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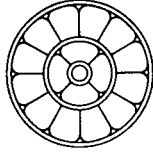
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LII

No. 1

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE DESTINY IS SET FREE

So now he set free destiny in that hour:
“The truth thou hast claimed, I give to thee the truth
A marvel of the meeting earth and heavens
Is he whom Savitri has chosen mid men,
His figure is the front of Nature’s march,
His single being excels the works of Time
A sapphire cutting from the sleep of heaven,
Delightful is the soul of Satyavan,
A ray out of the rapturous infinite,
A silence waking to a hymn of joy
A divinity and kingliness gird his brow,
His eyes keep a memory from a world of bliss.
As brilliant as a lonely moon in heaven,
Gentle like the sweet bud that spring desires,
Pure like a stream that kisses silent banks,
He takes with bright surprise spirit and sense.
A living knot of golden Paradise,
A blue Immense he leans to the longing world,
Time’s joy borrowed out of eternity,
A star of splendour or a rose of bliss
In him Soul and Nature, equal Presences,
Balance and fuse in a wide harmony
The Happy in their bright ether have not hearts
More sweet and true than this of mortal make
That takes all joy as the world’s native gift
And to all gives joy as the world’s natural right
His speech carries a light of inner truth,
And a large-eyed communion with the Power
In common things has made veilless his mind,
A seer in earth-shapes of garbless deity.
A tranquil breadth of sky windless and still
Watching the world like a mind of unplumbed thought,
A silent space musing and luminous
Uncovered by the morning to delight,
A green tangle of trees upon a happy hill
Made into a murmuring nest by southern winds,
These are his images and parallels,
His kin in beauty and in depth his peers
A will to climb lifts a delight to live,
Heaven’s height companion of earth-beauty’s charm,

An aspiration to the immortals' air
 Laid on the lap of mortal ecstasy
 His sweetness and his joy attract all hearts
 To live with his own in a glad tenancy,
 His strength is like a tower built to reach heaven,
 A godhead quarried from the stones of life
 O loss, if death into its elements
 Of which his gracious envelope was built
 Shatter this vase before it breathes its sweets,
 As if earth could not keep too long from heaven
 A treasure thus unique loaned by the gods,
 A being so rare, of so divine a make!
 In one brief year when this bright hour flies back
 And perches careless on a branch of Time,
 This sovereign glory ends heaven lent to earth,
 This splendour vanishes from the mortal's sky
 Heaven's greatness came, but was too great to stay
 Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her;
 This day returning Satyavan must die''
 A lightning bright and nude the sentence fell
 But the queen cried "Vain then can be Heaven's grace!
 Heaven mocks us with the brilliance of its gifts,
 For Death is a cupbearer of the wine
 Of too brief joy held up to mortal lips
 For a passionate moment by the careless gods
 But I reject the grace and the mockery
 Mounting thy car go forth, O Savitri,
 And travel once more through the peopled lands.
 Alas, in the green gladness of the woods
 Thy heart has stooped to a misleading call
 Choose once again and leave this fated head,
 Death is the gardener of this wonder-tree,
 Love's sweetness sleeps in his pale marble hand
 Advancing in a honeyed line but closed,
 A little joy would buy too bitter an end.
 Plead not thy choice, for death has made it vain
 Thy youth and radiance were not born to lie
 A casket void dropped on a careless soil;
 A choice less rare may call a happier fate."

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL Vol 29, pp 429-31)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

ASCETICISM AND RENUNCIATION

IN the preceding essay¹ it has been said that the Discipline (Dharma) spoken of in the Gita can be followed by everyone, it is open to all. And yet the supreme status in this Discipline is not a whit less than that of any other. The Discipline of the Gita is the Discipline of desireless works. In this country with the resurgence of Aryan Discipline a flood of asceticism has spread everywhere. A man seeking Rajayoga cannot rest content with the life or the work of a householder. For the practice of his yoga he needs to make tremendously laborious efforts to be able to meditate and concentrate. A slight mental disturbance or contact with the outside upsets the poise of meditation or completely destroys it. Difficulties of this kind one meets abundantly in home-life. Therefore it is quite natural for those who are born with an urge for yoga, derived from past lives, to turn towards asceticism. When such souls with an inborn yogic urge begin to increase in number and by contagion to spread among the youthful generation a strong movement to asceticism, the doors are opened indeed for the good of the country, in one sense; but also along with the good there arise causes for apprehension. It is said that the ascetic discipline is the very best, but very few are competent to follow it. The incompetent who enter the path go a certain distance and then stop short midway through a kind of satisfaction arising from lethargy and inertia. One can in this way pass one's life upon earth in ease, but then one does no good to the world and also it becomes very difficult for such a one to rise to the higher reaches of the world. The time and the circumstances in which we are at present demand that we awaken the qualities of dynamic energy (Rajas) and luminous poise (Sattwa), that is to say, activity and knowledge, discarding the qualities of inertia and devote ourselves to the selves of the country and the world so that we may rejuvenate the moral and spiritual strength of our land. This is our foremost duty today. We have to re-create an Aryan people rich with knowledge and power and wide catholicity, out of the womb of this people weak and worn out, weighed down with inertia, narrowed into selfish bounds. It is for this reason that so many souls, full of strength and yogic power, are being born in Bengal. If such people attracted by the charm of asceticism abandon their true law of life and their God-given work, then with the destruction of their true law the nation too will perish. The younger generation seems to imagine that the stage of the student (Brahmacharya) is the time fixed for the acquisition of education and character. The next stage as fixed is that of the householder. And when one has assured the preservation of the family and the future building of the Aryan race and thus freed oneself from the debts to the ancestors and also when one has paid off one's debts to society by the acquisition of wealth and by useful service and when one has paid off one's debts to the world by

1 *Gita*, XVIII 47

spreading knowledge and beneficence and love and strength and finally when one has been able to satisfy the Mother of the worlds by one's unstinted labour and high service for the good of Mother India, then it will not be amiss to retire from the world into the forest (Vanaprastha), and take to the ascetic life. Otherwise there arises confusion of social values and growing dominance of the wrong law. I do not speak of young ascetics who have been freed from all debts in a previous life, but it would be wrong for one who has not made himself ready for asceticism to take to it. Great and magnanimous Buddhism has done no doubt immense good to the country, yet no less harm, because of asceticism spreading everywhere and the warrior class (Kshatriya) renouncing their appointed function, in the end it was itself banished from the country. In the new age the new dispensation must not admit this error.

In the Gita Sri Krishna has time and again directed Arjuna not to follow asceticism. Why? He admits the virtue of Sannyasa and yet, in spite of the repeated questionings of Arjuna overwhelmed as he was with the spirit of asceticism, abnegation and altruism, Sri Krishna never withdrew his injunctions with regard to the path of action. Arjuna asked, "If desireless Intelligence, founded in Yoga, is greater than karma, then why do you engage me in this terrible work of slaying my elders?" Many have repeated the question of Arjuna, some even have not hesitated to call him the worst Teacher, one who shows the wrong way. In answer, Sri Krishna has explained that renunciation is greater than asceticism, to remember God and to do one's appointed work without desire is far greater than freedom to do as one likes. Renunciation means renunciation of desire, renunciation of selfishness. And to learn that renunciation, one need not take refuge in solitude. That lesson has to be learnt through work in the field of work, work is the means to climb upon the path of yoga. This world of varied play has been created for the purpose of bringing delight to its creatures. It is not God's purpose that this game of delight should cease. He wants the creatures to become his comrades and playmates, to flood the world with delight. We are in the darkness of ignorance, that is because for the sake of the play the Lord has kept himself aloof and thus surrounded himself with obscurity. Many are the ways fixed by him which if followed would take one out of the darkness, bring him into God's company. If any one is not interested in the play and desires rest, God will fulfil his desire. But if one follows His way for His sake, then God chooses him in this world or elsewhere as His fit playmate. Arjuna was Krishna's dearest comrade and playmate, therefore he received the teaching of the Gita's supreme secret. What that supreme secret is I tried to explain in a previous context. The Divine said to Arjuna, "It is harmful to the world to give up work, to give up work is the spirit of asceticism. And an asceticism without renunciation is meaningless. What one gains by asceticism one gains also by renunciation, that is to say, the freedom from ignorance, equanimity, power, delight, union with Sri Krishna. Whatever the man worshipped by all does, people take that as the ideal and follow it. Therefore, if you give up work through asceticism, all will follow that path and bring about the confusion of social values, and the reign of the wrong law. If you give up desire for the fruit of action and pursue man's normal law of life, inspire men to follow

each his own line of activity, then you will unite with my Law of life and become my intimate friend” Sri Krishna explains furthermore that the rule is to follow the right path through works and finally at the end of the path attain quietude, that is to say, renounce all sense of being the doer. But this is not renunciation of work through asceticism, this is to give up all vital urge to action involving immense labour and effort through the rejection of egoism and through union with the Divine—and transcending all gunas, to do works as an instrument impelled by His force. In that state it is the permanent consciousness of the soul that he is not the doer, he is the witness, part of the Divine, it is the Divine Power that works through his body created for action by his own inner law of being. The soul is the witness and enjoyer, Nature is the doer, the Divine is the giver of sanction. The being so illumined does not seek to help or hinder any work that the Divine Power undertakes. Submitted to the Shakti, the body and mind and intellect engage themselves in the work appointed by God. Even a terrible massacre like that of Kurukshetra cannot stain a soul with sin if it is sanctioned by God, if it occurs in the course of fulfilment of one’s own dharma (Inner Law), but only a few can attain to this knowledge and this goal. It cannot be the law of life for the common man. What then is the duty for the common wayfarers? Even for them the knowledge that ‘He is the Lord, I am the instrument’ is to a certain extent within their reach. Through this knowledge to remember always the Divine and follow one’s inner law of life is the direction that has been given.

“Better is one’s own law of works, swadharma, though in itself faulty, than an alien law well wrought out, death in one’s own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an alien law”¹

One’s own law of life (swadharma) means the work governed by one’s own nature (swabhava), one’s own nature evolves and develops in the course of time. In the process of Time man develops a general nature of his own, the works determined by this formulation of nature is the law of that age. In the process of a nation’s life-movement the nation’s own nature is built up and the works determined by that nature are the nation’s law of life. And in the course of the life-movement of an individual, the special nature he develops determines the work that becomes the individual’s law of life. These various laws of life are united together, organised in a common ideal which is that of the Eternal Law. This law is one’s own law for all who seek to follow the true law. As a spiritual student (brahmachari) one follows this law to gather knowledge and strength. As a householder also one follows this law. And when one has completely fulfilled this law, then one becomes eligible for the final stages, Vanaprastha or Sannyasa. Such is the eternal movement of the eternal law.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Nirranjan)

COMPARISONS

क्षान्तिश्चेत् क्वचेन किं किमरिभि क्रोधोऽस्ति चेद् देहिना
ज्ञातिश्चेदनलेन किं यदि सुहृद् दिव्यौषधैः किं फलम् ।
किं सर्पैर्यदि दुर्जना किमु धनैर्विद्यानवद्या यदि
ब्रीडा चेत् किमु भूषणैः सुकविता यद्यस्ति राज्येन किम् ॥

MEN cherish burning anger in their hearts,
Yet look without to find if they have foes.
Who sweet forbearance has, requires no arts
Of speech, persuading silently he goes

Why fear the snake when in thy kindness bask
Men evil, or a fire while kinsmen jar
Burning thy house' From heaven no medicines ask
To heal a troubled mind, where true friends are

Nor seek for ornaments, noble modest shame
Being with thee, nor for wealth when wisdom's by
Who needs a kingdom when his mind can claim
A golden realm in sweetest poetry?

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

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

My dear Mother,

When I stand up for the work, not caring for personal things, the result is that everyone finds me "severe, strict, unbearable, iron-fisted, hard as a rock" The present condition at work is becoming more and more of an impasse In desperation I sometimes speak out "Either drive me out or these things must change "

PEOPLE will always talk like that when there is a discipline to be maintained. You ought not to mind it as you have my love and trust

1 February 1936

My dear Mother,

When I saw D's hair quite dry today, I asked her "Have you no oil?" She replied "No " I know that D has nothing to keep her head cool, she washes it daily since the last few days, and this is not good for the hair

I was just preparing some hair lotion to give her But you must tell her that I had decided to give her hair lotion before you spoke of it

7 February 1936

My dear Mother,

Whatever may be the causes of F's anger, let him remain calm, quiet, fully controlled and self-restrained, let him not burst out

Surely it ought to be like that and I told him so when he came to see me I told him that the first thing is to remain quiet, composed, peaceful—he simply answered that it was impossible for him—and I had nothing else to say

With all my heart I wish for the growth of the movement that has taken place in me to remain quiet under any circumstances, to turn to You and call Your Peace

Yes, let this movement grow in you and a great strength will grow also to face all difficulties

Always with you, my dear child

10 February 1936

My dear Mother,

Today I was very sorry, so sorry that I could not tell You during the day about the misbehaviour of the D R. workers One thought was in my mind. "I have failed miserably in serving the Mother, I am unfit and useless for the D R "

Whatever it may be, my dear Mother, I live in Your trust, which is my constant companion even in deep sorrow

I do not see why you should be sorry because the people of the D R misbehave. You cannot be responsible for their character. And if they choose not to change their ways and refuse to progress, it is surely not your fault So you must not listen to the wrong suggestions speaking of failure and unfitness, and remember always that I am quite satisfied with you, your progress and your work

14 February 1936

My dear Mother,

Darshan is coming, but I am having a strong reaction against eating and preparing food. Today the preparing of luchis was mere play and not much work, but still I am tired of eating

Tired of eating? When you have so many people to feed! It is not the time for this kind of reaction I was glad to see that all these outsiders will have a good impression of our cooking

Many Aroumé workers have the impression that I tell G everything. It is false

What do you care about the impressions they have? Let them think whatever they like, it does not matter

They accuse me of knowing all the Ashram gossip and passing it on to her. In fact I know nothing of all this.

What does it matter!!

I wish with all my heart for harmony, peace and a clear understanding with the kitchen workers.

This peace and harmony and clear understanding can be possible only when you will remain perfectly untouched by false accusations and strongly peaceful yourself in front of them.

18 February 1936

My dear Mother,

H has sent a note to me: "I cannot continue to help J in washing plantains—I am very weak and feel very tired"

Yes. Once more she has gone wrong—and by diminishing her work she will become weaker and weaker. It is the work done heartily that was keeping up her health.

19 February 1936

My dear Mother,

J lost his temper on the 20th and 21st over nothing, at each step he shows that he wants to rule and govern.

Did you hear him *yourself*? Were *you* there when he lost his temper? He is quite capable of doing it, but as a rule never believe the reports of anybody.

22 February 1936

My dear Mother,

K speaks of having her work back—so I understand from her chit

Why that particular work and not any work that is to be done? If people could stop speaking of the work as their work it would put an end to a lot of trouble

26 February 1936

My dear Mother,

This afternoon I felt a conspiracy in the atmosphere formed by hostile forces to trouble me through the Aroumé workers and send me away from here. But, dear Mother, I know that nothing can send me away, for I am in Your hands.

I know that nothing can take you away from here—but the best is to attach no importance whatever to these suggestions and also to the bad will of the workers. If you remain perfectly calm and quiet, these attacks will lose all their strength

With love and blessings.

27 February 1936

(To be continued)

OUR IDEAL

THE "Arya" having completed its first year and survived the first perils of infancy, now offers itself a second time to decisions of Time and the mind of the hour. We think it necessary to open our new year with a succinct statement of the idea this Review is intended to serve and the aim which it holds before it. For our Review has been conceived neither as a mirror of the fleeting interests and surface thoughts of the period we live in, nor as the mouthpiece of a sect, school or already organised way of thinking. Its object is to feel out for the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past.

We believe in the constant progression of humanity and we hold that progression is the working out of a Thought in Life which sometimes manifests itself on the surface and sometimes sinks below and works behind the mask of external forces and interests. When there is this lapse below the surface, humanity has its periods of apparent retrogression or tardy evolution, its long hours of darkness or twilight during which the secret Thought behind works out one of its phases by the pressure mainly of economic, political and personal interests ignorant of any deeper aim within. When the thought returns to the surface, humanity has its periods of light and of rapid efflorescence, its dawns and splendid springtides, and according to the depth, vitality, truth and self-effective energy of the form of Thought that emerges is the importance of the stride forward that it makes during these Hours of the Gods in our terrestrial manifestation.

There is no greater error than to suppose, as the "practical" man is wont to do, that thought is only a fine flower and ornament of life and that political, economic and personal interests are the important and effective motors of human action. We recognise that this is a world of life and action and developing organism; but the life that seeks to guide itself only by vital and material forces is a slow, dark and blundering growth. It is an attempt to approximate man to the method of vegetable and animal existence. The earth is a world of Life and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal, he is a spiritual and a thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation.

Therefore by his very nature he serves the working of a Thought within him even when he is ignorant of it in his surface self. The practical man who ignores or despises the deeper life of the Idea, is yet serving that which he ignores or despises. Charlemagne hewing a chaotic Europe into shape with his sword was preparing the reign of the feudal and Catholic interpretation of human life with all that that great though obscure period of humanity has meant for the thought and spiritual development of mankind. But it is when the Thought emerges and guides life that man grows towards his full humanity, strides forward on his path and begins to control the development of Nature in his destiny or at least to collaborate as a conscious mind and spirit with That which controls and directs it.

The progress of humanity has therefore been a constant revolution with its rhythm of alternate darkness and light, but both the day and the night have helped to foster that

which is evolving. The periods have not been the same for all parts of the globe. In the historic ages of the present cycle of civilisation, the movement has been almost entirely centred in the two continents of Asia and Europe. And there it has been often seen that when Asia was moving through the light, Europe was passing through one of her epochs of obscurity and on the other hand the nights of Asia's repose or stagnation have corresponded with the days of Europe's mental vigour and vital activity.

But the fundamental difference has been that Asia has served predominantly (not exclusively) as a field for man's spiritual experience and progression; Europe has been rather a workshop for his mental and vital activities. As the cycle progressed, the Eastern continent has more and more converted itself into a storehouse of spiritual energy sometimes active and reaching forward to new development, sometimes conservative and quiescent. Three or four times in history a stream of this energy has poured out upon Europe, but each time Europe has rejected wholly or partially the spiritual substance of the afflatus and used it rather as an impulse to fresh intellectual and material activity and progress.

The first attempt was the filtering of Egyptian, Chaldean and Indian wisdom through the thought of the Greek philosophers from Pythagorus to Plato and the neo-Platonists, the result was the brilliantly intellectual and unspiritual civilisation of Greece and Rome. But it prepared the way for the second attempt when Buddhism and Vaishnavism, filtered through the Semitic temperament, entered Europe in the form of Christianity. Christianity came within an ace of spiritualising and even of asceticising the mind of Europe, it was baffled by its own theological deformation in the minds of the Greek fathers of the Church.

The Islamic invasion of Spain and the southern coast of the Mediterranean—curious as the sole noteworthy example of Asiatic culture using the European method of material and political irruption as opposed to a peaceful invasion by ideas—may be regarded as a third attempt. The result of its meeting with Graecised Christianity was the reawakening of the European mind in feudal and Catholic Europe and the obscure beginnings of modern thought and science.

The fourth and last attempt which is as yet only in its slow initial stage is the quiet entry of Eastern and chiefly Indian thought into Europe first through the veil of German metaphysics, more latterly by its subtle influence in reawakening the Celtic, Scandinavian and Slavonic idealism, mysticism, religionism, and the direct and open penetration of Buddhism, Theosophy, Vedantism, Baháism and other Oriental influences in both Europe and America.

On the other hand, there have been two reactions of Europe upon Asia, first the invasion of Alexander with his aggressive Hellenism which for a time held Western Asia, created echoes and reactions in India and returned through Islamic culture upon mediaeval Europe; secondly, the modern onslaught of commercial, political, scientific Europe upon the moral, artistic and spiritual cultures of the East.

The new features of this mutual interpenetration are, first, that the two attacks have synchronised and, secondly, that they have encountered in each case the extreme

exaggeration of their opposites Intellectual and materialistic Europe found India, the Asia of Asia, the heart of the world's spiritual life, in the last throes of an enormous experiment, the thought of a whole nation concentrated for centuries upon the pure spiritual existence to the exclusion of all real progress in the practical and mental life of the race The entering stream of Eastern thought found in Europe the beginning of an era which rejected religion, philosophy and psychology,—religion as an emotional delusion, philosophy, the pure essence of the mind, as a barren thought-weaving,—and resolved to devote the whole intellectual faculty of man to a study of the laws of material Nature and of man's bodily, social, economic and political existence and to build thereon a superior civilisation.

That stupendous effort is over, it has not yet frankly declared its bankruptcy, but it is bankrupt It is sinking in a cataclysm as gigantic and as unnatural as the attempt which gave it birth On the other hand, the exaggerated spirituality of the Indian effort has also registered a bankruptcy, we have seen how high individuals can rise by it, but we have seen also how low a race can fall which in its eagerness to seek after God ignores His intention in humanity. Both the European and the Indian attempts were admirable, the Indian by its absolute spiritual sincerity, the European by its severe intellectual honesty and ardour for the truth, both have accomplished miracles; but in the end God and Nature have been too strong for the Titanism of the human spirit and for the Titanism of the human intellect.

The salvation of the human race lies in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind in the individual and in the community The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unilluminated knowledge and soulless organisation. The safety of Asia lies in the recognition of the material mould and mental conditions in which that aim has to be worked out, otherwise she will sink deeper into the slough of despond of a mental and physical incompetence to deal with the facts of life and the shocks of a rapidly changing movement It is not any exchange of forms that is required, but an interchange of regenerating impulses and a happy fusion and harmonising

The synchronism and mutual interpenetration of the two great currents of human effort at such a crisis in the history of the race is full of hope for the future of humanity, but full also of possible dangers The hope is the emergence of a new and better human life founded on a greater knowledge, a pursuit of the new faculties and possibilities opening out before us and a just view of the problem which the individual, the society, the race have to solve. Mankind has been drawn together by the developments of material science and for good or evil its external future is henceforth one, its different parts no longer develop separately and in independence of each other There opens out at the same time the possibility that by the development and the practice of the science and the life of the soul it may be made one in reality and by an internal unity

The idea by which the enlightenment of Europe has been governed is the passion for the discovery of the Truth and Law that constitutes existence and governs the

process of the world, the attempt to develop the life and potentialities of man, his ideals, institutions, organisation by the knowledge of that Law and Truth and the confidence that along this line lies the road of human progress and perfection

The message of the East to the West is a true message, "Only by finding himself can man be saved", and "what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world if he lose his own soul" The West has heard the message and is seeking out the law and truth of the soul and the evidences of an inner reality greater than the material. The danger is that with her passion for mechanism and her exaggerated intellectuality she may fog herself in an external and false psychism, such as we see arising in England and America, the homes of the mechanical genius, or in intellectual, unspiritual and therefore erroneous theories of the Absolute, such as have run their course in critical and metaphysical Germany

The idea by which the illumination of Asia has been governed is the firm knowledge that the truth of the Spirit is the sole real truth, the belief that the psychological life of man is an instrument for attaining to the truth of the Spirit and that its laws must be known and practised with that aim paramount, and the attempt to form the external life of man and the institutions of society into a suitable mould for the great endeavour.

This idea, too, is absolutely just and we accept it entirely But in its application, and in India most, it has deviated into a divorce between the Spirit and its instruments and a disparagement and narrowing of the mental and external life of the race For it is only on the widest and richest efflorescence of this instrumental life that the fullest and most absolute attainment of the spiritual can be securely based This knowledge the ancients of the East possessed and practised, it has been dimmed in knowledge and lost in practice by their descendants

The message the West brings to the East is a true message Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead, Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman, and to deny Life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient knowledge The East also is awaking to the message The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own law and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudenesses which are invading her

The problem of thought therefore is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony, to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life, to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power and complexity, and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the

utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity

That is our ideal and our search Throughout the world there are plenty of movements inspired by the same drift, but there is room for an effort of thought which shall frankly acknowledge the problem in its integral complexity and not be restrained in the flexibility of its search by attachment to any cult, creed or extant system of philosophy

The effort involves a quest for the Truth that underlies existence and the fundamental Law of its self-expression in the universe,—the work of metaphysical philosophy and religious thought, the sounding and harmonising of the psychological methods of discipline by which man purifies and perfects himself,—the work of psychology, not as it is understood in Europe, but the deeper practical psychology called in India 'Yoga', and the application of our ideas to the problems of man's social and collective life

Philosophy and religious thought based on spiritual experience must be the beginning and the foundation of any such attempt, for they alone go behind appearances and processes to the truth of things The attempt to get rid of their supremacy must always be vain Man will always think and generalise and try to penetrate behind the apparent fact, for that is the imperative law of his awakened consciousness; man will always turn his generalisations into a religion, even though it be only a religion of positivism or of material law Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things; religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. They are essential to each other, a religion that is not the expression of philosophic truth, degenerates into superstition and obscurantism, and a philosophy which does not dynamise itself with the religious spirit is a barren light, for it cannot get itself practised. .

[Our first preoccupation in the "Arya" has therefore been with the deepest thought we could command on the philosophical foundation of the problem, and we have been so profoundly convinced that without this basis nothing we could say would have any real, solid and permanent value, that we have perhaps given too great a space to difficult and abstruse thought whether in the shaping of our own ideas or in the study and restatement of the ancient Eastern knowledge Our excuse is that we come forward as ourselves learners and students and must begin at the roots to proceed forward safely

Our second preoccupation has been with the psychological discipline of Yoga; but here also we have been obliged to concern ourselves with a deep study of the principles underlying the methods rather than with a popular statement of methods and disciplines But without this previous study of principles, the statement of methods would have been unsound and not really helpful There are no short-cuts to an integral perfection

We shall develop our general thought in later numbers at present we content ourselves with restating our ideal]

Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external

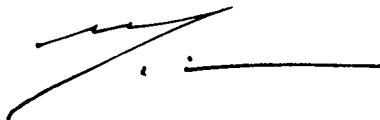
association of interests, the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence, the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which Science tells us that we have issued. These three are one, for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the Spirit.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(This article as given here formed a part of chapter 1 of Anilbaran Ray's unpublished book *The Prophet of the New Age*. The original under the title *Our Ideal* appeared in the August 1915 issue of the *Arya*. See also SABCL, Vol 16, pp 308-15. The matter within square brackets, not present in the original, is a part of Anilbaran's version —Editor)

my love and
blessings are with you
Understand that
blessings are for
the best spiritual
result, not necessarily
according to human wishes



OMNI-REALISM

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A KEY TO THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

3

It is possible to plead that mystical disciplines of illumination, Yogic deepenings and widenings and heightenings of consciousness, may enable us to know truly the physical world without dependence on observation. But in practising mysticism and Yoga the human consciousness outgrows its human status and unites with an infinite Spirit: the world external to the human observer takes on quite a different colour. The infinite Spirit is not only our own secret Self—it is also the secret Self of what is to us the objective universe. When either the particularities or the generalities of the universe are discovered through it, we go beyond our individual being to something which is at the same time outside our ordinary individual being and inside it. Mysticism and Yoga do not justify Berkeley or Kant who talk of the human observer as he is. Mysticism and Yoga serve only to negate in their own way the contentions of Berkeley and Kant.

So we return to our thesis that an actual objective aspect of reality is revealed in every perception. Here we may legitimately be asked: “What about ‘error’ and ‘illusion’? Are they not purely subjective, an imposition by the mind on what is ‘out there’? But if they are subjective, do we not undermine all realism? There is no discoverable inherent difference between the objects of error and illusion and the objects of so-called perception. The bent of a stick dipped in water is seen in the same way as a straight stick—if the bent is mind-imposed, so too is the straightness. The pink snakes seen by a drunkard offer to the drunkard no visual signs that can differentiate them from the snakes we ordinarily see. Again, the bush that in a dark lane is taken to be a cow is as real to the sight as any bush or cow observed in daylight. The only difference is that neither the bent stick nor the pink snakes nor the bush-cow can be felt ordinarily by the touch. But why should the ordinary sensation of touch be a test of objectivity? Cross your fingers and feel your nose—you will feel two noses! If the twoness is subjective, then the oneness we usually feel about the nose is just as much so—there is no discoverable inherent difference between the tactual sensations. The only difference is that the two noses cannot be seen, while the one nose can. But press your finger against one of the eye-balls and you will see two noses—and this visual sensation will not have any discoverable inherent difference from our ordinary one. Error and illusion seem to vary from normal perception in the respect that in the latter we have an agreement of all the senses on the objectivity of what is perceived. But have you not heard of hypnotic suggestion? A person under hypnosis can get an all-round impression—that is, by means of all his senses—of something which neither the

hypnotist nor his audience believes to be present. So, finally, even the test of agreement of all the senses has to be abandoned. If we allow purely subjective factors in error or illusion, we must allow them in all perception. Here is a pretty quandary for you, Mr. Omni-realist!"

The quandary is, I may suggest, only apparent. We must concede that, ultimately, ordinary perception cannot be distinguished from error or illusion by any discoverable inherent signs. But this does not subjectivise everything: on the contrary, it objectivises everything! For, once we allow subjective factors anywhere in perception—be it ever so "erroneous" or "illusory"—we shall land plump in solipsism. If solipsism which is the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum* of subjectivism is unacceptable by philosophical logic, perception of all kinds has to be understood Omni-realistically. We have to grant every error and illusion a correspondence in objective reality. Logically, there is no evasion possible of such a concession. Whatever is perceived, either by only one sense or by all the senses, is objectively real. Objective reality need not possess all experienceable qualities at once, and even those it does possess need not be experienceable by most men in their ordinary state of mind and under ordinary circumstances. Whatever is perceived, in whatever way, is real. Berkeley said that existence is wholly founded in perception: we have to say the opposite—"perception is wholly founded in existence,"—*percipi est esse*.

Naturally this view robs us of all certitude, we can never know what is error or illusion and what is true perception: every experience is true in the sense of having an objective correspondent of some kind or other. But let us not forget that, in the universal objectivisation of Omni-realism, space is still available for wider reality and narrower reality: error and illusion are narrower realities than the facts experienced by most men in their ordinary state of mind, because the latter possess qualities experienceable either in a greater number of ways or in more numerous sets of circumstances.

Can there, similarly, be deeper and shallower, higher and lower realities? Well, whenever perception takes place, it is in the midst of some mood or other. There is nothing like a moodless perception. We are either at peace or agitated, happy or miserable, thrilled or dull, idealistic or materialistic, poetic or utilitarian, religious or sceptic, questful of hidden meanings or content with surface suggestions. Objective reality is never perceived with only primary and secondary qualities: there are also what may be termed tertiary qualities mixed with them—qualities like pleasantness, beauty, goodness, holiness, or their opposites, or else just a commonplaceness and an uncertain neutralness. These qualities we would be inclined to consider as complexions our consciousness puts on the objective. But what right have we to throw primary and secondary qualities on one side and tertiary on the other? Our consciousness, by being in a particular mood, may merely be in a condition to pick out a particular aspect of objective reality: the aspect may very well belong to that reality. If tertiary qualities invariably go with primary and secondary, there is a *prima facie* case for their being whatever these are. And when we consider that secondary qualities were for a long time

taken to be subjective and that even the primary ones were ascribed to subjectivity by both Berkeley and Kant and that yet the secondary no less than the primary have been found by us to be wholly objective, we realise further that our commonsense movement to see the subjective in the tertiary can be quite mistaken. If the primary and secondary are, as demonstrated by us, wholly objective, little reason seems to be there for deeming the tertiary to be otherwise. The only argument apparently in favour of their being subjective is that the same thing or collection of things can be associated with different moods according to the person who perceives it! While to a Peter Bell a primrose is merely a yellow flower it can be to a Wordsworth a peep-hole into the World-Spirit! But if no single quality of the primary or secondary kind can be regarded as real to the exclusion of others but all are on an equal footing of reality—if, in short, omni-qualifiedness is granted here, we need only extend omni-qualifiedness a stage further in order to bring the differences (according to individual and individual) of tertiary qualities into the domain of the objective. There is no illegitimacy at all in the procedure: it is perfectly logical, under the circumstances, to say that objective reality can be at the same time pleasant and unpleasant, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, holy and unholy. A percept, therefore, is what it is by not only a correspondence of the type we have already noted but also a correspondence between objective reality and the temperamental tone of our consciousness: the natural bent of our psychology, the species of education we have had, the prevailing interest of our life, the present response of our mind to events, all these make for different percepts and reveal different aspects actually belonging to objective reality. In these aspects we have the material for distinguishing between high and low, or deep and shallow—provided we possess a standard of value. Even the material for admitting a more revolutionary superiority is present: just as the realities experienced by men may be reckoned as deeper and higher than the ones experienced by animals or plants, the realities experienced by a Jesus, a Buddha, a Krishna may be held to be far more deep and high than what is experienced by us at our finest pitch of artistic, moral, philosophical, religious or scientific consciousness. Of course, some may choose not to regard a Jesus, a Buddha or a Krishna as a percipient of the super-human and the divine: on account of their rarity or abnormality they may be ranked by some as a special class of those who commit ‘error’ or ‘suffer’ ‘illusion’. But Omni-realism in itself has no prejudice against admitting these figures as superior types of beings who perceive marvellous depths and heights of objective reality.

At least it allows objective reality to what they perceive and not only to what is perceived by other men. And, out of what the latter perceive, the beautiful, the good and the holy are, according to Omni-realism, just as objective as their absence.

When Omni-realism is understood in its fullest implications, it can even be seen to supply a standard of value which leans it definitely to the pro-Jesus, pro-Buddha, pro-Krishna attitude. The first favourable implication emerges if we reflect on the view which Omni-realism takes of consciousness in the act of perception. How do we perceive the objective omni-qualified world? It is by contact between things in general

and our sense-organs. At the moment of contact, the nerve-ends in our sense-organs send messages to our brains: then perception occurs. But just consider the fact entailed by Omni-realism that in perception we have a precise awareness of the things with which our sense-organs come into contact. Even lesser forms of realism entail that to some degree or other we become aware of things as they objectively are. Now, can any degree of truth in perception be explained by the process of contact between sense-organs and things in general, resulting in stimulation of nerve-ends and passage of nerve-current to the brain? Can what the brain receives be anything like what makes contact with the sense-organs? Even the light-rays which we must take to be conveying the visual details of an object set up nerve-currents which cannot be thought of as in any way like them. No nerve-current resembles any stimulus of the outer world meeting the sense-organs: it is, no doubt, itself a part of the outer world which we are aware of in perception but it does not have the colour or shape or texture of the things of which we become aware through its activity. How then do that colour and shape and texture manage to get transported by it? Moreover, it seems that the nerve-current transporting colour is not essentially of a different kind than the one transporting taste, scent, warmth, hardness: all kinds of qualities seem to be transported by essentially the same kind of nerve-current. What carries to our consciousness so many different kinds of qualities?

Evidently, there can be no true perception of objective reality if the perceiving takes place at the brain-end of the whole process. It must take place at the point of contact between things and the sense-organs. Even there, it cannot take place through any stimulation of nerve-ends: the nerve-current, whether at one end or the other, cannot transport qualities. A direct perception by the consciousness must happen. The perception is at the point of contact, between sense-organs and things, but it is not mediated by any bodily machinery: it is immediate, direct. The consciousness goes out to meet the contact at the sense-organs and what they receive is perceived by it in virtue of its own powers and not in virtue of nerve-stimulation. The nerve-stimulation and the rest of the process is merely the occasion, somehow the occasion is, in ordinary circumstances, indispensable, but the actual perceiving of things is done by the consciousness straight away in its own right.

Two conclusions follow. First, consciousness is not clamped, as it were, to the brain, inseparably associated with the grey matter: it is something independent, no matter how limited its usual functioning. Second, its immediate and direct awareness of things, though from the standpoint of the contact between them and the sense-organs and though occasioned by this contact, shows it to be supra-sensuous in capacity, knowing by what can only be called a mode of intuition. If knowledge of objective reality is fundamentally by a mode of intuition, the more active the intuition, the more and more beyond the surface of things does knowledge of objective reality go and the deeper and higher it becomes. A Jesus, a Buddha, a Krishna are characterised precisely by what seems to be a play of intuition at its most active and intense: our judging whether they are a special class of victims of error and illusion or a superior type of

being with capacity of deeper and higher perception depends on what role we assign to their seeming intuitiveness. If intuitiveness, in whatever mode, is at the very base of all perception, surely a Jesus, a Buddha, a Krishna must be taken to be percipients of deeper and higher realities

(To be concluded)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

THE DUAL MOOD

ONE eye of laughter spans the air,
One eye of dream
Is lost in the firmament bare
Of trance-white gleam

One ear of hush has heard the feet
Of eternal mood,
Another is deaf in the retreat
Of solitude

One hand of might is awake and strong,
A son of fire,
One hand of a calm ivory song
Ascends in prayer

One foot treads the abyss, and one
The god's lost womb,
One heart has seen the naked sun,
The other the tomb

O body of dual epiphanies
Of night and day,
Thy magnificence reveal—thy seas
Of gnostic ray

12-1-62

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

THE WAGER OF AMBROSIA

IX. The Divine Assurance (D)

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

ARJUNA IS promised that by following step by step the spiritual Path of Action, Karma Yoga, he shall obtain closeness to the supreme Being. Indeed, he shall finally obtain him. By doing works and offering these to him the doer of the works shall get the knowledge of him and by that knowledge become one with him.

तैसे सर्वत्र माते भजता । सर्व मी होता अहता । नि शेष जाऊनि तत्त्वता । मीची होसी ॥एवं माझिये प्राप्तीवरी । कर्मालागोनि अवधारी । दाविली तुज उजरी । उपायाची ॥ जे आधी तव पांडुसुता । सर्व कर्मे मज अर्पिता । सर्वत्र प्रसन्नता । लाहिजे माझी ॥ पाठी माझां इये प्रसादी । माझे ज्ञान जाय सिद्धी । तेणे मिसळिजे त्रिशुद्धी । स्वरूपी माझा ॥

(Jnāneshwarī 18 1381-84)

Having arrived at this state any doubt regarding desirable or undesirable works, as to what is to be done and what to be shunned, that kind of clumsy uncertainty which haunted and disturbed him so far will no longer be present there. Arjuna is now told in a most assuring manner to leave everything in the hands of the Master of Works who ever guides the karmayogin and who controls all his actions.

सर्वधर्मास्त्रियज्य मामेक शरण ब्रज ।
अह त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुच ॥

इद ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
ना चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्य न च मा योऽभ्यसूयति ॥

(Gita: 18 66-67)

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

(Essays on the Gita, SABCL, Vol 13, p 536)

Jnaneshwar's exposition of these most important shlokas of the Gita runs as follows:

Desire is the cause of unhappiness, slander and fault-finding give rise to sin, ill-fortune and want of luck lead to utter helplessness, in that way, and out of ignorance, are born for life's progress dharma and adharma, misconduct and gainful conducive action. These are the ones which, when fallen under their sway, cause heaven and hell to take birth in us. Therefore, tells the Teacher to Arjuna, by

dismissing all these notions of things, these unavailing ideas, prejudices, misconceptions, individual preferences, this ignorance itself, should he take refuge solely in him. He should take refuge in the supreme Being by surrendering to him alone, in full awareness and knowledge of everything. That is indeed *saranam*, true protection and shelter for him,—living in him without dissolving himself in him. In that manner, and without abolishing their two-ness, did Krishna make Arjuna one with him.

हृदय हृदय येक जाले । ये हृदयीचे ते हृदयी घातले । व्दैत न मोडितां केले । आपणाऐसे अर्जुना ॥ दीपे दीपु लाविला । तैसा परिष्वंगु जाला । व्दैत न मोडितां केला । आपणपे पार्थु ॥

dwaita na moditā kele āpanā aise arjunā

(*Jnāneshwarī* 18 1421-22)

The sea got mingled with the Sea and rose to the sky

Everywhere is the presence of the Lord himself, the universe filled by Narayana alone. In this way, through Bhakti Yoga, does the true Karma Yoga lead the doer of the works to the knowledge of the Eternal in whom is complete liberation. This is the most ancient and cherished primordial knowledge proclaimed by the Gita.

Indeed it is this knowledge which we call the Gita, the Knowledge of the Spirit, of the Self, the Knowledge of the Eternal. It is actually the Song of the supreme Lord, *bhagavadgītā*. It puts you firmly on the forward-leading path and dispels everything which is retrograde. Its greatness is such that in it are founded the Vedas themselves. In this statement of Jnaneshwar there is a great and very unusual perception which again bespeaks his unique spiritual attainments. The supreme secret of the Gita has been truly revealed in its supreme greatness.

The message has been given, the supreme word uttered. The bewildered soul of man facing the battle of life, and meeting the conflicts of values in its daily conduct, has been divinely assured that everything for him will be taken care of. He is not to have any fear and he is not to grieve. He is only to take refuge in him alone who is the Lord of the Universe. Such is the promise and pledge made by him, the Bhagavan of the Gita. Arjuna shall attain oneness with him and in his eminence and suzerainty win all, by his grace move for ever in his happy tranquil delight. That is the truest deliverance from this mundane existence and its thousandfold entanglements and evils, deliverance for doing action in the Spirit's freedom. Indeed, it will lead the doer of the works to perfection in the "light and splendour of a divine and infinite nature". After giving up works altogether, whatever he shall be doing in this state will be the *muktasya karma*, the action that will not bind him to anything. Such is the secret of Karma Yoga by which the seeker of the Self will discover the Self, realise the Self, fulfil himself in the Self. That is the finest boon and the noblest victory offered by the Yoga of the Gita to

the human soul, the Aryan spirit living and acting in the nobility of life. That is the merit of the Yoga of the Gita which holds spiritual transformation as its most desirable siddhi or attainment

Rising well above the tamasic or inert mechanical actions, crossing the stage of actions governed by the egoistic-vitalistic impulses and determinations which are held under her sway by the lower Prakriti, discarding the inferior determinants, doing things without recoiling in any way and doing them with skill even while attending to their minute details, stationing himself in the Spirit and performing works in its tranquil freedom and finally making all works a Yajna, a sacrifice to the Master of Works, does the karmayogin really come to the state of perfect felicity of taking refuge completely in the Divine Here is for him the crowning achievement of the Yoga of the Gita In the words of Sri Aurobindo this is what the Teacher of the Gita tells Arjuna

All this personal effort and self-discipline will not in the end be needed, all following and limitation of rule and Dharma can at last be thrown away as hampering encumbrances if thou canst make a complete surrender to Me, depend alone on the Spirit and Godhead within thee and all things and trust to his sole guidance. Turn all thy mind to Me and fill it with the thought of Me and My presence. Turn all thy heart to Me, make thy every action, whatever it be, a sacrifice and offering to Me That done, leave Me to do My will with thy life and soul and action, do not be grieved or perplexed by My dealings with thy mind and heart and life and works or troubled because they do not seem to follow the laws and Dharmas man imposes on himself to guide his limited will and intelligence My ways are the ways of a perfect wisdom and power and love that knows all things and combines all its movements in view of a perfect eventual result, for it is refining and weaving together the many threads of an integral perfection I am here with thee in thy chariot of battle revealed as the Master of existence within and without thee and I repeat the absolute assurance, the infallible promise that I will lead thee to Myself through and beyond all sorrow and evil. Whatever difficulties and perplexities arise, be sure of this that I am leading thee to a complete divine life in the universal and an immortal existence in the transcendent Spirit

(*Essays on the Gita*, SABCL, Vol 13, pp 537-38)

The supreme Mantra is given to the seeker soul

An omniscient consciousness will take up our knowledge and our ignorance, our truth and our error, cast away their forms of insufficiency, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*, and transform all into infinite light An almighty Power will take up our virtue and sin, our right and wrong, our strength and our weakness, cast away their tangled figures, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*, and transform all into its transcendent purity and universal good and infallible force An ineffable Ananda will

take up our petty joy and sorrow, our struggling pleasure and pain, cast away their discordances and imperfect rhythms, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*, and transform all into its transcendent and universal unimaginable delight. All that all the Yogas can do will be done and more, but it will be done in a greater seeing way, with a greater wisdom and truth than any human teacher, saint or sage can give us. The inner spiritual state to which this supreme Yoga will take us, will be above all that is here and yet comprehensive of all things in this and other worlds, but with a spiritual transformation of all, without limitation, without bondage, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*. The infinite existence, consciousness and delight of the Godhead in its calm silence and bright boundless activity will be there, will be its essential, fundamental, universal stuff, mould and character. And in that mould of infinity, the Divine made manifest will overtly dwell, no longer concealed by his Yogamaya, and whenever and as he wills build in us whatever shapes of the Infinite, translucent forms of knowledge, thought, love, spiritual joy, power and action according to his self-fulfilling will and immortal pleasure. And there will be no binding effect on the free soul and the unaffected nature, no unescapable crystallising into this or that inferior formula. For all the action will be executed by the power of the Spirit in a divine freedom, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*.

(*Ibid* , pp 540-41)

We may thus say that, according to Sri Aurobindo, the Mantra of the Gita is the Mantra of Spiritual Transformation. The Yogic vision and intuition of Jnaneshwar also comes pretty close to it, which is quite surprising when we remember that his Shankarite thoughts and metaphysics pertain essentially to the passive Brahman alone, the quiescent Eternal devoid of any activity. The Yogi stands taller in him than the Thinker.

In this context we may also note in retrospect that the highest siddhi or perfection, that of the spiritual transformation held for us by the Gita, is characteristic of the Overmind working in life here in the mortal world, *mrityuloka*. Overmind dynamism in the hierarchy of the Planes of Consciousness comes from the topmost plane standing above the mental consciousness in its widest sense. Which also means that the Gita itself is an utterance of the supreme transcendent Being standing on the Overmind plane, Krishna as the Overmind Avatar. In the evolutionary process of the Earth his chief concern was to establish this dynamism, it leading to the completest possible spiritual transformation. Until this work was done the absolute dynamism of the Absolute that comes only with the Supermind or the gnostic Truth-Consciousness, Vijnana proper, had to wait for its Avatar to arrive. To the yogic *Jnāneshwarī*, true to the vision and work of the Gita, no hint of him is available.

(*To be continued*)

R Y DESHPANDE

SRI AUROBINDO—THE YOGI-AUTHOR

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

WITH the Mother's arrival in 1914, a new chapter in Sri Aurobindo's writing began with the publication of a new journal, the *Arya*

In a new act of the drama of the world
The united Two began a greater age²²

One immediate result of this meeting was the decision to launch a philosophical magazine, the *Arya*, in which he would put forth the synthesis of Knowledge and Experience, writing in the terms of, as he himself described it, the intellect all that he had come to know in practising Yoga daily. But soon the rumblings of the war were heard in Europe and the Mother had to leave Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo had to take full charge of writing and publishing the magazine single-handedly, this he did till January 1921, by which time the Mother had returned for good. The real aim of the *Arya*, he pointed out, was

to feel out for the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thoughts of the past²³

This was to be done on the basis of intuitive thought and spiritual experience. His ideal was

to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life, to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power and complexity, and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity²⁴

This was the announcement of what the journal was to attempt and to accomplish. Sri Aurobindo was not merely a writer of works of prose or poetry, he intended to lay the foundations of an integral divine life on earth, the new evolutionary stage that humanity would reach on its upward journey. For six and a half years the *Arya* gave its readers the treasures of Sri Aurobindo's experience and vision in the various realms of knowledge—philosophy, literature, Yoga, deep interpretations of the Vedas and the Upanishads, artistic and literary criticism, studies of history, sociology, national and

international politics. A world of wisdom was given to man, in fact, a new world based on a new consciousness was brought within the reach of the human grasp.

The first and most important gift he gave was *The Life Divine* which is a grand statement of his vision of the new humanity based on his realisation of the Gnostic consciousness, a sublime announcement of the coming age of Supernature. This is possible because Life is not divorced from God, Spirit from Matter. He says

The two are one: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter, Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit.²⁵

It is because we fail to realise that “all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony” that we feel the need to divide and separate truths. A detailed exposition of how this future supermanhood is to be realised is presented in *The Synthesis of Yoga* in which all the Yogas are synthesised and exceeded by the Integral Yoga. Of the past Knowledge there were also interpretations in *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Eight Upanishads*, *Essays on the Gita* (interpretations which were based on experiences and not on mental analysis). Harmony, integration, synthesis, evolution—these were the lines along which his themes were developed. *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Psychology of Social Development* (later known as *The Human Cycle*) followed the same pattern of evolution of consciousness in the Collectivity. *A Defence of Indian Culture* (which later became *The Foundations of Indian Culture*) and the shorter work *The Renaissance in India* looked deeply into India’s past, indicating also the ways of her future fulfilment. Even a work commenced as the review of a book turned into a treatise, *The Future Poetry*, poetry being the heightened expression of the human experience and consciousness. Added to all these were translations, miscellaneous essays, aphorisms and reviews. So much wealth poured out of his masterly pen, with the help of which he sought to awaken man to his own essential truth and the purpose of his terrestrial existence. His was the Creative Word, the Word of Power. It was Revelation.

Long after the *Arya* publication was suspended, Sri Aurobindo took up the revision of these articles, made substantial additions and published the first volume of *The Life Divine* in 1939 and the second in 1940. This Manifesto of the Future is vision and experience written in inspired prose. The opening paragraph sets the tone of sublimity of rhythm and expression.

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration, today we see a humanity satiated but not

satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality ²⁶

In all of Sri Aurobindo's writings we find all-comprehensiveness and all-inclusiveness. He is never exclusive. Subsequent to *The Life Divine*, he continued with a series of articles called *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, which were the results of the powerful realisations of the Supermind. These were, as was *The Life Divine*, the record of his journey into this highest realm of the Supramental Consciousness, a Consciousness promised to the earth, which would usher in a New Age and a New World of Knowledge and Truth and Power and Joy. The ideal was "a divine life in a divine body".

A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and Joy remould her way to live
Even the body shall remember God ²⁷

This is the promise Sri Aurobindo makes in his great poem *Savitri*. What are required are, as he says,

The power of aspiration of the heart, the force of the will, the concentration of the mind, the perseverance and determination of the applied energy.. ²⁸

The command is to

Follow your soul and not your mind, your soul that answers to the Truth, not your mind that leaps at appearances, trust the Divine Power and she will free the godlike elements in you and shape all into an expression of Divine Nature ²⁹

Prior to this period, in the '30s, the advice and help that Sri Aurobindo gave to the disciples took the form of letters after he went into retirement and the Mother took full charge of the Ashram.

Every day the disciples sent up their queries and letters to Sri Aurobindo by 11 p.m. and he sat up through the night so that the answers could be sent back to them early the next morning. The letters, thousands of them, were of all kinds. They were about Yoga or about life in general, about personal and intimate matters as well as letters on art and poetry. The answers were equally varied, the tones included revelation, sublimity, even banter, humour, practicality. Often they were friendly, easy, revealing the close relationship between the Guru and the Shishya. For instance.

Disciple. No joy, no energy, no cheerfulness. Don't like to read or write—as if a dead man wailing. Do you understand the position? Any personal experience?

Sri Aurobindo. I quite understand, often had it myself devastatingly. That's why I always advise people who have it to cheer up and buck up.

To cheer up, buck up and the rest, if you can, saying, ‘‘Rome was not built in a day’’—if you can’t, gloom it through till the sun rises and the little birds chirp and all is well ³⁰

The great range of subjects and the varied style, the scintillating wit, the luminous insights, the gentle friendliness, the global vision—all these make the letters of Sri Aurobindo a profoundly illuminating yet highly enjoyable body of work

Along with this correspondence with his disciples, Sri Aurobindo continued with his poetic compositions. Poetry was to him always the language of the spirit. A poet was not merely a maker of verses or a thinker in lines and stanzas but one who

sees beyond the sight of the surface mind and finds the revealing word, not merely the adequate and effective, but the illumined and illuminating, the inspired and inevitable word, which compels us to see also ³¹

Such an intuitive and revealing poetry would harmonise five eternal powers, the five suns of poetry—Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit. Though Sri Aurobindo says that the poetry of the future will kindle these five ideal lamps or suns within our being, in our highest mind and inmost life, giving man a new largest vision of himself and Nature and God and things, we could say that this poetry no longer belongs strictly to the future, but is already given to us, to the earth, through his own compositions. They are all recordings of his vision and his yoga. Especially those that were written in the last two decades of his physical existence reveal a depth, a sweep, an inevitability and certitude that are the stamp of conscious creation. Very clearly he states, with no ambiguity

All things have bliss for their secret, only our consciousness falters
Fearing to offer itself as a victim on ecstasy’s altars
Is not the world his disguise? when that cloak is tossed back from his shoulders,
Beauty looks out like a sun on the hearts of the ravished beholders
Mortals, your end is beatitude, rapture eternal his meaning ³²

and again, later, another magical line

Ever we hear in the heart of the peril a flute go before us ³³

He noted down the stages of his inner journey, particularly during the years 1936-40, in numerous sonnets. They are, in a way, a part of his spiritual autobiography. Of them one in particular expresses the reason for his determined plunge into the Abyss—

I made an assignation with the Night,
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous

In my breast carrying God's deathless light
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.³⁴

He ends the description of that dangerous journey thus

And yet I know my footprints' tracks shall be
A pathway towards Immortality³⁵

The real essence of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is not only ascent to the Higher Realms, but also descent into earth-nature's subconscious and inconscient, to transform this earthly life into the Life Divine. In the poem *A God's Labour* he describes it thus:

A voice cried, 'Go where none have gone'
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate . . .'³⁶

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss³⁷

The final stages of his mysterious journey are compacted in a short powerful lyric, one of his later short poems (1938-39):

Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod
A step, and all is sky and God³⁸

The story of this long climb over hills and rocks, this adventure of the spirit to reach 'sky and God' is recounted in the grand synthesis of poetry and yoga, of legend and symbol that is *Savitri*. *Savitri* is an adventure of consciousness and joy, an epic battle between Death and Light, between Love and Night. Night finally drops its dreadful and dim mask to reveal a Wonderful Face of Everlasting Day.

This poem is the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. In fact, all that he has written in his other works is woven into this marvellously long epic with its flowing incantatory lines. It is a story that is a spiritual testament given to us,—as well as a force in action. Even the utterance of the lines can transpose the receptive reader or hearer to other planes of consciousness, his spirit vibrant with their rhythms.

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune.
One who is in us as our secret self,

Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
 He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
 His image in the human measure cast
 That to his divine measure we might rise,
 Then in a figure of divinity
 The Maker shall recast us and impose
 A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould
 Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,
 Touching the moment with eternity
 This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven
 A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme
 His nature we must put on as he put ours,
 We are sons of God and must be even as he
 His human portion, we must grow divine
 Our life is a paradox with God for key.³⁹

This then is the task he sets before us, this the labour he has undertaken so that we may follow in his wake. In his life, in his works, this is the central theme, the one thread that runs through his vast range of writings. Today, at the end of the century, at the start of the new millennium, we realise that Sri Aurobindo transcending time, place and circumstance, leads us to the origin and the ultimate end of existence. All of it is indeed A God's Labour. When this long adventure of consciousness shall arrive at its final fulfilment

A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell
 And take the charge of breath and speech and act
 And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns
 And every feeling a celestial thrill
 Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come
 Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind,
 A sudden bliss shall run through every limb
 And Nature with a mightier Presence fill
 Thus shall the earth open to divinity
 And common natures feel the wide uplift,
 Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
 And meet the deity in common things
 Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
 The Spirit shall take up the human play,
 This earthly life become the life divine⁴⁰

(Concluded)

JHUMUR BHATTACHARYA

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[N B All references, except reference no 23, are from the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* volumes]

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| 23 <i>Arya</i> 15 August, 1915 p 1 | 33 <i>Ibid</i> p 533 |
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THE MAJESTY EMERGED

My running mind demurred
 To cease its sophistry,
 Levying doubt it blurred
 Knowledge with its fee

My beating heart refused
 Beats of a sweeter thrill.
 With sentiment effused
 Its worldly quadrille

Tier on tier of habit
 I ripped from belly to brow
 An inner lamp was lit
 In a golden-orange glow

With gaping disbelief
 My mind forgot to brood,
 My heart devoid of grief
 Dumb and alert stood

The spirit that is in the sun
 Awoke in my bosom blind,
 Emerging from the cave it won
 And ruled my heart and mind

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

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

III. Bases of the Mother's Yoga

IN this section the article proposes to reveal the several ways and 'methods' which are indispensable for this yoga and which the Mother has disclosed in her prayers. Regarding the method to be followed Sri Aurobindo says, "The sadhana of this yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, Mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come."¹ Sri Aurobindo lays the greatest emphasis on surrender which is the first and the last word of the supramental Yoga. To quote him "The first word of the supramental Yoga is surrender, its last word also is surrender. It is by a will to give oneself to the eternal Divine for lifting into the divine consciousness, for perfection, for transformation, that the Yoga begins, it is in the entire giving that it culminates, for it is only when the self-giving is complete that there comes the finality of the Yoga, the entire taking up into the supramental Divine, the perfection of the being, the transformation of the nature."² Only a complete surrender helps one "to adopt the baby-cat attitude" suggested by Sri Ramakrishna.

In almost all her prayers the Mother emphasises, either directly or indirectly, upon the significance of surrender, self-giving, consecration. In the preface to the *Prayers and Meditations* she writes "Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, life, work, wealth, these are the true children of God." The worth of man lies in his self-giving to the Divine, and does not depend upon his "position, power and riches." And the Mother concludes the preface. "This book is meant for those who aspire for an utter consecration to the Divine."

The very first prayer of November 2, 1912 is on consecration and how it "made myself one in identity with Thee", made the ego disappear—"for I shall be Thou". On April 8, 1914, she writes "I give myself to Thee without reserve and the 'I' disappears in Thee." Such a surrender and self-giving offers a "sense of relief, the delicious lightness we feel when we are disembarrassed of all the anxious care for ourself, for our life, for our health, for our satisfactions and even for our progress," records the Mother in the prayer of August 17, 1913. With surrender we hand over the responsibility of our life to the Divine, the 'baby-cat attitude'. The prayer of July 17, 1914 expresses a beautiful experience. "O my sweet Master, sovereign Lord, Thou hast taken all my cares and hast left me only the Beatitude, the supreme ecstasy of Thy divine Communion."

This 'divine Communion' leads to several other realisations. The foremost from the point of view of yoga is identification of the individual will with the Divine Will. And, as the Mother records in the prayer of May 11, 1913, "It is by becoming conscious of Thy will and identifying ours with Thine that there is found the secret of true liberty and all-puissance, the secret of the regeneration of forces and the transfiguration of the being" Such an identification is an important step towards transformation, it comes from surrender and is aided by faith and trust. The prayer of June 15, 1914 expresses the attitude of complete faith and trust. "Lie nestled in my heart and do not worry' what has to be done will be done" The same child-like faith and trust is in the prayer of December 7, 1912 "and like the child who does not reason and has no care, I trust myself to Thee that Thy Will may be done, that Thy Light may manifest, Thy Peace radiate, Thy Love cover the world When Thou Willest I shall be in Thee, Thyself, and there shall be no more any distinction, I await that blessed hour without impatience of any kind. "

Sri Aurobindo puts the greatest emphasis upon aspiration, faith and surrender. He exhorts:

If one wanted the Divine, the Divine himself would take up the purifying of the heart and develop the sadhana and give the necessary experiences; it can and does happen in that way if one has trust and confidence in the Divine and the will to surrender. For such a taking up involves one's putting oneself in the hands of the Divine rather than relying on one's own efforts alone and this implies one's putting one's trust and confidence in the Divine and a progressive self-giving¹

Therefore Sri Aurobindo stresses, in the same letter, this aspect of his Yoga. He writes

The core of the inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude "I want the Divine and nothing else All for him and myself for him Whatever happens, I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and go on in perfect reliance that it will be done."⁴

For the sadhana of Integral Yoga Sri Aurobindo always asks from the sadhaks faith and surrender, nothing more. With perfect trust and self-giving the great Work of Transformation would be achieved.

Identification of the individual consciousness with the Divine Consciousness requires, besides faith and trust, an intense aspiration. The prayer of February 13, 1914 records, "In the silence of an intense concentration I would unite my consciousness with Thy absolute consciousness, I would identify myself with Thee, O sovereign Lord of our being ." Again the prayer of February 14, 1914 expresses, "with all our strength we aspire to identify our consciousness with Thy eternal Consciousness, that we may accomplish Thy sublime work in each thing and at every moment " What an

intense aspiration for this identification! When this identification is achieved, our limited consciousness is immeasurably widened so as to hold the vast Truth-Consciousness in it. Listen to the prayer of October 16, 1914, "Thy will is that I should be like a channel always open, always more wide, so that Thy forces may pour their abundance into the World. O Lord, may Thy will be done! Am I not Thy Will and Thy Consciousness in a supreme bliss? And the being enlarges itself immeasurably to become as vast as the universe." The widening of the consciousness is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a condition for supramental creation. To quote him "The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting." The prayer of February 17, 1914 records, "O Lord, how ardently my aspiration rises towards Thee give us the full consciousness of Thy law, the constant perception of Thy will, so that our decision may be Thy decision."

According to both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother true union cannot be realised without a total and complete surrender. In the prayer of December 2, 1912 she writes "So long as one element of the being, one movement of thought is still subjected to outside influences, that is to say, not solely under Thine, it cannot be said that the true union is realised." Or again, listen to the prayer of April 7, 1914 "Never hast thou been able to die integrally. Always something in thee has wished to know, to see, to understand. Surrender completely, learn how to disappear, break the last dam which separates thee from me, accomplish without reserve thy act of surrender." The result of such a surrender is that the ego disappears in the Beyond-ego. Then the Divine makes of the individual a docile instrument put at His service. The individual consciousness becomes a centre of concentration and manifestation of His infinite and eternal rays. This is the theme of the prayer of April 10, 1914, "Thou hast taken my life and made it Thine; Thou hast taken my will and united it to Thine, Thou hast taken my love and identified it with Thine, Thou hast taken my thought and replaced it by Thy absolute Consciousness." Thus when the Divine penetrates each and every fibre of our being, "till Thou alone livest in us and through us" (March 7, 1914), then the process of transformation begins.

The infinite and eternal rays of the Divine shall penetrate the fibre of our being in the silence of the mind. The prayer of December 5, 1912 exhorts "In Peace and Silence the Eternal manifests: allow nothing to disturb you and the Eternal will manifest; have perfect equality in the face of all and the Eternal will be there. Yes, we should not put too much intensity, too much effort into our seeking for Thee, we must not desire to see Thee, for that is still a mental agitation which obscures Thy Eternal Presence; it is in the most complete Peace, Serenity and Equality that all is Thou even as Thou art all, and the least vibration in this perfectly pure and calm atmosphere is an obstacle to Thy manifestation. No haste, no inquietude, no tension."

Listen to Sri Aurobindo's poetical expression of the same

This Light comes not by struggle or by thought,
In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts

And the hushed heart hears the unuttered Word.
A vast surrender was his only strength ⁶

Our mind must reflect a 'vast quietism' so as to let the Transcendent act. But unfortunately we do not have time nor will to step back from outside agitations into the silence of the mind. In the prayer of November 29, 1913 the Mother expresses this unfortunate situation "Why all this noise, all this movement, this vain and futile agitation. How sad is the sight of all that wasted energy, all those useless efforts! When will they stop from dancing like puppets on a string, pulled they know not by whom or what? When will they find time to sit quietly and go within, to recollect themselves and open that inner door which screens from them Thy priceless treasures, Thy infinite boons?"

As surrender, self-giving, consecration form the base of the Mother's Yoga in *Prayers and Meditations*, so Divine Love is the master key to unlock the door to Transformation. On December 16, 1913 the Mother writes "Thy love in so far as we can perceive and manifest it, is the only key that can open the hearts seeking for Thee." In the same prayer the Mother states that those who follow the path of intellect "are the most difficult of all to convert, one finds it harder to awaken in them the consciousness of the Divine than in any other being of good-will. It is love alone that can accomplish this miracle, for love opens all doors, pierces through all walls, crosses beyond all obstacles." As love touches the depth of our being, it makes the soul turn to eternal things, and

In every shrine it cries for the clasp of God
Then is there played the crowning Mystery,
Then is achieved the longed-for miracle ⁷

For both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo Divine Love plays the most decisive role in integral Yoga. As Sri Aurobindo states, 'the longed-for miracle' can be achieved when

A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God ⁸

"Love is stronger than the bonds of Fate" and it "must not cease to live upon the earth." Sri Aurobindo expresses, as does the Mother in her *Prayers*, the great power of Love in the following lines

For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here,
Love is man's lien on the Absolute ⁹

(To be concluded)

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- 3 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 23, pp 586-87
- 4 *Ibid*, p 587
- 5 *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10, p 375 (footnote)
- 6 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 28, p 315
- 7 *Savitri*, SABCL Vol 29, p 631-32
- 8 *Ibid* p 632
- 9 *Ibid*, p 633

COMMUNICATION

EBBING and waning of joy, the day estranged
 Here, petalled evening droops,
 Below sky-rim the petals have drifted—all is changed

To a dim listless stalk where Twilight stoops
 Horizonward, and then
 The black scorpion, Night, lifts claws of loneliness and loops

The zenith and all the sky
 (Its venomèd blackness is in the life-blood of men)
 O then, love-armèd cry,

Bring with compulsive dream the moon's foreglow
 Over the difficult edge
 Of being, that eastward-straining hopes may know

Lit pearl of untarrying pledge,—
 Counsel, and laughter, and undissembling eyes.
 Time-tameless thought shall dredge

Wide welcome for the glimpsed sail of moonrise,
 The ship of understanding and conjoinèd wills,
 The keel of trust from far-off friendly skies

April 2, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment

A very finely built poem in every way, diction, rhythm and the working out of the idea and image. Lines 3-7 and 15, 16 and the expression 'Bring Over the difficult edge of being' I find especially original and vividly forceful in image and phrase

CULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE INDIAN APPROACH

THE modern age is characterised by the predominance of the economic motives overshadowing the other equally or even more important motives such as the intellectual, aesthetic and ethical motives of the higher mind of man which shape the cultural life of the community. But in the ancient civilisations economic motives played a much less dominant part and were subordinated to the political and cultural motives. It is necessary for us to examine the balance arrived between economy and culture by the ancient Indian civilisation and its relevance for the modern humanity.

One of the oft-repeated arguments of the champions of secularism thrown constantly against the exponents of the spirit of culture is the economic factor of poverty, inequality, unemployment, etc. Its triumphant rhetoric is "What is the use of culture and its noble abstractions when more than half of the human population is below the poverty line or without a job?" And so on. This sort of rhetoric has an immediate emotional appeal for the unthinking sentimental part of our mind. But, paradoxically, the important factor ignored in this economic argument is that one of the major causes of this economic poverty and inequality lies in the stunted growth of mankind in the spiritual, moral and cultural dimension due to an excessive lopsided emphasis on "economic development".

The present humanity has sufficient material, scientific and technological resources to produce adequate quantity of food and wealth to eliminate poverty in the world. What it lacks are the moral and spiritual resources for the equitable distribution and sharing of wealth and, more importantly, the sharing of the means of creating the wealth, which, in our age, is the power of technology. The economic argument is valid only if the economic problem is solely a problem of production. But the real problem lies not in production of wealth or technological bottlenecks but in the distribution and sharing of wealth and technology. An eminent environmental thinker writes in his well-known and influential book as follows: "Another central component in the existing ethic is a near exclusive emphasis on production and on the acquisition of wealth as an end in itself. A by-product of thousands of years of material scarcity, this must give way to a much greater emphasis on distribution and sharing. Poverty exists in the late twentieth century not because of a lack of technology to raise individual productivity above a minimum level, but because the diffusion of technology and wealth on a global scale have received little attention. Modern man has excelled at production but failed at distribution."¹

One may ask, is this not the ideal of the economic system of Marxist communism which collapsed recently? But the problem with Marxism is not with its ideals, it is with its methods. Marxism is right in its emphasis on distributive justice. However, the method employed to realise this ideal in society is not on the right track.

This problem of distribution cannot be solved solely by technology, management

and organisation. There has to be a cultural revolution in the economic and political community leading to a higher level of spiritual and moral awakening. This means a positive and living awakening to the unity and interdependence of human life and, as a result, elimination of greed and the urge for domination and exploitation,—two major causes of economic and social inequality and poverty. A change in the moral and psychological poise and the lifestyles of the community from the consumptive and acquisitive mode of life to a sharing and giving mode of life is needed. But this inner psychological evolution can come only by a free growth from within the economic community and not through a regimented outer control of the economic system.

The second factor which the economic argument ignores is the close and mutual interdependence of culture and economy. Cultural progress and its new thought, values and ideals release a fresh wave of intellectual, moral and spiritual force, which has a positive and inspiring effect on the economic, social and political life of the community. When we examine the history of human civilisation we can see that a cultural renaissance is always followed by economic prosperity, social progress and political stability. On the other hand, economic prosperity and political stability provide the leisure and free energy needed for cultural pursuits and as a result may bring with it a cultural renaissance. We are stressing on culture because it is a deeper and higher dimension of the collective life with a bearing on the moral and spiritual evolution of humanity and therefore of living relevance for the future evolution of Mankind. In this important issue the balance struck between these two sections of the society by ancient Indian culture may yield some useful insights.

Economics in ancient India, contrary to popular conceptions, was given much importance in the thought and life of the people. The science of economics, called *Vitta*, formed an important part of the royal curriculum, it was considered as essential for the material well-being of the people as the Vedas for their spiritual well-being. Ancient Indian thinkers also recognised that the real source of economic prosperity of a nation is not its material resources but the entrepreneurial class, *Vaishya*. As the *Mahabharata* states. “The power of production in the *Vaishyas* should be always encouraged. They make the realm strong, enhance agriculture, develop its trade. . . A wise king should be favourable to them. There is no greater wealth in a kingdom than its merchants.”

The other feature of the ancient Indian economic system is that primary emphasis is not on consumption, acquisition and possession but on spending, sharing and giving. The ancient Indian thinkers are well-aware of the fundamental law of wealth-generation that wealth is gained not by hoarding but by spending. “Wealth should be spent by one who wishes to increase his wealth after the manner of scattering the seeds on the ground,” says the *Mahabharata*. Constant emphasis by the *Smritis* on *dāna* or “giving” as one of the duties or *Dharma* of the higher classes created a philanthropic spirit among wealthy and powerful sections of the society which tended to redistribute wealth in social and public welfare projects.

But in the Indian vision of society the highest motive and aim of social progress is

not economic development or wealth-maximisation. Progressive socio-moral well-being of the community through an increasingly conscious manifestation of the divine Law. Dharma, in society has always been emphasised by it. Artha (worldly riches) and Kama (pleasure) are only the means for the progressive reign of Dharma in society. And, for the individual, even Dharma is not the end but only a stage in his progressive evolution towards his ultimate spiritual consummation, Moksha. As Bhishma says in the Mahabharata: "Dharma, Artha and Kama are not ends in themselves, but are just means to an end, and that end is Moksha."

One of the major defects of the modern development models patterned on the Western values is that their vision does not extend beyond the Artha-Kama dimensions of the society. Continuous enlargement and fulfilment of the Artha-Kama needs, motives and aims of human beings is considered as the only way to progress. So, economy and polity, especially the first one, have occupied an inordinately large portion of human society overshadowing and suppressing other equally important organs of the society like culture. But the architects of Indian culture had a more "holistic" vision of development. They aimed at a balanced and gradual development of all the four basic organs of the society—Economy, Polity, Culture and Labour-force—but with an emphasis on the cultural progress of the community. This is not peculiar to ancient Indian culture alone, it is a common feature of all the great and major ancient civilisations. The only difference is that, while other ancient civilisations stressed the intellectual, aesthetic and ethical dimensions of culture, Indian civilisation emphasised the spiritual and subordinated all other aspects of life to the dominant spiritual motive.

The Indian vision of development is in agreement with the modern development models that the first business of the governing organ of a collectivity is to create a sound, efficient and healthy economic, social and political organisation for the fulfilment of the Artha-Kama needs of the people. Hence economy, society and polity and the science of economics and politics, Vitta and Dandaniti, occupied an important place in the educational, social and cultural life of ancient India. But ancient Indian thinkers recognised that to stop short and wallow contentedly or to indulge excessively in this stage would lead to a relapse into barbarism. Once the Artha-Kama needs of people are reasonably fulfilled, the governing organ of the society must turn its attention to the development of the higher dimension of the collectivity, to the socio-cultural, moral and spiritual evolution of the community, to the awakening and fulfilment of the Dharmic motives in the people which will elevate the collective consciousness of the community to a higher level of corporate life. In fact from the beginning all the four major organs of the society have to be simultaneously developed though a predominant stress or priority attention to a particular organ of the society may be necessary at each stage of the collective evolution or for strengthening an organ which is underdeveloped.

This Indian vision of development has a living relevance for the future evolution of human society. For, as Sri Aurobindo points out, "in the next great stage of human

progress it is not a material but a spiritual, moral and psychical advance that has to be made..^{1,2} The entire humanity in general, and the affluent nations of the West in particular are now poised or even compelled to make such an evolutionary leap. Now it is recognised by most of the economic and development experts that there are certain ecological limits to economic and material growth, Artha, and most of the affluent societies in the West are on the threshold of these limits. What the ancient Indian seers perceived from the point of view of moral and psychological considerations, modern economic and development thinkers are arriving at through the ecological route.

But what is not equally recognised by these modern experts is that just as there is a limit imposed on the economic and material growth in the dimension of Artha by the ecology of the physical and biological dimensions of Nature, the Dharma of our material Mother, there is also a limit to the satisfaction of Kama, the desire for vital enjoyment, by the ecology of the subjective dimensions of Nature. Unchecked and indiscriminate indulgence of vital passions, *kama*, whether by the individual, the collectivity or a civilisation leads to the exhaustion of the vital energy of the human being and as a result loss of the creative force needed for higher evolution and progress.

The present critical situation in the ecological and energy front has created a widespread awareness and interest among the economic community in energy preservation and management. But in a predominantly materialistic civilisation like ours, the focus is primarily on the material energies. The preservation and management of human creative energies which is more important or at least as important as material energies is not receiving as much attention.

M S SRINIVASAN

References

- 1 Lester R. Brown, *World without Borders* p. 339
- 2 *SABCL*, Vol. 1, p. 465

ADITI

PURIFY the body
Of our human love,
Making it a temple
Of your Bliss

May our aspiration
Be a perfect offering,—
To find full acceptance
In your Divinity

SURESH THADANI

THE REAL YOU

THE other day I went to a chemist's shop to get tablets for a toothache. The pills were given in a paper bag on which was written the line "Awaken the real You in you." It was an advertisement to sell cosmetics or costly jewellery.

This line rang a bell in my memory and brought to my mind an incident relating to Kant, the German philosopher. Kant was going home brooding over some philosophical problem in deep concentration. He went into his house and was still brooding. Two visitors wanted to see him.

Along with Kant there was another man in the room. The two visitors went in but were not able to place Kant. One of the visitors asked "Are you Mr Kant?" Kant did not answer as he was still brooding over his proposition in philosophy. Then the second visitor asked: "Who are you?" Kant was still brooding and after a couple of minutes answered "I shall be much obliged to you and feel grateful to you, gentlemen, if you can give me the answer to your question."

Then my mind brooded over the question and its answer, and it brought me to the gospel of Ramana Maharshi who directed everyone to make an enquiry for one mighty question "Who am I?" This takes us deeper and one has to inescapably answer this sometime or other. It is obvious that one is not the body or the desire-self (vital) or the mind. Everyone is an *amśa*, a portion of the Self, the Oversoul as Emerson calls it, and it has come to do a work of God on earthly soil.

The fact that one is not the body is borne out by another story relating to Epictetus, the philosopher. He was a slave under the Roman Emperor and he was harshly punished by his master even for slight mistakes. He was beaten almost everyday by his master. One day, for no serious fault of his the master beat him so severely that his leg broke and he became lame. After sometime, a friend of Epictetus, who lived far away, came to see him and, finding him limping, asked him how he became lame. Epictetus gave a characteristic reply: "I am not lame, but my leg is lame." His detachment from the body was so perfect that whatever happened to it, he never thought it had anything to do with his real *Self*. This story is told by Swami Ramdas, a saint in Kerala.

This midday meditation of mine put me in touch with one of Sri Aurobindo's sonnets, *The One Self*, which is the answer to both the questions "Who are You?" and "Who am I?" The sonnet is given here.

All are deceived, do what the One Power dictates,
Yet each thinks his own will his nature moves,
The hater knows not 'tis himself he hates,
The lover knows not 'tis himself he loves

In all is one being many bodies bear,
There Krishna flutes upon the forest mood,
There Shiva sits ash-smear'd, with matted hair
But Krishna and Shiva are the single God

In us too Krishna seeks for love and joy,
 In us too Shiva struggles with the world's grief
 One Self in all of us endures annoy,
 Cries in his pain and asks his fate's relief

My rival's downfall is my own disgrace,
 I look on my enemy and see Krishna's face

(*Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p 165)

At this point my hands picked up by chance or destiny K D Sethna's slim volume called *The Secret Splendour* (published in 1941) wherein I found the beautiful poem titled *The Real You* * Lines 11 to 18 in the poem sum up in poetic language all that the seers and philosophers have said regarding *the real you* Sri Aurobindo says in another sonnet called *I*

One mighty Self of cosmic act and thought
 Employs this figure of a unit nought

All types of sadhana lead to this realisation which is the basis of Yoga

C SUBBIAN

THE REAL YOU

Draw near, O Love, draw very very near,
 For I would see Your visage full and clear
 A distant adoration cannot ease
 My heart's unbearable burning chastities
 Am I grown pure that I may worship nought
 Save an elusive sweetness in my thought?
 The white soul-dream but beckons You to trace
 Upon its solitary calm Your face—
 Your limbs of utter intimacy, Love!
 And no mere flush of joy looming above
 The real You, imperishably fair,
 Compared with whom our flesh is thin as air—
 Body of light which makes all forms of clay
 Dim replicas of its prefiguring play—
 Let my unworlded eyes touch the true line
 Of that primordial passion O divine
 Lover, I am now stripped of all I see,
 That You may lose invisibility!

AMAL KIRAN

* The poem is reproduced at the bottom of this page

TORTURE

NOTHING has changed
The body suffers pain
It must eat, breathe air, sleep
under the thin skin flows blood
It has a fair supply of teeth and nails,
the bones are breakable, the joints extendable
When tortured, all this is taken into account

Nothing has changed.
The body trembles as it has trembled
before and after the foundation of Rome,
in the twentieth century, before and after Christ
there have been tortures and there are tortures now,
merely the globe has shrunk
Whatever happens seems just next door

Nothing has changed
Only there are more people
Beside the old misdeeds, new ones have appeared
real, imaginary, transient and non-existent
but the scream of the body in reply
was, is and will be always the cry of innocence
according to the ancient scale and tone

Nothing has changed
Maybe manners, ceremonies and dances
The body writhes, struggles, tries to escape,
when hit it falls to the knees,
it grows blue, swells, salivates and bleeds

Nothing has changed apart from the courses of rivers,
the outlines of woods, shores, deserts and icebergs
Amid these landscapes the little soul wanders,
disappears, reappears, approaches, withdraws
a stranger to itself, evasive
now certain, now uncertain of its own existence,
while the body is, and is, and is—
it cannot get away

W SZYMBORSKA

(Translated from the Polish by Marta Guha)

NARAD—THE DEVARSHI

NARAD IS said to be the Brahma-Manasputra, *i e*, the mental son of Brahma, the Creator. The Puranas describe many ups and downs in the spiritual evolution of his personality and finally we have that he attained the highest status as a Divine Seer. In the Geeta, Sri Krishna described him as a Devarshi and his Vibhuti.

He is the foremost bhakta of Sri Maha Vishnu, the Supreme Divine Personality. He moves freely in all the worlds of the universe. He is a welcome personage everywhere, be it in the assembly of Rishis, sages and saints, kings or any class of beings. He is endowed with the highest Jnana, knowledge, and is the knower of the past, present and future.

In the spiritual lore of India, we often hear about Narad. He not only holds an esteemed position in the class of saints, seers and sages, but seems to have been assigned a special role in the spiritual development of India from ancient times, and also in guiding individuals in their spiritual practices. Whenever and wherever there is a doubtful situation or a likelihood of world events being diverted into wrong directions by whatever forces, he is there giving a push in the right direction, averting a wrong movement.

Coming to our own times, on some occasion, when the Mother was asked where Narad stands, she was reported to have said that he is on the edge of the overmind plane.

The special role of Narad appears to be to give a push, a spurt of strength, to an individual's turn for an intenser spiritual activity or to give a definite spiritual trend to world events. But, strangely, in the world, because of his precipitate action, he is known as *kalahapriya*, a lover and promoter of quarrels and disputes.

The spiritual literature of India has developed a tradition to introduce Narad whenever a great spiritual event is to happen or a great soul is to be helped and guided towards God-realisation. Sri Aurobindo appears to have honoured this great tradition by giving a role to Narad in his epic *Savitri*.

Aswapati with his queen is sitting in his palace. Then Narad enters and he is welcomed.

Sri Aurobindo beautifully describes the descent of Narad from the high heavens to the mortal world below.

Crossing a wide expanse of brilliant peace
Narad the heavenly sage from Paradise
Came chanting through the large and lustrous air
He passed from the Immortals' happy paths
To a world of toil and quest and grief and hope
Across an intangible border of soul-space
He passed from mind, into material things
He beheld the cosmic Being at his task

(*Savitri*, pp 415-16)

We see how from the worlds of light he takes shape and form and then sings about the whole creation through all the stages from nebulae to the suns and concrete matter. He gives a bird's-eye-view of the whole creation and makes us thrill with his vast knowledge of the universe. As he descends down into the worlds of ignorance, the theme of his song and mood changes. He sings about the marvel and mystery of pain and suffering and also the joy behind it on which he is going to expatiate a few minutes later.

Narad enters Aswapati's palace and to the royal couple speaks of the toils of men and what the Gods strive for on the earth. As they are talking, Savitri enters.

The spontaneous description of Savitri by Narad, immediately on seeing her, is a specimen of wonderful poetry, it brings out the divine qualities of Savitri. We have a very vivid, impressive, and exquisite delineation of Savitri's personality.

The situation is unique. There is king Aswapati, a great sage (seer-king) whose ardent tapas was responsible for Savitri's birth. He is not an ordinary human being. There is Savitri's mother, the queen, who is a woman of the way of the world, with worldly instincts and foibles and whose love and affection for her daughter are immense. There is Savitri who is full of joy at having found her partner in life.

For what purpose has Narad come down? It is not a casual visit to see the great king Aswapati in his palace. Nor is it to answer and clear the doubts of the queen, regarding the wisdom of God inflicting pain and suffering on human beings. He has come down to intimate to Savitri the doom ahead which she will have to face alone by herself. By imparting this foreknowledge to her, he has put her on her guard to prepare herself for facing the great calamity. It is to strengthen her determination and indirectly remind the Divine Spirit in her of the work she has to do or is ordained to do.

When told of the doom of her chosen partner, Savitri's spirit rises up and says that her will can wipe out Fate. She takes up the challenge. In the powerful words of Sri Aurobindo, Savitri declares

Once my heart chose and chooses not again
The word I have spoken can never be erased,
It is written in the record book of God
Its signature adverse Fate cannot efface,
Its seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve .
I am stronger than death and greater than my fate,
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me
Helpless against my immortality
Fate's law may change, but not my spirit's will (*Savitri*, p. 432)

Though she may feel crushed under the heavy weight of the calamity when the human is dominant in her, she immediately picks up courage, she was always guided by the higher forces with which she came down to rise up and face every challenge.

SAMADHI SPEAKS

NIGHT 9 o'clock, I was at the Samadhi. It was the 20th December 1996. After offering my pranam I was standing with folded hands, opening myself to the presence above. When I was fully concentrated I heard a voice—as if someone asking me “Where is your key?”

At first I thought of avoiding this voice, thinking the key might be in my pocket and I should continue to be in the state I was. But the mind was uneasy and I stepped back, searched my pockets and realised that the key was missing. I looked at the window-sill near the Samadhi, as at times I keep the key there, but it was not there. I rushed to the Dining Room, thinking I might have left it there before leaving for the Ashram. There also there was no trace of the key. I went to a general store from which I had purchased something, but to no avail. Then I realised the seriousness of the situation. I prayed for help. Finally, I went to the nearby S T D booth and found the key there.

Why I had gone to the S T D booth is another story, but it is related to the present one. A lady doctor had written to me that her son, also a doctor, had developed the bad habit of drinking and that she was sending him to me to help him open himself to the Mother, she was keen that he give up the habit. I placed the letter at the feet of the Mother's photograph and began to walk to and fro in my flat, in front of the photo. I prayed for Her guidance. I said, “He is a doctor and knows better the consequences. What can I say to him? Please give me some suitable words.” Immediately I heard a voice: “If he is ready to face the unhappy events in life he can continue.” To convey this message I had gone to the S T D booth. The doctor came and stayed for 10 days. He received the Grace and returned with a happy heart.

SUKHVIR ARYA

KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, TRUTH ABSOLUTE

A REFLECTION

CAN wisdom know all things?

The question is quite a big one and the answer perhaps even bigger. Speaking in a general way we may say that it is the accumulated philosophic and scientific knowledge which can be called wisdom. It is something that is received, perceived and acquired by the mind of reason, intelligence, or knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge plus something more. But that still doesn't necessarily mean the Total, the Absolute. By pure knowledge we might know many things, existential, philosophical, scientific, but not everything.

Knowledge has its ramifications, divisions galore, so too wisdom.

In the reverse dimension of consciousness what we call knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, reason, ratiocination may be accumulated falsities. But Truth has its immensity, is immeasurable and is unreachable even by the best of intelligence, knowledge and wisdom.

There mind breaks down and is incapable of knowing the Truth in its vast body. So is the case with wisdom. Knowledge received through the instrument of mind is forever handicapped to know the ultimate Truth. Wisdom received or acquired through the same instrument of mind is equally inadequate to know it.

Moreover, what we call wisdom may be our fancy, fad, or cherished ignorance and never true knowledge. So long as we remain slaves to our ego, greed, envy, desire and their cohorts we cannot have true knowledge: True knowledge cannot be received by an impure mind. A pure mind merging into the soul of Being can be heir to true knowledge and true wisdom.

For true knowledge and wisdom mind has to be overpassed. Mind only reasons, divides, analyses, and cannot reach the Truth in its absolute form, content and ranges. We have to develop other instruments within us to get at the true Truth. For example, Higher Mind (Christ), Illumined Mind (Buddha), Intuitive Mind (Ramakrishna), Psychical-Spiritual Mind (Chaitanya).

But then only in absolute silence we realise absolute Truth.

PRASANTA K SARKAR

PEOPLE AROUND US— AN ENCOUNTER WITH FRED PINN

THE flora and fauna of my adopted land fascinate me, so I hurried full of expectations to the Ashram's International Centre of Education when an exhibition entitled "Life in the Indian Ocean" was announced. There I got to know a very unusual English biology teacher. School children were crowding around him as with humour and fun, love and patience he taught them about the lives of a wide variety of sea-creatures.

Fred's teaching method was based on a collection of cardboard boxes, each containing a variety of different species, such as sea animals, kinds of wood, seeds, etc. According to the theme of the class, one of these boxes would come on the table. The children were allowed to take out the contents and pass them round and ask all sorts of questions. If the lesson was about spices there was a chest full of small containers to be passed round so that everyone could sniff the aromatic contents.

This wonderful teacher was Fred Pinn from London. He had taught in Europe and Kenya, and was in charge of a school in Calcutta from 1966 to 1971. His special interest in sea shells had been awakened by the gift of a shell collection. In Africa he used to spend his holidays on the coast, diving to explore the marvels of the coral reefs. Many of Fred's pupils had become remarkably successful and made good careers.

One day Fred came into the weaving workshop, and heard us speaking about Salem. He turned questioningly to me and asked, "Did you say Salem?" "That's right," I replied. "It is a town here in Tamil Nadu. We get handwoven saris from there." He said, "I studied in Salem." And I responded, "My elder sister too—in the thirties." We looked at each other in surprise—the name had uncovered a connection across space and time—and it led to a lasting friendship.

Fred had had to leave Salem, a German boarding school near Lake Constanz, after only a few months there. With the help of friends he had reached London, where he was safe from racist persecution. Even the Director of the school had to leave Germany.

Now, decades later, a relationship formed between us, to our great mutual enrichment, in spite of everything that had been done in the name of the German nation during the Third Reich. The excursions made with Fred are unforgettable—on Pondicherry beach collecting shells, to Hogenakkal where we were rowed around in circular basket-woven coracles, the outing to the mangroves of Pichavaram, full of countless seabirds. There were short trips to London and the experience of Fred's home, packed to the brim with collector's treasures, visits to wonderful bookshops, the botanical gardens, and a walk through the medieval parts of historical London, even a journey through London history, deep beneath the city.

He took me to the British Museum, where we wandered through the long galleries. A visit from the Queen was expected and the luggage room had been closed. As I had come straight from the airport, we had to carry all my luggage with us. On the long broad staircases Fred had to help me, and on the level stretches we rolled it along on my small trolley. The great reward for this strenuous exercise was a visit to a special

exhibition of Chinese thangkas, the famous find of the German explorer, Aurel Stein
What a wealth of forms and colours, figures and symbols!

Then, in a tiny two-seater cabin the two of us travelled together deep beneath the city through the history of London from early times to the present. The epochs are presented in panoramas with life-sized and life-like figures.

Another day we walked many kilometres through the extensive glasshouses of Kew Gardens. We perspired in the damp heat of tropical vegetation, and then cooled off in a drizzle in the open air. The most beautiful thing of all there was the picture gallery of Marianne North, a widely travelled painter. This is a house whose walls are covered from floor to ceiling with watercolours painted from nature—botanical rarities against background landscapes showing their habitat, enlivened with butterflies and birds. I could not see enough of these.

Another time we pushed through the crowded lanes of a street market, forgetting the passage of time in front of the many stands and shops full of things from every country—treasures and antiques from all over the world.

The shelves of the fine London bookshops were also most fascinating and enticing. There were so many beautifully produced photo-books, and classic old volumes with leather bindings tooled in gold. With a sure hand Fred grasped a thick book on cowrie shells, that was a special find for him. I found the ultimate illustrated encyclopedia of all the turtles and tortoises of the world—an environmental theme that was very acute in Pondicherry at that time.

Not far from Fred's house was a street full of shops selling household and kitchen equipment—huge stores with self-service shelves, as roomy as railway stations, stuffed with products, vast bazaars, offering everything from teaspoons to washing machines—everything the housewife could possibly think of. The best shops are run by Indian families. For me, coming from the provincial remoteness of Pondicherry, it was overwhelming.

Born under a special Virgo constellation, Fred was destined to a life of untiring research and authorship. While in Pondicherry he wrote what was for India a first and very informative volume, *Seasnails of Pondicherry*, profusely illustrated with his own photos of 124 species, with the life-histories and characteristics of each of the species described in detail. I feel grateful that I was able to offer assistance when he had almost lost the courage to continue with the book in manuscript. I was able to take some of his pages to one of the "writing stands" in the town—where men sit in open verandahs with their typewriters. One was found who knew English, even had a dictionary, and could give us clean copies with a minimum of errors. So the book could be completed after all.

It was only in 1995 that Fred, during a short trip to Holstein, was able to visit my sister in our family home—so at last the two ex-Salem students were able to meet for the first time. With what great pleasure these two, of the same age and similar interests, exchanged memories. Even our father's collections of shells, butterflies and minerals were still there, in big glass cases, along with his paintings and the furniture designed

by him with handwoven cloth covers forming the matching background Fred chose to eat Matjes herring with potatoes stuffed in their jackets, and on the second day, Sauerkraut As he had been born in Berlin it was possible for him to get a German passport again—he had always cherished in secret the affection for Berlin that is characteristic of the natives of this unique city in the heart of Europe

Fred is still occupied with research and publications His special topics Indian palmleaf manuscripts, and the technical instruments connected with producing them, cowrie shells and the history of their use as a currency, the Indian shell known as Shankha, the history of Darjeeling, the second volume of which is now in progress, and many others We can expect many more beautiful contributions from him in these fields of research

SIBYLLE SHARMA-HABLIK

AUTUMN

THE leaves invent a new numerology
 and the daylight seems wayward
 Lonely earth,
 your wealth recedes
 When love is ended
 the sky becomes unbearable too
 Birds fly away
 Songs become silences
 And my mind brushes off
 the sun and the sun's caress

RANAJIT SARKAR

SCIENCE-EDUCATION IN INDIA*

THROUGH a somewhat distorted understanding of history, there is a tendency to identify the introduction of the 'scientific method' in India with the advent of the British rule. Modern Indians seem to be forgetting almost totally about the existence of quite a developed scientific and technological knowledge in India going back to the earliest records of history.¹ In regard to technology, contemporary records of as late as the eighteenth century *inter alia* show: "Ice making was common. Even surgery was practised. Inoculation against small pox was practised long before it became generally acceptable in Europe. Steel produced in India was considered by the British as superior to that which they themselves manufactured."²

Just as a cavalry man takes care of his horse, so much care a wise man also takes of the material aspects of his life. No wonder, India of the past, before being emasculated by foreign subjugation, provided a very congenial environment for the people to make remarkable progress not only in religion, psychology and philosophy, but also in literature, art, music and technology. India's contribution in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, etc. was well known. "In sciences and arts, in trade and commerce, it was not behind the most advanced nations of the world till the middle of this millennium," says Radhakrishnan.⁶

Despite our achievements, we are at the moment so completely cut off from our tradition that we invariably look to the West for knowledge and guidance, nay, some of us even take pride while doing so. The reason for this is not far to seek. The current system of education nurtures indifference, even contempt for everything indigenous.³ In the modern educational system, the teaching particularly at the University level is imparted through books based on the works of foreign Western authors. Hence, the taught learn more about early Greek contributions than about the original contributions made in this country, and therefore suffer from a national inferiority complex. Of course there are exceptions, and these exceptions are found among those who carry out extra-curricular studies. That Indian students in general do not feel proud of being Indians was noticed also by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who pointed this out in a meeting of educationists a few years ago.

The basic structure of the present educational system was laid by the British during the colonial days, for their own purpose.⁷ The characteristic feature of this system is that it is completely divorced from our national ethos and cultural heritage, which are based as is well known on spiritual values, on the principle of harmony in variety. On the other hand, being modelled on the Western pattern, it has almost all the features common to the Western technological culture, namely, stark materialism, ostentatious consumerism, fragmented world-view, and so on, with which several Western thinkers themselves are not very happy.⁸ The negative character of this system

* This article is based on the contents of a letter dated March 20, 1985, addressed to the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, by Lt. Col. R. I. Easwaran (Retd.) and Dr. A. S. Ghosh, on behalf of a small group of friends having diverse professional interests. (Dr. Ghosh passed away a few months ago. —Ed.)

was pointed out by Vivekananda almost a century ago⁹ It is no wonder that many English-educated Indians are able to show a high level of intellectual ability, but with no involvement and little concern for creativity, besides being alienated from the vast mass of common people¹⁰

Psychological ambivalence

The major psychological problem of the educated Indian is that he tends to develop ambivalence, or some sort of split personality, by virtue of the 'modern' alien education he gets. The youth of the technologically advanced countries, however, do not suffer from this malady. Under the influence of one-sided subtle propaganda during their formative years, the educated men and women of India, instead of appreciating the basic tenets and essentials of their native culture,¹¹ tend to despise them, adoring and admiring the outward glamour of the foreign Western culture. Whether we like it or not, those of us who are born and brought up in this country imbibe unconsciously the cultural characteristics of this land, good and bad, and have them deeply ingrained in our personality. At the same time, another part of the personality builds up by imbibing alien values and cultural factors acquired through formal education in schools and colleges. These two parts of the personality, instead of being blended harmoniously, seem to be always in disharmony and conflict. In other words, through modern education not only do we learn to disrespect our own native culture, but it also disturbs eventually our inner psychological poise, without our being aware of it. Educated Indians thus tend to develop ambivalence. No wonder the behaviour of such persons often turns out to be unexpectedly bizarre, lacking consistency in motives, and therefore, there are wide disparities in words, action and thinking. Modern Indians belonging to the upper class are so schizophrenic that they have no qualms about accepting alien values and norms knowing fully well their absurdities. These contradictions in value system and behavioural pattern in the educated class give rise naturally to mistrust amongst different groups of people, thereby giving rise to social imbalance.¹¹ This devastating consequence of negative education on every aspect of our national life is very much there for everybody to see.

There are other aspects of our national education, such as those pertaining to the development of leadership qualities, the influence of an improper understanding, as at present, of the term 'secularism', etc., which are discussed elsewhere^{12,13}

'Modernity' of the Post-Independence Era

Let us recall the fact that education did not figure prominently in the first Five-Year Plan. Subsequently, however, education did come into the picture but mainly as an aid to the creation of manpower resources required for the grandiose technological projects conceived and established entirely with foreign collaboration and assistance. If the primary concern of an educational programme be the successful implementation of

certain economic and technological plans, then it has perforce to be in perfect tune with that particular economic and technological culture, which happened to be alien in the present case. Thus the national educational policy in the post-Independence era not only moved further away from its primary purpose, namely, man-making, but also helped to nurture indifference to things indigenous. It just became instead a huge technical training programme. While old universities were starving for funds, new technological institutes, centres of atomic, space and industrial research started coming up on a grand scale. The 'Swadeshi' zeal, which was so carefully and assiduously built up despite all the constraints of a subject race during the pre-Independence days, started disappearing gradually and is now practically at rock bottom.

The pertinent questions which arise here are: has the climate thereby created in the name of 'modernity' and 'science and technology' been really conducive to the fostering of the true scientific temper?¹⁴ Has it served the cause of technology itself by eradicating poverty? An analysis of the main issues implied in these questions is attempted below, as they are very much relevant in the present context.

(a) It is often forgotten that science and technology, though closely related, are yet not the same. While science cannot do any harm to mankind, technology can do not only good but also great harm, nuclear warfare and ecological disasters being typical examples. Since technology by itself cannot be made living and dynamic without the backing of basic sciences, the latter occupy a vital place in all technologically advanced countries of the West. That is perhaps the reason why there is a common tendency, especially in Third World countries, to club science with technology. In fact, many 'scientists' in India use the term 'science' when they really mean technology.

As several Western authors¹⁵ have pointed out, most of the people who claim to be scientists are in reality technicians, being completely unaware of the philosophical, cultural and spiritual implications of modern scientific theories. Many of them actively support a system which is still based on the mechanistic fragmented world-view, without seeing that science points beyond such a view, towards the oneness of the universe.

(b) The poor performance of Indian research laboratories is not a secret. The reported¹⁶ low output, despite the huge financial investment after Independence, is attributed to the stronger attraction, often bordering on infatuation, in the modern Indian elite for the glamour of Western technological culture than for the inherent spirit of science.

(c) The recent technological achievements of Western countries have been so epoch-making that the modern technologist and his supporters have started thinking that they can change the course of Nature, without realizing that technology is concerned with no more than a part of Nature, only the outer physical. Out of their fragmented world-view and shortsighted egoism, they have started undervaluing the traditional art of living based on *Dharma*,¹¹ based on the laws of Nature. Nature consists not only of matter, but also of life, feeling, intellect, inner psychic planes and so on. It is through the current educational system that the obsession with Western technological

culture and consequent evils are spreading far and wide ¹⁷

(d) There are reports¹⁸ showing that the introduction of large-scale foreign technology has frequently gone against the interest of our people in general. It has had a very damaging effect especially on indigenous cottage industries. A sound technological base capable of standing on its own legs and of independent growth is yet to be seen in this country, despite our national sacrifice in the form of a huge foreign-exchange debt, continuously growing inflation eroding into the savings of the common man, and so on. There is much force in the suggestion¹⁹ that official and popular interest in India should be turned away from grandiose technological projects to the real needs of the common man, especially the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. It appears that 'modernity' has become for all practical purposes a euphemism for alien Western culture, ideas and goods.

(e) India of today undoubtedly needs modern technology, particularly in the fields of energy, transport, communication, etc., and also needs foreign collaboration for healthy growth. But, it has to be tailored to our own ingenuity and sense of cultural values. Anything foreign, unless properly assimilated, gives rise only to more problems. This is the reason why many management experts are now veering round to the viewpoint which has been best expressed by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi: 'Only when one is firmly rooted in one's culture can one usefully take and profit from other cultures.'²⁰

(f) The myth that scientific methods got created with modern science in Europe has contributed to the delegitimization and destruction of Indian traditional knowledge and technology by assigning to them an irrational, superstitious and mystical status. As pointed out in a workshop of professionals,¹⁸ our traditional systems have been rich resources of appropriate science and technology, and it is an urgent research task to collect as much information as possible about the rationality of these systems before they are further lost.

(g) A blind following of whatever goes on in the name of science and technology in the more developed Western countries seems to be the only legitimate aim to be pursued in India. 'Indian scientists and technologists are in a paradoxical situation of being involved in an activity that is rooted and sustained in alien cultures, while at the same time subscribing to the myth of the universality of science and technology. The fact that most scientists and technologists all over the world are practising Western science and technology is in no way a confirmation of its uniqueness at the level of rationality. Rather, it is an expression of the cultural domination of the advanced countries over the third world countries. The universality is being questioned only at the level of legitimization and acceptance of the various knowledge system as scientific. Universal validity is the common property of all knowledge systems. Thus, while a falling apple in China or India will be guided by Newton's laws, a Britisher can also be cured by Acupuncture or Ayurveda. However, Newtonian mechanics or Acupuncture or Ayurveda was developed in completely isolated cultural contexts and had their own respective criteria of legitimization within the respective practising

communities It is this element of science and technology which is not universal...’’¹⁸

Concluding Remarks

Since science cannot be divorced from social culture and human values, science-education cannot be isolated from the overall educational policy of the society Through an alien educational system, we are losing hold of our native cultural roots, and thereby tend to lose, for reasons explained before, the inherent poise in the personality How can the scientific temper grow in such a situation? It appears that for the same reason the modern Indian élites have not been able to choose appropriate technology for endogenous development The following utterances of our late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi seem to be extremely relevant in this context He declared in Parliament on January 23, 1985, ‘‘We must build on our heritage of culture for the future If culture is to survive, it must be alive. We will do everything to make it alive’’ He is again reported to have said at the golden jubilee celebration of the Doon School ‘‘that the new education policy would be directed towards deriving strength from the inner ethos which had been left behind in search of technology’’ (vide *Indian Express*, Bombay, November 4, 1985)

There are, however, grave doubts if the foregoing ideas of wisdom and farsightedness can be put to practice without an active support from the Indian educated class, including the scientific community Since there is hardly any awareness among the educated²¹ (statistically speaking) of the evil effects of the fast spreading current of the so-called ‘modern’ education, the first step must be to create such an awareness The influential and prestigious organisations of the Indian scientific community like the Indian National Science Academy, the Indian Science News Association, etc., who have the capability of moulding ‘public opinion’ amongst Indian scientists, could perhaps play an effective role in this task

It may be noted that the criticism ventilated in this paper is not directed so much against the contents of curricula, namely, learning of foreign languages including English, modern sciences, technology, etc. in which topics we should certainly continue to take interest in all earnestness, in these days of technology and internationalism All that is being underscored is that unless social education is made to conform to our national ethos and cultural heritage, no amount of reform in the name of ‘modernity’ is going to help us This conclusion is in fact consistent with our experience over the last forty years, during which period the situation has not at all improved despite several educational reforms including the prestigious Radhakrishnan and Kothari Commissions On the other hand, the situation has so much worsened that the present Government is thinking in terms of formulating a new educational policy.

It is absolutely essential that an average modern Indian, whether a scientist or not, should learn to develop the vitally important emotional mooring in our native culture as expounded by our saints and seers Our Rishis after all had a deep insight not only into human psychology, but also into physical sciences In any case, the ancient Indian

wisdom is not in disharmony with that modern scientific temper, nor is pure science (as distinct from technology), which seeks truth and the unifying principles in this universe of diversity anti-spiritual To be familiar with and to appreciate the ancient Indian wisdom do not mean going back in history On the contrary, such an exercise would enable the educated to see the present-day national problems in the correct historical perspective, and perhaps clear much of the prevailing confusion in the society

It is obviously futile to expect that the basic structure of our educational system can be reformed overnight, at one single stroke Thus comes the question of identifying important areas needing immediate attention, and of course laying down priorities The aforesaid leading organizations commanding the respect of our scientific community could surely play an effective role by initiating debates for the purpose of making appropriate recommendations to the Government To start with, several other steps could be envisaged or planned For example, our prestigious organizations might consider sponsoring schemes for making young students familiar with our ancient heritage in Science and Technology Such schemes would obviously include publication of handy books—say, textbooks of about 100-200 pages—written by eminent scientists in different vernaculars, and suitable for High School or Pre-University students The material to be included therein might be taken from authoritative volumes in English already available, some of which are cited in this article ¹⁵ The idea would be to include such books in a 'common core curriculum' for the whole country, as envisaged in paragraph 19 of the document on Educational Policy Perspective issued (August 1985) by the Ministry of Education

As regards research activities, investigation into the scientific import of the ancient Indian literature is one field which the Indian scientific community could profitably undertake Despite the difficulty of the language being old and statements being couched in symbolism, an intensive probing is likely to yield a rich harvest, not only from the academic point of view but also from applied aspects If the Indian scientists continue to neglect this fruitful field of research, then the more enterprising Western scholars would not wait for long, and would consequently reap the harvest In this type of work, learning of Sanskrit or Prakrit would of course be a prerequisite That would surely not be more difficult than learning German, French or Russian, which a modern Indian student is not averse to doing for carrying out advanced scientific or technological work

Moreover, very relevant scientific and technical knowledge has been available to traditional Indian communities, which have been ignored as inefficient and irrational by the 'moderns' An impartial examination reveals that these traditional systems did not lack rationality, and they did not die a natural death, but were suppressed or killed by external political forces ^{16,22,23} As pointed out before, it is an urgent research task to collect as much information as possible about the rationality of these systems before they are further lost In all such research activities, active support and encouragement from Universities and from apex scientific bodies would not only be desirable but also necessary

While the common problems of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are too well known to need recounting, the subtler ones like cultural degradation and alienation often elude the eyes of a commoner. Wisdom dictates that for the eradication of material poverty, elimination of cultural poverty needs greater attention. This has to be reflected in the social educational system.

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(Courtesy *Science and Culture*)

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- 2 D. M. Bose, S. N. Sen and R. V. Subbarayappa, *A Concise History of Science in India*, Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, 1971.
- 3 Dharmapal, *Indian Science and Technology in the 18th Century—Some contemporary European accounts*, Impex India, Delhi, 1971.
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- 5 (i) Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (Ed.), *Studies in the History of Science in India* (Original authoritative works) Editorial Enterprises, New Delhi, 1992, (ii) Proc. of Symposium (4, 5 Aug 1996) Bull. Natl. Inst. Sc. No. 21, 1993, etc.
- 6 S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, Unwin Books, London, 1963.
- 7 In all fairness, it must be said that though the British introduced the system, yet they did not forcibly impose it on the natives. They, however, were responsible for creating a situation whereby middle class Indians were generally attracted to this education for economic reasons.
- 8 See for example (a) E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, Abacus Edition, Sphere Books Ltd., London, 1978, p. 66, (b) Ivan D. Illich, *De-schooling Society*, Harper and Row, New York, 1971.
- 9 Swami Vivekananda warned us: "This education has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that the good things are weighed down. It is not manmaking, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education is worse than death." (Vide *Complete Works*, Adwaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1960, Vol. III, p. 301.)
- 10 M. S. Gore, *Indian Youth Processes of Socialization*, Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, 1971, pp. 50-59.
- 11 Indian culture and civilization embodying the ancient Indian wisdom are based on spirituality and *Dharma*. They take a comprehensive and integral view of life, unlike the fragmented view typical of the modern technological culture. The Indian emphasis on *Dharma* is not religious or ritualistic obsession. *Dharma* is the Law, law of each being, each grade of existence. This term is still used in this sense in several vernaculars. For example, one says, "It is the *Dharma* of fire to burn." "The king's *Dharma* is to look after his subjects" and so on. To find out this law and to follow it to the best of one's ability is right living.
- A distinction, however, needs to be made between the basic tenets and essential features having perennial value and universal validity, and the outer forms, formalities, rituals, etc. of a culture. The latter, though of great importance, have a limited range of applicability depending upon circumstances such as individual nature, time and place. The latter constitute the body, *corpus*, so to say, while the former the life within, *animus*. They are inseparable in the case of a living culture. The moment, however, the *animus* is forgotten or ignored, decadence sets in naturally.
- 12 For a fuller treatment of the subject see S. K. Ganguly and A. S. Ghosh, *Relevance of our Cultural Heritage to Modern India*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1983.
- 13 Ardhendu Sekhar Ghosh, *Prabuddha Bharata*, Vol. 80, Oct. 1985, p. 416.
- 14 Scientific temper should have at least the following ingredients: (i) Sincere quest for the knowledge of reality or truth, (ii) Genuine desire to discover unifying ideas through theories and experiments behind the diversity of this phenomenal world, and (iii) a truly objective attitude. This temper cannot come just by installing sophisticated apparatuses in a grand edifice. It has to be fostered and nurtured as a living plant or a growing child.

15 Cf (a) Arthur Koestler, '*Physics and Metaphysics*' in *Janus—a summing up*, Pan Books Ltd, London, 1983, pp 241-273, (b) Fritof Capra *Tao of Physics*, Wildwood House London, 1975 p 324 (c) Gary Zukav *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, Bantam Books, New York, 1980 p 10

16 See, for example, B V Rangarao, *Science & Culture*, Calcutta 1974 Vol 40 p 441

17 For an incisive analysis of this issue, see Ref 9(b)

18 Proceedings of a Workshop held at Bangalore, reported by K Seetharam, V Shiva and J Bandopadhyaya in *Science & Culture* Calcutta, 1981, Vol 47 p 234

19 E F Schumacher *Small is Beautiful* Abacus Edn, London 1974 p 156

20 Quoted by Shamlal, *The Times of India* Bombay, Feb 20 1982

21 This class by virtue of its training cannot but be biased in favour of the Western technological culture. An index of its mental attitude was provided by the speeches made during the last election held in December 1984. Hardly anything worthwhile regarding education and cultural heritage was voiced by the average politician, even by one of the opposition parties. Again, take the case of teachers who often agitate justifiably though for better service conditions. But we hardly hear of teachers starting any systematic movement for the reorientation or the improvement of the prevalent educational policy for the country.

There is however, a saving feature. The bias referred to above is not only not natural but fortunately also does not constitute a permanent feature of the Indian psyche. It is moreover confined to a small, maybe influential, section of people confined to urban areas. The problem of educational reform may not therefore prove to be intractable, provided the required political will be forthcoming.

22 Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule* (First Edn, 1901) 4th Edition, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubar & Co Ltd, London pp 256-259

23 J A Hobson *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* George Allen and Unwin London, 1965, p 10

THE SYMBOL DAWN

APROPOS OF *TWELVE YEARS WITH SRI AUROBINDO*

THOUGH Nirodbaran's *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* covers the 'Last Phase' of the Master's physical life on the earth it also denotes a new beginning in the Supramental ascension. It is rather *The Symbol Dawn* of the new era which proclaims the advent of a 'New World' in the evolution of the universe. Indeed, Nirod has penned a new Usha-Sukta—inspired, intuitive and creative to the core.

Twelve Years is a remarkable document of its kind which depicts the unique events that took place in the fifth decade of the present century. The mysterious veil which fell around Sri Aurobindo's worldly life after he suddenly left the political scenario at the Divine bidding was lifted a bit when he met with a fateful accident on the eve of the November Darshan in 1938.

Now the bed-ridden Master needed physical attendance round the clock, thus giving a rare opportunity for the fortunate few to have acquaintance with him at close quarters. Of all the attendants it was Nirod's proverbial cup of tea to observe, record, analyse and interpret a number of events that were taking place during this momentous period. What Nirod perceived was no less bewildering than what Arjuna saw when Lord Krishna revealed his *Vishwarupa* at the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Looking back at this juncture one realises that the twelve years which Nirod and his associates spent with Sri Aurobindo were precisely the most significant and of a far-reaching consequence in the annals of world history as well as in the terrestrial life of the Master. The third dimension was provided to this phenomenon in the form of the fierce combat between the Divine and Evil forces on the occult plane which was beyond ordinary human perception.

The outbreak of the Second World War, India gaining independence, and the creation of the epic *Savitri* are the three landmarks that took place in the forties of this century. In this context Sri Aurobindo's birth anniversary on the 15th August assumed vast significance in 1947 as India achieved freedom on that day. The master took this coincidence not as a fortuitous accident but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guided his steps in carrying on the work with which he began his life, and the beginning of its full fruition.

The second significant event of the period was the outbreak of the Second World War. The fundamental difference between the First and the Second World War is quite evident. When the First World War broke out in 1914, the Richards, who were in Pondicherry at that time, had to rush back to their motherland to fulfil their national duties. On the other hand, when the Second World War broke out Mirra Richard, now the Mother of the Ashram, was beyond any narrow national obligation and had before her the tremendous global, nay Cosmic, responsibility to save democracy and freedom at large and to ward off the evil forces incarnated in Hitler, thus nipping in the bud the impending catastrophe.

Of course it was Sri Aurobindo himself who was at the head of the fierce battles fought on the occult plane. This high Cosmic drama directed by the Divine Forces from the nucleus at Pondicherry Ashram could never have seen the light of day but for Nirodbaran. He has set the record straight in this respect as Sri Aurobindo's role in the Second World War was much misunderstood and misjudged by the contemporary public and its leaders alike.

The last but not the least important event of this period is the creation of the epic *Savitri*. The Unexpected (accident) brought Nirod nearer to Sri Aurobindo and he eventually had the unique good fortune to see Sri Aurobindo working on the epic in its entire revised version and had some small share by being its scribe. Earlier Nirod had his initiation by Sri Aurobindo into English poetry and this rendered his scribe's work congenial as well as convenient.

To quote Sri Aurobindo, "In fact, *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as the field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative."¹

The Mother pronounces the last word on *Savitri*: "He has crammed the whole universe in a single book. It is a marvellous, magnificent work and of an incomparable perfection. It is a revelation, a meditation and seeking of the Infinite and the Eternal. Each verse of *Savitri* is like a revealed Mantra. *Savitri* is the spiritual path, the Tapasya, Sadhana. He has walked in the darkness of inconscience, even stepped near Death, endured the sufferings of Hell and he has come out of the mud, earthly misery in order to breathe the Sovereign Plenitude and enter into the Supreme Ananda."²

As *Savitri* is nothing short of a Yoga, it takes its proud place among the outstanding events that took place during the tenure of Nirod's association with Sri Aurobindo.

Nirodbaran's detailed account of his close relations with Sri Aurobindo provides an ample insight into the play of Destiny which not only turned this great revolutionary into the Mahayogi but also brought him into close rapport with the French-born occultist Mirra Richard as a lifelong collaborator. Nirod perceives Sri Aurobindo as Shiva and the Mother as Shakti and portrays the subtle nature of their role in the Divine Play.

As Sri Aurobindo himself has commented: "The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes an outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the Divine."³

Thus, though God-incarnate to their followers, they adhered to the teaching of Lord Krishna who has asked Karmayogins to refrain from behaving in an extraordinary manner and to respect the rules and laws of Nature. That is why Nirod's God-incarnate shows his human face now and then, including his humility and humour.

Three cheers for Nirod for "his revelation of an altogether unknown side of what Sri Aurobindo was. It is extremely interesting and very instructive."⁴

Let these last words pronounced by the Mother be the fitting *finale* of this short appreciation

PRABHAKAR NULKAR

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- 1 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29 pp 727-28
- 2 Reported by Mona Sarkar
- 3 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, SABCL Vol 25 p 48
- 4 The Mother's letter to Nirodbaran in *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* frontispiece

THIS DAY...

This day I truly can declare
I saw Thy naked light unveiled,
And notice how the morning air
Watching me watch Thee, slowly paled

And all around my soul prevailed
A purity that grew aware
Of Something in me held and nailed
To a high cross of perfect prayer

And then, a white, divine release
From shadowy bondage of the flesh,
Which blossomed to a virgin peace
Snow-beautiful and lily-fresh!

7 30 evening
15-10-34

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment Very beautiful

(From the typescript volume entitled *Alone with the Alone*, composed between 15-10-34 and 23-11-34, containing 100 poems)

K. D. SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

THE SUPRAMENTAL PHYSICAL

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

THE body has received special attention in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, who himself has shed significant light on this issue in his essays on the destiny of the body. Two very illuminating essays have been included in *The Supramental Manifestation*, which seem to be the final version of Sri Aurobindo's views on the evolving body. K. D. Sethna, also an authentic interpreter of Sri Aurobindo's theory of the evolving body-consciousness, has shed fresh light on the topic in his book *A Follower of Christ and a Disciple of Sri Aurobindo*. The book consists of correspondence between Bede Griffiths and K. D. Sethna.

Father Griffiths is certainly an authentic seeker of light and Sethna is extremely respectful when he corrects him by pointing out that Sri Aurobindo is a total revolutionary in this field.

In none of India's own scriptures, in no religion either of East or West, in the depth of no mystical experience available to his insight into inner achievements did he [Sri Aurobindo] find direct traces of the Supramental Consciousness and Force.

About the traditions behind them, Sethna's classifications are summed up, on p. 33, within a single paragraph. Let us refer to the most significant part of the paragraph.

Of course, since Sri Aurobindo held that the supermind was at the back of all evolution and history in order to prepare the way for its own emergence or manifestation, he has pointed to various signs of its secret working in the career of earth's spirituality or even in the course of the secular terrestrial adventure, but nowhere has he found any true sign of its open presence—not even in the highest revelations of India, the country whose many-sided comprehensive spiritual search is most likely to strike upon the Aurobindonian Gnosis. Indeed in these revelations he has discovered a background and a basis for his own further explorations and arrivals, but no concrete direct epiphany of the Supramental.

Things which are new and worthwhile have to be appreciated and accepted, else we shall tend to ignore the evolutionary principle of the earth and the dynamic Absolute. Sethna gives us vital information in brief, which is both information and interpretation, that both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo saw the "Aurobindonian truths peeping out of various phases of spiritual history and so it is not a mistake to educe from old religious experience and events what they were shadowing forth" (p. 38).

Quoting from Sri Aurobindo's letter to him, Sethna reminds us once again that the spiritual and the supramental are two different things (see p 51)

By and large, these are the queries of all religious people from the old schools. But Sethna is there with us to explain things at the risk of being branded as a fanatic. Sethna's words written to Father Griffiths are in reality words for all those who have to face the new light.

You'll be disappointed to find me so critical and, by and large, rather negative, but I have to be honest and, where fundamental issues are concerned, as forthright and clear as I can (p 81)

This is how Sethna continues to explore Sri Aurobindo's thoughts, not in the Master's language but in a spontaneous style of exposition of his own.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

THE QUEST FOR AN INDIAN PARADIGM OF MANAGEMENT

WHEN the hosts of Lucifer, Son-of-the-morning, greedily swooped down on the celestial apples of paradise,

They, fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
Chewed bitter ashes

Centuries later that Miltonic image is revived when, writing of the psychic penury and emotional frustration of the 20th century, T S Eliot speaks of “The bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit” The question is not merely what shall it profit a man if he should gain the world and lose his own soul—for to modern man such insubstantial things are of no consequence, even though quantum physics shows him that what he asserts to be corporeal is not so at all—but rather that desire is an impulse that is insatiable, that craving is a Charybdis which sucks in however much you may pour in howsoever fast In the period after the Second World War, management of business has been perhaps the most powerful concept emanating from America, sweeping across the globe, with Internet and the World Wide Web bypassing all national barriers. In the context of the motto that this has launched—“Create More Desire” (a full page advertisement in *The New York Times*, 12 7 1949)—and the foaming consumerism thrown up in its wake (S M Davis’ 2001 management formula, “anything, anytime, anywhere”), it becomes necessary for the two ancient civilizations that are still living—India and China—to step back and take stock of whether they are not to be swept off their feet, suffer a tragic crisis of identity, and join the dusty remains of Sumer, Egypt, Greece and Rome

S K Chakraborty’s books perform precisely this seminal task Every few years he has been sharing his research, delving deep into India’s psycho-spiritual heritage and applying his findings to modern management and living Starting in 1985 with *Human Response in Organisations*, he wrote *Managerial Effectiveness and Quality of Work-Life* in 1987, *Foundations of Managerial Work* in 1989, *Management by Values: Towards Cultural Congruence* in 1992, *Ethics in Management: Vedantic Perspectives* in 1995, and now *Values and Ethics for Organizations Theory and Practice*. The common thread linking all the books is the assertion that our own culture provides more than adequate foundations for building up an indigenous management ethos that will enable and support sustainable development of the nation and its people, whereas blind imitation of foreign models will only lead to speedy burn-out and long-term disaster for the individual, the environment and the country The American system of management cannot be wished away, but we also need to realise that in the USA imitation of the Japanese model of management has come a cropper, as it happened in Sweden copying

the American style. The European nations have evolved styles of management which are integrated with their own ethos. It is only in this subcontinent that, “servile imitation with a peculiar Indian servility”, as Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Bande Mataram*, “we have swallowed down in a lump our English (replace it with ‘Western’) diet”. Ours is a persistent compulsion to ape what is foreign without assimilating it to evolve a system that is holistic and sustainable, being home grown. This “shadow mind”, as Chakraborty terms it, is possibly a legacy of colonisation. Its inevitable consequence is the “shadow fruit”. Eliot writes of. And yet, throughout history, India’s speciality has precisely been the unique capacity to assimilate and integrate all that has invaded her, permitting it to fertilise her soil and bring forth fruit that nourishes her children’s body, heart, mind and soul.

In *Ethics in Management* Chakraborty had carried forward the thesis he had propounded in his earlier work that just as the Asian tigers have moved towards the Confucian management ethos, away from the Judaeo-Christian Protestant roots of Western management theory, similarly it is necessary to develop and follow an authentic Indian management paradigm. The roots of this Indian ethos he discovered in Vedanta as rediscovered for the modern Indian by the brilliant quartet of Mahatma Gandhi, Gurudev Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Instead of patching together a coat of many colours, Chakraborty urges managers and academics in India to ground themselves firmly in the psycho-spiritual practices that made India’s prosperity the envy of the world for millennia. Dispelling the misconception that India’s is a world-denying heritage, he shows that our greatest rulers and leaders have been those who were simultaneously seers and kings, at once *raja* and *rishi* (Janaka, Ashoka, Milinda), that profound wisdom was not achieved merely by world-renouncing hermits but householders too (Vashishtha-Arundhati, Agastya-Lopamudra, Yajnavalkya-Maitreyi, Vidura, Krishna and, though one would dispute this, Bhishma) who plumbed the pellucid depths within to draw sustenance and power for transforming the chaotic world without into a thing of beauty and joy for fellow humans. After all, it was not a poverty-ridden country that was repeatedly invaded by successive hordes of foreigners! Rigorous self-discipline centering round management of the unruly, grasping ego and unremitting austere striving for welfare of others (*sadhana* and *tapasya*) are shown to be the methods whereby charismatic and inspiring leadership evolves. Time and again the Indian needs to look at the words uttered by the teenager Nachiketa, *na vittena tarpanyo manushyo* (wealth provides no real satisfaction) and the wife Maitreyi, *yenaha amritam syam kimaham tena kuryam* (what shall I do with all this if it does not lead me to immortality?). In his dawn talks at Shantiniketan—compiled in two volumes of that name—Gurudev Tagore had, time and again, reminded his audience of these eternal clues to holistic living.

The major and almost insuperable obstacle the author and those embarking on a similar quest face is a wall of blind ignorance existing in modern Indian managers and management institutions. The Occident is seeking to find the secrets of sustenance from the philosophy of the Orient. Tragically, the Indian management don, unlike his

Japanese and Chinese counterparts, prefers to look the other way and refuses to heed these warnings that stare him in the face. One need not, however, be taken aback by this. More than a century and a quarter ago Swami Vivekananda's younger brother Mahendra Dutta recorded about Bengali society of the 1860s the same arrogant ignorance regarding our own traditions, the same unquestioning worship of the West, the same obsession that being fashionable and educated necessarily means getting drunk and being amoral and atheistic.

In all affairs to deceive, to behave deceitfully, cheat widows etc. was the proof of intelligence. To deprive people of property through forgery was a task of bravery. Besides this what unspeakable crimes people used to commit cannot be stated here. *Pranam*-ing was regarded a bad tradition. Performing *shraddha* was a superstition, as also worshipping deities, let alone listening to their tales. English priests were plentiful, addressing people at road corners and markets to vilify Hindu society and religion as pure superstition. For instance, bathing in the Ganges, bathing after oil-massage, shaving [so we stopped shaving!]. Many did not have any idea what is Hindu religion. None had read much regarding Hindu religion and no book regarding Hindu religion was available then. . . We did not know much about Shri Chaitanya and Vaishnava dharma. *Gita* and *Upanishad* no one had heard of. We had only read some of the Bibles that priests used to distribute door to door. Atheism and disintegration prevailed in society. Most of us neither liked Christianity, nor followed Hindu religion. We believed in nothing that was old, and did not know what new thing should be done. We could not decide what to grab hold of.

(*Shri Ramakrishna Anudhyan*)

Today the only difference is that we are politically independent. And the real difference is that there is no Sri Ramakrishna present to bring society back on the rails.

Provocatively Chakraborty coins alternatives to the catchwords and phrases of western management thought, and presents models which stress wisdom, the emotions and the heart instead of only the intellect, information and the brain. Chakraborty quotes the revealing letter of Margaret Wilson, daughter of the American President Woodrow Wilson, to Sri Aurobindo in 1936. "I am conscious now of a terrible emptiness, that every word and act of mine is useless because not motivated from within by the Self, and I am convinced that I shall never again come under the illusion that the little self can be useful, except it be guided and activated by the higher Self." Is this not an echo of Maitreyi's anguished cry?

A couple of years ago the renowned management scientist Stafford Beer published articles in *Interfaces*, the journal of the Operations Research Society, showing how the Gita and Vedantic thought provide the best management principles for practising managers to follow. The World Bank started the *Spiritual Unfoldment Society* finding that employee-morale was nose-diving despite high pay. Rather late in the day for a

Christian society to discover that man does not live by bread alone! More startling is the title of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party's 1996 plenum "Strengthening of socialist spiritual culture" It emphasized the need to promote spiritual civilisation (*jingshen wenming*) by invoking principles of ancient Confucianism and dwelt at length on the values to be inculcated, referring to the Buddhist trinity of *Zhen, Shan, Mei* (the Indian concept of *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*) to counter corruption, crime, drug abuse and growing crude individualism that turns its back on neighbours, co-workers or elders in the family Discussions have been initiated seeking to combine material progress with ethical and cultural progress The resolution called for establishing a new society with noble values human respect and dignity, care for others, enthusiasm in promoting public good, helping the poor and needy, opposition to Mammonism, Hedonism and Individualism, departmental selfishness, self-seeking at others' expense, pocketing public wealth, etc Drives have been launched to promote patriotism and moral education among the youth The media has been exhorted to help in securing a balance of material and ethical progress, governed by a moral-political code of serving the people and socialism It sought to combat vulgar commercialisation in culture, art and media in general

All this no present-day Indian takes note of In the Epic of Epics Vyasa has a pronouncement that may jog the memory cells of our drifting intellectuals.

That man succeeds when, based firmly in the present,
he faces the future on the strength of the past

Udyoga Parva, 39 54

In the midst of the global worship of the Japanese miracle, Chakraborty has the courage to strike a different note He points out that by utilizing spirituality for worldly aims only, Japan is possibly contributing no less to ecological damage than America, and may actually be accelerating this at a pace much faster than the West How prophetic his warning is has been proved by the financial scams that have surfaced in Japan climaxing in the recent resignation of the prime minister For India, Chakraborty has a Gandhian reminder non-centralized functioning makes for simple living, small and autonomous work groups infused with cohesion and a sense of belonging are more humanely productive, as still seen in the unorganized rural and household sectors as opposed to the urban, industrial sector in India

In the book under review, focusing on the uncritical adoption of Western Organisational Psychology (OP), isolated from the moral dimension, by the Indian corporate leaders, Chakraborty points out that without a sound model of the Indian man at the centre it is fruitless to seek to revive values and ethics in organizations He presents the Yoga-Vedanta model which interweaves the sacred into the secular, the spiritual into the worldly, infusing the changing world without with a stable permanence at the core rooted within Against the helpless servitude to the Herachitean view of change (read "progress" for modern man) as inevitable, he presents the Vedantic

realization that unless the permanent underpins the superficial change, man will be managed by change instead of managing change. Otherwise the frenetic pace of change will continue to be accompanied by ever-rising rates of unethical and amoral behaviour and top-executive diseases of body and mind

Simultaneously it is necessary for the educational system, particularly the management schools, to help and facilitate their students to realize that an individual's right is exercised fruitfully only if others discharge their duties. The blind imitation of the Western celebration of individualism (*why feel guilty to be selfish!*) in Indian management teaching and training (*sakāma karma* running riot!) has developed serious imbalances in the social structure of organizations where respect for age, consideration for others, humility are scorned by MBAs emerging from the management institutes. Chakraborty presents a profound learning experience in the record of the reactions of 52 Indian and 23 Swedish MBA students to his course "Managerial Effectiveness & Human Values". He finds that they all feel the need to find concepts and processes for sustaining their innate moral propensities, and that they find mere intellectual fare cannot provide this. The practice of a methodology to develop the Quality Self is felt to be necessary. In celebrating individual freedom, the manager, whether Indian or Western, is actually becoming a slave to his senses. Hence the phenomenon of swift burn-out that is causing much concern. If an organization seeks to develop values and ethics that are sustainable, these needs must be founded upon a movement moving away from the grasping, grabbing lower self (*rajaso-tāmasic*) to the giving, sublimating Higher Self (*sattvo-rājasic*). In managing change the touchstone is: does a change in the secular sphere help or hinder the sacred in man? Even in the USA the *Washington Post* has remarked in an editorial on the absurdity of public school education in assuming that without a moral-religious framework any character can be built up.

Chakraborty makes a powerful plea for developing wisdom-leadership by cultivating the Total Quality Mind, as a counterbalance to the mechanical Total Quality Management, using Indian psycho-spiritual processes to practise working without personal greed with the superordinate goal of *lokasangraha* for the world's welfare. In the Co-operative Movement he finds the Western parallel to this. This calls for the cultivation of the right-brain, the integrating, synthesizing part of consciousness, developing the "feminine" side in each of us which is other-fostering, holistic, what Dr. R. P. Banerjee describes as "Mother Leadership Style" (Wheeler Publishing, 1998). Tagore had provided a profound insight: "The masculine creations of intellectual civilization are towers of Babel, they dare to defy their foundations and therefore topple down over and over again. Has it not been sufficiently proved that her (science) material law of ruthless skilfulness can only commandeer the genu of power for her agents but cannot conjure up the spirit of creation which is the love of God and man?" Chakraborty calls upon leaders of industry and politics to embark on "a personal odyssey for transformation of the exteriorized, deficit-driven, hungering ego-self to the non-contingent, self-existent fulfilment of the Self" if mankind is to pull

itself out of the Serbonian bogs of corruption and blind self-interest that is driving itself lemming-like to destruction. The Cartesian-Baconian-Lockean world-view has led to self-destructive exploitation of nature and man. Manic consumerism and not the population of developing nations is the real danger to the world. Instead of trying to emulate the magician's tricks and committing gross errors, why not seek to understand the magician himself? Why not regard the world as a grand moral gymnasium for strengthening one's ethical, moral and spiritual self? This is the adventure of the consciousness which the millennial Indian—MBA, politician, academic, bureaucrat—is invited to embark upon.

The last part of this book bears out the sub-title 'Theory and Practice'. Here are as many as 15 case-studies portraying ethical issues in a management context. This collection is extremely valuable as it provides the management schools with real-life instances which can be used to develop insights in a way that students will find engrossing, instead of merely dull lectures. Taken together they form a powerful exhortation to management educators and practitioners to remember that what needs to be nourished above all is the human spirit and that the ingredients that nourish it are work, play, friendship, family and being rooted in one's heritage—these are what matter and this, alas, is what we have forgotten—the simplest things! A final nit-pick. For once the scrupulous scholar Chakravorty nods. He attributes to Duryodhana an appeal to Krishna, seated in his heart to guide him rightfully. *Mahābhārata* is innocent of any such plea.

The letter of Jamshedji Tata to Swami Vivekananda which Chakravorty quotes should become the watchword of our management education and practice. 'If such a crusade in favour of (not destroying but of diverting the ascetic spirit into useful channels) were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science and the good name of our common country.' The Rigveda, mistakenly regarded as of only antiquary value, has this sound mantra for value-laden business that Chakravorty reminds us of.

Let a man think well on wealth and strive to win it
by the path of law and by worship
And let him take counsel with his own inner wisdom,
grasp with spirit still greater ability

Hardly a world-denying philosophy! And the epic of epics has this exhortation by its creator, Vyasa, that those who would create wealth and their educators would do well to ponder on

I lift up my hands and I shout
From dharma flow wealth and pleasure,
Why is dharma not practised?

The Indus Age—The writing system Gregory L. Possehl Oxford and IBH Publishing Co Pvt Ltd, 66, Janpath, New Delhi Rs 750

DECIPHERING THE INDUS SCRIPT

Professor Gregory Possehl is one of the leading authorities on the Indus Civilisation, and he has spent long years in the exploration of the Indus settlements in both India and Pakistan and published several significant works like *Indus Civilisation in Saurashtra* and *Ancient Cities of the Indus* (Edited). This volume is the first of the four books written by him on the Indus Age, the other three being on "The beginnings", the "Mature Harappan" and the "Transformation". Taken together they will form a comprehensive overview of the ancient cities of the Indus from the village-forming communities through the transformation and eclipse of the civilisation.

This book is not another attempt at decipherment of the elusive writing system which was in use for 600 years (2500-1900 B.C.). It is an in-depth survey of the nature of Indus writing and a critical review of the most prominent decipherment efforts. Possehl frankly states that all attempts made so far are "to be judged as failure at least in so far as can be proved by independent tests." This may be seen as a counterpoint to the claims of decipherment but there are many positive sections in the book to locate where there is a consensus and what might be done to move forward for a full decipherment.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the Indus civilisation and its writing system. Based on the latest excavation and carbon datings, he defines six phases or stages in its rise and fall starting from the farming communities and pastoral camps as seen in sites like Kili Ghul Mohammed (7000-5000 B.C.), stage two, developed village communities (4300-3200 B.C.), stage three marks the early Harappan (3200-2600 B.C.), stage four, the early mature Harappan transition (2600-2500 B.C.), stage five, mature Harappan (2500-2000 B.C.), stage six, late and post-Harappan, ranging in date from 2000 to 1300/1000 B.C. He describes the socio-cultural components, technology of the stages.

One of the interesting observations Possehl makes is the absence of any monumental religious architecture with the possible exception of the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro. The pyramids of dynastic Egypt and the ziggurats of Mesopotamia have no parallel in the Indus valley. Also conspicuous by absence is the palace, indicating the absence of a king or a self-aggrandizing institution and individuals. However, he cites evidence to observe that the Harappans were deeply involved in worship and ritual but their religion was expressed in ways different from the Egyptian or Mesopotamian civilisation. "This is an important contrast to the socio-cultural system of the archaic states and the Harappan civilisation may not fall within that form of organisation."

In the second chapter he gives an excellent description of the various materials on which the Indus inscriptions are to be found: seals of different categories like stamp, cylinder, round, bar and the seal impression, sealings and pottery. He cautions that each class has its own place and message and must be seen as a functional part of its context.

These glyptical materials should not be mixed as it would blur and distort the content

He next discusses the characteristic features of the Indus script, such as the total number of signs, sign frequency, pictographs, direction of writing and the language family of the Indus system. He agrees with Iravatham Mahadevan that the normal direction of the script was from right to left (forming 83.23 per cent of the total inscription). The presence of hundreds of signs suggests that the writing system was based "on syllables or something akin to them and is neither alphabetic or logographic."

Regarding the origin of the script, he examines the various findings and states that it has to be traced only to the mature Harappan phase though the possibilities of the presence of the prototypes in the transitional period from the early to the mature Harappa can be recognised (e.g. Amri). This short period of development contrasts with the long history of the development of writing in Mesopotamia. Another intriguing feature is that no scholar has detected any change or development in the writing system over 500 years of the mature Harappan indicating "that once codified it remained frozen in forms."

A very significant part of this book is the detailed critique of all the most important efforts (about 35) made by various scholars for the decipherment of the Indus script. It has a long history right from the pioneers like Stephen Langdon, L. A. Waddell, G. R. Hunter, Father Heras to the recent computer-based decipherments like those of the Soviet team (1965) and the Finnish team headed by S. Parpola and P. Alto and scholars like I. Mahadevan (1972), S. R. Rao (1982), Walter A. Fairservis Jr. (1989). Some of them are serious and scientific in their approach. Many are based on "faith, revelation, guesses and unexplained methods."

The various theories regarding the script that have emerged are that it is close to Sumerian, Sumer-Elam, Etruscan, close to Easter Island script, proto-Elamite, proto-Dravidian, Indo-European, Aryan or proto-Vedic, progenitor of the Brahmi script. There are also theories that the Indus writings are all numerical signs and that they are tantric codes and are simply records of properties or receipts. Possehl gives a chronological sequence of these decipherments, their methodologies (or lack of them) and his own valuable comments and critical assessment of each one of them. He also gives the reviews of these readings made by other scholars like K. V. Zvelebil's review of the decipherment of the Soviet and Finnish teams and I. Mahadevan's review of S. R. Rao's readings. All these make the volume a very interesting and thought-provoking study, which would be extremely useful for students and researchers in the disciplines of archaeology, palaeography and linguistics.

Equally valuable is the last chapter, where he outlines some common ground, shared conclusions and the emerging patterns from all decipherment efforts. Following Kamil Zvelebil, he states, "The script is to be read from right to left with occasional instances of left to right, use of extensive suffixes but no prefixes or infixes, it is a logosyllabic writing, not alphabetic, it is not closely related to other writing systems of second and third millennium B.C., although some convergence might be found with

proto-Elamite, it is not related to any later Indian script like Brahmi or Kharoshthi, it is not likely to have been a written form of an Indo-European language since it lacks prefixes and inflectional endings, not likely to be the written form of a West Asiatic language except a poorly understood relationship to Elamite and last but not least none of the proposed decipherments can be proved to be true ”

He lists some problems that need attention like intensive study of certain working hypotheses, for instance, its relationship to proto-Elamo-Dravidian family or proto-North-Dravidian family, the rebus principle as a tool, the structural analytical approach. All these hypotheses “need to be confirmed by independent work” on a more sustained scientific basis. Among the drawbacks in the present stage of research, according to him, are the lack of agreement on the number of signs in the Indus script. Now, just about anything is fair game and the claims are mostly nothing but guesses. He stresses the need for a sign list and the need to study the writing system in its various cultural contexts (e.g. B. M. Pande’s analysis of copper tablets and Frank-Vogt’s analysis of bangle inscription).

What is the test for the correctness of a claim of decipherment? His answer is the appearance of an exemplar with a substantial bilingual inscription, one in Indus script, the other in a writing system that could be read. “In the absence of this, the text is ultimately going to rely on meaningful and consistent patterns and concepts that unfortunately elude precise definition. The hard and sad reality is that except for the concordances, we are nowhere nearer decipherment than G. R. Hunter was in 1929 ”

K. V. RAMAN

(Courtesy *The Hindu*)

Indian Thoughts on Shakespeare, edited by Goutam Ghosal, School of Sri Aurobindo Studies, Calcutta, 1998, pp. 70

The book consisting of eight essays on the different aspects of the playwright is a landmark in Shakespeare criticism. It includes both Aurobindonian and non-Aurobindonian views and all these are relevant in the context of the Aurobindonian credo which, as the editor has said, “accepts life as a whole”. Being a Yogi, Sri Aurobindo was equipped with a pair of extra eyes and “has made new discoveries in the human consciousness showing the existence of numerous planes inside us working either separately or in collaboration, fused together at times, after a deeper plane overlapping from behind to be mixed up with a crude surface layer”. Since the Indian approaches on Shakespeare are rare and the Aurobindonian approaches are even more scanty, this book one hopes will make a major breakthrough in the overcrowded world of Shakespeare criticism and initiate fresh thinking.

Among the non-Aurobindonian approaches the essays by Santanu Majumdar, Malika Ghosh Sarbadhikary and Sukla Basu (Sen) deserve special mention. Santanu

Majumdar's essay explores the "metaphysical underpinning" (to use the author's own phrase) of Shakespeare's little-read late romance *The Winter's Tale*. He goes on to assert that, contrary to the traditional view, the play reconciles quite closely the realistic and the miraculous and subjects the miraculous and fantastic part in the second half of the play to scrutiny and scepticism. Hence the play is not simply a "story of progression, growth, reconciliation and restoration"

Mallika Ghosh Sarbadhikary's essay deals with the famous Jonson-Shakespeare theatrical war and also points out the many similarities in their respective handling of tragedy and comedy. The writer has made a comparative and brief analysis of several pairs of plays of these two playwrights which include *Cynthia Revels* and *Hamlet*, *Every man Out* and *Twelfth Night*, among others.

Sukla Basu Sen's paper is a re-interpretation of the comedies of Shakespeare in the socio-cultural line of thought. This approach makes a case for the comedies which are traditionally considered as being inferior to the tragedies. The author combines her vast knowledge of modern critical scholarship with acute analysis and concentrates her study on the character of Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

The essays in the Aurobindonian line of thought are equally illuminating and well-documented. The consciousness-approach, of which Sri Aurobindo is the pioneer, is brilliantly handled by Goutam Ghosal in his essay on *Timon of Athens*. With his characteristic intuitive and scholarly understanding of the complexity of Shakespeare's genius and art and a clarity of thought and expression, Ghosal has taken the Aurobindonian approach to a new height. He has exactly characterised the forces behind Timon's insanity by relating them to the complex plane called the 'Vital'.

Supriyo Bhattacharya in *Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare* has pointed out Sri Aurobindo's conception of the role of poetry and art in Yoga and the Indian Yogi's exact characterisation of the strengths and weaknesses of Shakespeare's genius.

In *On Teaching Shakespeare* K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, a critic and scholar of extraordinary merit, has given an account of his growth of acquaintance with the world of Shakespeare as well as his experience of teaching Shakespeare to the Indian students. His observations are simply brilliant.

Kalyan K. Chatterjee's essay is another novel approach in the non-Aurobindonian line and it deals with the possible influences that Shakespeare's plays might have exerted on the Bengali poet as are revealed through the latter's essays on Shakespeare, especially, *Shakuntala*. The other essays are remarkable in their own rights as well.

One hopes that the essays presented in this volume will bring a proper focus on Sri Aurobindo's approach to Shakespeare, which is indeed a global approach. One only wishes that Sri Aurobindo's critical evaluation of Shakespeare would be included in the syllabi of Indian universities at the post-graduate level. This will enhance the Indian student's understanding of the vast and complex world of the great playwright. The only shortcoming of such a good book is that there are quite a few printing errors.