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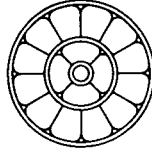
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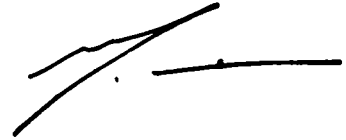


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LII

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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TOO WELL SHE LOVED

TOO WELL she loved to speak a fateful word
And lay her burden on his happy head,
She pressed the outsurging grief back into her breast
To dwell within silent, unhelped, alone.
But Satyavan sometimes half understood,
Or felt at least with the uncertain answer
Of our thought-blinded hearts the unuttered need,
The unplumbed abyss of her deep passionate want
All of his speeding days that he could spare
From labour in the forest hewing wood
And hunting food in the wild sylvan glades
And service to his father's sightless life
He gave to her and helped to increase the hours
By the nearness of his presence and his clasp,
And lavish softness of heart-seeking words
And the close beating felt of heart on heart.
All was too little for her bottomless need.
If in his presence she forgot awhile,
Grief filled his absence with its aching touch,
She saw the desert of her coming days
Imaged in every solitary hour
Although with a vain imaginary bliss
Of fiery union through death's door of escape
She dreamed of her body robed in funeral flame,
She knew she must not clutch that happiness
To die with him and follow, seizing his robe
Across our other countries, travellers glad
Into the sweet or terrible Beyond.
For those sad parents still would need her here
To help the empty remnant of their day
Often it seemed to her the ages' pain
Had pressed their quintessence into her single woe,
Concentrating in her a tortured world
Thus in the silent chamber of her soul
Cloistering her love to live with secret grief
She dwelt like a dumb priest with hidden gods
Unappeased by the wordless offering of her days,
Lifting to them her sorrow like frankincense,
Her life the altar, herself the sacrifice
Yet ever they grew into each other more

Until it seemed no power could rend apart,
 Since even the body's walls could not divide
 For when he wandered in the forest, oft
 Her conscious spirit walked with him and knew
 His actions as if in herself he moved,
 He, less aware, thrilled with her from afar
 Always the stature of her passion grew,
 Grief, fear became the food of mighty love.
 Increased by its torment it filled the whole world,
 It was all her life, became her whole earth and heaven
 Although life-born, an infant of the hours,
 Immortal it walked unslayable as the gods.
 Her spirit stretched measureless in strength divine
 An anvil for the blows of Fate and Time
 Or tired of sorrow's passionate luxury,
 Grief's self became calm, dull-eyed, resolute
 Awaiting some issue of its fiery struggle,
 Some deed in which it might for ever cease,
 Victorious over itself and death and tears

The year now paused upon the brink of change
 No more the storms sailed with stupendous wings
 And thunder strode in wrath across the world,
 And still was heard a muttering in the sky
 And rain dripped wearily through the mournful air
 And grey slow-drifting clouds shut in the earth.
 So her grief's heavy sky shut in her heart.
 A still self hid behind but gave no light.
 No voice came down from the forgotten heights,
 Only in the privacy of its brooding pain
 Her human heart spoke to the body's fate.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 472-73)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

The Littleness of Divine Maya

THE first words of Arjuna are, "These are our 'own people', they are our kin and objects of our love, what good of ours will be served by killing them in battle? The pride of the victor, the glory of kingship, the rich man's joy? I do not wish for all these hollow selfish ends. Why do kingship and enjoyment and life become dear to men? All these pleasures and greatnesses are tempting things because there are the wives and sons and daughters, because these will enable us to maintain in comfort our dear ones and relatives, because we shall be able to share our days with friends in the joy and comfort of wealth. But the very persons for whom we want kingship and enjoyment and pleasure are come as our foes in war. They would much rather kill us in battle than share the kingship and pleasure together with us. Let them kill me, but I can never kill them. Could I obtain possession of the kingdom of the three worlds by killing them, even then I would not do it, undisputed empire on earth is a mere trifle."

A superficial observer, enchanted with the words,

na kāmke vijayam kṛṣṇa na ca rājyam sukhāni ca

and

*etānna hantumicchāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana
api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kinnu mahīkrte*

would say, "Oh, how noble and high, how unselfish an attitude on the part of Arjuna, how full of love! To him defeat, death and eternal suffering are more desirable than an enjoyment and pleasure tainted with blood." But if we examine Arjuna's state of mind, we come to know that this attitude of his is extremely mean, a sign of weakness, fit only for a coward. To give up one's personal interests for the benefit of the clan, for the love of dear ones, under the influence of pity or for fear of bloodshed may be a high and noble attitude for one who is not an Aryan man; but, for an Aryan, it is not the best attitude; to give up one's interests for the sake of the right and for the love of God is the highest attitude. On the other hand, to give up the right law of living for the benefit of the clan, for the love of dear ones, under the influence of pity, for fear of bloodshed is the worst attitude. To keep the feelings of affection, pity and fear under control for the sake of the right law and for love of God is the true Aryan way.

In order to defend this low attitude of mind, Arjuna says again pointing to the sin of killing one's kin, "What pleasure, what satisfaction of mind can be ours by the killing of Dhritarashtra's sons? They are our friends, our kith and kin. Even if they

commit injustices and act as our enemies, rob us of our kingdom, break their promises, to kill them would bring us sin, will not give us happiness” Arjuna had forgotten that he was fighting a righteous war, was engaged by Sri Krishna in the slaughter of Dhritarashtra’s sons not for his own happiness or for the happiness of Yudhishtira, the object of this war was to establish the rule of law, the fulfilment of the Kshatriya’s duties, the founding of a great empire in India based on the law of right living To achieve these ends by forsaking all happiness, even by undergoing life-long suffering and pain was Arjuna’s duty

The Question of the Ruin of Clans

But Arjuna finds another, a nobler argument in support of his weakness. “This war will lead to the ruin of clans and nations, therefore this war is not a righteous war but an unrighteous war This fratricide implies an animosity towards friends, that is, it means doing harm to those who are naturally in our favour and help us Moreover, it will lead to the destruction of that clan of ours, that is, the Kshatriya family and clan-nation named Kuru from which both sides have sprung” In ancient times, the nation was frequently based on blood-relationships A large clan when it expanded grew into a nation For example, particular clans such as the Kurus and the Bhojas included within the Bharata nation became each a powerful nation The internal strife and mutual wrong-doing within the clan were what Arjuna described as the animosity of friends On the one hand, this kind of animosity is a heinous sin from the moral point of view, on the other hand, from the economic point of view, this great evil is the inevitable fruit of the deterioration of clans implied in such animosity

The proper observance of the old established laws of the clan is the mainstay of its progress and continuity The clan undergoes a downfall through a departure from the high ideals and a slackening of the disciplines which the ancestors have laid down and maintained with regard to the life of the householder and in the political field These ideals and disciplines are maintained as long as the clan remains fortunate and strong When it suffers deterioration and becomes weak, there is a slackening of the great ideals through the spread of tamasic ideas, as a result, evils like immorality and anarchy enter the clan, the women of the clan lose their virtue and the clan loses its purity, to the noble clan are born sons of persons of a low character and birth In consequence of this cutting off of the ancestors from the true line of their progeny, the destroyers of the clan find themselves in hell And through the spread of unrighteousness, the moral degradation following the admixture of castes, the pervasion of low qualities and because of anarchy and such other evils, the entire clan is ruined and becomes fit for hell With the ruin of the clan, both the law of the nation and the law of the clan come to an end, by the law of the nation is meant the old established ideals and disciplines come down through the generations among the great collectivity of the nation formed of all the clans

Arjuna thereupon threw down at the very moment of battle his Gandiva bow and

sat down in the chariot, having proclaimed once again his initial decision and the resolution as to how he should act. In the last verse of this chapter, the poet has left a hint that Arjuna was determined to act in this un-Aryan manner unworthy of a Kshatriya because there had been a confusion in his understanding on account of grief

The Knowledge and the Ignorance

In Arjuna's words about the ruin of clans, we find the trace of a very high and large idea, it is extremely important for the interpreter of the Gita to consider the serious question involved in that idea. On the other hand, if we look only for the spiritual significance of the Gita, if we make a complete break between the law of living propounded by the Gita, and our national, domestic and personal, our mundane acts and ideals, we shall be denying the greatness and importance of that idea and that question, it will be to limit the universal application of the Gita's law

Shankara and others who have interpreted the Gita were men of knowledge or devotion, other-worldly philosophers intent on spiritual knowledge, they were content with seeking in the Gita and finding therein whatever knowledge or ideas that were important to them. Those who are at once men of knowledge, devotion and works are alone fit for the innermost teaching of the Gita. The speaker of the Gita, Sri Krishna, was a man of knowledge and works, the recipient of the Gita, Arjuna, was a devotee and man of action, it was in order to open his eye of knowledge that Sri Krishna propounded this teaching in Kurukshetra. A mighty political conflict was the occasion for the propagation of the Gita, its object was to induce Arjuna to fight as an agent and instrument for the carrying out of a great political purpose in this conflict, the battlefield itself was the venue of the teaching. Sri Krishna was a supreme fighter and master of political science, to establish the rule of law was the prime object of his life, Arjuna too was a Kshatriya prince, war and politics were works proper to his nature. How should it be possible to interpret the Gita by ignoring the purpose of the Gita, its speaker, the recipient of the knowledge, the reason for its propagation?

There are always present in human life its five principal supports: the individual, the family, the clan, the nation and the human collectivity. The law of right living is also based on these five supports. The object of that law is to reach God. There are two paths to reach God: to possess the Knowledge and to possess the Ignorance. Both are means to Self-knowledge and God-realisation. The path of the Knowledge is to reject this Creation full of Ignorance though a manifestation of the Supreme, and to realise Sachchidananda or merge in the Supreme Self. The path of the Ignorance is to see the Self and God everywhere and to realise the Supreme Lord who is Knowledge, Power and Good incarnate, as friend and lord, teacher, father and mother, son and daughter, and servant, lover, husband and wife. Peace is the object of the Knowledge, love the object of the Ignorance. But the Divine Nature is made of both the Knowledge and the Ignorance. If we follow the path of the Knowledge alone, we shall

realise the Supreme in his form of Knowledge, if we follow only the path of the Ignorance, we shall realise the Supreme in his form of Ignorance. He who can possess both the Knowledge and the Ignorance alone realises Vasudeva in his entirety, he crosses beyond the Knowledge and the Ignorance. Those who have reached the final goal of the Knowledge have possessed the Knowledge with the help of the Ignorance.

This great truth has been revealed in the Isha Upanishad in very clear terms, as follows

*andham tamah praviśanti ye 'vidyāmupāsate
tato bhuya iva te tamo ye u vidyāyām ratāh*

*anyadevāhurvidyayā 'nyadevāhuravidyayā
iti śūsūma dhīrānām ye nastadvicacaksire*

*vidyāñcāvidyāñca yastadvedobhayam saha
avidyayā mrtyum ūrtvā vidyayāmrtamaśnute*

“Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone

“Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance, this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.

“He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality ”

The entire human race is progressing towards the Knowledge through its experience of the Ignorance; this is the true evolution. Those who are the best, the aspirant and the yogin, the man of knowledge and devotion, the doer of the Yoga of works, are in the vanguard of this march. They reach the far goal at a quick pace, they come back and make the human race hear the gospel, show it the path, distribute power. The incarnations and emanations of God come and make the path easy to tread, create favourable conditions, destroy the obstacles. To realise the Knowledge in the midst of the Ignorance, renunciation in the midst of enjoyment, the ascetic spirit while living in the world, all beings within the Self, the Self in all beings,—to have this realisation is the true knowledge, this precisely is the path laid down for the human race to march its destination. The limitations of one's self-knowledge are the main obstacles to progress, the identification of self with the body and the sense of egoism are root causes of those limitations, hence, to look upon others as one's own self is the first step to progress. Man's first preoccupation is with the individual, he is engrossed in his own individual bodily and mental progress, he devotes himself to his own body and mind, to their progress, enjoyment, and the development of their powers. “I am the body, I am the mind and vital being, the aim of life and the highest condition of progress are to secure the strength and beauty and happiness of the body, swiftness

and clarity and delight of the mind, prowess, enjoyment and cheerfulness of the vital being'—this is the first egoistic form of knowledge in man. This too has a utility; it is after achieving the development and fullness of body, mind and life in the first instance that one should use that fully developed power in the service of others. That is why the egoistic development of power is the first stage of human civilisation, the animal, the ogre, the demon and the titan, even the goblin find their play in human mind, action and character, express themselves through these. Afterwards, man widens his self-knowledge and begins to see others as his own self, learns to submerge his self-interest in the interests of others. At first, he looks upon his family as his own self, gives up his life for saving the lives of his wife and children, throws away his own happiness to secure the happiness of his wife and children. Thereafter, he comes to regard the clan as his self, gives up his life in order to save the clan, sacrifices himself, his children and his wife, throws away his own happiness and that of his wife and children. Afterwards, he considers the nation as his own self, gives up his life for the safety of his nation, sacrifices himself, his wife and children, his family and clan, even as the Rajput clans of Chitore sacrificed themselves repeatedly of their own accord for the safety of the entire Rajput nation, out of regard for the happiness and glory of the nation he throws away the happiness and glory of his clan, his wife and children and himself. Finally, he sees the entire human race as himself, gives up his life for the progress of the human race, sacrifices himself, his wife and children, his clan and nation, throws away for the happiness and progress of mankind, the happiness glory and advancement of himself, his wife and children, his clan and nation. Thus to see others as one's own self and to sacrifice himself and his happiness for the sake of others have been the main teachings of Buddhism and of Christianity which had Buddhism for its parent. The moral progress of Europe has been along these lines. The men of ancient Europe learnt to submerge the individual in the family, the family in the clan, the modern Europeans have learnt to submerge the clan in the nation, to submerge the nation in the human collectivity is considered by them as a difficult ideal. Thinkers like Tolstoy and supporters of the new ideal like the Socialist and the Anarchist parties are now anxious to put this ideal into practice. Europe has been able to move thus far. Europeans are devoted to the Ignorance, they are not aware of the true Knowledge. "Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance."

In India, the sages have mastered both the Knowledge and the Ignorance. They know that apart from the five bases of the Ignorance, there is God who is the foundation of the Knowledge; unless we know Him, the Ignorance too is not known, cannot be mastered. Therefore, instead of seeing only others as self, they have seen God in others as within themselves, *ātmavat paradeheṣu*. "I shall better myself, my betterment will lead to the betterment of my family; I shall help improve the family, with the improvement of the family the clan will be improved; I shall help advance the cause of the nation, the advancement of the nation will make for the advancement of the human race". This knowledge lies at the root of the Aryan social system and

the Aryan discipline Renunciation of personal self is for the Aryan a habit ingrained in his very bones—renunciation for the sake of the family, renunciation in the interests of the clan, the society, the human race, renunciation for God The deficiencies or faults that are observed in our education are the results of certain historical causes. For instance, we see the nation as a part of society, we are used to submerging the interests of the individual and the family in those of the society, but the development of the political life of the nation was not accepted as a main element included in our law of right living This teaching had to be imported from the West Nevertheless, the teaching was there in our country itself, in our ancient education, in the Mahabharata, the Gita, in the history of Rajputana, in Ramdasa's *Dāsabodha* We could not develop the teaching because of excessive devotion to the Knowledge, for fear of the Ignorance Because of this fault, we were overcome by *tamas*, we deviated from the right law of national life, fell prey to abject slavery, suffering and ignorance We could not master the Ignorance, were on the point of losing the Knowledge as well *Tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyām ratāh*

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Sanat K Banerji)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

समुद्रज्येष्ठाः सलिलस्य मध्यात् पुनाना यन्त्यनिविशमाना ।
इन्द्रो या वज्री वृषभो रराद ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु ॥ (R1g Veda, 7 49 1)

May those divine waters foster me, the eldest (or greatest) of the ocean from the midst of the moving flood that go purifying, not settling down, which Indra of the thunderbolt, the Bull, clove out (SABCL, Vol 10, p 106)

Eldest of the ocean they go amidst this water purifying all, not resting in any, they whom Indra with the lightning, the Male, [clove out]—may those divine waters keep me here in my being (Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research, December 1983, p.114)

या आपो दिव्या उत वा स्रवन्ति खनिन्निमा उत वा या स्वयञ्जा ।
समुद्रार्था याः शुचय पावकास्ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु ॥ (R1g Veda, 7 49 2)

The divine waters that flow whether in channels dug or self-born, whose movement is towards the Ocean,—may those divine waters foster me (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 106)¹

The waters divine,—whether they that flow in the channels we dig for them or they that are self-born, they who are substance of the Ocean pure and purifying—may those divine waters keep me here in my being (Sri Aurobindo. Archives and Research, December 1983, p.114)

यासा राजा वरुणो याति मध्ये सत्यानृते अवपश्यञ्जनानाम् ।
मधुश्रुतः शुचयो या पावकास्ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु ॥ (R1g Veda, 7 49 3)

In the midst of whom King Varuna moves looking down on the truth and the falsehood of creatures, they that stream honey and are pure and purifying,—may those divine waters foster me (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 106)²

They in whose midst moveth Varuna the King looking down on the truth and falsehood in creatures, they who stream sweetness and are pure and are purifying, may those divine waters keep me here in my being. (Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research, December 1983, p. 114)

¹ The divine waters that flow whether in channels dug or self-born, they whose movement is towards the ocean, pure, purifying,—may those waters foster me (SABCL, Vol 10, p 105)

² the divine, pure and purifying waters, honey-pouring, in the midst of whom King Varuna marches looking down on the truth and the falsehood in creatures (SABCL, Vol 10, p 451)

यासु राजा वरुणो यासु सोमो विश्वे देवा यासूर्जं मदन्ति ।
वैश्वानरो यास्वग्निं प्रविष्टस्ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु ॥ (Rig Veda, 7 49.4)

In whom Varuna the king, in whom Soma, in whom all the Gods have the intoxication of the energy, into whom Agni Vaishwanara has entered, may those divine waters foster me (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p. 106)

They in whom Varuna the King, in whom Soma, in whom all the gods have ecstasy of the fullness of force, in whom Agni, the universal Power, has entered in, may those divine waters keep me here in my being (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1983, p 114)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

STAR-PURIFIED

O DRAW some divination from the stars
To shape anew the wryness and misgrowth
Of worlds where light is scathed or ill-fare mars
The heart by dimness and the deed by sloth
To gaze and gaze upon the fire-strewn sky
Until the hush of heaven loom within,
Where the unshadowed splendours fill the eye
And world-renewing harmonies begin.

You stars who span with strength long leagues of space,
Blessed beyond the confines of our thought,
Surely you guard the palace sages sought,
Gold-shining sentries of Truth's dwelling-place
Emptied of shadow, we would be as you,—
Gold untarnished,—girt vigil of the True.

May 12, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment An exceedingly fine sonnet, perfect in thought and diction and structure.

THE NEW AGE

A SPIRITUALISED society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul. This freedom from the egoistic standpoint would be its first and most prominent characteristic. But the elimination of egoism would not be brought about, as it is now proposed to bring it about, by persuading or forcing the individual to immolate his personal will and aspirations and his precious and hard-won individuality to the collective will, aims and egoism of the society, driving him like a victim of ancient sacrifice to slay his soul on the altar of that huge and shapeless idol. For that would be only the sacrifice of the smaller to the larger egoism, larger only in bulk, not necessarily greater in quality or wider or nobler, since a collective egoism, result of the united egoisms of all, is as little a god to be worshipped, as flawed and often an uglier and more barbarous fetish than the egoism of the individual. What the spiritual man seeks is to find by the loss of the ego the self which is one in all and perfect and complete in each and by living in that to grow into the image of its perfection,—individually, be it noted, though with an all-embracing universality of his nature and its conscious circumference. It is said in the old Indian writings that while in the second age, the age of Power, Vishnu descends in the King, and in the third, the age of balance, as the legislator or codifier, in the age of the Truth he descends as Yajna, that is to say, as the Master of works manifest in the heart of his creatures. It is this kingdom of God within, the result of the finding of God not in a distant heaven but within ourselves, of which the state of society in an age of the Truth, spiritual age, would be the result and the external figure.

Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised, would make the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure. As it was to some extent in the ancient Vedic times with the cultural education of the higher classes, so it would be then with all education. It would embrace all knowledge in its scope, but would make the whole trend and aim and the permeating spirit not mere worldly efficiency, but this self-developing and self-finding. It would pursue physical and psychical science not in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends, but to know through and in and under and over all things the Divine in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them. It would make it the aim of ethics not to establish a rule of action whether supplementary to the social law or partially corrective of it, the social law that is after all only the rule, often clumsy and ignorant, of the biped pack, the human herd, but to develop the divine nature in the human being. It would make it the aim of Art not merely to present images of the subjective and objective world, but to see them with the significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to reveal the Truth and Beauty of which things visible to us and invisible are the forms, the masks or the symbols and significant figures.

A spiritualised society would treat in its sociology the individual, from the saint to the criminal, not as units of a social problem to be passed through some skilfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mould or crushed out of it, but as souls suffering and entangled in a net and to be rescued, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow, souls grown and from whom help and power can be drawn by the lesser spirits who are not yet adult. The aim of its economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or the co-operative kind, but to give to men—not only to some but to all men each in his highest possible measure—the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all. In its politics it would not regard the nations within the scope of their own internal life as enormous State machines regulated and armoured with man living for the sake of the machine and worshipping it as his God and his larger self, content at the first call to kill others upon its altar and to bleed there himself so that the machine may remain intact and powerful and be made ever larger, more complex, more cumbrous, more mechanically efficient and entire. Neither would it be content to maintain these nations or States in their mutual relations as noxious engines meant to discharge poisonous gas upon each other in peace and to rush in times of clash upon each other's armed hosts and unarmed millions, full of belching shot and men missioned to murder like hostile tanks in a modern battlefield. It would regard the peoples as group-souls, the Divinity concealed and to be self-discovered in its human collectivities, group-souls meant like the individual to grow according to their own nature and by that growth to help each other, to help the whole race in the one common work of humanity. And that work would be to find the divine Self in the individual and the collectivity and to realise spiritually, mentally, vitally, materially its greatest, largest, richest and deepest possibilities in the inner life of all and their outer action and nature.

For it is into the Divine within each man and each people that the man and the nation have to grow, it is not an external idea or rule that has to be imposed on them from without. Therefore the law of a growing inner freedom is that which will be most honoured in the spiritual age of mankind. True it is that so long as man has not come within measurable distance of self-knowledge and has not set his face towards it, he cannot escape from the law of external compulsion and all his efforts to do so must be vain. He is and always must be, so long as that lasts, the slave of others, the slave of his family, his caste, his clan, his Church, his society, his nation, and he cannot but be that and they too cannot help throwing their crude and mechanical compulsion on him, because he and they are the slaves of their own ego, of their own lower nature. We must feel and obey the compulsion of the Spirit if we would establish our inner right to escape other compulsion, we must make our lower nature the willing slave, the conscious and illumined instrument or the ennobled but still self-subjected portion, consort or partner of the divine Being within us, for it is that subjection which is the condition of our freedom, since spiritual freedom is not the egoistic assertion of our separate mind and life but obedience to the Divine Truth in

ourself and our members and in all around us. But we have, even so, to remark that God respects the freedom of the natural members of our being and that he gives them room to grow in their own nature so that by natural growth and not by self-extinction they may find the Divine in themselves. The subjection which they finally accept, complete and absolute, must be a willing subjection of recognition and aspiration to their own source of light and power and their highest being. Therefore even in the unregenerated state we find that the healthiest, the truest, the most living growth and action is that which arises in the largest possible freedom and that all excess of compulsion is either the law of a gradual atrophy or a tyranny varied or cured by outbreaks of rabid disorder. And as soon as man comes to know his spiritual self, he does by that discovery, often even by the very seeking for it, as ancient thought and religion saw, escape from the outer law and enter into the law of freedom.

A spiritual age of mankind will perceive this truth. It will not try to make man perfect by machinery or keep him straight by tying up all his limbs. It will not present to the member of the society his higher self in the person of the policeman, the official and the corporal, nor, let us say, in the form of a socialistic bureaucracy or a Labour Soviet. Its aim will be to diminish as soon and as far as possible the element of external compulsion in human life by awakening the inner divine compulsion of the Spirit within and all the preliminary means it will use will have that for its aim. In the end it will employ chiefly if not solely the spiritual compulsion which even the spiritual individual can exercise on those around him,—and how much more should a spiritual society be able to do it,—that which awakens within us in spite of all inner resistance and outer denial the compulsions of the Light, the desire and the power to grow through one's own nature into the Divine. For the perfectly spiritualised society will be one in which, as is dreamed by the spiritual anarchist, all men will be deeply free, and it will be so because the preliminary condition will have been satisfied. In that state each man will be not a law to himself, but *the* law, the divine Law, because he will be a soul living in the Divine and not an ego living mainly if not entirely for its own interest and purpose. His life will be led by the law of his own divine nature liberated from the ego.

Nor will that mean a breaking up of all human society into the isolated action of individuals, for the third word of the Spirit is unity [The other two words are God and Freedom. When man is able to see God and to possess him, then he will know real freedom and arrive at real unity, never otherwise. And God is only waiting to be known, while man seeks for him everywhere but all the while truly finds, effectively erects and worships images only of his own mind-ego and life-ego. When this ego-pivot is abandoned and this ego-hunt ceases, then man gets his first real chance of achieving spirituality in his inner and outer life.] The spiritual life is the flower not of a featureless but a conscious and diversified oneness. Each man has to grow into the Divine within himself through his own individual being, therefore is a certain growing measure of freedom a necessity of the being as it develops and perfect freedom the sign and the condition of the perfect life. But also, the Divine whom he thus sees

in himself, he sees equally in all others and as the same Spirit in all. Therefore too is a growing inner unity with others a necessity of his being and perfect unity the sign and condition of the perfect life. Not only to see and find the Divine in oneself, but to see and find the Divine in all, not only to seek one's own individual liberation or perfection, but to seek the liberation and perfection of others is the complete law of the spiritual being. If the divinity sought were a separate godhead within oneself and not the one Divine, or if one sought God for oneself alone, then indeed the result might be a grandiose egoism, the Olympian egoism of a Goethe or the Titanic egoism imagined by Nietzsche, or it might be the isolated self-knowledge or asceticism of the ivory tower or the Stylites pillar. But he who sees God in all, will serve freely God in all with the service of love. He will, that is to say, seek not only his own freedom, but the freedom of all, not only his own perfection, but the perfection of all. He will not feel his individuality perfect except in the largest universality, nor his own life to be full life except as it is one with the universal life. He will not live either for himself or for the State and society, for the individual ego or the collective ego, but for something much greater, for God in himself and for the Divine in the universe.

The spiritual age will be ready to set in when the common mind of man begins to be alive to these truths and to be moved or desire to be moved by this triple or triune Spirit. That will mean the turning of the cycle of social development which we have been considering out of its incomplete repetitions on a new upward line towards its goal. For having set out, according to our supposition, with a symbolic age, an age in which man felt a great Reality behind all life which he sought through symbols, it will reach an age in which it will begin to live in that Reality, not through the symbol, not by the power of the type or of the convention or of the individual reason and intellectual will, but in our own highest nature which will be the nature of that Reality fulfilled in the conditions—not necessarily the same as now—of terrestrial existence. This is what the religions have seen with a more or less adequate intuition, but most often as in a glass darkly, that which they called the Kingdom of God on Earth,—his kingdom within in men's spirit and therefore, for the one is the material result of the effectivity of the other, his kingdom without in the life of the peoples.

SRI AUROBINDO

[This article from *The Human Cycle*, SABCL, Vol 15, pp 239-245, formed a part of Anilbaran Roy's proposed book *The Prophet of the New Age*]

ALIPORE BOMB CASE TRIAL

C. R. DAS DEFENDS SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

Now with regard to the National College I have one word to say There again I do not quite understand my friend's argument He does not suggest as I thought at first he did that the Council of National Education was a limb of the conspiracy against the Government What I understood him to suggest was—I say this subject to correction by your Honour—that Arabinda made use of the National Council to give effect to his nefarious views If that was so then no inference can be drawn against him from the fact that he was connected with it I ask your Honour not to draw any inference from the fact that he was connected with the National College If inference is to be drawn it must go further, not only must the National Council be not harmless but it must also be proved that the National Council is a part and limb of the conspiracy Unless that is established, mere connection with the National Council will not give rise to any inference adverse to Arabinda Ghose. You will find in the evidence that Arabinda was connected with it not only after it was started but he came down to Bengal expressly for the purpose of carrying on the National Council of Education He took part in it before it was started as we find in the evidence of Satish Chander Mukerjee, and the best part of the arguments too shows that he did not intend to use the National Council of Education as a party organ in this conspiracy. At the time the National Council was formed who were the men we find in it? Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, Sir Gooroo Dass Banerjee, and Mr. Nagendra Nath Ghosh with whose names no one will ever try to associate politics That conclusively proves that Arabinda had no control over it, or if he had it was not his intention to make it a sort of organ for his political activities The people in Bengal wanted to keep the National Council of Education free from political activity This inference clearly arises from the names I have mentioned It was intended, as the prospectus shows, to be an institution to further the education of the country and it was intended to be free from all political bias of either party Arabinda was selected as the Principal of this College because he was under the circumstances the fittest person When he came to Calcutta in August 1906 he was still in the service of Baroda. He does not give it up until after he is appointed Principal of the National College With reference to this I desire to read just a few lines of the evidence of Satish Chander Mukerjee (Reads) There is no evidence even that Arabinda exercised any active control so far as the selection of the course of studies was concerned I submit that this fact is of no importance at all in arriving at the question whether Arabinda Ghose is guilty or not of the charges brought against him. I submit that although it does not help you in coming to any conclusion as to his guilt it shows—as I have submitted to you before—that the course of the activity of Arabinda Ghose was in accordance with the principles which were enunciated in that

letter of 13th August 1905. That is all that I have got to submit up to this period of 1906.

The next period I take is the period from October 1906 to April 1907. This is a period of very little activity on Arabinda's part as you will find during that period he was mostly ill. You will find—I will state the facts before I prove them—that he was at Deoghar from 11th December 1906, to 14th December 1906, and again from 27th January 1907, to the middle of April 1907, and you have heard from the evidence of Sukumar Sen that on the night he left for Deoghar permission was asked—after his name appeared as Editor of the "Bande Mataram"—if he would agree to be the Editor and upon his refusal his name was removed the next day. With regard to three different dates which I have given there is very little documentary evidence in the case, and from Arabinda's written statement I shall have to refer to it. In this connection we see that he was ill. He had to take leave from the National College on several occasions, in fact he was practically ill during the whole of this period. (Reads Arabinda's statement.) Satish Chander Mukerjee was asked about it and he said that the statement about Arabinda taking leave was true.

Another thing which I should like to point out in this connection is that there is no suggestion that at that time there was any activity in Seal's lodge. That was from a few days before February 1908 to some time in April 1908.

With reference to this period my learned friend read out some articles in the "Bande Mataram" dealing with autonomy, swaraj etc., and he further said that they contained a show of racial antipathy, that there was no love for humanity and that they advocated a direct violation of the law. Well, I have read those articles over and over again and I say that they are absolutely—every one of them—free from any one of those charges, except the charge—and I did not understand my friend to bring that in as a charge—that they wanted to bring in absolute swaraj. What I did understand him to say—if I have understood my friend aright—was that the means suggested for attaining swaraj was not legal and it was that that made the ideal of Swaraj improper. He took care to say that and I must say that it was very fair on the part of my learned friend to point it out.

So far as these articles are concerned I submit that the charge of racial antipathy cannot be brought against the "Bande Mataram". The particular note in the "Bande Mataram" was "love for its own people" and if that in itself involved some antipathy it may be expected, but what I want to lay stress on is, that the dominant note was not antipathy but love for its own people, and in dealing with that it may be that the articles have referred to other nations not in very complimentary languages. If you read the whole thing you will find that the object is not to attack any nation at all, but to point out that we must fall back upon our own resources, and stand on our own legs, or in other words, as I have pointed out before, that you cannot attain your ideal except through your own salvation. The Bande Mataram had to attack other nations because it pointed out that the people of this country were under the spell of foreign civilisation, under alien civilisation and wanted to dispel by these articles that peculiar

hypnotism that was cast on the people of this country by European nations. Not that European civilisation is bad, but that European civilisation is for “Europeans”. European nations must develop in their own way, they must rise to the noblest and best in them according to their own traditions. So also with the Indians; they must also take their own stand. Not that European civilisation is bad—I want you to particularly notice that—you won’t find that in the articles—but that European civilisation applied to us, European traditions brought into this country, are not the materials upon which this nation can grow. That is the philosophy underlying all the articles. The European civilisation is as a tree which grows in the soil of England; if you bring that tree here, it will not attain the same growth because the soil is not congenial. In the same way the development of a nation must be based on its own traditions. If you base it on any other traditions the soil will not be congenial. As for antipathy and dislike for humanity they are not to be found in those articles I submit they breathe all that my friend denies. I say according to these people nationalism has no rational basis to go upon unless it be for humanity I ask your permission here to read an article which comes into this period. It is written in very figurative language, but the thing it brings out is the inner philosophy of this school (Reads article entitled “Nation Day” October 16th)

Counsel next referred to the period from April 1907, to September 1907, i.e up to the acquittal of Arabinda Ghose in the sedition case In this period, Counsel said, Arabinda’s activities were confined to the National College and Bande Mataram. In this connection Counsel read a letter written to Arabinda from Tokio sympathising with him in his trouble with the Bande Mataram Trial.

(To be continued)

THE LATEST PHYSICS

A LETTER TRYING TO COPE WITH IT

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

So much for the main themes. Now for some side-questions on the future of scientific discovery. Hawking essays a prophecy “we know that particles that were thought to be ‘elementary’ twenty years ago are, in fact, made up of smaller particles. May these, as we go to still higher energies, in turn be found to be made from still smaller particles? This is certainly possible, but we do have some theoretical reasons for believing that we have, or are very near to, a knowledge of the ultimate building blocks of nature” (p. 70). Against this statement I would put another from the same book “We now know that Laplace’s hopes of determinism cannot be realised, at least in the terms he had in mind. The uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics implies that certain pairs of quantities, such as the position and velocity of a particle, cannot be predicted with complete accuracy. Quantum mechanics deals with this situation via a class of quantum theories in which particles don’t have well-defined positions and velocities but are represented by a wave. These quantum theories are deterministic in the sense that they give laws for the evolution of the wave with time. Thus if one can know the wave at one time, one can calculate it at any other time. The unpredictable, random element comes in only when we try to interpret the wave in terms of the positions and velocities of particles. But maybe that is our mistake: maybe there are no particle positions and velocities, but only waves. It is just that we try to fit the waves to our preconceived ideas of positions and velocities. The resulting mismatch is the cause of the apparent unpredictability” (pp. 182-83). Well, if we stop thinking of positions and velocities, however indeterminate, we have to stop thinking of particles at all. Then can we talk of “ultimate building blocks of nature”? There seems to be a confusion here, even apart from the wonder whether we cannot go beyond the quark on the one hand and the electron on the other, both regarded as ultimate at present.

Furthermore, if waves rather than particles are basic, is there not still a query about them, persisting from almost the time they were first mooted? As far back as 1932 Hans Reichenbach in his book *Atom and Cosmos*,¹ discussing the lately discovered wave-character of matter, said “What, then, are the waves, after all? De Broglie believed in such a duality of waves and particles that both would have reality, Schrodinger regarded the waves as primary, and wished to explain the corpuscles as the structure of a wave field. A third conception, finally, which at this moment seems to have the best prospect of success, was developed by Born, Heisenberg and Bohr. According to it, the corpuscles constitute the substantial, ‘thingish’ element of matter,

¹ George Allen & Unwin, London

but the waves are no electric fields, they are nothing thingish at all, but probabilities'' (p. 258) Adverting to the demonstration by Heisenberg that the position and velocity of a particle cannot both be measured with accuracy, Reichenbach comments: ''What does the conception of 'inaccuracy' mean? It says that definite statements about a certain condition cannot be made, but that signifies that the only statements which can be made refer to *probabilities*. Inaccuracy means probability We can state the result of Heisenberg's investigations by saying that only assertions of probability can be made concerning the states of the smallest particles of matter. That does not mean, as one might suppose, that those states are lawless; the investigation of probabilities means, rather, the learning of laws—but laws of a quite new type. The mathematical form of this type of law, however, is given by the waves, for their strength is nothing but a measure of the probability that a particle should be at the place in question This, then, is the sense of what we formulated in the statement that the waves are nothing 'thingish', but mean only probabilities, that they are 'waves of probability', the conditions through which the corpuscles pass are so arranged that their statistical regularity is described by waves The waves are, accordingly, a description of states, something 'statish', in contrast to the 'thingish' corpuscles. It is a very strange scene to which this interpretation of the quantum theory of the atom has brought us The regularity of Bohr's model is replaced by a probability mechanism in which waves play the decisive role, these waves, however, are denied the nature of things, since they are but to represent the descriptions of distributions of particles from the standpoint of probability theory'' (p. 263)

No doubt, Reichenbach does not halt here as if the end were reached He continues. ''It cannot be said that this conception yields a satisfactory solution of the riddle of matter It seems almost as if the interpretation just given suffers by still conceiving particles as too much in the image of macroscopic experience—that is, as little bodies in space' perhaps we shall have to learn to develop quite new conceptions of small-scale space itself before we can do justice to the relation between wave and corpuscle This seems, too, to be the opinion of physicists who lead in the field of quantum theory For the present, the corpuscle-wave duality still remains as a warning question-mark before the physics of quanta Certain it is that we know astonishingly much of the quanta, that the laws concerning them have been brought to the highest mathematical precision But it is equally certain that only the future can bring the final interpretation of these results'' (pp. 263-64)

Reichenbach anticipates Hawking's question whether we are right in thinking of positions and velocities on the analogy of everyday experience, but he renders it impossible to dissolve everything into waves as though they were actual realities which could substitute the particle-conception altogether

Now a last point raised by Hawking He opines. ''...the prospect for finding a successful unified theory seems to be much better now because we know so much more about the universe But we must beware of overconfidence—we have had false dawns before! Having said this, I still believe there are grounds for cautious

optimism that we may now be near the end of the search for the ultimate laws of nature'' (p 164)

On general grounds I would throw cold water on this "cautious optimism" The whole history of science shows that there can never be a complete theory since more and more secrets of nature are bound to be discovered in the course of time. Nor will one particular theory be kept improving, there can be and have been revolutions in physics like relativity theory to a considerable extent and quantum theory to an almost unthinkable degree Even less realistic is Hawking's assertion about what we are said already to know After saying that we have found "the laws that govern the behaviour of matter under all but the most extreme conditions", he adds "In particular, we know the basic laws that underlie all of chemistry and biology" (p. 179) Biology means the phenomena of life, including our own Is it possible to declare on the basis of our knowledge of DNA and other facts of molecular biology that we have insight into all workings of the living organism, human as well as animal? What about the books of the two biologists, Sir Alister Hardy and Lyall Watson? They present problems in biological phenomena which make a mechanistic explanation almost unthinkable even theoretically Take the very champion of materialism in biology, Jacques Monod He goes as far as possible to establish the reign of "chance and necessity" in his famous book of that name¹ Yet he writes.

"The development of the metabolic system, which, as the primordial 'soup' thinned, must have 'learned' to mobilize chemical potential and to synthesize the cellular components, poses Herculean problems So does the emergence of the selective permeable membrane without which there can be no viable cell. But the major problem is the origin of the genetic code and of its translation mechanism Indeed, it is not so much a 'problem' as a veritable enigma. The code is meaningless unless translated. The modern cell's translating machinery consists of at least fifty macromolecular components *which are themselves coded in DNA. the code cannot be translated except by products of translation* It is the modern expression of *omne vivum ex ovo* When and how did this circle become closed? It is exceedingly difficult to imagine" (p 135)

This is a refutation of Hawking's claim at the most primitive level. At the most sophisticated level, that of the human brain and the phenomenon of "consciousness", Monod tells us

"We are able to guess the existence of this marvellous instrument and we know how to translate the result of its operation by language, but we have no idea of its functioning or its structure. Physiological experimentation has so far been unable to help us. Introspection, despite all its dangers, does tell us a little more There is also the analysis of language, which however only reveals the process of simulation after it has been transformed, and certainly does not reveal all its operations. There lies the frontier, still almost as impassable for us as it was for Descartes. Until it has been

1 Collins, London, 1972

crossed, a phenomenological dualism will continue to appear unavoidable. Brain and spirit are ideas no more synonymous today than in the seventeenth century” (p. 148).

We may choose to think of our scientific shortcomings as mere “gaps” which are likely to be filled in the future. But surely the “gaps” should prevent us from boasting, as Hawking does, that “we know the basic laws that underlie all of chemistry and biology”. I should say that the “gaps” themselves look basic, lying as they do at the starting-points of life and mind. In any case, Hawking’s proclamation is bound to ring hollow. It is good to find him less cocksure about the higher reaches of science. After the vaunt about chemistry and biology he good-humouredly confesses: “Yet we have certainly not reduced these subjects to the status of solved problems; we have, as yet, had little success in predicting behavior from mathematical equations!” (p. 179)

Now let me cry halt and not put too much strain on you with my questionings. To test them and to get a proper hang of Hawking’s own solution of the dilemma posed to him by the big bang I shall consult our Education Centre’s most knowledgeable professor of physics who is also philosophically minded.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

GREED FOR GLORY

WHEN you do not come to the concert
 With a liting song of love,
 And instead fill your emptiness
 With the jingling sound of words,
 When your garden is not resonant
 With rhapsody of the springtime birds,
 When shadows of the dreams of fame
 Dance feverishly upon your eyelids
 And hinder with hallucinations
 The simple vision of truth,—
 Does that make you
 A poet, a seer?

M L THANGAPPA

UPRUSH OF MUD... EINSTEINIAN FORMULA, ETC.

AN INFINITY OF COMBINATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF GREAT TRANSFORMATIONS

I suppose you have no time to see my old poem of 80 lines?

AFTER the 15th would be more convenient.

August 8, 1935

This morning I lost my temper over N.P 's obstinacy He would not listen to my instructions But can you tell me why I've been feeling a sort of antagonism towards him?

It may be a Dr Fell affair "The reason why I cannot tell"—or it may be the result of a feeling of accumulated bother

August 11, 1935

Well, Sir, have I covered a few milestones on the journey to the Infinite?

Move on, move on!

Some time back you wrote to me. "Never has there been such an uprush of mud and brimstone as during the past few months However the Caravan goes on and today there was some promise of better things " What about the uprush of mud? Has it settled down, and are people now floating in the flood of the Supramental?

It is still there, but personally I have become superior to it and am travelling forward like a flash of lightning, that is to say zigzag but fairly fast Now I have got the hang of the whole hanged thing—like a very Einstein I have got the mathematical formula of the whole affair (unintelligible as in his case to anybody but myself) and am working it out figure by figure

As for people, no! they are not floating in the supramental—some are floating in the higher mind, others rushing up into it and flopping down into the subconscious alternately, are swinging from heaven into hell and back into heaven, again back into hell ad infinitum, some are sticking fast contentedly or discontentedly in the mud, some are sitting in the mud and dreaming dreams and seeing visions, some have their legs in the mud and their head in the heavens etc , etc , an infinity of combinations, while many are simply nowhere. But console yourself—these things, it seems, are inevitable in the process of great transformations

I send a poem as an offering—the result of the Darshan

By the way very much pleased with your offering. Even if he is slow in delivery and his Muse not অনন্তপ্রসবা¹ like Harin's or Dilip's or—, the poet is undeniable.

August 16, 1935

You say, “I have become superior to it and am travelling forward fast,” but you have been always superior and been always travelling fast all your life How is it going to affect us? [Sri Aurobindo underlined “always superior and been always travelling fast”].

Rubbish!

If my being able to solve the problem of the subconscious in the sadhana is of no importance, then of course it won't affect anybody Otherwise it may.

From the condition of the people you describe, there isn't much hope left, nor does it show that your travelling fast has speeded them up.

That is of no importance at present To get the closed doors open is just now the thing to be done and I am doing it Speeding people through them can come in its own time when the doors and the people are ready

What is this mathematical formula that you have all of a sudden found out? Let us have it in a tangible form, if possible

I told you it was unintelligible to anybody but myself, so how the deuce do you expect me to give it to you in a tangible form?

Chand writes that while he was meditating in a quiet place, he saw a very brilliant mass of reddish light above the temple there What does it mean?

Don't know Red means a hundred different things and the particular sense depends upon the shade and the context If he is getting calm and peace, that is more important

August 17, 1935

It appears you have made many people happy at this Darshan in spite of their

1 *anantaprasavā*, infinitely fertile

oscillations, sitting contentedly on their mud thrones My discontented self is one of that happy group¹

Well, one can be happy in a swing or even in the mud! The perfect sadhak should indeed be happy in all circumstances, *সর্বথা বর্তমানোহপি*¹ as the Gita puts it.

We wonder and wonder how, all on a sudden, you have melted so visibly, tangibly and manifestly What is it that could melt you so as to give us a patting during darshan?

It is my mathematical discovery—don't seek for any other cause—my grand new, brand-new mathematical formula.

Divine Love concretising itself? or the Divine himself elated at the thought of an impending big deal?

What great expectations! Besides I'm not Roosevelt. I am only going ahead, therefore visibly cheerful though not yet demonstratively exuberant.

But whatever it may be, if you keep up this patting, Sir, at every Darshan, our repinings will disappear. Don't you think so?

Don't know. Provided no sadhak interprets my pattings as blows and cries "Why did you thrash me, Sir?"

NIRODBARAN

(*Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol I, pp 287-89.)

1 *sarvathā vartamano'pi* in all conditions or states of the being

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

A Tale and a Vision

WE HAVE seen how *Savitri* developed gradually from the earliest versions which opened “In a huge forest...” to those beginning “A starless hush prepared epiphany”, and through another dozen or so drafts of the opening until the first line arrived at its present form. During most of the later stage of this process, the first portion of the poem was no longer called “Love”, but “Quest”.

Soon after changing the six “cantos” to six “books”, Sri Aurobindo divided the rapidly growing first book into two. “Book I” was renamed “Quest”, for it now ended with Savitri travelling through the land in search of her destined life-companion. “Love” was kept as the title of the second book, devoted entirely to the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan. Thus the poem consisted of seven books—called Quest, Love, Fate, Death, Night, Twilight and Day—and an epilogue.

Sixteen complete or incomplete versions of “Book I: Quest” have been found among the manuscripts of *Savitri*. In the fourth of these, Sri Aurobindo reintroduced the division of the poem into two parts, calling them “Earth” and “Beyond”. Below the title “Savithri” (as he then spelled it), he added a subtitle “A Tale and a Vision”.

In a letter of 1936, he referred to the scheme of parts and books found in “Savithri: A Tale and a Vision”.

Savitri was originally written many years ago before the Mother came, as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond... each of four books—or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue.¹

This helps us to date the first phase of Sri Aurobindo’s work on *Savitri*. “Before the Mother came” cannot mean before her first arrival in Pondicherry in 1914, it can only mean before she came to stay in 1920. Even if we suppose that the earliest surviving manuscript of *Savitri*, dated 1916, was preceded by others that have been lost, the mention of two parts and several books shows that Sri Aurobindo was referring to a more advanced stage than the 1916 version, which had no such divisions. He has simplified the story of the genesis of the poem by leaving out the numerous drafts through which it reached the form of seven books and an epilogue. But the statement makes it clear that the early phase of work on *Savitri*, whose outcome is represented by manuscripts subtitled “A Tale and a Vision”, came to an end by about 1920.

A Legend and a Symbol

In January 1921, Sri Aurobindo discontinued the *Arya*. After six years of one of the most astonishing and momentous outbursts of literary activity in the history of thought, he abruptly stopped writing for an equal period. From 1921 to 1926, he suspended work on *Savitri* along with virtually all other writing. But this long silence, far from being an interval of sterile inactivity, was a time of intense concentration and ascent to heights hardly glimpsed in the past evolution of the human consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's experiences and realisations during this period made possible the next phase in the composition of *Savitri*.

When he began to write again, his first book was *The Mother*, written and published in 1927. A few pages of *Savitri* are found in a notebook used for drafts of *The Mother*. But Sri Aurobindo's renewed attention to the poem may have been quite intermittent at first. In a letter of 1931, which provides the next datable evidence of his resumption of work on *Savitri*, he speaks of looking at it "once a month perhaps". But he also reveals a fundamental change in his conception of it:

There is a previous draft, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have been a *magnum opus* at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I therefore started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages and lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame.²

During the 1930s, a heavy load of correspondence and other preoccupations, such as the revision of the writings published previously in the *Arya*, limited the amount of time Sri Aurobindo could give to *Savitri*. Nevertheless, he filled notebook after notebook with drafts of the first book. Even a glance through these notebooks gives an impression of his Herculean labour to lift the poem to the highest attainable levels of inspired and revelatory utterance.

Initially, the first book was still called "Quest". But Sri Aurobindo was increasingly preoccupied with the introductory sections, especially the description of Aswapati's Yoga and vision of the Divine Mother. As these sections expanded, the first book became disproportionately long. He did not yet create a new book with Aswapati as its central figure. But he reduced the excessive length of the first book by shifting material from the end of it to the second book.

The last manuscript titled "Quest" (a medium-sized notebook in which Sri Aurobindo was writing twenty-one lines on a page, before revision) begins with a four-page section corresponding to the present opening canto, followed by a section of twenty pages or so which would develop eventually into the rest of Book One and Book Three—as yet there was hardly even a hint of Book Two, the longest book of the finished epic. Then come three sections of about ten pages each, covering the subject matter of the present Book Four, "The Book of Birth and Quest". The

sections had no titles, but were separated by blank spaces

When Sri Aurobindo revised this manuscript, he marked the last section to be transferred to the next book. But this meant shifting Savitri's quest from the first book to the second, so the first book could no longer be called "Quest" Accordingly, at the beginning of the next manuscript we find a new title, "The Book of Birth" Besides substituting "Birth" for "Quest", Sri Aurobindo included the word "Book" in the title, as he would do henceforth in the titles of all books of *Savitri*

Apart from this change in the form of the titles, the scheme of the poem was not affected much by starting with "The Book of Birth" instead of with "Quest" The transfer of material left the number of books the same, only adjusting a disproportion between their lengths But the new title of the first book marked a break with the old poem that had been subtitled "A Tale and a Vision" The rewriting of the first book was transforming *Savitri* into an epic of a kind unknown in the world's literature, with a more far-reaching significance than Sri Aurobindo had contemplated when he began

One of the next manuscripts has a title page on which he put for the first time, under "Savitri", the subtitle "A Legend and a Symbol". Below this, a table of contents listed the four books of "Part I" as it was then conceived. "The Book of Birth", "The Book of Love", "The Book of Fate", "The Book of Death". Sri Aurobindo perhaps thought it was time to write out at least this much of the poem in order to get an overview of it as it then stood

But this was not to be The notebook in question is filled with drafts for "The Book of Birth". Sri Aurobindo got as far as the vision of the Divine Mother Then he went back to the beginning of the Yoga of the King, rewriting and thoroughly revising the first page four times in succession before continuing At this point, in the early 1930s, so much work remained to be done on this part of *Savitri* that it would be years before the later books, lying almost untouched since 1920, could be taken up again

The Worlds

In the manuscript of "The Book of Birth" just described, where "A Legend and a Symbol" first appeared below "Savitri" on the title page, we find the following passage

A voyager upon uncharted routes,
Venturing into another space and time,
He faced the viewless danger of the Unknown
And traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake
And saw in front the flaming hierarchies
And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords.

This sentence ultimately came to be spread out over more than two hundred pages of *Savitri*, from page 91 to page 300 in the current edition. The first three lines were transposed and altered into the four lines that form the last sentence of the present Book One:

A voyager upon uncharted routes
Fronting the viewless danger of the Unknown,
Adventuring across enormous realms,
He broke into another Space and Time.

The last two lines of the six-line passage from “The Book of Birth” are now found almost at the end of Book Two—the first line slightly modified and followed by two new lines

Above him he saw the flaming Hierarchies,
The wings that fold around created Space,
The sun-eyed Guardians and the golden Sphinx
And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords

Today, fourteen cantos intervene between these two passages. In the manuscript described above, there was a single line. In the final version, this line comes at the end of a sentence in Book Two, Canto Eight (page 230).

In vague tremendous passages of Doom
He heard the goblin Voice that guides to slay,
And faced the enchantments of the demon Sign,
And traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake

The line about “the opponent Snake” and some lines on the Overmind, now found on the last pages of Book Two, were the starting-point for a veritable explosion of visionary poetry which by the early 1940s had produced “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds”. It was a literary repetition, as it were, of the primal event

When worlds broke forth like clusters of fire-flowers,
And great burning thoughts voyaged through the sky of mind. 3

The detonation-point can be seen in the next manuscript, on a page which presents a remarkable appearance even compared with other pages of the *Savitri* manuscripts of this period. The page is large, for the ruled notebook Sri Aurobindo was using allowed him to write 38 lines on a page before revision. But more than half of what is written on this page is found in the margins and between the lines

Almost all the new lines relate to what is now “The Book of the Traveller of the

Worlds''. Even among the 38 lines written before the marginal revision began, we find the following in place of the last three lines of the passage quoted above from the previous version:

Across that subtle Matter's reign he passed
Which holds the types of things our world attempts,
And through the astral chaos built his road,
Across the illusions of the demon Kings ,
Assaults of Hell he endured and Titan strokes,
Bore the fierce inner wounds that are slow to heal,
And traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake,
In shining Edens of the vital gods
And scenes forbidden to our pallid sense
Rejoiced, where life is beautiful, proud and free,
And wandered in stupendous realms of Mind,
The borders of the inexpressible Light,
And saw in front the flaming hierarchies
And the tiered planes and the immutable Lords.

In this fourteen-line sentence, several of the worlds through which Aswapati travels in the fifteen cantos of the final Book Two are already very briefly indicated. The cantos later called "The Kingdom of Subtle Matter", "The Godheads of the Little Life", "The World of Falsehood" and "The Paradise of the Life-Gods" are represented by two or three lines each, while the passage that would evolve into "The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge" continues with several more lines at the bottom of this page and the top of the next.

But this only opened the floodgates for what now began to descend. The lines jotted in the top, left and right margins of this page show the beginning of the process. At the end of the same notebook, Sri Aurobindo began to write out entire pages describing some of these worlds. By 1936, when for the first time in twenty years we have a precisely datable version, this section of the poem had reached a length of many hundreds of lines

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

- 1 *Savitri* (1993), p. 729
- 2 *Ibid*, p. 727
- 3 *Ibid*, p. 612

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

15:09:1994

Last year on my birthday I had gone for the Darshan as usual. But at that time the Mother appeared very serious. I had given appointments to a number of friends, as it was my birthday, they wanted to see me.

But then I ignored all the appointments, I came down and sat there for a long time, for half an hour. I ignored all the appointments. She had given a very serious look.

Plenty of things have happened after that. I was expecting the same thing this year also. You see, on the seventh evening, on the eve of my birthday, I was at the Mother's Couch, in the Meditation Hall. I saw the Mother's feet and bowed down.

But then there were Sri Aurobindo's feet, instead of the Mother's. And these two sets of feet kept on alternating for quite some time.

Next day Kailash told me about his dream-experience. He saw in his dream the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's feet alternating, and me bowing. He had seen this in his dream.

There is a descent, but I don't know when it takes place. It happens suddenly.

Things are happening again. But I will take precaution. I think, I was forcing earlier, but now I will not do that. Now my health is also much better.

You see, I am eighty but now I am all right. I have stopped taking medicine. I had suffered two heart-attacks and I had to undergo an operation for my broken thigh-bone. But I am much better now.

I am sure something will happen.

My effort will be through the psychic being or through intuition. It is through one of these I will try. I will try through the psychic being. Let us see.

27:09:1994

Day before yesterday. Just before waking up. I saw five candles coming out of my body. Big candles. In a bundle of five. Somebody wanted one of them; but I could not remove any from the bundle. They were all stuck together. Big large candles.

It seems, things have started happening. I am approaching through my psychic being. Now the sadhana will perhaps be different. But there is no descent in the usual sense.

But there was one descent the other day, for a long time. It was for such a long duration that I could not even go to the Samadhi. I was sitting on the cement bench under the Reading Room window, and it was happening all the while.

10:10:1994

I will have to go through the spiritual path, and not the psychic. I am told so. Spiritual consciousness must open to the higher.

12:10:1994

Day before yesterday, in the afternoon, I was taking my usual nap. When I was about to wake up I saw a dream.

I was escorting somebody to the Playground. The door was closed. I heard Sri Aurobindo giving the orders for Gymnastic Marching, conducting the Group.

It was Sri Aurobindo, and not Mona who gives the orders for marching. It was a very loud voice. We stood outside the door.

When the door opened, I sent the visitors in and stood outside. I didn't want to disturb the Gymnastic Marching as Sri Aurobindo was giving the orders. From inside nobody could have seen me standing there at the door.

Then, suddenly I heard Sri Aurobindo's loud voice "Who is the young man standing there outside?" I heard it very distinctly, ". the young man . ?" Then I went inside.

19:10:1994

The path is the spiritual. Yes, it is the spiritual path, and not the psychic. Can the supermind come down directly?

Unless the necessary instruments are ready it will not. Otherwise these will get shattered. The spiritual planes must be able to receive it.

It has come to the individual-cosmic plane, to the cosmic consciousness.

22:10:1994

My spirit went down, went below to the inconscient. Or was it to the subconscious? I do not know, but it must be the latter. I can't distinguish these, must be the subconscious.

It was directed to go there, my spirit. There is the experience of delight even in the physical. Mind well, it is not the delight of existence, but delight in the physical.

It is happening. It happened yesterday.

08:11:1994

It was our new year day, a few days back. I had gone to Sri Aurobindo's Room. As I was coming out, he told me. "This is your psychic being." I did not see it, but I felt great calm and happiness.

27:11:1994

Sri Aurobindo told me: "I am descending in your psychic being."

On another occasion, later on, something from my lower nature was taken up. Yes, I could see it, taken up and lifted very high.

I could follow it, up to a certain point. It went very high, very high, to the Overmind, I believe. Sri Aurobindo himself had done it. But I did not see him.

Then, again some other day, Sri Aurobindo said that he was descending in me. I went deep within and saw the Mother sitting there. She said that she is bringing purity in my sex-centre. I could feel the flow there.

In another meditation she told me that she is making me global. The action is now directly from the Overmind

I was also told that it is the impersonal that is working in me.

There were many other things also which were happening in between.

She said. "I am now acting in you directly from the Overmind."

I feel the difference It is something wonderful Its effect is very definite

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

HUMILITY

Rise high, then higher, and then higher yet,
Set no rein upon your aspirations,
Spurn with your feet each dizzy summit,
Let not your soul stop its surging motions.

Even at the brink of blissful fulfilment,
You are the eternal Mother's chosen child
Remember this and let the firmament
Ring to the steps of your venture in the wild.

Soar up beyond the blue cocoon of earth
From heaven to heaven, leaning in endless trust
On the glow divine of the Mother. Yet know your birth
As lower than a speck of dust

Be not vain of the heights you scale, for thus
The Mother wills—a mother to each of us

NISHIKANTO

(Translated by Ratri Rai 'Vinamra' from *Vaijayanti*)

THEY HAVE ARRANGED...

THEY have arranged themselves in rows,
Fires which were once a-whirl,
O what a winged wide repose
Of amethyst and pearl!

Frail mountain lovers, clouds of eve,
Bordered with seraph hues
Tremble under a giant heave
Of music-mated dews

All is a miracled suspense
Of flames and winds become
A harmony, in whose intense
Vibration time grows dumb.

Nature resolves into a dot
Its blue infinities
Of sky become a bridal spot
On brows of timeless ease.

A giant vacancy forgives
The memory of flux
And, from the loveliness that lives
Upon the surface, plucks

A fruit of essence hanging far
On boughs of melting peace,
Against a heaven where every star
In a self-trance doth cease.

And naught remains but huge repose,
A vibrant static whirl
Of living unembodied glows
Fleece-amethyst and pearl.

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

THE MYSTERY OF SRI AUROBINDO'S 'DEPARTURE' VIS-À-VIS THE IDEAL OF PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

The Mother's Action

WE have more than once mentioned in the course of our essay that the Mother's body-consciousness was intimately linked with Sri Aurobindo's body and her body lived day and night for thirty long years in an absolute ecstasy and peace, without any problem or any tension or even any sense of responsibility

Now the Mother felt that a constant memory of this wonderful period haunting her daily life would seriously hamper her new onerous responsibility that Sri Aurobindo had entrusted her with before and also after leaving his physical body. So she "locked up" the profoundest part of her psychic being and kept it aside so that it could not pull her back from her new type of activity

But let us not indulge here in any type of gaucherie of expression from our side. Let the Mother speak for herself.

"When I realised that it was really a fact that Sri Aurobindo had left, when he came out of his body and entered mine, with the most material part which had to deal with the most external things, and I understood that from then on I had the responsibility for all the work, also for Sadhana, I took up that part of my being, the part of my deepest psychic, which had lived for thirty years in the ecstasy of realisation, above all responsibility, well, I took that, locked it up and set it aside, and then spoke to it 'Close, don't move, remain outside of Time and Manifestation till everything else gets ready' "

The Mother once remarked that it was an act of supreme Grace on the part of Sri Aurobindo and the demonstration of his absolutely miraculous power that she could do this 'locking-up'; for, otherwise, it would have been impossible for her to work conveniently in the absence of Sri Aurobindo's physical support (Incidentally, we may mention that the Mother partly opened the closed door only in 1960, ten years after Sri Aurobindo's passing, and then too with much caution so that it might not entail serious difficulty in the discharge of the Work)

Now we come to the second Action of the Mother which she adopted after Sri Aurobindo's departure for the right functioning of her Work which was to realise and establish the supramental upon earth. The Mother has referred to the whole situation in this way

The Mother's Second Action

"I saw and understood very well that I could by concentration give to my body

the attitude of the absolute authority of the universal Mother. When Sri Aurobindo told me 'You are She', he, at the same time, conferred on my body this attitude of absoluteness in authority

"Later on, when he left and it devolved upon me to do the Yoga myself, I could have taken the attitude of the Sage in order to be able to take his physical place. As a matter of fact, I was for some time in a state of unparalleled serenity.

"When he came out of his body, entered my own and told me: 'You will continue, you will go to the end of the Work', at that moment I imposed on my body the serenity of a total detachment

"I could have remained like that but I saw that an absolute serenity implies in some measure the withdrawal from action. So I had to make a choice between the two. I said to myself 'I shall be neither this one *exclusivement* nor the other one *exclusivement*'. Since then I have renounced the uncontested authority of the Divine, also renounced the unshakable serenity of the Sage

"My body has now, let me repeat, neither the indisputable authority of God nor the imperturbable serenity of the Sage. I have asked it to do in all seriousness the Work of Sri Aurobindo and, at bottom, to do the given Work of Sri Aurobindo is to realise the supramental upon earth. And in that my body is only a simple apprentice which is learning to work. I am only an apprentice, a simple apprentice: I am in the process of learning my job."

So the Mother's Work started in right earnest after the day of decision of 12 December 1950. And this work was, in her own words, "the realisation of super-humanity intermediate between man and the supramental being." And this was "a work of every day, nay, every minute."

And in this Avataric Work Sri Aurobindo was ever there by the Mother's side, in her own consciousness, helping and guiding and effectively preparing the Way.

Yes, even without his physical body Sri Aurobindo went on acting as vigorously as before 1950, the year of his passing away. There was absolutely no interruption in his action. 5 December 1950 was only a purposeful milestone in his spiritual-supramental existence. It did not signify any termination nor even a temporary pause. It is worth recalling in this connection the illuminating words of the Mother:

"Sri Aurobindo has not left me, not for a moment—for He is still with me, day and night, thinking through my brain, writing through my pen, speaking through my mouth and acting through my organising power."

"One day—it was perhaps one or two years after his Departure—early in the morning I was at one corner of my breakfast table. When I started taking my food, Sri Aurobindo came and stood near me. He was so concrete that I had the impression that a mere trifle was needed so that he could become material again. Then I told him: 'Oh, you are coming back!' But he replied 'I'll be with you, but I can't come back materially—I must not come back materially.'"

"And I see now [in 1970] how his departure and his work, so immense and so constant in the subtle physical, how much has that helped! How much has he aided to

prepare things and to change the structure of the physical ”

“Oh, how has he worked since when he left, all the time, all the time!”

Even as late as 1969, nineteen years after he had left his body, the Mother affirmed: “Sri Aurobindo has been working all the time, all the time ”

And about his constant presence in the Mother she clarified “I feel in an inexpressible way that the Truth that we call Sri Aurobindo is gathering itself near my body, on my body, inside my body—(of course, there is neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’ there) It is not as people imagine, it is not that a form enters another, Sri Aurobindo entering me does not prevent him from being wherever he wants to be, or from doing whatever he wants to do, from appearing as he would like to appear, and from occupying himself with all that is happening upon earth Yet, it is not that only with a part Sri Aurobindo is in me, he is there in his totality. And this makes me understand that he was indeed a manifestation of the Absolute ”

About the real reality and the constant and ubiquitous presence of Sri Aurobindo whom the Mother knew as the supreme Lord, she once remarked:

“Sri Aurobindo is everywhere, I have found him high above, absolutely one with the Supreme Consciousness; I have seen him spreading himself and being at many different places at the same time, seeing many people and doing many types of work, I have seen him in the subtle physical with a form sufficiently precise but possessing great suppleness, resembling somewhat what we knew him to be in his physical body. There he has a residence and stays there permanently—of course, that does not prevent him from being elsewhere at many different places The Sri Aurobindo who is in the subtle physical, I see him almost every night, he looks after every work, sees people, and is almost always with me ”

We have thus far scanned, although in brief, the entire period of time from 1914 when the Mother first met Sri Aurobindo till 1950 when he physically withdrew from her, and shown how even after his departure he had been working constantly to further the advancement of his work of supramental transformation. But some readers may be wondering that somehow we have not made one point sufficiently clear, it is why Sri Aurobindo had to leave his physical body at all

So far as we remember we have already in the early part of this essay referred to the Mother’s assertion that the real reason behind Sri Aurobindo’s decision to depart was too profound for ordinary human comprehension and was known only to Sri Aurobindo, that is, only to the supreme Lord

However, for an easy understanding by human intelligence, the Mother herself has indicated a few relatively superficial factors What follows is based on what she has revealed in this connection

Factors behind Sri Aurobindo’s departure

First Factor Sri Aurobindo knew as early as in 1934 and spoke of it to the Mother at that time that for reasons too inscrutable one of them would have to leave

the body The Mother volunteered to quit but Sri Aurobindo forbade her to do so. He said that when found necessary in the future, he himself would depart.

The Mother has affirmed that when Sri Aurobindo spoke to her in 1934 about this ominous possibility, she could easily understand why the two of them would not remain together in physical bodies for all time to come. But she completely forgot in course of time what the reason was. On many later occasions in subsequent years, even after Sri Aurobindo's passing, she could not recollect what the reason was.

Second Factor: The Mother knew that Sri Aurobindo definitely wanted to leave at the time when he actually left. It was the supreme Lord's decision. Therefore in spite of all her efforts to the contrary she could not prevent him from leaving.

Third Factor: The lack of sufficient receptivity on the part of his disciples was hampering the Work. Sri Aurobindo felt that his physical withdrawal might give a needed jolt and wake everyone up.

Fourth Factor. The unfavourable situation prevailing all around, the earth not being ready and men not fulfilling the requisite conditions, the real work could not be achieved in the near future, if Sri Aurobindo had to remain bound to his body. He therefore dropped it to hasten the work of supramental descent.

Fifth Factor: This was of a very occult nature. Let the Mother speak about it:

“When we were together in our bodies, all sorts of hostile forces fought against us, their attacks were especially directed against me. They tried to finish me off—how many times I don't know. And Sri Aurobindo saved me each time, in a manner absolutely miraculous and marvellous. But that seemed to create for him great corporal difficulties.

“We then talked a lot about this problem and I told him: ‘If one of us must go, I want that it should be me.’ He replied ‘It can't be you, because you alone can do the material thing.’

“He did not say anything else. He forbade me to quit the body. He said ‘It is an absolute interdiction, you can't, you must remain.’

“This was at the beginning of the year 1950. And after that he took upon his body by slow degrees his last fatal illness. That's all.”

So much for the apparent factors governing Sri Aurobindo's decision to depart from the physical scene and ask the Mother to continue with their Work. But one of the reasons adduced above may have somewhat puzzled the readers. It is as regards the inner implication of Sri Aurobindo's assertion that the Mother and not himself could alone do the work on the material plane.

The readers may rightly ask: “Why did Sri Aurobindo prefer the Mother's body to his own? In which way did the Mother's physical being possess some special qualities that equipped it to stand the rigour of physical transformation?”

Who else can answer this question except the Mother herself? So let us listen to her:

“Since my infancy, all my effort has been to arrive at a state of total indif-

ference—neither irksome nor agreeable. Yes, from my very infancy I remember having a consciousness that always tried to have what Sri Aurobindo calls ‘spiritual indifference’

“That makes me understand why he told me that it was I alone who could attempt to make the transition between human consciousness and the supramental consciousness ”

“I was born with a body consciously prepared. Sri Aurobindo was conscious of that and he declared it the very first day I met him ‘You are born free ’ Yes, I was absolutely free from the spiritual point of view—without any desire, without any attachment

“And it is a fact that if there is the slightest desire or attachment, it is impossible to attempt the work of transformation ”

“Sri Aurobindo told me so because he saw it and knew it: ‘It is only your body that can resist *THAT*, has the power to resist the difficulties of transformation on the physical plane ’

“Once during the last years of difficulties, Sri Aurobindo told me that that was my superiority. He added that it was because of this that I had greater possibilities of going to the end of the Work ”

“For being a saint or a sage, the body’s formation has a minimal, altogether secondary importance. But for the supramental work, the formation of the body has almost a capital importance. The most important thing here is the capacity to hold out and endure. And from that point of view it is absolutely undeniable that my body is of a really superior quality ”

We have almost come to the end of our marathon essay. And we can by now very well realise that Sri Aurobindo did not ‘fail’ in his mission. He brought down the supramental Light and Force into the physical before he left his body.

But that was only the first and the most difficult and fundamental part of his Work. The next part was to establish it permanently in earth-nature and bring about by its potent action the supramental transformation of man’s mental, vital and physical existence, so that a new order of beings, the gnostic beings, might appear upon earth as a destined fulfilment of the whole course of earthly evolution.

Sri Aurobindo could have tried to achieve the supramental transformation in his personal body first but for that, given the unfavourable circumstances all around, he would have had to wait for an indefinitely long time, thus postponing to a far, far future the fulfilment of the same prospect for earth-nature in general.

Sri Aurobindo had pursued two programmes of action parallelly—the programme of his own individual supramentalisation and a collective programme for the same for the whole of humanity. He sacrificed the complete fulfilment of his individual

programme in order to hasten and stabilise the sure victory for the collectivity Did he not say after all that as for himself he needed neither salvation nor the supermind? If he was seeking to make the supramental descend it was for the ultimate fulfilment of the divine manifestation upon earth

It was not that Sri Aurobindo did not know how to bring about the supramentalisation of his body; he knew it perfectly well but did not do it on purpose As the Mother has affirmed. "Sri Aurobindo could have done it if he would have continued but that was not to be because he had decided to sacrifice his body He never told me that he did not know it, never, never He used to tell me always: 'Everything in its own time' "

So Sri Aurobindo arranged that the Work should continue as before but now through the Mother's body After all, as we have noted before, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were entirely identified in consciousness but functioning through two separate bodies for the facility of the work

Now a new phase opened with the Mother's physical body placed in front and Sri Aurobindo remaining active as ever and preparing all the forward steps of Sadhana—only without the visible symbol of his own physical body

But what were the results of this joint action by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo during the long period of twenty-three years from 1950 to 1973? How far did the process of supramentalisation proceed in this period?

That is a wonderful saga of unheard-of spiritual-supramental adventure and fulfilment Its treatment is reserved for a second essay to follow.

But a nagging question may be troubling the reader's mind: "What about the year 1973 when the Mother herself left her body plunging all their disciples into a shocked query Did the work of supramentalisation ultimately fail? Was it at least suspended for the time being?"

Our answer is an emphatic "NO" Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Work continued and has been continuing with unabated intensity and effectivity even after the momentous event of 17 November 1973 and this will continue till the definitive Victory is won on the physical plane

But we do not propose to talk about that now. We shall deal with it later As the present essay centres around the mystery of Sri Aurobindo's Departure, we may close it at this point with the following two lines from Sri Aurobindo's *The Pilgrim of the Night*

And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
A pathway towards Immortality.*

(Concluded)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

* Most of the passages directly attributed to the Mother in the course of this essay are free renderings of what She said in Her 13-volume French *Agenda* The author is grateful for this to the publishers Institut de Recherches Evolutive, Paris

THE SKY IS CLEAR

THE sky is clear, the breeze is brisk .
Unfurl all the sails, my soul,
And forward!
The white waves are hurrying on with a gleeful murmur,
They go tripping towards the verge of the world—
The blue Infinite calls them!

They keep me company, the little sisters
Tossing their diamond tresses,
Scattering their silvern laughter,
They fill my sails with the fragrant breath of their little mouths—
And forward drives my bark!

Lo! I have grown golden wings,
And I soar into the blue of the high heaven,
Right on the verge of the spaces!

My little brothers are all around,
The bright twinkling star-angels,
A very galaxy of them escorts my winging voyage,
Each holds aloft his blazing discus—
Avaunt, Darkness and Night!
Hail, Light of the Beyond!

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

NOTES FROM SAINT-PETERSBURG: A LETTER FROM MANCHESTER

27 August 1999

Revered Nirod-da,

In this letter I shall describe experiences of my recently concluded visit to Saint-Petersburg in Russia. This trip was especially rewarding because I had the opportunity to celebrate Sri Aurobindo's Birthday there and to have a feel of the Sri Aurobindo movement in Russia.

I had always wanted to visit Russia, and Saint-Petersburg in particular. When I was a young boy my father visited the former Soviet Union and recounted to us the splendours of the pre-Perestroika Soviet era. In fact, when I was visiting the University of Athens in Greece I was invited to present a scientific talk at a leading research institute in Saint-Petersburg. This was during the spring of 1995 and I tried getting a visa from the Russian Embassy in Athens. This was a futile exercise and I did not have the patience nor the time to cut across the horrendous red tape that centred around the procurement of a Russian visa then. My assignment with the Athens University ended and I had to return to England. Subsequently I tried for a visa from London and again failed. It was at this point that I realised that the time was not right for me to visit Russia. During my last visit to Pondicherry, in January this year, I learnt that Sri Aurobindo's Sacred Relics were taken to Saint-Petersburg in August 1998. I also read about the incredible vision that unfolded *en route* the flight to Russia from India where very vivid contours of Sri Aurobindo's face were etched in the cloud deck on the flight track (see *Mother India*, December 1998). I then knew in unmistakable terms why I could not visit Russia earlier.

I arrived at Saint-Petersburg in the afternoon of the 14th of August, at about 4.30. Ivan and Eugene from the Cultural Centre of Sri Aurobindo and Mirra Richard came to receive me. For the rest of my visit Eugene was my interpreter too—I certainly needed one, for my knowledge of the Russian language was limited to *spasiba* (thank you), *pozhalusta* (please), *ya nye ponumayu* (I do not understand you), *izvenitye* (excuse me) and *suchlike*! As we drove along to my hotel I learnt that Eugene, who is not quite 21, is a student of Economics and a recognised young mathematician in Russia. He was here for the August Darshan with his parents Oleg and Tatyana. Normally, the first drive from the airport to a new city in a foreign country is the most exciting and the drive this time was even more so because I was not at all expecting such a fashionable and vibrant city bustling with new shops, cafes and cinemas lining the great boulevard of Nevsky Prospect—the city's main thoroughfare. Although, away from the town centres, I noticed subsequently that the city remains resolutely Russian in the many *blini* (delicious Russian pancakes) shops and the stoic crowds in the highly efficient and very ornate Metro subway and a genuine piety in the Orthodox church. Anyway as we drove along, Eugene and Ivan told me that what Russia was going through now was only temporary, on the drive to my

hotel I also sensed that, after the heroism and hardships of its time as Leningrad, majestic Saint-Petersburg was back!

I was not quite sure how far from the Sri Aurobindo Centre my hotel was located. After checking in at the hotel *Pribaltyskaya* (meaning “near the Baltic sea”, and to my delight I had a wonderful view of the Bay of Finland from my room!) my hosts asked me whether I would like to visit the Samadhı straightaway. I was very pleasantly surprised to learn that it was virtually right next to this huge hotel complex! I again thanked the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for this. Unlike the Centres in the UK, which are generally in private houses and run by Indian families, the Centre here was more of a collective venture. No one lives there—but devotees and supporters live in small apartments nearby so that the Samadhı can be well looked after. I was led to a huge block of apartments containing more than 600 flats and we took a small lift to one of the upper floors. We came out on to the right corridor and everything seemed nondescript and ordinary until the door of the Samadhı room was opened for me to enter. Then what I saw filled me with wonder and amazement. The room was filled with a dazzling afternoon sunshine, almost Mediterranean in character and was entirely done up in white—white walls, white floors and white muslin curtains. On the far wall were pictures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo decorated only with green leafy foliage. On all sides there were large windows that looked out to the vast blue expanse of the Baltic sea. In the centre was the Samadhı designed like a classic renaissance flower-vase holding a single lotus bud. All this was sculpted with *marramar* (a kind of marble) from the Ural mountains. Encircling the reliquary was a string of white chrysanthemums and the Samadhı stood on a stylised symbol of Sri Aurobindo done in black-and-white marble. In short, it was immaculate and the whole room shone with a soothing and gentle beauty. One felt profundity and immensity everywhere and what impressed me most was that there was not one unnecessary embellishment. There were white cushions on the floor and I found one for myself and sat down to meditate. I was left in silence, and on my own, for a quite a long time.

The next day was the 15th of August. It dawned bright and I got ready for the celebrations that were to start at 8 in the morning. I was very impressed by the sheer number of the Russian devotees. Because the Shrine room could comfortably accommodate only about 20 people, there were 5 meditation sessions that morning! This was all done in silence. In the adjacent room they were softly playing Shobha’s musical arrangement *Adoration and Invocation* which I had brought along with me. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were tangibly present and this was evident from the faces of the many Russian devotees which shone with serenity, peace, and love.

Since this was my first visit, my hosts (this time Dimitris and Eugene) had arranged for some sight-seeing as well. They took me to the State Hermitage (which is part of the imperial winter palace) soon after the morning meditation. In both quality and quantity the collection makes the Hermitage one of the greatest museums in the world. By the curator’s own calculation, including the 16,000 paintings and

12,000 sculptures, all the drawings, prints, jewellery, ceramics, coins and pre-historic artifacts, the Hermitage's inventory numbers to nearly 3 million objects. To see the Hermitage properly would take at least a week and I could afford only about 3 hours and so I mainly saw modern European 20th-century art which included Monet (*Lady in a Garden*), Renoir (*Jeanne Samary*), Van Gogh (*Thatched Cottages*), Gauguin (*Conversation*), Cezanne (*Woman in Blue*), Matisse (*The Red Room*), Picasso (*Dance of the Veils*), Kandinsky (*Composition No 13*) among many others. It took me some time to take in the almost overwhelming opulence of the imperial palace and in a way I felt that it was after all an appropriate setting for this world famous art collection.

I also visited the famous *Charm Voskressenia Christova* (Church of the Resurrection of Christ). With its profusion of disparate colours on the facade, onion domes and gilded spires, it certainly confirmed my distant impressions of a Russian church. It was truly striking and contrasted starkly with the classicism of Saint-Petersburg's prevailing landscape.

After my sight-seeing I was driven to a flat which was the venue for a big feast that was arranged as part of Sri Aurobindo's Birthday celebrations. I then learnt that all the devotees were vegetarian and some of them were also vegans. The dining hall was tastefully done and we sat down to the first course—deliciously fresh organically grown salad vegetables with a homemade dressing and a glass of apple and cranberry juice. After the first course all the plates and cutlery were taken away before the table was set up for the main course—*blinis* with a sweet-and-savoury filling along with sautéed summer vegetables. Finally, the table was again cleared for dessert and tea which was served rather elegantly and was reminiscent of the aristocracy of a bygone era. The meal lasted for well over 3 hours and, after tea, individuals read out from their own poetic creations or sang Russian songs which ranged from rather sad love songs to opera arias. I sang *Sanggachchadhvam* from the *Rig Veda* set to tune by Rabindranath Tagore. Then Elena, the moving spirit behind the Sri Aurobindo movement in Saint-Petersburg, made a short speech describing her many inner experiences and contacts with the Mother. I also learnt how the group worked incessantly to have the Samadhi Room ready in time. She also told us that currently a group in Moscow was engaged in the translation of *Savitri* into Russian.

So, this was how I celebrated the August Darshan with friends from Russia. I marvelled at the thought that it had been actually less than 24 hours since I had met these people and yet how close I felt towards them already! Their friendliness was special—something quintessentially Russian—a blend of almost Asian hospitality combined with European high culture. As a parting gift I was presented with a beautiful book of Russian Icons signed by members of the Saint-Petersburg Centre—something that I will treasure forever. Although they very graciously accepted the gifts that I had brought for them, they would not let me pay for any of the transportation charges despite the current financial crisis. Such was their hospitality and kindness!

The day soon drew to a close and I had to get back to the hotel in order to get ready for my departure on the following day. Again we drove past the stately

Hermitage standing majestically on the banks of the river Neva. I paused for a moment to enjoy the beauty of the late night-sky which was still alight. I remembered some memorable lines from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*

How often, when the sky was glowing,
by Neva, on a summer night,
and when its waters were not showing,
in their gay glass, the borrowed light
of Dian's visage, in our fancies
recalling earlier time's romances...

Although it was August and I could not witness the famous mid-summer 'white nights', I still was enchanted by the crimson-golden sky on this very special day, and to me it appeared that the sky was a shade rosier that evening, especially lit up by Sri Aurobindo's Grace and the ardour of aspiration of the Russian devotees

With deep regards,

Yours,
Satyajit

INVOCATION

O CONCEALED flame unmask your glow
No longer your gaze can scorch my eyes,
nor scorch my skin.

Reveal the secret of the fire whence you came
No longer I clutch at shadows vain,
Nor even relapse.

Stamp Thy halo white on my brain,
My cells with light suffuse,
O mystic flame!

HEMANT KAPOOR

A TRIBUTE TO THE “SACRED POET OF INDIA”: KAMALAKANTO-DA

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

IN 1999 Kamalakanto-da was in his 86th year, because of his ill-health, on 17th March he was taken to the Ashram Nursing Home. I used to visit him from time to time. During the last few days he could not take food. They put him on saline drip. Seeing him bed-ridden, I asked him “Why don’t you apply your will-power and pray to the Mother to cure you? You should continue to do the Mother’s work and take our classes also.”

With practically no hope he asked me “Is it possible now? I don’t know. I pray to the Mother to make me stand on my feet or else to take me in her lap and let me not suffer so much.”

Feeling his deteriorating condition, it became clear to me that he might leave his body at any moment. So I asked him if it was necessary to inform anybody about him. He said, “No.”

Whenever I used to meet him in the Nursing Home he would tell me “I’ll give you my room-key, go through all my belongings. Take whatever you want. After me everything will be yours. Read my diaries and writings, etc.” But I couldn’t spare time to go through all those things. And what would I do with his belongings? I was not interested in them. But to fulfil his wish I just agreed to take his room-key. But the key was not to be found. On April 28th, I came to know from one of my classmates, Nityananda who works there, that Kamalakanto-da’s room-key was with Shubhra Apa. When I reported this to Kamalakanto-da he told me to take it from her. To make certain, she came and asked him whether she could hand over the key to me. He said, “Yes, give it.”

I received the key, went to his room where he used to take the *Savitri* classes on days when he was not able to go to school in the evening. On the table, there were two copies of *Savitri*, one was given to him by the Mother on 14 October 1960, on the occasion of his birthday (without signature). It attracted my attention. I thought it would be the best thing to keep with me and read regularly if Kamalakanto-da himself would present it to me. There was not much time in hand to see other books or other things. So I decided to check them later. But then my eyes fell on a letter he had received from Benjamin R. Yuzon, it was an invitation addressed to him to attend the 16th World Congress of Poets (2-6 August) 2000, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. I picked it up to show it to him, I also took those two copies of *Savitri*. In the Nursing Home Nityananda and I met him and showed him the books. I asked if he would like to give those books to us, the old one to me and the other to Nityananda. He placed happily his old *Savitri*-book in my hand and gave the other to Nityananda. He also said, “If you find other things useful, you may take them.” We wanted his autograph, he said, “Come tomorrow.” Then I read out to

him Yuzon's letter and Christmas wishes with a quotation which he had received earlier.

Christmas, 1998

Dear venerable friend

M Kamalakanto,
Knowing the Lord
fills every day
with harmony and hope
and sharing His love
with special friends like you
makes Christmas
even more joyful

Love and prayer

Benjamin R Yuzon

May the roads rise with you
And the wind be always at your back
And the Good Lord hold you
In the hollow of His hand

Old Irish Blessing

He listened to me in silence I touched his feet in gratitude and in response he raised his hands folded I came back wishing to meet him again.

Next day, in the afternoon I found Kamalakanto-da was being given oxygen. I couldn't believe it I went close to him and, holding his hand, asked him: "Kamal-da! What is this? What happened?" He didn't say anything, but opened his eyes and looked at me My eyes were fixed on him Then slowly he closed his eyes in a praying mood So I called others and stood near him holding his right hand, reciting the Great Name of the Mother "Maa, Maa." After a short while he breathed his last I enquired the time from Shubhra Apa and she replied it was 4.05 p.m She also said. "You were destined to be here at this moment"

I remember some shlokas from the Gita One of them is:

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्व शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ (II.27)

For certain is death for the born, and certain is birth for the dead, therefore grieve not for what is inevitable.

Sri Aurobindo says: "For the spiritual seeker death is only a passage from one form of life to another, and none is dead but only departed"

Yes, Kamalakanto-da's soul had departed, but his body was lying there. As he had no kith and kin here, everything fell upon me. What to do, and how? I had to go to the Sportsground for the Road Race meeting, as I was a participant. And I had my usual work in the Tennis Ground also. But I thought that keeping his body in the Nursing Home, as others wanted it, might not be the right thing to do. I looked around and found his diary on a small table near his bed (No A-3). I turned over some pages and suddenly the date 29th March attracted my attention. He had written: “Today in 1914, Our Mother with Monsieur Paul Richard first visited Pondicherry. She stayed in our Subbou House. So I am fortunate enough.”

No more evidence was needed for me. I decided to take him to his holy chamber where he could lie in peace which he liked so much. When I told this to Dr. Datta, he said, “You are there. No problem.”

Again I looked into some more pages of his diary which he wrote till Friday, 2nd April. He was in the habit of writing every day a Sanskrit Mantra of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Bengali Script:

Mirarabindau sharanam mama
(Mother-Sri Aurobindo is my refuge)

What a sincere sadhak he was and how much faith he had in the Mother and the Master!

On several pages he had written something as follows:

Mother, take me off for new birth (22.2.99)

I don't like this kind of life. Better end and begin a new one (22.3.99)

My movements here are very very difficult. Why am I not taken for new birth?
How long can I endure? (28.3.99)

So the Mother granted him his wish. Some lines from *Savitri* came to me. Addressing him I murmured:

Even death can cut not short thy spirit's walk.
Thy goal, the road thou choosest are thy fate

(*Savitri*, p. 458)

At 5.30 p.m. we brought his body to the room. His students and sadhak-friends started coming to pay him their last respects. They offered their good wishes by signing in his diary.

The next day, while going through some of his files, I found a letter written to our Managing Trustee on 4 June 1996.

“.. You know, since 1981, I am at Subbou House, upstairs, in the little room which the Mother, in 1914 used as Her study . I treasure this room since it is hallowed by the Mother’s presence ”

Leaving the physical sheath Kamalakanto-da’s soul has gone to the Source to take a new birth As the Gita says

वासासि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
 नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
 तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
 न्यन्यानि सयाति नवानि देही ॥ (II.22)

The embodied souls cast away old and take up new bodies as a man changes worn-out raiments for the new

To conclude I would like to quote Pythagoras, in an English version as noted by Kamalakanto-da in one of his Notebooks

Death, so called, is but
 older matter dressed
 In some new form and
 in a varied vest,
 From tenement to tenement
 though tossed
 The soul is still the same,
 the figure only lost

(Concluded)

RAMACHANDRA PANI

THE VEDAS AND THE FUTURE OF INDIAN CULTURE

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

THE Vedas in the Indian spiritual tradition are considered as something uncreated and eternal and not man-made. The sages who revealed the Vedas are said to be only instruments and not the creators of Vedic knowledge. These scriptures are also considered as a revelation which is “heard”, *sruti*. The truth behind this ancient traditional belief can be fully understood only when we understand the Indian theory of creation by Sound and the creative Word. The Vedic knowledge was revealed to the inner sight and hearing of the sages as the inspired Vision and Word which they expressed spontaneously in the form of inspired poetry.

This brings us to certain unique features of the Vedic civilisation. The Vedas are the creation of one of the earliest epochs of human civilisation when humanity as a whole had not acquired the reflective and rational intellectuality. It was the infrarational age in which the human mass in general lived in the mostly subconscious and communal vital-sensational mentality with its spontaneous life-instincts and intuitions. It was an age in which human consciousness unclouded by the complexity of reflective intellectuality had an instinctive insight which perceived the outer world as a symbol of some supra-physical powers. From this state of spontaneous vital instincts, a few exceptional individuals, by following a psychological and spiritual discipline, might have ascended to a higher level of consciousness of the spontaneously intuitive spiritual mind by bypassing the rational-intellectual mind. These are the mystics of the ancient civilisation. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“For the greatest illuminating force of the infrarational man, as he develops, is an inferior intuition, an instinctively intuitional insight arising out of the force of life in him, and the transition from this to an intensity of inner life and the growth of a deeper spiritual intuition which outleaps the intellect and seems to dispense with it, is an easy passage in the individual man.”

This explains the symbolic and naturalistic forms of Vedic poetry. The Vedic sages described their inner psychological and spiritual experiences and realisations in a symbolic language using the events and objects of the external world which attracts and occupies the predominantly physical man who lives mainly in his spontaneous, instinctive and sensational physical-vital being. For example, the Dawn of inner illumination, personified in the figure of the goddess Usha, is described in the symbolic imagery of the outer dawn. And the states or stages of unilluminated inner darkness—which in the Yoga of the Vedic mystics seem to alternate with states of inner illumination—are imaged as Nights. The fruits of spiritual effort bringing inner light and knowledge to the mind and energy to the vitality are described in the image of cows and horses, *go* and *ashva*, representing the dual aspect of the divinity, light and energy, or knowledge and force. The inner wars with the inner enemies of darkness, ignorance, falsehood and division—Panis, Valas and Vritras—are described

in the imagery of outer wars which are a common and frequent phenomenon of ancient society. The sense of infinity and vastness of the higher spiritual consciousness is imaged in the figure of the Ocean. The Vedas abound in such images.

Another unique feature of the Vedas which gives mystic richness and profundity to the revelation is that their symbolism is not a deliberate creation of the mind but a direct and spontaneous expression of a higher supramental consciousness and knowledge. It is frequently said by exponents of esoteric philosophies that the mystics of these early prehistoric religions deliberately used symbolic language to conceal the spiritual truth from the profane. But in the case of the Vedic revelation there seems to be no such deliberate intention to conceal the truth from the laity. This esoteric motive may be built into the revelation itself as it was received ready-made by the Vedic sages, but might not be consciously or deliberately intended by them. The Mother explains the nature of the Vedic revelation as follows:

“They used an imaged language. Some people say that it was because they wanted it to be an initiation which would be understood only by the initiates. But it could also be an absolutely spontaneous expression without a precise aim to veil things, but which could not be understood except by those who had the experience. For it is quite obviously something that is not mental, which came spontaneously—as though it sprang from the heart and the aspiration—which was the completely spontaneous expression of an experience or knowledge, and naturally, an expression which was poetic, which had its own rhythm, its own beauty, and could be accessible only to those who had an identical experience. So it was veiled of itself, there was no need to add a veil upon it. It is more than likely that it happened like that.

“When one has a true experience which is not the result of a preliminary thought constructing and obtaining the experience by a special effort, when it is a direct and spontaneous experience, an experience that comes from the very intensity of the aspiration, it is spontaneously formulated into words which are not thought out, which are spontaneous, which come out spontaneously from the consciousness. Well, it is more than likely that the Vedas were like that. But only those who have had the experience, had the same state of consciousness, can understand what it means.

“There are those sentences which seem absolutely banal and ordinary, in which things seem to be said in an almost childish way, and which are written out or heard and then noted down, like that. Well, when read with an ordinary consciousness, they seem sometimes even altogether banal. But if one has the experience, one sees that there is a power of realisation and a truth of expression which give you the key to the experience itself.”⁸

Thus the Vedic revelation is a spontaneous expression of the truth and knowledge and harmony of a higher consciousness expressing itself in its own rhythm, language, form of expression and, finally, clothing itself in the right words. This is the origin of the Indian ideal of poetry and the Indian theory of the Mantra. For in the ancient Indian conception, perfect poetry is a mantra, a sacred intonation, a truth or

idea seen by the inner vision of the seer breathed out in the right rhythm and the inevitable word.

This makes the Vedic revelation capable of multiple interpretation and understanding depending on the perspective of the interpreter. The Vedas are a description in a symbolic language of the spiritual quest and experiences and realisations of the Vedic Rishis. But the symbols can be interpreted at the spiritual, cosmic, psychological or physical level. At the highest spiritual level the Vedas reveal the knowledge of the highest spiritual truth, powers and laws of the transcendent Reality. One existence which the sages call variously, *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*. At the cosmic level they reveal laws and processes of the occult or cosmic forces in the play of their interaction and harmony. At the psychological level the Vedas reveal the manifestations and workings of these cosmic forces in the psychological being of man. Let us, for example, take the Vedic pantheon. At the highest spiritual level the gods are spiritual powers or “aspects” or names and forms of the supreme Godhead, each god containing within himself all the other godheads and representing the One Supreme. On the cosmic level each god is a universal force performing a particular cosmic function. On the psychological level each god represents a psychological faculty or power in the human consciousness, especially a higher faculty beyond the human mind. Extending this correspondence further down to the level of physical nature we may surmise that the Vedic symbolism, when rightly understood, may reveal the deeper laws of physical Nature, which means the highest scientific knowledge. So the contention of some of the modern Vedic commentators like Dayananda that the Vedas contain not only the highest spiritual and psychological knowledge but also the highest scientific knowledge is quite a plausible proposition. For, according to the Vedic sages, the laws of the universe follow the principle of unity and correspondence. There is in this universe only one essential Law which repeats itself and works itself out differently at each level of the cosmos according to the energy and substance of that level. As Sri Aurobindo explains this ancient Vedic conception: “it is one Law and Truth acting in all, but very differently formulated according to the medium in which the work proceeds and its dominant principle. The same gods exist on all the planes and maintain the same essential laws, but with a different aspect and mode of working and to ever wider results”⁹

Viewing the Vedic revelation from this integral spiritual perspective, I think it will not be irrational to suppose that the Vedas, being the first spiritual revelation to civilised mankind, may possibly contain in a seed-form all the spiritual, psychological, social and scientific ideas that were to shape the evolution of humanity for an entire cycle of its evolutionary march and the ultimate Ideal for which evolutionary Nature is preparing humanity. For, in the Indian conception, Spirit is the source and the seed and the beginning and end of the individual and collective existence of Man. And the Vedic spirituality, being the first revelation of the spirit to the consciousness of humanity in the very beginning of its civilised evolution, may possibly contain the seed of all that has to be developed later on and a glimpse or promise of the Ideal that

has to be realised at the end of this evolutionary cycle

The present cycle of human evolution is coming to an end. We are recovering from a materialistic age and groping for an authentic spiritual light which can help not only to rediscover the spiritual source and centre of our being, but also to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of all the other parts of our being—our body, life and mind—in a higher luminous harmony of the Spirit. The Vedas may possibly contain the secret of such a harmony. A deep study of this ancient scripture may possibly reveal the ideal of perfection which evolutionary nature has intended to realise in this cycle of evolution. So the highest respect accorded to the Vedic revelation in the Indian spiritual tradition is not just a superstition but is based on sound spiritual faith, reason and intuition.

(Concluded)

M S SRINIVASAN

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- 7 *SABCL*, Vol 15, p 177
- 8 *CWM*, Vol 7, pp 359-60
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PONDICHERY DOORDARSHAN PROGRAMME ON THE EVE OF 15TH AUGUST 1999

Interviewer: P. K. Sen
Interviewee: S. Ramanathan

Question How did you become closely associated with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram? Being an Engineer and Industrialist, how did you become a sincere devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? What is the background of your being a devotee of Sri Aurobindo?

Answer: My association with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram dates back to 1951 when my parents turned to the Mother as devotees. We were then living in Coimbatore. I was a boy of 15 and we used to visit the Ashram every now and then. Shri P. V. Sitaramji of the Ashram Dining Room, my father's cousin, was then the connecting link. In 1960, on February 29th, I was one of the lucky ones to personally receive the special Supramental Day medallion from the Mother. I continued my contact with the Mother and received Her blessings even when I was in the U.S.A. doing my postgraduate studies. Later, just before my marriage in August 1967, I sent photographs, through Amrita-da, of myself and the bride chosen by my parents to the Mother and got Her blessings for my marriage.

I was then Technical Director of a Company in Hyderabad. A couple of years later, in 1969, I wrote to the Mother as to what I should do. The letter was taken by Madhav Panditji to the Mother and She told him to inform me that Auroville is the best place for me and if I agreed, I could come and participate in the project. In August 1975, I got inner indications to start an industrial activity in Pondicherry along with some family friends. But my mainstay has been the Ashram and participating in its various activities.

Question. What is your experience about Sri Aurobindo and His field of action at the present crucial stage of India when our country is facing so many problems?

Answer: Sri Aurobindo left His body on 5 December 1950 and our family turned to the Mother as devotees only in 1951. But His presence can always be perceived and His Grace experienced by all those who look up to Him for His help and guidance. I am no exception.

With regard to Sri Aurobindo's field of action, let me refer to what the Mother said on 7 December 1950: "Lord, this morning Thou hast given me the assurance that Thou wouldst stay with us until Thy work is achieved, not only as a consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action."

What is His work to be achieved is the question.

Although His main work for humanity is the manifestation of a new race and a

new world—the Supramental—in so far as our country is concerned His vision and mission are about greater India

No doubt our country is now facing various problems—such as terrorism, intrusion by the Pakistani military into Kargil, Batalik and Dras sectors, mid-term polls, etc. But with faith and devotion when people, particularly those in responsible positions of our country, pray to Sri Aurobindo for help, His hand can be seen and felt guiding and shaping the destiny of our country. His vision and mission for spiritual India as depicted on the map in our Ashram Playground will certainly be realised. It is only a question of time.

Question. What is the Mother's contribution towards realisation or fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's vision?

Answer: Sri Aurobindo's vision for humanity is the establishment of divine life on earth. Man has the latent capacity to exceed himself from the present stage. Instead of the surface mind governing his life, it is his true being or inner being that should govern his life. For that he has to himself make the effort to discover and establish a conscious and constant contact with it, so that the lead and direction in his daily life are given by the inner being and not by his surface mind.

Yet another requirement is the readiness of the earth's atmosphere to render it possible. It is only for this purpose that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did all Their tapasya, to establish the Supramental Light, Force and Consciousness in the earth's atmosphere which alone can effectively create the necessary and conducive environment for the task to be taken up and accomplished. In other words, Their task was transformation of the ordinary human consciousness into Divine Consciousness.

Human effort is most indispensable, but that alone is inadequate to accomplish the purpose. Constant compassionate understanding, help and guidance are needed from the Divine source. This is exactly why the Transcendent and Universal Mother had to come on earth as the Individual Mother in a human body to help humanity which She did for 95 years. In 1926, to be precise, on 24 November, when the descent of Sri Krishna, the Overmind God, took place into Sri Aurobindo's physical being, as we are told, that was deemed to be the birth of the Ashram with about 24 sadhaks and Sri Aurobindo had then declared that the sadhana was to grow into a divine life with the Mother's consciousness. He retired into seclusion for intenser work, handing over the full charge of the Ashram to the Mother.

In 1950 when Sri Aurobindo left His body, the force termed by Him as the "Mind of Light"—which He had accumulated in His body—passed on to the Mother, it became a realised part of Her own consciousness and this is what the Mother Herself has declared.

In 1953, on 5 May, the Mother said. "Sri Aurobindo is still with me, day and night, thinking through my brain, writing through my pen, speaking through my mouth and acting through my organising power."

The Mother was working for the descent and manifestation of the Supramental—and it happened on 29 February 1956 at the Playground meditation. In the Mother's own words "I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine. . . I knew and willed . . . And lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow... and the door was shattered to pieces. Then the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon Earth in an uninterrupted flow."

The phenomenal growth of the Ashram with its various departments for self-sustenance—of about 1,500 inmates whose material and spiritual needs are fully taken care of by the Mother—the starting of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1952, where today about 400 students are studying, the starting of Auroville, the international township in 1968 to realise human unity, the descent and manifestation of the Supramental are certainly the Mother's contributions towards fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's vision.

Question: Sri Aurobindo was not only a freedom fighter, but also a Yogi. Can you shed some light on these aspects, briefly?

Answer: Freedom fighter and Yogi are two faces of the same coin for Sri Aurobindo, the Supreme Avatar. The Yogi in Him was instrumental for the action of fighting for freedom in respect of three important issues.

Firstly, to get total freedom for our country. He was the first national leader to demand Poorna Swaraj or total freedom from the British and the Yogi in Him got the occult sanction from God Almighty, the Supreme Lord long before the physical materialisation of our Independence on 15 August 1947 (Sri Aurobindo's 75th birthday).

Secondly, to get freedom for the human race, freedom from the clutches of a very dark Asuric Force which had taken hold of Adolf Hitler during World War II. Sri Aurobindo, sitting in Pondicherry, through His yogic capacity, recognised that Hitler was a puppet in the hands of this Asuric Force and if Hitler went on conquering nation after nation, there could be no emancipation for the human race. So Sri Aurobindo and the Mother decided to intervene. By Their Yogic Force They countered the moves of the Asuric Force, They worked on Hitler's mind and diverted him to attack Russia which resulted in his downfall. Thus freedom for humanity from the hold of the Asura was obtained by Sri Aurobindo.

Thirdly, to establish freedom for aspiring humanity from slavery of the mind and to make rapid progress in the evolutionary path was the next step. By His Yoga Sadhana He made it possible.

These three issues clearly bring out the relationship of Sri Aurobindo the freedom fighter to Sri Aurobindo the Yogi.

Question: Day by day the people of not only the South Zone but also people of

different parts of the whole world are coming to pay homage to the Samadhi, doing meditation to seek peace of mind What is your personal experience regarding this matter?

Answer The great influx of people from the South Zone and various parts of the world to the Ashram to pay homage at the *Samadhi* is a clear sign of the great awakening and response to follow the path worked out by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother When visitors stand before the *Samadhi*—which is a powerhouse of Love, Energy, Compassion, Peace, Light and Delight—they are bound to be enthralled by the captivating atmosphere with beautifully decorated fragrant flowers, vibrant with their spiritual significance, and sweet-smelling lighted incense sticks, representing our own burning aspiration for upliftment in an environment of compelling calmness and perceivable peace It is an ideal place where the potent and sublime Presence of the Master and the Mother is available to communicate with and to offer our prayers, unburden our problems and let the solutions work out, feel the compassionate and comforting Grace for our spiritual progress Depending on our aspiration, sincerity, opening and receptivity, the Light, Force and Consciousness of the Avatars help the people to reshape their destiny to evolve further

The *Samadhi* is a twin-chamber construction, about 8 feet deep below the ground, constructed according to the Mother's direction when in December 1950 Sri Aurobindo left His body. The two chambers are one above the other. Sri Aurobindo's body in a rosewood casket was kept in the lower chamber in December 1950 while that of the Mother in the upper chamber in November 1973

The Mother's salutation on 9 December 1950, inscribed on the marble stone of the *Samadhi*, brings out what Sri Aurobindo had gone through in His compassion for humanity and our indebtedness to Him. Here it is

To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.

MEN OF THE MILLENNIUM

MEN leave behind imprints on the sands of time. Great mortals make deeper impressions. The 15th century was riveting, with Renaissance in full bloom, with Gutenberg building the printing press, Copernicus beginning to fathom the solar system and Columbus sailing in his cultural boat. But, perhaps, this century holds the unique distinction of experiencing variety, bewildering, even horrifying, yet always fascinating. Cinema was developed, television slipped into the living room. The transistor gave a new meaning to mobility. The microchip was discovered, and along with it penicillin and the structure of the DNA. Dolly was cloned. The atom was split. Highways criss-crossed the planet and the world was wired. The internet brought information to our fingertips. The moon ceased to be a fantasy when an earthling landed on it. Fascism was destroyed. Communism crumbled. Capitalism rose to etch consumerism on the earth; Coke and Barbie-doll can well be the two most enduring symbols of this. Nation-states lost some of their distinct characteristics when they became part of the global village—where nuclear monstrosity helped and threatened us. Yet, with mere months to go before this millennium marches away, we have survived. With aplomb, maybe.

Thanks to some memorable men *Time* has published four of the six special issues it intended to publish, listing the names of those who guided our destiny. The magazine writes: “There is Lenin arriving at the Finland Station, and Gandhi walking to the sea to make salt. Winston Churchill with his cigar, Louis Armstrong with his horn, Charlie Chaplin with his cane, Einstein in his study, and the Beatles. In 1900 Freud published ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’, ending the Victorian era.” In China, a new giant was awakening and elsewhere cars were replacing horses. John F. Kennedy asked Americans what they could do for their country. Martin Luther King had a dream. Lech Walesa proved to be the nemesis of the Eastern bloc. Pablo Picasso was like no other artist; he virtually dominated the Western canvas. James Joyce caused a fictional revolution. However, T. S. Eliot provided some kind of salvation to poetry.

But, where were the Indians while all this was happening? *Time* mentions just one in full-length—Gandhi—and two in passing—Indira Gandhi and Srinivasa Ramanujan. The magazine’s list of great people who shaped this century, sometimes with their method, sometimes with their madness, does not include, at least till date, some that we in India might want to talk about. For example, Satyajit Ray’s brilliance in the movie medium is unquestionable. He gave a new direction, a new hope that even Hollywood saw, albeit only days before his death. Pandit Nehru’s vision and Radhakrishna’s philosophy were the cherished ideals of hundreds of thousands of youth who were unsteady on their feet and unhappy in their minds after the euphoria of freedom had died down. If Gandhi’s satyagraha freed us from the shackles of slavery, a Bhagat Singh or a Netaji cannot be forgotten. Subramania Bharati’s songs stirred our patriotism. Jamshedji Tata set up, brick by brick, a concept that injected a

new dignity into employer-employee relationship. Along with it, the name signified quality. Ravi Shankar, Bala Saraswati, M S Subbulakshmi, M F Hussain and others enriched the arts, pushing them to glorious heights. Apart from these men and women, there were hundreds of citizens who have done their bit to make this millennium memorable. They might go unrecorded, even unsung, but their sweat and blood have undoubtedly sweetened the soil of our land

(Editorial dated 26 April 1999 Courtesy *The Hindu*)

TO MOTHER

If only my body could vibrate with Thy name
 As a kitten purrs, its constant joy expressed,
 And there rise in me a mystic mantra's sound
 Calling Thee always in consecration's prayer!

Music has been the inner expressive force
 Charging my youth and my years in Auroville,
 The Ashram choir, the night we sang to Thee—
 But now a new voice dominates my days
 Somewhere behind the heart a singer sings
 Recalling Thy Face, Thy Touch, The Sacred Years
 When again Thy Feet descended touching earth,
 And through half-blind and shuttered inner doors
 We glimpsed or felt the brilliant light of Thee

I do not know if the flame is stronger now
 Than in those youthful years when you cleaved my heart
 And installed therein the fierce and cleansing fire,
 But I know love grows and silent gratitude

For in these days when the earth so despairingly cries
 I feel Thee near and wait the sacred hour
 When the Lord in his golden image shall descend
 With Thee, O my mother, his white eternal bride.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

SHADOW-SUBDUING

Who would live in the hut of twilight
Under the cliff of Dark,
Or watch the veering from grey to white
And the first day-kindling spark?

When the sky is rife with rumour of dawn
And the red wine is spilt in the East,
The night is a raiment that earth has outworn—
And stint is o'erleapen and Truth is increased.

(March, 1937)

✽

The theme of this poem of Arjava is the twilight before sunrise when shadows gather close and subdue the glimmering dawn. No one would like to live in a hut of such twilight against the backdrop or under the cliff of Night and watch the grey gradually whiten and wait for the first spark of the daylight. (Stanza 1)

At that hour when the sky is overcast with the rumour of dawn and the sun spreads its red riot of dawn in the East ("And the red wine is spilt in the East"), the whole scene changes. Night slips like a outworn raiment from the body of the earth and all barriers and limits are overstepped and the Truth is increased and made palpably clear (Stanza 2)

With this shadow-subduing all grows a consecration and a rite. Truth has her throne on the back of light. Our prostrate soil bears the awakening ray and common things and shapes are turned into marvels new and miracles divine. In India these moments receive the name of "time of Union", *sandhyā*, the hours of darkness and sun seeming to meet each other in a point.

There is a physical tension, as it were, between the dark and the day-break which is resolved by the coming of dawn. This is the in-tension. If we could have an extension of meaning as Allen Tate calls it, we can say with Sri Aurobindo

Above mind's twilight and life's star-led night
There gleamed the dawn of a spiritual day
(*Savitri*, p 26)

The lurking twilight disappears and its marvels turn all things to a strange beauty on creation's verge. This twilight beauty trembles and makes way for the throb of a wider life. And the twilight Poet awakens to his own self, oblivious of his share in all things made. And then we too realise.

There is a morning twilight of the gods,
 Miraculous from sleep their forms arise
 And God's long nights are justified by dawn
 (*Savitri*, p 601)

And the mind delivered from all twilight thoughts sees the secrets of the gods made plain And when the twilight realm passes from our souls, we see immortal clarities of form and Night is impossible to the radiant world

For further enjoyment and appraisal of the poem we have Sri Aurobindo's enlightened comment

“I don't agree that it is mechanical and without power. The last line is a little stale and the general image is not new, but I find a considerable power and verve in the turn given to the images and in the felicitous choice of expression, that is a power you have acquired and it does not leave you. Instead of being discouraged you should insist on going on and getting into the stream once more. I may add that the one line about the East is very fine. I don't see how the beauty of the three first lines of the second stanza especially in the line, 'And the red wine is spilt in the East' with its extraordinary colour and fire can be called mechanical or a mere stale touch. Novelty of substance is no doubt desirable but it is one of the powers of poetry and not a small one to make things familiar new and fresh and vivid with the sense of something revealed that one had missed—to reveal something entirely new in itself is a greater power but not the only one worth having.”

In conclusion we may say that only in the poet's eyes the commonest things are marvel-robed

C SUBBIAN

THE LIGHT OF PANINI

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

15. Patanjali's Tribute to Ashtadhyayi and its Guardians

WHAT IS the language of the Aryas? This is the language flowing through the Chhandas and flowering in the Bhasha, its rules had been laid down by Panini, the wizard of the Science and Art of the Language, showing the highest of speech a human harmony can achieve through the *saman-chant* called Pra-gātha. What do the cream of Aryavarta do? Masters of simple living and high thinking, storing food not beyond a week, *kumbhadhānya*, they protect as our dearest treasure this Ashtadhyayi of Panini, so that no errors can creep in, in our language, the temple hewn in monolithic stone, decorated by marvellous sculptures.

16. Patanjali's Premonition

But errors were about to creep in, in disguise in the form of regional synonyms of Bhasha both in roots and nouns. Patanjali had a premonition that people were switching over to regionalities, and the continental character of Bhasha might be in danger. So he sent a powerful warning to people: Be careful, *apashabdās* or *apabhramshas* or *apabhashas* are coming. Deviations from Panini's Bhasha to regional synonyms, then a mixing up peculiar to 'Asuras' who had to leave because of the misuse of the language, then a code-language either in letters or in meaning, e.g. Vidura's code-instructions to Yudhishtira were all in Bhasha, the language of the Epic, but it was called *mlecchabhasha*. Later any mixing up in language, culture, etc. came to have a racial meaning. Patanjali's *apabhramsha* should not be understood in the sense of a much-later meaning. One has to be careful about the context, the period, and not to misconstrue words like Hybrid Sanskrit or Bauddha Samskrita. Prakritism in the Veda is such an erroneous concept. The language was, and is, constantly growing, moulding itself according to needs.

17. Patanjali: Southern 'Style' of Bhasha—Chhandas

Patanjali says that southerners are fond of the secondary affix, i.e. 'taddhita'. Patanjali's illustration itself shows that Dakshina was full of current and Vedic words and idioms, because Yajna was the order of the day. Dakshin, Uttar, etc. are relative terms. For a Gujarati, Mumbai is south. For a Bengali, Sundarban's Bangla dialect is 'dakhne' i.e. Southern.

18. Panini's Voice Calling Pala, Pala

Now Panini's light has shone to clear my listening Tamil 'pāla', and Bangla

‘palan’ meaning udder of a cow, both come from the same root *pāl*, to nourish So Pali means the common language which, like the mother’s milk, sustains everybody, especially the child So the faltering bhasha, toothless like the child, was called Pali Other examples—*krishna kisa, dharma dhamma, ut-tistha ut-tiththe*

I heard in Karnataka an old woman asking for oranges, saying ‘doremmi amma’ Now Panini tells me that she was saying “‘dharma-amba, God-mother, please give me some oranges out of your basket ’’ Both ‘dharma’ and ‘amba’ date back to the Veda Saraswati, our speech, is invoked as *ambi-tame*, O Mother of mothers (RV II 41 16) ‘Ida’, meaning the prasada of a sacrifice, is incorporated in South-Indian id-li, ‘li’ is an endearing affix, meaning our daily dear food Dosa is also from Vedic ‘dosha’, meaning night Thus Idli and Dosa—food in day and night, prepared from a fermented mixture of rice and cereal—come from the Veda The Vedic sound ष in Pali occurs in Tamil, Telugu, Kannad, Oriya, Gujarati, Marathi, Bangla (as ষ) and Assamese (as ষ) So there is no bar between North and South India in soil, flora and fauna, culture, language, geography and anthropology Modern Southern languages are mixtures of *tat-sama* (Sanskrit) and *deshis* of the region. This is known as the Mani-Pravala style in literature, just as in Bankim’s *Vande Mataram* a mixture of Sanskrit and Bangla.

19. Buddha and Pali

Dhammapada, the cream of Tri-Pitaka (as is Gita of Mahabharata) is composed in this faltering language, a natural outcome of Bhasha and Chhandas Buddha’s was a protestant voice in a topsyturvy society, it was against the ruthless titan’s cruel command of false dharma The language was an instrument to awaken broken men and women. The affluent people were moving away from dharma and rushing to rituals They had practically become uncultured, *anārya*, crooked and looking after only Artha and Kama—Money and Power So he spoke in the language of the people to tell them what dharma is and how to practise it, every day, in every breath of life, in livelihood, in thoughts, in deep understanding of oneself and others *Eso dhammo sanatano, ariyo dhammo*, this is everlasting Dharma, the Dharma of the spirited ever-moving progressive Man, and not rituals and sacrifices.

Siddhartha had a prince’s education, learning both Chhandas and Bhasha through Panini But he took to Pali as the medium of his message The language is easy to pronounce without tooth-breaking conjuncts All sibilants are a single dental ‘sa’ Visarga has gone

After Buddha’s Dharma-Vijaya, Saptadwipa Vasumati took to his version of Dharma Centuries later Panini’s Prithivi took a natural turn to Pali—the descendent of Bhasha-Chhandas And that is why Burma, Srilanka, Tivvat, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Mongolia, Korea look upon Pali as their ‘chhandas’, sacred language

What Buddha did to India and these countries Mahavira did to India itself Buddha went abroad, Mahavira stayed back Both the Ribhus preached in Rajagriha

in adjacent hills. In course of time Buddha's teachings were recorded in Pali, in the East and South. Mahavira's teachings went West to Gujarat and Rajasthan, and were recorded in Ardhamagadhi—a new turn of our language.

20. Bhasha and Sam-s-krita

The advent of these mighty men—Rishus, human-divine toilers for the total welfare of all—made the well-meaning scholars of the time stand up. Our language was breaking! This was all due to the misdeeds of kings, politicians, affluent businessmen, greedy priests—not the *arya* priests. Yet came men who took to Panini, the ancient wizard, a Rishi, a Samrat of our language. And out of his Sutra they made Sam-s-krita—a refined language, and re-edition of Bhasha, separating the Vedic portion.

This is the second reform of our language.

The difference between Bhasha and Sam-s-krita can be seen in the so-called *ārsha-prayogas* of Mahabharata, Ramayana, late Upanishads, Bharata's Natyashastra, etc. while *satyam eva jayate* is correct in Bhasha, in Sanskrit they make it *jayati*. Bhasha's undulating accent became in Sanskrit a monotone, 'eka-sruti'.

(To be concluded)

GAURI DHARMAPAL

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 1999)

It can be seen that the spiritual aim that made God-realisation or life-transformation in the image of the Divine, the goal of life, by the very fact of its being the noblest possible aim, imposed a tremendous strain on the aspirants and practitioners, and naturally in its actual working there have been “great imitations, great imperfections”, but that can be no argument against the ideal itself nor can it abridge the glory of the many leaders of the march “India has lived and lived greatly, whatever judgement one may pass on her ideas and institutions”, and the history of her great men is not a record of saints and ecstasies alone, but includes also poets, sculptors, painters, scientists, polymaths, rulers, statesmen, conquerors, administrators, Ashok, Chanakya, Chandragupta, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh, Gautam Buddha, Mahavira, Sankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya and Nanak, these make the golden roll-call of India

Indian Art comprising of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, drama, is more an expression of Indian life in its true inwardness, with its inwardness insistent on religious commitment and reserves of spiritual sublime

We can read from the writings of Sri Aurobindo about the hostile attacks of Mr. Archer and other Western critics on “Indian Art” Sri Aurobindo fought against their hostile criticisms He wrote

“A good deal of hostile or unsympathetic western criticism of Indian civilisation has been directed in the past against its aesthetic side and taken the form of a disdainful or violent depreciation of its fine arts, architecture, sculpture and painting Mr Archer would not find much support in his wholesale and indiscriminating depreciation of a great literature, but here too there has been, if not positive attack, much failure of understanding, but in the attack on Indian art, his is the last and shrillest of many hostile voices This aesthetic side of a people’s culture is of the highest importance and demands almost as much scrutiny and carefulness of appreciation as the philosophy, religion and central formative ideas which have been the foundation of Indian life and of which much of the art and literature is a conscious expression in significant aesthetic forms Fortunately, a considerable amount of work has been already done in the clearing away of misconceptions about Indian sculpture and painting and, if that were all, I might be content to refer to the works of Mr Havell and Dr Coomaraswamy or to the sufficiently understanding though less deeply informed and penetrating criticisms of others who cannot be charged with a prepossession in favour of oriental work But a more general and searching consideration of first principles is called for in any complete view of the essential motives of Indian culture I am appealing mainly to that new mind of India which long misled by an alien education, view and influence is returning to a sound and true idea of its past and future, but in this field the return is far from being as pervading, complete or luminous as it should be I shall confine myself therefore first to a consideration of

the sources of misunderstanding and pass from that to the true cultural significance of Indian aesthetic creation

“Mr Archer pursuing his policy of Thorough devotes a whole chapter to the subject This chapter is one long torrent of sweeping denunciation But it would be a waste of time to take his attack as serious criticism and answer all in detail His reply to defenders and eulogists is amazing in its shallowness and triviality, made up mostly of small, feeble and sometimes irrelevant points, big glaring epithets and forcibly senseless phrases, based for the rest on a misunderstanding or a sheer inability to conceive the meaning of spiritual experiences and metaphysical ideas, which betrays an entire absence of the religious sense and the philosophic mind Mr Archer is of course a rationalist and contemner of philosophy and entitled to his deficiencies, but why then try to judge things into the sense of which one is unable to enter and exhibit the spectacle of a blind man discoursing on colours? I will cite one or two instances which will show the quality of his criticism and amply justify a refusal to attach any positive value to the actual points he labours to make, except for the light they throw on the psychology of the objectors

“I will give first an instance amazing in its ineptitude The Indian ideal figure of the masculine body insists on two features among many, a characteristic width at the shoulders and slenderness in the middle Well, an objection to broadness of girth and largeness of belly—allowed only where they are appropriate as in sculptures of Ganesha or the Yakshas—is not peculiar to the Indian aesthetic sense, an emphasis, even a pronounced emphasis on their opposites is surely intelligible enough as an aesthetic tradition, however some may prefer a more realistic and prosperous presentation of the human figure But Indian poets and authorities on art have given in this connection the simile of the lion, and lo and behold Mr Archer solemnly discoursing on this image as a plain proof that the Indian people were just only out of the semi-savage state! It is only too clear that they drew the ideal of heroic manhood from their native jungle, from theriolatry, that is to say, from a worship of wild beasts! I presume, on the same principle and with the same stupefying ingenuity he would find in Kamban’s image of the sea for the colour and depth of Sita’s eyes clear evidence of a still more primitive savagery and barbaric worship of inanimate nature, or in Valmiki’s description of his heroine’s ‘eyes like wine’, *madireksanā*, evidence of a chronic inebriety and semi-drunken inspiration of the Indian poetic mind This is one example of Mr Archer’s most telling points It is by no means an isolated though it is an extreme specimen, and the absurdity of that particular argument only brings out the triviality of this manner of criticism It is on a par with the common objection to the slim hands and feet loved of the Bengal painters which one hears sometimes advanced as a solid condemnation of their work And that can be pardoned in the average man who under the high dispensation of modern culture is not expected to have any intelligent conception about art,—the instinctive appreciation has been already safely killed and buried But what are we to say of a professed critic who ignores the deeper motives and fastens on details in order to give them this kind of significance?

“But there are more grave and important objections in this criticism, for Mr Archer turns also to deal with philosophy in art. The whole basis of Indian artistic creation, perfectly conscious and recognised in the canons, is directly spiritual and intuitive. Mr Havell rightly lays stress on this essential distinction and speaks in passing of the infinite superiority of the method of direct perception over intellect, an assertion naturally offensive to the rationalistic mind, though it is now increasingly affirmed by leading western thinkers. Mr Archer at once starts out to hack at it with a very blunt tomahawk. How does he deal with this crucial matter? In a way which misses the whole real point and has nothing whatever to do with the philosophy of art. He fastens on Mr Havell’s coupling of the master intuition of Buddha with the great intuition of Newton and objects to the parallel because the two discoveries deal with two different orders of knowledge, one scientific and physical, the other mental or psychic, spiritual or philosophic in nature. He trots out from its stable the old objection that Newton’s intuition was only the last step in a long intellectual process, while according to this positive psychologist and philosophic critic the intuitions of Buddha and other Indian sages had no basis in any intellectual process of any kind or any verifiable experience. It is on the contrary the simple fact, well-known to all who know anything of the subject, that the conclusions of Buddha and other Indian philosophers (I am not now speaking of the inspired thought of the Upanishads which was pure spiritual experience enlightened by intuition and gnosis,) were preceded by a very acute scrutiny of relevant psychological phenomena and a process of reasoning which, though certainly not rationalistic, was as rational as any other method of thinking. He clinches his refutation by the sage remark that these intuitions which he chooses to call fantasies contradict one another and therefore, it seems, have no sort of value except their vain metaphysical subtlety. Are we to conclude that the patient study of phenomena, the scrupulous and rigidly verifiable intellectual reasonings and conclusions of western scientists have led to no conflicting or contradictory results? One could never imagine at this rate that the science of heredity is torn by conflicting “fantasies” or that Newton’s “fantasies” about space and gravitational effect on space are at this day in danger of being upset by Einstein’s “fantasies” in the same field. It is a minor matter that Mr Archer happens to be wrong in his idea of Buddha’s intuition when he says that he would have rejected a certain Vedantic intuition, since Buddha neither accepted nor rejected, but simply refused at all to speculate on the supreme cause. His intuition was confined to the cause of sorrow and the impermanence of things and the release by extinction of ego, desire and *samskāra*, and so far as he chose to go, his intuition of this extinction, Nirvana, and the Vedantic intuition of the supreme unity were the seeing of one truth of spiritual experience, seen no doubt from different angles of vision and couched in different intellectual forms, but with a common intuitive substance. The rest was foreign to Buddha’s rigidly practical purpose. All this leads us far afield from our subject, but our critic has a remarkably confused mind and to follow him is to be condemned to divagate.

“Thus far Mr Archer on intuition This is the character of his excursions on first principles in art Is it really necessary to point out that a power of mind or spirit may be the same and yet act differently in different fields? or that a certain kind of intuition may be prepared by a long intellectual training, but that does not make it a last step in an intellectual process, any more than the precedence of sense activity makes intellectual reasoning a last step of sense-perception? The reason overtops sense and admits us to other and subtler ranges of truth; the intuition similarly overtops reason and admits us to a more direct and luminous power of truth But very obviously, in the use of the intuition the poet and artist cannot proceed precisely in the same way as the scientist or philosopher Leonardo da Vinci’s remarkable intuitions in science and his creative intuitions in art started from the same power, but the surrounding or subordinate mental operations were of a different character and colour. And in art itself there are different kinds of intuition Shakespeare’s seeing of life differs in its character and aids from Balzac’s or Ibsen’s, but the essential part of the process, that which makes it intuitive, is the same The Buddhistic, the Vedantic seeing of things may be equally powerful starting-points for artistic creation, may lead one to the calm of a Buddha or the other to the rapture dance or majestic stillness of Shiva, and it is quite indifferent to the purposes of art to which of them the metaphysician may be inclined to give a logical preference. These are elementary notions and it is not surprising that one who ignores them should misunderstand the strong and subtle artistic creations of India

“The weakness of Mr Archer’s attack, its empty noise and violence and exiguity of substance must not blind us to the very real importance of the mental outlook from which his dislike of Indian art proceeds. For the outlook and the dislike it generates are rooted in something deeper than themselves, a whole cultural training, natural or acquired temperament and fundamental attitude towards existence, and it measures, if the immeasurable can be measured, the width of the gulf which till recently separated the oriental and the western mind and most of all the European and the Indian way of seeing things An inability to understand the motives and methods of Indian art and a contempt of or repulsion from it was almost universal till yesterday in the mind of Europe There was little difference in this regard between the average man bound by his customary first notions and the competent critic trained to appreciate different forms of culture The gulf was too wide for any bridge of culture then built to span To the European mind Indian art was a thing barbarous, immature, monstrous, an arrested growth from humanity’s primitive savagery and incompetent childhood If there has been now some change, it is due to the remarkably sudden widening of the horizon and view of European culture, a partial shifting even of the standpoint from which it was accustomed to see and judge all that it saw In matters of art the western mind was long bound up as in a prison in the Greek and Renaissance tradition modified by a later mentality with only two side rooms of escape, the romantic and the realistic motives, but these were only wings of the same building, for the base was the same and a common essential canon united their

variations The conventional superstition of the imitation of Nature as the first law or the limiting rule of art governed even the freest work and gave its tone to the artistic and critical intelligence The canons of western artistic creation were held to be the sole valid criteria and everything else was regarded as primitive and half-developed or else strange and fantastic and interesting only by its curiosity But a remarkable change has begun to set in, even though the old ideas still largely rule The prison, if not broken, has at least had a wide breach made in it a more flexible vision and a more profound imagination have begun to superimpose themselves on the old ingrained attitude As a result, and as a contributing influence towards this change, oriental or at any rate Chinese and Japanese art has begun to command something like adequate recognition

“But the change has not yet gone far enough for a thorough appreciation of the deepest and most characteristic spirit and inspiration of Indian work An eye or an effort like Mr Havell’s is still rare For the most part even the most sympathetic criticism stops short at a technical appreciation and imaginative sympathy which tries to understand from outside and penetrates into so much only of the artistic suggestion as can be at once seized by the new wider view of a more accomplished and flexible critical mentality But there is little sign of the understanding of the very well-spring and spiritual fountain of Indian artistic creation There is therefore still a utility in fathoming the depths and causes of the divergence That is especially necessary for the Indian mind itself, for by the appreciation excited by an opposing view it will be better able to understand itself and especially to seize what is essential in Indian art and must be clung to in the future and what is an incident or a phase of growth and can be shed in the advance to a new creation This is properly a task for those who have themselves at once the creative insight, the technical competence and the seeing critical eye But everyone who has at all the Indian spirit and feeling, can at least give some account of the main, the central things which constitute for him the appeal of Indian painting, sculpture and architecture This is all that I shall attempt, for it will be in itself the best defence and justification of Indian culture on its side of aesthetic significance

“The criticism of art is a vain and dead thing when it ignores the spirit, aim, essential motive from which a type of artistic creation starts and judges by the external details only in the light of a quite different spirit, aim and motive Once we understand the essential things, enter into the characteristic way and spirit, are able to interpret the form and execution from that inner centre, we can then see how it looks in the light of other standpoints, in the light of the comparative mind. A comparative criticism has its use, but the essential understanding must precede it if it is to have any real value But while this is comparatively easy in the wider and more flexible turn of literature, it is, I think, more difficult in the other arts, when the difference of spirit is deep, because there the absence of the mediating word, the necessity of proceeding direct from spirit to line and form brings about a special intensity and exclusive concentration of aim and stress of execution The intensity of the thing that

moves the work is brought out with a more distinct power, but by its very stress and directness allows of few accommodations and combined variations of appeal. The thing meant and the thing done strike deep home into the soul or the imaginative mind, but touch it over a smaller surface and with a lesser multitude of points of contact. But whatever the reason, it is less easy for a different kind of mind to appreciate.

“The Indian mind in its natural poise finds it almost or quite as difficult really, that is to say, spiritually to understand the arts of Europe, as the ordinary European mind to enter into the spirit of Indian painting and sculpture. I have seen a comparison made between a feminine Indian figure and a Greek Aphrodite which illustrates the difficulty in an extreme form. The critic tells me that the Indian figure is full of a strong spiritual sense,—here of the very breath and being of devotion, an ineffable devotion, and that is true, it is a suggestion or even a revelation which breaks through or overflows the form rather than depends on the external work,—but the Greek creation can only awaken a sublimated carnal or sensuous delight. Now having entered somewhat into the heart of meaning of Greek sculpture, I can see that this is a wrong account of the matter. The critic has got into the real spirit of the Indian, but not into the real spirit of the Greek work; his criticism from that moment, as a comparative appreciation, loses all value. The Greek figure stresses no doubt the body, but appeals through it to an imaginative seeing inspiration which aims at expressing a certain divine power of beauty and gives us therefore something which is much more than a merely sensuous aesthetic pleasure. If the artist has done this with perfection, the work has accomplished its aim and ranks as a masterpiece. The Indian sculptor stresses something behind, something more remote to the surface imagination, but nearer to the soul, and subordinates to it the physical form. If he has only partially succeeded or done it with power but with something faulty in the execution, his work is less great, even though it may have a greater spirit in the intention, but when he wholly succeeds, then his work too is a masterpiece, and we may prefer it with a good conscience, if the spiritual, the higher intuitive vision is what we most demand from art. This however need not interfere with an appreciation of both kinds in their own order.

“But in viewing much of other European work of the very greatest repute, I am myself aware of a failure of spiritual sympathy. I look for instance on some of the most famed pieces of Tintoretto,—not the portraits, for those give the soul, if only the active or character soul in the man, but say, the Adam and Eve, the St. George slaying the dragon, the Christ appearing to Venetian Senators, and I am aware of standing baffled and stopped by an irresponsive blankness somewhere in my being. I can see the magnificence and power of colouring and design, I can see the force of externalised imagination or the spirited dramatic rendering of action, but I strive in vain to get out any significance below the surface or equivalent to the greatness of the form, except perhaps an incidental minor suggestion here and there and that is not sufficient for me. When I try to analyse my failure, I find at first certain conceptions

which conflict with my expectation or my own way of seeing. This muscular Adam, the sensuous beauty of this Eve do not bring home to me the mother or the father of the race, this dragon seems to me only a suriy portentous beast in great danger of being killed, not a creative embodiment of monstrous evil, this Christ with his massive body and benevolent philosophic visage almost offends me, is not at any rate the Christ whom I know. But these are after all incidental things, what is really the matter is that I come to this art with a previous demand for a kind of vision, imagination, emotion, significance which it cannot give me. And not being so self-confident as to think that what commands the admiration of the greatest critics and artists is not admirable, I can see this and pause on the verge of applying Mr Archer's criticism of certain Indian work and saying that the mere execution is beautiful or marvellous but there is no imagination, nothing beyond what is on the surface. I can understand that what is wanting is really the kind of imagination I personally demand, but though my acquired cultured mind explains this to me and may intellectually catch at the something more, my natural being will not be satisfied, I am oppressed, not uplifted by this triumph of life and the flesh and of the power and stir of life,—not that I object to these things in themselves or to the greatest emphasis on the sensuous or even the sensual, elements not at all absent from Indian creation, if I can get something at least of the deeper thing I want behind it,—and I find myself turning away from the work of one of the greatest Italian masters to satisfy myself with some "barbaric" Indian painting or statue, some calm unfathomable Buddha, bronze Shiva or eighteen-armed Durga slaying the Asuras. But the cause of my failure is there, that I am seeking for something which was not meant in the spirit of this art and which I ought not to expect from its characteristic creation. And if I had steeped myself in this Renaissance mind as in the original Hellenic spirit, I could have added something to my inner experience and acquired a more catholic and universal aesthesis.

"I lay stress on this psychological misunderstanding or want of understanding, because it explains the attitude of the natural European mind to the great works of Indian art and puts on it its right value. This mind catches only what is kin to European effort and regards that too as inferior, naturally and quite rightly since the same thing is more sincerely and perfectly done from a more native fountain of power in western work. That explains the amazing preference of better informed critics than Mr. Archer for the bastard Gandharan sculpture to great and sincere work original and true in its unity,—Gandharan sculpture which is an unsatisfying, almost an impotent junction of two incompatible motives, incompatible at least if one is not fused into the other as here certainly it is not fused,—or its praise otherwise incomprehensible of certain second-rate or third-rate creations and its turning away from others noble and profound but strange to its conceptions. Or else it seizes with appreciation—but is it really a total and a deeply understanding appreciation?—on work like the Indo-Saracenic which though in no way akin to western types has yet the power at certain points to get within the outskirts of its circle of aesthetic conceptions. It is even so

much struck by the Taj as to try to believe that it is the work of an Italian sculptor, some astonishing genius, no doubt, who Indianised himself miraculously in this one hour of solitary achievement, for India is a land of miracles,—and probably died of the effort, for he has left us no other work to admire. Again it admires, at least in Mr Archer, Javanese work because of its humanity and even concludes from that that it is not Indian. Its essential unity with Indian work behind the variation of manner is invisible to this mind because the spirit and inner meaning of Indian work is a blank to its vision and it sees only a form, a notation of the meaning, which, therefore, it does not understand and dislikes. One might just as well say that the Gita written in the Devanagari is a barbaric, monstrous or meaningless thing, but put into some cursive character at once becomes not Indian, because human and intelligible!

“But, ordinarily, place this mind before anything ancient, Hindu, Buddhistic or Vedantic in art and it looks at it with a blank or an angry incomprehension. It looks for the sense and does not find any, because either it has not in itself the experience and finds it difficult to have the imagination, much more the realisation of what this art does really mean and express, or because it insists on looking for what it is accustomed to see at home and, not finding that, is convinced that there is nothing to see or nothing of any value. Or else if there is something which it could have understood, it does not understand because it is expressed in the Indian form and the Indian way. It looks at the method and form and finds it unfamiliar, contrary to its own canons, is revolted, contemptuous, repelled, speaks of the thing as monstrous, barbarous, ugly or null, passes on in a high dislike or disdain. Or if it is overborne by some sense of unanalysable beauty of greatness or power it still speaks of a splendid barbarism. Do you want an illuminating instance of this blankness of comprehension? Mr Archer sees the Dhyani Buddha with its supreme, its unfathomable, its infinite spiritual calm which every cultured oriental mind can at once feel and respond to in the depths of his being, and he denies that there is anything,—only drooped eyelids, an immobile pose and an insipid, by which I suppose he means a calm passionless face. He turns for comfort to the Hellenic nobility of expression of the Gandharan Buddha, or to the living Rabindranath Tagore more spiritual than any Buddha from Peshawar to Kamakura, an inept misuse of comparison against which I imagine the great poet himself would be the first to protest. There we have the total incomprehension, the blind window, the blocked door in the mind, and there too the reason why the natural western mentality comes to Indian art with a demand for something other than what its characteristic spirit and motive intend to give, and, demanding that, is not prepared to enter into another kind of spiritual experience and another range of creative sight, imaginative power and mode of self-expression.”

(*Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol 14, pp 196-206)

(*To be continued*)

NILIMA DAS

THE MAN WHO INTRODUCED BUDDHISM IN TIBET

[In 629 A.D. Srong-tsan-gampo of Yarlung dynasty ascended the throne at Lhasa and at the behest of his two queens (one from Nepal and the other from China) introduced Buddhism in Tibet. However, it was under his great-grandson Khrisong Detson that Tibet became Buddhist. Padma Sambhava, a tantric Buddhist living in Udayana in north-west India, was invited to Tibet in 747 A.D. and it was his association with king Detson that led to the spread of Buddhism in that land. This is the story of how it happened.]

IN Lhasa there lived a cobbler, Tongstan by name. This was in 751 A.D. Tongstan had a tiny room in a basement, the one window of which looked out on to the street. Through it one could see only the feet of those who passed by, but Tongstan recognised the people by their boots. He had lived long in the place and had many acquaintances. There was hardly a pair of boots in the neighbourhood that had not been once or twice through his hands and so he often saw his own handiwork through the window.

Tongstan had always been a good man, but in his old age he began to think more about his soul and God. While he still worked for a master, his wife had died, leaving him with a three-year-old son. None of his elder children had lived, they had all died in infancy. At first Tongstan thought of sending his little son to his sister in the country, but then he felt sorry to part with the boy, thinking, "It would be hard for my little boy to have to grow up in a strange family. I will keep him with me."

In order to earn more money, Tongstan left his master and began to work on his own. But he had no luck with his child. No sooner had the boy reached an age when he could help his father and be a support, than he fell ill and, after being laid up for a week with a burning fever, died. Tongstan could no longer control his remorse and gave way to despair, so great and overwhelming that he murmured against God. In his grief he prayed again and again that he too may die, reproaching God for having taken the son he loved, his only son, while he, old as he was, remained alive.

One day, Gyatsho Tshering, an old man from Tongstan's native village who had become a monk, called in on his way from the Samye monastery. Tongstan opened his heart to him and told him of his sorrow.

"I no longer even wish to live, holy man," he said. "All I ask of God is that I may soon die. I am now without any hope in the world."

The old monk replied, "You have no right to say such things, my friend. Birth and death are part of life. So is suffering. Your problem is you wish to live for your own happiness."

"What else should one live for?" asked Tongstan.

"For Nirvana," said the monk. "Sorrow, suffering, dissatisfaction, and all other forms of unpleasantness are inherent in life. By giving up our craving, personal gratification and selfish living, we can attain Nirvana."

Tongstan was silent awhile, and then asked: "But how can one attain Nirvana?"

Gyatsho Tshering replied: "How one may attain Nirvana has been shown to us by the Buddha. He preached his message of compassion and true happiness many centuries back. Follow his teachings and you shall be more content."

The bootmaker bowed humbly and asked from where he could obtain the teachings of Buddha.

"The teachings of Buddha are contained in the scriptures called *The Turning of the Wheel of Law*. This is in Sanskrit whereas our language is Bhot. If you want I will come to you for the next few days and tell you of the message of Buddha."

"That will be most kind of you, holy Gyatsho Tshering," said Tongstan.

And so began the education of Tongstan. At first they met only on holidays, but having once started, Tongstan found his heart so light that he wanted his friend to come every day. Sometimes he got so absorbed in the discussions that the oil in his lamp burnt out before he could think of bidding his friend goodbye. Earlier when he would go to bed he would lie with a heavy heart, moaning as he thought of his son, but now he found only peace and contentment.

From that time Tongstan's whole life changed. He became peaceful and calm. The more he discussed the teachings of Buddha, the better he understood life and the clearer and happier he felt in his mind.

Now, Tongstan was also the bootmaker of Krisong Detson, the king of Tibet, who lived in his majestic Khritse Marpo (the Red Palace). Tongstan frequently went to the king to make or mend his shoes. This had brought him quite close to the king and he frequently shared his grief and sorrow with him.

One day the king asked him: "Tongstan, you lost your only son and all desire to live. Now I notice your sorrow has lessened and you are at peace with yourself. What has brought about this miracle?"

"My Lord," replied the bootmaker, "it is the teachings of Buddha. He has taught me the meaning of life."

"You know, Tongstan, I too have heard of the many wonders of Buddha. But I have never understood the full meaning of this religion. I still get confused between our earlier beliefs when we followed the Shamanistic religion and worshipped our local Gods and these teachings of Buddha. Very recently a man from Udayana in north-west Aryadesha had come to my court. His name is Padma Sambhava. He too spoke of the many wonders of Buddha. Why don't you bring your monk friend to me so that we may all learn something more?"

"Of course, Your Majesty. I shall do as you bid."

And so Gyatsho Tshering was brought to the king and there again began a long series of discussions between them four, the Tibetan monk, Padma Sambhava, the king and the bootmaker. As the king knew how to read, he also began studying the Buddhist scriptures. Meanwhile, Gyatsho Tshering, the old Tibetan monk, fell sick and died.

This death had a profound effect on the king. He relapsed into sorrow and began

wondering about the meaning of life. Not able to contain himself any longer, he one day asked Padma Sambhava what is happiness and how it could be obtained

“There is no absolute happiness, my Lord,” replied Padma Sambhava “Indeed, *duhkha* or suffering is inherent in life It is entirely due to our craving for individual satisfaction It can be stopped by stopping this craving, and this can be done only by taking the middle path as propounded by the Buddha ”

“And what is this middle path?” asked the king

“This, my Lord,” replied Padma Sambhava, “is following a course between self-indulgence and extreme asceticism, and leading a moral and well ordered life ”

Khrisong Detson thought about this for some time. After a long silence he asked “How can one follow this middle path?”

“My Lord, it is called the Noble Eightfold Path,” replied the man from Aryadesh “It is Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Recollection and Right Meditation ”

The king remained quiet for a long time The more he thought about this path, the more he liked the idea

“Did Buddha preach this?” he asked

“Yes, my Lord,” replied Padma Sambhava “That is why we call him Tathagata It means *he who has attained enlightenment* ”

“He certainly must have been a great man, Padma Sambhava,” said the king “Did he say anything about suffering?”

“Yes, Your Majesty ”

“What?”

“That birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, every wish unfulfilled is suffering—in short all the five components of individuality make suffering ”

The more Detson contemplated these answers, the more merit he began seeing in the teachings of Buddha He brooded about these answers for many days Then one day he asked Padma Sambhava what is the best way to avoid these sufferings

“This is called the *Noble Truth of Stopping of Suffering*, my Lord,” he replied “It is the complete stopping of that thirst, so that no passion remains It means, completely leaving this thirst, being free from it, giving no place to it ”

However, despite these long talks with Padma Sambhava, Khrisong Detson was still not completely convinced of the merits of Buddha’s teachings compared to his own beliefs of local Gods So one day he asked his friend. “Holy man, you also know something of occult sciences Why can’t you ask your Buddha to come and speak to me and tell me the truth about life?”

Padma Sambhava contemplated the king’s question for a long time “Very well, Your Highness I will today do something I am sure Buddha will grant your wish and come to you in person ”

That night as Detson was gloomily contemplating life, he laid his head upon both his arms and, before he was aware of it, he fell asleep

“King Detson!” he suddenly heard a voice, as if someone had breathed the words above his ear

“Who’s there?” startled in sleep, he asked

He turned around and looked at the door, no one was there He called again Then he heard quite distinctly “King Detson, king Detson! Go to your friend, the bootmaker, tomorrow and ask him to leave you alone in his room for a day and look out for me, for I shall come Be sure to be alone ”

So the next morning Detson rose well before daybreak and, after eating some food, quietly went to the room of his friend, Tongstan There he told Tongstan that he wished to spend the whole day alone in his room for contemplation Much shocked and confused, Tongstan left the king alone. He himself went to spend the day in the monastery of Samye

So Detson sat by the window, looking out into the street, and whenever any one passed by the window, he would crane his neck to see him First he saw a porter in torn clothes, then a person carrying water Some children playfully ran past the window Presently an old army soldier came near the window, spade in hand. Detson knew him by name as they had both fought in many wars together His name was Tsering Wangyal and he began clearing the snow in front of the window

“I must be growing crazy,” said Khrisong Detson, laughing at his fancy “Tsering Wangyal comes to clear away the snow, and I am imagining it’s Buddha coming to visit me I am a fool.”

Yet after he had waited for some time he felt drawn to look out of the window again He saw that Tsering Wangyal had kept his spade against the wall and was either resting himself or trying to get warm The man was old and broken-down and, evidently had not enough strength even to clear away the snow

“What if I called him in and gave him some tea?” thought Detson

He slowly rose and putting the samovar on the table, made tea Then he tapped the window with his fingers Tsering Wangyal turned and came to the window. Detson beckoned to him to come in and went himself to open the door

“Come in,” he said, “and warm yourself a bit. I’m sure you must be cold ”

Seeing the king, Wangyal was shocked “My king,” he said “What brings you to this humble abode?”

“Hush,” whispered the king “I am here to meet someone But let that not disturb you Come, my friend, first have some tea with me ”

“You are a very kind man,” Wangyal answered “My bones do ache, to be sure, but then I am an old man ” He started shaking off the snow and, lest he should leave marks on the floor, began wiping the sole of his shoes But as he did so he tottered and fell

Detson rushed to lift him and gently put him in a chair Filling two tumblers, he passed one to his visitor and, pouring his own into the saucer, began to blow on it

But while Wangyal drank his tea, Detson kept looking into the street.

“Who are you expecting, my Lord?” asked the visitor after some time “If I am an intruder, I may be permitted to leave ”

“Pray, do not be cruel,” said Detson “It is true I am expecting someone But that does not mean you should leave ” And saying so Detson poured more tea into the visitor’s tumbler

They sat in silence for a long time Then Wangyal Tsering got up and said “Thank you, Your Majesty You have given me food and comfort both for soul and body You are much more than a king. You are a noble man ”

Slowly Tsering walked to the door and while going out blessed his host Detson again began looking out of the window, waiting for the Buddha and thinking about him and his doings His head was full of the great Teacher’s preachings.

Two town-people went by, then a baker carrying a basket Then a woman came up in peasant-shoes. She passed the window, but stopped by the wall. Detson glanced at her through the window, he saw that she was poorly dressed and had a baby in her arms Detson heard the baby crying and the woman trying to soothe it He rose and, going out of the door, called her in

“Why do you stand out there with the baby in the cold? Come inside You can wrap him up better in a warm place Come this way ”

The woman was surprised but she followed him inside his room He took her near the stove and said “Sit down, my dear, and warm yourself Also please feed the baby ”

“I cannot I have eaten nothing myself since early morning,” said the woman but still she took the baby to her breast

Detson shook his head He brought out a tumbler and some bread Into it he poured some cabbage soup and said “Eat, my dear, and I’ll mind the baby ”

The woman began eating while Detson put the baby on the bed and sat down beside it. He chuckled and chuckled, and soon the baby was laughing. He drove his finger straight at the baby’s mouth and then quickly drew it back, and he did this again and again. This made the baby laugh all the more and Detson felt quite pleased

The woman sat eating and talking, and told him who she was, and where she had been.

When she finished eating she got up to go Detson sighed

“Haven’t you any warmer clothing?” he asked

“No,” she replied “I cannot afford anything better.” Then the woman came to the bed and took the child Detson picked up his long cloak which he had earlier hung on a nail in the wall and gave it to her

“Here,” he said “It will do to wrap him up ”

The woman looked at the cloak, then at her host and, taking it, burst into tears While leaving she thanked and blessed him

After the woman left, Detson ate some cabbage soup, and again began waiting Presently he saw an old apple woman just in front of his window. She had a large basket, but there did not seem to be many apples in it, she had evidently sold most of

her stock. She placed the basket on the ground in order to rest and while she was looking further towards the street, a boy in a tattered cap ran up, snatched an apple out of the basket and tried to slip away. But the old woman noticed it and caught the boy by the sleeve. The boy screamed and the old woman began scolding and beating him. Detson rushed out and heard the boy saying, "I did not take it. What are you beating me for? Let me go."

Detson separated them. He took the boy by the hand and said, "Let him go, Mother. Forgive him. He is just a child."

"I'll teach him a lesson that he won't forget for a year! He is a rascal!"

"Let him go, Mother. He won't do it again. Please let him go."

The old woman let go, and the boy wished to run away but Detson stopped him.

"Ask the lady's forgiveness," he said. "And don't do it another time. I saw you take the apple."

The boy began to cry and to beg pardon.

"That's right. And now here's an apple for you," and Detson took an apple from the basket and gave it to the boy, saying, "I will pay you, Mother."

"You will spoil them that way, the young rascals," said the old woman. "He ought to be beaten so that he would remember it for a week."

"Oh, Mother," said Detson, "that's the simple way—but it's not the correct way. If he should be beaten for stealing an apple, what should be done to us for our sins?"

The old woman was silent.

"We should forgive, dear Mother," said Detson, "or else we shall not be forgiven. And we should forgive a thoughtless youngster most of all."

"It's true enough," she said, "but they are getting terribly spoiled."

"Then we must show them better ways," Detson replied.

Soon enough the old woman was about to move and as she picked up her basket, the boy sprang forward to her, saying, "Let me carry it for you, Mother. I'm going that way."

The old woman nodded her head, and as they moved away she blessed Detson but quite forgot to ask him to pay for the apple.

When they were out of sight, Detson returned to his room to again await the arrival of the Buddha. But no one came and presently it was evening. Feeling tired, he lay down to rest. As he was about to go to sleep, he seemed to hear footsteps, as though someone was moving behind him. Detson turned around and it seemed to him as if people were standing in the dark corner, but he could not make out who they were. And a voice whispered in his ear: "King Detson, king Detson, don't you know me?"

"Who is it?" murmured Detson.

"It is I," said the voice. And out of the dark stepped Tsering Wangyal, who smiled and vanishing like a cloud was seen no more.

"It is I," said another voice after a few moments. And out of the darkness

stepped the woman with the baby in her arms, and the woman smiled and the baby laughed, and they too vanished

“It is I,” said a third voice and this time Detson saw the old apple woman and the boy stepping out of the darkness and smiling They too vanished quickly like the others

And Detson felt good He understood that the Buddha had visited him through these people and had shown him the correct way to live He understood that only by following his message can he and his people attain enlightenment. He understood that by the Buddha visiting him he was blessed and that it was now his duty to spread his message throughout his kingdom.

King Detson called Padma Sambhava the next morning and, after narrating to him his experiences of the previous day, said “My friend, you are truly a remarkable man From now onward I will call you Guru Padma Sambhava As for me, I will devote the remainder of my life to spreading the message of the Buddha.”

ANIL CHANDRA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Story of a Soul, Volume One (1954-1955) by Huta Havyavāhana Trust Price Rs. 100 00

“THE MOTHER first asked me to write this book in 1957 ” So writes Huta who was hesitant in the beginning to undertake this task. Perhaps there is an understandable justification in this reluctance of hers But inspiration came, and also the needed power of expression Such is the great privilege of *The Story of a Soul*, inscribed in the Mother’s own hand

There is no doubt that each soul has its own story to tell and that there is always something unique in its unfoldment Yet when the Divine Grace descends directly upon it, the story has to be altogether different Here we have an unusual story of an aspirant heart in search of truth, beauty, love, joy even in the midst of the demands of life which is otherwise full of conflicts and contradictions There may be a hundred failures, human failures and trepidations, but it seems that ultimately these do not really count much when the invisible hand is there as the guide There is again a confirmation of the Upanishadic revelation that one who chooses the Divine has already been chosen by the Divine

Huta read out to the Mother a passage from the first chapter of her notebooks. “Does the Divine exist in this world of falsehood? Is there any truth here? If not, then what am I living for? If my aspiration is true and sincere, then reveal that Truth to me, O Lord ” The Mother exclaimed. “But, child, now you have found it, you are here!”

The first volume of the *Story* being presented to us now covers the period up to the end of 1955 and marks the decisive early beginning of an incredible spiritual journey; several other volumes in the sequence are expected to follow The entire set when out should thus constitute a luminous biography of the seeker-soul opening to the wonder that is ready to rain in great abundance upon it It is that which makes life meaningful and worthwhile

But you have to do something worthwhile before the end will overtake you, before the candle run out,—as the author would like to put it metaphorically The first awakening has to occur and perhaps it does occur even before you realise that you are actually on the path, somewhere deep within a surer initiation has already been given by the unseen preceptor who indeed is waiting there for you even as you hurriedly go through the mundanity of this anguish-filled existence

At last the longing was fulfilled Huta writes “When I entered the Ashram building, a huge wave of peace engulfed me There was a profusion of flowers of different kinds, shapes, colours and fragrances, beautiful bowers of creepers, and a small rockery with a tiny pond full of sweet small water-lilies As I proceeded further, my eyes were drawn to more and more details I had a first distant glimpse of the Mother clad in a white sari, she was seated radiant in a high-backed carved chair

inside the Meditation Hall Step by step I approached her As she handed me the message, a powerful spark of her divine touch left me completely lost in her luminous Presence ” This was on Monday morning of 1 November 1954, Huta’s spiritual birthday, the first one in the Ashram

And the message that was distributed that day was from Sri Aurobindo “A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and unified India ” The unfortunate thing, however, is that we do not yet recognise the spiritual necessity of it in the evolutionary progress of the world for which he attempted all in his occult-yogic pursuit

In the *Story* now and then our author becomes acceptably and pleasingly lyrical with the touch of the joyous, making it more intimate, spontaneous, genuine. Thus about the new day that dawned on her, Thursday 10 February 1955, she writes.

“I left the house at five in the morning, when the night had scarcely gone Some stars still twinkled in the sky, a grey dawn clung silently to the trees and buildings, but at seven the sun took over: a new day—my new life had started.”

Exactly a week after that Savita of the past became Huta. The Mother gave a card to her with the new name written on it “Huta—the offered one With my blessings ”

Here are a few more examples of Huta’s lyricism.

The Mother began the lessons Her voice was music to my ears

My days passed like unsettled weather one day I was sunshine, the next shrouded in gloomy clouds, as I swung from one mood to another.

and there were innumerable tumbles and tempests By now I had realised full well that this path was not a bed of roses All the time the Mother encouraged me immensely “Do not give up to the enemy—resist—I am with you for the fight and we must conquer ”

The springs of this lyricism, as we notice here, are certainly in life’s ardent urge to exceed itself, and not just in a kind of aesthetical expression of a poetic heart, not the Tagorean “I thought that my voyage had come to its end at the last limit of my power,—that the path before me was closed, that provisions were exhausted and the time come to take shelter in a silent obscurity. But I find that thy will knows no end in me And when the old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart, and when the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.” One wonders whether the poet has really given up those old words or abandoned those old and trodden tracks, that the new expression of the spirit may kindle a breathing fire and take him on the path of the truer higher life A melopoetic experience leaves the beyond yet far away

Indeed, lyricism is not all and the difficult problem of the beyond is not the

beyond, it is the problem of the near. The soul no doubt has happily offered itself to the Divine, now the outer personality and the constituents of nature that make up the ego-individual have to depart. Spirituality is not an airy-fairy tale and a grim battle has to be constantly waged. Once Huta sent a note to the Mother

My dearest Mother,

Are you really angry with me because of countless errors, defects, and my revolt against the Truth? I am sorry Love

The Mother assured her

I am never angry with you and always ready to help you.

With all my love and force.

The sunshine of love becomes brighter and warmer as the day takes up the birthday hues

I rose early on November 1st. With a dazzling smile she welcomed me and wished me 'Bonne Fête'. Her eyes were tender with love as she handed me a bouquet of beautiful flowers. Then she looked deeper into my eyes for quite some time. Afterwards she pointed to the small room opposite to where she was sitting, and said "When Sri Aurobindo was in his body, he and I used to sit over there and give darshan to devotees. Come with me into Sri Aurobindo's room and receive his blessings also, for he is always present among us." She held my right hand and led me into his chamber, which was marvellously peaceful. I sank to my knees and prostrated myself reverently before his bed. A huge wave of Divine Peace engulfed me. The Mother stood very close to me, indrawn. My mind fell silent in Their Presence.

But what is the meaning of the Mother's blessings and warmth of love? Certainly these cannot be with human connotation in a manner to be understood in a human way. The Mother herself tells about the power of her blessings as follows

My blessings are very dangerous. They cannot be for this one or for that one or against this process or that thing. It is for the Will of the Lord to be done, with full force and power. And the Will is for progress.

That makes our task also multiply difficult. To be ready to receive her blessings is itself an untiring sadhana and only when it is done does she herself begin the sadhana in us. The past is removed and the real future is begun. The Mother sent to Huta a painted card depicting a white bird coming out of leaping flames. It was the picture of the Phoenix, the mythical bird of Arabia that arises out of its own ashes and soars again to the sky. On the card the Mother wrote

This is the picture of the soul coming out victoriously from all the ordeals I want this realisation for you

30-12-55

Bonjour ! my dear
little child.
I hope this day will be
a good one for you
with my love always
near you. This is the
picture of the soul
coming out victoriously
from all the ordeals.
I want this realisation
for you.



A new birth has occurred, the privilege of which even the Gods do not possess

R Y DESHPANDE

1. Gleanings from the Ramayana, 2. Gleanings from the Mahabharata, 3. The Wisdom of India. By Shyam Sunder Jhunjhunwala Published by Sri Aurobindo's Action Pondicherry - 605 002 Price each Rs 45

Gleanings from the Ramayana

The Ramayana, the first epic in world literature, is a household name in India. As the author had rightly pointed out, "There is hardly an Indian in the North, be he literate or illiterate, who has not heard of the Ramayana of Tulsidas." This enlightening poem is read joyfully throughout the length and breadth of the country in many languages. The author of this book has done a great service to the readers by incorpo-

rating the comments of Sri Aurobindo The Ramayana is “the parable of an enormous conflict. between the representative of a high culture and Dharma and a huge unbridled force and gigantic civilisation of the exaggerated Ego ” All this is set against a moral and ethical background Some of the sections in the Gleanings like The Power of Name, Power of Maya, in the Kaliyuga, Aim of Human Life need special mention here The book will help initiate into its beauty one who has not read this wonderful poem, the Ramayana.

Gleanings from the Mahabharata

The Mahabharata is on a vaster scale than the Ramayana It is “the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India ” It is “the creation and expression not of a single individual mind, but of the mind of a nation ” The main theme of this grand poem is “the Indian idea of the Dharma”, “the struggle between the godheads of truth and light and unity and the powers of darkness and division and falsehood” So vast is the canvas of the Mahabharata that it is said “whatever is in India is in the Mahabharata ”

The effort of Shyam Sunder Jhunjunwala in selecting and translating the verses is praiseworthy, yet while reading the Gleanings one feels that the very soul of the epic is missing The idea of the Mahabharata without the presence of Lord Krishna is unimaginable The Gita is the very soul and life-blood of the Mahabharata ‘Nothing has been taken from the Gita,’ because ‘the Gita has been brought out as a separate book’ is no justification for its non-inclusion here

At least some cardinal verses could have been included Without the Gita the Mahabharata becomes a maimed creation With what expectation one would open the pages of *Gleanings from the Mahabharata*, and what disappointment would await him

The Wisdom of India

By far the best of the trilogy both in execution and selection, *The Wisdom of India* could be of real interest and value, especially to students and youngsters. In this book the author has taken real pains to compile the verses and arrange them systematically The concept of God, God-realisation, the Path, Evolution, Divine Life, the Next Future, all have been included here. In spite of its reasonably all-pervasive aspect, how one wishes this book would contain one section solely devoted to Transformation, the ultimate spirituality, in the light of the integral Yoga Still the attempt of Shyam Sunder Jhunjunwala is highly commendable. However, the reviewer refrains from analysing the various sections as that would take a lot of space Better would it be to read and enjoy the book As it is specially useful for beginners like students and youngsters, it would have been better if the publishers had kept its price a little lower than what it is.

In all the above three books the print is good and they are attractively bound. More books like *The Wisdom of India*, one hopes, will be published in the near future

ASOKA K GANGULI

Students' Section

THE BIGGEST IN THE SKY

A CLOUDLESS blue sky lay bare above the swaying fields of mustard. The air was refreshing, but the heat was coming on. Farmers, perspiring after their hard work, had stopped to have a sip of water. Cries of birds, voices in the background and the breeze were the only destructors of the otherwise prevailing silence.

In the distance a little figure was seen approaching. It was waving its hand in glee and seemed to float above the yellow flowers. Coming closer, it took the shape of a young carefree boy.

“Chachi, Chachi, where is Sahil?”

“What happened, Rahul? What is all this excitement about?”

“Chachi, papa has promised to take me to the neighbouring village fair for my birthday next month. He said that I could take Sahil if he too wanted to come.” He panted for breath, more out of excitement than from the exercise. The farmer woman smiled and assured him that her son would love to accompany them.

Evening came and the blue sky blushed pink. The farmers returned home. On the terrace Rahul was playing with a kite and his father was looking at the sky. He was disturbed, worried. Finally, in a grave tone he called Rahul to sit by his side.

“Rahul, come soon. I have something to tell you.” Rahul, overwhelmed by the importance given to him, leaped towards his father.

“Sure, papa, what have you to tell me? Have you got new plans for my birthday?”

“No, Rahul. But I want you to listen to me like a big boy.”

It was getting dark now, and a few stars were rising. Suresh paused for a moment, but Rahul was getting impatient.

“Rahul, you remember what I have told you about our neighbour, Pakistan?”

“No, papa, what happened?” he asked in an eager voice. This topic didn't interest him. He busied himself watching an insect on the ground.

“Rahul, just as Sahil and you are neighbours, and sometimes you fight, Pakistan and India are fighting. Pakistan has sent some soldiers into Indian territory. So, India has to fight back to send them out.”

“There's a war! With real machine guns?” This captured his attention; his eyes sparkled with fascination as he volleyed to his father questions about the great thing ‘the war’.

“Son, wars aren't happy things. So many soldiers are injured, and many never return.”

“Why? Where do they go?”

“They go away, far away and become stars. Brave stars.” His voice became sadder, this was not the age for his son to learn about death, but then..

The little boy commented something, but Suresh didn't pay any attention; he

was lost in his own world, looking at the stars. He was fiddling with a paper, a telegram he had received that afternoon. He read it again. He had read it a hundred times before.

Finally, making an effort to change his tone, he said “. And you know what? I too was a soldier, but I did not get a chance to fight a war, never. Today, there is a war. I have to go and fight ..with a machine gun.” He tried to sound excited, so that his son would take it in the right spirit.

He waited for Rahul to say something, but he said nothing. Maybe he didn't understand

“So, Rahul, I won't be here on your birthday ..”

“On my birthday? And what about the fair? I have already asked Chachi if Sahil could come, and she said yes ” Tears of disappointment filled his eyes “Papa, the fair will be over. We'll never be able to go.”

Suresh didn't know how to proceed. The words almost choked in his throat. “I might not come back, Rahul ”

This was more than the boy could take. He was so confused that he couldn't even cry. After a while he said. “You too will become a star?” he could hardly speak “You'll leave me and go away, and Daddu also. And won't you remember us?”

“Of course, I'll remember you both. And then, Rahul, I can see you every evening when you come to the terrace. Won't you look for me?”

The trace of a smile crossed Rahul's lips “Then I can tell everyone that my papa is a star ”

Suresh smiled in a melancholy manner. He didn't have the heart to see his boy's heart breaking. But today his duty demanded him to go and fight. His thoughts ran wild; but one thought disturbed him “What would become of my son, if I die? How would he react? What kind of stories would people tell him of his father's death?” He was worried.

“If I don't come back, Rahul, everyone will tell you that your father was a very brave soldier, but, Rahul, the true soldier will be here, at home, who will not cry because his papa can't be with him ” He pulled Rahul towards him, and both remained that way, embracing each other. It became darker and the stars rose higher “Will you be my brave soldier, here at home?”

“Yes, papa, I will be brave like you ”

Early next morning Suresh left for the border, leaving his village. Nothing changed,—except a little boy's heart strove to be happy, and a prayer on every neighbour's lips

The days went on, and no message came from Suresh. Rahul's birthday was coming closer, but he had forgotten all about the fair. He was the same carefree boy running in the field. But he spent a lot more time with his Daddu, listening to stories of other wars and great soldiers. But after each story Rahul's comment was the same

“But papa is the bravest. When will he return?” He missed his father, but as a soldier's son he refused to admit it. He fought

There were only two days left for Rahul's birthday and as usual Daddu was telling him the story of a true fighter, when all of a sudden he stopped. He could speak no longer and tears overtook him.

"What happened, Daddu? Are you all right?"

Daddu said nothing, just held him tight and cried harder. After a while he said. "Rahul, papa will never come back ."

Tears rushed into Rahul's eyes. He was dumbfounded. Then, forcing himself free from Daddu, he ran out and returned a second later,—with a paper and a pen.

"Daddu, don't cry. Papa had told me that if he doesn't return home, he would become a star." He struggled to hold back his tears. "Daddu, will you write a letter for me to papa? Tell him not to worry. Just the way he was pushing back the Pakistani soldiers, I too am pushing back my tears. They have come, but I am a brave soldier and I am fighting bravely. And also say that I will come to see him every evening on the terrace. And I will recognise him immediately, because papa has got to be the biggest star in the sky."

STUTI

(The story was written as a part of class-assignment)