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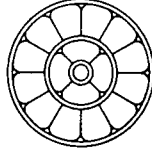
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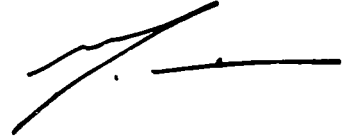


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 5

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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## A MARRIAGE HYMN

ALLURED to her lashes by his passionate words  
Her fathomless soul looked at him from her eyes,  
Passing her lips in liquid sounds it spoke  
This word alone she uttered and said all  
“O Satyavan, I have heard thee and I know,  
I know that thou and only thou art he ”  
Then down she came from her high carven car  
Descending with a soft and faltering haste;  
Her many-hued raiment glistening in the light  
Hovered a moment over the wind-stirred grass,  
Mixed with a glimmer of her body’s ray  
Like lovely plumage of a settling bird  
Her gleaming feet upon the green-gold sward  
Scattered a memory of wandering beams  
And lightly pressed the unspoken desire of earth  
Cherished in her too brief passing by the soil  
Then flitting like pale brilliant moths her hands  
Took from the sylvan verge’s sunlit arms  
A load of their jewel faces’ clustering swarms,  
Companions of the spring-time and the breeze  
A candid garland set with simple forms  
Her rapid fingers taught a flower song,  
The stanzaed movement of a marriage hymn  
Profound in perfume and immersed in hue  
They mixed their yearning’s coloured signs and made  
The bloom of their purity and passion one  
A sacrament of joy in treasuring palms  
She brought, flower-symbol of her offered life,  
Then with raised hands that trembled a little now  
At the very closeness that her soul desired,  
This bond of sweetness, their bright union’s sign,  
She laid on the bosom coveted by her love  
As if inclined before some gracious god  
Who has out of his mist of greatness shone  
To fill with beauty his adorer’s hours,  
She bowed and touched his feet with worshipping hands;  
She made her life his world for him to tread  
And made her body the room of his delight,  
Her beating heart a remembrancer of bliss  
He bent to her and took into his own

Their married yearning joined like folded hopes;  
 As if a whole rich world suddenly possessed,  
 Wedded to all he had been, became himself,  
 An inexhaustible joy made his alone,  
 He gathered all Savitri into his clasp  
 Around her his embrace became the sign  
 Of a locked closeness through slow intimate years,  
 A first sweet summary of delight to come,  
 One brevity intense of all long life  
 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,  
 Her consciousness was a wave of him alone  
 And all her separate self was lost in his.  
 As a starry heaven encircles happy earth,  
 He shut her into himself in a circle of bliss  
 And shut the world into himself and her.  
 A boundless isolation made them one,  
 He was aware of her enveloping him  
 And let her penetrate his very soul  
 As is a world by the world's spirit filled,  
 As the mortal wakes into Eternity,  
 As the finite opens to the Infinite.  
 Thus were they in each other lost awhile,  
 Then drawing back from their long ecstasy's trance  
 Came into a new self and a new world  
 Each now was a part of the other's unity,  
 The world was but their twin self-finding's scene  
 Or their own wedded being's vaster frame

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp. 409-10)

## THE SILENCE AND THE WORD

THE silent and the active Brahman are not different, opposite and irreconcilable entities, the one denying, the other affirming a cosmic illusion, they are one Brahman in two aspects, positive and negative, and each is necessary to the other. It is out of this Silence that the Word which creates the worlds for ever proceeds, for the Word expresses that which is self-hidden in the Silence. It is an eternal passivity which makes possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence of an eternal divine activity in innumerable cosmic systems. For the becomings of that activity derive their energies and their illimitable potency of variation and harmony from the impartial support of the immutable Being, its consent to this infinite fecundity of its own dynamic Nature.

Man, too, becomes perfect only when he has found within himself that absolute calm and passivity of the Brahman and supports by it with the same divine tolerance and the same divine bliss a free and inexhaustible activity. Those who have thus possessed the Calm within can perceive always veiling out from its silence the perennial supply of the energies that work in the universe. It is not, therefore, the truth of the Silence to say that it is in its nature a rejection of the cosmic activity. The apparent incompatibility of the two states is an error of the limited Mind which, accustomed to trenchant oppositions of affirmation and denial and passing suddenly from one pole to the other, is unable to conceive of a comprehensive consciousness vast and strong enough to include both in a simultaneous embrace. The Silence does not reject the world; it sustains it. Or rather it supports with an equal impartiality the activity and the withdrawal from the activity and approves also the reconciliation by which the soul remains free and still even while it lends itself to all action.

~

It [the divine soul] would be aware in itself at once of the infinite self-concentration and the infinite self-extension and diffusion. It would be aware simultaneously of the One in its unitarian consciousness holding the innumerable multiplicity in itself as if potential, unexpressed and therefore to our mental experience of that state non-existent and of the One in its extended consciousness holding the multiplicity thrown out and active as the play of its own conscious being, will and delight. It would equally be aware of the Many ever drawing down to themselves the One that is the eternal source and reality of their existence and of the Many ever mounting up attracted to the One that is the eternal culmination and blissful justification of all their play of difference. This vast view of things is the mould of the Truth-Consciousness, the foundation of the large Truth and Right hymned by the Vedic seers, this unity of all these terms of opposition is the real Adwaita, the supreme comprehending word of the knowledge of the Unknowable.

The divine soul will be aware of all variation of being, consciousness, will and delight as the outflowing, the extension, the diffusion of that self-concentrated Unity developing itself, not into difference and division, but into another, an extended form of

infinite oneness It will itself always be concentrated in oneness in the essence of its being, always manifested in variation in the extension of its being All that takes form in itself will be the manifested potentialities of the One, the Word or Name vibrating out of the nameless Silence, the Form realising the formless essence, the active Will or Power proceeding out of the tranquil Force, the ray of self-cognition gleaming out from the sun of timeless self-awareness, the wave of becoming rising up into shape of self-conscious existence out of the eternally self-conscious Being, the joy and love welling for ever out of the eternal still Delight.

\*

The Absolute is not limitable or definable by any one determination or by any sum of determinations; on the other side, it is not bound down to an indeterminable vacancy of pure existence On the contrary, it is the source of all determinations: its indeterminability is the natural, the necessary condition both of its infinity of being and its infinity of power of being; it can be infinitely all things because it is no thing in particular and exceeds any definable totality It is this essential indeterminability of the Absolute that translates itself into our consciousness through the fundamental negating positives of our spiritual experience, the immobile immutable Self, the Nirguna Brahman, the Eternal without qualities, the pure featureless One Existence, the Impersonal, the Silence void of activities, the Non-being, the Ineffable and the Unknowable On the other side it is the essence and source of all determinations, and this dynamic essentiality manifests to us through the fundamental affirming positives in which the Absolute equally meets us; for it is the Self that becomes all things, the Saguna Brahman, the Eternal with infinite qualities, the One who is the Many, the infinite Person who is the source and foundation of all persons and personalities, the Lord of creation, the Word, the Master of all works and action; it is that which being known all is known .

x

In our scrutiny of the seven principles of existence it was found that they are one in their essential and fundamental reality for if even the matter of the most material universe is nothing but a status of being of Spirit made an object of sense, envisaged by the Spirit's own consciousness as the stuff of its forms, much more must the life-force that constitutes itself into form of Matter, and the mind-consciousness that throws itself out as life, and the Supermind that develops Mind as one of its powers, be nothing but Spirit itself modified in apparent substance and in dynamism of action, not modified in real essence. All are powers of one Power of being and not other than that All-Existence, All-Consciousness, All-Will, All-Delight which is the true truth behind every appearance. And they are not only one in their reality, but also inseparable in the sevenfold variety of their action They are the seven colours of the light of the divine



consciousness, the seven rays of the Infinite, and by them the Spirit has filled in on the canvas of his self-existence conceptually extended, woven of the objective warp of Space and the subjective woof of Time, the myriad wonders of his self-creation great, simple, symmetrical in its primal laws and vast framings, infinitely curious and intricate in its variety of forms and actions and the complexities of relation and mutual effect of all upon each and each upon all. These are the seven Words of the ancient sages; by them have been created and in the light of their meaning are worked out and have to be interpreted the developed and developing harmonies of the world we know and the worlds behind of which we have only an indirect knowledge. The Light, the Sound is one, their action is sevenfold.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, pp 26-27, 153, 316-17, 482-83)

## HINDU-MAHOMEDAN UNITY

OF one thing we may be certain, that Hindu-Mahomedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress flatteries. It must be sought deeper down, in the heart and in the mind, for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. We shall do well in trying to solve the problem to remember that misunderstanding is the most fruitful cause of our differences, that love compels love and that strength conciliates the strong. We must strive to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy, we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musulman brother, remembering always that in him too Narayana dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom; but we must cease to approach him falsely or flatter out of a selfish weakness and cowardice. We believe this to be the only practical way of dealing with the difficulty. As a political question the Hindu-Mahomedan problem does not interest us at all, as a national problem it is of supreme importance. We shall make it a main part of our work to place Mahomed and Islam in a new light before our readers, to spread juster views of Mahomedan history and civilisation, to appreciate the Musulman's place in our national development and the means of harmonising his communal life with our own, not ignoring the difficulties that stand in our way for making the most of the possibilities of brotherhood and mutual understanding. Intellectual sympathy can only draw together, the sympathy of the heart can alone unite. But the one is a good preparation for the other.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Karmayogin, SABCL, Vol 2, p 24)*

## DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

*(Continued from the issue of April 1998)*

*My dear Mother,*

*I, who was so social and friendly to all, am becoming more reserved day by day and relate to others only for the work or for business. Often the suggestion has passed in me that even with those I am somewhat free with, I should relate just for the work*

THIS IS NOT NECESSARY NOR EVEN ADVISABLE You must feel free to speak to them and help them when they need it. Go on with them as you do—it is all right

*Grant me the strength, my dear Mother, to remain quite faithful to the Divine Will*

Yes, the strength is always with you to be always faithful to the Divine Will.

2 June 1935

*My dear Mother,*

*There is not a single worker in Aroumé who has not shown his or her bright side—love, devotion and service to the Divine. That is the light which shines in each of us; that I adore and through it I always feel in harmony with the inmates That is what I put in front in my dealings with them*

Good

*Difficulties each of us has, some more, some less, but it is foolish to have contempt for someone having troubles On the contrary, a sympathetic heart must go out to them in all goodwill and kindness, to help them out of their difficulties*

What you say is quite right and with this attitude there is no doubt that, sooner or later, the difficulties will vanish

All love and blessings to you my dear child

4 June 1935

*My dear Mother,*

*The work in our courtyard garden as you saw, I can do good work as a coolie also, and though completely soiled with earth all over, I can remain Your child*

I was very pleased to see you enjoying your work. I hope you will rest very well this night and your body will get stronger and stronger

*I feel that it would be good for us inmates to do some sort of manual work—but the wish must come from within our hearts*

Yes, it is when it comes spontaneously from the good will of the heart that it is helpful in all ways

*I am quietly happy, with a greater confidence that the Divine Will is always victorious. The increased confidence gives me more strength, quietness, peace, patience and a force that serves the Divine Will*

Yes, with the growing confidence comes the growing force and the growing capacity to receive it

All love and blessings to you, my dear child

6 June 1935

*My dear, dear Mother,*

*I am happy with an increasing daily experience My Mother is in my heart. She who supports me, guides me, loves me, She is the soul of this body and much more than that*

*My dear Mother, I love You with all my heart*

Yes, you are truly in my arms. arms of love that always keep you close, very close to me

6 June 1935

*My dear Mother,*

*At work two parties have formed—the quarrels go on daily and the smallest thing becomes a mountain Both parties are quite dissatisfied with me because I do not take sides, I hear nobody and I put forth my case of peace and quietness*

What you are doing is quite all right The most important thing is to keep an unshakeable quietude and peace One day or another it will act upon them

*Desires, desires, have they no end? Yes, they have, the moment we turn towards the Divine and quietly aspire for Him, giving ourselves completely and sincerely to Him*

Yes, you are right Keep a constant faith in the Divine's final Victory.

7 June 1935

*My dear Mother,*

*Where You are, I am And I have no place to go except into Your loving and affectionate consciousness*

Yes, my dear child, your home is here and I am always with you

7 June 1936

*(To be continued)*

### **THE SPIRITUAL, THE PSYCHIC, THE OCCULT**

THE spiritual realisation is of primary importance and indispensable I would consider it best to have the spiritual and psychic development first and have it with the same fullness before entering the occult regions Those who enter the latter first may find their spiritual realisation much delayed—others fall into the mazy traps of the occult and do not come out in this life Some no doubt can carry on both together, the occult and the spiritual, and make them help each other, but the process I suggest is the safer

SRI AUROBINDO

## QUOTATIONS FROM CHAMPAKLAL'S PAPERS

*(Continued from the issue of April 1998)*

### Difficulties

THE very first lesson in this yoga is to face life and its trials with a quiet mind, a firm courage and an entire reliance on the Divine Shakti

Sri Aurobindo

\*

In moments of trial faith in the divine protection and the call for that protection, at all times the faith that what the Divine wills is the best

Sri Aurobindo

\*

There are always unregenerate parts tugging people backwards and who is not divided? But it is best to put one's trust in the soul, the spark of the Divine within, and foster that till it rises into a sufficient flame

Sri Aurobindo

\*

Do not allow yourself to be troubled or discouraged by any difficulties, but quietly and simply open yourself to the Mother's force and allow it to change you.

Sri Aurobindo

\*

Whatever sufferings come on the path are not too high a price for the victory that has to be won and if they are taken in the right spirit, they become even a means towards the victory

Sri Aurobindo

\*

Aspire, concentrate in the right spirit and, whatever the difficulties, you are sure to attain the aim you have put before you

Sri Aurobindo

\*

For the Supreme Lord, sin does not exist—all defect can be effaced by sincere aspiration and by transformation.

The Mother

**Be Resolute and Persistent**

Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking, after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the light will come.

Sri Aurobindo

\*

You have only to remain quiet and firm in your following of the path and your will to go to the end. If you do that circumstances will in the end be obliged to shape themselves to your will, because it will be the Divine Will in you.

Sri Aurobindo

\*

You must know what you want and want it with your whole will—it is only so that there can be an end of this restlessness and failure.

Sri Aurobindo

\*

If you keep to what you have resolved then all will be right.

Sri Aurobindo

\*

If you want your endeavour to succeed, it must become always purer and more steady and persistent. If you practise sincerely, you will get the help needed by you.

Sri Aurobindo

\*

If you are resolute you are sure to succeed.

The Mother

\*

Keep steadfast in confidence therefore and all that has to be done will be done

Sri Aurobindo

\*

Have confidence in the final result and give time for the Power to do its work

Sri Aurobindo

*(To be continued)*

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## TIDE-TURN

At the turn of the tide  
The sea stands still for a long instant

Ripples shimmer over and around the rocks  
On the spot—  
Not moving in any direction,  
Resisting the wind  
No wave laps the shore,  
Nothing moves but the breeze

“Eau Morte,” they call it—  
“Dead Water”

But at this moment  
The sea is most alive—  
All its force  
Held for a few seconds  
In suspense

SHRADDHAVAN



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

(Continued from the issue of April 1998)

3

(a) contd

THE first dates back to 1954. It appears in an article by my then Associate Editor, Soh Albless. He read out the article to the Mother before its publication in *Mother India*. It contained a report which I reproduced afterwards in two places: (1) *verbatim* in a pamphlet I published with the Mother's approval on 29 February 1960, where all that had been written by Sri Aurobindo and her up to that year about the Supermind's advent was collected, and (2) in a paraphrase in an essay I wrote in *Mother India* in February 1970. The Mother's report runs. "Even in 1938 I used to see the Supermind descending into Sri Aurobindo. What he could not do at that time was to fix it down." Here we have the exact gist of her bracketed phrase in the talk of 22 December 1971. "(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)." Nowhere, except in Albless's article and my collection and my own essay, is this fact given expression. Nor could it have been expressed in any of the letters we can pick out as relevant in one way or another, for they all precede 1938. The Supermind's descent, no matter how intermittently, into Sri Aurobindo's physical substance took place only in that year in which the Mother had told me, when I left Pondicherry at February's end for a visit to Bombay, that something great and definite was expected to occur in the course of the year and that she would inform me of it as soon as it happened, so that I might hurry back.

No call came for me for months and then I wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking why I had not received the Mother's summons. He replied on 1 August 1938. "A general descent of the kind you speak of is not in view at the moment." Yes, a manifestation on a universal scale such as was attested by the Mother for 29 February 1956 was somehow delayed—for 18 years as it proved to be—but a breakthrough was achieved on the individual scale and this is what the Mother's statement first cited by Albless implied.

From my later essay the statement was pressed into service in a brochure on Auroville which the architect Roger Anger was preparing in 1970. It was then read out to the Mother again after nearly 16 years. She criticised it saying it seemed to assert that

<sup>1</sup> *Life-Literature-Yoga: Some Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Revised and Enlarged Second Edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1967), p. 43.

Sri Aurobindo did not have the Supermind in his body until 1938. Such an assertion she dubbed “utter nonsense”. And when I had an interview with her on my birthday on 25 November 1970 she scolded me for letting this suggestion spread. After I had apologised and she had characteristically responded, “Oh, it doesn’t matter,” she put before me the correct position of things: “Clearly, Sri Aurobindo did not have the supramental body, and neither do I have it. But that does not mean that the Supermind was not in his body. The two things are quite different. One can have the Supermind in the body without the body being supramentalised. It is not true that the Supermind descended into Sri Aurobindo’s body only in 1938 or that it was not fixed there but merely coming and going.”<sup>1</sup>

In view of what the Mother said in her talk of 22 December 1971, a little more than a year after my interview, the full situation appears to be as follows. Sri Aurobindo did have the Supermind in his body before 1938 but it had not penetrated his body-substance anywhere: it was a presence in the body inasmuch as it had settled within his embodied mental and vital and even subtle-physical being. His letters testify to individual “perfection” or “transformation” having been sufficiently achieved up to the subtle-physical level,<sup>2</sup> but they repeatedly admit that the Supermind had not entered Matter.<sup>3</sup> In one letter he says that it was on the point of doing so.<sup>4</sup> Thus we may infer that the entry into the body-substance happened only in 1938 and that even then it was fluctuant and not established once for all.

The Mother evidently accepted towards the end of 1971 her own statement in the sense I have just tried to elucidate. She even repeated from it the word “fixed”, and the words of Sri Aurobindo, which along with it she interprets to the effect that for the Supermind to be fixed and stable on earth it must enter and settle itself in the physical mind, hail from a note which Nolini sent to me from her on 29 June 1953 when I was writing my article on “the Mind of Light”. The note ran: “The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—in the mind and even in the vital: it was working in the physical also but indirectly through these intermediaries. The question now was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light, the physical mind receiving the supramental light. Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light.”<sup>5</sup>

While answering very closely to the phraseology of the second talk, this statement anticipates almost word-for-word the first talk’s turn of speech. The first talk refers at the start to “Sri Aurobindo saying that for the Supramental to manifest upon earth the physical mind must receive it and manifest it”—and at the close the talk refers to his

1 *Light and Laughter: Some Talks at Pondicherry*, by Amal Kiran and Nirodbaran (Second Revised Edition, All India Press, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1974), p. 84.

2 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 100.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 380.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 215.

5 *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo* by K. D. Sethna (*Mother India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1968), p. 100.

having “written that this is indispensable so that the Supramental may manifest itself permanently upon earth.”

No question, I hold, can any more be raised as to what exactly was the text upon which the Mother drew. However, her usage of the term “physical mind” requires discussion. But, before we discuss it, we may say a few words on a point which must have puzzled many students of the Aurobindonian sadhana

In the thirties the Master wrote semi-humorously of glimpsing the Supermind above his head and of trying to catch its tail and pull it down into himself. Evidently this tantalising situation, which was pictured to Nirodbaran in a letter of 1935 and a talk of 1938,<sup>1</sup> persisted until Sri Aurobindo's passing away, since even in 1947 he was still preoccupied with progressively supramentalising the Overmind at the brain-level and using on the world the Overmind force from there and not the sheer supramental.<sup>2</sup> But if, as the Mother declares and the Master also implies, the supramental realisation was complete in him except that the Supermind had not yet permeated his body-substance—if the Truth-Consciousness had already descended into his inner mind, inner vital being and even subtle-physical nature—why could it not emerge into the gross-physical from within instead of being glimpsed up to the end above his head with its tail dangling just beyond?

The query is hardly illegitimate, but it overlooks an occult fact. There is a necessity for each part of the being to receive a separate independent descent. Not by an efflux from the Supermind already descended into the parts other than the gross-physical but by a direct pull from the latter upon the Supramental Consciousness, the Divine Gnosis, existing above in its own plane, would that Highest Reality be natural, authentic and inalienable to this part. Just as every component of us—the mental, the vital, the physical—must make its spontaneous individual surrender to the Supreme under the influence of the inmost psyche, in order to make integral our self-surrendering, so too the supramental descent must be accomplished essentially by a straight and unmediated relationship of each component to the Gnostic Truth. Even when the inner nature has been inhabited by that Truth, the consciousness in the outer substance has to act towards that higher Reality almost as if nothing of this Truth were achieved elsewhere in the being. No doubt, the consciousness of the outer substance would be influenced by the many-sided victory in the inner dimension and find its task helped to a certain degree, yet this victory could still leave room for a defeat in the outer region. The outer region has to pay its own crucial price for the laurel and the crown of supramentalisation to rest on its head. Thus alone would the Supermind “involved” in matter meet its free “overhead” counterpart and hold supramentalisation as if it were its innate *dharma*, its intrinsic self-law.

Not to understand this paradox of transformative perfection may lead us to a

1 *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1954), pp. 92–104. See also *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, Calcutta, 1966), p. 52.

2 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* (1953), p. 245.

confused misreading of what Sri Aurobindo did or left undone until his mighty self-sacrifice on 5 December 1950

A further misreading can there be if we confine the Integral Yoga to the phenomenon of descent. In understanding Sri Aurobindo's spirituality we must not forget that, while the Supermind's descent into all the components of earthly existence is the ultimate aim, knowledge of the Supermind is not born only of this descent. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga strives also for ascent—the consciousness rising from its embodied state to “overhead” planes. All the planes above the mind were known to Sri Aurobindo before he undertook the responsibility of the monthly *Arya* in 1914, although detailed acquaintance with their specific powers obviously came later, as we saw in the preceding chapter. In 1947, at the very time that he declared what his preoccupation and capacity were, he unmistakably implied that he had the freedom of the topmost height itself of the “overhead” Spirit. This height was the far extreme of his multi-realised being. What he did at the moment was his own choice inspired by the Avatic mission he had accepted: transformation of embodied life in its totality, down to divinisation of the body, by the one sole agency that could consummate it: the Supramental Light and Force and Bliss. He begins the 1947 letter: “If I had been standing on the Supermind level and acting on the world by the instrumentation of Supermind, that world would have changed or would be changing much more rapidly and in a different fashion from what is happening now. My present effort is not to stand up on a high and distant Supermind level and change the world from there, but to bring something of it down here and to stand on that and act by that.”<sup>1</sup>

*(To be continued)*

AMAL KIRAN  
(K D SETHNA)

1 *Ibid*, pp 244-45

## “INSPIRATIONS FOR PROGRESS”

(Continued from the issue of April 1998)

MOTHER has given me Her special Force with loving intimacy to write the articles

I must remain conscious of this and must continuously open to it and receive it more and more and relying on it go on with the writing work

The three articles that I wrote after receiving Her special Blessings on 25-4-63 have been liked by Her and have also proved very helpful for Her Work. There is now a great need for this writing and I must persevere in this work

I must not allow inertia or wrong suggestions of difficulty to fix their grip on me. I must, with an apt and resolute will, shake them off and *persevere*, always relying on the Mother's ever-present Force with absolute happy confidence

I must fix a programme immediately and go forward

Whatever difficulties arise, I must face and conquer them by offering them to Her and calling Her Force—then they are bound to go

I must gather myself up, fix a programme and go forward with this work

3-7-64

\*

In all my dealings with others, especially students, I must learn to keep them at the highest level. All kinds of inconsequential or unconscious behaviour must be scrupulously controlled and swiftly corrected

The following points must be carefully observed

1. Remain [in] and behave from the highest level of consciousness, always remembering the Mother
2. Be always truly dignified, noble. Do not allow any small or petty movements of speech or action
3. Remain reserved, do not try to be hastily familiar, do not open out too much too soon
4. Do not ask for favours. When something has to be asked, ask for it clearly and with quiet firmness
5. Never cringe
6. Strict control of speech
7. Never show dissatisfaction, irritation or anger. Be patient, considerate, generous
8. Do not criticise—especially avoid all personal criticism
9. Always radiate more and more the Mother's Light, Joy, Sweetness
10. Do not shrink from any difficulty—relying on the Mother, face and conquer it

7-6-64

\*

The secret of success in sadhana is to stick—to endure, to persevere in the right endeavour with absolute confidence

Nothing can ultimately resist the Lord's Will. The final Victory of the Lord over all that opposes Him is absolutely certain

Meanwhile one has to endure tenaciously, obstinately, with limitless patience and courage

Also, one must learn to face the trials and ordeals on the way with a *cheerful* and *happy* confidence

Always we must remember that the Lord and the Mother are constantly with us—that they will lead us through every circumstance on the way

And never to forget:

“The Victory is certain if we persevere, and what price of difficulty or endeavour can be too great for such a conquest?”

21-4-65

\*

Difficulties there will always be until there is complete transformation. Their existence, persistence or recurrence should not discourage or dishearten or create diffidence, depression or despair or a sense of unfitness.

What is needed is to face them with a right attitude

The best way to deal with every difficulty, inner or outer, mental, vital or physical, is to become and remain very quiet and refer and offer it to Him and Her with happy confident reliance on Their unfailing Help

Do this very concretely

Whenever any difficulty or trouble arises be very quiet and go to Their living Presence in the photos and concentrate on Their eyes. Thus attuning the consciousness to Their consciousness refer the matter to Them in an attitude of complete loving surrender and call for Their Help and ask for Protection and Grace. After that remain quiet with deep and entire reliance and the difficulty will surely disappear.

Expose all troubles to the Sun-Gaze of His Eyes—and they will fly away.

Do not struggle with difficulties, do not identify with them

Remain separate and aloof and refer all difficulties to Them and with loving trust and complete reliance ask, ask, ask for Their Help

This is the surest and the best way. Constantly follow it and soon the whole life will be attuned to Their Truth-Will

And the New Birth will come and the Sunlit Path will open up.

Live in Truth's straight and simple way—utterly cast away all futile complexities and confusion

Make all things light and easy and happy in the wide Light of the Truth and cast away all trouble and anxiety

With entire love take complete refuge in Their Love and cast away all frustration and fear

14-10-65

\*

I must now very clearly remember that He is constantly with me with His Almighty Tender Love to carry me on the Path leading me to union with Him

Till the Victory comes there will be difficulties on the Path, but I must have no fear or doubt—for He also is there to sweep away all difficulties

Difficulties are only passing clouds I must not allow them to oppress me I must look behind them to His Sun-Face shining with a golden smile

The smiling golden Light of His Sun-Face is fast increasing and it is coming ever closer It will soon shatter all this darkness and release the pent-up tide of the New Life

At every instant without shame or fear or doubt simply remember Him, turn to Him and offer up every knot and tie, every resistance and obstacle, call for His magically solvent Love and Light and Delight—and He will never fail

He is intimate and close and coming ever closer Across all resistances draw ever closer to Him, with loving trust take complete refuge in Him, rely on Him with absolute confidence to do everything and cast away all doubt and fear and shame and grief

13-12-65

✧

It is very essential to take the right attitude towards the defects of nature

The following points constitute the right attitude and they must always be clearly and firmly kept in mind

- 1 The external nature is full of defects in all its parts Some of these defects are even very bad and obstinate. This must be frankly recognised without any sense of dejection or shame. There should be no self-righteousness nor any feeling of inferiority or guilt
2. It should also be admitted that by my capacity alone these defects cannot be removed But this also should not lead to any disheartening because—
- 3 There should always be firm conviction that even though I cannot remove my defects, the Mother’s Grace can definitely do so and that Her Grace is constantly acting on me to remove them
4. The right thing to do therefore is not to worry or feel dejected by the burden and pressure of defects but (a) to remain detached and separate them, and (b) to constantly offer them to Her for removal with the assured conviction that She will remove them
- 5 It should be understood that this takes time So there should be endurance and

patience—as long as needed But endurance and patience must be accompanied by a firm, assured and happy conviction that eventually all these contradictions from my nature will be completely removed and the New Birth and New Life will surely come

All this wrong attitude of worry, anxiety, sense of incapacity, guilt, doubt must be constantly and thoroughly rejected. In its place the right attitude of detachment, equanimity, surrender, openness, plasticity, endurance and faith must be established

This must now be done

18-2-66

\*

I must now firmly fix this in my consciousness that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are not blaming, condemning, punishing me for my faults and defects and weaknesses, but constantly guiding and helping me to overcome them

I have not to be a saint before them but with simple absolute love and trust open out my heart, all my nature and movements, all my experience before them, offer all to them and let them cleanse and purify me of all dark obstructing elements.

Without any guilt or fear, with completest trust and love, I must utterly expose everything before Their gaze, offer up everything to Them and ask Them to set me free

I must be very sure that they understand and sympathise, that they never blame, never accuse, never condemn, never punish—They always help and protect and guide

I must open out to Them with utmost intimacy, love, trust and leave all to them. I must let Their All-Powerful, All-Tender, All-Wise Love do everything for me

No anxiety, worry, fear, trouble, despair,—*constantly* They are with me, They will do everything for me

Taking complete refuge in Their All-Powerful, All-Kind Love, relying on Them absolutely, I must go on offering all experience to Them I must cast away utterly all trouble and fear and remain deeply, entirely confident The New Birth and New Life of union with Them will surely come

18-11-66

*(To be continued)*

KISHOR GANDHI

(Compiled by Arvind Akki)



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

## Extracts of Letters from Russian Correspondents

(Continued from the issue of April 1998)

I AM thirty-nine years old and was born in Alma-Ata India has pursued me all my life. At fifteen or sixteen years of age, I made a sari for myself and later discovered that I was wearing it in the correct Indian style. I was also dancing Indian dances Four years back I saw a wonderful Indian film In January, last year, I saw in a vision that in a previous life I was named Hastia or Aria, and I was in a temple

7 April 1995

Tatyiana Pantelova (Tobolsk, Russia)

\*

It is hard to get books by Sri Aurobindo in our town They are few and rarely found here. But those I was lucky to read have filled my life with happiness, calmness, excitement. The impression made by reading these works is beyond any comparison.

The first book that made great changes in my consciousness was Satprem's *Sri Aurobindo. The Adventure of Consciousness* I read it in Russian It was five years ago and since then I try to read all the works by Sri Aurobindo published in Russia They are not numerous, but it is great that they exist With every book I read my desire to learn Integral Yoga and the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother become more and more strong

Some words concerning me My parents lived in Latvia from 1966 But when it was time to bear me, my mother left for Penja where her relatives lived So I was born in Penja on 29 April 1967. Two months later my mother moved with me to Latvia I studied in a school there and specialised in English After that I spent five years in St Petersburg, studying at the Leningrad Institute of Textile and Light Industry The trade I was trained in was the production of chemical fibres The last four and half years I have lived in Kurgan working as a guard on the railroad.

Undated c May 1995

Marina Shuvalova (Kurgan, Russia)

\*

I am thirty-three years old and a philologist specialising in Russian language and literature I work in the Centre of Russian Language in St Petersburg I am very interested in Integral Yoga. In St Petersburg there are quite a few circles and courses of different societies spreading the spiritual teachings of the East But I have not found anything really serious or corresponding to the level of the books I have read These

“teachers” of yoga take money and make yoga a show and try to create an atmosphere of mystery with all sorts of aromatic scents, exotic dresses and music I simply cannot believe that this is serious yoga

I feel strongly drawn to study Integral Yoga, but I can't see where I can do it and what it would give to my life Perhaps I am attracted to exoticism and romanticise and fantasise India and the yoga. I know that a teacher of any spiritual disciple is always ready to consider what is necessary for his particular student In order to understand whether yoga is my path I have to have a realistic experience of it, and not only read about it Not seeing anything close at hand, I am following the usual trend of casually seeking through enquiry and letters

Undated c December 1995

Alena Zadorina (St Petersburg, Russia)

\*

Some years ago I read Satprem's *Sri Aurobindo ou l'Aventure de la Conscience* and I decided to practise yoga. I am not crying about success or mishap on the path, but I feel the need of someone to guide me The urge to practise yoga is like a pain or a fire in me I don't really know what to do I am lonely, here there is no literature on yoga or men who practise it Everyone speaks about God, but knows nothing, just chats I don't know where my search will take me

25 January 1996

\*

It happened in my childhood I was six or seven years old It was summer. I had a sun-bath and peered into the sky Suddenly something happened—it was as if land and sky changed places I felt that I was losing my weight, as if land had lost its gravitation and the sky was under me, and the sky pulled me up into the endless cosmos. Dismay was all over me I will never forget that Then I felt a big pain in my chest

Time has passed I am now twenty-one years old I have been practising yoga for a couple of years and that “thing” comes to me again. It is like what happened to me in childhood, but it comes through my head This yoga is “force from up to down” but not as usual “from down to up” Last time, especially in my dream, I felt that there is a “door” in my head, a force comes “from up” and a very strong current sucks from outside and takes me out too This experience usually happens with such great force that I have to stop it, because I feel that the force will not bring me back. It's a very great force, very great I can allow it to take me away, but something stops me, I think, because of the unknown

11 April 1996

Nikolai Naoumotchkın (Segeza, Russia)

\*

We are twins, nineteen years old We have been practising yoga for a year and a half We came to know about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother almost immediately after we felt the yearning to find the Divine Having practised Integral Yoga for one and half years, we have realised that our spiritual experiment cannot get fixed in our external consciousness under the present conditions of our life, life in the city, family, studying at the institute, all disturb our sadhana and restrict our aspiration to fully dedicate our activities to the Divine When we graduate from the institute we will go to the army where there is no possibility at all to practise sadhana We feel that we absolutely don't need either the institute or the senseless external life which kills us spiritually and does not let our mental essence to become apparent Everything around us is saturated with falsehood

31 March 1996

Leonid and Boris Gournyansky (Nizhni Novgorod, Russia)

×

I have been practising Sri Aurobindo's yoga since 1992 I haven't had any experiences as yet, but I work on myself as much as I can I am trying all the time to get into the inner consciousness and I am concentrating, but I have not probably experienced the psychic. And I am trying to work on my sleep, but again, until now, without results

12 July 1996

Anatoly Valutin (Halle, Germany)

×

Sri Aurobindo Centre in Rostov (a city with one million people in south Russia) was founded nine years ago by Alexandr Mazurenko as the Russian-Indian Friendship Club This Club unifies different spiritual ways and different people But Alexandr makes sure that the members are the Mother's disciples He serves the Mother this way In 1992 Sri Aurobindo Centre accepted under its roof Sri Chinmoy's Centre and Alexandr became Sri Chinmoy's disciple, seeing that Chinmoy's was a part of Sri Aurobindo's yoga In spring 1995 I came to the Centre I am twenty-five years old

In 1991, I got a beautiful experience Prior to that I was a "militant materialist", then I read in a small book about Sri Aurobindo and all my life turned over I found a belief. Later, I acquired *The Synthesis of Yoga* and other books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

I was not interested in Sri Chinmoy's path until I came to know that Sri Chinmoy spent twenty years in the Pondicherry Ashram So one year ago I came to Sri Chinmoy's Centre. Now I see that Sri Chinmoy's path is not Sri Aurobindo's

15 July 1996

Gleb Nesterov (Rostov-na-Donu, Russia)

(To be continued)

## ESHA-DI TELLS ME ABOUT NAGIN-BHAI

I WENT to Esha-di's place along with S and M and had a fairly long session with her, from 5 40 to 6 50 on 20 January 1998. It was an intimate meeting and there were no inhibitions or reservations in talking about Nagin-bhai's sadhana as far as it was made known to us, or as far as we understood it. He spoke very rarely about his personal experiences to anyone, in fact he always avoided talking about these. Only during the last few weeks he would speak something, now and then, but that also very briefly.

It was 25th April 1997, immediately following the Darshan. Early in the morning Nagin-bhai suddenly felt that his soul wanted to leave the body. He was wiping his hands after the bath when he had this strong but quite unmistakable feeling. At once he sent a message to Dr Datta to that effect. Dr Datta was not yet ready, but he rushed to his house and examined him. Medically the doctor found him to be perfectly all right, his heart, pulse, blood-pressure, everything. But Nagin-bhai again said the same thing, that his soul wanted to leave the body. The doctor visited him a couple of hours later to examine him again. But, from the medical point of view, he was quite normal and there was no sign of any concern in that respect. When Nagin-bhai repeatedly spoke about his soul wanting to leave the body, Dr Datta told him that he would examine him only as a doctor and the rest would be a question between his soul and the Mother; about that relationship, between the two of them, he would not say anything.

\*

Two weeks later, on 9th May, Nagin-bhai passed away in the evening. Dr Datta was present by his bedside. He touched his feet and his eyes were wet with tears. That morning Nagin-bhai was admitted to the Nursing Home. In the afternoon, at 4 or so, he himself telephoned Dr Datta as he wanted to talk to him personally.

At about 6 45 in the evening S and M went to see him at the Nursing Home. But as they were just to enter the room, the nurse drew the curtain and kept Nagin-bhai on oxygen. No one was allowed to see him.

Later Dr Datta examined him and when he came out after 20 minutes or so he said that Nagin-bhai had breathed his last. He then telephoned Vishwabandhu and informed him to take his body to the room where he was staying. It seems that Nagin-bhai was quite conscious till the last moment of his life.

\*

The following was on 25th April. At that time he told S to inform Esha-di about this,—that his soul wants to leave the body. When Esha-di met him, he told her repeatedly the same thing. He also requested her to pray to the Guru and find out from him if it was true. But she told Nagin-bhai that she would not ask such a question to the Guru. She also spoke to him that it could be some kind of fear about death in him.

\*

During these days Nagin-bhai once noticed that his room had become suddenly very bright. Later he saw that Sri Aurobindo was present there in his wonderful golden form. He saw him standing there, near his bed. He stood so for a long time. Then slowly the vision disappeared. He told about this vision to Esha-di and asked her to find what exactly it meant. He wanted to know if it had any significance in the context of his soul's choice.

She went home and opened *kathāmrta* and read the description given by the Paramhansa regarding *brahma-chetanā*, the Consciousness-Flame of the Eternal. She at once recognised that Nagin-bhai had attained *brahma-chetanā*. It was Sri Aurobindo himself who had come to take care of Nagin-bhai's soul.

\*

While on the one hand Nagin-bhai was repeatedly saying that his soul wanted to leave the body, on the other he also told Esha-di that he wanted five more years of life to complete his present sadhana. He asked her to pray to the Guru for that. She replied: "Nagin-bhai, why five years? If it is in my power, I will ask for you a life of a hundred years." Nagin-bhai wanted to live for five more years. It didn't happen.

×

Perhaps his external nature had an urge to live longer to do sadhana, though the soul had already taken the decision to leave the body. The fear of death was certainly a part of this external nature of his. Normally a Yogī does not keep on repeating that his soul wants to leave the body. If at all, he will speak to this effect just once or twice to somebody very intimate to him and who is advanced in Yogic sadhana. Nagin-bhai had told it many times and to a number of persons. No doubt he was a Yogī, but he was not that kind of Yogī who would not say a single word about his soul's decision. This conflict of the soul wanting to leave the body and he wishing to live for another five years is typical of the inner and the outer not yet grown one in the spirit.

\*

Once Esha-di gave Nagin-bhai a picture of Lord Jagannath. He went to Sri Aurobindo's room and sat there for meditation, but he could not sit too long, he left the room much before the meditation-bell rang\*. There was a flood of light coming from Lord Jagannath and his being was filled with it. He could not bear it any more and left the room. He told her so.

\*

Nagin-bhai did not want Esha-di to visit him in his room. She felt so and discreetly

× N.B. To signal the end of meditation in Sri Aurobindo's room a small jingling bell is rung.

made the visits brief as well as less frequent. She thought that he did not want any woman to visit him and be in his room. Even in the night he would not allow any attendant to sleep in the room, though it was necessary for somebody to take care of him. Only once or twice R gave night-duty to him. He said that his sadhana was going on in sleep also and hence he did not want any other influence to be present there.

\*

As far as the presence of a woman was concerned, he did not have any feeling of that sort. Definitely the Mother had worked it so in him and he was free of it. Once the Mother told Sri Aurobindo that her experiment with Nagin was successful but with X it was a failure. Esha-di tells that Nirod-da himself had heard this when, in those days after the accident, he used to attend on Sri Aurobindo in his room.

\*

Once Nagin-bhai saw in a vision two persons holding his hands and feet and swinging him on a bright fire. They were swinging him gently, as one rocks a cradle. He did not look at those two men and had no further recollection of them. The fire was cool and pleasant. Was the fire on which he was being swung Agni of Purification, *agni pāvaka*, or was that the Pyre? For us there is no way of knowing it.

\*

S and M got acquainted with Nagin-bhai when they used to come to the Ashram as visitors and work in the Washing Section of the Dining Room where Nagin-bhai also used to work before the accident to his leg. They became pretty intimate and Nagin-bhai had expressed his desire to visit them in Goa. But arrangements to take him to the place were not easy, as no one was available to accompany or escort him. In those days S and M were in service and they could not make any special trip to take Nagin-bhai along with them. Once Nagin-bhai had gone to Bangalore. At that time it was suggested that he should board a certain train and they would receive him at the other end. It didn't happen,—Nagin-bhai returned to the Ashram from Bangalore. But, on the next occasion, he followed the instructions carefully and visited them. He was very happy, but did not evince any great interest in going around and visiting the sightseeing places.

Before leaving for Goa one of his Ashram friends had told him not to come back without tasting *kāju-pheni*, a drink prepared from green cashewnuts. When he made this request to S and M, more or less immediately after getting down from the train, they were shocked! An Ashramite asking for *kāju-pheni*! But when they explained to him what *kāju-pheni* is, he did not ask for it. So simple was he in his attitude and in his look on life. Esha-di says he was like a child, very simple, without the usual cleverness of the human mind.

Nagin-bhai used to give flowers to S and M. In case for some reason or other they had failed to see him, he would make enquiries about them. He always enjoyed their preparations and had said so to them. But he never mentioned a word about his sadhana to them. As he was reluctant they also did not press him for that in any way.

\*

During the last two or three years of his life Nagin-bhai had told me a few things about his spiritual sadhana. We used to meet pretty regularly, though for a brief while only, in the Ashram when he would tell me about the experiences he was having then. I have made a record of these and it will be serialised in *Mother India* soon. The present article is a kind of an introduction to it being given to mark the first anniversary of his passing which falls on 9th May.

R Y DESHPANDE

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## THE WORLD AND YOU

INTRINSICALLY one and inseparable  
 Are the world and you, O Lord!  
 A drop or even a semblance  
 Of this unity, when realised,  
 Can cause the inrush of an overwhelming bliss.  
 Never minding our inattention  
 You are talking to us with your countless mouths,  
 Your embrace is the embrace of the Many,  
 How can we shun your Love seeking residence everywhere,  
 Or deny your coming birth in every form?  
 Because you love the world, your own self,  
 A full-bloomed lotus can hope to reflect you,  
 And so can the thickest mud  
 And the meanest vermin  
 Let our eyes open to your incessant clinging  
 To us mortals,—to ignore it  
 With ingratitude and recklessness  
 Would be a step towards the darkest abyss

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

## BESIDE HIM SAT THE QUEEN OF LIGHT AND LOVE

BESIDE Him sat the Queen of Light and Love:  
Sweetening for us the huge unbearable Power  
Which He is drawing for us from above,  
Her cool smiles concentrated to a flower  
Of benediction large and luminous  
Strange-scented, petalling the gloom in us  
With soft translucences through whose serene  
Broke into coloured hope all life's despair,  
Mother! Without your smile could we have seen  
That full Magnificence of the Unseen  
Seated beside you, knit  
In heavenliest Union distant and aloof  
Under a narrow roof  
Some finite builded for the Infinite?  
Without you, Mother, could we ever bear  
The grandeur of the Master who has tested  
Terrific Beings through the mist  
Of time's long challengings?  
Through Him without whom you could not exist  
And you through whom His Dream is manifested  
We climb black mountain-peaks of change and fate  
On glad invulnerable wings  
Drunk with immeasurable soarings great  
With blessings from the Queen of queens, the King of kings!

The air with Him was sable-silver gleaming  
As though in every hair  
Of Him the Dream of Him itself was dreaming!  
And in His calm and soft and lordly feet,  
The aimless wanderings of every being  
In every road and lane and street,  
Seemed lulled in perfect rest  
And ended in an ultimate far freeing  
And in His fingers were  
Touch-hungers of the universe agreeing  
In a last Harmony of Touchlessness!  
Deep in His master-breast  
World-multitudes were gathered, gripped and blessed  
By Him alone who knows the way to bless  
While there, beside Him, Mother, you



Were like a waterfall which poured and poured  
 Deep, conscious emanations of the Lord,  
 With your own sweet effulgence shining through!  
 Mother, your look was like a first caress  
 Of Loved and Lover in some last  
 Immortal consummation of the Vast.  
 Was it a dream within a dream we saw  
 Or Vision of Awakening without a flaw?

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Harin Kindly give me your remarks as I go on at this poem It will help immensely  
 —This came today (between 11 to 12 30—in two different periods of inspira-  
 tion) in continuation of 15th August.

Sri Aurobindo: The poem as it goes on rises in power and beauty and richness of  
 expression

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## MY SILENCE

My silence was an abyss,  
 It became a flame  
 Rising in vast release  
 A fire without name

My pause was a veil of drowse,  
 It became the tide;  
 Upbuoyed by stark repose—  
 The veilless bride.

My earth was vacant, immune,  
 It became the sea  
 Of an all-awakening swoon  
 Of infinity.

21-11-1960

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

## THE MESSAGE OF INDIA

(On the occasion of Her 50th year of Independence)

WHAT IS this query quivering  
In the minds of common men?  
Have they not heard of the Rishis of yore,  
The Vedic Hymns and the Mystic lore?  
Do they not see the primeval sea  
Dancing joyously around three sides of me  
Carrying on its head the crown of white peace?

Above, the mighty Himalayas overlook me,  
The abode of gods and the god-seekers,  
The upholder of the sacred flow!  
The Ganges glides down to the thirsty soil below,  
Ever vibrant with green dream and desire!  
I, India, the Mother, adored from time immemorial,  
The cradle of eternal love, light and life

Yet behold the irony of my fate,  
The torture I've undergone throughout the ages,  
Arson, looting, cruelty and killing!  
History has been written in letters of blood;  
Blood oozes out from the folds of my fields!  
Even today the butchers fight tooth and nail  
To possess and monopolise me part by part!  
It never occurs to their bestial mind  
That whenever they will renounce their evil design,  
I shall nourish them all with the nectar of My Soul

At the taste of a drop of it  
Their sinister motive and devouring plan  
Will vanish into thin air like bubbles .  
Then their life will ever yearn for things eternal  
Till the time when dipped in the ocean of Love  
They will discover the law of living perfect and pure!  
And in the long run the mission of India, the Mother,  
In the world of strife, treachery and untruth,  
Will be achieved for ever for the bewildered Race!

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## HYMN TO ABIRAMI

*(Continued from the issue of April 1998)*

In desire, the sea of troubles about to be trapped  
And enslaved by the God of Death, rescued by thee,  
How can I in poor words express my gratitude?  
Wearer of fine jewels and the Lord's favourite Beauty! (32)

Beauteous Lady! when the hour of death draws near  
I rush to thee as my only repose and refuge  
Thou, with bosom smeared with sandal,  
Save me with thy assuring words "Fear Not." (33)

Fear there is none once surrendered to thee,  
In the four faces of Brahma thou livest  
In the Kaustubha-adorned chest of Vishnu,  
In the honeyed Lotus and the wide rays of Sun and Moon (34)

Moon-flavoured are thy feet on our minds desireless and free,—  
What have we done to deserve such divine largesse?  
Do the denizens of heaven enjoy that benediction?  
O, Vaishnavi, on the serpent-bed over the sea of enormous wealth. (35)

Enormous wealth, enjoyer and giver of all wealth,  
A life of sensations rather than of thoughts,  
Luminous wisdom beyond the sense-shackled mind.  
Tricked by my illusory mind, I know not thy grace, Ambika! (36)

O, Ambika! with bow and flower-arrows in thy hand,  
Thy body with the garland of pearls tossed over,  
Thy waist with ornate gems and silken robes,  
Thou art ever-charming and lotus-red! (37)

Red as the coral reef is thy mouth,  
Thy sweet smile issues from pearl-white teeth,  
Thy heaving breasts rise above the slender waist,  
Those craving for Indra's wealth ever bow to thee: (38)

To thee is my vast surrender, my only strength,  
Thy glance saves me from the red assault of Death,  
Mine is the fault if I lay waste my powers,  
Mother with the crescent-shaped forehead! (39)

Forehead bright and arching over thine eyes  
 The sages adore in their meditations, fancy-free  
 Yet near and visible even to the blind heart,  
 Ever I have aspired to thee as of now. (40)

Now, O my heart, doer of divine deeds as in the past,  
 Thine eyes fresh as the burst of blooms!  
 Now I am among souls with unfailing aspiration,  
 A miracle is it that I pray to Thee, ever and anon (41)

Anon, thy beaming breasts grow supple and soft,  
 Thy big bosom disturbs with Circean charms, thy Lord,  
 Thy navel rivals the beauty of the hooded serpent,  
 Thy anklets kindle the sweet rhythms of the Vedas (42)

Anklets adorn thy feet, the ankusha and arrows thy hands,  
 Sweet-tongued maiden, Mother of the three worlds,  
 The dread destroyer of deadly demons, red-hued,  
 Tripurasundari, the fire and flame of the loins of Shiva! (43)

Shiva's consort, sole centre of the heart's musings,  
 His courted queen, pampered bride and angel,  
 Transcendent Mother, Supreme Goddess, adored Deity,  
 Ever am I thy bond-slave and serf (44)

Service and adoration only a few pursue,  
 I follow the promptings of my vagrant mind.  
 Bear with me my desires and demands and tricks,  
 Revolts and refusals and wilful wrongs (45)

Wrongs of the devout are lightly borne by the great,  
 Proud paramour and possessor of the heart of Shiva,  
 Even if thou cast me down, put away and despise,  
 I shall be steady and steadfast and gladly live (46)

To live a life of joy and peace I have found the Way,  
 A way not easily grasped by the ignorant mind of man  
 Inexplicable, it wanders over the seven seas and hills,  
 In between the Sun and the Moon, it sheds its Light (47)

Light Immortal! dear to Shiva the Lord of the hosts,  
 Thou clingest to Him like a tender creeper,

The sleepless Yogins ever aware of thee  
Never enter the womb of flesh and blood and tissue (48)

Tissue-borne body is the asylum of the Soul  
Confronted by the cruel God of Death, I am dazed;  
Thou the Origin of the seven sounds of music!  
Come with thy Apsaras and rid me of the fear, O Mother! (49)

Mother Brāhmī, bride of Brahmā, Nārāyaṇī!  
Sāmbhavi, Shankarī, Shyāmali, Bhumādevī,  
Wearer of the snake-garland, bearer of the trident,  
Mātangi! far-famed Abirāmi, my sole refuge! (50)

Refuge of all who surrender and are free from births,  
The destroyer of the three citadels of the Asuras,  
The destroyer of the strength and will of demon hordes,  
Shiva and Viṣṇu adore thee as Abirami in this world (51)

*(To be continued)*

C SUBBIAN

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## ON MY FEELINGS

FROM now on I have abandoned all my sorrow,  
In all my activities,  
Thou art vibrating,  
Thou art set forever,  
In the cave of my heart  
I welcome Thy bliss,  
Wrapping it with life  
Thy grace of nectar,  
Will sever all my bondage  
My life within Thee,  
An endless road of eternity,  
Making the heart dance,  
With a new song,  
The full-moon of a new hope,  
Rich with ecstasy. .

DAXA

## IN PRAISE OF DREAMS

In my dreams  
I paint like Vermeer van Delf

I've got no problem  
breathing under water

I speak fluent Greek  
and not just with the living.

I can't complain.  
I've been able to locate Atlantis

I drive a car  
that does what I want it to.

It's gratifying that I can always  
wake up before dying.

I am gifted  
and write mighty epics.

As soon as war breaks out,  
I roll over on my other side

I hear voices  
as clearly as any venerable saint.

I'm a child of my age  
but don't have to be.

My brilliance as a pianist  
would stun you.

A few years ago  
I saw two suns,

I fly the way we ought to,  
i e , on my own

And the night before last a penguin  
clear as day.

Falling from the roof  
I tumble gently to the grass

WISLAWA SYMBORSKA

(Courtesy *POET*)

## USHA STOTRA

A Free Rendering of Sri Aurobindo's Bengali Translation—  
Rig Veda, Mandala 7, Sukta 77

THE radiant body of Usha, the young beloved, is manifest.  
Universe-wide life in its appointed courses has directed Usha,  
Agni, Lord of Energism, has been born to be kindled in man,  
Usha, driving every manner of Nescience, is giving birth to Light, is fulfilled.

Vast outspread, with her forward gaze lifted to the Infinite, she has arisen  
Draped in Light, the goddess manifests the luminous body of the law of love  
Heaven-gold her hue, her vision the embodiment of completeness,  
Mother of the radiant herds of Knowledge, Commander of the Day of Knowledge,  
Her luminous body has become manifest

The eye of the gods, the Sun, to carry, She, All-Enjoyment,  
Those white life-steeds of perfect seeing to bring to us,  
Wholly revealed in Truth's rays, has shown Herself, Devi Usha.  
I see varied divine treasures, I see in the universe  
Self-manifest everywhere, that Effulgent One

All that is Delight, that within, all that is hostile, that afar, so may it be  
in your dawning!

Build for us the infinite pastures of Truth's illuminings,  
Build for us the fear-free fields of Delight,  
All that divides and repels, make distant, carry to us the manifold riches of Man's Soul,  
O Mother of Plenitudes, Delight and Opulence send forth into Life

Devi Usha, unfold within us with the play of your supreme Effulgence,  
Make rich and wide the life of this embodied Being,  
O All-Delight, bestow stable impulsion,  
Bestow on us that treasure where the luminous kine of the Truth are the wealth,  
Where range Life's infinityward chariots and horses

Rich in these riches, Vasishtha are we, steadily aspirant,  
O Sujata, Perfect-born, Daughter of Heaven,  
When in our thought-streams we foster you, you too hold us within,  
Vast the Knowledge won, those seas of Bliss.

DEBASHISH BANERJI

## AS I SEE IT

If necessity is the mother of invention, it is something beyond the necessities that is the genesis of awakened knowledge. It is the quest for the world around and the quest for the self.

This world of our empirical perception is most likely to be finite in time, having a beginning and an end. Science also holds a similar view. This world is a changing world and every change involves action. Science says that in every action there is a loss or dissipation of thermal energy, in the sense that it passes into the entropy state or unavailable energy-state. Since boundless energy is not conceivable, the energy was surely at its highest level at some point of time and it will be completely lost some time in the future. The point of time when the energy was at its highest level must have been the time when the world began and the point of time when the energy will be completely lost will be the end of the world. It may be mentioned that ancient Indian rishis were also of the opinion that the world is finite in time, as is clear from their notions of *sristi*, *sthiti* and *pralaya*.

But the question arises as to what was there before the beginning of the world. The answer that there was nothing is meaningless to us, for we are convinced that out of nothing nothing comes. We are equally convinced that into nothing nothing goes, *nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate satah* (Gita, 2.16), or *nāsad utpadyate nāsad vinaśyati* (Sankhya Sutra, 1.92). Thus existence is eternal.

If we want to know the essence, the true nature, of the existence out of which the world has come, we shall have to look at this world again. This is because, to understand the real nature of that which is the cause, one has to look at the effect of the cause. It may be mentioned that by cause we do not here mean causation in time. We mean a deeper explanation and we have no doubt that there must be a fundamental cause of everything. It must be well-understood that the cause need not only pre-exist the effect, it may co-exist and even post-exist it. The fundamental cause or the true cause of the world must be itself uncaused and therefore it must itself be beginningless. Also, it is unthinkable that a reality which is beginningless will come to an end in time. So the true cause of the world must be something eternal. Now, the question about the nature of this eternal existence.

The rule of law that we find everywhere abiding in Nature, technically called the uniformity of Nature, leads us to the notion of one consciousness, one mind, working behind the universe. But consciousness, if it is consciousness alone, cannot create world-matter out of itself. There are philosophers who think that the world-matter should be taken as a second ultimate reality. In this context we want to say that if the single consciousness working behind the world and the world-matter are extraneous to each other, then it will not be possible for the consciousness to act on that matter. Consciousness can act on matter if the consciousness and that matter are one single self. Look at our own mind. Our mind can act on our body, because our mind and body together form one single composite, but our mind cannot by itself act on any extraneous



matter It may still be argued that, even if it is admitted that the creator or the form-giver of the world is not just consciousness, but a conscious being having an extra-consciousness or material part. on which the consciousness can act, it is still not obligatory to assume that the extra-consciousness part of the supreme being is the world-material, for it may quite be the case that the world-matter is extraneous to it, and the supreme being through its own extra-consciousness part acts on the extraneous matter, just as our mind, through our body, can act on extraneous matter As to this line of thinking we would like to observe that if the extraneous matter were inconscient then mechanical effects only could be produced on it (*i e*, effects completely describable in terms of space and time), but consciousness cannot be grown on it, which precisely has been grown in the evolutionary time-scale On the other hand, if the extraneous matter is also assumed to have consciousness, then we have to make room for more than one independent consciousness, and the uniformity of Nature becomes unexplainable.

We have mentioned the rule of law and uniformity of Nature People may raise their brows about it by referring to the 'indeterminacy principle' of modern science In this connection, we need only observe that the indeterminacy talked of in the indeterminacy principle lies in the sphere of our reckoning the exact state of Nature, and as such, such indeterminacies are epistemic problems and therefore lie in the realm of phenomenology which involves study of things as they appear to us or our senses If the indeterminacy is irremovable, even then it will only mean that the scope of our knowledge about the universe has unavoidable limits, the last word cannot be said But it will never mean that the law itself that visibly governs the universe fails or is shaken here or there

We think that the ultimate reality is a conscious being without a second, having a consciousness part and an extra-consciousness part, and it has, under the dictates of its consciousness, produced world-matter or empirical matter out of its own stuff We feel we have the corroboration of our line of thinking in the Nasadiya Sukta of the R̥gveda

*tucchyena āvu apihitam yadāsīt  
tapasastanmahimā ajāyata ekam*

which means "the one that was there, covered by a paltry sheath, expanded itself by self-energizing itself" It requires to be noted that the paltry sheath, by which the supreme one was covered, could not be anything external to it, for otherwise the question of its expansion through self-energization could not arise

We like to call the supreme being God (theos) and describe our viewpoint as 'pantheism' which means that everything is God Our viewpoint is perhaps a bit different from that of Spinoza which goes under the name 'pantheism' Spinoza defined the ultimate reality God as substance and also as Nature begetting (*natura naturans*), and looked upon the universe as Nature begotten (*natura naturata*) We would like to look upon God not only as Nature begetting but also as transcendental to it We may stretch our imagination and say that God is transcendental to any and all of his

creations We have already said that we are of the opinion that the present creation is finite in time It is unthinkable that God in eternity of time entered into creation once only, for that would mean that after remaining actionless for an infinity of time, God entered into action This is not imaginable of the absolute being that God is We think God's action of creation is also going on recurrently without or with intervals of repose, like a continuous or an intermittent spring This persisting creative aspect of God is the immanent aspect of God. But there is a permanent substratum of changeless inactive aspect of God which is his transcendental aspect These two aspects have been together described in various places in ancient scriptures The following is one of them:

*agniryathaiko bhuvanam pravisto  
rūpam rūpam pratirūpa babhūva  
ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā  
rūpam rūpam pratirūpo bahiśca*

(*Katha Upanishad*, 2 2 9)

This means: "Just as the fire entering the world takes different shapes in different things, so also the one, the inner self of all things, takes different shapes in different things and is yet beyond them all" Hegel also, like us, conceived of the absolute one as immanent in the universe and transcendental to it His viewpoint is known as 'panentheism' which means that everything is in God Now, since God is God and everything that is in God is also (essentially) God himself, we think we can better describe our viewpoint as 'pantheism' as we have done

Our viewpoint, namely that the ultimate reality is one, is known as monism, *advaitavāda* Monism may be of different kinds depending upon the notion regarding the nature of the ultimate reality, but it is primarily of two kinds—idealism and materialism There are differences among the various idealist schools and differences among the various materialist schools But the basic idealist tenet is that the ultimate reality is consciousness and out of that matter is born On the other hand, the basic materialist tenet is that matter is the ultimate reality and consciousness is born out of that Our viewpoint is obviously different from both these schools. We do not believe that idea can, out of itself, produce matter or that matter can, out of itself, produce consciousness

Idealist Hegel must have had doubts about consciousness being able to produce matter To make it possible, he conceived of the dialectical property of consciousness, and said that it is by virtue of this dialectical power that consciousness produced matter His pupil Karl Marx was an admirer of Hegel and of dialectics But Marx later turned into a materialist and endowed matter with the dialectical property He said that the ultimate reality is matter and matter through its dialectical property produced consciousness out of itself We on our part fail to conceive of any power of consciousness producing matter, or of any power of matter producing consciousness The ultimate reality, according to us, is one and consists of a consciousness-part and a matter-part.

This matter-part is not empirical matter, but is the cause of empirical matter. For this reason we shall call it only the extra-consciousness part of the ultimate reality. The consciousness part and the extra-consciousness part of the ultimate are both eternal, no one part is produced by the other. But the two parts are inseparably connected with each other and together they form one reality or one self. Thus our monism itself is dialectical in nature. We do strictly hold to our viewpoint and think that the age-old conflict between idealism and materialism should come to an end, first in the ontological field and then in any other field.

We have said that the extra-consciousness part of the ultimate reality is not empirical matter. This is because empirical matter is extended in space and is thus plural and also limited. Both these features are inconceivable about the ultimate reality which is one without a second. Apart from this, we think that the case of extension in space of the ultimate reality does not arise, because space itself, according to our viewpoint, is a creation. We consider space to be a creation immediately prior to or concomitant with creation of physical objects expanding in space. Many relativistic and quantum cosmologists consider space as a physical object. We do not want to equate space with physical objects, but consider it to be a creation immediately prior to or concomitant with the creation of physical objects. It is worth mentioning that the Rishi of the Prashna Upanishad, while describing the creation of the sixteen features (*soḍaśa kalā*) by the supreme being (*Purusa*) out of itself, says the very same thing.

Our observation on space calls for a delineation of our stand as regards the two ways of viewing God—one, viewing God as endowed with a form (*sākāra*) and the other, viewing God as formless (*nirākāra*). Since we consider space itself to be a creation, we cannot consider God as having a form. But it may be self-defeating to say that since God is not with a form he is formless. This is because the line of thinking holding God as formless holds God as such in the sense that God is consciousness alone. We have described our viewpoint in detail. We view God not as consciousness alone, but as a conscious being having an extra-consciousness part. We do not know the true nature of this extra-consciousness part, excepting that it is through this part that the supreme being creates space and creates physical objects in space. The supreme being himself is thus independent of space. So it will be nearer to truth to consider God as formless. But this we do in our special sense. We may call the extra-consciousness part of God as the space-germ (and also as the matter-germ). But then God is also the matter-germ.

*(To be concluded)*

ASOK KUMAR RAY

## PARALLELISM BETWEEN MODERN PHYSICS AND VEDANTA

MODERN science and technology in view of their unique achievements undoubtedly command a prestigious and dominant position in academic circles and in global economics as well

Modern physics would undoubtedly be the crest-jewel amongst all the branches of today's science. On the other hand, Vedanta, the outpouring of our ancient sages and seers, embodies supra-intellectual wisdom gathered through inspiration from beyond the reach of the mind and the senses. To look for any harmony between these two could be interesting and revealing.

Despite the fact that modern physics is not concerned with any non-sensory perception, some of its conclusions are nevertheless strikingly analogous to those of Vedanta and other ancient schools of mysticism. A few are furnished below as illustrations

a) The history of evolution of scientific thought in Europe clearly teaches us the folly of clinging to concepts too closely. A typical example thereof would be the spectacular evolution of the aforesaid concepts of modern physics from those of the classical Newtonian physics. To this extent it is an echo of the ancient wisdom

b) One of the conclusions of modern physics is that the innumerable creations and destructions which are observed to occur all around and at all times, are only apparent, and that in reality they are transformations of *one* indestructible entity which sometimes manifests itself as gross material objects and at other times as diverse subtle forms of energy. This is in close harmony with the Vedantic truth that the Reality is One, the changing universe of diversity is but an appearance

c) Since spiritual experience is supra-mental, it is impossible to express the same in ordinary language, as language itself consists of symbols created by the ordinary mind and intellect

Ordinary language is similarly found to be inadequate for describing quantum mechanical conclusions. Elementary particles, for example, are no longer 'material' in the same sense as objects of daily life such as trees, stones, stars, etc. As Heisenberg says, “. . . But we cannot speak about atoms in ordinary language. Atom is an idea which, we are now told, we cannot even picture.”

d) Mysticism defies our ordinary concepts of space, time, matter and our conventional logic. So also does modern physics. A few examples thereof are (i) When an electron transits from one orbital to another in an atom, it is supposed not to traverse the intervening space, (ii) Feynman's diagram depicting an electron moving forward in time can be taken to depict a positron—an anti-particle capable of annihilating an electron—moving backward in time, (iii) The unconventional yes-and-no logic invoked for explaining the duality of particle-wave nature of a sub-atomic entity. As Koestler sums up, “ physics turns into metaphysics with a flavour of mysticism ”<sup>1</sup>

e) The failure of the principle of causality and determinism at the sub-atomic level has led many outstanding scientists, including Einstein, to speculate about some 'hidden variables' which, according to them, perhaps rule and determine these seemingly indeterministic processes. While in the micro-world of atoms and sub-atomic particles, the events are indeterministic, in the macro-world, in contrast, a deterministic pattern is observed. Note that each macro-event consists of a large number of micro-events at the atomic/sub-atomic level. Many physicists, therefore, have postulated that the above-said 'hidden variables' are non-physical but real in nature. Some of them, including a few Nobel Laureates, are of the opinion that mind/consciousness may be a non-physical entity. Scientific discussions also show that several outstanding Western scientists and scholars have of late come out openly in favour of spiritualising science. Moreover, a feeling is growing that Eastern mysticism in general, and Indian spiritual tradition in particular, could provide the necessary insight.

The discovery of the harmony between modern science and the ancient spiritual wisdom has been possible, not only because of the dogmas and taboos of the nineteenth century physics getting demolished, but also because of the scientific thinking and methodology having undergone a revolutionary change.

The 'Systems Approach' is one such new invention which is pregnant with far-reaching possibilities. Instead of concentrating on basic building blocks, the Systems Approach emphasizes basic principles of organisation on a whole system. The specific structures of the whole arise from the interaction between and interdependence of its parts. The nature of the whole may be different at times from a mere sum of its parts. Thus, one has to take the total system into consideration even while one tries to understand a part.

This approach is indeed closely akin to the comprehensive and integral approach of all schools of spiritual thought.

ARDHENDU SEKHAR GHOSH

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# SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF ETHICS

## Definition of Ethics

...but true ethics is Dharma, the right fulfilment and working of the higher nature, and right action should have right motive, should be its own justification and not go limping on the crutches of greed and fear. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation*)

THE above statement could be the best definition of ethics. However, in the Indian tradition the real definition consists in just one single word Dharma, the rest is merely description. Dharma entails four characteristics of human conduct: right action, right motive, right means and self-justification. This is the human part in ethical conduct; but there is a divine part too, i.e., the 'working of the higher nature' is essential to make our conduct an act of dharma.

In a well-known treatise on ethics by Peter Singer called *Practical Ethics*, the author entitles his last chapter (chapter 10) "Why act morally?" For Singer the concern of the question is "about ethics" and not "within ethics", i.e., acting morally concerns the fundamental question, why ethics at all and not what are the different problems that ethics deals with? It is obvious, of course, why we should act morally. It is because human beings are endowed with reason, a faculty that differentiates our acts as good and evil, becoming and unbecoming, edifying and non-edifying, etc. *Should* we act morally or *ought* we? Again, is our behaviour ethical or moral? Doctors, for instance, follow medical ethics, but the common man follows morals. There is a confusion regarding the distinction between ethics and morals; while the former is treated in a more secular way the latter is tinged with religious codes. This has been a serious problem in Western ethics that it cannot bridge over the general definition of ethics with the particular actions. Thus, to take an example from the great master of ethics, Socrates, to kill is certainly ethically or morally wrong, but would it not be a virtue if one were to kill another in the defence of one's own country? In the sacred Gita, for which Sri Aurobindo had the greatest regard, we find a clear answer to such a puzzling question. To do one's duty is the supreme dharma; to follow it is to do one's duty and not seek its fruit. The question one should ask is, therefore, to act morally or ethically is to ask "What is my duty?" It is immaterial if it is a war-duty or some mental task.

I hold that the confusion between ethics and morals that has come down over two millennia of Western philosophy is mainly due to a lack of holistic understanding of man, the concept that includes both the physical and the transcendental aspects. To add to the existing confusion, our contemporary understanding of secular and non-secular principles or values makes the subject even harder. The traditional Indian understanding of the subject is wholesome; the term dharma embodies all the principles and laws whether physical or spiritual that govern either matter or spirit. It is the dharma of the planets to orbit around the sun, it is the dharma of the rivers to flow downwards; it is the dharma of a soldier to fight and so on. All activity, in principle, is the activity of the

Brahman, the Divine that resides in every thing whether animate or inanimate, whether irrational or rational

To Sri Aurobindo therefore the human act is to be understood in ethics or morals according to the ordained dharma. Dharma is not a passive code. It is the dynamic force within that acts in all creation whether inert matter, vegetation, animals, or man. Those who become actively conscious of this force within them and act accordingly are the beneficiaries of Sachhidananda, the totality of being as existence, consciousness and bliss. The entire revelation of Brahman is an evolution of reality. Man is only a part of it and he becomes better as he evolves and performs his dharma. Thus, ethics is a subject that evolves as man's consciousness grows. Indeed, it is Brahman that sustains this reality, it is He who is there present, the immutable substance in all the mutations of the evolution.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) gave a succinct description of ethics in the following famous words. "The starry heavens above and the moral law within." This implies that the physical world as is around us, so is the moral law that resides in our conscience. He advocated a theory of ethics that closely resembles the teachings of the sacred Gita. Doing one's duty without seeking reward finds its resonance in the Kantian maxim 'duty for duty's sake'. He regarded ethics as 'practical reason'. The moral worth of an action depends not upon what it is going to achieve, but on whether the intention of the agent is to fulfil a certain maxim. Pure reason cannot be the motive of our action; but it is the will, always good, totally and absolutely good, which is the source of our action. The will of man is free, so free that it eschews all subjective interest and is attracted by universal good. This is the imperative that generates from practical reason. All our actions become meaningful because of our relation to God and the immortality of the same divinity that is in man's soul. Hence, all our actions are directed to treat humanity as an end and never as a means.<sup>2</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's ethics closely resembles Kantian ideas. His philosophy is based on the existence of God and the individual souls. The Vedantic principle, the Brahman, resides in each individual and evolves until it finds itself in the Brahman. Man is endowed with consciousness and as he evolves and develops he becomes increasingly aware of the divinity in him, the universality of the Being in him. The more conscious he becomes the more intense is his moral experience. Just as our intellectual faculty fundamentally depends on intuition, so does Sri Aurobindo advocate that the conscience is a creation of the evolving nature. Conscience is moral consciousness; it develops through our experience in life. Indeed, the conscience of man is not static, it evolves but there is something fundamental that subsists throughout the changes, the mutations of the evolution. In other words

. Nature in man and the world is in its beginnings infra-ethical as well as infra-rational, as it is at its summit supra-ethical as well as supra-rational, yet in that infra-ethical there is something which becomes in the human plane of being the ethical, and that supra-ethical is itself a consummation of the ethical and cannot be

reached by any who have not trod the long ethical road Below hides that secret of good in all things which the human being approaches and tries to deliver partially through ethical instinct and ethical idea; above is hidden the eternal Good which exceeds our partial and fragmentary ethical conceptions<sup>3</sup>

‘The secret of good,’ as Sri Aurobindo observes, is the Brahman that resides in us, in whose ‘image and likeness’, to use the Biblical phrase, we are made The human plane of ethical conduct leaves much to be desired because it is still at the ‘infra-ethical’ stage, it is perfected only when it arrives at the ‘supra-ethical’ stage Until then the evolution must go on and the goodness that is in us, the residing Supernatural in us, would lead us towards that goal Thus, the entire ethical activity described above is summed up in the word dharma it is both the goodness in us that is the Brahman Himself and the activity, *i e* , the individual ethical conduct

### **Origin of Ethics**

If dharma helps us to understand what ethics is, ‘evolution’ helps us to understand the origin and development of the subject It is in our nature to acclaim, approve, appreciate, applaud, command, favour, support, praise and value actions which appease, gratify, please, satisfy, humour and flatter us Likewise a list of accusation, blame, censure, condemnation, disapproval, displeasure, denunciation, etc , is the reserve of all those actions which break, damage, destroy, harm, hurt, injure and ruin us If we examine human history we could make a tabulated account of both good and evil under the above-noted terms We also will be able to note that our ethical consciousness gets refined more and more as the human action in history piles up This does not necessarily mean that the human race becomes better behaved, what it means is that humans understand better the good or the wrong that they do, there increases the knowledge of good and evil—

Disapproval of that which threatens and hurts us, approval of that which flatters and satisfies refine into the conception of good and evil to oneself, to the community, to others than ourselves, to other communities than ours, and finally into the general approval of good, the general disapproval of evil<sup>4</sup>

### **The Selection of an Ethical Code**

Monastic life-styles thrive in every religion, the very first thing that these religious groups have is a list or a document or a constitution of laws and regulations to govern them and thus help them attain spiritual fulfilment It has taken ages, however, to form an ethical code for man As we have stated, ethics is an evolutionary process and it takes a very long time to test various norms and tenets, for they must be subjected to a strict process of selection and rejection in a living society While monastic rules and regulations are created and imposed, the ethical code develops painstakingly in a



human community through an ingenious method of historical acceptance and rejection of customs and traditions which find social or religious sanction. There are certain laws which find unanimity, a universal acceptance, irrespective of the communities and societies. These we may call ethical laws. Those which do not find such a quality but have only a restricted acceptance may be called local customs or even cultural morals. Thus, every society, every community, evolves a code of behaviour, some aspects of which are universal and some particular. *i e*, peculiar to that community.

The method adopted by the mind of man through the ages has been always a principle of selection and rejection, and this has taken the forms of a religious sanction, a social or moral rule of life or an ethical ideal. But this is an empirical means which does not touch the root of the problem because it has no vision of the cause and origin of the malady it attempts to cure, it deals with the symptoms, but deals with them perfunctorily, not knowing what function they serve in the purpose of Nature and what it is in the mind and life that supports them and keeps them in being. Moreover, human good and evil are relative. What is forbidden by one religion or another, what is regarded as good or bad by social opinion, what is thought useful to society or noxious to it, what some temporary law of man allows or disallows, what is or is considered helpful or harmful to self or others, what accords with this or that ideal, what is prompted or discouraged by an instinct which we call conscience, an amalgam of all these viewpoints is the determining heterogeneous idea, constitutes the complex substance of morality, in all of them there is the constant mixture of truth and half-truth and error which pursues all the activities of our limiting mental Knowledge-Ignorance.<sup>5</sup>

The above problem that has been presented by Sri Aurobindo requires the distinction that we have made earlier, *i e*, universal and particular applicability of a law. Only such a law can be called ethical which is applicable universally. In the Kantian way of saying, that something which one wishes for himself could at the same time be made into an universal law. For instance, since I would not like to be hurt by others, so too would none in the world by any other. On the other hand, the way people marry may not be an universal law. The Hindus go around the fire, the Muslims have a mutual agreement and the Christians say "I do", there is no universal law to control the mode of marrying.

*(To be continued)*

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

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## TRUTH AND ITS REVELATION

Measure not in words the Immeasurable  
Rise not with thoughts to the Inscrutable.

—Taoism

TRUTH reveals itself. It can neither be proved beyond doubt nor can it be reasoned out in full. He who knows it does not argue. He who argues is far from it. For reasons and arguments we so vehemently advance are abysmally poor before the truth-infinity.

When we argue we reveal our bias. Reality is without any bias. Any arguments, any reasonings symbolize our personal inclination, personal propensity, personal disposition. Truth of things unfolds itself when it is truly lived by and acted upon. Mere arguing and reasoning is an arid intellectual function without worthy contents.

Unless we feel intensely with our whole being we are far from truth-reality. Our complete surrender with almost religious devotion to the Reality-Immensity is perhaps the only way left to us to be in unison with the Reality around.

Only analysing won't do. Mere observation of the process of reality taking shape is equally a failure. Our partaking of the very process of reality emerging may be the answer. When away we are alien, when involved we become the process itself and achieve the direct vision.

Total view goes beyond. It penetrates into the thing itself to get at direct vision. We can never reach the truth unless we become simple and humble at our very root. Purity of our whole being brings in purity of vision. Purity of vision unfolds the truth in its manifold dimensions.

Speech cannot be applied to eternity. With soul-vision awakened within we get intuition. Intuition reveals all light before us. At this juncture, we lose our identity and get merged with the universe around. Or the universe itself gets dissolved within us. Thus is the marriage between the Finite and the Infinite.

Truth is both Finite and Infinite simultaneously. Finite at the personal level, Infinite at the impersonal level. The Finite always longs for the Infinite, so too the Infinite is all set for merging with the Finite to complete the cycle. Individual and Infinite are complementary to each other. Man himself is a universe in miniature. We contain enfolded within ourselves the whole universe.

Eternity has its own language—the language of unspeakable SILENCE, the language of INTUITION that comes direct from the soul. Unless we develop soul-language that sees the wholeness, speaks the wholeness, feels the wholeness, breathes the wholeness, we are fated to remain far from Truth-Reality. Our deliverance is our search for the soul within and without.

PRASANTA SARKAR

# THE INDIAN VISION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## THE FOUR STAGES AND AIMS OF LIFE

THE second quartet of the Master-ideals of Indian culture is the Purusharthas which means the aims of the Purusha, human being. In the Indian vision of life the highest Purushartha is spiritual liberation, Moksha. But the ancient Indian thinkers are wise enough to perceive that the individual and the collectivity can arrive at this ideal only through a gradual evolutionary progression. They also recognised that the legitimate needs, desires and interests of the human ego in the different dimensions of the human personality and the different stages of its evolution have to be fulfilled before man can rise to the highest consciousness of unity and oneness of the spirit, or the state of Moksha. In other words, the dharma of each stage of human evolution, and each part of the human being, has to be taken into consideration, has to be properly fulfilled by giving it creative and constructive self-expression. With this balanced and integral vision of life the Indian thinkers evolved the ideal of four-fold Purusharthas: Artha, Kama, Dharma and Moksha. They correspond roughly to the physical, vital, mental and spiritual needs of the human being. We have already discussed this Indian ideal in one of our earlier articles. We have to examine the implications of it for the individual and collective evolution of humanity.

The first business of a Government is to create a sound, strong and vigorous economic, social and political system which can efficiently fulfil the Artha and Kama needs of the community. But this is to be done in the right regulated way within the limits of its Dharma and not in an unrestrained way which would make man a mean and petty slave of his desires. In the Indian view not only every individual but every human activity, even something grossly physical as sex, has its own Dharma, its right and natural way of fulfilment according to the truth and law of Nature in that activity. When the activity is performed in a disciplined way according to the canons of its unique Dharma then it leads at once to Bhoga as well as Yoga or, in other words, right enjoyment, success and evolutionary progress for the individual. So to discover the Dharma of each activity, and to evolve a system of values, and the art and science for regulating each human activity according to its Dharma is one of the major aims of culture. So Indian culture insists that even while building a sound socio-economic and political system to fulfil the Artha-Kama needs of the community, the ideals and values of Dharma and the cultural life of the community must not be neglected but have to be actively encouraged and promoted so that they cast a refining and restraining influence on the socio-economic life of the community.

In the Indian scheme of Purusharthas the word Dharma is used in the sense of "duty" or, to be more specific, fulfilment of the social responsibility of the individual through an occupation which is in consonance with his/her *swadharna*, true nature. But the word can be interpreted in a broader sense to include the mental, moral and cultural development of the individual and collectivity. For Dharma is all that lifts man beyond

the essentially animal impulses of his physical and vital being towards his true manhood. Since Man in the present status of his evolution is essentially a mental being, his first major accomplishment must be to fulfil his mental Dharma which means to develop fully all the powers, faculties and potentialities of his Mind—intellectual, moral and aesthetic—and impose a harmonised control of the higher mental will over his lower physical and vital impulses. This is the true meaning and ideal of culture—to realise our highest Manhood. As Sri Aurobindo puts it in a masterly fashion

“Not to live principally in the sense-mind, but in the activities of knowledge and reason and a wide intellectual curiosity, the activities of the cultivated aesthetic being, the activities of the enlightened will which make for character and high ethical ideals and a large human action, not to be governed by our lower or our average mentality but by truth and beauty and the self-ruling will is the ideal of a true culture and the beginning of an accomplished humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the ideal of Dharma in the Indian scheme of the fourfold Purusharthas, fulfilment of social responsibility and the realisation of a cultured humanity is the dual aspect of this Purushartha. So once the Artha-Kama needs of the community are reasonably assured through a sound socio-economic and political organisation, the governing organ of the community must turn its attention, creative energies and resources more and more to the cultural development of the community.

But the unique and special feature of the Indian scheme of development is the spiritual aim of Moksha. The master-builders of the Indian culture perceived that mind cannot bring any settled harmony and fulfilment to human life, nor does the human mind possess the secret of ultimate self-mastery. So the architects of Indian culture fixed the spiritual aim of Moksha as the ultimate goal and destiny of human life. In all the different stages of human evolution, this spiritual aim of life, its meaning and substance, have to be constantly kept alive in the communal mind, so that when the time comes and the consciousness of the collectivity is ready and prepared, the spiritual values find a ready acceptance and self-expression in Society.

Thus we can see that Indian culture denies none of the natural and legitimate needs, desires and interests of human beings, it denies only the unrestrained and licentious indulgence of these desires and counsels a regulated and disciplined satisfaction of them under the uplifting guidance of some higher moral, aesthetic and spiritual values. The architects of Indian culture recognised that while on one hand a severe ascetic suppression of these natural needs and desires may lead to loss of vitality and vigour in society, on the other hand a free and unrestrained indulgence of these needs and desires may lead to a collapse of civilisation into barbarism and, in the long run, to an exhaustion of vital energy. So they avoided both these extremes and evolved a balanced approach which tries to harness the creative energies of man and make them flow in constructive channels which will lead to both inner and outer progress.

Modern society is very much in need of such a balanced approach to development. Now there is almost a near-unanimous agreement among progressive thinkers that the traditional, purely materialistic “greed is god” philosophy is no longer a viable model

of development and if obstinately pursued may jeopardise the very material survival of the human race. But among this new crop of thinkers, there is a small influential group which tends towards a reactionary other extreme, preaching some form of escape or retreat into "Nature" or a pure ascetic spirituality, denying the values of prosperity, progress, technology, etc. But such extreme measures cannot solve the problem because they are not in harmony with the evolutionary laws of Nature. Progress is one of the eternal values of the human soul and one of the fundamental laws of Nature. It is true that Indian culture gave a much higher importance to inner progress than to outer progress. This, we believe, is the right emphasis needed for a "sustainable development". For no progress can be secure, sound and sustainable on a long-term basis if it is not a spontaneous outer expression of the inner progress. But the ancient Vedic culture of India never denied the necessity of this inner progress manifesting outwardly in society in the form of economic, social and political progress. For, the Vedic Ideal of the society is to make it a conscious collective self-expression of the fourfold powers of the creative Godhead in man.

*(To be concluded)*

M S SRINIVASAN

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## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 1998)

IN the long history of Indian spiritual thought there have been many attempts at synthesis. In the opening chapter of his *Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo goes briefly over these and shows where the Gita stands in relation to the others.

“The crown of this synthesis,” says he, “was in the experience of the Vedic Rishis something divine, transcendent and blissful in whose unity the increasing soul of man and the eternal divine fullness of the cosmic godheads meet perfectly and fulfil themselves.”<sup>1</sup> When the Truth-Consciousness of these early seers got lost in the maze of elaborate rituals, the Rishis of the Upanishadic period took it on themselves to discover the lost key of Vedic Sadhana. By earnest meditation they sought to realise the highest spiritual Truths of the more recent attempts at synthesis. Sri Aurobindo picks out the Tantric view and pays a very high tribute to it.

“There is yet another, the ‘Tantric’, which though less subtle and spiritually profound, is even more bold and forceful than the synthesis of the Gita,—for it seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of life in our divine scope as the Lila\* of the Divine, and in some directions it is more immediately rich and fruitful for it brings forward into the foreground along with divine knowledge, divine works and an enriched devotion of divine Love, the secrets also of the Hatha and Raja Yogas, the use of the body and of mental askesis for the opening up of the divine life on all its planes, to which the Gita gives only a passing and perfunctory attention.”<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that today we are called upon to proceed to a newer and larger synthesis than any that has gone before. In this progress, we must not get caught within the four walls of the teaching of even a great scripture like the Gita, for, as says Sri Aurobindo: “We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us, we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking, and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost by the consciousness of mankind but now breaking out again from behind the veil. All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis, a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future. But just as the past syntheses have taken those which preceded them for their starting-point, so also must that of the future, to be on firm ground, proceed from what the great bodies of realised spiritual thought and experience in the past have given. Among them the Gita takes a most important place.”<sup>3</sup>

\* The Cosmic Play

Sri Aurobindo has imparted to humanity the teaching of the Gita in his *Essays on the Gita* in the following passages

“The Gita can only be understood, like any other great work of the kind, by studying it in its entirety and as a developing argument. But the modern interpreters, starting from the great writer Bankim Chandra Chatterji who first gave to the Gita this new sense of a Gospel of Duty, have laid an almost exclusive stress on the first three or four chapters and in those on the idea of equality, on the expression *kartavyam karma*, the work that is to be done, which they render by duty, and on the phrase ‘Thou hast a right to action, but none to the fruits of action’ which is now popularly quoted as the great word, *mahāvākya*, of the Gita. The rest of the eighteen chapters with their high philosophy are given a secondary importance, except indeed the great vision in the eleventh. This is natural enough for the modern mind which is, or has been till yesterday, inclined to be impatient of metaphysical subtleties and far-off spiritual seekings, eager to get to work and, like Arjuna himself, mainly concerned for a workable law of works, a *dharma*. But it is the wrong way to handle this Scripture.

“The equality which the Gita preaches is not disinterestedness,—the great command to Arjuna given *after* the foundation and main structure of the teaching have been laid and built, ‘Arise, slay thy enemies, enjoy a prosperous kingdom’, has not the ring of an uncompromising altruism or of a white, dispassionate abnegation, it is a state of inner poise and wideness which is the foundation of spiritual freedom. With that poise, in that freedom we have to do the ‘work that is to be done’, a phrase which the Gita uses with the greatest wideness including in it all works, *sarvakarmāni*, and which far exceeds, though it may include, social duties or ethical obligations. What is the work to be done is not to be determined by the individual choice, nor is the right to the action and the rejection of claim to the fruit the great word of the Gita, but only a preliminary word governing the first state of the disciple when he begins ascending the hill of Yoga. It is practically superseded at a subsequent stage. For the Gita goes on to affirm emphatically that the man is not the doer of the action, it is Prakṛiti, it is Nature, it is the great Force with its three modes of action that works through him, and he must learn to see that it is *not* he who does the work. Therefore the ‘right to action’ is an idea which is only valid so long as we are still under the illusion of being the doer, it must necessarily disappear from the mind like the claim to the fruit, as soon as we cease to be to our own consciousness the doer of our works. All pragmatic egoism, whether of the claim to fruits or of the right to action, is then at an end.

“But the determinism of Prakṛiti is not the last word of the Gita. The equality of the will and the rejection of fruits are only means for entering with the mind and the heart and the understanding into the divine consciousness and living in it, and the Gita expressly says that they are to be employed as a means as long as the disciple is unable so to live or even to seek by practice the gradual development of this higher state. And what is this Divine, whom Krishna declares himself to be? It is the Purushottama beyond the Self that acts not, beyond the Prakṛiti that acts, foundation of the one, master of the other, the Lord of whom all is the manifestation, who even in our present

subjection to Maya sits in the heart of His creatures governing the works of Prakṛiti, He by whom the armies on the field of Kurukshetra have already been slain while yet they live and who uses Arjuna only as an instrument or immediate occasion of this great slaughter. Prakṛiti is only His executive force. The disciple has to rise beyond this Force and its three modes or Gunas, he has to become *trigunātīta*. Not to her has he to surrender his actions, over which he has no longer any claim or 'right', but into the being of the Supreme. Reposing his mind and understanding, heart and will in Him, with self-knowledge, with God-knowledge, with world-knowledge, with a perfect equality, a perfect devotion, an absolute self-giving, he has to do works as an offering to the Master of all self-energising and all sacrifice. Identified in will, conscious with that consciousness, That shall decide and initiate the action. This is the solution which the Divine Teacher offers to the disciple.

“What the great, the supreme word of the Gita is, its *mahāvākya*, we have not to seek, for the Gita itself declares it in its last utterance, the crowning note of the great diapason. ‘With the Lord in thy heart take refuge with all thy being, by His grace thou shalt attain to the supreme peace and the eternal status. So have I expounded to thee a knowledge more secret than that which is hidden. Further hear the most secret, the supreme word that I shall speak to thee. Become my-minded, devoted to Me, to Me do sacrifice and adoration, infallibly, thou shalt come to Me, for dear to Me art thou. Abandoning all laws of conduct seek refuge in Me alone. I will release thee from all sin, do not grieve.’

“The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps by which action rises out of the human into the divine plane leaving the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law. First, by the renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being. This is the initial step. Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit, but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakṛiti, the unequal, active, mutable power. Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Puruṣa governing this Prakṛiti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature. To Him love and adoration and the sacrifice of works have to be offered, the whole being has to be surrendered to Him and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His divine transcendence of Nature and of His works and act in a perfect spiritual liberty.

“The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita’s insistence is on action. The second is Jñānyoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world, and here the insistence is on knowledge, but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion,



but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues, the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine Nature''<sup>4</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

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- 3 *Ibid*, p 8
- 4 *Ibid* pp 32-35

## HOW SPECS LIVE FOREVER

THE US Standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8 5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the US railroads were built by English expatriates. Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did they use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing. Okay! Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

So who built these old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made for or by imperial Rome they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Thus, we have the answer to the original question. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8 5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman army war chariot. Specs and Bureaucracies live forever.

(Courtesy *Kyoto Journal*, No. 33, 1997, the issue's theme is Orthodoxy-Heresy.)

## AN INTERVIEW WITH MANOJ DAS

(Continued from the issue of April 1998)

P Raja. You spoke about inspiration. Will you explain the idea?

Manoj Das. That is a profound subject. I have written an article in the Sunday magazine section of *The Hindu* (Oct 6, 1996) showing five streams of literature. I wondered what impelled a Vyasa or Valmiki to write. They had no claim to amenities or rewards as we writers have. They wrote out of their inspiration. Then there are works designed to achieve a worthy goal, like the *Panchatantra*, or the *Jatakas* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*. They are inspired works, stimulated by a purpose in the social context. Then there are works which entertain and project life in its vicissitudes. They too are fine—from the *Kathasaritasagara* to many classic novels of our time.

But then comes the fourth stream, literature subordinated to pure commercial motive—with pornography for its forte. The fifth stream is hardly literature—literature for utility. Like art being at the service of decorating a drawing room, certainly nothing wrong, literature here is used to glorify advertising, political manifesto, etc.

As you can easily see, in the first three streams inspiration plays a vital role—along with motivation in the second and the third streams. Of course, the quality of inspiration can be different from stream to stream and then from work to work. But so far as the fourth and fifth streams are concerned, there is nothing but motivation.

Inspiration, needless to say, is much more relevant to poetry. And there are planes and planes of inspiration. Let me show a passage in Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri*.

The genius too receives from some high fount  
Concealed in a supernal secrecy  
The work that gives him an immortal name  
The word, the form, the charm, the glory and grace  
Are missioned sparks from a stupendous Fire,  
A sample from the laboratory of God  
Of which he holds the patent upon earth,  
Comes to him wrapped in golden coverings,  
He listens for Inspiration's postman knock  
And takes delivery of the priceless gift  
A little spoilt by the receiver mind  
Or mixed with the manufacture of his brain,  
When least defaced, then is it most divine (p 542)

P Raja. How do you view the current scene in Indo-English creativity? Don't you think that it is dominated by the third or the second streams you have referred to?

Manoj Das. There is nothing wrong in the third stream dominating the scene. But if the fourth does that, the literary atmosphere gets reduced to that of titillation,

hedonism and snobbery I'm afraid we are on the verge of such a vulgarisation

P Raja What is the way out?

Manoj Das The only answer I can give is, those conscious of the situation should be true to themselves A truly gifted writer must take the vulgarised atmosphere as a challenge to his spirit He or she must not stoop to cash in on it, but stand above it

P Raja Wouldn't he be left out of the race?

Manoj Das Race for what?

P Raja For recognition

Manoj Das Of what worth? Do you believe the readers respect writers who titillate them? They are amused They look upon them as cheap entertainers only

P Raja Are you sure? Don't people adore the cheap entertainers—say—the filmstars?

Manoj Das I don't think anybody, apart from fools, adores them They are fascinated and infatuated Fascination and infatuation are a very complex law A fat lot of elements coexist usually—inferiority complex, illusion, envy for the very object of fascination, possessiveness, coveting the person, so on and so forth, but nothing sane and sound, nothing rational That does not mean that fascination is something supra-rational, it is infrarational

P Raja In any case, if a good writer is not recognised, what effect can he have on the milieu?

Manoj Das A good writer will not go totally unrecognised, but his circle will be smaller in comparison In every age, those who keep up and champion the true spirit of any tradition, any discipline, are in the minority Yes, on second thought, I must hasten to add that in principle a good writer can also go totally ignored In that case we have to take it as his fate!

P Raja I believe you are a good writer who is also recognised

Manoj Das Thank you But, again, by a relatively smaller circle .

P Raja You were the first writer in Oriya to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award for short stories, way back in 1972 Your contribution to Oriya short story has been much more after that After the veteran, the late Surendra Mohanty, you were the second writer to receive the prestigious Sarala Award in 1980

You have been the first recipient of the recently instituted Sahitya Bharati Award carrying the highest amount so far Evidently Orissa knows that yours is the highest contribution to contemporary Oriya literature after the late Gopinath Mohanty and the trend-setting poet Sochi Routray, both of whom have been recipients of the Jnanpith Award Why were you denied some bigger awards given on an all-India basis, which went to a couple of other Oriya writers? I know you through your English writing alone I can say that no award is too big for you But in what I have just stated, I have only echoed the sentiments of several Oriya scholars What have you to say to that?

Manoj Das How can I say anything at all? Besides, all said and done, those who got such so-called bigger awards might have deserved them What I can say would sound hackneyed any way—that awards are determined not by any clear measuring rod They depend on many factors and, I believe most of those, if not all, who receive

awards deserve them, though some who deserve do not receive. So far as I am concerned, believe me, I am least anxious to bag any award.

P Raja: What motivates you to write?

Manoj Das: My best stories and all my poems (the latter only in Oriya) are written out of creative inspiration, some are written out of simple creative joy, some are out of a commitment to society. The columns I wrote for the newspapers were motivated by the last. My books for the young are mostly out of a sense of duty towards and love for the young. But there are also creative works among my books for children.

P Raja: For example?

Manoj Das: *The Fourth Friend, Legend of the Golden Valley*.

P Raja: Your novels *Cyclones* and *A Tiger at Twilight* are quite different from each other, yet each is unique, unlike any other novel of the recent years. *Cyclones* is an authentic picture of the transitional rural India of the late forties—with the crumbling feudalism, the collapsing colonialism and the metamorphosis of a remote, little village into a thick town. The change that comes in the consciousness of the villagers is an absorbing realism. But what have you tried to show through the protagonist, Sudhir?

Manoj Das: The spirit of India that is capable of transcending all such changes—if I must be pinned down to defining the character.

P Raja: *A Tiger at Twilight* reads like a fairytale whereas every situation, every character in it is entirely credible. What have you tried to achieve in it?

Manoj Das: A fusion of the real and the fantastic, resulting in a certain kind of allegory.

P Raja: You are committed to spirituality. Doesn't that encumber your creative freedom?

Manoj Das: Spirituality brings a touch of freedom from all sorts of encumbrances. It broadens one's understanding and horizon. It cannot be a limiting factor.

P Raja: Let me be very specific. Can you now write a story like "A Trip into the Jungle" which A. K. Bir made into a powerful film in Hindi as "Aranyaka"—showing the darkness in man?

Manoj Das: No writer can stop at any milestone. I wrote that story at a transitional point in my own quest. I had lost faith in all political and philosophical doctrines, but had not got any alternative faith to support me. A disenchantment with and contempt for man inspired that story. I do not subscribe to that cynicism any more.

P Raja: What changed your idea of man?

Manoj Das: The vision of Sri Aurobindo—telling us that man is a transitional being, capable of transforming himself, albeit with the intervention of a higher power, the supramental. At the moment we are passing through an evolutionary crisis.

P Raja: So you are no longer a cynic, but an optimist!

Manoj Das: Can a writer ever be genuinely a cynic? What for and for whom should he write? Every writer is fundamentally an optimist.

(Concluded)

(Courtesy *Bhavan's Journal*, April 1997)

## STATUS OF WOMEN IN VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA

To a devout Hindu, the cultural concepts of the Ramayana supply the yardstick by which he can evaluate all cultures, Indian as well as foreign. Valmiki's Ramayana has been described as an eulogy of family life. Through a study of it, we can learn about the position of women in the Aryan society, their status vis-à-vis that of the women in the non-Aryan communities. The women of the Ramayana are of great interest to the Hindu mind. In creating the epic woman Sita, Valmiki has immortalised Indian womanhood. There is not a Hindu woman in India who is not familiar with the sufferings of Sita, and to whom Sita's character is not a model to emulate. She is the grand exemplar of the Hindu woman as the embodiment of purity, chastity and wifely fidelity—notions which have become so ingrained in the Indian psyche, that thousands of years later the ideals still hold good.

When we study the Ramayana of Valmiki, we have to keep in mind the influences of Valmiki and his prejudices in presenting one society as an ideal, while condemning another. Valmiki's Ramayana presents different kinds of societies in various stages of economic and cultural development. Through an objective analysis of his Ramayana, we can discern the stages of economic development in a society and their influences on women.

Ayodhya society is an agriculture-based hereditary monarchy. The association of the kings with their *janapadas* and not with their tribes has to be noted. The queens bear the names of their respective *janapadas*, viz. Kausalya of Kosala, Vaidehi of Videha. The eminent historian Dev Raj Chanana has described the Ramayana as the story of the spread of the agriculture-practising people beyond the Ganges Valley to the south of the Vindhya. Tagore in his *Bharata Varshe Vivaha* says that the basis of war in the Ramayana is the abduction of Sita, that is to say, attacks on cultivated areas. The story, which at one time was the triumphal song of the protection of cultivation and its spread, later on developed as the eulogy of domestic life. The Ayodhya society, an agriculture-based one, was a strong patriarchal society and was glorified by Valmiki as ideal.

### Matrilineal Origin

In sharp contrast, the Vanara and Rakshasa societies were matrilineal. The social anthropologist Kathleen Gough says that matrilineal descent is more common in predominantly cultivating societies which lack the plough, important large domesticated or extensive irrigation works—thus a society with low productivity. Matrilineal descent groups do not require the status of father and husband, while the status of mother and wife is indispensable to both the matrilineal and the patrilineal systems. The existence of a strong matrilineal system among the Vanaras and the Rakshasas is evident. They are born at a pre-agricultural stage—a stage where woman's role in the economic activities, as food gatherers, was of prime importance.

The group family—one of the earliest forms of family—can be seen among the

Vanaras, where the brothers Vali and Sugriva, though married to Tara and Ruma respectively, are seen at different times to be sharing both the women. They participate in all the pleasures of life on an equal footing with their mates. There are no moral taboos on chastity, which were used to subordinate the women to men in the Aryan society. Anjana conceives Hanuman through Vayu, even though her mate Kesari is alive, and yet there are no moral censures on her.

Rakshasa society though more advanced than the Vanaras still shows strong matrilineal influences. There is no evidence of the practice of agriculture in Lanka. The only reference to cereals is in rituals, as in the coronation of Vibhishana. Chanana opines that the Rakshasa society was tribal rather than monarchical, but headed by hereditary kingship. It seems to be in a transitional stage—from a matrilineal to a patrilineal society. But the relative importance and freedom of the women of Lanka shows that their role was still strong. Shurpanakha, as the royal sister of Ravana, displays more individuality than the princesses of Ayodhya. She questions Ravana about his duties as a king; she is free to roam about the forest at will, unarmed. Tadaka becomes the ruler of Madhuvana on the death of her husband, Shunda. Contrast this with the women of Ayodhya who have to be sheltered and protected by men all through life. It is only due to the matrilineal character of the Rakshasas that, notwithstanding the fact that their father was Pulastya, Ravana and his brothers are recognised as Rakshasas, because they are born of Kalkasi, who was a Rakshasi. Among the kinship terms employed by the poet with reference to the Rakshasas are *mātāmaha* and *mātrishvaseya*, but their counterparts *pitāmaha* and *pitriśhvaseya* are conspicuous by their absence.

### Brahmanical Society

With the development of the caste system, referred to in the Ramayana in several places, the position of women deteriorated. While extolling the Brahmanical form of society as the ideal, Valmiki condemned those that did not follow the same rules. Thus the Rakshasas, who were opposed to the Aryan way of life, were condemned outright. The most effective way of making women subject to the strict control of men was through the strict enforcement of chastity rules. The prime emotional conflict in the Ramayana centres on the question of the chastity of Sita. We can see the unsympathetic Ayodhya society which makes Sita prove her innocence like a common criminal by the fire ordeal. The thought of the severe censure of Sita's character by Rama's society froze all his feelings of love and sympathy for his long-separated wife, and made Rama respond to Sita's eagerness at their reunion with coldness. In contrast to this there is absolutely no censure against 'fallen' women in the non-Aryan societies, viz. despite Ruma's abduction by Vali, Sugriva accepts her back without reservations. Some scholars feel that the rigidity of Rama's behaviour was an indication of the evolution towards a stricter code of sex ethics for which the epic stood.

In a patriarchal society where sons inherited the property of the fathers, sons were

naturally more welcome than daughters. Parents often performed sacrifices for the sake of begetting sons. The son was the perpetuator of the family line and it was only a son who could deliver his father from hell. Girls, though not so welcome, were not abandoned. The word *bhāryā* for wife means 'protected' female or one who carries the burden. *Bhartā* for husband means the protector or feeder. These terms themselves show the respective positions of the two sexes.

### Property

In a patriarchal society, property was divided among the sons. In this context, the verse ascribed to Lakshmana, where he says that Kausalya had one thousand villages of her own, is significant. According to the Dharmashastra, the property given to a woman by her parents or family, or given to her by her husband on his marriage with another wife (wealth thus given to gratify the first wife is called *adhivedamika*) is called *strīdhana*. The Vishnu Samhita states that besides these two, the fee or gratuity or what has been given to her after marriage is called woman's property (*strīdhana*). The text has *śulka* for fee, it means the value of a property made over to her by her husband, or the fee paid by the bridegroom. Thus Kausalya's property can be seen either as that which was given to her by her father, or as that which was given to her on Dasharatha's marriage to another wife.

### Bride Price

In the lower sections of society, bride-price was common. Therefore daughters were more welcome. According to Kathleen Gough, in a matrilineal society where men acquired durable, moveable property like herds, slaves, money, etc., they used this bride-wealth to induce parents to part with their daughters, and so bring about a shift to patrilocal residence. In the *asura-vivāha* the husband paid a bride-price. In the marriage of Dasharatha and Kaikeyi, a heavy bride-price was paid. This, however, was in the nature of two boons, which the king was committed to honour at any time. Kaikeyi was *rājya-śulka* in the sense that Dasharatha had to promise to appoint as his successor a son begotten by Kaikeyi.

### Forms of Marriage

The Rakshasa form of marriage was one in which the bride was forcibly abducted or kidnapped, usually as a war booty. Ravana's abduction of Sita was perfectly normal according to Rakshasa tradition, but since it was contrary to the custom prevalent in Aryan society, Valmiki condemned it. The Sanskrit word *vadhu* for bride, has the root meaning 'one who is carried away'. This could mean the wife being taken away to her husband's house as the in-marriage affine in a patriarchal society, or it could revert to a previous existence of a Rakshasa type of marriage among the Aryans, where the bride



was forcibly carried away. (It may be remarked that the Rakshasa form of marriage was prevalent among the Yadavas, viz Krishna's abduction of Rukmīnī, though with her consent.)

### Pairing Family

Ayodhya society displays an increasing tendency towards the pairing family system. Despite the several wives a man had, one was always the principal wife. The pairing family aims at begetting of children of undisputed paternity to inherit the father's wealth as natural heirs. On the other hand, the consanguine family, considered to be the first stage of family, entails all men and women of the same generation, irrespective of whether they are brothers or sisters, as natural husbands and wives. Such a marriage between brother and sister is described in Dasharatha Jataka (one of the earliest Jataka tales). According to the Jataka, Rama was the brother of Sita. On Rama's return from exile he is married to Sita. It is interesting to note in this respect that Dasharatha, the king of Koshalā, married Kausalya, the princess of Koshalā. Either this was a marriage like the one described in the Jataka, or alternately, Kausalya could have belonged to Kashi, which was for some time referred to as Dakshina Koshalā.

Valmiki's society was a polygamous one. The word *dampati* meaning two joint owners of the household, excludes a third person from conjugal life. The rituals also require only one wife to assist the husband in the performance of sacrificial rites. Polygamy seems to have developed mainly due to the fear of childlessness, since, in Hindu society, the position of a son was of prime importance. In a polygamous society, the position of women was degrading. The favourite wife always had the better of the other wives. Despite the practice of polygamy, Valmiki expounded the monogamous family as the ideal one. Rama was a strict monogamist. Even at his Ashvamedha, the Horse-Sacrifice, which required the presence of a wife, Rama had only a golden image of Sita as his partner, since Sita was already forsaken by him.

The ideals of *sahadharmīni* and *pativrata* were emphasised for womanhood. In order to be an ideal companion to her husband, a woman was educated in rituals, etc. Sita and Anasuya have stood out as the ideals to be emulated by Indian women through the ages.

### Widows

Despite a woman's life centring on her husband, it is to be noted that widows were not looked down upon or considered inauspicious, as in later times. Before Rama's coronation, Sita was decorated by Dasharatha's widows. Sati was not common. The practice of widow remarriage was prevalent. Aryan society recognised the practice of *niyoga*, where a widow was allowed to marry her husband's kinsmen (*sapinda*) for the sake of begetting a son (if she did not have one). Tara's marriage with Sugriva gets Rama's approval as this custom was prevalent in Aryan society. However, in view of

the ideal of *pāṭivratya* which Valmiki tried to foster in his society, it is difficult to reconcile to the fact that a woman was required to be faithful to her husband when alive, but not when he was dead

### **Kaikeyi**

The character of Kaikeyi strikes a discordant note in the 'ideal family' of Ayodhya. She is from the beginning treated as an outsider Kaikeyi's name is after that of her tribe, Kekeya, while Kausalya and Sita (Vaidehi) take their names after their *janapadas* Dasharatha had, at the time of their marriage, agreed to make their son the heir-apparent Valmiki's reasons for presenting the much-wronged Kaikeyi in a poor light may be due to fact that she did not place her duties as a wife above that of a mother But, the real reason, we feel, is that Valmiki, in trying to present an ideal society, wished to establish the laws of primogeniture According to this law only Rama, the first born, could succeed to the throne Kaikeyi, who opposed the law, justly or not, was condemned

### **Tara**

Tara's character is unique She is a Vanara woman, but she is made to expound the views of a typical Aryan wife She has no qualms about marrying Sugriva after Vali's death, but she is made to lament Vali's death and her widowhood like an Aryan woman She is shown as being well-versed in the Vedas and has knowledge of statecraft The other side of Tara's character is seen when Lakshmana sees her drunk on 'madhu' in Kishkindha, very much like the tribal woman that she was Valmiki's discrepancies in his description of the Vanaras and their society, presenting them in one place as aboriginals living by 'loose morals', and in another place describing them as practising Vedic and Aryan ideals, may not be due to just a misunderstanding of their society, we feel it betrays an indulgent attitude towards the Vanaras who were willing to be 'Aryanised'

According to Altekar, one of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization and to appreciate its excellences and realise its limitations is to study the history of the position and status of women in it He says the treatment meted out by society to women overtaken by misfortune is the real touchstone to test the genuineness of a society's sympathy towards the weaker sex From this angle we can see that the ideal society of Valmiki was most apathetic to women. Dr Mildrethworth states, "The unsupported suspicions concerning the character of womanhood which were expressed by the revered Rama have not helped forward the ethical progress of womanhood in India "

GEETA VASUDEVAN

(Courtesy *The Hindu*, Sunday, 3 March 1985)

## WU WEI

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

(Continued from the issue of April 1998)

THE MOTHER says that there is a confusion in human consciousness, mixing up spirituality with the dissolution of the material creation and seeking to escape from the world into Tao, the formless beyond qualities. But there is a solution, which is not to leave Matter as it is, but to transform it, to divinise it.

This is the work Savitri has come to do, by transcending the human mental consciousness and ascending to the next step in the evolution, the Supramental Consciousness, and bringing its force of light into the instruments of our being—body, life and mind—to resolve all terrestrial problems.

In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, while speaking of the Mystery of Love, Sri Aurobindo explains: “All our thoughts, impulses, feelings, actions have to be referred to him [the Divine] for his sanction or disallowance, so that he may more and more descend into us and pervade them with all his will, power, light and knowledge, his love and delight.”<sup>12</sup> We must become conscious of ourselves as a part of his being till there is no longer any division.

In this light, personal human love is transformed into a sacred union consecrated to the service of the Divine. Thus, we become the living and loving instruments for his work in the world, rejoicing in his possession.

Sri Aurobindo gives a comprehensive understanding of love, human and divine. We find only a faint reflection of it in Lao Tse. Love, as Sri Aurobindo says, is a self-existent force at its origin, a power of the Divine. “In its secret foundation it is a seeking, if sometimes only a dim groping for the Divine. Love in its depths is a contact of the Divine Possibility or Reality in oneself with the Divine Possibility or Reality in the loved. It is the inability to affirm or to keep this character that makes human love either transient or balked of its full significance.”<sup>13</sup>

Let us read the Wu Weian sage’s discourse on Love as he teaches the seeker what it is to love: “Love is nothing other than the rhythm of Tao. It is from Tao that you come and to Tao you will return in the infinite azure of the skies.”

He advises: “Don’t look for happiness in a woman. It is Tao’s Revelation offered to you, she is the purest Form in the entire Nature through which Tao manifests, she is the sweet force that awakens in you Tao’s rhythm, but by herself she is only a poor creature resembling you. And for her you are the same Revelation which she is for you. You both are angels for each other, guiding each other towards Tao, unknowingly.” How true!

Taking a line from the Upanishad, “Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear. but for the sake of the Self (the greater Self, the Spirit within) is she dear,” we understand what Lao Tse calls Tao. As Sri Aurobindo explains, a seeker of the

Absolute or a mystic “would not consent to remain in love with the finite for the sake of an unrealised Infinite. . .he would not rest satisfied with the Divine unconscious of itself, unmanifested or only distantly *in posse*”<sup>14</sup>

In the light of Sri Aurobindo’s explanation, Lao Tse’s conception of true love becomes quite clear

Towards the end of the book, we come across a beautiful passage making us wonder if the sage is not describing the transformed state of love that irresistibly flows towards all. The sadness in the human heart echoed by Nature at twilight is symbolically described as the aspiration for union with Tao,—the Divine. It is an aspiration of the soul which has lost its love, Tao, to whom it was united in the past and now desires to reunite. “an absolute reunion with Tao. Is it not an immense love? To be so absolutely one with the beloved that you be entirely hers (Tao’s) and she be entirely yours; a union so complete and eternal that desire cannot rise in you any more, because the supreme Happiness is attained, and there is only peace, a sacred calm and luminous peace!”

Even as you read it, you feel the atmosphere of Tao pervading with its still luminosity

But Sri Aurobindo goes much further since the aim of his Integral Yoga is not to merge into the absolute Reality and disappear, but “to bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world,” for which the foundation is the Divine Truth and its Power. It is only the realisation of the Supramental Consciousness that makes the descent of the Divine Love possible so that one can become an instrument of its action in the world.

Sri Aurobindo shows us how love, in whatever form it comes, can be transformed into love for the Divine and become Divine Love. It is “not possible for the tongue of human speech to tell all the utter unity and the eternal variety of the Ananda of divine love. Our higher and our lower members are both flooded with it, the mind and life no less than the soul. even the physical body takes its share of the joy, feels the touch, is filled in all its limbs, veins, nerves with the flowing of the wine of the ecstasy, *amṛta*. Love and Ananda are the last word of being, the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries”<sup>15</sup>

Next, the sage of the *Wu Wei* gives a profound discourse on the subject of poetry and art, which too must be as spontaneous as the movement of the sea, the birds, the sky and the earth. According to him, all phenomena give birth to sound and the greatest are those of the wind and thunder—the natural voice of the sky and the earth, born of movement. The heart in its purest disposition, when it is moved, also creates a sound. And from it all literature is born. The sound must be born of itself—*Wu Wei*, “melodious, powerful like a rumbling of a torrent among rocks, like a rumble of lightning among clouds, sweet as a murmur of a shower at twilight, as the light breath of a summer breeze at night!” This must be, Sri Aurobindo would say, only a bright side of the Illusion.

Lao Tse invites us to listen to the sea at our feet—“its wonderful song,” “its pure

music," "its rhythmic assault." A poet has to be great and simple as the sea. The inner movement of a true poet is as that of the sea, an impulse emanating from Tao. He must abandon himself to it, in peace. The sage does not give importance to the technique or versification into which one forcibly squeezes "a succession of soulless words." For a poet of great worth there is no law or technique since the expression is spontaneous.

Those who have read *The Future Poetry* of Sri Aurobindo will find here much that is familiar. Sri Aurobindo says: "The true creator, the true hearer is the soul. . . technique, however indispensable, occupies a smaller field. The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value . . . a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing . . . its power soars up beyond the province of any laws of mechanical construction. Rather it determines itself its own form . . . in his [the poet's] best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it [technique] altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous form of his soul that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving the mechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature."<sup>16</sup>

Sri Aurobindo, of course, has a larger and more comprehensive vision of life and poetry: ". . . if an age comes which is in common possession of a deeper and greater and more inspiring Truth, then its masters of the rhythmic word will at least sing on a higher common level and may rise more often into a fuller intenser light and capture more constantly the greater tones of which this harp of God. . . is secretly capable."<sup>17</sup> Then, we may have a "poet who is also a Rishi, master singers of Truth, hierophants and magicians of the diviner and more universal beauty"<sup>18</sup> who can point man to his future and reveal to him the face of the Eternal. The "mediation between the truth of the spirit and the truth of life will be one of the chief functions of the poetry of the future."<sup>19</sup>

No doubt, it is a delight to read Lao Tse's comments, full of poetic beauty:

A statue of the Buddha, guarded in a beautiful chest, is described with subtle appreciation of its form of beauty and an insight into the depths of its message, which is revealed by the artist through its "ideally pure face which sees with such calm into eternity and love."

He must be a true artist who could "obtain the pure and ethereal substance" out of the hard, white stone through which a pink radiance passes, symbolising the dawn of enlightenment that the Buddha brought to humanity. It is an inspiration direct from Tao, when Matter disappears and the love of the artist radiates through it, conveying "the essence of Buddhism gathered in a single figure!"

This is an art of "imperishable radiance" and "virgin majesty" which can be created only by those who are simple and pure in heart, contemplating the beauty of landscapes and flowers, the immensities of the seas and skies, and the pure colours which exist only in nature, as the sage proclaims:

The infinite care with which he opens and closes the casket containing the statue is touching. There is such tender delicacy and reverence in his handling of the figure. This

reminds us of the Mother's message on the care of the material objects. The sage reminisces over the period of the great empire of China when all objects were made beautiful, because the attitude of the artists was simple and honest. He sadly reflects upon the present conditions, saying that if art declines, the whole country degenerates.

This comes very close to the spirit of the great ancient Indian art about which Sri Aurobindo says "Its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine to the regard of the soul. A seeing in the self accordingly becomes the characteristic method of the Indian artist."<sup>20</sup>

The book is an extremely well-presented essence of Lao Tse's philosophy with refinement of thought, sensitivity of feeling, artistic imagery and poetic subtlety. There are lovely landscapes which evoke an atmosphere at once soothing and enlightening.

The Mother says that in the domain of Yoga this very strict and severe spontaneity is absolutely indispensable. But for that one must have no ambition or desire or excessive imagination. She gives us beautiful aphorisms on the subject of spontaneity.<sup>21</sup>

One must be spontaneous in order to be divine

One must be perfectly simple in order to be spontaneous

One must be absolutely sincere in order to be perfectly simple

To be absolutely sincere is to have no division, no contradiction in one's being

We know that each part of our being—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual—has its own demand and will. She says, therefore, "there must be an accord, a harmony among all the wills of the being so that there may be a being which is simple, clear and uniform in its action and tendency. It is only when the whole being is gathered around one single central movement that one can be spontaneous."<sup>22</sup>

The Mother's final advice to those who wish to follow the teaching given in *Wu Wei* is to take the Middle Way by avoiding the extremes. Balance is indispensable. For, it is in a state of tranquillity and calm that one can let the Divine Consciousness express itself.

The book ends with a pointer to the rhythm of Tao which carries the entire universe in its glorious course through eternities. All Nature bathes joyously in this pure light with reverence and the soul trembles in ecstasy because it has seen the face of its Beloved.

The disciple wants to live with the master in this atmosphere. But the master who has the knowledge of the journey of the soul through all the vicissitudes of life asks him to return to the world. For, one must be strong enough to uphold and maintain the revelations in the midst of life.

With "the tranquil assurance of the learned who takes support in an indispensable truth," the master's final advice is "Only be simple at heart, and you will discover everything painlessly, as a child finds flowers. Remember that Tao is constantly within you and around you, that he never abandons you, that you are in security and well guarded under that holy protection. You are surrounded by blessings, you are

protected by an eternal love ”

The disciple finally leaves the sage who lives “with his soul’s dream in the midst of Nature, alone in an Infinite, deprived of all human love but close to the immense heart of Tao ”

This enchantingly beautiful book ends with sweet musings of the seeker which must be read in the luminous silence of the heart and the purity of Nature

(Concluded)

KAILAS JHAVERI

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## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Rachana Bichitra** by Nirodbaran (in Bengali).

*Rachana Bichitra* is the latest of Nirodbaran's literary works. It is a scholarly work written by a pre-eminent sadhak of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga who is also a mystic poet.

My first reaction upon reading this book is that every line seems to be suffused with Nirod-da's consciousness (Nirod-da—because that is how he is most commonly known to us devotees of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo). And when I say Nirod-da's consciousness it is of course true to say that it is also to a great extent, suffused with Sri Aurobindo's own as well. This can be at once appreciated by anyone familiar with the fact that Nirod-da happened to be the scribe for Sri Aurobindo's dictated epic *Savitri*.

In *Rachana Bichitra* I found a seamless blend of deep spiritual experiences intertwined with a medley of humorous anecdotes that vividly recreate the history of Sri Aurobindo Ashram spanning well over 60 years. Nirod-da's descriptions of the lives of the well-known and deeply revered personalities like Nolini-da, Champaklalji, Dyumanbhai, Pavitra-da, Sahana-di, Dilip Kumar Roy, Nishikanto, and others, are well woven into an evocative prose. What struck me particularly, was the way in which the individual essays are titled. They are all very short and the adjectives describing the personalities are perfect and irreplaceable. For example, "Atimanasjatri" Nolinikanto, "Maharaj" Champaklal, "Sadhak-Kobi" Nishikanto, "Bishwa-Manab" Madhav Pandit, are the most *revealing* descriptions of each of these personalities. Although there are previous accounts of some of these sadhaks and several previous biographical works on Sri Aurobindo himself (including 2 definitive ones by Nirod-da himself—I am referring to *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* and *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*), every article reveals something utterly new and fresh. To put it simply, every essay has many surprises for the reader.

Writing about spiritual colleagues can prove to be difficult because it can often become coloured with the author's personal and often subjective impressions. What is truly remarkable is the fact that *Rachana Bichitra* is free from all shades of sentimentality and the author has never once got 'carried away' in the course of writing about people who meant a great deal to him.

Now I shall come to some of his more general essays. Personally, I feel that Nirod-da has given a most befitting rebuttal (without any rancour) to Sankari Prasad Basu. Recently, I had dipped into some writings of Sankari Prasad in a book entitled *Vivekananda O Samakaleen Bharatbarsho—Saptam Khanda* (published by Mondal Book House, Calcutta). In this book Sankari Prasad has an essay entitled *Ramakrishna o Vivekananda Sri Aurobinder Jeebane o Rachanaye*. Upon reading this particular essay I could not contain my disappointment and to a certain extent indignation when I found that Sankari Prasad had tried to prove that all of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is derivative. Since then I had deeply felt that at the very least the essay in question



deserved a well-argued and academic rebuttal Nirod-da has done that admirably in one of the essays in *Rachana Bichitra*.

His essay on ‘Scotland, Mrs. Scott, Mrs Ball’ is full of humour and wit and gives a perfect account of Indian lodgers in English/Scottish households more than half a century ago!

His essay ‘Debahoomi’ seems so real that it cannot be passed off as just another story I do not know much about Nirod-da’s early life (except from what I read from some published material) Yet, somehow I feel that the character ‘Amal’ in *Debahoomi* is none other than Nirod-da himself! I may of course be completely wrong. The story ‘Eucalyptuser mrityu’ is among the most poignant that I have read in recent years

To summarise, I feel that *Rachana Bichitra* is among the very best of Nirod-da’s prose writings and certainly among the very best that have ever been written on eminent sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo Ashram I feel that Nirod-da’s scholarship shines through these essays brilliantly—yet as always, these are written with extreme modesty when it comes to himself The book offers abundant evidence of Nirod-da’s ability to begin with observations on so called ‘trivial’ or ‘mundane’ incidents and then develop these observations into profound ruminations on the most fundamental spiritual concerns

I hope and pray that the book will run into many editions and before long it will also appear in an English translation (preferably by the author himself) It is too good to be restricted only to the Bengali-speaking community.

S GHOSH