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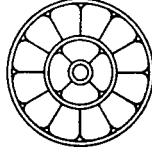
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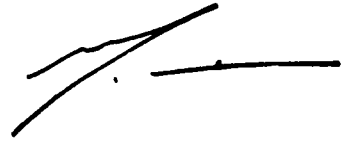
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LI

No. 4

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
DESCEND, O HAPPINESS (Poem)	219
ABOUT SPIRITUAL POETRY	221
<i>Dyuman</i>	
CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER	224
<i>Champaklal</i>	
QUOTATIONS FROM THE MOTHER S AND SRI AUROBINDO S WRITINGS	227
<i>Amal Kiran (K D Sethna)</i>	
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER S CONTRIBUTION TO IT	229
A VISION AND A CERTITUDE	231
<i>Harindranath Chattopadhyaya</i>	
STRANGE (Poem)	232
<i>Kishor Gandhi</i>	
“INSPIRATIONS FOR PROGRESS”	233
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
HUMAN NATURE IN FULL PLAY IN THE ASHRAM	236
<i>Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya</i>	
HE LOVED HIS COUNTRY MORE THAN HIS LIFE	240
<i>Russian Correspondents</i>	
INTEGRAL YOGA IN THE ERSTWHILE U S S R	243
<i>R Y Deshpande</i>	
A WORLD'S DESIRE	246
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
SINCE I HAVE SEEN YOUR FACE (Poem)	252
<i>Viren</i>	
AT THE SAMADHI (Poem)	253

<i>A Biswas</i>		
	RAINDROPS ON PETALS (Poem)	254
<i>Ruth</i>		
	HOLD UP THE TORCH (Poem)	255
<i>Shraddhavan</i>		
	THE NECKLACE (Poem)	256
<i>C Subbian</i>		
	HYMN TO ABIRAMI (Poem)	257
<i>Jyoti Sobel</i>		
	HAIKUS (Poem)	260
<i>Akash Deshpande</i>		
	SUNFLOWER (Poem)	261
<i>Georgette Coty</i>		
	TRUTH AND VIGILANCE	262
<i>Ranajit Sarkar</i>		
	UMA HAIMAVATI	263
<i>The Mother</i>		
	THE SUN OF DIVINE LAUGHTER	268
<i>Internet</i>		
	WORLD ORDERS ACCORDING TO TWO COWS	269
<i>Winston Churchill</i>		
	ABOUT INDIA	270
<i>P Raja</i>		
	AN INTERVIEW WITH MANOJ DAS	271
<i>Kailas Jhaveri</i>		
	WU WEI	276

STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Nishikanta Khandai</i>		
	FATE	283

DESCEND, O HAPPINESS

AND Satyavan replied to Savitri:
“In days when yet his sight looked clear on life,
King Dyumathsena once, the Shalwa, reigned...
Son of that king, I, Satyavan, have lived
Contented, for not yet of thee aware,
In my high peopled loneliness of spirit
And this huge vital murmur kin to me,
Nursed by the vastness, pupil of solitude....
I met the frankness of the primal earth,
I enjoyed the intimacy of infant God....
The reigning pride of rapid life that roams
Wind-maned through our pastures, on my seeing mood
Cast shapes of swiftmess; trooping spotted deer
Against the vesper sky became a song
Of evening to the silence of the soul.
I caught for some eternal eye the sudden
Kingfisher flashing to a darkling pool;
A slow swan silvering the azure lake,
A shape of magic whiteness, sailed through dream;
Leaves trembling with the passion of the wind
And wandering wings nearing from infinity
Lived on the tablets of my inner sight;
Mountains and trees stood there like thoughts from God....
I carved my vision out of wood and stone,
I caught the echoes of a word supreme
And metred the rhythm-beats of infinity
And listened through music for the eternal Voice.
I felt a covert touch, I heard a call,
But could not clasp the body of my God
Or hold between my hands the World-Mother’s feet..
I sat with the forest sages in their trance:
There poured awaking streams of diamond light,
I glimpsed the presence of the One in all
But still there lacked the last transcendent power. .
But thou hast come and all will surely change:
I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs
And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.
The child of the Void shall be reborn in God.
My Matter shall evade the Inconscient’s trance,
My body like my spirit shall be free:

It shall escape from Death and Ignorance . .
 O golden princess, perfect Savitri,
 More I would tell than failing words can speak
 Of all that thou hast meant to me, unknown,
 All that the lightning flash of love reveals
 In one great hour of the unveiling gods
 Even a brief nearness has reshaped my life
 For now I know that all I lived and was
 Moved towards this moment of my heart's rebirth;
 I look back on the meaning of myself,
 A soul made ready on earth's soil for thee.
 I looked upon the world and missed the Self,
 And when I found the Self, I lost the world,
 My other selves I lost and the body of God,
 The link of the finite with the Infinite.
 But now the gold link comes to me with thy feet
 And His gold sun has shone on me from thy face
 For now another realm draws near with thee
 And now diviner voices fill my ear,
 A strange new world swims to me in thy gaze
 Approaching like a star from unknown heavens;
 A cry of spheres comes with thee and a song
 Of flaming gods I draw a wealthier breath
 And in a fierier march of moments move....
 All with thy coming fills. Air, soil and stream
 Wear bridal raiment to be fit for thee
 And sunlight grows a shadow of thy hue
 Because of change within me by thy look.
 Come nearer to me from thy car of light
 On this green sward disdaining not our soil
 For here are secret spaces made for thee
 Whose caves of emerald long to screen thy form.
 Wilt thou not make this mortal bliss thy sphere?
 Descend, O Happiness, with thy moon-gold feet,
 Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie.
 O my bright beauty's princess, Savitri,
 By my delight and thy own joy compelled
 Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine ''

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 28, pp 403-408)

ABOUT SPIRITUAL POETRY

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

It won't do to put excessive and sweeping constructions on what I write, otherwise it is easy to misunderstand its real significance. I said there was no reason why poetry of a spiritual character (not any poetry like Verlaine's or Swinburne's or Baudelaire's) should bring no realisation at all. This did not mean that poetry is a major means of realisation of the Divine. I did not say that it would lead us to the Divine or that anyone had achieved the Divine through poetry or that poetry by itself can lead us straight into the sanctuary. Obviously, if such exaggerations are put into my words, they become absurd and untenable.

My statement is perfectly clear and there is nothing in it against reason or common sense. The Word has power—even the ordinary written word has a power. If it is an inspired word it has still more power. What kind of power or power for what depends on the nature of the inspiration and the theme and the part of the being it touches. If it is the Word itself,—as in certain utterances of the great Scriptures, Veda, Upanishads, Gita, it may well have a power to awaken a spiritual and uplifting impulse, even certain kinds of realisation. To say that it cannot contradict spiritual experience.

The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as Mantras, they were the vehicles of their own realisations and could become vehicles of realisation for others. Naturally, these mostly would be illuminations, not the settled and permanent realisation that is the goal of Yoga—but they could be steps on the way or at least lights on the way. I have had in former times many illuminations, even initial realisations while meditating on verses of the Upanishads or the Gita. Anything that carries the Word, the Light in it, spoken or written, can light this fire within, open a sky, as it were, bring the effective vision of which the Word is the body. You yourself know that some of your poems deeply moved people who had the tendency towards spiritual things. Many have got openings into realisation while reading passages of the *Arya*—which are not poetry, have not the power of spiritual poetry—but it shows all the more that the word is not without power even for the things of the spirit. In all ages spiritual seekers have expressed their aspirations or their experiences in poetry or inspired language and it has helped them and others. Therefore there is nothing absurd in my assigning to such poetry a spiritual or psychic value and effectiveness of a psychic or spiritual character.

If poetic progress meant a progress in the whole range of Yoga, X would be a great Yogi by this time. The opening in poetry or any other part helps to prepare the general opening when it is done under the pressure of Yoga, but it is at first something special, like the opening of the subtle vision or subtle senses. It is the opening of a special capacity in the inner being.¹

It would be a mistake to silence the poetic flow on principle; the creative habit is a tonic to the vital and keeps it in good condition and the practice of Sadhana needs a strong and widening vital for its support. There is no real incompatibility between the creative power and silence, for the real silence is something inward and it does not or at least need not cease when a strong activity or expression rises to the surface.²

*

The word is a sound expression of the idea. In the supra-physical plane when an idea has to be realised, one can by repeating the word-expression of it, produce vibrations which prepare the mind for the realisation of the idea. That is the principle of the Mantras and of Japa. One repeats the name of the Divine and the vibrations created in the consciousness prepare the realisation of the Divine. It is the same idea that is expressed in the Bible: "God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light". It is creation by the Word.³

*

Nishikanta seems to have put himself into contact with an inexhaustible source of flowing words and rhythms—with the world of word-music, which is one province of the World of Beauty. It is part of the vital world no doubt and the joy that comes of contact with that beauty is vital but it is a subtle vital which is not merely sensuous. It is one of the powers by which the substance of the consciousness can be refined and prepared for sensibility to a still higher beauty and Ananda. Also it can be made a vehicle for the expression of the highest things. The Veda, the Upanishad, the Mantra, everywhere owe half their power to the rhythmic sound that embodies their inner meanings.⁴

*

. No doubt, if one could get a continuous inspiration from the Overmind, that would mean a greater, sustained height of perfection and spiritual quality in poetry than has yet been achieved; but it is only in short passages and lines that even a touch of it is attainable. One gets nearer the Overmind rhythm and inspiration in another line of Wordsworth—

...a mind. .

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone

or a line like Milton's

Those thoughts that wander through eternity

One has the sense here of a rhythm which does not begin or end with the line, but has for ever been sounding in the eternal planes and began even in Time ages ago and which returns into the infinite to go sounding on for ages after. In fact, the word-rhythm is only part of what we hear, it is a support for the rhythm we listen to behind in "the

Ear of the ear'', *śrotrasya śrotram*. To a certain extent, that is what all great poetry at its highest tries to have, but it is only the Overmind rhythm to which it is altogether native and in which it is not only behind the word-rhythm but gets into the word-movement itself and finds a kind of fully supporting body there.

P S Lines from the higher intuitive mind-consciousness, as well as those from the Overmind, can have a mantric character—the rhythm too may have a certain kinship with mantric rhythm, but it may not be the thing itself, only the nearest step towards it.⁵

*

I suppose the poem you sent me might be described as the poetic rendering of a symbolic vision—it is not a mystic poem. A poem no doubt can be symbolic and mystic at the same time. For instance Nishikanta's English poem of the vision of the Lion-flame and the Deer-flame, beauty and power, was symbolic and mystic at once. It is when the thing seen is spiritually lived and has an independent vivid reality of its own which exceeds any conceptual significance it may have on the surface that it is mystic. Symbols may be of various kinds; there are those that are concealing images capable of intellectual interpretation but still different from either symbolic or allegorical figures—and there are those that have a more intimate life of their own and are not conceptual so much as occultly vital in their significance; there are still others that need a psychic or spiritual or at least an inner and intuitive sight to identify oneself fully with their meaning. In a poem which uses conceptual symbols the mind is more active and the reader wants to know what it means to the mind, but as minds differ, the poet may attach one meaning to it and the reader may find another, if the image used is at all an enigmatic one, not mentally clear and precise. In the more deeply symbolist—still more in the mystic—poem the mind is submerged in the vividness of the reality and any mental explanation falls far short of what is felt and lived in the deeper vital or psychic response. This is what Housman in his book tries to explain with regard to Blake's poetry, though he seems to me to miss altogether the real nature of the response. It is not the mere sensation to which what he calls pure poetry appeals but to a deeper inner life or life-soul within us which has profounder depths than the thinking mind and responds with a certain kind of soul-excitement or ecstasy—the physical vibrations on which he lays stress are merely a very outward result of this sudden stir within the occult folds of the being. Mystic poetry can strike still deeper—it can stir the inmost and subtlest recesses of the life-soul and the secret inner mind at the same time; it can even, if it is of the right kind, go beyond these also to the pure inmost psychic.⁶

References

1 *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9 pp 510-511

2 *Ibid* p 507

3 *Ibid*

4 *Ibid* p 340

5 *Ibid*, p 369

6 *Ibid*, pp 355-356

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

My dear Mother,

Unless the body consciousness opens and receives the Divine Light, Peace and Consciousness, nothing of permanence is achieved. The body is the base, and upon that base the Divine has to work and construct a building. However much the vital and the mental are open and receptive, nothing can be said to be permanent if the body is not stable.

I AM glad that you had the experience of the necessity for the body to open and to receive the divine Light and Will, as the mind and the heart does. This will do much for the increase of the resistance to illness and the capacity of keeping good health.

I am always with you.

15 May 1935

My dear Mother,

I am always given to Thee and to Thy Work. Make me more quiet, make me rest in full peace amidst these hundredfold activities. I have to learn this more and more, and You have to teach me. Teach me, my dear Mother, to be more and more Thine.

Yes, I am always with you, teaching you the true action and the true consecration.

19 May 1935

My dear Mother,

The most important thing for me to do is to remain quietly happy, consecrated and concentrated on You, and to do what has to be done very sincerely and devotionally, not worrying about the future, but quietly aspiring very humbly before You.

Yes, this is the right attitude and the most sure way.

Always with you in an affectionate trust.

27 May 1935

My dear Mother,

What did I see this evening when You were looking at me from Your window? I saw that my chest was as transparent as glass and that You were seeing Your own image there.

My dear Mother is always in my heart for eternity. My Mother, my Mother, my Mother.

This is a very beautiful and true experience. I am happy you had it Yes, I am always in your heart—for ever with you.

28 May 1935

My dear Mother,

I fail to understand why there is so much antipathy against me in the Aroumé workers.

I do not think it is so bad as all that

Three days back, as soon as I entered the Aroumé gate from the market, a force ran through my neck, saying "It would have been better if you had died."

Do not listen to all this rubbish *It does not come from the Aroumé workers, but from some hostile force that wants to upset you.*

Yesterday when I was taking my lunch, a force wanted to send me away from Aroumé "Go away, go away, you are not wanted here."

Same explanation as above.

And now B tells me. "I shall not be able to cooperate with you in this way, nor shall I be able to work with you " I do not even know what "way" he means.

My dear Mother, all is left to you I rest happily and go to bed.

Yes, be quiet and do not worry about all that.

It is the same forces which want to make you believe that your co-workers hate you and make the others believe that you hate them. The mistake is to believe these forces—one ought always to answer them: *No, it is not true, it cannot be.*

Always with you, my dear child.

30 may 1935

My dear Mother,

I thought that as I have grown bulky, I might not be able to work physically. But I find that I can work with a sustained energy, quietly and with a balanced mind. And I think You are quite happy to see me working.

Yes, I am very glad to see you working physically and am sure it will do you much good I am glad also that your body is getting a little less thin. It was truly necessary to fill the holes!

All love and blessings to you, my dear child

30 may 1935

My dear Mother,

Today I heard C and D quarrelling Afterwards, F told someone: "Prison life is easier than to work with C."

Would it not be better if you spoke to D? If he is not satisfied, it is better for him to tell it frankly rather than to complain hidingly.

Always with you, my dear child.

1 June 1935

My dear Mother,

I have spoken to D very clearly "Give dumb service; utter not a word even if there are whips on your back."

If you mean that there must be no quarrels it is quite all right But he must feel free to tell me what he has in his heart.

"Work can never be done if there is no discipline! The Mother knows very well the person in charge of the work, and those who work with him have to follow his instructions." And he has agreed to that kind of work

Let us see, my dear Mother I wish that dumb service should be given to You by all of us.

I wanted you to tell him also that if he has any complaint to make or if he is not satisfied with his work, it is *to me* that he must freely say so.

My love, blessings and trust are always with you, my dear child.

2 June 1935

(To be continued)

QUOTATIONS FROM CHAMPAKLAL'S PAPERS

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

The Divine

It is the Divine Presence that gives value to life. This Presence is the source of all peace, all joy, all security. Find this Presence in yourself and all your difficulties will disappear.

The Mother

*

The best friend one can have, is it not the Divine? The Divine to whom one can say everything, reveal everything, because here is the very source of all tenderness, of all power to efface error when it is no longer repeated, to open the way to the true realisation; the Divine who can understand everything, cure everything, help you always on the way not to waver, not to falter, not to fall down, but to walk straight to the goal.

The Mother

*

Let all thoughts, all feelings, all actions, all hopes be turned towards the Divine and concentrated on Him. He is our only help and our only safety.

The Mother

*

The Divine's love is always with you and that is the only thing that never fails in life.

The Mother

*

Think of the Divine alone and the Divine will be with you

The Mother

Surrender and Self-giving

Perfection comes by renunciation of desires and surrender to a higher Will

Sri Aurobindo

*

Your surrender must be self-made and free; it must be the surrender of a living being, not of an inert automaton or mechanical tool

Sri Aurobindo

*

An inert passivity is constantly confused with the real surrender, but out of an inert passivity nothing true and powerful can come. It is the inert passivity of physical Nature that leaves it at the mercy of every obscure or undivine influence.

Sri Aurobindo

*

This period [of preparation in yoga] can be dry and desert-like unless one has the ardour of self-introspection and self-conquest and finds every step of the effort and struggle interesting or unless one has or gets the secret of trust and self-giving which sees the hand of the Divine in every step of the path and even in the difficulty the grace or the guidance.

Sri Aurobindo

*

A complete liberation and a complete perfection or the complete possession of the Divine and possession by the Divine is possible but it does not usually happen by an easy miracle or a series of miracles. The miracle can and does happen but only when there is the full call and complete self-giving of the soul and the entire widest opening of the nature

Sri Aurobindo

*

Whatever aspect of the Divine you adore, even whatever guide you choose, if you are perfect in your self-giving and absolutely sincere, you are sure to reach the spiritual goal.

Sri Aurobindo

*

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

(To be continued)

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

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

3

(a)

THERE has been a little perplexity among the Mother's readers owing to a broad use of the term "physical mind" in two talks of hers and to a vague reference in them to some writing or letter of Sri Aurobindo's in the past. She says on 18 December 1971:

"I heard something written by Sri Aurobindo saying that for the Supramental to manifest upon earth the physical mind must receive it and manifest it—and it is just the physical mind, that is to say, the body mind, that is the only thing that remains in me now. And then, the reason why only this part has remained became quite clear to me. It is on the way to being converted in a very rapid and interesting manner. This physical mind is being developed under the Supramental Influence. And it is just what Sri Aurobindo has written, that this is indispensable so that the Supramental can manifest itself permanently upon earth

"So it is going on well ..but it is not easy ...

"I could say truly that I have become another person. There is only this (*Mother touches the outer form of her body*) which remains as it was.... To what extent would it be able to change? Sri Aurobindo has said that if the physical mind were transformed, the transformation of the body would follow *quite naturally*. We shall see."

On 22 December 1971 she says:

"A letter of Sri Aurobindo was read to me in which he said that for the Supramental to be fixed here (he had seen that the Supramental came into him and then it withdrew, and then it came back again and again withdrew—it was not stable); for it to become stable it must enter and settle itself in the physical mind. It is this work which is being done in me for months now. The mind has been withdrawn and the physical mind. .., the mind that is in the body, became wide, it had a global view of things, and its entire way of its seeing was absolutely different. I have seen, it is this: the Supramental is at work there. I am passing through extraordinary hours."

In the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, February 1972, where both the talks appear in the series "Notes on the Way" on pp. 83-4 and 91 respectively, a footnote has been put in connection with the second talk, reading:

"We do not know exactly the text to which Mother refers here, but it must be some writing similar to the following:

"There is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles. Haeckel, the German materialist, spoke somewhere of the will in the atom, and recent

science, dealing with the incalculable variations in the activities of the electrons, comes near to perceiving that this is not a figure but the shadow thrown by a secret reality. This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and docile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the Supermind Force and the transformation of the functioning of the body. On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature.' ”¹

Taken along with other talks of the same period, what the Mother is speaking of is obviously the work going on in her of the illumination of the body's cells by the Supermind. However, it is very improbable that some writing of Sri Aurobindo like the letter quoted in the editorial footnote should be the one to which she refers. No doubt, like her two talks, the letter points to “an obscure mind of the body” or “body mind” at work in the cells (as well as in the molecules, the corpuscles) and it also mentions the task of converting this mind and the important role its conversion will play in stabilising—that is, in manifesting permanently—the Supermind to earth-Nature. But there is here no focusing on this task of conversion as the one master-key to the physical transformation, the supramentalisation of the body. And—what is equally if not more significant—the omitted sentence, which immediately precedes in this letter the words quoted in the footnote, actually differentiates the “physical mind” from the “mind of the body” or “body mind” belonging to “the very cells”, for we read “The physical mind is technically placed below the vital and yet it is a prolongation of the mind proper and one that can act in its own sphere by direct touch with the higher mental intelligence. And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells...” Here the “body mind”, to which the Mother alludes, is specially regarded as additional to and not overlapping with the physical mind.

Finally, where in the letter is any hint about Sri Aurobindo's having seen the Supramental coming into him and then withdrawing and again coming and once more withdrawing? Such an experience as a background is not evident in any letter of his. Besides, all the letters at our disposal touching on the themes concerned in the two talks of the Mother—in fact, all the letters on any subject—go without a single assertion that the Supermind has not only been at work in Sri Aurobindo's inner parts but also descended into his body-substance for however short a time. Therefore, the letter in question as well as every other on allied topics is ruled out. Nothing in his correspondence has a straight bearing on the Mother's themes. An oblique bearing, from the Mother's memory of Sri Aurobindo's correspondence, is possible, but to get to the definite point of her reference we must look elsewhere.

We do not need to search long. Two published statements of her own are at hand—statements which must have been read to her—and the second one quotes Sri Aurobindo's words as she remembers them.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

A VISION AND A CERTITUDE

The Mother once said to me "I know I have come from above, but any praise of me makes my hair stand up"

On a certain occasion in the 1930's, when everybody's eyes were shut during meditation, I happened to open mine. To my amazement I saw the Mother rapt in a superb majesty of faint white light beyond all human conception. What I said justified to me her assertion of having come from above. I said to myself: "Surely here is Maheshwari!"

The power of this vision also justified to me the invocation I had once chosen from the Mother's Prayers and Meditations as the guiding principle of my life. The passage shows the Divine in a human form with all our disabilities accepted, invoking her own transcendent reality: "O Divine and adorable Mother, with Thy help what is there that is impossible?"

These words gave me the assurance that even with all my defects and weaknesses she could raise me up to herself and make me a part of her divine world on earth. I have tried to live more and more in the light of this all-saving mantra, and I can say "There is no depth so low from which the Mother cannot lift us up sky-high!"

THE MOTHER once said to me "I know I have come from above, but any praise of me makes my hair stand up"

On a certain occasion in the 1930s, when everybody's eyes were shut during meditation, I happened to open mine. To my amazement I saw the Mother rapt in a superb majesty of faint white light beyond all human conception. What I said justified to me her assertion of having come from above. I said to myself "Surely, here is Maheshwari!"

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AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

STRANGE

It is the strangest thing to be
Eternity
And gaze
on small unnumbered days
Go by—
To be the silence at the end,
And then descend
Alone
Into a world of moan,
And cry
It is the strangest thing to live
A fugitive
On this
Wild earth and love and kiss
And plan .
I, the immortal voiceless one,
To have begun
These coloured blossoms on the grave
Called man

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Sri Aurobindo to Dilip Kumar Roy I have always admired Harin's poetry. His language and rhythm are always beautiful, and he has grown in ease and mastery, his images also are fine and vivid. The thought is not always successful—there is sometimes excess of exaggeration, sometimes a fall. This poem, however, is original in rhythmic movement and perfectly phrased and constructed in which there is no exaggeration or fall of thought anywhere.

(This is one of Harin's pre-Pondicherry period poems; it was sent by Dilip Kumar Roy to Sri Aurobindo.)

“INSPIRATIONS FOR PROGRESS”

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

I MUST remember that I had on 25-4-63 asked the Mother's special and personal support and help for the writing work I had written to Her that I did not want to take up this work on my own initiative and choice, but only if She would like me to do it and would support it with Her full Force

She had consented to do this and written to me on the same day about it in Her own hand with affectionate love '

I must therefore be fully conscious that She is with me in this work, intimately and constantly, and Her full Force will help in all my needs

Already the two articles² I wrote after this have been liked by Her and have been widely read They have also proved helpful to awaken the consciousness of people to the need of the present hour.

I have now only to go forward with this work with *full confidence*

Whatever difficulties come, I must not shrink back nor shirk the work but, *relying on the Mother*, face them and overcome them

I must not hesitate from any sense of personal incapacity or limitations

Relying on Her constant, intimate and decisive Grace, I must persevere

All these suggestions of incapacity, of extreme difficulty are sheer delusions

With a clear, resolute, apt, persistent will I must throw them away

With entire happy confidence, relying wholly on Her, I must always persevere, move forward, upward, onward in all things

Her Force is illimitable and all-powerful. I have only to open to Her and be Her child and instrument

That is the simple truth of which I must now remain fully conscious

But all work, all things, must be done in a quiet steady poise and with joy

No straining, no tension, no anxiety, no hurry; also no inertia, no disorder

Establish a quiet, wide, firm steady poise. Open more and more to the Mother's Force Let nothing obstruct it

Organise, be simple, straight, efficient

25 8 63

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No desire, no attachment, no hankering, no craving, no bondage, no slavery, no wants

No greed, no accumulation.

Only true needs

All desires are naturally foreign to the true being They come from outside from

1 "Kishor, my dear child you can write the articles It is a good idea and I approve of it —The Mother

2 "The Hour of God", "The Crucial Choice" (July October 1963 *Mother India*)

the universal lower Nature The first thing to do is to become conscious with the true consciousness, exteriorise the desires and then reject them.

The psychic being, if it can come in the front, can do this easily, swiftly, radically But the higher consciousness can also do it

Always the main reliance must be on the Mother's Force

Rejection of all desire is the necessary condition of supramentalisation For without it there can be no union with the Divine Will

8-9-63

*

In this crucial Hour the Supramental Truth-Force will radically press for the elimination of defects that stand in the way.

So there are bound to be difficulties which may become acute because of this pressure, and which may recur until they are eliminated.

The need is to face them in a creative spirit, with a right attitude. The following are the main requisites.

1 Do not try to deal with the difficulties alone, by your own light and will Turn constantly towards Mother and Sri Aurobindo, offer them all that resists, call for their help and remain open to them

Rely upon them with loving trust in complete surrender

2 Do not identify yourself with these wrong movements Do not consider them to be your own, look upon them as foreign things, remain separate and detached and with a quiet, steady and determined will keep on rejecting them constantly until they cease

3 Be very clear-sighted and straight in self-observation and entirely sincere in rejection of the wrong movements. Avoid all sentimentalism, all self-indulgence

Be severe towards your lower nature with a creative spirit.

All the old wrong things that remain under cover must be exposed in the Truth-Light and utterly rejected. All the old wrong formations that stick tenaciously must be torn out and burnt away in the Truth-Fire

Do this without dejection, without any fear of loss—the only loss is of the old ugly things

Rather rejoice and with a great enthusiasm, with heroism and courage, now act decisively and, rending through the fence of dark obstructions, push forward into the New Light

That is the Mother's urgent call Do not shirk or shrink from what is demanded, from any sense of personal incapacity For this work Her constant Grace is radically with you Entirely relying on Her now move forward—and the New Birth and New Life will soon come in the long hoped for union

9-9-63

Work

Organise, concentrate, steadily persevere

Enter into the stream of work, open more and more to the Mother's Power that is given, surrender to Her more and more, feel Her working through you.

Fix a quiet, steady, firm station in the inner consciousness and from there open more and more, receive more and more, express more and more the Mother's Power through work

All work is a loving service to the Lord—simply, absolutely It should be done in ever-increasing Peace, Joy, Enthusiasm in a spirit of happy consecration

No dispersion, no externalisation, no carelessness, no neglect, no ego

Face squarely all the defects that stand in the way of true and perfect service to the Lord The Mother's decisive Help for overcoming them is always with you With complete confidence, relying on Her, remove them, and be fit, efficient, expert in the work that has to be done for the Lord.

In this Hour of the Lord cast away all inertia, all weakness, and awake, arise, be upright and, giving all to the Lord, do only His Will perfectly—with love and joy. Always say in all sincerity—

O Lord!

Let Thy Will be done!

26-10-63

(To be continued)

KISHOR GANDHI

(Compiled by Arvind Akki)

HUMAN NATURE IN FULL PLAY IN THE ASHRAM

IN 1934 I wrote to Sri Aurobindo

A distinguished littérateur of Bengal used to say. It is simply unthinkable that living in entire seclusion in Pondicherry or the Himalayas one can write anything in prose or poetry. His experience is sure to be limited.¹

I received the following answer from Sri Aurobindo in his characteristic style:

What a stupidly rigid principle! Can X really write nothing except what he has seen and experienced? What an unimaginative man he must be! And how dull his stories must be and how limited!

I wonder whether Victor Hugo had to live in a convict's prison before he invented Jean Valjean. Certainly one has to look at life, but there is no obligation to copy faithfully from life. The man of imagination carries a world in himself and a mere hint or suggestion from life is enough to start it going. It is recognised now that Balzac and Dickens created on the contrary their greatest characters which were not at all faithful to life around them. Balzac's descriptions of society are hopelessly wrong, he knew nothing about it, but his world is much more striking and real than the actual world about him which he misrepresented—even life has imitated figures he made rather than the other way round. Besides who is living in entire seclusion in Pondicherry? There are living men and women around you and human nature is in full play here as well as in the biggest city—only one has to have an eye to see what is within them and an imagination that takes a few bricks and can make out of them a great edifice—one must be able to see that human nature is one everywhere and pick out of it the essential things or the interesting things that can be turned into great art.²

I came to the Ashram in 1933 to settle for good. At that time literary activity was not much in progress. The Ashram sadhaks like Nolinida, Dilipda, Sahanadi, etc. had started translating some mystic poems of Sri Aurobindo into Bengali. One of the poems I remember was *In Horis Aeternum*—a difficult poem indeed. They were trying hard and Sri Aurobindo was correcting them. They had taken it as part of their sadhana.

The literary man was perhaps justified in passing that stricture since he did not know much about the Ashram life at that time when the literary activities were very few and far between.

I shall start by giving some examples chosen at random to illustrate the nature and variety of the Ashram life quite different from the orthodox to be followed by examples of a creative cultural life as the Ashram developed.

Let me start with the fascinating life-story of a handsome old lady who had left the worldly life some years earlier to live in the Ashram. I used to pay her regular visits once a week. It being my visiting day, I was waiting for my nephew to come and take

me on his moped to her house. We started at about 5.00 p.m. He left me at her place saying he would return after some time to pick me up. She lives all alone in her small flat in a corner of the first floor away from the street side. Mother, husband, son, etc., she has forgotten all of them. The small room is practically filled by her wooden cot and the place for her bath; no furniture other than an almirah and a fridge. In the small verandah there is a kitchenette. Yes, she has a cassette player to entertain herself with devotional songs. She keeps no servants, cooking, cleaning the room, washing, etc. she does herself even at this old age. And yet she belonged to an aristocratic family with every luxury at her command. She hardly goes out of her room, except to visit the Samadhī in the Ashram. It reminds one of the life of the Bengali widows who live in Benaras at the end of their days consecrated to the worship of Shīva. She depends entirely on her Lord to look after her necessities and He does! A number of friends and neighbours help her by supplying all outer needs. About her inner experiences, one can write a book. Plenty of visitors go to hear her stories. She is very free with them without any reserve. Her candour, child-like simplicity, are her special attraction.

When we reached her house, we met a visitor listening to her devotional stories from Sri Ramakrishna's কথামৃত and other such spiritual sources which she has committed to memory by repetition. Her room has some pictures of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Krishna and Jagannath of Puri—that's all.

The man who was listening to the stories was an elderly person who had given up his lucrative job drawing Rs. 14,000 a month and now was her neighbour. He came to know the lady and became her admirer and attends to all her outer needs. Like him, other devotees too come to see her regularly to listen to her refreshing talks. She has no other interest except what is related to the spiritual life.

Recently she has been attracted to read stories connected with the lives of sadhus and sannyasis who visit the Narmada Valley whose banks are lined with many temples. This valley has become famous as a place of pilgrimage. Many books have been written about it. They are really thrilling stories of pilgrimages based on the lives of the ascetics.

Sri Aurobindo also visited the Narmada with some friends in the early days and entered into a temple dedicated to Kali. He has told us that when he approached and looked at the idol, it opened its eyes and looked at him. He did not believe in the gods or their statues before. After this experience his views changed. He has written a splendid poem on it called

The Stone Goddess

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
 From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,—
 A living Presence deathless and divine,
 A Form that harboured all infinity

The great World-Mother and her mighty will
 Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
 Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
 Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,
 Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,
 Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard
 The secret of her strange embodiment,

One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,
 A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.³

Sri Aurobindo told us also that when he went with his friends to visit the great yogi Brahmananda on the banks of the Narmada he opened his eyes and gave him a penetrating look, while he kept his eyes shut when the friends appeared before him

Now one day when my friend was reading the stories of the lives of Narmada sannyasis and pilgrims, she got so absorbed that she forgot everything. Suddenly she found that her Ajna Chakra (the subtle centre between the eyebrows) had opened up and Sri Aurobindo was sitting there and his gaze was fixed on her. It was strange that she was absorbed in reading and at the same time she could see Sri Aurobindo sitting in the chakra all aglow and looking at her—both actions happening at the same time. Gradually she lapsed into a deep sleep forgetting time and space to wake up in the morning with the memorable vision

Such is the lady and her life and her close contact with Sri Aurobindo

Now let us change our venue and go to another place where we shall see a video. The occasion was the celebration of the birthday of one of the oldest sadhaks of the Ashram who had been very close to Sri Aurobindo for many years. Just the day before, a group of young Russians had arrived all the way from their native place to visit the Ashram and learn about Sri Aurobindo's life preferably from a sadhak who had been in close contact with him. They had taken the video. Among them only one grown-up girl knew English.

The place we had gone to was in striking contrast to the previous one—a sumptuous modern room, well-furnished, it was the ground-floor of a huge mansion. Though not a skyscraper, it consisted of thirty-two flats. People from different parts of the world lived there. The inmates were connected with the Ashram. The sitting-room could be taken for that of an aesthete. It was furnished with different kinds of pictures in good taste collected from America, Europe and other parts of the world. There are other exhibits also from various countries. As soon as we entered the room a small cute puppy, which was freely frisking about, came running to us and started licking us all over.

The video starts. You see an old man above ninety years of age who is greeted and

fêted by a big crowd with many fine presents as tokens of their love and admiration. The young Russians were particularly noticeable. Out of them only one had some knowledge of English and she was asking the old sadhak many questions about his halcyon days with the Master. The video had been taken in the Ashram: the Samadhî, the courtyard, trees and houses all looked very beautiful indeed! The shots are all taken from inside the room. The Samadhî was indeed shining like a jewel, adorned with colourful flowers. That was the video. The Russians took away all the snaps with them and left the video with us. It was a gala day but without any excitement—a simple silent spectacle of a spiritual dimension. They were very happy because their cherished desire had been fulfilled.

The festival comes to an end. We return to the Ashram. On the way we see that in the Ashram playground a Hindi cinema-show is going on for the enjoyment of the children. As soon as we enter the Ashram, however, we are suddenly lifted to another plane, or that plane may have come down to the earth. It is about 8.00 p.m. A serene calm and an atmosphere of silence pervade the courtyard and we see quite a number of sadhaks and sadhikas and visitors seated here and there plunged in meditation or quietly drinking in the atmosphere; some others have by their side their little children sitting quietly; some tots are running about or doing pranam at the Samadhî. Suddenly you notice the big “Service Tree”, a hundred years old, with its branches spread over the Samadhî, become alive as it were. The big round moon is pouring its luminous magic rays through the scattered branches of the old tree flooding the Samadhî and the courtyard. A strange new flower with tender tendrils shimmering at the top of the central vase draws your attention and your eyes are glued to the centre. Time and space vanish, you are altogether spellbound.

After some time you come back to your senses and return to your room. At night you have a sound slumber and a glorious dream in which you see the marvellous moon flooding the whole earth. I was almost in a dreamland. Next morning I got up fresh with a new life as it were. I told the Mother about my dream and she replied that I had been with Sri Aurobindo in his world-abode in the subtle plane.

As for the “creative activities” of the Ashram they need not be mentioned here.

This is just a short pen-picture to dispel wrong impressions about the Ashram carried by the people outside. In fact, Huxley’s *Brave New World* is in the making by the unseen Power.

NIRODBARAN

References

- 1 *Nirodbaran’s Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol 1, p 50
- 2 *Ibid*, pp 50-51
- 3 *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p 139

HE LOVED HIS COUNTRY MORE THAN HIS LIFE

My first meeting with Sudhir-da took place in 1942 at the Pondicherry station. It was one late evening at the beginning of April. On that day four of us, Sunil, Gora, Ranju and I arrived in Pondicherry for the first time for the April Darshan. Sudhir-da had come to the station to fetch us.

I did not know Sudhir-da then. But when he looked at me I could see in his look the love and trust he bore for me. I too felt a strange attraction for him, an attraction mixed with respect and love. And the bond that we formed on that first day remained firm till the very end.

Sudhir-da accompanied us to Chettiar House, where arrangements for our stay had been made. We had a quick shower and then he took us for dinner to the Dining Room. After our meal we were taken to Nolini-da.

In those days, there used to be a collective meditation in the Meditation Hall at 8 in the evening. After the lights had been turned off in the Meditation Hall, Mother used to come down and stand on the staircase. After the meditation was over, in about thirty minutes, she went up and stood at the landing. People would then line up and go to her one by one, do pranam, receive a flower, etc. After that we either returned home or we went to the sea-front for a walk. This was our usual programme.

It was Sudhir-da who took us for our first darshan of Mother that evening. It was on that day that I asked Ranju at one point who he was. Ranju replied: "He's Sudhir Sarkar. He worked with Sri Aurobindo." Hearing this about him my respect for him increased even more. I felt that we could not have met a better man on the first day.

Sudhir-da was an extremely simple, cheerful person. He normally wore shorts and a vest and he had a crop of short pepper-and-salt hair. Later his hair turned completely white. I was told that he used to cut his own hair. His wrinkleless, taut-skinned figure spoke of the solid, robust health he possessed in his youth. His heart was simple like a child's, but he had tremendous will-power and stamina. If he saw or was told of any act of courage and heroism he would exult with joy. A few years later I took a photograph of Sudhir-da's to show to Mother. After seeing the photo Mother remarked: "His face looks exactly like an ancient Roman's."

He loved his country more than his life and kept himself informed about both the positive and negative developments in the country. He identified himself completely with everything of the country.

During the 1947 riots and a few days after the partition of India, he fell very ill. When Mother was informed she fully agreed with the doctor's reading. It was the news of the riots that had resumed once more that had upset him so much and that is what caused his physical illness. He reposed in Mother and Sri Aurobindo his total faith. And this he has exemplified with his entire life. It is hard to believe this without having seen it.

After the April Darshan, I stayed till August and then returned home in order to complete my studies. The first time I came to Pondicherry, it was to see for myself what was going on here even though my family was in contact with the Ashram from 1934

and I already knew something about the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo and Mother's ideal and vision

I came away to the Ashram for good on May 1st, 1945. Within a short time at the Ashram, and with Mother's blessing, I started my work for the physical education department.

I used to stay with my mother and brothers at the Fanovard House that Mother had chosen for us. Now it is the family house of Captain Mona. Sudhir-da with his children used to stay in the house on our right.

Right from the beginning, Sudhir-da always encouraged me in my work. He was helpful in my starting group-activities for the elderly. I used to conduct gymnastic marching for the elderly. He was extremely interested in this and would say: "Pranab, they do Bharatnatyam whereas we do Mahabharatnatyam!" And he encouraged everybody to actively participate in the gymnastic marching and in physical education.

While we remained neighbours, I used to seize the least occasion to go and listen to his stories about former times. And he would tell us so many stories. I have forgotten a lot but if I had known then that I would write about Sudhir-da I would have noted those stories down. I regret it immensely now.

I have heard from Sudhir-da that during the Swadeshi movement's inception, when their Revolutionary Volunteer Force went to Jamalpur for action, he was part of the team. He was then a mere teenager. The group-leader had taken him along impressed by the young boy's courage and eagerness. The group-leader's name was Sri Indranath Nandi.

The volunteer Force got into action, the police started firing and soon encircled the whole group. But Sudhir-da, being small, managed to slip out from under the nose of the police. On the way he stopped by a cobbler's house. Taking the cobbler's tools he disguised himself as the cobbler's son and after walking for many days he reached Mymensingh and stayed at the zamindar's palace. He was worried that since he had escaped, the elders of the group might dismiss him as a little coward. But later he saw that just the opposite happened. Everyone was impressed with his presence of mind. He had done the right thing by slipping out. Otherwise no one would have ever found out about their action.

On another occasion, he told me how Sri Aurobindo took upon himself the responsibility of educating him. They would all sit around Sri Aurobindo and would recount to them the stories of the French Revolution even while he continued to directly translate on his typewriter the *Mahabharata* into English poetry.

One day, Sri Aurobindo told Sudhir-da that unless one read the *Mahabharata*, it was impossible to know anything about India. And he asked Sudhir-da to go and buy a copy to read to the others. Sudhir-da took the money from Sri Aurobindo and went to a bookshop. He found there that the best version of the *Mahabharata* by Kaliprasanna Sinha was much too expensive. And so he bought another cheaper version. "After all, this too is the *Mahabharata*," he said to himself, "it should serve their purpose." They were going through a severe financial crisis at that time. So that was the justification.

When Sudhir-da gave the book to Sri Aurobindo, he did not like it at all. He told him that it was not possible to learn the essence of the *Mahabharata* from that book. And so he asked him to go back, return that book and buy the Kaliprasanna Sinha edition. One ought to remember one thing though. The revolutionary group was going through a terrible financial problem at that time.

In the Alipore Bomb Case, the whole group was caught. Along with Sri Aurobindo the co-revolutionaries were all plunged in deep thought. At that time Sudhir-da used to do all the personal errands for Sri Aurobindo. They all would be discussing something but everyone seemed to be holding himself down. Sri Aurobindo would not say anything, he was lost in some other state. Sudhir-da was looking after his personal needs then. He would feed him and Sri Aurobindo would silently eat. He was not conscious of what he ate or how much. The fact that Sri Aurobindo could trustingly leave the entire responsibility for his life on Sudhir-da showed how much faith and reliance he placed in him. It is amazing even to think of it.

The government convicted Barin Ghosh, Ullaskar Dutt, Upen Bandopadhyaya and, along with these principal revolutionaries, Sudhir-da was also sent away to the Andamans. And there, in spite of the thousand and one tortures and pains, he did not let either his ideal or his inner strength flag. He remained in good spirits even there. A senior officer in Andaman Jail began trusting him but never once did he think about himself. He could have obtained a lot of advantages for himself from him. But instead of that, he would sneak out the personal printed envelopes of the officer. And in these envelopes Barin Ghosh would send news to the mainland about the country's revolutionaries imprisoned in the Andamans. The police never suspected anything as the envelopes were government stationery.

After the end of the First World War, Sudhir-da was released and returned to India along with all the others who had been jailed in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. But the police did not let him live in peace. Through all these experiences, Sudhir-da lived on with great courage and dynamism. Then he brought his five sons and one daughter to take refuge in Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry and dedicated his own life in one-pointed service of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

I have seen a lot of political sufferers make a lot of effort to try and obtain the "Freedom Fighter's Pension" or get the amount increased. But when Sudhir-da received the offer of this government pension he said: "I worked for the country only out of love and not to get a pension. And now that Mother has taken charge of me, what need do I have to take advantage of the government's generosity?" It is seldom that we come across such a selfless person and one with such trust in Mother.

Mother told me that whenever an avatar comes down to the earth he brings with him his instruments for his work. Sudhir-da undoubtedly was one such instrument. He consecrated his entire life to the given work with single-minded devotion. Today, I can say with conviction that among the followers of Sri Aurobindo, Sudhir-da walked in the foremost rank.

PRANAB KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

INTEGRAL YOGA IN THE ERSTWHILE U.S.S.R.

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

I AND my wife Mary are both psychologists. I am thirty-four and Mary twenty-six. We live in Cheliabinsk, which is located in central Russia. It is said here that it is in our city that the spiritual renaissance of the whole earth will start, but we are not sure. We feel people here are unusual in that they are seekers and engaged in studying yoga. Quite a few are engaged in Integral Yoga.

Not very far from Cheliabinsk a city, Arkaim, was discovered underground. It would appear that the ancient Rishis, those who wrote the Vedas, used to live there. It is said in a prophecy that when a second underground city is found not far from the Urals, then a spiritual renaissance of the entire world will begin. But each must begin with himself, of course, as in the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

15 October 1994

For the last several years I have been the head of the Sri Aurobindo Society in the city of Cheliabinsk. The first organised group consisting approximately of thirty like-minded people, was established in 1990. Our activities were based on the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which had just been released after the Perestroika, about which you must have heard. Integral Yoga aroused great interest among the inhabitants of our city, especially those who had higher education or creative potential. The main interest was in the teaching about the next evolutionary step given by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Some of their works have been translated into Russian. These translations appeared in Moscow, St Petersburg, Tbilisi (Georgia) and other cities of Russia. Also, we had translations which gave precise definitions of the most difficult parts of the published works. A few branches of the Sri Aurobindo Society have appeared in small cities in our region; we maintain relations with them and exchange experiences in the theory and practice of the yoga. Besides this, there are, in our city, a number of people who have tried to practise intense sadhana. At the beginning there was a great interest in books on spiritual teaching which were unknown before and forbidden, but now the interest has subsided. More and more people who showed intense spiritual aspiration have now reverted to a more normal lifestyle.

At present there exists a small group which continues to practise the evolution of mankind, but the direction has somewhat changed. Earlier most people concerned themselves with theoretical studies, but now there is a great urge to organise a spiritual life and to practise and integrate it with everyday life. In the course of our practice there were experiences among some of us with the discovery of the psychic, but this was difficult to prove since none of us was really in possession of this condition. These higher experiences and states of consciousness did not become stable, but came only from time to time.

23 August 1995

Victor and Mary Zhukov (Cheliabinsk, Russia)

I am twenty-four and live in St Petersburg The first time I heard of Sri Aurobindo was in 1987 when I was still in school In 1989 I attended a lecture on the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's work The integral aspect of his yoga captured me at once and it was not a passing fancy Before my acquaintance with the Integral Yoga I had read a lot about Buddhism and later was attracted by Christianity and the spiritual seeking of India Each had many interesting aspects, but only the Integral Yoga came up to my expectations. This was because, firstly, it did not make its goal Nirvana, but asked one to remain in the material world and, secondly, it had as its goal the transformation of the crude material nature by the descent of the higher consciousness

Although due to circumstances I had my higher education in economics, I entered the faculty of Physics as I was interested by the mystery of matter and the possibility of man At present two friends and I are systematically studying the universe The inner spiritual poise is the basis of our work

26 December 1994

Marina Y Markarova (St Petersburg, Russia)

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At fourteen I began to feel a strong and growing inclination towards a knowledge of the Truth In my mind I was appealing for help for a means, a method of understanding the world In a very short time, to my great delight, I became acquainted with a group that was studying and practising yoga It was then that I also became acquainted with Satprem's book *The Adventure of Consciousness*. This book attracted me greatly, but because I could not understand it I stopped reading it and also abandoned yoga in general. After three years of rejection I again returned to this group and my guru. After learning the technique of positive thinking and one month of meditation, I started again to read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and I began at last to understand them. That is why I have decided to give myself entirely to Integral Yoga.

Undated, c January 1995

Vitalii V Turanov (Sigulda, Latvia)

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Two years ago, I started Patanjali's Raja Yoga Then I found Satprem's book *On the Way to Superhumanhood*. As part of my yoga practice, I fasted for two weeks. The fast activated my mental chakra and I could understand the book *The Adventure of Consciousness* and also Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's books, which were being widely sold in St. Petersburg in 1993 I felt an affinity for the yoga

Before starting yoga I worked as an agronomist at a laboratory. In 1992 the laboratory went bankrupt and all twelve workers were laid off I became a labourer in the city of Syktyvkare in a brigade composed of students, programmers, university teachers, an astronomer specialising in quarks, the former director of a large farm and others All summer I spent with a hammer laying cables and a compressor that broke

the asphalt While the compressor was working, due to severe vibration, I felt as if my brain was dissolving, but unexpectedly I suddenly experienced a complete quiet. I felt remarkably well, almost like a child.

Whenever I had free time, I used to go to a forest to collect berries and bathe in the river Sysola. Then inside me the psychic being, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, began to awaken and in this state of meditation I rediscovered a book on Raja Yoga. It attracted me. The idea of the plasticity of the world and of consciousness deeply penetrated my being. The old world disintegrated for me and a scientific career no longer interested me. I was a bachelor and started on the path of yoga at twenty-eight years of age. That was in August 1992.

Two years have passed and I continue to practise yoga. More and more I am getting into the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. I worked as a teacher of Agronomy at the University and then I entered a group who were all doing Tantric yoga, extra-sensory practices and other psychic techniques. I attended all kinds of schools of yoga/extra-sensory perception, of which there are a great number in St. Petersburg. Unfortunately these schools have a commercial character.

I was present at a lecture of Dr. R. G. Zorn. He was interested in Integral Yoga and had even been to Pondicherry. He told me many interesting things. I am now thirty years old, and have spent the last two years as a brahmachari with the aid of fasting and vegetarian food. I have achieved a healthy physical and vital body. I take food only five or six times a week and I sleep less than six hours a day. The technique of meditation of Integral Yoga has given me psychic/mental health. I would like to continue the yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

29 January 1995

Alexander P. Sergeevich (Pushkin, Russia)

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For more than two years I have been doing Integral Yoga based on the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but of late I have begun to feel the need of a guru, as the books do not always answer my questions. Besides, I need the energetic support of a guru to counteract the *tamas* which hinders my progress. I also feel the lack of spiritual companionship with other sadhaks of Integral Yoga and feel as if I am stewing in my own juice. In theory I know I should not ask anything of the Mother except peace, light, purity and knowledge and that everything will be given to me at the right time. I know I should depend on the inner guidance and address myself directly to the Mother, but my stupid mind constantly questions my activities and my vital constantly annoys me by not achieving perfection quickly enough.

30 March 1995

Elene P. Petrovna (Vyborg, Russia)

(To be continued)

A WORLD'S DESIRE

THE PRINCESS of Madra in the Story of Savitri has to first discover her soul and in it find out the meaning and purpose of the world's desire. But, before that, the Yogin-Father has to carry the world's desire to the Great Goddess and invoke her incarnation in the world. In the fulfilment of this desire is the fulfilment of the mortal creation.

(a)

Savitri has come back and reported to Aswapati about her meeting Satyavan in the Shalwa country. She has already chosen him as her husband, so that even Narad's pronouncement about the death of Satyavan at the end of one year of their marriage is not going to make her alter the decision. But it looks as though the problem of Satyavan's death was, in some way, already known to Aswapati, he definitely had a distant intuition about it. In fact, he had told his daughter Savitri to be prepared to confront Heaven's large question that ever haunts life here. Thus, while bidding her to go in search of a partner, he tells her

O Spirit, traveller of eternity,
Who camest from the immortal spaces here
Armed for the splendid hazard of thy life
To set thy conquering foot on Chance and Time,
The moon shut in her halo dreams like thee.

(*Savitri*, pp 373-74)

That moon has to come out of the dream and shine in a bright spiritual sky, which can happen only if the dauntless moon-goddess stands up in her full Yogic stature to meet the dark challenge of life. In the meanwhile, she is assured that

A mighty Presence still defends thy frame
Perhaps the heavens guard thee for some great soul..
Depart where love and destiny call your charm.
Venture through the deep world to find thy mate .
One force shall be your mover and your guide,
One light shall be around you and within,
Hand in strong hand confront Heaven's question, life:
Challenge the ordeal of the immense disguise
Ascend from Nature to divinity's heights;
Face the high gods, crowned with felicity,
Then meet a greater God, thy self beyond Time

(*Savitri*, pp 374-75)

His words had power and

A hand from some Greatness opened her heart's locked doors
And showed the work for which her strength was born
(*Savitri*, p 375)

There was the full mantric force behind what Aswapati had spoken to Savitri, the traveller in the ways of eternity. He had bidden her to face the hazard of life, and the ordeal of immense disguise, and meet the challenge of the gods in her task that she may meet the God of Love who, even in Time, remains beyond it. In that discovery shall be the crowning happiness of her soul's endeavour, the endeavour that represents the burden and travail of the whole world. Savitri accepts the command and proceeds forthwith on her uncertain and unknown quest.

But along with the discovery of Love she, as if designedly, stumbles upon the discovery of Death. Deep somewhere in the emerald-green of the Earth and behind helpless Love hides grim Death. Savitri's soul has at once recognised the first. The dark presence of the second was very timely pointed out to her by Narad who was undoubtedly prompted by some mysterious urge that supports the universe.

Savitri is in the company of Satyavan. But in that very moment of love she feels in her breast the ancient pain that ever afflicts the Earth. Even so, from some happy and helpful spiritual region she receives an answer with its healing touch. Not only that, now she asserts who she really is and, holding the weapon of sure victory, she lifts up her hand.

She matched with the iron law her sovereign right
Her single will opposed the cosmic rule
To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose
(*Savitri*, p 19)

All this knowledge, and this determination, comes to her as if she is resuming the task she had partly carried out in some distant past. Now she has to take it up again and complete it. Her "memory's casements" open out and bring into active view the swift-approaching event. In the far sight of some gleaming vision is seized the primordial nature of the struggle. Now everything has converged at a single point of action.

But human Savitri has to first discover her soul. In it the Power from above and the Power from within have to join together. Only then can the assault be winningly made. Thus, while still in the company of Satyavan, Savitri receives, "in the vigilance of the sleepless night," a sudden command, stern and imperative in its assertion:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths
(*Savitri*, p 476)

She is to rise and conquer Death. In her soul she has to harbour the strength of her Guardian Spirit, Mahadevi, the Great Goddess herself. The human Savitri has thus been set on the interior occult-yogic journey. Travelling through the inner worlds and meeting her soul's forces, and also their opposing and distorting powers, entering into the night of God, crossing the "sacred darkness within," she has presently surrendered herself to the Unknowable's will, totally, in every detail, and in every respect. She is now about to step into the sanctum sanctorum of her soul.

In the last chamber on a golden seat
 One sat whose shape no vision could define,
 Only one felt the world's unattainable fount,
 A Power of which she was a straying Force,
 An invisible Beauty, goal of the world's desire,
 A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
 A Greatness without whom no life could be.

(Savitri, p. 525)

In this discovery Savitri also discovers where the world's desire is to go. Invisible Beauty is in search of form, but that form will be able to hold her only when Savitri, in her soul's will, shall surrender completely to the Great Goddess. Savitri has done that.

(b)

Likewise, Aswapati also bears a distinct memory of the ageless primordial struggle. He has already told his daughter to prepare herself to fight against the "immense disguise" which she is soon going to meet in the very act of discovering Love. Aswapati possessed timeless knowledge of things and events, *kālātīt jñāna*, and hence, as if in an inverse chronology, he could advise her so. He had heard the call and taken the world's desire to the Great Goddess. It is actually he who had persuaded her to take birth, that the victory for God be won in this suffering mortal world.

A world's desire compelled her mortal birth
 One in the front of the immemorial quest,
 Protagonist of the mysterious play
 In which the Unknown pursues himself through forms
 And limits his eternity by the hours
 And the blind Void struggles to live and see,
 A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air,
 Brought down to earth's dumb need her radiant power

(Savitri, p. 22)

In fact, the Avataric birth is generally in response to a call from below. There has

to be an ardent invocation before the boon is granted. It is as if human aspiration has to be there to support the grace ready to come down and fulfil it. Savitri's birth is an answer to such a call. Indeed, the occult necessity of it has a certain logical basis as well: creation must rise towards God before God can enter into it,—to recreate it in his own being.

(c)

In the Puranas we often read about Prithvi having fallen into a sad plight. She has been overpowered by the evil forces and is about to sink in the ocean of darkness. Prithvi, the Earth who upbears this multifold creation, goes to the Abode of the Gods, on Mt. Sumeru, and offers her respects to Brahma and other Deities. She tells them how the Daityas, the Sons of Diti, the Mother of Division, have been afflicting her and causing great havoc. The Gods listen to her prayer and approach Vishnu, with a request to redeem the Earth. Vishnu comes as an Avatar and destroys the Daityas.¹

However, the Puranic call for the Divine's birth is always in a specific context, normally at the time of an evolutionary crisis. But, then, these crises will continue to be there as long as evolution remains in the domain of Ignorance. Indeed, a radically different kind of Avatar has to appear if evolution has to step into the domain of Knowledge. Furthermore, he must come not alone but accompanied by his full executive Consciousness-Force. Both together have to take upon themselves the mortal load and establish the active Knowledge-principle in it. Savitri and Aswapati's incarnations precisely mean that.

If such is the meaning of this twin birth, then, Aswapati's prayer to the Great Goddess assumes another deeper significance than that we have in the Puranas. The purpose of the whole endeavour is now to introduce, in the evolutionary working, the dimension of the luminous Supreme. In order to accomplish this, Aswapati has done yoga-sadhana in the earth-consciousness and prepared the base for active dynamism of the incarnate Goddess. He has explored all these thousand worlds and found the root cause of their failure. He has also realised that this cause can be removed only by invoking the transforming Power of the Supreme. It is the problem of the mortal creation that has haunted him and taken him to her for its everlasting solution. In it is fulfilled the world's evolutionary desire.

(d)

Aswapati becomes one with the Earth and lifts her desire up to the Supreme. Climbing ladder by ladder to the very Sky of Divinity, the dauntless Adventurer of the Spirit carries with him that desire for its integral and benedictive realisation. But, for

¹ Adwaita Acharya prayed to Krishna to incarnate himself to show the path to suffering mankind and redeem it. He took birth as Prabhu Chaitanya.

the world's desire to become one with God's desire, to fulfil himself in it, there must step in that dynamic Power of the Supreme Her decisive action is necessary

there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother The Mother's power can alone bring down into this world Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda

(*The Mother*, SABCL, Vol 25, pp 40-41)

The call from the world is feeble and cannot climb by itself to the transcendental summits of spirituality Even if it were to ascend to these peaks, it would have no strength to bear the glory and the grandeur when the sanction would come

By his arduous tapasya Aswapati strengthens the call, the urge, the aspiration imploring the Grace of the Supreme; for he is the protagonist of God's work in the world who has consented to take upon himself its burden To live in God to do God's work in the world in a Godly way,—that is Aswapati's task He has left his own wide infinity behind and accepted the lot of the mortal creature,— in order to change it into deathless life of happy beauty and harmony in the creative spirit of things.

The Call and the Sanction are ultimately fulfilled by the executive Power Aswapati, the Son of Strength, has kindled the call and made it sun-bright with his spiritual fire He has lifted it up and received a boon, marking the sanction of the Supreme To make the world's desire and God's desire one in a luminous manifoldness is now the full concern of the dynamic Consciousness-Force, Chit-Shakti.

To put it in somewhat metaphysical terms by the process of double tapasya Soul and Oversoul have joined together, now it is the supreme transcendental Nature who has to manifestly establish in the mortal world the splendour of truth-conscious delight

(e)

Seen in this way, it can be asserted that in *Savitri* these three aspects,—the Call, the Sanction, and the Action,—are presented by Sri Aurobindo in their completest manner possible In Part I, comprising *The Book of Beginnings*, *The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*, and *The Book of the Divine Mother*, it deals with the cosmic-spiritual operation of the Call and the Sanction; Part II and Part III are concerned with the occult ministry of the Presence and Power of the Great Goddess, Mahadevi While Part I provides, through Aswapati's Yoga, a transcendental basis for her dynamic executive action, through the other two Parts it ushers in the Everlasting Day It is by carrying this Day with her that Savitri comes back to the Earth with the soul of Satyavan

But the *Epilogue* or *The Return to Earth*, Book Twelve, is perhaps more

significant in another sense. It is the Divinity itself who is returning to its own Divinity *via* the fruitful experience of the Inconscience, a return in a measure of its another dimension. The Call, the Sanction, and the Action are the three Greatnesses in this revelatory expression of the evolutionary Supreme himself. Such is indeed the vast nature of the epic that *Savitri* is, with its Word of Truth and Beauty in the Delight of the Spirit. In it is resolved, by slaying the soul's ignorance, the "mystery of God's birth and acts"

A high and black negation is not all,
 A huge extinction is not God's last word,
 Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,
 The meaning of this great mysterious world
 In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power
 Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul
 And in the ray reveal the parent sun:
 It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,
 It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape
 To free the self is but one radiant pace,
 Here to fulfil himself was God's desire

(*Savitri*, pp 311-12)

Thus Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* proves to be the golden bridge between the world's desire and God's desire. That is its mutually connective greatness

R Y DESHPANDE

SINCE I HAVE SEEN YOUR FACE

SINCE I have seen your face at the window, sweet
Love, you have thrown a spell on my heart, my feet
My heart to your face, my feet to your window still
Bear me by force as if by an alien will

O witch of beauty. O Circe with innocent eyes,
You have suddenly caught me fast in a net of sighs.
I look at the sunlight, I see your laughing face,
When I purchase a flower, it is you in your radiant grace

I have tried to save my soul alive from your snare,
I will strive no more, let it flutter and perish there.
I too will snare your body alive, O my dove,
And teach you all the torture and sweetness of love

When you have looked from the window out on the trampling city,
Did you think to take my heart and pay me with pity?
But you looked at one who has ever mocked at sin
And gambled with life to lose her all or win

I will pluck you forth like a fluttering bird from her nest
You shall lie on Love's strong knees, in his white warm breast,
Afraid, with delighted lids that will not close.
You shall grow white one moment, the next a rose

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol 5, p 30)

AT THE SAMADHI

TWILIGHT—and it is meditation time at the Samadhi.
The weary day drifts off to sleep even as the twinkling night awakes
Silence weaves a holy wrap, 'twined with
spiral-coils of self-consecrating incense-sticks.
A gathering Luminosity blooms forth in the fading light,
and the balmy breeze lulls one to serenity and peace

A mystic Veil is drawn like the evening shroud,
the lamp of devotion is lit, a holy Halo is cast all around
Eyes are closed, immersed trance-like in contemplation
even as the breath is rhythmised,
In tune with Eternity's cadence.
A meditative poise descends deep in the psyche.
The heart, ecstasy-laden, is heavy with adoration

The Spirit gets attuned to a wide Divinity.
A Radiance glows, sun-like, in the centre-core of my Being
The surrendered soul is sanctified by the Master's Touch,
while nectar-drops of the Mother's Love drench me
Brimming over with Bliss and Beatitude,
I lay at last my head in Her Holy Lap

VIREN

RAINDROPS ON PETALS

THE raindrops on petals
Glistening in the pearly rays
Twinkling up at me
Brightening my heart
Tempt my face
Into a tender smile—
My first smile of the day
I keep for you

The morning filtered light
Through the sieve of mists
Laying lightly the soft shadows
And the fragrant breeze
Bathed in the sea of dews
Fill my heart with thoughts—
My first thought of the day
Is of you

How wondrous are your wonders—
You lift the mountains
 and all the oceans
Heat the sun
 and speed the planets
Twirl the universe
 round a finger,
Yet have time to shine
The pearls on petals

A BISWAS

HOLD UP THE TORCH

HOLD up the torch, receive the sacred Fire,
Protect the gold-red Flame!
Keep off the swarming flickers of desire,
Pursue your highest aim!

To seeking souls their lifted torches kindle
In moments of white Grace.
Care deeply that the flame may never dwindle:
It's God's gift to the race

Humanity will wake up from its swoon,
Perceive the growing Light
And with its gold-red flaming torches soon
Expel the lords of Night.

Earth's burning forests cry in agony,
Her whales and dolphins die
And peoples from their native countries flee!
How long, we ask, and why?

He knows, He wills, He labours, waits
Till in His hidden hour
The gold-red flames through Heaven's gates
He on the earth will shower.

RUTH

THE NECKLACE

It looks like something a sorcerer might wear

You selected the pebbles
On the beaches we wandered
By Homer's wine-dark sea;
I offer the thread to link them together

Knuckled, knobby, matt,
Bleached as old bones
Or petrified sponges,
Pitted like worn peach-kernels,
Almond shells or worm-eaten wood,
All sorts of sizes

These stones commemorate a journey
That was not all smooth sailing
But like something a sorcerer might value,
Charged with strange power

SHRADDHAVAN

HYMN TO ABIRAMI

(Continued from the issue of January 1998)

Thy glory is all I care, thy name is all I know
All my fervent devotion is for Thy feet
All my company is the company of the devout
How do I deserve these? Mother of the seven worlds! (12)

Worlds fourteen of them, Creator, Preserver, Destroyer,
Senior to Shiva, sister of the ever-youthful Vishnu,
Goddess of Tapasya, Mother, I know none else,
Divine Mother, ever should I worship Thee. (13)

Worship they do, all the Devas and the hostile Asuras,
Meditate on Thee, the good-natured Brahma and Vishnu
Immortal Shiva holds thee in thrall in his bosom
Yet thou art easy of access to men on earth: Such is Thy Grace! (14)

Thy Grace for which men do penance in million lives
Do they attain only the riches of this world?
They attain the prosperity of the heavens and immortality too
Mother of the Universe, green-complexioned as the parrot! (15)

Parrot-green Beauty! Light and Wisdom of the initiates!
Source of Light and the Vast beyond
Enveloping the ether and the other elements, Thou hast come
Within the ken of my vision; Isn't this a wonder? (16)

Wondrous Form! the lotus blooms in response to thy amorous look,
Shiva whose angry frown vanquished Manmatha,
Triumphant everywhere with his resplendent glory;
To conquer Him thou art on his left-half stationed. (17)

Stationed thus, with thy bridal pomp and glory and union,
Thou hast smitten me, my pride, and taken to Thy feet;
When Yama, the ruthless God of Time approaches me
Come to my rescue and reveal Thy Form. (18)

Thy form revealed: my vision and finer senses know no bounds;
Clear, luminous wisdom fills my inmost self
What does this form and revelation signify?
O Goddess! above the nine cones of Light, thou residest (19)

Residest thou with thy Lord in the very temple of Light,
 The crown of the Vedas and the peaked eminence of the Upanishads,
 Nectarous moon, white Lotus, the purity of my Witness-soul,
 The Ocean of milk where all drown: Immortal Bride! (20)

Bride immortal! Thy breasts the heavy golden jars of ecstasy,
 Thy hands with the bangles of crimson conch-shells,
 Queen of all arts, proud possessor of Shiva of matted locks,
 Golden Pingala, blue Kali, flame-red Lalitha, white Vidya,
 lush green Uma, the golden Creeper! (21)

Creeper! dateless Form, perfume of the flowering Vedas,
 The she-elephant broad ranging over the Himalayas
 Mother of Brahma, grant me freedom and immortality
 Freedom from the dolorous end of life and into thyself absorb me (22)

Absorbed in thee, I shall seek no other deities,
 Other creeds, religions and disciplines
 Inhabitant of the three worlds and heavens
 Mad luminous wine of my heart, gem of my inward eye! (23)

Gem, thy complexion lends lustre to the gems
 Thou art the disease and disaster of men unfriendly
 Thou art the cure of the maladies of mind and body
 None else I bow down to, having bowed to Thee (24)

I seek Thee to cut asunder the chain of lives
 Enough of tapas and penance have I done before
 Transcendent Mother, Abirami, the panacea for all ills
 Ever in mind I cherish Thee. (25)

Cherished deity, mother of the fourteen worlds,
 The triple gods look up to Thee and rejoice
 Lady with dark and flower-laden tresses
 My poor song to thee is a thing to be laughed at. (26)

Laughed at it is Broken are the bonds of my birth
 Abolished is the swollen pride in my heart,
 By the waters of thy grace, Sundari!
 How to extol thy grace in matching words? (27)

As words and meanings perfectly matched thou dancest
 They who think of thee beget kingly treasures,
 Success of arduous tapasya, sweet-scented Creeper!
 Delight of Shiva's penance and realisation (28)

Ultimate realisation, thou art the bestower and deity
 Parashakti, Liberator of the seeking souls!
 The seed-source of aspiration and wisdom
 The primal force within the seed and all. (29)

All of me thou hast taken into thy kingdom by violence;
 Canst thou cancel the contract betwixt thee and me?
 Even if I drown in the midmost ocean, thou art my Saviour!
 The Formless and the Formed joined in one, Mother Uma! (30)

Uma! Thou hast bidden us to do duty to thy feet,
 No other cults and creeds do we seek,
 No human mother, free from the tangle of birth,
 No more maidens with smooth shoulders desire. (31)

(To be continued)

HAIKUS

BLUE skies at midnight
drifting feather-clouds
moonlit roads—Auroville

*

Music sound
music light—
There is no I

*

—What dost thou know?
—Nothing!
—But *I* know thee

*

They said: a child
is teaching us music—
its name is Light

*

Crystal dewdrops
on leaves—
the Master dancing

*

The bee
in the flower—
silence

JYOTI SOBEL

SUNFLOWER

THIS flower, too, would have served its term of joy and beauty and quietly perished. However, the course of events it was to witness brought about a deviation from its normal and eventless life.

Well, it was nothing exceptional. Like a myriad of its brethren it dotted the gentle slopes of yonder hillside, cheering the rocky inclines with gay bursts of colour and billowing softly in the breeze as if to caress the sleeping mountain with a sweet-scented breath. There was no purpose in this, for this was the only way to be.

But every year used to be punctuated by a period of unrelieved and scorching heat. So relentless was the onslaught of the blaze that it would burn the slopes to tan and fell vast fields of delicate flowers. All around this flower, too, succumbed its playmates one after the other until for quite some distance it stood alone. Not given to such frightening loneliness so far, it fell to brooding and contemplated the fate of its neighbours known only in happier times. They lay now lifeless, prostrate on the breast of the high. It waited for its own end, dejected, and believing its inevitability, abandoned hope. The sun consumed the fallen foliage till the mountainside was bare, and proceeded in all glory to beat down on its stony back. Only this flower remained to see the formidable battle and slowly lifted its eyes from the massacre around to the brilliant sun. It flinched, and instinctively cast down its look. And it perceived something that it might never have ordinarily noticed: its own shadow on the barren rock below. In that one moment it went beyond remorse, sorrow, shame and became an ally of the brilliant sun. It followed its course, east to west, east to west, for many days until it was blinded no more by lifting its eyes to the sun.

And then one day it cast a glance on the hill again. Accustomed to magnificent brilliance it beheld a drab gray. Nothing really had changed. And there right by it lay a swart smudge—its own shadow. It was grieved. “Ought the sun to beat down on the entire proclivity?” bethought the sole flower. “Ought it to scorch the landscape? Ought I to annihilate myself?”

Its grief passed and it pursued calmly again the sun. “If I were not to be here,” it said, “I would have joined my brethren.” And then it noticed the change permeating its being.

Sunbeams had crystallized its nectar which glowed in golden hue. Slowly the petals, too, caught on and radiated a suffused brilliance. Its sepals and stamens, then the stem—all caught fire. And finally its roots, too. They seared through the rock, and lo, the entire mountain was aflame!

AKASH DESHPANDE

TRUTH AND VIGILANCE

AWAKE, yet unawake, I had a vision I was standing before a door, desperate to get in I heard the Lord calling me to come in. The door was all but closed, but someone from inside opened it just then to receive some flowers.

Smiling, I was pleading to be let in, if only for a spell—but he roughly shouted “The time is over! Get out!” and slammed the door in my face with a loud bang.

Shaken by the impact, trying to regain my balance—this was no ordinary blow, I knew, I staggered down some stairs as in a daze, but the vision pursued me.

I saw the self-same person standing before a door—self-accused he stood trembling before a judge, whose name was Truth. He said, “The time is over, get out!”

A very strange experience, this! Why should I have such visions?

Someone crossed my path when I was on my way to have lunch. I stopped to ask him: “Do you know who said,—‘The moving finger writes and having writ, moves on; nor all your piety nor wit can lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all your tears wash out a word of it’ ”

“Omar Khayyam,” he said, “why do you ask?”

“O, nothing, let it pass,” I said. “Excuse me for having troubled you ”

I felt somewhat dizzy “I must stabilise,” I said to myself He must have noticed that I was in need of support and he offered his hand. “Can I help you? Sit down and rest. I shall bring your food and some water to drink.” “That’s very kind of you. .” I shut my eyes and prayed to the Mother to help me to go home and rest.

Once safely in my room, I fell down at the Mother’s Feet and looked into Her eyes for solace, and I heard her voice inside me.. “True, you had a cruel blow, but do you know how many blows I have suffered that my children had given me? But I gave them a chance to change, I still do ”

Shall we know how to be vigilant in the face of wrongs? How to remain very strong and steadfast in faith in the Divine’s ultimate victory—when “all shall change in God’s transfiguring hour” ..and be ready and open for its arrival?

GEORGETTE COTY

UMA HAIMAVATI

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

Scene 5

(Uma is seen standing at the very place where the Yaksha had been)

Indra

What is this magic! What is this miracle!
Where has the Spirit gone?
And who are you, goddess or woman,
beautiful, dazzling?

Lovely is the golden glow
that covers your body,
spreading soft-yellow rays
in the sky and the air.

Who are you, O Wonderful?
And that Spirit, who is He?
O Lady of radiance, we are charmed
by your immense lustre

Uma

I am Uma, the daughter of Himalaya,
my dwelling is the snowy mountain,
I am the energy of the Supreme,
I am she who utters the hymn of creation
I am Gauri of the golden hue,
companion of the Eternal,
A goddess am I, the creative power of Brahman,
Nature that plays many roles,
I am the ancient light,
destroyer of all darkness,
and in the war against the asuras
I am Durga of the loud laughter.

Indra

You are Uma, the daughter of Himalaya,
I bow to you
Now please tell me, where is that Spirit?
and who is He?

Uma

O great Indra, master of the mind, I shall reveal to you
 the nature of that which lies beyond the mind
 This Spirit is none other than the supreme Brahman
 pervading the mutable and the immutable
 He is indeed the creator, the master of destruction,
 the overlord of the universe
 O killer of Vritra, your deeds are only
 the reflections of His fancy,
 in your thunderbolt burns His blaze,
 and it is His, the victory against the demons,
 it is His light that gives power
 to the Fire, the Wind and the Sun
 In all things dwells that Spirit
 who is the master of manifold forms

Indra

Now I know, I know, I know
 An intense joy rises up in my heart
 The glow of the gnostic light
 touches the depths of my mind
 Now I know, I know, I know
 Come you, one and all, gods and men,
 come running, come;
 the delight of Brahman has descended
 on the heaven and the earth
 Now I know, I know, I know
 My sight was tainted
 by the phantom of godly pride,
 deluded by strength I did not see truth,
 my mind was bound by illusion
 Now I know, I know, I know
 Come you, one and all, gods and men,
 at this moment of total awakening,
 and sprinkle on all the people of the earth
 the honey of beatitude
 Come running, come

(Enter a group of gods and goddesses, running)

(They sing in chorus)

What is this delight that fills the sky!
 The sun and the stars shine
 Drunk with the honey of the Supreme

the world is lost in ecstasy
 What is this delight that fills the sky!
 The earth is sweet, the water is sweet,
 and the sweet breeze blows bearing the honey-dust,
 and a thrill passes through
 the tiny atoms and the vast immensity
 And on all sides flows the stream
 of sweetness, joyous and lusty
 What is this delight that fills the sky!
 Seasons, months and days are bright
 and honeyed with the joy of the Supreme
 And a song bursting forth in glee
 from Time's flute brightens the air
 What is this delight that fills the sky!
 On the sacred dawn of beatitude
 the whole creation is intoxicated with gladness,
 and the heart-ocean of men and gods
 rises up in waves of joy
 With the invincible sweep of that delight
 all evil comes to an end
 What is this delight that fills the sky!

(Another group of gods and goddesses enter They sing in chorus)

The light of a new birth breaks forth,
 the chains of ego that bound us have fallen down,
 our life is touched by the wonderful
 vibrant melody of the new birth
 The light of a new birth breaks forth

The storm-tormented night has gone,
 in the eastern sky rises the golden sun,
 the eager lotus of truth opens
 in the lake of creation
 The storm-tormented night has gone

The rivers of bright love have arisen,
 joy pervades the three worlds,
 birds are singing the tunes of immortality
 and our hearts are filled with their harmony
 The rivers of love have arisen

(In the meantime Brahman, the Spirit, has appeared by the side of Uma Agni and Vayu enter Indra, Agni and Vayu chant together)

Salutation to the eternal Brahman,
 moving in the front of all creatures.
 All the gods bow to you
 Salutation to you, salutation!

Salutation to you, Uma, Lady of greatness,
 Energy of the Brahman. Mother supreme,
 O great knowledge held in a single syllable!
 Salutation to you, salutation!

You are the only Lord,
 you are the sun-bird,
 the most ancient, the supreme Brahman
 Salutation to you, salutation!

You are the Mother, the daughter of Himalaya,
 unthinkable, beatitude incarnate,
 you are the force, the brightness.
 Salutation to you, salutation!

In the duality you are ever the one-without-a-second,
 you are the source of enjoyment, liberation and devotion,
 the eternal golden Seed.
 Salutation to you, salutation!

You are the father and the mother,
 unborn, everlasting, supreme,
 giver of knowledge and higher wisdom
 Salutation to you, salutation!

(All the gods and the goddesses together)

Sing, oh sing the song of victory!
 Rending the heart of darkness
 the maker of light has appeared.
 Sing the song of victory!

The night of unconsciousness
 has vanished from the sods and the shrubs.
 Fill the jars of your souls
 with the flow of the bright divine love
 Sing the song of victory!

Victory, victory to Brahman!
 The enemies of the gods are destroyed.
 Victory, oh victory!
 The heaven and the earth are now
 free from all fear.
 Sing the song of victory!

The whole creation wakes up
 at the sound of the sacred OM.
 Sing the song of victory!

Flowers and leaves are flawlessly beautiful,
 our hearts are drunk with the tunes of the Transcendent;
 poetry and songs are filled with the joyous emotions
 of eternal beauty.
 Sing the song of victory!

Victory, victory, victory to Brahman!
 The enemies of the gods are destroyed.
 Victory, oh victory!

Sing, oh sing the song of victory!
 May our lives be a sacrificial offering,
 deathless and permanent!
 Sing the song of victory!

Our hearts are filled with the strength of Brahman,
 the earthly soil holds the liquor of immortality.
 The three worlds are blessed by the downpour of the gnostic light
 Sing the song of victory!

Victory, victory, victory to Brahman!
 The enemies of the gods are destroyed.
 Victory, oh victory!

(Benedictory verses)

It is Truth that conquers and not falsehood; by Truth was stretched out the path of the journey of the gods, by which the sages winning their desire ascend there where Truth has its supreme abode

Vast is That, divine, its form unthinkable, it shines out subtler than the subtle. very far

and farther than farness, it is here close to us, for those who have vision it is even here in this world, it is here, hidden in the secret heart

(Mundaka Upanishad, 3 1 6-7, Sri Aurobindo's translation)

Om shantih, shantih, shantih

Curtain

(*Concluded*)

RANAJIT SARKAR

THE SUN OF DIVINE LAUGHTER

AND this Sun, this Sun of divine laughter is at the centre of all things, the truth of all things we must learn to see it, to feel it, to live it

And for that, let us avoid people who take life seriously, they are very boring people

As soon as the atmosphere becomes grave you can be sure that something is wrong, that there is a troubling influence, an old habit trying to reassert itself, which should not be accepted All this regret, all this remorse, the feeling of being unworthy, of being at fault—and then one step further and you have the sense of a sin Oh! to me it all seems to belong to another age, an age of darkness

THE MOTHER

(*On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, CWM, Vol 10, pp 158-159)

WORLD ORDERS ACCORDING TO TWO COWS

Some Definitions and Comments

Feudalism. You have two cows. Your lord takes some of the milk

Pure Socialism You have two cows. The government takes them and puts them in a barn with everyone else's cows. You have to take care of all the cows. The government gives you as much milk as you need.

Bureaucratic Socialism. You have two cows. The government takes them and puts them in a barn with everyone else's cows. They are cared for by ex-chicken farmers. You have to take care of the chickens the government took from the chicken farmers. The government gives you as much milk and as many eggs as the regulations say you should need.

Fascism You have two cows. The government takes both, hires you to take care of them, and sells you the milk.

Pure Communism You have two cows. Your neighbors help you take care of them, and you all share the milk.

Russian Communism You have two cows. You have to take care of them, but the government takes all the milk.

Dictatorship: You have two cows. The government takes both and shoots you.

Singaporean Democracy. You have two cows. The government fines you for keeping two unlicensed farm animals in an apartment.

Militarism You have two cows. The government takes both and drafts you.

Pure Democracy You have two cows. Your neighbours decide who gets the milk.

Representative Democracy You have two cows. Your neighbours pick someone to tell you who gets the milk.

American Democracy The government promises to give you two cows if you vote for it. After the election, the president is impeached for speculating in cow futures. The press dubs the affair "Cowgate".

British Democracy You have two cows. You feed them sheep brains and they go mad. The government doesn't do anything.

Bureaucracy. You have two cows. At first the government regulates what you can feed them and when you can milk them. Then it pays you not to milk them. After that it takes both, shoots one, milks the other and pours the milk down the drain. Then it requires you to fill out forms accounting for the missing cows.

Anarchy You have two cows. Either you sell the milk at a fair price or your neighbors try to kill you and take the cows.

Capitalism You have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull.

Hong Kong Capitalism You have two cows. You sell three of them to your publicly listed company, using letters of credit opened by your brother-in-law at the bank, then execute a debt/equity swap with associated general offer so that you get all four cows back, with a tax deduction for keeping five cows. The milk rights of six cows

are transferred via a Panamanian intermediary to a Cayman Islands company secretly owned by the majority shareholder, who sells the rights to all seven cows' milk back to the listed company. The annual report says that the company owns eight cows, with an option on one more. Meanwhile, you kill the two cows because the fung shui is bad

Environmentalism You have two cows. The government bans you from milking or killing them

Feminism You have two cows. They get married and adopt a veal calf.

Totalitarianism You have two cows. The government takes them and denies they ever existed. Milk is banned.

Political Correctness You are associated with (the concept of "ownership" is a symbol of the phallogocentric, warmongering, intolerant past) two differently-aged (but no less valuable to society) bovines of non-specified gender.

Counter Culture Wow, dude, there's like these two cows, man. You just got to have some of this milk.

Surrealism. You have two giraffes. The government requires you to take harmonica lessons.

(From *Internet*)

CHURCHILL ABOUT INDIA

WHEN the Indian Independence Bill was debated in the House of Commons, Winston Churchill made the following statement:

Liberty is man's birth-right. However, to pass the reins of the Government to the Congress at this juncture is to hand over the destiny of hungry millions into the hands of rascals, rogues and freebooters. Not a bottle of water or a loaf of bread will be free and the blood of hungry millions will be on the head of Mr. Clement Attlee. India will be lost to political squabbles. It will take a thousand years to know the periphery of the philosophy of politics. Today we hand over the Government to men of straw of whom no trace will be found in a few years.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MANOJ DAS

“CONTEMPORARY evaluation is generally incorrect. The bias of the critic is not always conscious, his ideas and impressions are not deliberately cultivated, but it is difficult for anyone short of a yogi-cum-critic to focus the light of his objective wisdom on the subject of his scrutiny, through these clouds,” said Manoj Das to a research scholar writing a thesis on his fiction. In fact, he tries his best to dissuade would-be critics from academically treating his works, even though no less than a full dozen scholars must have obtained their doctoral degrees with studies on his works.

Their number may even be more, for Manoj Das writes in two languages—Oriya which is his mother-tongue, and English. It is not easy to locate another writer in contemporary India who has accomplished so much—I mean creatively—in two languages

Manoj Das was born in a village on the sea, a hundred km away from the nearest town, in northern Orissa and had his entire primary education in the non-English medium village schools: “I was a good student to begin with, but revolt against mathematics ruined my interest in my studies. Later, by the time I was in the High School at Balasore, politics claimed the greater part of my interest,” he says.

His politics was Marxism. As a revolutionary student leader he spent a term in jail and also participated in the Afro-Asian Students’ Conference at Bandung in the fifties. His lyrics, tuned and sung by himself, resounded in numerous throats of the youth of the time in his home state and galvanised the spirit of thousands.

But all the while he kept up his zeal for writing. His first book, a tiny collection of poems, was published in 1949, followed by an equally tiny collection of short stories the very next year. He has at least twenty-five volumes of works of different genres in Oriya and an approximately equal number of works in English.

Along with his creative urge, he was goaded by a creative quest for the meaning of life. This led him to study different philosophies and religious and mystic doctrines and finally to Sri Aurobindo. After serving as a lecturer in English at Cuttack for four years, during which he edited the finest literary Oriya monthly of the time, *Diganta*, he joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1963. Since then Pondicherry has been his home, his work in the Ashram being teaching English literature at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He was also a regular columnist in a couple of India’s major newspapers and his readers still miss his comments, at once highly readable and revealing, on topics of the day.

While in Oriya he is a versatile writer, a remarkable poet, the best-loved short story writer, a profound essayist and author of *belles-lettres* and travelogues, his short stories alone have won him a unique place in Indo-English Literature. Graham Greene, towards the closing years of his life, found in him a writer he must preserve on his shelves along with R. K. Narayan. H. R. F. Keating (the famous creator of Inspector Ghote) wondered how he had missed this writer till the eighties, in India, introducing one of his stories, a comment in *Imprint*, then edited by Ruskin Bond, said, “There are

only a few good story-tellers left in the world today and one of them is Manoj Das ’’ M V Kamath, the former editor of the *Illustrated Weekly*, brought out the intriguing quality of the writer in a few words when he asked ‘‘What is Manoj Das? A social commentator? A psychiatrist? A sly peeper into people’s hearts? Or just a plain storyteller?’’ and himself answered, ‘‘He is all this and an incorrigible Indian, besides ’’

But this incorrigible Indian’s stories are well received in select circles in the West. They find in him an Indianness which is also timeless

P RAJA In an interview you had said that you were not a good student How did you master the English language so well—so much so that even the prestigious *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* in two volumes has given acknowledgement to you by using a quote from you to illustrate a word and its sense Of course, you can say that even Shakespeare or for that matter any number of great writers had nothing to do with academic education But they wrote in their mother-tongues.

MANOJ DAS. So far as the *Oxford Dictionary*’s gesture is concerned it is a tribute to the plasticity and receptivity of the English language—one of the secrets of its wide acceptance So far as my writing in English is concerned, one’s intimacy with a language does not depend on one’s interest in classroom lessons I believe that there is a spirit, a divine genius, behind every language, a belief quite close to that of Goddess Saraswati presiding over the spirits of literature—and, with humility and love, one can approach that spirit and gain a certain personal access to the glorious citadel of a language

P RAJA Way back in 1971 when Mr Alan Maclean of Macmillan, London, chose one of your stories for an anthology he edited, most of the contributors to which were, or are by now well-known writers in Britain, he is said to have observed that after a long search he had at last found a story which was genuinely Indian by both its theme and language, even though the language was English How did you achieve that kind of idiom which retained its very natural Indianness without sounding artificial in a foreign tongue?

MANOJ DAS Several factors must have contributed to it You struggle to achieve felicity in expression when you have some intense feeling for what you wish to say. I was born in a typical Indian village and grew up through an avalanche of rapid experiences, memorable ones—like a great cyclone, a terrible famine, our ancient household and the treasures of my ancestors being looted by bandits not once but twice before my blinking eyes, reducing us to penury These experiences must have aroused a long range of emotions in me Loving and innocent rural characters of the day, noble even in their distress, left an indelible impression on me My initiation into feeling the spirit of Mother India, mostly through the anguish, compassion, patience and spiritual leanings of my own mother, apart from the sorrows and joys of the multitudes around us, was unmistakable Then remained the issue of its expression Well, I never thought that expression—I mean literary expression—was something extraneous I somehow

took it for granted that it was one of my natural functions. Hence I wrote, without being conscious that I was doing anything special, from a very early age. But that was in Oriya. I resolved to write in English, when a student, under a certain provocation. Someone praised a work as representative of Indian life, but it was a grotesque misrepresentation of Indian characters as well as situations. It was then that I decided to present the India I knew to be true. Of course, some years passed between my resolution and its execution.

P RAJA: I understand that in Oriya you were well known as a poet before taking to short story writing. Why don't you write poetry in English?

MANOJ DAS: As I told you, it was an anxiety to project Indian life that motivated me to write in English. What I meant by Indian life could best be portrayed through prose. My purpose was rather limited. Poetry, I mean true poetry, is born of a vaster inspiration. Secondly, I believe that genuine poetry can be written only in one's mother-tongue, the language in which ideas and objects found their first formulation and definition in one's mind, the language in which the poet, as a child, first blabbered out his emotions, struggled to express himself, the language in which he first described his dreams and reveries. This is the general rule to which exceptions are there, but rare.

P RAJA: What about Sri Aurobindo, then? His mother-tongue was Bengali, whereas his entire poetic output is in English?

MANOJ DAS: Bengali was not Sri Aurobindo's mother-tongue. It was his mother's tongue. His anglicised father made Bengali—or anything Indian—taboo in his family. At the age of six he was put in an Irish Convent in Darjeeling. At nine he was in England and continued there till he was 21. He learnt Bengali along with Sanskrit only after his return to India. In any case, Sri Aurobindo is a dazzling exception in practically everything.

P RAJA: What then about the future of Indo-Anglian poetry?

MANOJ DAS: Who can predict the future? Doesn't the unexpected play the greatest role in moulding the future? What I think may prove utterly wrong in the future!

P RAJA: But judged in the light of what you say, it is alarming.

MANOJ DAS: What's alarming about it? The Indo-Anglian literature is only one aspect of the vast Indian literature. Besides, there is no limit to what the Indo-Anglian can achieve in prose. But, once again I must say that my observation about Indo-Anglian poetry is not something indisputable. It can be proved wrong.

P RAJA: Has any poet, according to you, proved it wrong so far?

MANOJ DAS: One has English was not the language of his parents. He is K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), a Parsi. But he too, if not at Sri Aurobindo's plane, is an exception at another plane, a genius of rare calibre, at once a wonderful poet, a critic and a historian with a profound insight which could have been acquired only through a mystic propensity and not through academic excellence. But, coming to Indo-Anglian poetry, there are fine English poems written by Indians, some of them better than many written by born English poets. But, I still assert, in the average world, a poet's mother-

tongue is the most suitable medium for his or her poetic creation. But at the same time I must say that in creative endeavours nothing is a hard and fast rule. Much depends on the nature of one's inspiration.

P RAJA: While preparing my Ph.D thesis on your fiction, I came across numerous passages which, I felt, could pass on as excellent poems if they were printed in uneven lines, the sentences broken. What about them?

MANOJ DAS: What about them? Do they disprove what I said? After all, both creative prose and poetry are literature. There cannot be an inviolable wall between them. They may be like day and night but always meeting at twilight. The more prolonged the twilight the better!

P RAJA: In some of your best creations, such as the novelette *Dusky Horizon* included in *Farewell to a Ghost* (Penguin Books) the narrative magic is so enchanting that even when readers shed tears because of its overwhelming tragic sequence, they cannot pause until they finish the piece. Some people have traced this charm to your poetic handling of the narration.

MANOJ DAS: The setting of the novelette is rural India which abounds with poetry.

P RAJA: Is that enough?

MANOJ DAS: No. The rest is the art, as mysterious as poetry.

P RAJA: Do you believe that art is mysterious?

MANOJ DAS: Yes, but not mystifying. Art is an indication of possibilities beyond the gross existence. A flower or a rainbow is Nature's art. A charming piece of literature or music or painting is human art.

P RAJA: Your statement, to some extent, explains a significant element in some of your stories, the meeting of the real and the surreal. Let's take for example, your short story *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night*. An old man suddenly discovers that his love offered to a girl some sixty years ago had not gone in vain, she had responded to it, but the bearer of her letter had torn it to shreds and let the air carry them into the river under the bridge. He quietly dies in his easy chair while listening to the bearer's confession, but one of his friends claims to see him from a distance, as if he was searching for something under the bridge at that very moment. You don't make it clear whether it was the friend's hallucination or really the old man's spirit, after its sudden departure from its body, was looking for it. Probably you personally believe in the second possibility. Am I right?

MANOJ DAS: Right.

P RAJA: Do you believe in the supernatural?

MANOJ DAS: I do. you see, supernatural is a relative experience. There are several planes of reality. I think I illustrated this point somewhere earlier through an imagery. Some mountaineers have set up a camp at the base of the mountain, some are in a tent midway and some are spending the night in a tent atop the mountain. At dawn the middle-campers are sending signals to the base-campers asking them to get up. The base-campers are vexed, for according to them it is still dark. Those atop the hill can

already see the Sun about to rise, but they dismiss neither the middle-campers' reading of the situation, nor the base-campers' From their relative points of ascent, all the three perceptions are true.

P RAJA: Is that the reason why you do not impose your beliefs on the reader and leave them to come to their own conclusion, not only in *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night* but also in a story like *Farewell to a Ghost* where, despite the whole village sympathising with their solitary ghost residing in the deserted villa, you never show the ghost to the reader?

MANOJ DAS: That's right. But apart from the matter of beliefs, such restraints are also demanded by the art.

(To be concluded)

P RAJA

(Courtesy Bhavan's Journal, March 1997)

WU WEI

A Review and a Comment in the Light of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

WU WEI is essentially a little book on the philosophy of Lao Tse

Henri Borel, after making a research for its meaning, has elaborated some of its central principles and woven them into a little story of his journey in search of the Truth

He comes to the temple of Shien Shan and finds it filled with dirt and filth around the disfigured statues of Kwan Yin, Sakya Muni, and Sam Pao Fu There is a subtle satire on the temples, rituals, priests and scholars, all lacking the true spirit

It is a very interesting book with pleasant images of Nature, written in a refreshingly lucid, lyrical style There is much profound philosophy conveyed throughout the conversations between the Master and the seeker in this setting of lovely landscapes, which significantly enhance the message

The sage has a very endearing and venerable personality, giving the impression of "a great light which does not dazzle, but soothes " He is "tall and straight like a palm tree His face is peaceful like a calm evening amidst the silence of trees and the tranquillity of moonlight His whole person breathes the majesty of Nature From his presence alone emanates the sacred atmosphere . "

Spontaneity is the very essence of Lao Tse's philosophy and it is beautifully conveyed through the story of the Yellow Emperor who lost his magic pearl and made a great effort to search for it, but all in vain It is only when he gave up all effort and resorted to Nothing that "Nothing rendered it to him " And what was this pearl? It was his soul which the mind, sight and speech cover up "It is only in the peace of a perfect quietude" that he regained the consciousness of his soul

Tao is 'Wu,' that is to say, Nothing And the sage explains it further "There exists an absolute Reality, without beginning and without end, which we can't understand and which, therefore, to us resembles Nothing."

This conception is quite close to what Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine* "We really mean by this Nothing something beyond the last term to which we can reduce our purest conception and our most abstract or subtle experience of actual being as we know or conceive it while in this universe This Nothing then is merely a something beyond positive conception " It surpasses "all that we can know and consciously are Actually it is a zero which is All or an indefinable Infinite "'

But soon we come to the parting of ways For Lao Tse, "what we are able to understand and which has relative reality for us is, in truth, an appearance only " As we proceed further, we will hear an echo of Shankaracharya's philosophy in Lao Tse's

The Mother has referred to this philosophy and commented on it during her classes on 15 and 29 August 1956, pointing out its strength and shortcomings

Shyamsunder Jhunjhunwalla has done well to translate it into English since no such translation exists and the original French book of Henri Borel is no longer

available. It is difficult to comment on the translation without access to the original. However, on the whole, it makes delightful reading, except for rare errors of oversight.

If you have "a simple and natural faith" like that of Henri Borel, the essence of Tao will penetrate your atmosphere. You will be inspired by the discourses on Art, Poetry, and Love, whose essence is Tao. Tao is the ultimate reality, the Supreme, the Origin of everything. All is Tao, because everything emanates from Tao, the One and the Unique. And yet, "things that are real to our eyes are not real in themselves."

Tao lives in all as an essential principle, as the soul, the only reality and the rest is appearance. Here, there is a fine distinction made between what is real and what is appearance. "Tao is there in what you see, but Tao is not what you see." So, everything must return back and merge into Tao, as a river merges irresistibly into the ocean.

In our view, this is no solution to the problem of existence. For, it does not account for our individual existence, nor the world existence, nor does it reconcile their truths. It does not give a proper understanding of our right relationship with the world and to the truth of our right relationship with the transcendent Reality.

If Tao alone exists as the Real and all emanates from Tao, the world also cannot be excluded from that Reality of Tao. Then the universe is equally real. As Sri Aurobindo explains, "If it does not reveal to us in its forms and powers the Reality that it is, if it seems only a persistent and yet changing movement in Space and Time, this must be not because it is unreal or because it is not at all That, but because it is a progressive self-expression, a manifestation, an evolving self-development of That in Time which our consciousness cannot yet see in its total or its essential significance."²

There is no explanation in Wu Wei as to why Tao, the Unique, becomes the Many and how Tao the Real becomes unreal in the world and its forms. One wonders why did Tao, the formless, emanate at all into these many forms if all must finally vanish into Tao? By what miracle does the illusion come to be? What is the relation between the Reality and the illusion or appearance? If my soul or the inner self is real, how can my thoughts, feelings, actions, which are its expressions, be unreal? What is the purpose of this illusory world and its non-durable forms? All these questions remain unanswered here, and all seems vain as in "the greatest happiness is the absence of happiness!" It would be profitable to read the chapter on Reality and Cosmic Illusion from *The Life Divine*.

We are not given here any process of spiritual discipline for ultimately returning to Tao. For, only Tao can lead us back to Tao by a spontaneous movement from within. This spontaneous movement of Tao, everywhere in nature and in us, is Wu Wei and is the secret of all peace and bliss.

According to the author, Wu Wei is wrongly translated by many as inaction. Wu Wei is certainly exempt from all effort, but it is not inaction. For, it is an action spontaneously carried out, without resistance, by the effortless, inherent force of Tao. When one surrenders to this power, which guides everything in the world, one sails through life in a perfect calm as that of the vast, blue sea. "The ocean moves not

because it wishes to move or because it knows that it is wise or good, it moves involuntarily, unconscious of movement. It is thus that you also will return to Tao, and when you have returned to Tao, you will not know it, because you yourself will have become Tao.”

The Mother, commenting on this, says that this will certainly give you perfect peace. It is a state of unmixed bliss. But one needs a preparation for it. She explains in her talks and forewarns that so long as one lives in ignorance, it is dangerous to be spontaneous. For, one would be tossed about by all sorts of desires and impulses and there would be no peace. So, all that is contrary to the Divine Will and all that is undivine must be first rejected.

As Sri Aurobindo advises us, there must be a total absence of desires, of self-will in the thought and action, an abolition of the ego, an integral silence of the being. Without the purification of the entire being and the exclusive opening to the Divine, one cannot arrive at the state of perfect discernment of the Pure and the Wise to follow the guidance of Lao Tse. This preparation is necessary. And the Mother gives us the example of Sri Aurobindo, who in the silence of his being could receive from above all that he had to write for the *Arya*. This is true spontaneity, she says.

What is the discipline needed to arrive at this state of consciousness when the entire being is silent and exclusively receptive to the Divine? This is not given here, except that one is supposed to arrive at a “relaxation of terrestrial activity, of desire, of greed for things unreal. That implies a powerful movement of the soul which has to be released from its wretched body like a bird from its cage. a kind of surrender to an inner directive power, which derives from Tao and takes us back to Tao.” And we find even the author a bit puzzled. For, he asks: “I carry a burden of dark desires and it is the same for men. How could our life ever float thus towards Tao, the radiant?”

The Master’s answer is simple: “..the imperishable light of the soul radiates in each of us. The eternal Tao dwells in us—in the murderer and the courtesan as well as in the philosopher.. . None will be banished from Tao... Their sins are illusory. .. You have made too much effort to become good and you have come to the point of seeing your wickedness with a false clarity. but all that is appearance. One must be free from all desires—even the desire to seek knowledge, and to be wise or to be good. For, Tao is the only reality, and Tao is neither good, nor bad. Tao is real and Tao alone is.” Perhaps, he means that the wisdom comes by itself, as spontaneously by the movement of Tao from within, or as a result of life’s natural experiences, and not by seeking.

It seems that Tao, who alone is real, emanates an infinite multiplicity of ignorant beings unaware of the true reality, and who must one day, somehow, become aware of it and individually cease to be.

However, as Sri Aurobindo points out, “The deepest instinct of humanity seeks always and seeks wisely wisdom as the last word of the universal manifestation, not an eternal mockery and illusion. .an ultimate victory and fulfilment, not the disappointed recoil of the soul from its great adventure.”³

One wonders if Tao alone is and Tao is all-powerful and all emanates from Tao as

“a natural part of the grandiose system which has come out of a unique principle.” why is the world not as it should be? Some would say, it seems so to those who live in ignorance For Lao Tse, when you become one with Tao—the Divine—you are in a state of harmony with everything Nothing will give you any trouble or joy For, “you would have become Wu Wei, not existing in the usual human sense ”

The Mother says that this is good for personal salvation Everything will seem marvellous, sublime, when you are united with the Divine If you change your consciousness, evidently you will see differently, and you will live in a beatific state in the midst of storms, provided you keep this state of consciousness But, she says, this is simplistic, because it keeps you from participating in the world This is not the solution, but an escape. For, the problem remains until all the elements of the world are transformed And for this, even an eternity would not suffice

She refers us to Sri Aurobindo who has explained all this in *The Life Divine* For us, the goal is to manifest the Divine on this very earth He says that there are certain signs of a progressive evolution by which Nature moves towards such a goal From this point of view, one can conceive of everything as an expression of the Divine Will and the Divine Grace, the Mother says But at the same time one knows that all is not as it should be Otherwise, one would not move at all One must make a conscious effort to collaborate with the Divine’s intention in Nature and progress towards the goal of the Divine Manifestation

For Lao Tse, the goal is Tao which is the absolute and the only Reality So, when one comes to understand that all—the world and its forms, life itself—is unreal and an illusion, one naturally turns to Tao as irresistibly as a river merges into the sea and one disappears into Tao. One becomes Wu Wei—Nothing Life is unreal, cold and empty

But the soul, as an emanation of Tao, is ever pure, free and one with Tao It does not need salvation The world, according to Lao Tse, is an illusion and so is man’s relation with it What purpose could an individual salvation have? Who profits by it? In the divine scheme of life, Sri Aurobindo says “The individual is still necessary to the action of the Transcendent in the universe If his inexorable removal through the very act of illumination is the law, then the world is condemned to remain eternally the scene of unredeemed darkness, death and suffering And such a world can only be a ruthless ordeal or a mechanical illusion.”⁴

As Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*

An aimless labour with but scanty sense,
All opposition seems and strife and chance
To eyes that see a part and miss the whole ⁵

For the author, the question is “What does one do with love and friendship? Life is so dear, so radiant, and death so dark!”

The sage’s answer is “You look at death in contrast to life, and both are unreal a change and an illusion At the origin, there was nothing, neither form, nor life ” As for

love and friendship, "they are the best contents of existence They are one with the first leaping of Tao in your being " So, to banish love from the heart would be going against the current of Tao "It would be insensible and distance you far away from Tao. Love is not an obstacle and yet love and friendship too, one day, will naturally disappear into Tao For, Tao is not love or anything one can conceive of Tao is the infinite of the soul, unique, eternal and pure!"

We may question the necessity to return to Tao in the words of *Savitri*:

Why drew he wide his scheme of mighty worlds
Or filled infinity with his passionate breath?⁶

Far Heaven can wait our coming in its calm
Easy the heavens were to build for God
Earth was his difficult matter, earth the glory
Gave of the problem and the race and strife....
Is not the spirit immortal and absolved
Always, delivered from the grasp of Time?
Why came it down into the mortal's Space?
A charge he gave to his high spirit in man
And wrote a hidden decree on Nature's tops
To make fine wisdom from coarse scattered strands
And love and beauty out of war and night,
The wager wonderful, the game divine ⁷

Evidently, one would feel that in the vision of Lao Tse, there is no joy of the search and the journey, no joy of the effort and the discovery, no joy of the battle and the victory In other words, there is no joy of the consciousness

The disciple feels that "love is greater than Tao. Tao without love is an illusion, full of obscurities " We have here a profound discourse on the subject of Love and a lovely reminiscence of the sage as he speaks of his first love, so intense and beautiful, that when it was taken away from him, he wanted to die since nothing had any longer any meaning without it

But he realised in time that, in truth, it reflected the beauty of his soul marching towards Tao And Tao is greater than the love of a woman "This beauty is the imperishable splendour which radiates throughout Nature as an essence of Tao And this essence could be awakened anywhere by anything in Nature—the blossoming of a flower, the graceful flight of a bird, the musical murmur of a waterfall, the innocent smile that lingers in a child's eyes—anything can awaken that love in you to lead you back to Tao "

Let us compare this with what Sri Aurobindo says on this subject "Affection, love, tenderness are in their nature psychic "s who expresses them through the vital They are indispensable notes in the harmony to which we aspire We hold them sacred

and wish to found them on a surer psychic-spiritual basis

Coming back to Wu Wei, that return to Tao where love and everything else disappears into Nothingness is not what the human heart desires. And the seeker cries out. "Love is not the desire to see the beloved absorbed in Tao! Love is the intense aspiration to melt two souls in one alone, the ardent desire to glide with her in felicity, united in one and the same breath, but always alone with the beloved, not with others, not with Nature! And if I were absorbed in Tao, all that happiness would be lost forever!"

This inevitably reminds us of the lines of *Savitri*

In a wide moment of two souls that meet
 She felt her being flow into him as in waves
 A river pours into a mighty sea
 As when a soul is merging into God
 To live in Him for ever and know His joy .
 He shut her into himself in a circle of bliss
 And shut the world into himself and her...
 Each now was a part of the other's unity.⁹

A fusing of the joys of the earth and heaven
 A rushing of two spirits to be one,
 A burning of two bodies in one flame ¹⁰

For the sage, however, the woman's beauty is a vague reflection of Tao's formless beauty and will, one day, wither away like the leaves. "It is futile to love so much the non-durable. It is mediocre and pitiable!" This could be true if it were a mere physical beauty, but if it is a reflection, however vague, of Tao's formless beauty, it must reflect the beauty of the soul and leave the imperishable impact of the Divine

We can only answer the sage with Savitri's answer

Even in all that life and man have marred,
 A whisper of divinity still is heard,
 A breath is felt from the eternal spheres ¹¹

I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream ¹²

For the sage, love is the rhythm of Tao, to lead one back to Tao. This rhythm, though awakened by the woman, is independent of her and leads one always to go beyond the object of love,—“their hands held in a sweet clasp they will go together through life, carried by the same impulse, towards the same goal. Tao”

(To be concluded)

References

- 1 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, p 28
- 2 *Ibid* , pp 464-65
- 3 *Ibid* p 31
- 4 *Ibid* pp 37-38
- 5 *Savitri* (Cent Ed) p 657
- 6 *Ibid* p 653
- 7 *Ibid*
- 8 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL Vol 23 p 807
- 9 *Savitri* (Cent Ed) p 410
- 10 *Ibid* p 468
- 11 *Ibid* , p 612
- 12 *Ibid* , p 614

STUDENTS' SECTION

FATE

THEY were five of them when Mr Dharmesh Dhawan, rehabilitation commissioner of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam, entered the dilapidated house. They had nothing in common except poverty. For ages they had been farmers passing to the next generation the batons of their convictions and superstitions. And now there was an upheaval, an upheaval both in their minds and in their village. They were to be rehabilitated away from their village where their ancestors had first settled down. The Gujarat government was building a dam on the river Narmada and yet the farmers from Madhya Pradesh were to be affected. This was outrageous!

They protested. They united themselves, 245 villages in total, and rallied against both governments. The government offered to rehabilitate them, and to give them money. Rs 1.8 lakhs per family. It coaxed them, it cajoled them; many agreed to leave but others remained. In the following months there was a mass exodus as villagers and tribals alike left their traditional lands to settle down in some foreign place.

After two years of delay over the project the government was piqued by their protests. They developed a thick skin for the remaining people. "To hell with these tribals," the Gujarat Irrigation Minister had retorted. "Why can't these people come to some sense? They need to learn the hard way."

The government had cordoned off the entire area surrounding the dam, before it started building it. It took them nearly a decade to complete it. And now it was all over. The reservoir would generate 1450 MW of power and bring water to 18 lakh hectares of parched land.

The monsoons had started in mid-July and gradually the reservoirs had accumulated water. The water level rose steadily, submerging in the process nearby forest and village areas. Villagers fled in panic, taking with them whatever little they possessed.

Jaram Dugga, a tribal, was the first of the five to arrive at the dilapidated house. His mother had died in the floods while he had managed to swim and reach the high land. Then came, in the middle of the night, two brothers, Bhagat and Pratap Singh. They were once rich zamindars, but now, after years of failure, were reduced to being mere farmers. It was their upper-caste pride which had compelled them not to budge from their land. They had no family. They had left everything and brought with them bitter resentment for their callous government. The following day two more people arrived. A middle-aged labourer, Kamleshwar Parihar, and a youth, Aadarsh Sharma. Nobody said a word to anyone. Each one was lost in his own thoughts. The more each one thought the more bitter he grew. They slept that night with empty stomachs. It was only the following day that Pratap ventured to speak. "Well," he said a little uncomfortably, "perhaps each one of us could go out and forage for some food. It has nearly stopped raining now. We may have to wait for a day or two till the relief workers help us out."

This was a good idea, each one thought. What was the use of running away from the floods with nothing in the stomach and an unsure future? Relief workers would help them in a day or two, and later the government would give them land as compensation.

Everyone except the tribal went out. He sat there with stone eyes, not comprehending anything. They came back in the evening. They had had their fill before bringing anything. Some huts had been abandoned in the village when people heard rumours of flooding. Not surprisingly everyone had brought uncooked rice from these huts. They were drenched to the bone when they returned.

That morning Dharmesh Dhawan decided to survey the flood situation in the nearby villages. His post was at a height at present well protected from the water. Soon he would have to shift to another post, when the reservoir would get filled completely.

The rain had increased during the day. And the water had found familiar gaps through the roof. They were cooking rice in a broken pot and had shifted the cooking to a corner when the drops started falling.

It was during this time that Dharmesh Dhawan entered the house. It was becoming impossible to drive in this rain. He decided to spend the night in this abandoned house and return the following day to his post. He was surprised to find it inhabited, with a fire in the corner. Perhaps he could ask the people for some shelter. As his eyes adjusted to the thick darkness of the room, he counted five people sitting along the walls. He had nearly missed the tribal who sat at the opposite corner of the fire.

He realised that they too were taking shelter in this house. He would have some company. He approached the person who looked the most decent. The light flickering from the nearby fire illuminated Pratap Singh's face. At once he saw the suspicion and hatred in his eyes. He remembered the face because of an unpleasant incident.

It had happened two years ago. He and his men were going around in a village, begging the villagers to cooperate. They had managed to evacuate the entire village except for these two farmers, apparently brothers, who had refused pointblank to shift. No amount of persuasion could deter them. When they tried to threaten, one of them had charged at him, cursing him in the foulest language. The other brother, at whom he was now looking, had stopped him and his men. He had asked them to get out before they got on his nerves.

Dharmesh Dhawan turned away, not wanting to confront his old adversary. As he turned, he found himself suddenly pinned to the ground. Pratap Singh was beside him, cursing and blowing hot air on his face.

"Got you," he grunted savagely.

"Bastard," he spat out, "you deserve to die."

His brother Bhagat, hearing the commotion, came hurrying. Having recognised Dharmesh Dhawan, he kicked him in the ribs.

"Please, please," Dharmesh pleaded, "just listen to..." He was lifted by the scruff of his shirt. Bhagat sent him reeling with a mighty blow.

"I...I was just trying to protect you," he stammered in desperation. "It was for your safety that we did everything. You would have got Rs 18 lakhs with a house and

a plot of land to farm on ”

“Oh! Yeah? You would have pocketed half the money and we would have had to content ourselves with a barren plot of land in the middle of nowhere ”

“I would have taken a small percentage, and in return offered you a very fertile piece of land ”

“Shut up.”

Bhagat’s fury always mounted when he talked with such cowards. He came lumbering towards Dharmesh Dhawan, who had nowhere to go. He had reached a corner. Rajgopal caught him by his neck and smashed his head against the wall. It thudded dully. Years of subdued bitterness gushed forth and he felt a crude pleasure in beating Dharmesh Dhawan, the rehabilitation commissioner. He banged his head again, harder this time. Dharmesh twisted his torso trying to save himself and felt his temple hitting against the wall. He stood dazed.

“I did everything to protect the interests of you all,” he tried again, whimpering.

Bhagat was in a frenzy. He lifted his knee, intending to kick him in the stomach, but stopped when he heard a strange noise. It grew louder with each passing second. He couldn’t figure out what it was when suddenly it dawned on him. “The floods,” he cried out aloud, “they have reached here!”

He left Dharmesh and hurried towards the window. Others joined him. They saw nothing, but heard everything. The swift waters of the floods ate up everything on their path. The level gradually increased. The jeep outside was swept away by the sheer force of the current. The level climbed the steps of the house. It had now reached the door. Water poured in. Jairam Dugga, yet in his corner, cried out.

The group’s attention was turned. They saw water coming in. Kamleshwar Parihar scrambled forward to shut the door. “Wait,” ordered Bhagat from behind. He caught hold of Dharmesh and dragged him to the door.

“Well, Protector, you have protected us enough. Your time to die has arrived. I don’t want to dirty my hands killing cowards like you.” He pushed him out. “Farewell,” he shouted as an afterthought before shutting the door.

Dharmesh Dhawan was carried away like a leaf in the wind. He was trying to come to the surface when his hand got hooked to a branch, just above the water. He kept the grip, fighting the current, and reached out with the other outstretched hand to hold it. With a mighty heave he inched himself closer to the branch and wrapped his legs around it. Slowly, but with a determined pace, he moved towards the trunk. Finally he reached the trunk. He was exhausted. His limbs ached and his head was dazed. But he resolved not to give up. He started climbing the tree. He climbed about three metres and took a rest. He offered a silent prayer before climbing again. In the distance he heard a rumble.

The walls of the dilapidated house could take it no more. They caved in and the roof came crashing down.