengthen its soul and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity.

Sri Aurobindo's writings also reflect the same characteristic diversity, founded on the central unity of the Spirit manifesting itself through all the activities of mind, life and body. In his revolutionary writings published in the weekly *Bande Mataram*, he lit the same fire of the spirit. For instance, the power of the inner attitude flames out of lines such as these:

In this grave crisis of our destinies let not people lose their fortitude or suffer stupefaction and depression to seize upon and unnerve their souls. The fight in which we are engaged is not like the wars of old in which when the King or leader fell, the army fled. The King whom we follow to the wars today is our own Motherland, the sacred and imperishable, the leader of our onward march is the Almighty Himself, that element within and without us whom sword cannot slay, nor water drown, nor fire burn, nor exile divide from us, nor a prison confine ¹⁴

We hear the voice of the Rishi when he tells his countrymen:

What is Nationalism? Nationalism is not a mere political programme, Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live. God cannot be killed, God cannot be sent to jail ¹⁵

Behind politics and revolution, Sri Aurobindo saw the Divine Guide, leading the nation to its destined goal; thus on the cover page of his journal *Karmayogin*, which he would bring out after his year in prison, would be Sri Krishna, the Charioteer, leading the chariot of the nation through the battlefields of life.

In his powerful Hymn to Durga in Bengal, he prayed for Her strength:

Mother Durga! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy

instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. . May our entire life become a ceaseless worship of the Mother, all our acts a continuous service to the Mother, full of love, full of energy.¹⁶

Durga, Bhavani, “She who watches over India till the end”, Krishna, the divine Helper and Guide was how he saw the real Soul of the Indian race This is what he asked his fellow countrymen to realise

Sri Aurobindo was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case in May 1908. In prison he continued to write plays full of joy and laughter, like *The Viziers of Bassora*, poems, articles, essays. His spirit could not be cooped up, it always flamed forth He wrote:

Not in the petty circle of cities
 Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell,
 Over me God is blue in his welkin,
 Against me the wind and the storm rebel¹⁷

There were other lines too, long, magical, soul-enchanting lines such as these of the *Mother of Dreams*, written by one whom no prison could contain—

Thine is the shade in which visions are made; sped by thy hands from
 celestial lands come the souls that rejoice for ever.
 Into thy dream-worlds we pass or look in thy magic glass, then beyond thee
 we climb out of Space and Time to the peak of divine endeavour¹⁸

The year of Sadhana in prison culminated in Sri Aurobindo’s mighty experience of Vasudeva.

it was while I was walking that His strength again entered into me. I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there holding over me his shade I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me.¹⁹

What a tremendous reversal of consciousness—the perception of the universal Divine, a perception which would never leave him any more. Thus when he came out of prison in May 1909, helped by the inspired defence of C R Das, he started two Weekly papers, the Bengali *Dharma* and the English *Karmayogin*, a “Weekly Review of National Religion, Literature, Science, Philosophy”, meant for the growth of the

national life and the development of the soul of the nation. For henceforth, his purpose was obviously to recapture the spiritual master key to the solution of life's problems. In the *Karmayogin*, he categorically stated "the freedom, unity and greatness of India have now become necessary to the world. This is the faith in which the *Karmayogin* puts its hand to the work.. We believe that God is with us and in that faith we shall conquer"²⁰

Apart from the ideal of the *Karmayogin*, the paper also published some other collections of articles called "The Brain of India", "The National Value of Art", "A System of National Education". In all these the emphasis is on the flowering of the human consciousness opening, as does a bud, when it experiences the higher light.

But some of the writings published in the *Karmayogin* were thought to be seditious. The office of the journal was raided on 14 February 1910. Some of Sri Aurobindo's young friends brought the news of his imminent arrest; but by then he had received the inner command "Go to Chandernagore", which was then in French India. In Chandernagore, where he stayed till the end of March, "he plunged", as he says, "entirely into solitary meditation". Another *adesh*, or command, came to him "Go to Pondicherry". He left Chandernagore on the 31st March to reach Pondicherry, by the S. S. Duplex, on the 4th of April, 1910, at 4 p.m. He left British India and arrived at the seat of his Sadhana, his "cave of tapasya", Pondicherry.

The intense yogic practice that he followed here, particularly between 1910 and 1914, is noted in his *Record of Yoga*. Some of his realisations too were transcribed into lyrics such as *The Meditations of Mandavya*

I know, O God, the day shall dawn at last
 When man shall rise from playing with the mud
 And taking in his hands the sun and stars
 Remould appearance, law and process old
 Then, pain and discord vanished from the world,
 Shall the dead wilderness accept the rose
 And the hushed desert babble of its rills,
 Man once more seem the image true of God²¹

(To be concluded)

JHUMUR BHATTACHARYA

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[N B All references are from *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* volumes]

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| 5 See Vol 26, p 50 | 14 Vol 1, p 334 |
| 6 See Vol 22, p 121 | 15 <i>Ibid</i> , pp 652-53 |
| 7 Vol 1, p 5 | 16 Vol 8, p 216 |
| 8 <i>Ibid</i> , p 12 | 17 Vol 5 p 39 |
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| 10 Vol 8, p 309 | 19 Vol 2 p 4 |
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YOU SIT IN JUDGMENT

YOU sit in judgment over me,
 O outer man with vision blind
 As a grey bat's, and cannot see
 Beyond the little dusk of mind

The being that I am is rife
 With deepest glories interspun
 How shall you know my inner life
 Who have but lived an outer one?

Withdraw, O outer man! withdraw
 Into yourself, and then behold
 Your inner Self and mine with awe,
 For both are elemental gold

6-30 evening

9-8-34

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: Very fine

(From the typescript volume entitled *The Wheel of Time*)

PILGRIMAGE TO PONDICHERRY

I SAT with my lunch plate, an extra large stainless steel plate or *thali* with two oversized stainless bowls and an equally oversized stainless steel tumbler of water, at the table on the Ashram's Dining Room verandah. The fan above, way up above, revolved with full speed, but could not send down enough breeze to stop me sweating from sweltering humid heat. All were busy eating their lunch. There was cereal with vegetables or *dahl* in one bowl, curd in another, rice, a couple of slices of brown bread and two small yellow bananas. Although the food was the same for all, I was amazed at the ingenuity of the people producing a variety out of such plain uniformity. Some would transfer their rice portion to the *dahl* bowl until it would be full, others would mix rice, curd and *dahl*, while some would take the porridge and milk, others would deftly slice bananas into the curd using the bowl's sharp edge for the purpose, yet others would manage to have more bananas and less rice, some would eat bread first and rice later or *vice versa*, some would keep the curd as dessert as they would put sugar in it. No two people ate the same way. But all did eat in silence, or, even if there was some talk, it was very subdued. I was overwhelmed by such an atmosphere, where there were people from all states of India, all sorts of regions and languages and people from all around the world. I could hear people whispering to each other in German, French, English and other languages that I could not identify. There was no one to issue orders or oversee the mammoth functioning of the feeding of the people. Tens of hundreds of people carried their own plates, ate in a dignified manner and left the table just as neat and clean as when they came to sit there. An unseen spirit seemed to admonish them, for no one is trained here to be disciplined, the same spirit seemed to guide them as they moved around without confusion and the very same spirit seemed to keep their thoughts busy as they maintained silence. There was peace here. There was silence and reflection. There was the presence of a spirit, for I cannot find any other reason for the creation of such an atmosphere. There wasn't anyone, I am sure, who couldn't have experienced these, the *peace*, the *presence*.

Until a couple of years ago, as far as I was concerned, there existed neither Sri Aurobindo nor Pondicherry. Curiously enough, in those days I was searching for an appropriate Indian thinker who could fit into my academic designs in rational psychology. Being attached to Franz Brentano Research Institute at a German University is the beginning of the story of my discovery of Sri Aurobindo. Brentano, a latter-day Aristotelian who sowed the seeds of phenomenology, had propounded a doctrine called *Psychology from an Empirical Point of View*. Accordingly, he analysed our mental phenomena in a *descriptive* and *empirical* way. He dealt incisively, he classified our mental workings or processes into acts: acts of perception, acts of judgment and acts of love or hate. The study of mental phenomena centred around the concept of consciousness. Brentano presented very efficiently and scientifically the working of mental phenomena and the concept of consciousness strictly from an empirical point of view. I needed this to be complemented by a transcendental or

spiritual aspect, thus complete a study of the concept of consciousness with both its aspects physical and transcendental, material and spiritual or, to use Immanuel Kant's terms, phenomenal and pneumenal.

I searched through the Indian philosophical firmament and was dismayed to find that other than a Vedantic concept of consciousness, which I admit is very rich and resourceful in itself, there was no thinker who explored systematically with clear scientific basis the foundations of consciousness. The Vedantic thought consists in the self-realization of an individual, *Atman*, into the ultimate One Self, *Paramatman*; when one gains the knowledge that the multiplicity in the world is an illusion, *Maya*, and true knowledge consists in knowing consciously the unity of all that exists, then one attains enlightenment. One may free oneself from the deceptive world through good works and perfect duty, *karma*, or through devotion and sacrifice, *bhakti*, or through intellectual pursuit of truth or knowledge, *jñana*.

But there was a surprise waiting for me, it was Sri Aurobindo who offered me hope in my pursuit. For he spoke about *evolution* of the world and particularly of man in a revolutionary way. We have come to accept that man is the crown of creation. He rejects this! He advocates that the evolutionary process has not stopped, the next step for man is to be superman. Man today is defined as a rational animal; all his activities emanate from the mind. Sri Aurobindo says that the mind is merely an instrument, an imperfect instrument at that, extremely impaired by limited experience and even less dependable memory. In order to get over this problem we must raise the level of our consciousness to such an extent that it rises to the supramental level. We begin the mental exercise by silencing the mind! The entire pursuit for the higher level of consciousness is termed Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo develops his thesis scientifically. He himself becomes the object of his own observation and attains the supramental stage. On the way he records his progress which finally gets epitomized in his works. He presents his thought with rigour, logical preciseness and with the mastery of an accomplished philosopher. Both theory and praxis go hand in hand,—the masterly work, *The Life Divine*, explores his doctrine systematically, on the other hand there is *The Synthesis of Yoga* that guides one through the Integral Yoga towards the goal. All this by a man who never studied formally the subject of philosophy!

As I researched into Sri Aurobindo's concept of consciousness I felt more and more acquainted with him. He speaks directly in his works. This perhaps is the clue to his successful editorship of *Bande Mataram*. People used to wait for the next issue to come out so that they might first read what he had to say. His audience is always before him. As India was celebrating the golden jubilee of her independence, I asked what Sri Aurobindo would say on this occasion. I had several questions, doubts and problems. Would he address them? So I began an interview or a discussion with him. It was fair and square: he had answers to all my queries and problems about his country. The result of this activity is *Freedom and Future, an Imaginary Dialogue with Sri Aurobindo*, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press.

Studying Sri Aurobindo, an intellectual activity, did not satisfy me. There must be

something more to it I must visit *him* So, I landed in Pondicherry Did I see him? I saw his spirit everywhere and in everyone First, I say everywhere, that is, all the establishments that directly bear the name of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother stand out in their neat and well-defined appearance, clean and green surroundings and calm and prayer-like atmosphere Whether it is the school, library, press, various units of cottage industries, shops and travel services, and so forth all bear the unmistakable stamp of the spirit of Sri Aurobindo and its expression that the Mother had endowed on them. Thousands of people visit the Ashram and the related institutions every day Any other worldly establishment would need an elaborate system of organization to control and administer the volume of people Nothing of the sort exists Only the Spirit works on the hearts and minds of the people

The people move about and participate as though they have been there for ages It does not take very long to accept the promptings of the Spirit I saw a group of people who appeared to me to have landed, wherever they had come from, straight in the Dining Room This was at the evening supper time They had had no idea what the Ashram was all about or how to go about it They seemed rather *raw* and *undisciplined* I said to myself "Let me see! This is how I shall find out whether the Spirit of Sri Aurobindo really works I shall observe these people" The next day, at lunch time, I found that the members of the group were dispersed and sitting with the others, one of them carried his *thali* of food and sat on a mat, kept his food on the tiny table in front of him, closed his eyes and was lost in prayer! And, the leader of this group, to my amazement, had volunteered himself to work in the dish-washing section!

I also saw Sri Aurobindo in the people who had seen, worked and lived with him and the Mother I visited Nirodbaran, the man who served Sri Aurobindo for twelve years I held his hands in great reverence, for he had served with them the Master Did I not feel Sri Aurobindo? I paid a visit to Amal Kiran There is no better man in the world, more brilliant and knowledgeable than he to comment upon Sri Aurobindo Did I not get a glimpse of what Sri Aurobindo wanted to impart to the world? On the way back, at the Pondicherry bus-stand I met a man who happened to be an ex-student of the Ashram School We travelled together till Delhi, all along talking only about Sri Aurobindo Did I travel with *him*?

At my last meal in the Dining Hall I thanked the man who sits at the door to punch the tickets for meals. "This is for the last time," I said He smiled, looked straight into my eyes and said "No, it is just the beginning" I had stayed for only five days in Pondicherry Days may have been few but I had an experience of a lifetime One may not be always in Pondicherry, but one can take the experience from there, cherish and dwell upon it The Spirit abides beyond the territorial boundaries Indeed, as the man at the Dining Hall's doorstep taught me, the pilgrimage did not end; it had merely started

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 1998)

WE have found that in the view of Sri Aurobindo the social development is an evolutionary cyclic movement, progressing upward through stages. In *The Human Cycle* Sri Aurobindo has traced out the whole social cycle through a sequence of five stages, named symbolic, typical, conventional, individualistic or rational and subjective. As we have mentioned earlier, these names are taken by him from an eminent German historian Karl Lamprecht, the first social thinker in pre-war Germany. He put forward a psychological theory of history and social development. The theory of Lamprecht may have just struck Sri Aurobindo. He found that it was not a wholly acceptable theory but it signified an initial advance over the materialistic economic conception of history and social development which had dominated the socio-historical thought in Europe till the first decades of the present century. It was because of the importance of the idea of modern scientific materialism in Sociology. Sri Aurobindo has mentioned "The theorist, Lamprecht, basing himself on European and particularly on German history, supposed that human society progresses through certain distinct psychological stages which he terms respectively symbolic, typical and conventional, individualist and subjective. This development forms, then, a sort of psychological cycle through which a nation or a civilisation is bound to proceed. Obviously, such classifications are likely to err by rigidity and to substitute a mental straight line for the coils and zigzags of Nature. The psychology of man and his societies is too complex, too synthetical of many-sided and intermixed tendencies to satisfy any such rigorous and formal analysis. Nor does this theory of a psychological cycle tell us what is the inner meaning of its successive phases or the necessity of their succession or the term and end towards which they are driving. But still to understand natural laws whether of Mind or Matter it is necessary to analyse their working into its discoverable elements, main constituents, dominant forces, though these may not actually be found anywhere in isolation. I will leave aside the western thinker's own dealings with his idea. The suggestive names he has offered us, if we examine their intrinsic sense and value, may yet throw some light on the thickly veiled secret of our historic evolution, and this is the line on which it would be most useful to investigate."

Sri Aurobindo found that Lamprecht's interpretation is not adequate for a definite psychological interpretation of social evolution and he put aside the views of Lamprecht, except the names of the stages of the cycle given by him. Sri Aurobindo thought them to be very psychological and very suggestive. Therefore he adopted in "their intrinsic sense and value the name of stages" in the opening chapter of *The Human Cycle*.

In the remaining chapters he has given the names as adequately infrarational, rational, and suprarational or spiritual. For an adequate understanding of Sri Aurobindo's explanation of social evolution it is necessary to accept this later sequence

of three stages as the basis. The earlier one of five stages, the names of which were adopted from Lamprecht's theory, can easily be correlated with it, for Sri Aurobindo includes in the infrarational stage the first three stages—symbolic, typical and conventional—of the earlier sequence, the rational stage is common to both the sequences, while the last, the suprarational stage is a wider extension of the subjective age of the earlier sequence. Sri Aurobindo's sequence of the three stages of the social evolution is based upon a psychological criterion derived from the fundamental, subjective conception of society. Sri Aurobindo has explained the distinctive character of each social stage as well as the transition from one stage to another. His words run: "We have seen that there are necessarily three stages of the social evolution or, generally, of the human evolution in both individual and society. Our evolution starts with an infrarational stage in which men have not yet learned to refer their life and action in its principles and its forms to the judgement of the clarified intelligence, for they still act principally out of their instincts, impulses, spontaneous ideas, vital intuitions or else obey a customary response to desire, need and circumstance,—it is these things that are canalised or crystallised in their social institutions. Man proceeds by various stages out of these beginnings towards a rational age in which his intelligent will more or less developed becomes the judge, arbiter and presiding motive of his thought, feeling and action, the moulder, destroyer and re-creator of his leading ideas, aims and intuitions. Finally, if our analysis and forecast are correct, the human evolution must move through a subjective towards suprarational or spiritual age in which he will develop progressively a greater spiritual, supra-intellectual and intuitive, perhaps in the end a more than intuitive, a gnostic consciousness. He will be able to perceive a higher divine end, a divine sanction, a divine light of guidance for all he seeks to be, think, feel and do, and able, too, more and more to obey and live in this larger light and power. That will not be done by any rule of infrarational religious impulse and ecstasy, such as characterised or rather darkly illumined the obscure confusion and brute violence of the Middle Ages, but by a higher spiritual living for which the clarities of the reason are a necessary preparation and into which they too will be taken up, transformed, brought to their invisible source."²

The same kind of psychological significance about these three stages of social evolution is given by Sri Aurobindo in the following passages:

"Human society has in its growth to pass through three stages of evolution before it can arrive at the completeness of its possibilities. The first is a condition in which the forms and activities of the communal existence are those of the spontaneous play of the powers and principles of its life. All its growth, all its formations, customs, institutions are then a natural organic development,—the motive and constructive power coming mostly from the subconscious principle of the life within it,—expressing, but without deliberate intention, the communal psychology, temperament, vital and physical need, and persisting or altering partly under the pressure of an internal impulse, partly under that of the environment acting on the communal mind and temper. In this stage the people is not yet intelligently self-conscious in the way of the reason, is not yet a

thinking collective being, and it does not try to govern its whole communal existence by the reasoning will, but lives according to its vital intuitions or their first mental renderings. The early framework of Indian society and polity grew up in such a period as in most ancient and mediaeval communities, but also in the later age of a growing social self-consciousness they were not rejected but only farther shaped, developed, systematised so as to be always, not a construction of politicians, legislators and social and political thinkers, but a strongly stable vital order natural to the mind, instincts and life intuitions of the Indian people.

“The second stage of the society is that in which the communal mind becomes more and more intellectually self-conscious, first in its more cultured minds, then more generally, first broadly, then more and more minutely and in all the parts of its life. It learns to review and deal with its own life, communal ideas, needs, institutions in the light of the developed intelligence and finally by the power of the critical and constructive reason. This is a stage which is full of great possibilities but attended too by serious characteristic dangers. Its first advantages are those which go always with the increase of a clear understanding and finally an exact and scientific knowledge and the culminating stage is the strict and armoured efficiency which the critical and constructive, the scientific reason used to the fullest degree offers as its reward and consequence. .

“On the other hand the tendency of the reason when it pretends to deal with the materials of life as its absolute governor, is to look too far away from the reality of the society as a living growth and to treat it as a mechanism which can be manipulated at will and constructed like so much dead wood or iron according to the arbitrary dictates of the intelligence. The sophisticating, labouring, constructing, efficient, mechanising reason loses hold of the simple principles of a people’s vitality, it cuts it away from the secret roots of its life. The result is an exaggerated dependence on system and institution, on legislation and administration and the deadly tendency to develop, in place of a living people, a mechanical State. An instrument of the communal life tries to take the place of the life itself and there is created a powerful but mechanical and artificial organisation; but, as the price of this exterior gain, there is lost the truth of life of an organically self-developing communal soul in the body of a free and living people. It is this error of the scientific reason stifling the work of the vital and the spiritual intuition under the dead weight of its mechanical method which is the weakness of Europe and has deceived her aspiration and prevented her from arriving at the true realisation of her own higher ideals

“It is only by reaching a third stage of the evolution of the collective social as of the individual human being that the ideals first seized and cherished by the thought of man can discover their own real source and character and their true means and conditions of effectuation or the perfect society be anything more than a vision on a shining cloud constantly run after in a circle and constantly deceiving the hope and escaping the embrace. That will be when man in the collectivity begins to live more deeply and to govern his collective life neither primarily by the needs, instincts,

intuitions welling up out of the vital self, nor secondarily by the constructions of the reasoning mind, but first, foremost and always by the power of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty, supple and living order of his discovered greater self and spirit in which the individual and the communal existence have their law of freedom, perfection and oneness. That is a rule that has not yet anywhere found its right conditions for even beginning its effort, for it can only come when man's attempt to reach and abide by the law of the spiritual existence is no longer an exceptional aim for individuals or else degraded in its more general aspiration to the form of a popular religion, but is recognised and followed out as the imperative need of his being and its true and right attainment the necessity of the next step in the evolution of the race''³

Sri Aurobindo also traces the whole course of social evolution in the course of ten chapters of *The Human Cycle* through another sequence of three stages to which he gives a different set of names barbarism, civilisation or culture and spirituality

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 Sri Aurobindo *Social and Political Thought*, SABCL, Vol 15 p 2
- 2 *Ibid* p 173
- 3 *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL Vol 14 pp 336-338

APHORISMS—KARMA

THERE was a time when God came to the world, but the world didn't understand Him
The day will come when the world comes to God, but God does not understand it.

There was a time when God came to the world, but the world mocked at Him
The day will come when the world comes to God, but God mocks at it

There was a time when God came to the world, but the world crucified Him
The day will come when the world comes to God, but God crucifies it

There was a time when God came to the world to exalt it
The day will come when the world comes to God to exalt Him

GLEB NESTEROV

GOD-FORSAKEN PLACE

“It is a God-forsaken place,” said a friend of mine to me referring to a spot of desolation on the Coromandel coast.

This phrase seems to me to be a time-honoured dishonour to the creator. The world is an emanation from God. I would like to interpret the catchword ‘God-forsaken’ as a man of faith in my religion, as a Hindu. Not for me therefore are the geological theories of the origin of the Universe. We Indians burst into the expletive ‘God-forsaken’, which the rational West has coined.

No religion in the world says that God forsakes. For God’s sake let us forsake the word ‘God-forsaken’. We alone arrogate to ourselves the cruel right to desert and forsake. This is in consonance with the nature of our species. God never forsakes the forsaken.

No spot in the vast Universe is forsaken by God. The attribute ‘omnipresent’ will cease to have any import if God begins exercising his choice of residence in this world. The desolate stretches of the Rajasthan desert are as much permeated by His presence as is the Marina Beach at Chennai. It is blasphemy to say that God will desert a desert. A desert is no dead region or territory but pulses with many forms of life which bewilder us. God’s solicitude for them is as great as it is for us and there is no question of his forsaking them in that sandy desolation. If the power and love of God are not immanent, our planet would not be there. God’s love does not distinguish between a worm and a woman.

God’s immanence is not felt by us since the mystic base of our ancient faith has been knocked down by commercial science. Science-indoctrinated modern mind has lost its intuitive awareness of cosmic intimations which the pristine mind could sense. This discerning substratum in us is overlaid with too much of artificial stuff, killing the contemplative flair for subtle perception.

The above-mentioned talent lies at the base of pantheistic faith. The mystic pantheism of Wordsworth can feel in serene ecstasy the Supreme’s immanence in the Universe. The ‘High Priest’ of Nature lived most of his life in the solitary haunts of Nature. Yet he never felt them to be God-forsaken. In the West immanentists are rare. One of the climbers of the Everest, on reaching the top, exclaimed ‘If at all I feel the presence of God anywhere, it is only here, it is only here.’ The same sentiment thrilled an astronaut as his spacecraft soared into outer space. On the other hand, to the French philosopher Pascal the infinite spaces above are empty and they frighten him. Those infinite spaces are bereft of the ‘Infinite’, God. In other words, the measureless space for him is ‘God-forsaken’.

Pascal, like most Christians, has no proper sense of the cosmic Divine. So he feels he is in an alien Universe that is empty, and the more empty the more vast and magnificent it gets. But even European pantheists lack the true feel of Vasudeva who is everywhere. And they drive a line of distinction between the Transcendent and the Cosmic. The two are irreconcilable as much for the European pantheists as for the

orthodox Christians. The elemental world of Nature to a true pantheist is presided over by various spirits. He bows down to them and feels safe and protected. Rama, hero of the Hindu epic, appealed to the Sea-God to make way for building a bridge to Lanka. Varuna consented to his request.

But the pervasive fulness of cosmic immanence reaches its consummation in the Vedic verses, especially in Rudram. Here the omnipresence of the Divine leaves not even an inch of space in the Universe uncovered by Him.

The verses of Rudram, capturing the dwelling presence of the Divine in the Universe, refer to every blessed or cursed spot—fen of stagnant waters, *sudyāya*, waters of the lakes, *sarasvāya*, rivers, *nādyāya*, tanks and wells, *vaishantāya* and *kupyāya*, showering rains, *varshyāya*, and places where it does not rain at all, *avarshyāya*. He dwells in and through everything, neglecting neither rill nor rock, and feels at home anywhere and everywhere in the Universe.

The simple and pure pantheistic panegyric to Rudra is lyrical self-surrender to Him. It shows how our religion originated in Nature-worship which broke into rhythmic ecstasies of wonder and beauty.

The Hindu counterparts of Greek pantheistic deities are the gods, *devas*. The religion of Hindu pantheism is not mere myth-making poetry. Its framework constitutes an elaborate administrative set-up with countless portfolios allotted to the *devas*, presided over by their Chief, Indra.

It provides a link between us and those luminous occult spirits, with mutual obligatory duties enjoined on both. It is the function of these gods occupying the elemental world of Nature to sustain the rhythmic balance of its forces which animate them. For example, the five elements have their special deities presiding over them and the spirits see to it that fire, water, wind, etc. maintain a steady flux without breaking out into extremes. In other words, the gods are roped into the task of protecting and fostering the elemental world and making it beneficial to us. Overseeing this work is Lord Indra, presider supreme of the gods.

Our minds have not reached that degree of subtlety to perceive the deities of the occult world. But the tangible proof of their existence can be known from their response to our appeasing them. For example, propitiating Varuna, the rain-god, never fails to secure for us his pluvial plenty underscoring the reality of his existence. But it is important to note that the whole ceremony of propitiation has to be performed with utter sincerity of devotion.

Our Shastras tell us that we can obtain the grace and blessings of the gods through such propitiatory rites. One may wonder what relevant connection there is between the two. But it acquires a pertinent import when explained in terms of a government paying its employees from the money collected through taxes from the people. Similarly, the Divine provides sustenance to the *devas* from the performance of our karmic duties.

We provide nourishment to the *devas* through sacrificial offerings and ablutions, in return for their keeping the elements in favourable conditions for our lives' sustenance. Though they are exempt from death and old age, and are endowed with

superhuman powers. It is by our offerings that they are enriched. It is only through subtilising our minds by askesis, Tapas, that we can perceive these gods and talk to them. Earth, water, fire and wind each has a *deva* guiding, directing and controlling it. Any outrageous act of pollution to the elements is at once felt by them.

Our ecology is in a shambles today. The reason is not far to seek. It is reckless addiction to technology. A Wordsworth or a Thoreau or a Vashishtha would have felt fundamental resentment on seeing the elements poisoned and polluted today by science. I panic at the thought of the robot-mind remaining unfazed as every sanctum of Nature on the globe falls to its bulldozing. Round the corner, perhaps, the last blade of grass is waiting to disappear, hastening our planet to write its own obituary. This condition stems from our loss of belief in the wisdom of the ancients. They taught us how our greatest ally for wholesome life is Nature. Unless humanity wakes up and retrieves its pantheistic mind, it will be too late to save our earth from utter annihilation. The pity of it is, we have promoted too deluxe a style of life that has hermetically sealed our mind to sober reflection on the consequences of our continuing folly. This has to change for man's as well as God's sake.

G VISWANATHAN

K. D. SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

THE PREGNANT HYPERBOLES

(Continued from the issue of September 1998)

Up till now, we have seen Sethna's poetic flourish within the logical texture, his pure argumentative style with a flash of imagery here and there, his proverbial *refutation*, which he has frequently used to defend Sri Aurobindo. Today, we take up his gesture of hyperboles. It would be interesting to see that even his hyperboles are beautifully balanced by a subtle secret logic. Let us listen to Sethna speaking on Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.

It was in 1926, when he was 28 years of age, at one of the weekly *souirées* organised by an energetic Begum ambitious of having gifted artists appear under her auspices to a cosmopolitan circle. Every Sunday she made a new lion. I happened to be caught in the trap of her enthusiasm, just a fortnight before Chattopadhyaya was launched upon us as the most Numidian of all the lions she had rejoiced in. I must confess that my own poetry at that time was hardly even an articulate mew; all that was leonine about me was perhaps the sweep of my mane. My poetry, nevertheless, was applauded, and when on his Sunday Chattopadhyaya appeared, a well-meaning mutual friend intimated to him that a rising poet was in the audience. But there seemed at first no chance for him to meet the "poet"—so great was the pressure on his versatile genius to pack itself within the couple of hours during which he was to be on the stage. And I must say he was a volcano compared to the crackle of burning twigs that had been the talent displayed hitherto in the circle. I looked and listened and lost myself, for, as that resonant, richly flexible, deep-vowelling tone filled the ear and that expressive fiery-gestured figure crossed the eye, I felt a strange beauty run through my veins and beat upon the intellect's reserve and judgment, until the whole being awoke to the perception of some elemental force blowing through Chattopadhyaya's personality as through a flute of the most profound tremolo possible.

(*Inspiration and Effort*, pp. 161-62)

This is a comparatively light style of Sethna. But then, you have to check all his enthusiastic outbursts. The hyperbole is often called a "loud liar", while nothing is false in Sethna's inspired efflux. The word "volcano" and the phrase "fiery-gestured figure" unite to create the exact impression of Harin. The self-mockery and humility in the first half of the passage are meant to highlight Harin. Talking of Milton he becomes overwhelmed by the thought of *Paradise Lost*, but once again he is not rash—

Paradise Lost—here we have an epic which would seem almost to make *Paradise*

worth losing, since without that loss Milton could not have sung so sublimely and almost regained Paradise for poetry-mad people like the present writer

(The Inspiration of Paradise Lost, p 1)

The hyperbolic gesture indicates the intense suffering of Milton, which has contributed to his achievement. A keen reader of Sethna's prose will see here and there this love for the apparently exaggerated mode. Poetry helps him use the hyperbole with great effect.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

HERE IS AN EMPTY HOUSE

HERE is an empty house
The owner has left,
closing the door behind him
Do you want the key? Here it is!

Here is a bell
Its tongue is lost
If you want it to ring,
strike it
It will sing the sacred names!

Here is a black horse
Its rider has abandoned it
still in harness
It is a gentle and obedient steed
Do you want to mount it?
Here is the stirrup.
If you whisper OM in its ear,
it will carry you to the stars

MEDHANANDA

(From With Medhananda on the Shores of Infinity translated by Shraddhavan)

GAUDAPADA'S ARGUMENTS FOR THE ILLUSORINESS OF THE WORLD

1. Gaudapada and his *Karika*

GAUDAPADA IS well known as the author of the *Mandukya Karika*. Written in more than two hundred couplets, the *Karika* is divided into four chapters, Prakaranas Agama, Vaitathya, Advaita and Alatasanti. It is hailed by Shankara as a work containing the quintessence of the teaching of Vedanta. Historically, the *Karika* is regarded as a systematic exposition of an early version of the philosophy of Advaita.

As a system of philosophy, Advaita was in existence even before the advent of Gaudapada. Though the system was traced to the teachings of the Upanishads, its doctrine of Maya was not traceable to any of the authoritative Upanishads beginning with the Isha. For only in the later Upanishads such as the Paingala, Niralambana, Nrisimhatapaniya and others, passages in support of Mayavada are discernible. Not only is the support in the clearest terms missing in the authoritative Upanishads but one of them, the Isha, seems to oppose the very doctrine by declaring that the world is a habitation of the Lord, *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*. Gaudapada saw that a commentary written on the principal Upanishads in favour of Mayavada was a desideratum, and therefore chose the shortest of the Upanishads, the Mandukya, for showing decisively that Mayavada was not alien to their teachings. He further designed the *Karika* as an illustrative work so that it might be followed afterwards by suitable commentaries on the rest of the Upanishads.

In fact this was what happened when Shankara arrived on the scene. He followed the lead given by Gaudapada and wrote commentaries on all the ten Upanishads, trying as far as possible to get support for Mayavada. Since he had his own commentary on the Mandukya there was no need for him to comment on the *Karika*. But he did comment on it, because he wanted to recognise the signal service Gaudapada had rendered through it.

2. The Two Categories of Argument

The second chapter of the *Karika* seeks to establish the illusoriness of the world. Gaudapada takes full advantage of the word *svapnam* in the Upanishad and shows that the Mandukya regards the world as a dream, an imaginary phenomenon, *kalpana*. He seeks to prove that the word 'dream' applies not only to the world one sees during sleep, but also to the world one sees on waking.

Here our aim is very limited. So we shall not go into the question of how far Gaudapada's interpretations agree with the teachings of the Upanishad. We shall rather see how far his arguments succeed in showing the world to be illusory.

In stating his arguments we shall lay emphasis on those that are important and omit others that are of minor importance or merely repeat themselves. With this proviso

we shall take up his arguments. Broadly, his arguments fall into two categories (1) those concerning the objects of the dream world, (ii) those concerning the objects of the waking world.

3. The Illusoriness of the World

(i) There are two arguments here (a) If the objects of the dream state are real, then we must suppose that they have entered the space inside the body through contraction. In view of the size natural to the objects of the waking world, they cannot enter the space inside except through contraction. But, in fact, they neither contract nor get inside one's body (b) Let us suppose that a person is asleep in a given place for a short duration and dreams that he is in another place which is actually far away from his place of sleep and cannot be reached without spending more time than the time available for him to sleep. If the place seen in a dream is real, then we must suppose that without leaving the place of sleep and within the short time available for his sleep he has travelled from here and is now staying there. But when awakened from sleep, he finds that he has neither moved away from his original place of sleep nor is he now staying in the new place. (c) That dream-objects are unreal is supported by the Brihadaranyaka also which says that these objects are produced by the dreamer himself, *svayam nirmāya* (4-3-9)

(ii) Here two arguments are given. (a) There is hardly any difference between the two states, dream and waking, for objects in both are imagined, *kalpitam*. In the former they are imagined through the inner consciousness, *antaścetasā* (2-9), whereas in the latter they are imagined through the outer consciousness, *bahiścetasā* (2-9) (b) In dream or waking, objects appear when the consciousness is active and disappear when the activity ceases. Since they do not exist in the beginning and the end but exist between the two, their existence even in the middle cannot but be imaginary, *nāsty vartamāne api* (2-6). For non-existing objects cannot assume existence under any condition.

One is aware of the world only under two conditions, dream and waking. Having proved that the dream-world is illusory, Gaudapada finds it easy to disprove the reality of the waking world. Since the objects of the waking world are imagined, as in the dream-world, he establishes that this world also is illusory. But the world is seen as though real because we do not possess the necessary discrimination between fact and fancy, *prajñā* (3-45)

Such is the extended significance Gaudapada gives to the word 'dream', and with this he makes the Mandukya a gospel of Mayavada, a doctrine integral to his Advaita.

4. The Logic of Illegitimate Reversal

Gaudapada gives importance to logic in his attempt to disprove the reality of the world. He points out that *śruti* itself recognises the value of logic, *śrūyate nyāya-*

pūrvakam (2-3), and gives its seal of approval to the conclusions of logical reasoning, *prakāśitam* (2-3)

A proper assessment of Gaudapada's arguments is possible only when we know how dream-objects are proved to be false in the first set of arguments. If we carefully go through them, we find that they take for granted the law inherent in the waking world, the law by which its objects are determined to be real. First, physical objects are real because they exist outside one's body and do not get inside through contraction. Second, in the case of a man who dreams there are only two things that are real—the duration of sleep and the place of sleep. And all questions concerning his dream are settled in reference to these two facts. Third, real objects are seen as they are (*grhitam*) and not imagined (*kalpitam*). It is undoubtedly with this law derived from the waking world that Gaudapada has measured the dream objects and declared them to be false.

Now we shall turn to the second set of arguments. First, Gaudapada abolishes the difference between the two states of dream and waking by saying that the objects of the latter, as in the former, are imaginary and do not have real existence, *uktam vaitathvam etayoh* (2-10). With this he makes a clean sweep of the world at one stroke. But it remains to be ascertained how far he is successful in the attempt.

In any measurement there are two things, (i) a measure and (ii) a result given by the measure. No result is possible without a measure. In case the measure is given up there is absolutely no reason for the result to exist. If it exists, then it implies that the measure has not been really given up. Therefore to give up the measure and yet believe in the existence of the result is to fall into a delusion.

By saying that the objects of the waking world are also imaginary like those of the dream world, Gaudapada has renounced the law which he assumed to be operative in the waking world, the measure according to which dream objects were determined to be false. In the absence of the measure the dream objects can never be considered false. If they are not false, then Gaudapada is prohibited from drawing the conclusion that the waking world is false like the dream world. But Gaudapada has drawn the conclusion. Evidently he has done so only through a false step in logic.

From another point of view also the conclusion can be shown to be logically impossible. Gaudapada says that the waking world is false because it is like the dream world. This means the dream world is admitted to be false. We have already found that it is false because it is known to be so in comparison with the waking world which was assumed to be real and thus we hold the necessary measure for judging a given object to be true or false. As long as the waking world is given the status of being real, the question of its likeness to the dream world in point of falsity can never arise. In other words, there is no rational basis for concluding that the waking world is false.

Gaudapada's next argument looks invincible at first sight. He says that an object which does not exist in the beginning and the end is as good as not existing even in the middle. This applies with equal force to both the worlds, dream and waking. This seems to have been designed as a powerful means of persuading all those who are not convinced by the previous arguments. If we closely examine this argument, we may

find that there is an error in this one also, an error of the type with which we are already familiar

When Gaudapada says that a given object does not exist in the beginning and the end, he does so evidently by using the object in its present position as a measure, otherwise it is impossible for him to assert that it has no existence either in the beginning or in the end. The moment he says that the object is not different from what it is in the beginning and in the end he relinquishes the measure which he assumed to exist in it. In the absence of the measure nothing can be said about its earlier or later conditions. Hence it is illegitimate to conclude that the object in the middle is as unreal as it is in the beginning and in the end.

Gaudapada's aim is to logically prove that the world is false. But unfortunately he stands defeated by his own arguments. For his whole edifice has been raised on the foundation of a false logic, the logic of illegitimate reversal.

N JAYASHANMUKHAM

UNTAME

I STAND upon an island-cliff of fire,
 Silent, a gazing thought, a sensing mood,
 Communing with the sunward solitude—
 A vesper heart leaning beyond mire

Into God's ocean of loneliness,
 Into the brilliant echoless waveless sun,
 Like a statue of dream transfixed, alone
 Revelling in the calm of Noon's caress

The mind is now a rampartless field of light,
 The life beacons an infinity of flame;
 All moments turn into a timeless eremite,
 A wondrous seer without a shadow name,
 Golden with the all-gathering pinioned height,
 A meteor of the gnostic—all untame.

20-12-1961

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

THE CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

MANIKCHAND Kondapalli Reddiar was one of the leading chartered accountants of the city. Born of mixed parentage as his name suggests, he had inherited the positive qualities of both the Marwari and the Reddiar communities. He had the business acumen of the Marwari and the drive of the Reddiars. He had started his career as a trainee under a moderately successful chartered accountant before he opened his own office. The next few years were spent in familiarising himself with the lanes and by-lanes, the check-posts and charges at various levels of the Income Tax Department. He learnt to speak the vocabulary of corrupt commissioners and Government secretaries and could handle even Ministers whose telephone calls changed failure into success, Earth into Heaven or Heaven into Hell. After that, his rise was meteoric. He introduced computers into his office and employed a dozen trainees to cope with his rapidly increasing business. Clients flocked to him—leading businessmen of the city, big industrialists, egg barons, rice barons and liquor barons, underworld dons and shady swamis heading bogus charitable societies. When they sat in front of him with sweating heads of worry, he told them with disarming simplicity ‘‘It is simply a play of colours! I wish there were a few more colours in our profession! Unfortunately we have only two, black and white! See, you can paint black over white, simple, isn’t it? Get some black paint and smear it over white paper! But try to make black into white! There lies the problem and there you require professional help, like mine! But don’t worry! Don’t you worry at all! I will settle everything for you! Pay my fee and I will see to it that you don’t get any I T notice’’ Of course, he quoted an exorbitant fee that made the client gulp twice. But in the end, the latter would relent fearing the endless bureaucratic hassles he would have to face in case he had to go about it alone. Once the payment was done, the customer had supreme peace of mind. All his worries for that year dissolved, like clouds on a sunny day; for Reddiar kept his word with ferocious honesty. It was this quality that attracted clients to him, like bees to a honeycomb.

Reddiar’s honeycomb soon became full and the honey started dripping out. He channelled the excess funds into shares and soon was doing roaring business in stocks. Hundreds of small investors availed themselves of the excellent services provided by him. He took up portfolio management in a big way and his reputation increased fourfold. It was time now to open his own finance company and go public. A swanky new office in the most posh area of the city with the letters M.K. Reddiar glittering in gold was the result. ‘‘Invest here and go to sleep! Wake up after ten years to find that you are a millionaire!’’—his new office-board said. The market value of his company’s shares shot up to dizzy heights and Reddiar was elected as the city’s most dynamic entrepreneur. The Lions’ Club made him its president. The Country Club, The Environmental Club and even the Blind Men’s Association followed suit.

All this fame, however, had one bad unignorable side-effect. He was affected by psoriasis, a harmless but extremely itchy skin disease which made him slough like a snake. It marked his face with red patches and made him look rather ugly. Ironically,

this happened at the height of his reputation, so that he couldn't print his photograph in the newspapers. The dermatologist recommended a few medicines but these only made the disease worse. Ayurveda, Homeopathy and all the pathies and pals didn't help him either. Reddiar was at his wits' end when one of his clients, who was a skin specialist, suggested to him the latest cure. He had read about it in a medical science journal, a therapy which hadn't yet come to India, which was only talked about in professional circles in America and Switzerland, a therapy called Meditation. Reddiar was deflated on listening to such nonsense. "Meditation!" he muttered to himself. "Meditation in this twentieth century, when science is master of the universe! To hell with it!" But then as a conscientious businessman who never underestimates the dark horses or the unknown factors, he gave it a chance. He did what he hated most, he called the stinking, sweating, fat swamiji of the nearby Ashram to teach him meditation. The price was duly fixed. Five hundred rupees for two weeks' course in *upasana* meditation plus a yearly donation of two thousand rupees to the Ashram which gave a hundred per cent tax deduction to its donors. To his surprise, the therapy worked. It reduced the itching and stopped the sloughing. Two weeks of meditation and, gosh, he was almost presentable for a photograph to cover the Lions Club's activities. His wife breathed a sigh of relief; his children cried out, "Papa, you look great again!" Reddiar told himself "Now back to business! I've lost time! I've lost so much money!" and he submerged himself in work to catch up with the backlog. Within three weeks, he had cleared all the pending files. The local stock exchange, which had missed the presence of one of its leading players, was once again booming with business.

Then the psoriasis broke out again, worse than before and Reddiar was facing the battle of his life. He hauled up the stinking swamiji who said with a sly smile "Look, I told you in the very beginning that we don't give guarantees in spiritual business, because it all depends on your sincerity! But I advise you to try again, this time for 4 weeks. I will give you a concessional rate of Rs. 800." This time Reddiar concentrated more on the words than on the mere technicalities of physical posture and breathing. "Concentrate on your breath! Concentrate on your emotions! Concentrate on your thoughts! You are not your body or your breath! You are not your feelings! These thoughts are not yours!"—mechanically repeated the swamiji without bothering to explain.

Unable to comprehend, Reddiar sprang up in the middle of the session. "Would you care to explain to me what all this crap means? You are not your breath! You are not your thoughts!"

The swamiji put his finger on his mouth. "Hush! Don't speak! Keep silent and continue your *pranayama*! I will explain to you later. For the moment, keep going and don't ask questions. Otherwise, you are losing your money. I won't give you another session if you waste time like this!" M. K. R. was beaten for the first time in his life. He went on quietly and finished his four weeks of *upasana*. He found himself again considerably relieved and went back to work with redoubled vigour.

After five weeks, the psoriasis turned him black and blue. His wish for more

colours had been ironically fulfilled in his own case. He went desperately again to the swamiji who was overjoyed to see him. The swamiji suggested, "Try again. Take a course of 8 weeks and I will give you a concessional rate of 1500 rupees." Reddiar knew for the first time that the tables had been turned on him. He had met his match in the swamiji and felt himself irresistibly drawn into the whirlpool of the swamiji's spiritual business. He did the 8-week course feeling sick at heart. As usual, the condition of his skin improved but after a few weeks there was a violent recrudescence. The swamiji wanted a permanent spiritual maintenance contract for five thousand rupees a year. At this point, when the skies of hope had closed up and the rains of misery and depression were drenching him to the skin, Reddiar got in touch with Wagner.

It was sheer luck that a client told him about the extraordinary German in South India. Reddiar took the first flight from the nearest airport with two lakhs of rupees stuffed in his suitcase. He told himself "This time, I am not going to be cheated. I will ask for a guarantee and I will enter into a contract. I will buy the swamiji himself!" The taxi-drive to the town was enjoyable and the countryside relaxing to watch. Rice fields, goats, cattle, mountains and casuarina trees flitted by. Occasionally, he rubbed his face clean of the dead skin that was coming off. He reached the place at three in the afternoon, when Wagner was relaxing after he had fed the fishes and squirrels. Wagner had been already informed. So, as soon as the chameleon face appeared in front of him, he said in his halting German accent "Mr M K Reddiar, I suppose? Come, I was waiting for you!"

Reddiar was rather puzzled at the simplicity of the man and the place. There were no asana classes in progress, no fee-collection counters, no smiling secretaries, no beautiful brochures, no photos of yogis immersed in transcendental meditation. Only a garden with a beautiful lawn, a mango tree and a pond with goldfish in it. Wagner made him sit on a rock in the sun. The weather was pleasant and, high above, cirrus clouds had weaved the sky with filigree work. A gecko gazed at them from the mossy wall. Wagner, meanwhile, had got a broom and pulled out one of the sticks. His face shone brilliantly in the sun, the wizard was performing his magic. He twirled the stick in the air and deftly inserted it into Reddiar's nose. The latter burst into a violent sneeze. "What is this? Are you a practical joker, or what?" Reddiar shouted angrily, rubbing his tingling nose to prevent another sneeze.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Wagner. "Don't you understand why I did it?" he queried Reddiar. "Now tell me, isn't that the natural reaction of your nose?"

"Of course, it is!" Reddiar answered.

"Well, the psoriasis is also a natural reaction of the body when you poke too much desire into your system, too much desire for money, for power, for enjoyment. What you are trying to do is to muffle the sneeze while continuing to poke the nose. That's not possible! Stop poking it first and the sneezes or the psoriasis will subside automatically. Work from within outwards, not the other way around. Reddiar, stop desiring so much money."

Reddiar was stunned by the sudden flash of wisdom. He retorted "But I thought that was the only thing that counts in life!"

"Of course not! There are so many other things to do in this life! Come, I will teach you some of those things you have never learnt," Wagner said.

For the next few days Reddiar helped Wagner feed the fishes and the squirrels. He picked up dry leaves from the ground, shooed away the kingfisher which preyed on the goldfish, booted at the rats that were digging up the garden, kept an eye on the cat that messed up the flower pots. He watched in admiration Wagner pruning the bushes, mowing the lawn, watering the plants. In the evening, they sat listening to the croaking of the frogs. M.K. Reddiar left the place in a month or so, completely cured, rejuvenated and profusely thankful. Wagner made him dump the two lakhs of rupees into the pond. "Throw it to the goldfishes!" he said. Reddiar's smile was beatific as he threw the suitcase into the pond and saw it slowly sink to the bottom. He then bade goodbye and went back to his work, a new man to an old job.

RAMAN

PARVATI

SINCE the days of my youth
I have laughed and danced
With the mountains and rivers
Of snow-clad Himalay

In all this time that passed
The Supreme Mountain Goddess
Watched me in my wanderings
Like a mother her child
Yet had she ever remained,
Veiled in the 'Silent Void'
Beyond mind and mortal sense

Now in Life's golden afternoon
I see her faintly on the mountains
Through the mists where Thought begins
And live in the hope and joy
Of her unfolding revelation

SURESH THADANI

EMPIRICAL CONSCIENCE AND TRANSCENDENTAL CONCILIATION

Introduction

EDWARD O. Wilson is a prominent professor of biology at Harvard University and the author of *The Diversity of Life* (1992), a remarkable study in neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory, which includes a thoroughly amazing account of the phenomenon of species diversity, on whose intricate web the life of the biosphere depends, and an important treatment of the massive extinction event in which our species currently finds itself involved, as its primary cause. At the end of the book, in a chapter titled "The Environmental Ethic", Wilson writes "Humanity is a part of nature, a species that evolved among other species. The more closely we identify ourselves with the rest of life, the more quickly we will be able to discover the sources of human sensibility and acquire the knowledge on which an enduring ethic, a sense of preferred direction can be built. For what, in the final analysis, is morality but the command of conscience seasoned by a rational examination of consequences? And what is a fundamental precept but one that serves all generations? An enduring environmental ethic will aim to preserve not only the health and freedom of our species, but give access to the world in which the human spirit was born."

As the dramatic conclusion to this monumental work, after a detailed discussion of the destruction of the biosphere that is taking place, professor Wilson clearly expresses grave concern about the future prospects of life on earth, and of the human species on whose choices that future depends. This concern has since been carried forward and elaborated in an article featured in *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1998), titled *The Biological Basis of Morality*. Here Wilson's focus is on the origin and nature of ethical behaviour, and the question whether humanity will be able to make the difficult choices that are now upon it. It is undoubtedly a troubling question, and one that is made no less so by the problems that seem to be inherent in Wilson's argument. In short, he successfully opens a can of philosophical worms.

At the start, he poses this disjunctive proposition "Either ethical principles, such as justice and human rights, are independent of human experience, or they are human inventions." The question of fundamental importance for him at this point is whether we believe that ethical principles have a transcendental origin, or else are the product of biological and cultural evolution, and can be empirically explained. One of these two beliefs must be false, he thinks, and the choice when made, or the truth finally known, "makes all the difference in the way we view ourselves as a species" and "determines the conduct of moral reasoning." There is no middle term or possibility for him. And as an empiricist, there is the further complication that in his view only the empirical choice, and its general acceptance, can ultimately enable our species to solve the big problems.

I would like to review Wilson's arguments in some detail, and to determine, if

possible, how he reaches his conclusions, whether they are justified, and what the implications might be for humanity—undoubtedly the real thrust of his concern, as well it should be. And in order to give a balanced view of the problems raised, I will use statements from Sri Aurobindo's major philosophical treatise *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), in which he discusses many of the same issues from the transcendentalist position.

First Paradox

In *The Biological Basis of Morality* Prof. Wilson tells us that the moral reasoning in modern society is a mess because both "ethics and political science lack a foundation of veritable knowledge of human nature sufficient to produce cause-and-effect predictions and sound judgments based on them." At its best, moral reasoning has produced precepts, such as those enshrined in the Ten Commandments of Judgment by Moses and the Declaration of Independence by Jefferson, which reflect patterns of behaviour, structures of social organization, and values selected through many cycles of tribal and prehistoric evolution. These patterns and structures now have an ingrained genetic basis but questionable long-term value and only limited effectiveness in the conditions of modern society. They have become outdated and rigid, in many cases, and moreover, they derive their authority from transcendental beliefs in either divine or natural law, which are supposedly independent of any kind of natural, material origins in heredity and evolution.

The empiricist's position is that such transcendental assumptions are necessarily false. Therefore, they can't provide a sound basis for moral authority. Only on the basis of a thorough understanding of heredity and brain science, says Wilson, can a wise and stable system of moral imperatives be constructed, capable of achieving a widespread consensus. His dilemma, however, is that even though he believes there is evidence that traditional ethical and religious values are the products of genetic evolution and behaviour patterns, such as dominance hierarchies, injunctions governing adultery, and rituals leading to mystical communion with the whole, have been favoured by evolution, they are susceptible to exploitation, abuse, and injustice. Yet modern biological science still does not have the depth of knowledge and understanding to over-ride the underlying mechanisms of a long evolutionary history. Nor does it have the credibility to do so, as yet. "The human mind evolved to believe in gods. It did not evolve to believe in biology. Acceptance of the supernatural conveyed a great advantage throughout prehistory, when the brain was evolving. Thus it is in sharp contrast to the science of biology, which was developed as a product of the modern age, and is not underwritten by genetic algorithms." Empirical science could do a better job of setting things right but it has first to overcome eons of evolution that have produced society as we know it and transcendental forms of ethical belief.

Second Paradox

Prof Wilson clearly believes that genetic predisposition in human nature somehow gets transported epigenetically into moral precepts, and eventually into laws and divine proclamations. Transcendentalists, however, believe that moral reasoning is independent of such processes, which is one of Wilson's chief concerns. Philosophers of a secular rather than religious predisposition, such as Plato and Kant, have said that moral imperatives are the product of higher mental faculties of intuition, reasoning, and critical judgment, exercised by a mind predisposed to arrive at truth by the very nature of reality. Wilson's response is, "Ethical precepts are very unlikely to be ethereal messages awaiting revelation, or independent truths vibrating in nonmaterial dimensions of the mind."

The process of arriving at ethical precepts in his view starts with basic instincts such as to co-operate or to defect. He gives examples in pack behaviour at the animal level, then at the level of primitive tribal organization, and on up to more sophisticated levels of social organization such as religions, armies, and one might suppose, even science departments in big universities. To associate and accept, or to dissociate and reject are the basic drives that lead to long-term success for the individual, family, and society. Through the long journey of history these drives bring us eventually to the development of such emotions and moral sentiments as "empathy, humility, shame, and moral outrage," which in turn "bias cultural evolution toward moral codes of honour, patriotism, altruism, compassion, etc." Such emergent qualities and values of human psychology are further abstracted into ethical precepts, and ultimately form the basis of moral judgments that are brought to bear in general on human conduct.

How this epigenetic process works to transform instincts into ethical concepts over time, and how resultant changes in behaviour get translated back into the genetic codes of later generations, of course remains a mystery. The notion that these transformations take place up and down the ladder of genetic, morphological, and sociological phenomena is based on empirical observation, inference, association, and analogy.

As Sri Aurobindo characterizes this enigma in *The Life Divine* (p. 272), "We know that genes and chromosomes are the cause of hereditary transmissions, not only of physical but of psychological variations, but we do not discover how psychological characteristics can be contained and transmitted in this inconscient material vehicle. We do not see or know, but it is expounded to us as a cogent account of Nature-process, that a play of electrons, of atoms and their resultant molecules, of cells, glands, chemical secretions and physiological processes manages by their activity on the nerves and brain of a Shakespeare or a Plato to produce or could be perhaps the dynamic occasion for the production of a *Hamlet* or a *Symposium* or a *Republic*. the divergence here of the determinants and the determination becomes so wide that we are no longer able to follow the process." These are the very mysteries that Wilson is convinced empirical science will eventually explain, and when it does it will be able to establish wiser and more stable guidelines for human behaviour than transcendental ethical

thought has yet been able to do. And yet that very type of thought is the fullest fruit of evolution, and the architect and poet of the great legal and religious systems of civilization

Third Paradox

It is a curious coincidence, and one that tweaked my interest in his article, that Prof Wilson begins *The Biological Basis of Morality* with a reference to the term “consilience” which he defines as “the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines,” defined elsewhere as “the accordance of inductions from different phenomena.” This is his basic criterion for empirical truth. The material origin of ethics meets this criterion, he says, because “causal explanations of brain activity and evolution, while imperfect, already cover most facts known about behaviour we term moral.” A transcendental proposition, on the other hand, such as “We hold these truths to be self-evident” he points to as lacking independent biological explanations that jump up consiliently as reinforcements all around. And yet he says that, “Ritual and prayer permit religious believers to be in direct touch with the Supreme Being. The unexplainable is explained; and an oceanic sense of communion with the larger whole is made possible. . . Perhaps, as I believe, these phenomena can all eventually be explained as functions of brain circuitry and deep genetic history.” But that belief does not prevent Prof Wilson from acknowledging, with a sort of self-contradictory respect, the power, grandeur, and possible truth of the elder contender for authority: “To call religion instinctive is not to suppose that any particular part of its mythos is untrue—only that its sources run deeper than ordinary habit and are in fact hereditary.”

In a chapter of *The Life Divine* (p 302), Sri Aurobindo uses a similar but different term to qualify the transcendentalist’s criterion for truth. “conciliation” Conciliation is defined as “the reconciliation of discrepant theories.” In introducing a discussion of the origin (determination) of qualities (determinants) in human nature, such as courage, or healing properties in a plant, Sri Aurobindo says, “The same conciliation occurs everywhere, when we look with a straight and accurate look on the truth of the Reality. In our experience of it we become aware of an Infinite essentially free from all limitation by qualities, properties, features; on the other hand, we are aware of an Infinite teeming with innumerable qualities, properties, features. Here it is evident that it is an undue finiteness of thought conception and verbal expression which creates the difficulty, but there is in reality none, for it would be evidently absurd to say that the Absolute is courage or curing-power, or to say that courage and curing-power are the Absolute, but it would be equally absurd to deny the capacity of the Absolute to put forth courage or curing-power as self-expressions in its manifestation. When the logic of the finite fails us, we have to see with a direct and unbound vision what is behind in the logic of the Infinite.”

The transcendental seer who reaps the fruit of eons of mystical evolution “looks straight at Reality,” “experiences it,” and is “aware of” the causal origin of those

qualities which begin to evolve in lower life forms, then in prehistory, and continue through tribal epochs, golden ages, warrior states and religions, ascetic theocracies, communistic and socialistic and democratic Leviathans. And he knows that each of these structures, just like each human mind and body, more or less perfectly embodies and expresses, within the limitations of the physiological, emotional, and intellectual environment and culture of which each is a part, those qualities and drives, concepts and patterns which recur again and again at every location and in every era, because they are of the essence of the transcendent reality, the Absolute, and a product of the natural and divine order of the unfolding Universe.

The empiricist believes that this kind of knowledge and experience is the result of natural, hereditary, and evolutionary processes, and he knows that it has been the greatest ethical force in history for curbing the darker and more destructive drives of human nature. Yet he insists that its conclusions, and its actions, do not have the potential validity, power, and authority of his method, perhaps only because in his view the Opposing Theory believes it is more than, and other than, Nature.

Summary and Conclusion

It could be that Prof. Wilson's logic of consilience will ultimately fail him, as he admits. It even seems he fears that it might. He certainly knows that it doesn't have the leadership charisma of religion, and that time is short. He is painfully aware of the stress that the human population is putting on the biosphere, and also of the indiscriminate destruction of which it is capable. It is no wonder that the perceived tension leads him to say, "The choice between transcendentalism and empiricism will be the coming century's version of the struggle for men's souls." He feels that only science has the ability to make us aware of our connection to the planet and our responsibility for its survival. And he even reaches out to religion to embrace the truths of science as its own and make them felt. But he does not see the possibility of science discovering and embracing a truth beyond itself.

This is especially unfortunate, because to his way of thinking, a victory for transcendentalism would mean the defeat of science, and of hope. The last paradox is that the only real hope lies in the mutual embrace of the two truths, in a conciliation between the observable facts of nature, including the mechanisms of evolution, the laws and patterns of behaviour derived from them, the intricate interdependencies of species, energies, lives, and human thought formations, and the greater potentials of the Absolute from which they originate, towards which they strive, and by which they may yet be transformed into a progressively more luminous and harmonious future manifestation.

The problem, as stated from the transcendentalist's perspective, does not, in the end, look much different than the one presented by the empiricist, although its solution and its method are more certain. Sri Aurobindo again. "Our view of the divine government of the world or of the secret of its action is either incurably anthropo-

morphic or else incurably mechanical; both the anthropomorphism and mechanism have their elements of truth, but they are only a side, an aspect, and the real truth is that the world is governed by the One in all and over all who is infinite in his consciousness...' (*The Life Divine*, p. 320). This perspective, this knowledge and understanding, can give us the leverage, and the freedom from atavistic limitations, that we need in order to act with absolute empathy for all beings, and to effectively reverse, or at least significantly alter our apparent fate. Then, by a deliberate psychological process, standing back from Nature, says Sri Aurobindo, it becomes possible to "know Nature and her processes and in all independence, since we are no longer involved in her works, to accept or not to accept, to make the sanction no longer automatic but free and effective; we can choose what she shall do or not do in us,.. or we can reject her present formations and rise to a spiritual level of existence and from there re-create our existence.'" (*The Life Divine*, p. 315) With the particularly pressing conjunction of Time and Population Growth that our civilization has to confront, and its unparalleled challenges, it would seem that the Absolute might welcome a new and enlightened science of social engineering as an ally. And Prof. Wilson, too, would gain valuable reinforcement from such a co-operative enterprise.

Those who are familiar with the work of Sri Aurobindo will have little difficulty accommodating the view that the patterns and structures of existence, including human thought forms, are products of evolution. And they will also understand the empiricist's methodological difficulty. For the consciousness that is able to grasp the source of the mechanism of the evolution of consciousness, up and down the "world-star", is a transformed consciousness, one in which:

All thought can know or widest sight perceive
 And all that thought and sight can never know,
 All things occult and rare, remote and strange
 Were near to heart's contact, felt by spirit-sense

(*Savitri*, p. 97)

The effort to achieve a grasp of the "subtle pattern of the universe" that makes consciousness possible, and is the key to every enigma, requires more than either ethical or empirical thought, and certainly more than a leap of faith. Well, perhaps a quantum leap .

ROD HEMSELL

SEEN FROM A HEIGHT

A dead dung beetle lies on the field path
Three pairs of little feet carefully crossed on its belly,
in place of death's chaos, order and neatness
The horror of this sight is subdued,
the scale strictly local—from couch grass to mint.
The sorrow is not for sharing
The sky-azure

To protect our peace, we look at the animals' death
as rather trivial—they don't die, only perish,
losing, we like to believe, less consciousness and a lesser world
Their spirits don't frighten us at night
They keep their distance
and respect the rules

Here we are—a dead dung beetle on the field path
Unlamented, he gleams in response to the sunlight
There isn't much to think about, a glance is enough—
he looks as if nothing important has happened to him
What is important apparently happens only to us,
only to our life and death,
the death that enjoys a superior status we have imposed

W SZYMBORSKA

(Translated from the Polish by Marta Guha)

OBITUARY

SHRI Ramakrishna Das, a senior Sadhak of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, popularly known as Babaji Maharaj, passed away on the 8th November, 1998. He was born in Orissa on the 14th August 1908. He became an ascetic at a very young age, left home and went to Ayodhya where he lived in a hermitage for many years. There he was initiated into Vaishnavism by Mauni Baba and commanded a large following including nobles and aristocrats.

After a few years of intensive Sadhana at Ayodhya, Ramakrishna Das came to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the year 1945. He had been much inspired by reading the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It was with his sincerity and Sadhana that he attracted a good number of devotees not only from Orissa but also from outside it. He combined in himself the traditional yoga and the integral and futuristic vision of Sri Aurobindo.

When Navajyoti Karyalaya was established in order to carry on better work in Orissa with the approval and blessings of the Mother, Babaji worked hard to organise its activities. It is his initiative, along with that of Prapatti, another Oriya Sadhak, that spread the message of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in Orissa resulting in the growth of hundreds of study circles and schools trying to follow the pattern of Integral Education. His emphasis was on Namajapa and on service and devotion to the Divine.

He wrote numerous books explaining the Yoga and Spiritual Philosophy of the Master and the Mother in lucid Oriya. They have inspired tens of thousands of readers in Orissa.

Babaji was one of those who became legendary in their own lifetime. On hearing the news of his death a large number of his admirers and devotees flocked to his residence as well as to the place of his Samadhi in the Cazanove Garden to pay homage to the departed Soul.

PREETI PATNAIK