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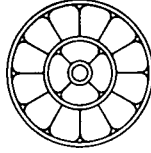
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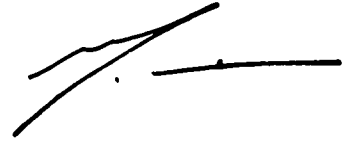


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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"Golden Jubilee" -

the words connoting fifty years of enterprise - ring and vibrate with deep happiness and a sense of time running forward to some end beyond all ends

At the back of these words are memories of experiments and fulfillments. There is the recollection of a time when Mather India was a fledgling out with a small strength, which yet looked out forward.

The first issue had come out, but there was not enough matter in hand for the editor to continue long. Seasoned journalists raised a finger of warning and said, "You must have at least six

months' matter in reverse. She
 You will go up a rocket and
 come down a stick!"

I wrote to Sri Anubindya
 and the Mother of this warning:
 "Tell me what to do. I myself
 feel like Marshall Foch at
 the start of World War I. He
 was asked by headquarters how
 he stood. He replied from the
 front at the river Marne:
 "My left wing is broken, My
 right wing is in retreat. My
 centre is ~~not~~ shaking. The
 situation is excellent. I am
 attacking." For a matter of days
 the battle swung uncertainly to
 and fro. Then the enemy broke
 and victory came. I am sure
Mother India too will be
 victorious." "

Well, fifty years have gone and we are still moving. I am retiring from the job of getting matters together month after month. But I cannot let a single issue appear without minutely going through the final page-proofs and letting them pass through a similar scrutiny by my assistant Miss Minna Palatino, an Ashramite, who has been by my side - a warm friend - for twenty years or so.

Netherendra has the honour of having had Sri Aurobindo's own personal backing. In its initial period it happened to receive some critical remarks from a prominent Sahakar for certain opinions expressed. When the incident was referred to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo smiled: "Doesn't he know that Netherendra is my paper?"

The workers on Mother India have kept the sense of Sri Anandabha's presence a living force behind all their efforts, and, remembering the Master's keen interest in the progress of the paper, they have endeavoured to serve her and the Master faithfully through the trials of the crowded years.

K. D. Setlura
(Amal Kivan)

“GOLDEN JUBILEE”

THE words—connoting fifty years of enterprise—ring and vibrate with deep happiness and a sense of time running forward to some end beyond all ends.

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K. D SETHNA
(AMAL KIRAN)

FACSIMILE OF MOTHER INDIA'S FIRST ISSUE

MOTHER INDIA

Managing Editor
K. R. PODDAR

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW

Editor
K. D. SETHNA

"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

FEBRUARY 19, 1948

VOL. I NO. 1. FOUR ANNAS

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We are here to answer a grave need of the times. This country has gained independence, but it has not found its proper line of life. There is a welter of ideologies and our minds are divided. A host of parties has sprung up, each with a different aim. In the clash of parties the right destiny of India is forgotten.

We have named our paper "Mother India" with a purpose. There is a tendency among us to regard India as just a collection of human beings with certain common racial and cultural characteristics. But India is more than a collection of human beings. India is a living entity, a presiding genius, the one self of all these human beings and the one consciousness that is at work in them. You cannot make a nation with a mere aggregate of individuals. A nation is a single being.

It is this single being, the life of our life, that we have to serve. It is the one Mother of whom we are the myriad children. Until we realise this, we shall never achieve greatness. Our first requirement is to live for and look up to a presiding genius which unites us, which alone has made our culture and civilisation persist through thousands of years and which alone can make us fulfil our destiny.

The sense of India the living Mother is what we are aiming to kindle everywhere in this country. But to kindle this sense is not to answer the whole need of the times. Every country has a presiding genius, whether openly acknowledged or not. But every country has predominant qualities, a typical nature, a central function. We must realise what exactly is the face and form of our presiding genius. What is Mother India?

Mother India is manifold. Art, philosophy, science, politics, industry—all these she has been known for through the ages. Yet brighter than her fame for these has been her fame for seeking the Godhead secret within earth's life. Her art, philosophy, science, politics and industry have been inspired directly or indirectly by this seeking. And unless we realise that Mother India is a spiritual light we shall either fumble in the dark or run after deceptive gleams. We cannot fulfil our destiny without following the instinct of divinity in us.

Does this mean we must be religious zealots, fanatics of a creed? Certainly not. The spiritual light that is Mother India is wider than religiosity. It has room for a thousand different ways of worship. Inasmuch as it is not limited to a narrow sectarianism it makes for a secular view

of the State. But by "secular" we must not understand indifference to the instinct of divinity. To be secular can be for Indians nothing except being widely spiritual rather than narrowly religious. The instinct of divinity we must never lose hold on without it we shall be false to our whole historical development and to the power that has made us great in the past and led to our survival while all other ancient civilisations have died. It shows us our 'swabhava', our real fountainhead of action. If we deny our "swabhava" we shall miss our goal.

There is, of course, in every nation the instinct of divinity. It is, however, not the master instinct and has not played so fundamental a part. That is why, more than any other nation, we Indians have to keep it burning if we are to fulfil ourselves and be to the entire world a source of illumination. Many things today work to dim this instinct. Perhaps the most dangerous of all things is the idea assiduously spread that it is unworldly and impoverishes earth-life. We have to admit that there has been a trend in India to look too much beyond the world and renounce earth life. But it is not the only trend, and spirituality can be dynamic as so often spirituality has been in India. The full flowering the full richness of life on earth is what we aim at when we point to the instinct of divinity as the "swabhava" of the Indian nation.

Our paper, therefore, will not stand aloof from the march of events. It will be in the very thick of them and take its position in the arena of politics. But in the hubbub of political slogans we bring a standard that is non-political. Though we shall never stop touching politics as also we shall never stop touching all that constitutes man's many-faceted life, we are not a political party. And our standard of judgment, by being essentially non-political and above all parties, will conduce to an impartiality, a freedom, a wideness, a depth of vision.

We are on the side of neither capitalism nor communism nor any other political 'ism'. In every field of activity we shall criticise whatever militates against the instinct of divinity and blocks the work of the spiritual force that is Mother India. We shall give the utmost constructive help we can to whatever encourages this instinct and facilitates its work. The Godhead secret within man is the truth of man and most keenly the truth of the Indian nation, the truth that has to be lived out as much as possible. Not for any lesser ideal do we launch our paper and only this highest ideal we have in mind when we take as our motto the ancient cry: 'Great is truth and it shall prevail'.

THE BURNING QUESTION OF THE DAY

THE PLEBISCITE IN KASHMIR

A Searchlight on Fundamentals

India has been profusely glorified for her success in securing that a plebiscite be held in Kashmir on the issue of accession. The garlands are deserved, but they must not be given with an eye fixed only on the immediate and the obvious.

DEMOCRACY AND THE PLEBISCITE-PRINCIPLE

Nobody seems to realise that in this case the very principle of plebiscite is utterly irrelevant. You will ask: "Is not the voice of the people echoed in a plebiscite and would not the turning of a deaf ear to it be most undemocratic?" The answer is not so simple as you might imagine. Let us be quite clear about the functioning of democracy. Democracy must function within the right context. There is something called the indivisibility of a country based on an essential commonness of culture and singleness of spirit. This indivisibility is further strengthened by certain geographical features like for instance Great Britain being an island. Not only are England, Scotland and Wales

knit close by a singleness of spirit but also held together by a surround of seas. To cut off Scotland or Wales from England on the score that the majority there are Scots or Welsh and not English is to apply democracy within a doubly wrong context.

THE PLEBISCITE PRINCIPLE AND NATIONALHOOD

India is also a distinct geographical unit marked by mountains and rivers at the top and by seas on two sides. This unit includes what is Pakistan today. Within it there has been throughout history a common culture which assimilated all civilisations that came inside the geographical boundaries. The Muslim invaders were the most difficult to assimilate and there seem to be some characteristics of the Muslim mind which perhaps can never be Indianised, but prior to its recent confusions and clamours a potent harmonising was achieved of the finest and most important strains in it with the symphony of a thousand moods that is the Indian spirit.

Moreover, even the difficult Muslim mind recognised little later, the geographical individuality of India and never dreamt of cutting up the country into two parcels. Owing to insufficient development of the political consciousness India was never a genuine political unity, except to some extent when under the stress of a common danger there was an attempt to bring all kingdoms under one presiding rajah or British. Now that the political consciousness has fully developed, there should have been a federal union of the various provinces as a political counterpart of the many-sided common cultural spirit there should never have been partition.

A plebiscite in provinces within a federal union to decide the composition and form of local government, is legitimate once we accept the democratic formula. But a plebiscite to settle whether a province should be torn apart from the rest of the country is democracy gone astray and annulling something greater than itself, an indivisible nationhood. Just because certain areas in the

Punjab and Bengal had a Muslim majority by a small margin there was no reason to grant them the right of breaking with the rest of India instead of the right of being autonomous provinces within the whole. To believe that a plebiscite should determine the Kashmir issue is also a gross mistake in fundamentals.

We have been fooling ourselves with that blessed word plebiscite. Why is not the U.S.A. divided up into Protestants and Catholics and Jews or also into English Americans and Italian Americans and German Americans? The UN Commission would be scandalised at such a question. But we are quite content to have allowed part of Bengal and of the Punjab to be hacked away and now we are willing to suffer another operation which if we are not very careful, might sever Kashmir from us or, at best, slice it into two. Instead of being ashamed we take pride and think we are being democratic and doing what must com-

Continued on page 4

The LIVING MOMENT

Glimpses of Men and Events.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEBRUARY 21

February 21 will be a day of moments that will be living with a light beyond the ordinary. For, on this day comes one of the four dawns the public has of Sri Aurobindo during the year. The occasion is the birthday of the luminous personality who has worked side by side with Sri Aurobindo for the last thirty years and who is all seers of spiritual transformation is known as the Mother. Hundreds will flock from over the entire country to the French-Indian town of Pondicherry, to stand before her and before the most towering figure in the contemporary world. Sri Aurobindo is to all appearances in seclusion, but the seclusion of a rishi and a yogi is more powerful than the massed movement of a whole mechanised army. It is the seclusion of a super-natural height of vision and the smallest stir lets loose on the lowlands of common existence a creative force gathering momentum every minute. And even the seclusion of a rishi and yogi like Sri Aurobindo who is no shunner of life is not a permanent fixture. It is adopted with a certain aim analogous to the aim of one who retires from normal calls and contacts in order to concentrate, in a research laboratory, on finding most quickly the cure for cancer! Any time Sri Aurobindo may withdraw from his seclusion and return to the world as a march of mighty waters—even more than in the old days of his political leadership.

His work in the Avram that has grown up around him is drawing increasingly the attention of India and the world. The world is on thousands of lips "What is Sri Aurobindo doing?" More and more people are realising that he is a powerhouse of wisdom that can change the face of earth. But among some of our own ministers there is a hesitation in approaching him, due to a fear that to consult him would be to bind themselves utterly to acceptance of his advice. Since the advice would come from a genius of the most versatile nature to whom no sphere of activity has been unknown such binding would indeed be salutary, but it certainly is rather demanded nor expected. The nation is free to discuss what the Master may have to say. It is really a pity that a misconception of this kind should prevent Pandit Nehru or Sardar Patel from the profound profit they would derive on every momentous occasion by entering into the mind of India's greatest living son.

The Andhra University took an admirable step in the right direction when recently it awarded the Sir C Ramalinga Reddy National Prize to Sri Aurobindo and asked him for a message. On pages 6, 7 and 8 of Mother India we are publishing for the first time on this side of our country the full text of both the address by Vice-Chancellor C R Reddy in offering the prize and the message given by Sri Aurobindo dealing among other vital matters with the vexed problem of linguistic provinces.

DEADLIER ATOM BOMB

The United States Atomic Energy Commission announced a little while ago that an atom bomb deadlier than the one responsible for the horror of Hiroshima had been perfected. The question cannot help being asked: What will be the final upshot of such power? But before this question comes another. Must

we wish that such power had never been found?

Knowledge, it is said, must be pursued for its own sake and we should not put up any reservations about the pursuit. Apropos this, Bernard Shaw once queried: Are we allowed to set fire to our grandmothers to see what degree of inflammability is possessed by elderly flesh? It was in connection with the torture of animals that often goes with medical discoveries that he brought in his reductio ad absurdum. But the issue is not very plain. There is involved the difference between human beings and animals. We cannot quite mix them up, but, of course, torture is to be ruled out as much as possible even if animal life is to be sacrificed on occasion in grave interests of human health. In the pursuit of knowledge the means cannot be totally ignored. The new atom bomb, however, involves no mutilation of means what is in debate there is the use to which knowledge might be put and the essential question in the concrete form becomes: Was it right for scientists to find how tremendous energy could be released by nuclear fission when they were aware that this energy would most probably be employed first for war-purposes?

But the question in even so concrete a form is yet too general. We must think of the circumstances in which the original atom bomb was made. America was at war with Hitler and Tojo and both her enemies were hot in search of nuclear energy. There was the danger that if they got hold of the fission-formula they would enslave the civilisation of the West. Not only was the right of self-defence involved but also the cause of democratic civilisation. It is clear, then, that the research in nuclear fission was more than merely advisable in spite of the probability of its being harnessed to war uses; the research was advisable in order to be helpful to America's war. The atom bomb was demanded by the very spirit of civilisation in whose name we are inclined to condemn it. Whether knowledge is to be welcomed, no matter what its danger, is a question which must always be decided in definite historical contexts. And just as the original atom bomb is to be judged with reference to Hitler and Tojo, the new deadlier one is to be judged with reference to the international position today. Is civilisation once again threatened? If it is, no halt can be given to the manufacture of ever more destructive weapons than any likely to be invented by those who threaten it.

Let us now return to the problem. What will be the final upshot of having in human hands a super-atomic destructive power? America, on the whole, may represent today the cause of democratic civilisation. But she is not wisdom incarnate and the hands in which she holds the new weapon are still those of very fallible humanity. The deadlier atom bomb is something by which a scientifically efficient yet spiritually half-enlightened brain of the race may blow its entire bodily existence on earth to nothingness. Will it do so? Here goes with all growth of physical power a child in man's image and the number or the power the intenser the challenge. The latest atom bomb is the acme of physical power hence it drives home to us with scorching appositeness the necessity to surpass the superficial brilliance of the mere mind and to evolve the hidden God which all our idealisms and heroisms have so far hunted. Never before has it

been rendered so imperative that the human should become the divine. More undeniably than any religion propaganda atomic energy pushes our attention beyond every patch-up nihilism towards a radical supermanhood of soul in which the nations of the world may discover a spontaneous fraternity by being conscious of a single universal spirit. Nothing short of this supermanhood can ensure the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes and not for those of war. Out of the atom's nucleus has broken forth the loudest and most convincingly the admonition: "There can be no peace on earth without the Peace that passeth understanding."

THE FALL OF CHIANG KAI SHEK

One of the most disturbing events that has taken place of late is the fall of Chiang Kai-shek in China and the rise of Mao Tse Tung. Communism which once had only 50,000 adherents has now 140,000,000—more than one third of the country. Chiang's armies are broken beyond repair and there seems no way of stemming the Communist deluge. In several quarters Chiang's plight is looked upon as well deserved. There was, people say, too much autocracy, too much the Secret Police, too much corruption and profiteering under him. That China was in a pretty deplorable state cannot be denied, but the victory of the Communists brings also a host of evils— wholesale liquidation of all who do not toe their ideological line, dispossession of land owners by main force, reckless looting of whoever does not belong to the so-called proletariat. And for the Secret Police and Communism with its one-party cry and class struggle motto can ever flourish without a vigilant and ruthless Oppu. In what manner has suffering China benefited by Chiang's defeat? No doubt the people will get more material goods for some time and there will be the semblance of institutions established for its welfare but there is a real grip on the mind of China and political democracy will be utterly dead and, besides, as far as China herself is concerned, power will be the technologists—the "managers", rather than the common people.

To the world at large the Chinese Communists represent a danger which can scarcely be exaggerated. For they are an instrument in the hands of Stalin. Stalin has received a severe check in Europe and his only means of expanding his influence is in Asia. In fact, China is really the corner-stone of his strategy for world domination. She will be a most potent centre from which the spread of communism in the rest of Asia will be directed and energised. This will take a long time, for China's economy is at present in chaos and the natural tendency of her native mind is to rehabilitate their own house before attempting to break up other people's houses. But sooner or later she will be a problem indeed to Asia and particularly to India, who envisages a vast renaissance of the true Asian spirit. India is not captivated in her outlook though her economy has been for the last two centuries capitalist in external form, she is not in love with that form and is trying to evolve a more equitable system. But a communist for she is never be. Not only is the communist system contrary to the just balance her philosophy demands between the individual and the group it goes also

against the grain of her non-materialist vision.

Chiang Kai-shek, for all his defects, is a believer in the individual's right to freedom of mind and growth from within outwards. His despotism was not genuinely oppressive of him, it was brought on by constantly increasing intrigues against him. In the early days he allowed full freedom all he asked for was sympathy with the democratic cause. He trusted the Communists because they too spoke of democracy. He did not realise that theirs was mere lip-service to him and his ideal and that they were slowly digging his own grave. When he found himself duped he decided on war to the knife and set up a strict regime which soon became autocratic by feeding constantly on suspicion and fear. Reactionary and commercial cliques took advantage of this regime, until it broke. But let us not forget that if Chiang had proved victorious there would have been opportunity again for a rebuilding of China nearer to the heart's desire of a man whom according to the most reliable of observers, Robert Payne, not even his enemies can accuse of being personally in love with power and whom our own Nehru has admired as a character of rare integrity and mellow scholarly Confucian wisdom. With his downfall the dream of a completely united Asia fulfilling her deepest nature recedes and that which only with extreme difficulty will be overcome.

Two factors alone hold out some hope at present. First, the coming of the Communist doctrine by the masses of China may be the result of having a common enemy in the Kuomintang Government and once this Government is gone that doctrine may weaken and China gradually develop a non-Russian political philosophy. Second, the economic disequilibrium of the country may necessitate foreign aid beyond the power of Russia to give and thus America may come in with her ample resources and also her non-atheist outlook on fundamentals.

ARTISTIC DREAM IN PICTORIZATION.



NEERA AUR NANDA

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MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

One of our chief aims will be to provide authentic guidance in regard to the many perplexing questions with which the common man is faced in his daily life. This cannot be better done than by considering these questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings, because Sri Aurobindo is not merely a Master of Yoga in possession of the Universal Spiritual Truth, but also a Guide

and Helper of mankind in the many trying situations that arise in the course of its day-to-day existence. To bring home the light of this guidance and to make it directly applicable to the concrete problems of life, a series of questions of common interest along with precise answers based on Sri Aurobindo's writings will regularly appear in these columns.

1. Q. Is it possible to predict future events? Is there such a thing as destiny?
- A. What is evident is that in the course of events there is an element of the predictable, predictable accurately in detail as well as in large points. But it is not true that all is predictable or that destiny is the sole governing factor of existence. Neither is it true that there is a complete free will. The popular view of the matter that all is destiny or else all is free will is quite summary and inconclusive.
2. Q. How is it that so many of Chero's prophecies have come true?
 - A. One cannot put great confidence in Chero's ideas and prophecies—some have come true but most have gone wrong, in fact the number of his prophecies that have failed to come off is rather staggering. So it is not possible to conclude from Chero's evidence that everything is pre-determined or that an unchangeable destiny governs everything and everyone.
3. Q. It is a known fact that a large number of astrological predictions have come true. Does this not prove that the stars rule our destiny?
 - A. If we take all astrological predictions together we have to admit that quite a mass of them have come true. But it does not follow that the stars rule our destiny. The stars merely record a destiny that has been already formed. They are a hieroglyph, not a force, —or if their action constitutes a force it is a transmitting energy, not an originating power. Someone as there who has determined or something is there which is Fate, let us say, the stars are only indications.
4. Q. How is it that in some cases astrological predictions fulfil themselves accurately upto a certain age and then no more come true? In the case of prophecies also some come true to the letter, others do not—they half fulfil or miss fire entirely.
 - A. Yes, that happens quite often, but it does not follow that the power of prediction is unreal or that the accurate predictions can be all explained by probability, chance or coincidence. The nature and number of these that cannot be so explained is too great. The variability of fulfillment may be explained by the fact that things are predictable in part only, or else they are determined by different factors or lines of power, different series of potentials and actuals. So long as one is in touch with one line one predicts accurately, otherwise not—or if the lines of power change, one's prophecy also goes off the rails. All the same, one may say, there must be, if

things are predictable at all, some power or plane through which or on which all is foreseeable, if there is a divine Omniscience and Omnipotence it must be so.

5. Q. Is human will entirely helpless before Fate or destiny?
 - A. The astrologers themselves say that there are two forces, *Daiva* and *Purushkara*, Fate and individual energy, and individual energy can modify and even frustrate Fate. Even what is determined by Fate has to be worked out, actually is worked out by a play of forces and in this play there is no absolutely rigidity discoverable. Personal will or endeavour is one of those forces. Napoleon when asked why he believed in Fate yet was always planning and acting, answered "Because it is fated that I should work and plan", in other words his planning and acting were part of Fate, contributed to the results Fate had in view.
6. Q. What is the explanation of Fate?
 - A. The Indian explanation of Fate is *Karma*. We ourselves are our Fate through our actions but the Fate created by us binds us, for what we have sown we must reap in this life or another.
7. Q. Whatever may have been our past actions, cannot our present will determine to some extent the course of future happenings?
 - A. Certainly it can, because we are creating our Fate for the future even while undergoing old Fate from the past in the present. It gives a meaning to our will and action and does not, as European critics wrongly believe, constitute a rigid and sterilising fatalism.
8. Q. Are we completely bound to undergo the results of our past Karma? Cannot our present will modify or prevent the consequences of our past actions in the present?
 - A. It is not impossible that our present will and action can annul or modify the past Karma, it is only certain strong effects called *Ukat Karma* that are non-modifiable. The achievement of spiritual consciousness, for example, can annul or give the power to annul past Karma, for then we enter into union with the cosmic or Transcendent *Divine Will* which has the power to annul what it created, break the narrow fixed lines of Karma and make possible a more plastic freedom and wideness. Neither Karma nor Astrology, therefore, point to a rigid and forever immutable Fate.

K. G.

EDITORIALS FROM EVERYWHERE

MEANS AND ENDS

That the Asian conference which was inaugurated at New Delhi has produced reverberations far wider than were originally anticipated is a measure of the significance which world opinion attaches to the deeper, basic issues underlying the gathering. To some of them Pandit Nehru drew attention in his eloquent and thoughtful address. He reaffirmed the ideal of Asian solidarity within the framework of the United Nations but simultaneously emphasised that the concept of realism had no place in it. The invitations to Australia and New Zealand testified to the wide sweep of this historic and unique gathering. "We represent", declared India's Prime Minister, "the ancient civilisations of the East as well as the dynamic civilisation of the West."

Equally unexceptionable were the other two principles which Pandit Nehru enunciated. The conference he said, would submit positive proposals to the Security Council with a view to the restoration of peace in Indonesia and the early realisation of freedom by the Indonesian people. It would also suggest to the Security Council what action it should take if either party to the dispute failed to act according to its recommendations. Obviously such proposals are in no sense meant to be mandatory but in so far as they signify a resolute effort to help in

the restoration of peace with honour they should be welcomed by the United Nations. Nor, as India's Prime Minister affirmed, does a regional gathering of this type run counter to the spirit or letter of the U N Charter. Indeed that document recognises regional arrangements for the furtherance of international peace and security. The Asian Conference can cite at least two impressive precedents in the Western Union and the Pan-American organisation established at Bogota last year.

At Lake Success, as also in London, the Asian Conference has provoked some interesting, and even lively repercussions. There has been much confabulation within the Security Council but, like the ill-fated League of Nations the U N seems fated "to touch nothing which it does not adjourn". Tory apologists for Dutch rule in Indonesia have delivered themselves of some vitriolic broadsides in the House of Lords. Lord Vansittart's speech, though strident, is not without significance. Communism has ceased to be a bogey, and as Asia has risen to know only too well, is fast assuming the proportions of a major menace. Pandit Nehru in his speech referred to the "dying colonialism of a past age" which threatens to raise its head again and challenge progressive forces in Asia and the world. That is unfortunately true, but it is equally true that the main stimulus for resurgent reaction comes not so paradoxically from

Communism. The threat of Red infiltration into Asia provides reaction with its major ammunition, and with the shadow of the hammer and sickle creeping over China and lowering over Burma, Malaya and Indo-China, the portents cannot be ignored. The Asian Conference can give quietus to these doubts and fears. A positive gesture against Communism from New Delhi would mobilise positive support within the United Nations for the Indonesian cause. It would help by the ghost of colonialism on the one hand and silence the mischievous sprites of reaction on the other.

Pandit Nehru called on the conference to adhere to the right means "with the conviction that the right means will inevitably lead to the right ends." The Asian Conference, judged by the spirit which guides it, may justifiably claim to represent the right means. Its immediate ends are just but in the larger perspective it is equally important that the same clarity and faith govern its long-term objectives.—(The Times of India, Bombay)

EXPANSION OF EDUCATION

One of the achievements of British Government in India is the fact that few countries in the world are more backward educationally than India. The Government appointed committee after committee to inquire into the problems of education. But actually no tangible benefits accrued from the reports of

inquiry committees. The truth is that the bureaucratic Government was not sincerely interested in the progress of education in India. The British ruling classes regarded India as a plantation and education of the masses as a disruptive force. Hence the present appalling illiteracy. The present rulers of India believe in democracy. But democracy and an uneducated electorate do not go well together. The keen interest the present Government of India and provincial Governments take in the expansion of education augurs well for the future of democracy.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said at the meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, "The first and foremost task of the national Government is the provision of universal free and compulsory basic education for all." While this statement of the Government's policy is to be welcomed, attention may as well be drawn to the fact that in England the Government made provision for universal free and compulsory elementary education as long ago as the close of the last century. India is therefore, half a century behind England in respect of education. In these circumstances it is of the utmost importance that the ideal of universal education should be achieved as early as possible and not in some distant future. According to the Kher Committee's report universal compulsory education can be introduced within a period of 16 years. It is to be hoped.

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Four

MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

THE GLORY AND FOLLY of SUBASH BOSE

By "LIBRA"

The large number of enthusiastic tributes to Subash Bose which filled newspaper columns on January 23 the day of his birth shows how strong is still his grip on the Indian mind. It is principally in his role of Netaji the leader of the I.N.A. that he makes the largest appeal. The great defence of his officers by the stalwarts of the Congress when the British Government impeached them for treason appeared to set the seal of approval on his intention and activity. And the adoption by free India of his slogan 'Jai Hind' added further colour to his figure in the country's imagination. Yet, let us not forget that when the I.N.A. was battling in Burma against the British, Pandit Nehru declared that if Netaji invaded India with Japanese help he would fight him every inch of the ground. Surely a just and balanced view of Subash Bose as Netaji is very essential.

THE MAGNIFICENT I.N.A.

When World War II broke out and Subash saw on the one hand the British unwilling to part with power in India and on the other the Congress too constitutional to wrest power from them he felt the need to enlist for his country's liberation the aid of Britain's enemies. He escaped from India contacted the Axis and finally joined forces with Tokyo setting up from there the Azad Hind Government and fashioning the famous Indian National Army—his masterpiece of organisation and his grandest weapon for smashing the physical might on which the British Empire had been erected in our country.

There is no Indian whose heart does not swell with pride at the thought of the magnificent gamble the I.N.A. stood for

And the pride is all the more because Subh never bent his knee to the lords of Japan. He took Japanese aid without subscribing to Japan's principles and without kowtowing, to her as he least. Japan recognised the free independence of Subh and respected him and helped him build up his army as an ally on equal footing. Nor is the spirit the solution that besides the dash of the whole enterprise makes the Indian heart glow. There is something else which is perhaps yet more precious the wonderful unity created by Subash out of a mixture of elements. The Sikh the Pathan the Maharat the Gurkha the Punjabi—he welded them together stripping them of their racial and religious differences forging out of Hindu and Muslim a single Indian consciousness. When India herself was saddy cut up by those differences, here was a large body of Indians knocking at her gates to bring her not only freedom from the British but also freedom from her own disunity.

A PAGE FROM THE BOOK OF DARKNESS

Yes the I.N.A. is a golden nationalist history Subash's most striking monument as patriot and fighter. But at the same time it is a page from the book of a terrible darkness the most scathing indictment of Subash's mind. For it actually strove to demolish the British yoke at India by overlooking in the world at large the ambitions of a tyranny compared to which British Imperialism was a blessing in disguise. Subash committed the error of thinking that there could be a safe island of free India an island of illumined culture in the mids of a huge ocean of Fascism. He had the folly to imagine that if Britain went down in the

struggle with Japan and her Forest allies the victors would let India follow her ideals. He failed to see that British Imperialism was a human evil a vestige of all humanity's past imperialistic character an evil which new times and new thoughts would tend to remove while the gospel of Hitler and his imitators was a blast from the Pit a diabolic invasion of the earth-consciousness a Satanic New Order that would put its heel for ages if not for ever on the aspiring heart of man.

IMPERIALISM AND HITLERISM

The ideals that were India's beacon—political liberty and democracy—were caught by her from the very country that held her in its net of empire the essential soul of England was compacted of those ideals. It matters how much they might be transgressed in the world sooner or later they would triumph. Their transgression must surely be combated but never at the cost of strengthening Hitlerism. For Hitler knew no hung of political liberty or democracy; he was drunk with the monstrous myth of Nordic superiority; he was out to turn the whole world his slave and he especially condemned the coloured races. If England and France or England and America had been at war with each other the I.N.A. would have been an unstained glory both France and America for all their faults are progressive at the core and to work for England's defeat would have been no blow at the very foundations of civilisation. To aid Japan who was in league with Hitler and be aided by her was to fight ultimately for India absolute slavery in mind as well as body at the hands of men as when the Titan and the Demon had replaced the evolving God.

THE FUTURE'S SUMMING-UP

Luckily for India and the world England was not luckily the I.N.A. proved no prop to Japan. Luckily Subash Bose fell short of his goal. It was the most perilous blunder perpetrated by any Indian of such outstanding gifts and sterling patriotism. No doubt the blunder was inspired by a lofty dream but it can be excused only because the devilry into whose hands Subash had played has been smashed—at least in the guise in which it was wooed by him. Safe now from the blind eyes of the Tripartite Powers we can admire the fiery devotion to India that wrought the I.N.A. the swift and proud and fearless spirit and mighty organising will of the one man who brought it into being the stirring example of unity it set us. But this cannot cover up what lay behind that militant nationalism—a lack of insight into the sources of civilisation. India's politics were put above humanity's danger. A grossly misguided grievously mistaken nationalist—a dynastic freedom-lover flung off his true course by complex currents that made him forget where his deepest loyalty should have been directed. That will be the future's moral and spiritual as distinguished from patriotic or military summing-up of Subash Bose in his role of Netaji.

If we bear this in mind, we shall not in the days ahead lose the right perspective when we inveigh against the remnants of western imperialism still lingering in the Asia of which free India is now the leader, we shall always be on guard against the greater peril which too is still present though Hitler is dust —the peril of Totalitarianism.

THE PLEBISCITE IN KASHMIR

Continued from Page One

mend itself in the eyes of the world. Our whole outlook has become unbalanced. No true democrat ever dreams of sacrificing nationhood or of weakening his country both economically and militarily by throwing away chunks of it. The area constituting Pakistan was not a foreign country unjustly annexed it was an organic member of the geographical body of Mo her India. And Kashmir is as much an organic member. There is nothing intrinsically honourable or genuinely democratic in submitting her fate to the mercy of a plebiscite.

THE ALTERNATIVES BEFORE US

What then is the right course? Theoretically, a decision by arms in our favour would be perfectly justified. The terrain in which our jawans have fought is a difficult one and progress would always be slow; but in the long run victory would surely be ours. Yes, in the long run—which means a good deal of expense in life and money. Is there no alternative? The sole alternative to a costly decision by arms is a political decision by the Kashmiris themselves to throw in their lot with India. It so happens by great luck that the balance of Kashmiri opinion is favourable to us. Although we can justifiably set aside the plebiscite-principle, it is no ton the present occasion necessary to do so. Sheikh Abdullah has a huge following in the regions that are not un-

der Sardar Ibrahim's so-called Azad forces, and if we may judge from the expression of intense gratitude by those districts which we have freed from our enemies three-fourths of Kashmir held by the rebels is also anxious to join India. A plebiscite will certainly bring Kashmir into our fold. But here too we must be firm on a few fundamentals. It must be repeated that if we are not very careful we shall either lose Kashmir or get nothing more than her partition. Against both possibilities we must set our faces like flint.

THE STAND OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

Most probably the Indian Government has taken a strong stand. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel seem to be fully aware that there should be no repetition of the political aberrancy which a year and a half ago mutilated the body of Mother India. They are too straightforward in statesmanship to go back upon the ruling by which they submitted though with severe heart-burning, to this mutilation. Once attacked, they are not likely to harbour aggressive ambitions as regards the Pakistan which they conceded. But when the very ruling accepted by them is actually promising to integrate Kashmir with India they will never countenance any conditions which may rob her of its present advantage. Whatever the past mistake, they appear

to feel that, within the terms of policy which are now operative, they should not yield an inch where the solidarity of post-Pakistan India is concerned. This is admirable and, while we refuse to blink the enormity of the past mistake and to grant the plebiscite-principle any basic relevance to Kashmir, we must also give the utmost support to our Government's refusal to let the plebiscite be so arranged as to hamstring the definite pro-India movement of the majority in Kashmir.

THE SINGLE AND STRAIGHT ISSUE

Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel have clearly declared that the plebiscite should be on the single and straight issue of joining either Pakistan or India. In such a plebiscite the pro-India bent of Kashmir's majority will prevail. If any complications are introduced India will withdraw her case from the cognizance of the U.N.O and retain Kashmir by her own means and even, if necessary, by a fight to the finish. If further military action can be avoided, she will certainly avoid it, but not the least interference with the wish of the Kashmiri people as a whole will be brooked. The interference will be at its maximum if the Azad forces are allowed to remain in arms in the places they now occupy. They will turn the plebiscite into a farce. Dr. Lozano's Commission sees eye to eye with India on this point, though Pakistan has put

on the Commission's somewhat unemphatic statements an interpretation to the contrary. The Azad forces must be disarmed. There can be no compromise about the matter. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel will resist compromise to the bitter end, and all India should steadfastly back them up.

A united front must also be presented against any suggestion of partitioning Kashmir. Weak hearts will argue "Why prolong a dispute? Why not let India and Pakistan keep those portions in which they already are in power?" But to these appeasers we must say "No true Kashmiri can forgive Pakistan for riding and abetting the savage Afghans who have made a hell of the most beautiful and happy province in our sub-continent. The majority in Kashmir has always been behind Sheikh Abdullah; he has always been the people's leader and those who have co-operated with the Pakistan helped frontier-tribes are a small horde of adventurers. Just because these adventurers can terrorise the regions in which they have joined hands with the invaders Kashmir must not be balked of her desire to join the Indian Union. Partition would be the acme of injustice and unwisdom.

The course adopted by the Government deserves whole-hearted endorsement by the Indian public. It is to be sincerely hoped that nothing will induce our leaders to deviate from their correct position.

MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1940

Five

THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA

BY
"Synergist"

I. THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS

Today, no thinking man will deny that the world is passing through a serious crisis. All that we have built up through the ages is in danger of collapsing, not only does our civilisation stand on the brink of destruction, but our very existence is in peril.

Various theories have been advanced to explain the reasons why humanity has come to this impasse, but very few of them show any psychological insight into the true causes. The general tendency is to state that the root causes are only economic and political in their nature—that had there been a more equitable system of social organisation in each country, and had a spirit of compromise guided nations in their political relations this crisis would have been averted. Those who support such a view hold that even now it is not too late, that all that is required is a greater social equilibrium in our national life and better political adjustment in our international relationships. The philosophy of life behind this kind of belief is that the external conditions amidst which a man lives entirely determine his mental, moral and spiritual growth and mould his inner consciousness. They believe that if given better environmental conditions than he has at present he will be socially adjusted, psychologically integrated and perfectly happy and prosperous. In short, they contend that the outer determines the inner. But they are unable to show why social organisations sworn to be almost perfect by their creators always crumble before their bewildered eyes, they cannot explain why it is not possible for men to devise perfect institutions and create Utopias or why, in spite of their exhortations, a spirit of compromise does not prevail amongst nations in their political relations.

This inability to understand the factors that govern men's lives and determine their relations with one another is as we shall see later, due to taking a wrong view of life—a view based upon a false metaphysic and a superficial psychology. It is not the outer that determines the inner but the inner the outer.

THE IMPERFECTION IN MAN'S NATURE

Why is it that man's social institutions are imperfect and collapse so often? Is it not because man imparts his own imperfection to all that he touches? Does not imperfection lie at the very root of all human endeavour? The malady is basically in man himself, and secondarily in his institutions in which he only projects it. It is this in itself that must be treated if his social institutions have to stand firm and if the ideal of a harmonious social life is to be realised the remedy must start with man himself, not with his institutions.

Now what is exactly the nature of this imperfection and what is its cause? Man wants to act, but has no light by which he can act truly; he wants to master the external world but cannot, because he does not possess adequate knowledge and power. When he gazes within himself he finds that there is no harmony in his being—he is at war with himself. He often feels that there is something radically wrong somewhere but cannot understand what it is.

This imperfection in his nature is due to a limitation of awareness in him, which again is the result of an unbalanced psychological growth. His consciousness is so one-pointedly focussed in his outer, mental, vital, physical being that he calls 'I', his ego, that he is oblivious of the inner luminous ranges of his personality, an expansion and growth into which can alone give him greater awareness, knowledge and mastery over the external world. This exaggerated outward stress in his consciousness limits his awareness, so that he has an imperfect knowledge both of himself and the outer world. Being separated from the inner ranges of his being, he is incapable of controlling the forces which he would otherwise be able to control, the forces whose impact he has to bear.

This limitation of awareness and of force, the result of a stifled consciousness, is the root cause of man's imperfect nature, the direct consequences of which are ignorance, insensibility and lack of psychological integration ending in disharmony and conflict. It is this conflict within himself that he projects in his outer social life.

Also, as the stress of the consciousness in the ego increases, his individuality becomes more and more pronounced, till he ceases to feel his oneness with other beings, his consciousness becomes so centralised in his ego, that he feels himself detached from the rest of the world. This feeling of being something quite apart from the rest of the world makes him self-centred and impels him to struggle against it; this naturally leads to self-assertiveness or rather, "ego-assertiveness." This intensely ego centric pose of his consciousness which separates his being from its inner soul-ranges, is the reason why today man has become so aggressive, heartless and callous, and preys upon his own kind and at the slightest pretext is prepared to hurt or kill his neighbour. These are the two main flaws in

man's nature which make him tinge with imperfection whatever he creates.

THE INNER DETERMINES THE OUTER

We have stated that it is not the outer that determines the inner, but the inner the outer, this thesis requires to be examined in greater detail. Man is aware of his own existence and of that of the external world around him. He perceives this world through the medium of his senses, and these sense impressions are carried to his mind which interprets them. His net of knowing is conditioned by the nature of his senses and by the particular constitution of the mind behind which uses them as its instruments, his knowledge of the external world, therefore, refers to his consciousness and is by no means absolute. Over and above this indirect way of knowing, he is capable of attaining knowledge directly through inspiration, intuition and revelation, such knowledge, too, refers to his consciousness.

Now, when he attempts, on the basis of his knowledge, to understand and interpret the nature of the external world, his relation to it, and the relation of both to the Ultimate Source of all that exists, he creates philosophy and religion and when he tries to establish a just system of relations with his fellow-beings, he creates sociology and politics. The unique character of this philosophy, religion, sociology and politics is determined by the kind of consciousness that creates them. In his present stage of evolution he possesses a particular type of consciousness, a mentally, vitally, physically developed but spiritually unenlightened ego centric consciousness, and creates a culture which is its direct reflection if he were to evolve further into a higher type of being and possess a wider and more luminous consciousness he would be sure to create a greater culture.

Some social psychologists will definitely object to such a thesis on the ground that we are utterly ignoring the influence of the outer on the inner—the influence of the environment on the psychological development of man. It is certainly not our intention to do so. It must be clearly understood that when we stress the importance of the inner and say that it determines the outer we do not mean to imply that the outer has no influence upon the inner. The outer affects the inner in this sense that either through sympathy or conflict it helps to bring out the potentialities of the inner by making it react in a particular way. It serves as testing material for the development of the inner and aids it first to grow and then to formulate itself outwardly in life. The inner is the true determinant, the outer its reflex and resultant.

We admit that the environment in which a man lives cannot be considered as something entirely apart from him, man is not a separate entity existing by himself and for himself, having no relation to other beings and to the stream of life that passes by him, he is both a nature organism and a social being. His mind, life and body belong to universal nature and are to a certain extent influenced and moulded by it; also, these carry in them a hereditary physiological and psychological content. This is his natural environment. Besides being an organism of universal nature he is also a social being—he is born amidst people with a particular kind of culture, this is his social environment, what Herbert Spencer calls the "super-organic environment" made up of his religion, customs, rites, language and such other aspects of his outer life.

But man is not only a nature organism and a social being a product of his natural and super-organic environment in his true spiritual status he is an evolving soul having the Transcendent Reality as his source—a soul who seeks divine perfection and spiritual fulfilment and who uses mind, life and body—his nature parts—as his instruments of growth and self-expression. He is a soul who creates and moulds his environment even whilst he is himself being influenced by it and reacts against it. It is this inner soul-consciousness that is the true determining factor of the outer. No doubt the super-organic environment does influence the growth of man, but it is itself man-created and, as we have seen, reflects the nature of his consciousness.

CAUSES PSYCHOLOGICAL, NOT POLITICO-ECONOMIC

Once it is granted that the inner determines the outer, that man's culture is a reflection of his consciousness, and that the imperfection in it, which is the result of an unbalanced psychological growth, is projected in his outer life, it is not very difficult to understand that though the causes of the present world crisis overtly seem to be political and economic, they are in their true significance psychological. Therefore a diagnosis which attributes the present ills of mankind only to economic and social maladjustment is a false diagnosis, a diagnosis based upon a very superficial reading of facts. So what is really needed today is not a social, political and economic revolution in man's collective life but a psychological revolution in his individual life which will lead to his spiritual growth.

NEXT ISSUE India, the Torch Bearer of the new World Order

See

MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

SRI AUROBINDO AWARDED BY THE ANDI

VICE-CHANCELLOR C. R. REDDY'S GLOWING TRIBUTE

MR CHANCELLOR, our object in founding the National Prize was to bring about a closer contact between the University and the inspiring, pre-meditated contemplative India—thy that in its history and will live in history as permanent lights that lead us through the encircling gloom. If that was our object we have reached the summit of realisation today by the kindly acceptance of this offering of ours by Sri Aurobindo. We are not awarding it—we are making an offering. If it is due to the eminent merit in Humanities of Sri Aurobindo that we are saying him this tribute his acceptance of it is the climax of the good fortune of the Andhra University and its blessing.

AMONGST THE SAVIOURS OF HUMANITY

In all humility of devotion I had Sri Aurobindo as the sole sufficient, genuis of the age. He is more than the hero of a nation. He is among the Saviours of humanity, who belong to all ages and all nations the Sanatanas who leave out existence with their eternal presence whether we are aware of it or not.

The Rishi tradition is the most majestic and priceless feature of Hindu culture. Its origin is lost in mystic antiquity, but its flow has never ceased. It will continue its sublime course till it mingles itself with eternity. We had Rishis in the Vedic era. And then a succession of Seers of whom Gautama Siddhartha, the fairest flower and uplifter of humanity towers to the highest heaven, and the Sages of the Upanishads, Mahatmas, Nank, Ramdas, the great Shankara, and in our own times, Sriyandana Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ruzana Maharshi, and he to whom we are today presenting our National Prize, Sri Aurobindo.

A great Frenchman has hailed Sri Aurobindo as the last of our Rishis. Really he is the most recent, for in his world of death and sorrow, Rishis are an undying race of bliss. And they pulsate every now and again with far flashing revelations like those wonderful stars which a astronomer call the Light houses of the Celestial Regions.

Sri Aurobindo excels in the range and compass of his genius. He is a poet, dramatist, philosopher, critic, interpreter and commentator of the Vedas, the Gita and all the transcendent lore and legend of India, and he is something higher than these, the Saint who has realised his oneness with the Universal Spirit, and has fathomed the depths and brought up treasures of transcendent value and brilliance. But these many aspects of Sri Aurobindo possess an organic unity of thought, impulse and purpose. They all reflect in their several phases the light of eternity that is in him.

I am not going to narrate the life of Sri Aurobindo as chronologically lived. Our Professor Mr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's splendid biography of Sri Aurobindo is the text for all to read. A book written in a style of superlative charm and power, and one which could without exaggeration be regarded as a masterpiece in English literature. Perhaps I may recall by way of pardonable vanity and the petty desire to have in Sri Aurobindo's reflected light that we are both Catholics, may be very much my senior and that I succeeded him as the Vice-Principal of the Driadi College. I had the honour of knowing him though not fully in his Purva-Ashrama. We had a number of friends in common. Mr. A. B. Clark, the Principal of the Baroda College, remarked to me, "So you met Aurobindo Ghose. Did you notice his eyes? There is mystic fire and light in them. They penetrate into the beyond." And he added, "If I had not heard heavenly voices, Aurobindo probably, sees heavenly visions." Clark was a materialist of materialists. I have never been able to understand how that worldly but delightful person could have glimpsed the truth, then latent, about Aurobindo. But then does not the lightning's blinding flash which lasts but a moment, leap forth from the dark black bosom of the cloud? The Alipore Jail where he was consigned to solitude and meditation for a year, marks a turning-point in Sri Aurobindo's career. The British Government had both his body and liberated his soul. They did not mean it, but the best things that we do are, not infrequently done unwittingly, and spontaneously. Body enslaved, soul at free, that was the paradox of his incarceration. It was there that his first mystic experiences and direct perception of the Eternal Truths, which according to our Sphotic theory are ever present, flowing as it were in the space that envelops the Universe occurred. Beginning to realise himself he retired to Pondicherry in 1910. Can a Rishi ever retire? He may retire in body, very often the retirement of the body is the prelude to the soul ascending, the heights of its own and jumping over the entire globe. His physical being is in Pondicherry, but his influence can we set limits to it in space or in time? His Ashram-minded without distinction of race and country. Judged by temporal standards he is seventy six years old, but really time cannot touch him nor earth and its impurities. His soul is like a star and dwells apart.

UNISON OF LITERATURE, METAPHYSICS AND SADHANA OF REALISATION

In Sri Aurobindo, literature, metaphysics, and the Sadhana of realisation, are a spiral ascending from Earth to Heaven in mutual support and

union. In the superb summary of Mr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "the Seer has fronted reality, the Poet has hymned his Glorious Fields of France," the Philosopher has sought to interpret the vision in terms of reason, the Yogi has formulated a method, a multiform technique, for achieving the desired change in consciousness, the sociologist has thrown out significant hints in regard to the organization of tomorrow's world, and the creative critic has sensed the rhythms of the future poetry and described how the new poet will ride on the wings of an elemental spirituality and articulate the ineluctable rhythms of the Spirit."

As a poet Sri Aurobindo ranks high. In that most difficult of all forms of prosody, the Blank Verse, which under artistic hands has a fatal tendency to become prose, he has placed all his own, which is among the highest "Urvasee", and "Love and Death", and "Savitri", a legend and a symbol, are in charm and beauty without a parallel in English Literature. "Abana" and "Dawn over Ilum" are masterpieces in the modern, a classical metre difficult to transplant in modern soils. "Savitri" is rhapsodic and glowing, and has not yet reached the full flush of her grace and beauty, and when it does it will have given a new colouring, a new life and attraction to the immortal legend of the Mahabharata.

In many of his works of criticism, interpretations of the Veda and the Gita, he has combined vast research with the intuition of a poet, the reflection of a philosopher and the vision of a Rishi. He has a scientific first will serve to inspire the United Nations Organization and give it spiritual ground and hope—Evolution moves through diversity from a simple to a complex oneness. Unity the race moves towards, and must one day realise. "It is a fine phrase, 'complex oneness' and a far reaching ray of hope and comfort though today we are all overwhelmed by the complexity and do not seem to be achieving oneness except under the darkening might of the Atom Bomb."

Sri Aurobindo's faith in the sure, but slow evolution of human unity in harmonious diversity is too robust to be dwarfed or defeated by herd, stubborn facts. Rather it is a faith that is out to conquer fact and remould it nearer to the heart's desire. He is of the race of prophets who see the present as but a transitory moment that should not be allowed to overcome the optimism of man.

PROPHET OF THE LIFE DIVINE

It is not as a man of letters or of philosophy, that Sri Aurobindo reaches his unique eminence, but it is as a Yogi who has caught the light and reflects it in blissful abundance. He is the Prophet of the Life Divine. To him it is an experience and not mere idea. This experience could be shared by others. The nature of his spiritual quest, which led to his great conquest, he thus described in a letter to C. R. Das who defended him in the Alipore trial— "I see more and more manifestly that man cannot see out of the futile cycle the race is always treading, until he has reached himself in a new foundation. How could one see out of the old and false life, mind body, mind force and perfect command for this is the condition." This was the problem I had been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wide knowledge, and some mastery of the secret.

He presents his gospel in a book that is a landmark in the history of human thought and aspiration, "The Life Divine" which Sir Francis Younghusband has acclaimed as the "greatest book published in my generation." Pythagoras spoke of the Music of the Heavens. Here is the Music of Humanity, no longer still and "ascending to Heaven." Sri Aurobindo believes that we shall evolve into a higher stage of being and thus evolution will enable us to overcome the limitations and miseries of our present existence and lead us to a world whose course is equidistant and pure, a life of harmony and bliss. This process of evolution is actual. It is operating steadily here and now, and will not stop short of fulfilling itself. In due course, Man will sit on the New Life, in which pain and sorrow will have no existence and death no sting.

Sri Aurobindo relieves one despair by the certainty of this ideal. In the world of death, he the Immortal, gives us the assurance of immortality. The world is need of Thee, Sri Aurobindo, and that is why thou art with us still.

Mr. Chancellor, I now request you, on behalf of the Andhra University, to be so good as to make the offering of this National Prize, with which it is my unmerited good fortune to have my name linked in absentia applicable. For though Sri Aurobindo leads a life of rigorous seclusion, rarely seeing people or being seen by people, yet thousands of devotees in all parts of the world feel him as a real presence. He is not of the earth and does not mix with the earth, but heaven envelops us all. So Mr. Chancellor, honour the University and if you don't think it incumbent of me to say so, honour yourself by awarding the Sir Cattamanche Ramalinga Reddy National Prize to Sri Aurobindo.

MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

Seven

D THE NATIONAL PRIZE RA UNIVERSITY

SRI AUROBINDO'S ILLUMINATING MESSAGE

YOU have asked me for a message and anything I write, since it is to the Andhra University that I am addressing my message, if it can be called by that name, should be pertinent to your University, its function, its character and the work it has to do. But it is difficult for me at this juncture when momentous decisions are being taken which are likely to determine not only the form and pattern of this country's Government and administration but the pattern of its destiny, the build and make-up of the nation's character, its position in the world with regard to other nations, its choice of what itself shall be, not to turn my eyes in that direction. There is one problem facing the country which concerns us nearly and to this I shall now turn and deal with it, however inadequately,—the demand for the reconstruction of the artificial British-made Presidencies and Provinces into natural divisions forming a new system, new and yet founded on the principle of diversity in unity attempted by ancient India.

THE PATTERN OF INDIAN CULTURE

India, shut into a separate existence by the Himalayas and the ocean, has always been the home of a peculiar people with characteristics of its own recognisably distinct from all others, with its own distinct civilisation, way of life, way of the spirit, a separate culture, arts, building of society. It has absorbed all that has entered into it, put upon all the Indian stamp, welded the most diverse elements into its fundamental unity. But it has also been throughout a congeries of diverse peoples, kinds, kingdoms and, in earlier times, republics also, diverse, sub-nations with a marked character of their own, developing different brands or forms of civilisation and culture, many schools of art and architecture which yet succeeded in fitting into the general Indian type of civilisation and culture. India's history throughout has been marked by a tendency, a constant effort to unite all this diversity of elements into a single political whole under a central imperial rule so that India might be politically as well as culturally one. Even after a rift had been created by the irruption of the Mohammedan peoples with their very different religion and social structure, there continued a constant effort of political unification and there was a tendency towards a mingling of cultures and their mutual influence on each other; even some heroic attempts were made to discover or create a common religion built out of these two apparently irreconcilable faiths and here too there were mutual influences.

But throughout India's history the political unity was never entirely attained and for this there were several causes,—first, vastness of space and insufficiency of communications preventing the drawing close of all these different peoples, secondly, the method used which was the military domination by one people or one imperial dynasty over the rest of the country which led to a succession of empires, none of them permanent, lastly, the absence of any will to crush out of existence all these different kingdoms and fuse together these different peoples and force them into a single substance and a single shape. Then came the British Empire in India which recast the whole country into artificial provinces made for its own convenience, disregarding the principle of division into regional peoples but not abolishing that division. For there had grown up out of the original elements a natural system of sub-nations with different languages, literatures and other traditions of their own, the four Dravidian peoples, Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Sind, Assam, Orissa, Nepal, the Hindi speaking peoples of the North, Rajputana and Bihar. British rule with its provincial administration did not unite these peoples but it did impose upon them the habit of a common type of administration, a closer intercommunication through the English language and by the education it gave there was created a more diffused and more militant form of patriotism, the desire for liberation and the need of unity in the struggle to achieve that liberation. A sufficient fighting unity was brought about to freedom, but freedom obtained did not carry with it a complete union of the country. On the contrary, India was deliberately split on the basis of the two-nation theory into Pakistan and Hindustan with the deadly consequences which we know.

THE PROBLEM OF ARTIFICIAL BRITISH-MADE PROVINCES

In taking over the administration from Britain we had inevitably to follow the line of least resistance and proceed on the basis of the artificial British made provinces at least for the time this provisional arrangement now threatens to become permanent, at least in the main and some see an advantage in this permanence. For they think it will help the unification of the country and save us from the necessity of preserving regional sub-nations which in the past kept a country from an entire and thorough-going unification and uniformity. In a rigorous unification they see the only true union—a single nation with a standardised and uniform administration, language, literature, culture, art, education,—all carried on through the agency of one national tongue. How far such a conception can be carried out in the future one cannot forecast but at present it is obviously impracticable, and it is doubtful if it is for India truly desirable. The ancient diversities of the country carried in them great advantages as well drawbacks. By these diversities the country was made the home of many living and pulsating centres of life, art, culture—a richly and brilliantly coloured diversity in unity, all was not drawn up into a few provincial capitals, or an imperial metropolis, other towns and regions remaining subordinated and indistinctive or even culturally asleep, the whole nation lived with a full life in its many parts and this increased enormously the creative energy of the whole. There is no possibility any

longer that this diversity will endanger or diminish the unity of India. Those vast spaces which kept her people from closeness and a full interplay have been abolished in their separating effect by the march of Science and the swiftness of the means of communication. The idea of federation and a complete machinery for its perfect working have been discovered and will be as fully worked. Above all, the spirit of patriotic unity has been too firmly established in the people to be easily effaced or diminished, and it would be more endangered by refusing to allow the natural play of life of the sub-nations than by satisfying their legitimate aspirations. The Congress itself in the days before liberation came had pledged itself to the formation of linguistic provinces, and to follow it out, if not immediately, yet as early as may conveniently be, might well be considered the wisest course. India's national life will then be founded on her natural strengths and the principle of unity in diversity which has always been normal to her and its fulfilment the fundamental course of her being and its very nature, the Many in the One, would place her on the sure foundation of her Swabhava and Swadharma.

This development might well be regarded as the inevitable trend of her future. For the Dravidian regional peoples are demanding their separate right to a self-governing existence, Maharashtra expects a similar concession and this would mean a similar development in Gujarat and then the British made Presidencies of Madras and Bombay would have disappeared. The old Bengal Presidency had already been split up and of the Hindi speaking part of the Central Provinces and the U P would complete the process. An annulment of the partition of India might modify but would not materially alter this result of the general tendency. A union of States and regional peoples would again be the form of a united India.

THE ANDHRA UNIVERSITY AND TRUE EDUCATION

In this new regime your University will find its function and fulfilment. Its origin has been different from that of other Indian Universities. They were established by the initiative of a foreign Government as a means of introducing their own civilisation into India, situated in the capital towns purely academic aims. Benares and Aligarh had a different origin but were all India institutions serving the two chief religious communities of the country. Andhra University has been created by a patriotic Andhra initiative, situated not in a Presidency capital but in an Andhra town and serving consciously the life of a regional people. The home of a robust and virile and energetic race, great by the part it had played in the past in the political life of India, great by its achievements in art, architecture, sculpture, music, Andhra looks back upon imperial memories, a place in the succession of empires and imperial dynasties which returned over a large part of the country it looks back on the more recent memory of the glories of the last Hindu Empire of Vijayanagara—a magnificent record for any people. Your University can fill its high position as the centre of Andhra to be worthy of their forefathers, the great past should lend book-knowledge and information but growth in culture and character comes by a true education to help the individual to develop his mind and action of the future, this is a part of its work. Moreover the life of the regional people must not be shut up in itself, its youths have also to contact the life of the other similar peoples of India interacting with them in industry and commerce and the other practical fields of life but also in the things of the mind and spirit. Also, they have to learn not only to be citizens of Andhra but to be citizens of India, the life of the nation is a thing of all great national affairs or problems and is able to represent Andhra national interest calling for the support and participation of her peoples. There is still a wider field in which India will need the services of men. For she stands already as a considerable international figure and this will her place as one of the preponderant States whose voices will be strongest and their lead and their action determinative of the world's future. For all this she needs men whose training as well as their talent, genius and can be of supreme service and do a work of immeasurable importance.

THE POST-WAR WORLD AND INDIA'S DESTINY

In this hour, in the second year of its liberation the nation has to awaken to many more very considerable problems, to vast possibilities opening before her but also to dangers and difficulties that may, if not left by the war full of risk and uncertainty, be a disordered world-situation another catastrophe which can only be soiled by the upsurge of a new power and can only be truly met by an effort at a world union such as was conceived at San Francisco but has not till now been very successful in the practice still the effort has to be continued and new devices found which will make easier the difficult transition from the perilous divisions of the past and present to a harmonious world-order for otherwise there can be no escape from continuous enmity and collapse. There are deeper

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Eight

MOTHER INDIA, 19 February 1949

NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

THE CHANGE OF MIND IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE

By

CHAD WALSH

New York Times Book Review

In the Nineteen Twenties Remarque and Hemingway debunked war, Sinclair Lewis debunked M.D.'s, ministers and almost everyone, H. L. Mencken consigned religion to the hookworm belt, all the writers who mattered joined forces in debunking Mrs Grundy and Queen Victoria. With the outbreak of the Depression and the arrival of the Nineteen Thirties, the high seriousness of social consciousness prevailed. Hemingway heard a bell tolling and discovered that "No man is an island inure of it selfe." Steinbeck wrote the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" of the Okies. Art went into politics and campaigned for a brave new world.

THE ANTI-RELIGIOUS MOOD PAST

The one thing the Nineteen Twenties and Nineteen Thirties had in common was their lack of sympathy for Queen Victoria—especially her religion. It is true that during both decades there was a profuse output of devotional manuals and pious novels, but they were not composed by the Sinclair Lewises, Hemingways and Steinbecks. Nor were they read by the sophisticated. The Nineteen Twenties ridiculed religion, the Nineteen Thirties did not bother to ridicule.

Many conflicting tendencies are rampant in the Nineteen Forties. Ruthless realism and debunking are far from dead, the school of social consciousness still has vitality. But the truly startling development to one who remembers the earlier eras is the rise of religion to a position of intellectual respectability. First-class authors are writing about it. Their books are being read by a large general consciousness of literature as well as the general public.

RELIGIOUS BEST SELLERS

C. S. Lewis, one of the most eminent medieval and Chaucerian scholars in England has written a dozen books directly or indirectly defending rock bottom orthodoxy. His combination of audacity and literary charm has made him a cult hero in many graduate schools and faculty circles. Somervell's abridgment of Toynbee's *A Study of His* story remains on the best-seller list (along with Toynbee's more recent *Civilization on Trial*) though even a capsule from Toynbee is by no means as easy to read as C. S. Lewis. Toynbee presents a systematic Christian philosophy of history, ranged squarely against the pessimistic predetermination of Spengler.

Two other recent books presenting religious faith in persuasive modern terms have been Leonote du Nouy's *Human Destiny*—an excursion into natural theology with the findings of science used to prove the probability of God and Joshua Liebmann's treatise on the relation between psychology and religion, *Peace of Mind*. Both became best sellers.

MYSTICISM BOTH EASTERN AND WESTERN

In the field of fiction, Evelyn Waugh's novels have progressed from the delightful slapstick of *Decline and Fall* to the bruising depth of *Brideshead Revisited*—a story in which Roman Catholicism

shapes the lives of all the characters, but written with so sure a touch that it never slips into didacticism. Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* faithfully mirrors the current interest in Oriental mysticism. The religious and spiritual interests of that remarkable novelist Graham Greene are an important part of his just published *The Heart of the Matter*. Other religious best sellers of recent years (though not of equality) have been Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette*, Lloyd Douglas *The Robe*, Bruce Marshall's *The World, the Flesh and Father Smith* and Sholem Asch's *The Apostle*.

Finally Thomas Sugrue's spiritual autobiography, *Stranger on the Earth*, has achieved critical acclaim if not the accolade of the best seller list. A complex, strangely beautiful book, its chances of publication ten years ago would have been slight.

Meanwhile there have been the conversions and reconversions. Aldous Huxley, after mordantly ripping society to shreds in such novels as *Antic Hay* presented the ideal of the well-informed so called "Hell-kne" in a number of essays then did a complete about-face in his novel *Eyeless in Gaza*. He now looks to the yogic orient for salvation. His last two novels *After Many a Summer* and *Time Must Have a Stop* are fictionized recruiting tracts for mysticism.

T. S. Eliot, poet of *The Wasteland*, announced as long ago as 1927 that he had been converted to Anglo-Catholicism but the critics forgave him until his *Four Quartets* in 1943 made it evident that his conversion had permeated his poetry as well as his essays. W. H. Auden who started out to syncretize Marxism and Freudianism in the Nineteen Thirties returned to the Anglican Church and proceeded to write his unmistakably Christian nativity play, *For the Time Being*.

TWO TRENDS OF THE NEW TREND

To one school of commentators all this represents a failure of nerve. The pace of events has grown so fast that writers are retreating to the wisdom of the Orient or the arms of Mother Church.

Mankind is incurably divided into what C. S. Lewis calls the "naturalists" and "supernaturalists." The former believe that the material universe is all there is. All thoughts and emotions are by products of its processes. The latter insist that there is something outside of the world of matter and this something is what gives significance to every thing else. Call it the Oversoul or God, it cannot be examined in the laboratory and it refuses to fit into a mechanistic pattern.

The supernaturalist welcomes the new literary trend, the "naturalist" deplores it. But both take it seriously and wonder what it portends.

BLOW TO MATERIALISTIC SCIENCE

It seems clear that the real religion of Europe and America for over a century now has been Science and Progress. Science was not valued greatly for its own sake but because

it created techniques that speeded up Progress. Progress was the steady, unbroken march toward Utopia. Utopia would consist of three square meals a day a maximum of comforts, and a minimum of onerous labour. Utopia, in fact, was the imaginary heaven created by the yearnings of a materialistic civilization.

The optimistic faith in inevitable progress is much less strong today than at the turn of the century. World War I dealt it a heavy blow, World War II a still more brutal one. The rise of totalitarianism suggested that human nature was not as good as had been thought nor progress as inevitable.

During several decades the hopes of many for Utopia were pinned on Soviet Russia, which seemed to be creating the earthly paradise by man's force. However Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and *The Yogi and the Commissar*, Victor Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom* and a host of other books by men who know Russia at first hand have greatly dampened the early enthusiasm of fellow travellers. The Berlin Moscow pact also helped.

The significance of science has in its turn come in for radical reevaluation. To the Victorians it was the good genius that would banish drudgery, create luxuries for everyone, and increase longevity. Since Hiroshima science has become a symbol of terror. In itself it is morally neutral but in the hands of men it offers the means of ending humanity's problems by ending humanity.

ANCIENT QUESTIONS RETURN

All of these twentieth century developments have resulted in a profound disillusionment. Utopia fades into the indefinite future. With its postponement the ancient questions have returned. The intellectual and the man in the street both face what men have always faced: the loneliness

of clinging precariously to an impersonal planet, the uncertainty of what the next year will bring, the uncertainty of death. The gleaming vision of the terrestrial paradise is no longer able to obscure those questions.

Religion has traditionally clung that it can provide the answers—that it can explain man's peculiar status in the animal world and give lasting significance to his life. Now that inevitable progress is no longer inevitable it becomes psychologically possible for disillusioned secularists to examine the claims of religion.

During the second half of the nineteenth century it required a powerful act of the will for a thoughtful person to accept a religious viewpoint. The whole tenor of science at least as it was popularly understood was anti religious. The discoveries of the astronomers and physicists made the universe seem an ever-tightening machine. This century has seen a gradual but far-reaching revolution in science especially physics. "Probabilities" and "statistical averages" are replacing iron bound "natural laws." The universe, as viewed from the laboratory, is becoming increasingly mysterious. There is room for anything in it—even God.

A NEW ERA BEGINS

Writers in general may not be able to predict whether there will be a World War III, but they are abnormally sensitive to subtle changes in the unspoken assumptions that govern people's thoughts and attitudes. The writers of to-day are beginning to express what the average man may well take for granted fifty or a hundred years from now.

The authors dealing with religious themes do not provide a blue print of the new period of history waiting to be born. What the literature of to-day does clearly suggest is simply that the present ultra materialistic era is drawing to a close.

NEXT ISSUE: Modern Art a Revolt and a Revolution

SRI AUROBINDO'S ILLUMINATING MESSAGE

(Continued from page 7)

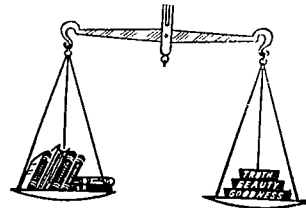
an immense military strength practising power politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outer world yet lose altogether her richly proved and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen but it cannot be said that the danger is not there. There are indeed other numerous and difficult problems that face this country or will very soon face it. No doubt we will win through, but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's true destiny.

MOTHER INDIA, 19 February 1949

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BOOKS in the BALANCE

The books that will be reviewed here are not only those recently published. Those published some time ago but still deserving special attention will also be "in the balance"



TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM

EDUCATION FOR A NEW WORLD, by Maria Montessori, M.D., D.Litt (Arundale Montessori Training Centre, Adyar, Madras), Rs 4/8

Madame Montessori is a household word in child education. Her latest book which is a sort of "concentrated extract" of her forty years' study of child-behaviour cannot but deserve attention.

'THE ABSORBENT MIND'

It is concerned with the child at the pre-school age—that is, up to the sixth year of his life. The author has come to recognise two distinct stages in the growth of the child. From birth to the end of the third year is in her eyes, the most effective period for education. The child has at this stage what she calls the "absorbent mind", which essentially works subconsciously and effects a complete transformation in him. Education, she says, "is not a question of development but of creation out of nothing "for, according to her, "the individual seems to start from a zero". The absorbent mind is compared to "a photographic plate which automatically recording impressions in the minutest details". Thus the child during the first three years is supposed to take up sub-consciously the infinite impressions of the environment and form faculties which are consciously availed of later on—that is from the third to the sixth year—for the acquisition of language and the growth of character generally.

The chief significance to our author decisive in forming the individual personality. And education is for her a natural process spontaneously carried out by the child. It does not consist of 'listening to words but of experience upon the environment'. The teacher has simply to afford to the child the prepared environment necessary for cultural growth but otherwise stand back. By doing so he can hope to see the rising of the New Man who will not be the victim of events but will have the ability of man to direct and shape the future of human society.

SPONTANEOUS DISCIPLINE

It is undoubtedly an inspiring prospect. And one cannot help admiring several points in the system. The concept of spontaneous discipline is brilliant. Madame Montessori puts it paradoxically "to obtain discipline give freedom"—simply let the child have the occupations that interest him. And the system seeks to characterise the evolution and growth of the child from stage to stage and plan the educa-

tional means for its growth and satisfaction. Madame Montessori is at her best in the treatment and employment of the activity urge of the child and she does not cure the child in two by the usual pedagogical logic which distinguishes sharply between mental and physical activities saying that for mental work we must sit still in the class and for physical work the mental part is not wanted.

TRUF GROWTH

The new system however, while being in many respects a reform movement, retains certain bases of the old. It regards the subconscious as being essentially concerned with the storing and discrimination of impressions. The sense organs are the first things to be cultivated. This is sensationist psychology. And the aim of the system is to produce what is called the intellectual man. The sensationist psychology forgets that growth is really not additive from without but differentiative from within. Contemporary psychology has—through Jung for example—felt obliged to recognise the existence of a "centre in human personality". From this centre the rest of the personality develops by a sort of specialisation of faculties, just as the embryo develops by cellular division of a unity and by a specialisation of the cells thus produced. Again the centre is marked by a quality of wholeness which is so absent from all intellectualistic activity. The intellect sets up sharp contrasts and conflicts of opposed ideologies. If we are to attain a harmonious truth, we must live in a sense for wholeness.

Madame Montessori's book, as much as it does with the blessings of the Theosophical Society, may be expected to go beyond the ideal of the cultivated intellect. But though it speaks of 'the discovery of the soul of the child' it does not illuminatingly bring out the fact of the deep psychic entity, the spark of the Divine which the mystical experience of the East has recognised as the source principle in human personality. The Montessori System can accomplish much and it founder because of its sympathetic understanding of the child but short of the executive touch in the true soul-spirit which is a state of consciousness of hidden psychic energies and marked possibilities and not a mere absorbent mind starting with almost zero how can any system of child-education direct us towards the millennium and satisfactorily evolve the New Man who will be no 'victim of events'?

'INDRAMAL'

RESEARCH IN REVELATION

THE ORIGINAL GITA, by Rudolf Otto (George Allen and Unwin), 15s

Dr Turner has ably translated and edited a book of research that has both shrewdness and gusto. Its famous author, Dr Rudolf Otto, enters keenly into the atmosphere of ancient India. No doubt, it is an atmosphere charged, like the modern world, with hostile cries, but what absorbs Dr Otto is the spiritual word that went forth on the field of Kurukshetra and out of the circumstances of carnage evoked for future times the revelation that is known as the Bhagavad Gita.

PROFOUND IMAGINATIVE SENSE

He makes a patient and intimate study of this great Hindu scripture in order to disentangle from later accretions what he considers its basic form. How much of it—he asks from various viewpoints of scholarship—belongs to the Mahabharata epic and what in it is poetically relevant to the situation arising when Arjuna throws down his weapons in dejection, refusing to fight against his own kinsmen and companions drawn up in the enemy's ranks? Dr Otto displays a profound imaginative sense of the situation that is why one feels that his reconstruction of the 'original Gita' is well worth considering.

THREE MAIN POINTS

He claims that the analysis on which he founds his reconstruction is confirmed by certain declarations made by Arjuna in which that warrior acknowledges what Krishna has revealed to him. There are three main points in it and Dr Otto's studies indicate them. Thou hast proclaimed the supreme secret of the true Self. Through the Holy Word my bewilderment is gone. As it is appointed to be born to exist and to pass away Thou hast taught me. And likewise has Thou taught me Thy imperishable Majesty. Accordingly to Dr Otto these three truths and none else are accepted by Arjuna from Krishna there are no perished Sankhya Yoga or Bhakti doctrines nor any others. Vedhas help directly to enforce the truths of the Gita. The rest to be later interpretation. The result is a book of

poetic utterance, simple and consistent, complete in itself, built round its climax, the dejection of the Theophany, the disclosure of Krishna as the cosmic Time spirit, the Universal Destroyer—a piece of spiritual epic which Dr Otto regards as the grandest composition in the whole range of literature.

WHAT IS THE TRUE CRITERION?

The attempt at simplification is surely credible. Yet one is inclined to believe that another criterion than that of mere relevance to a situation is admissible. There are verses scattered throughout the Gita which have the same unworldly poetic and spiritual feeling as those included in Dr Otto's text. Moreover they are highly relevant to the personal figure of Krishna the incarnate Godhead. They bear the signature of the same mind and cannot be easily excluded, but if they come in, numberless other verses have to be accepted because they lead up to or complete their sense.

Where then are we to stop? In almost all the chapters of the Gita they are to be found, and if they demand a legitimate place all the chapters must stand. And when they are taken together we observe not a haphazard mass of conflicting doctrines but a slowly unfolding synthesis of the disciplines of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti—Work, Knowledge and Devotion—a synthesis that culminates in a supremely satisfying message from the philosophic, it is well as practical standpoint as shown by the greatest Indian commentator on the Gita Sri Aurobindo.

It does not seem possible to break up the ancient Hindu whether all of it be directly relevant to a particular situation or no. It appears to have been assembled by a soul unifying genius. What Dr Otto holds to be the original form is rather a dramatic nucleus than the basic primitive text. At any rate it is a more profitable and poetic discovery than the lopsided fragments to which the enthusiasts of different schools of thought have reduced a comprehensive and glorious scripture that is truly a mirror of India's multi-minded yet simple pointed soul.

A. K.

DEEP FOOTPRINTS

Deep footprints upon my heart
On whose impressionable clay
You chose to walk but once
That unforgettable far off day

At times my heart is full
At times it painfully yearns—
But in each precious hollow imprint
An eternal candid burns

Guarded by shut inward eyes,
Each light is a thrill of Your

Name—
A reward for my long calling
For I was waiting and you came

MUSIC N. CHATTERJEE

Tex

MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

EDITORIALS FROM EVERYWHERE

Continued from page 3

that implementation of the Khair Committee's report will be expedited and that financial stringency or other difficulties will not be allowed to hamper progress.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad emphasized the importance of adult education. He said, "We want not mere literacy but mental development of the adults so that they can take an intelligent interest in the affairs of their country and the world." Maulana is right. One of the most important features of the draft constitution of India is the provision for adult franchise. An ignorant electorate will be a menace to democracy. But while the Government's efforts to promote adult education are to be appreciated there is a danger which should be guarded against. Under dictatorship puritan propaganda masquerades as adult education. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad should remember that the Government's duty is that those under their care become independent thinkers and not mere four ana members of the Congress.

Babu Sampurnanand's speech at the meeting of the Board was an agreeable surprise. The Education Minister has a raspy tone. He has ridiculed primary school teachers whose co-operation and goodwill are essential to the expansion of education. The tone of his present speech was conciliatory. He said "Unless the prices come down, the teacher must be paid more." The teachers deserve sympathy. In America in the 18th century teachers were indentured servants. They had to spend part of their time in manual labour. We have to say with regret that in the year 1949 the plight of primary school teachers in the United Provinces is not better than that of the indentured servants referred to above. The 18th century teacher was bound by his indenture, the primary school teacher in U.P. is

bound by low wages. The present deplorable state of affairs needs to be rectified at once. Schoolmasters are called nation builders. We do not believe that an indentured servant can build a nation. Babu Sampurnanand's speech encourages the hope that he will revise his attitude towards the teachers.—(The Leader, Allahabad)

JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

To the militant advocates of nationalisation who pose the issue as one of a mutually exclusive choice between the state capitalism and private initiative, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru now, as before offers, on behalf of the Government of India, a golden mean. Rejecting the demand for a sudden and revolutionary change in the economic make-up of the country the Prime Minister has informed the Central Advisory Council of Industries that he and his Government are in favour of 'continuity, and change on the basis of continuity.' That New Delhi is not ideology-ridden will be welcomed by those industrialists who are suspicious of a doctrinaire approach to economic problems. Government's assurance that they will adhere to the principle of the inevitability of gradualness, should encourage capital and industry to go ahead with their plans for expansion.

Responsible industrialists are aware that mixed economy has come to stay. To day, in most countries some basic industries are owned and conducted by the State, some others are left to private initiative, while still others function as private enterprise but are regulated and supervised by the State. In mixed economy a wide sphere of activity is left for exploitation by private industrialists the pace of nationalisation depends upon the State's financial and administrative resources,

the availability of technical personnel, and upon the requirements of political democracy. New Delhi is conscious of its limitations, and the Minister for Industries and Supplies has emphatically reassured industry that Government have no intention of nationalising existing undertakings for a period of ten years.

Mixed economy implies that private enterprise should be provided with the favourable conditions required to enable it to discharge its responsibilities in the sector which it enjoys. And the criticism has been made that Government's economic policy, enunciated in April last offers no incentives for private initiative, that Government are anxious to push forward schemes for public undertakings, but are unwilling to help and assist the private sector of the economy. Concessions recently granted by Government to industry, such as Income-tax relief, liberal depreciation allowances and supplies of the urgently needed raw materials at reasonable prices take the edge off this criticism. On wider issues however Government's industrial policy is liable to the objection that it does not clearly demarcate the respective spheres of public economic activity.

While Government, labour and industry blame one another for the prevailing economic climate, the inflation stricken consumer continues to suffer from scarcity and rising prices of the immediate necessities of life. It is an accepted fact that production is the only lasting cure for inflation. And, it is obvious that the country's industrial and agricultural output cannot be raised without active and close co-operation among the various agents of production. Government are performing their duties it is time for labour and industry to realise their responsibilities. An economically weak country cannot attain political sta-

bility and the sooner this is accepted by labour and industry, the better for them as well as the country.—(The National Standard, Bombay)

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MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

Eleven

EYE-TROUBLES CAN BE CURED WITHOUT GLASSES

BY DR. R. S. AGARWAL

It is said that everyone nearing the fortieth year suffers from defective eyesight due to old age and glasses are the only palliative. This belief seems to be long standing. The eye is one of the sense organs like the ear, nose etc. It does its function of seeing as other organs do of hearing and smelling etc. When other sense organs do not become defective in old age except in a few cases, why should the eye? Here is a clear indication that there is some other cause at work, and treatment for that cause is the right treatment.

FAILURE OF THE USUAL METHODS

In the treatment of the eye diseases the methods which are in use by the medical profession in general are of little value. They neither prevent nor cure the disease. When the patient complains of defective eyesight glasses are given to him. The more he takes the help of glasses the more does his sight deteriorate, and higher powers of glasses have to be prescribed. Some of the cases become so bad that they are given up as incurable. When there are symptoms of cataract and glaucoma patients are advised an operation. Cataract patients have to wait and sometimes they have to wait for their whole life till the cataract is matured and Glaucoma cases are seldom benefited by operation. Diseases of the retina choroid and the optic nerve are rarely cured by the usual treatment. At first most of the time and money are wasted in finding out the cause of diseases. Usually the cause is not found out and experimental treatment is given. Most of these cases are declared hopeless sooner or later. Patients who have no organic defect in the eye but suffer from defective eyesight are treated in various ineffective ways. In short the present system of treating diseases of the eye and its discomforts are very unfortun-

THE REMARKABLE DISCOVERY OF DR BATES

The remarkable discovery of Dr W H Bates of America that strain is the real cause of most eye diseases and relaxation or relief of the strain is the real treatment of them has given to the medical profession something like an "Elixir". The curative value of Dr Bates's system of treating eye diseases has already proved to be very great. Throughout the earth there are men, women and children today who think of him

with gratitude because of pain relieved and sight restored.

During my practice nature guided me to find out the value of all the methods. In the early days I prescribed glasses to all my patients and performed operations as others do. I studied the medicinal side from Ayurvedic books also and gained experience in the use of Ayurvedic medicines. Sushruta is the first ophthalmologist who wrote a book on eye diseases. I found that there was truth in the Ayurvedic methods but they were not sufficient for the cure of all eye diseases.

WONDERFUL CURES

When I studied Dr Bates's system of treating imperfect eyesight I was very much impressed by it. I myself had been using glasses for nine years and was able to cure myself in a month's time! I tried the new methods on a boy blind since birth in his left eye. He got cured in one and a half months. I felt very much interested in this system and was feeling that some secret hand was constantly guiding and helping me. Later on a boy who had been blind in the right eye since birth was cured in two hours. A careful study of the methods revealed many new things, but the history of all that is too long to be discussed here.

AN ALL-EMBRACING METHOD OF PRACTICAL TREATMENT

I evolved a system of practical treatment based on all the old systems as well as the methods of Dr Bates. I find that all methods of treatment—medicines, glasses, operations, relaxations etc. have their value but one has to be discriminative and discover what will be helpful in a particular case. Relaxation treatment as prescribed by Dr Bates is unavoidable and indispensable in all cases. Even if it is necessary to perform an operation or to prescribe glasses or medicine it is very helpful to prescribe the methods of relaxation along with them. Without giving relaxation no constructive work can be done and the condition of the patient will become worse.

EFFICIENCY OF RELAXATION METHODS

The efficiency of Dr Bates's relaxation methods is so great that one can successfully treat cases of eye troubles without making the diagnosis even. At times I was unable in some cases to diagnose the disease but I found myself quite successful in treating such cases by intelligently following the relaxation

methods. The reason is that when ever a patient complains of pain, headache, defective vision etc. it indicates mental and eye strain. Treatment which can relieve this strain will surely prove useful, at times miraculous. Some time back an elderly lady gave a history of constant pain and fatigue in the eyes, inability to sleep, presence of redness and swelling in the eyes in the mornings. Every doctor who examined her admitted that he did not know what was wrong. Blindness was expected by some doctors in the course of a few years. I told the lady that I did not know what was wrong with her eyes but that I believed she could be cured even without any diagnosis being made or without discovering the cause of her troubles. I said to the lady, "Look at the large letter of the Snellen Test Card and note its blackness. Then cover your eyes with the palms of your hands, shutting out all the light and remember the blackness of the letter until you see 'everything black'." She started to do as suggested and after a few minutes she told me she saw everything perfectly black and felt her eye trouble greatly relieved. In a few days by frequent palming and swinging she got complete relief from all the discomforts she suffered. The details of all the relaxation methods have been fully explained in my book "Mind and Vision".

OFFER TO READERS OF "MOTHER INDIA"

The value of the practical working of all of the methods of Dr Agarwal's Eye Institute Delhi has now become widely known and we receive many patients who have been

declared incurable. A report of some of them, such cases appear now and then in the medical journals. Practical training is imparted to deserving medical students.

The readers of *Mother India* may send in their questions, if any, and the same will be replied through *Mother India*. If the questions happen to be of a personal nature, I shall be glad to answer them by post.

FREE EXPERT ADVICE ON EYE-TROUBLES

Dr R S Agarwal author of the article on this page, is well-known for his successful application in thousands of cases of Dr Bates's method of treatment without glasses. He has offered his expert service to the readers of *Mother India*.

All you have to do is to write to *Mother India*, 22 Rampart Row, Fort, Bombay with the Free Expert Advice Coupon enclosed. State your eye-trouble in full detail, with history of previous treatment. In strict rotation Dr Agarwal's replies will be printed in our columns. Full name and address must be given in your initials or else any pen-name you choose.

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On
EYE TROUBLES



A scene from "CHANDRALEKHA"

BEG NUMBER

MOTHER INDIA, 19, February 1949

ALDOUS HUXLEY

WISHES 'MOTHER INDIA' SUCCESS

I wish you all success in your venture. You will, of course, be a voice crying in the wilderness. But if a few individuals pay attention, something will have been accomplished.

ALDOUS HUXLEY
California, U.S.A., January 29, 1949

BARON PALMSTIERN, PRESIDENT OF WORLD-CONGRESS OF FAITHS, SENDS A MESSAGE TO "MOTHER INDIA"

We have repeatedly noticed during the present era of nationalism that nations, which have arrived at independence and full sovereignty, easily neglect their precious spiritual possessions and succumb to the immediate demands of the hour and obvious material interests. The great inheritance of metaphysical and moral values which give the surest guarantee for freedom of spirit becomes overshadowed, when the allurements of might and materialism comes within sight. But could it be possible that the India of Gandhi should set another example of the kind? Among those who have learnt much from the Vedanta, many feel a certain anxiety that it might happen, in spite of the strong spiritual instinct of the nation.

Much watchfulness and tenacious efforts will be required to keep the spiritual light burning and to use the new opportunities for an unfolding and growth of the element of truth which has become yours.

May your "Mother India" become a torch that courageously upholds the ideal and makes your great nation collectively conscious of and devoted to the greatest of all tasks—to make the light of Divinity, which lives in us, shine through the darkness of earth and illumine all mankind.

ERIK PALMSTIERN
London, January 27th, 1949

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The Owl's Banquet

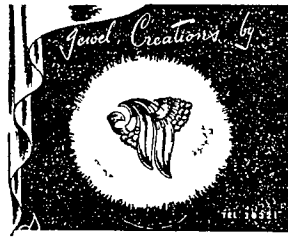
Sir W Macgregor Superintendent of British New Guinea has informed a wondering world that in the language of the Dunganwab tribe the number ten is expressed by the crisp little word "Ambutondaambutondanabodand"

What must their word for a hundred be? But luckily they do not carry their arithmetical calculations much beyond the number ten.

These are days of Socialism. It is proposed to change the King's English into the President's English. A humourist relates that according to the Report of the Philological Sub-Committee of the National Soviet or Natphilsbecon, the language must be purified if the land is to be made safe for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The first test—can it be altered to suit revolutionary theory?—has resulted in a crop of interesting new variations of old metaphorical cliches: a cat may look at a commar, "dead, alas" as Rosa Luxemburg—a baron of beef" becomes "a workers' delegate of beef", a "sirlon" becomes a "conrade lon", "enthroned in people's hearts" becomes "seated at a round table in people's hearts," and "a ten-per cent royalty" becomes a "ten-per cent presidency."

Leigh Hunt, condemning the use of Latin derivatives and enjoying the employment of the Saxon element alone, uses in one brief passage no less than thirty-five words of Latin extraction—or about one-half of the whole passage! Barnes, carrying the Saxon mania to its limit, suggested for "adjectives" "mawkwords of succiness", while degrees of comparison were to be known as "pitchmarks", and he gravely tells us that "pitchmarks offmark sundry things by their sundry succinesses". "Carnivorous" was to become "flesh-eatsome", "butler" to change to "cellar-thane", "electricity" to "fire-ghost", "criticism" to "dumberhood", "syllogism" to "a redeshup of three thoughtputtings."

In the biography of Hon Justice Onookool Mookerjee by his nephew, Mohendronath Mookerjee, we are told, in all seriousness, of that worthy gentlemen's effort "to restore happiness and sunshine to those sweet and well-beloved faces in which he had not seen the soft and fascinating beams of a samper for many a grimvisaged year." Further on we are informed "when a boy he was filanentous, but gradually in the course of time he became plump as a partridge."



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FACSIMILE OF CHAPTER V, THE MOTHER

If you want to be a true doer of divine works, your first aim must be to be totally free from all desire and self-regarding ego. All your life must be an offering and a sacrifice to the Supreme; your only object in action ~~shall~~ be to serve, ^{to receive,} to fulfil, to become a manifesting instrument of the Divine Shakti in her works. You must grow in the divine consciousness till there is no difference between your will and hers, no motive except her impulsion in you, no action that is not her conscious action in you and through you.

Until you are capable of this complete dynamic identification, you have to regard yourself as a soul and body created for her service, one who does all for her sake. Even if the idea of the separate worker is strong in you and ~~as~~ you feel that it is you who do the act, yet it must be done for her. All it is of egoistic choice, all hankering after personal profit, all stipulation of self-regarding desire must be extirpated from the nature. There must be no demand for fruit and no seeking for reward, the only fruit for you is the pleasure of the Divine Mother and ^{progression} the fulfilment of her work, your only reward a constant ~~growth~~ in divine consciousness and calm and strength and bliss. The joy of service and the joy of inner growth through work is the sufficient recompense of the selfless worker.

But a time will come when you will feel more and more that you are the instrument and not the worker. For first by the force of your devotion your contact with the Divine Mother will become so intimate that at all times you will have only to concentrate and to put ~~everything~~ into her hands to have her present guidance, her direct command or impulse, the sure indication of the thing to be done and the way to do it, and the result. And afterwards you will

realise that the divine Shakti not only inspires and guides, but initiates and carries out your work, all your movements are originated by her, all your powers are hers, mind life and body are conscious and joyful instruments of her action, means for her play, moulds for her manifestation in the physical universe. There can be no more happy condition than this union and dependence. For this step carries you back beyond the border line from a life of stress and suffering in the ignorance into the truth of your spiritual being, into its deep peace and its intense joy.

While this transformation is being done, it is more than ever necessary to keep yourself free from all taint of the perverseness of the ego. Let no demand or insistence creep in to stain the purity of the self-giving and the sacrifice. There must be no attachment to the work or the result in laying down of conditions, no claim to possess the power that should possess you, no pride of the instrument, no vanity or arrogance. Nothing in the mind or in the vital or physical parts should be suffered to distort to its own use or seize for its own personal and separate satisfaction the greatness of the forces that are acting through you. Let your faith, your sincerity, your purity of aspiration be absolute and pervasive of all the planes and layers of the being, then every disturbing element and distorting influence will progressively fall away from your nature.

The last stage of this perfection will come when you are completely identified with the Divine Mother and feel yourself to be no longer another and separate being, instrument, servant or worker, but truly a child and an eternal portion of her

consciousness and force. Always she will be in you and you in her; it will be your constant, simple and natural experience that all your thought and seeing and action, your very breathing and moving come from her and are hers. You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play and yet always safe in her, being of her being, consciousness of her consciousness, force of her force, ananda of her Ananda. When this condition is entire and her supramental energies can freely move you, then you will be perfect in divine works; knowledge, will, action will become sure, simple, luminous, spontaneous, flawless, an outflow from the Supreme, a divine movement of the Eternal.

Sri Aurobindo

August 19 1929

—

AN UNPUBLISHED ESSAY BY SRI AUROBINDO

[The essay reproduced below was written by Sri Aurobindo around 1898. At that time he was working on a critical study of the classical Sanskrit poet Kalidasa. Two chapters of his proposed work—*Kalidasa's Seasons* and *The Age of Kalidasa*—were published during his lifetime. Several others were found among his manuscripts and published posthumously. The present essay, however, was seized by the British police on 2 May 1908, when Sri Aurobindo was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case, and never returned to him. It was discovered in August 1997 in the storeroom of the Alipore Judges Court by Shri P. L. Dutta, Additional Sessions Judge, 24-Parganas North, West Bengal.]

The original manuscript of the article, written on a sheet of Baroda College stationery, remains in Alipore. A member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives was permitted to photograph and transcribe it. The resulting text is reproduced here for the first time since its use as an exhibit in the Alipore trial in 1909.]

[THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES]

THE life & personality of Kalidasa, the epoch in which he lived and wrote, the development of his poetical genius as evidenced by the order of his works, are all lost in a thick cloud of uncertainty and oblivion. It was once thought an established fact that he lived & wrote in the 6th century at the court of Harsha Vikramaditya, the Conqueror of the Scythians. That position is now much assailed, and some would place him in the third or fourth century, others see ground to follow popular tradition in making him a contemporary of Virgil, if not of Lucretius.

The exact date matters little. It is enough that we find in Kalidasa's poetry the richest bloom and perfect expression of the long classical afternoon of Indian civilisation. The soul of an age is mirrored in this single mind. It was an age when the Indian world after seeking God through the spirit and through action turned to seek Him through the activity of the senses, an age therefore of infinite life, colour and splendour, an age of brilliant painting and architecture, wide learning, complex culture, developing sciences, an age of great empires and luxurious courts and cities; an age, above all, in which the physical beauty and grace of woman dominated the minds and imaginations of men.

The spirit of the times pulses through all Kalidasa's poetry. His pages are often ablaze with its light & colour, other[s] pregnant, sometimes indeed overweighted with its rich and manifold learning, its keen pleasure in every phase and aspect of life fills them with a various vividness and infinite richness of matter. Language & verse thrill with the rustling of woman's raiment, the heavy scent of her cosmetics, the tinkling and lustre of her ornaments, they are sinuous with the swaying grace of her motion or subtle

with the delicate charm of her ways and words; the beauty & pleasure of her body possesses & besieges the poet's imagination. And behind the luxurious ease and sensuousness of court life we hear the clash of arms and glimpse the great & energetic motions of statesmanship and diplomacy. The variety of his genius specially fits Kalidasa for the interpretation of a rich & complex national life. From pages heavy with the obsession of the senses, the delight of the eye and the lust of the flesh we turn to others sweet and gracious with the virgin purity of the woodlands, the same poem which gives us a glowing picture of the luxurious voluptuousness of courts gives us also the sternest philosophy and the most vigorous expression of the noble, aspiring morality proper to an active and heroic age. His wonderful visualising power turns whole cantos into a series of almost physically vivid pictures. All his senses are on the alert, his ear for music and the sweetness of words and laughter, thunder, the cries of birds, his sense of smell for the scent of flowers, incense, the perfumes in women's attire, his sense of touch for every tactual pleasure, his mind for all subtlety of knowledge and all possible delicacies, richnesses, grandeurs in the world of thought. He will miss nothing; lose no joy of sense or intellect, throw away no chance of feeling himself alive.

And he has the touch of the perfect artist, turning all he handles to gold. Among his achievements we number the most exquisite, tender and delicately lovely of romantic dramas, the most varied and splendid panorama of human life, the noblest & most grandiose epic of our classical literature, and its one matchless poem of passionate love and descriptive beauty.

In Europe the *Shakuntala* is the one poem of Kalidasa universally known and appreciated. In India the *Cloud* has gone even nearer home to the national imagination. For this there is good reason. It is, essentially and above all, the poem of India, the poem of the country, its soil and its scenes, its thoughts & its atmosphere. No one who has not lived the life of India, till it has become part of his breathing and woven in with every thread of his imagination, can fully appreciate the poem. If one does not know the charm of its hills, the scent of its flowers, the beauty of its skies, [the] flowing sacredness of its rivers with all the phases & emotions of an Indian river's life, if one cannot distinguish & thrill to the touch of its various winds, if one cannot clothe its local places with ancient historic & mythical association or people them with the strange host of beautiful & weird figures & faces which the imagination of its people has created, if one does not recreate for himself the ancient splendours of its cities, the sense of peace & infinity in its temples & hermitages and the simple sweetness of its rural life, for him the *Meghaduta* offers only its shell. But all these, everything that is redolent of India, the visible, material, sensuous India has been fused and poured into one perfect mould by the genius of this supreme artist.

And then as if more utterly to ensnare the imagination of his race, after showing them the beautiful scenes, sights, sounds, scents, the sacred & cherished places, the historic cities of their country as they are—or alas as they were—he lifts these cherished things into a magic world, bathes them in an immortal beauty. Ullaca, the city

without death, is but Kalidasa's beloved Ujjaini taken up into the clouds & transformed into a seat of ideal bliss & loveliness. In the same moment he strikes straight home at one of the most deep-seated feelings in human nature, its repining at the shortness of life & the more tragic shortness of youth, and imaginative dream of an eternal beauty, youth & joy. These he satisfies and turns from a source of unrest into a new source of pleasure & joy, showing himself the great poet as well as the delicate artist.

The human interest which gives the breath of life to the poem is exquisitely treated. A faery attendant of Cuvère, God of Wealth, banished for a year from his home & wife sends his imagination travelling on the wings of the northward-bound cloud over the sacred places, the great cities & rivers of India to the snowbound Himaloy and the homes of the Gods. There his mind sees his wife, breathes to her all its sorrow & longing and prays for an answering message. The love described may not be on the highest altitudes, but it is utterly real & human, full of enduring warmth, tenderness & passion, of strife & joy, tears & kisses, the daily food of love.

SRI AUROBINDO ON HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA'S POETRY

THIS is the first published book [*The Feast of Youth*] of a young poet [Harindranath Chattopadhyay] whose name has recently and suddenly emerged under unusually favourable auspices. English poetry written by an Indian writer who uses the foreign medium as if it were his mother-tongue, with a spontaneous ease, power and beauty, the author a brother of the famous poetess Sarojini Naidu, one of a family which promises to be as remarkable as the Tagores by its possession of culture, talent and genius, challenging attention and sympathy by his combination of extreme youth and a high and early brilliance and already showing in his work, even though still immature, magnificent performance as well as a promise which makes it difficult to put any limits to the heights he may attain,—the book at once attracts interest and has come into immediate prominence amidst general appreciation and admiration. We have had already in the same field of achievement in Sarojini Naidu's poetry qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unmatchable in its kind. The same qualities are not to be found in this book, but it shows other high gifts which, when brought to perfection, must find an equal pitch with a greater scope. Here perhaps are the beginnings of a supreme utterance of the Indian soul in the rhythms of the English tongue.

. . . whatever may be said of the made-in-India type of second-hand English verse in which men of great literary gift in southern India too often waste their talent, Mr Chattopadhyay's production justifies itself by its beauty. This is not only genuine poetry, but the work of a young, though still unripe genius with an incalculable promise of greatness in it. As to the abundance here of all the essential materials, the instruments, the elementary powers of the poetical gift, there can be not a moment's doubt or hesitation. Even the first few lines, though far from the best, are quite decisive. A rich and finely lavish command of language, a firm possession of his metrical instrument, an almost blinding gleam and glitter of the wealth of imagination and fancy, a stream of unfailingly poetic thought and image and a high though as yet uncertain pitch of expression, are the powers with which the young poet starts. Mr Chattopadhyay is . . . overburdened with the favours of the goddess, comes like some Vedic Marut with golden weapons, golden ornaments, car of gold, throwing in front of him continual lightnings of thought in the midst of a shining rain of fancies, and a greater government and a more careful and concentrated use rather than an enhancement of his powers is the one thing his poetry needs for its perfection.

The name of the volume, taken from its first poem, *The Feast of Youth*, is an appropriate description of its spirit, though one is inclined to call it rather a riot or revel than a simple feast. It is the singing of a young bacchanal of the Muse drunk with a bright and heady wine. In his first poem he promises to himself,

O ! I shall draw the blue out of the skies
 And offer it like wine of paradise
 To drunken Youth

and the rest is an ample fulfilment of the promise For the thought and sentiment are an eager, fine and fiery drinking of the joy of life and being, not in the pagan or physically sensuous kind of enjoyment, but with a spiritual and singularly pure intoxication of the thought, imagination and higher sense The spiritual joy of existence, of its primal colour and symbolic subtleties, its essential sense, images, suggestions, a free and intense voluptuousness of light is the note

There is a background in it of Hindu Vedantic thought and feeling which comes out especially in ‘Fire’, ‘Dusk’, ‘Messages’ and other poems, but will be found repeatedly elsewhere and runs through the whole as a sort of undercurrent, but the mould of the thought, the colour and tissue of the feeling betray a Moslem, a Persian, a Sufi influence

The thought-substance, the governing inspiration of this poetry is such as might well form a fusion of the Vedantic and the Sufi mentality It is the utterance of a mystical joy in God and Nature, sometimes of the direct God-union It is to bring this remoter splendid vision near to us that image is strained and crowded, symbol multiplied We get this mystic sense and aspiration in the poem, ‘Fire’, in an image of love,—

I am athirst for one glimpse of your beautiful face, O Love!
 Veiled in the mystical silence of stars and the purple of skies

The closing lines of the ‘Hour of Rest’ express it more barely,—I quote them only for their directness, though the expression stumbles and even lapses badly in the last two lines,—

There is a sweetness in the world
 That I have sometimes felt,
 And oft in fragrant petals curl'd
 His fragrance I have smelt
 And in sad notes of birds, unfurl'd
 The kindness He hath dealt!

It is more beautifully and mystically brought out in another poem, ‘Worship’,—

Like a rich song you chant your red-fire sunrise,
 Deep in my dreams, and forge your white-flame moon.
 You hide the crimson secret of your sunset,
 And the pure, golden message of your noon

You fashion cool-grey clouds within my body,
 And weave your rain into a diamond mesh
 The Universal Beauty dances, dances
 A glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh!

Spring lives as a symbol of inner experience, universal spring,—

The Spring-hues deepen into human Bliss!
 The heart of God and man in scent are blended
 The sky meets earth and heaven in one transparent kiss.

Simple, moving, melodious and direct is its utterance in “Messages”, with one image at least which deepens into intimate revelation,—

In my slumber and my waking
 I can hear His sobbing flute
 Thro’ the springtime and the autumn
 Shaping every flower and fruit...
 And His gleaming laughter colours
 Orange hills and purple streams,
 He is throbbing in the crystal,
 Magic centre of my dreams
 Silver stars are visible twinkles
 Of His clear, transparent touch
 He is moving every moment
 To the world He loves so much!

In the sea

God churns thy waters into silvern foam
 And breathes His music into every shell ..

Noon† is the Master’s “mystic dog with paws of fire” and “Behind the clouds some hidden Flutist plays His flute” These are some of the more overt and express phrasings of the predominant idea, exquisite in harmony, lovely and subtly penetrating in their thought Elsewhere it is simply Nature and the bliss, light and wonder behind her that are expressed, the rest is concealed, yet suggested in the light But there is always the same principle of a bright mystic vision and the transmutation of natural things into symbol values of the universal light, joy and beauty

This poetry is an utterance of an ancient mystic experience with a new tone and burden of its own

† The poem has been reproduced at the end of this compilation

The genius, power, newness of this poetry is evident. If certain reserves have to be made, it is because of a frequent immaturity in the touch which at times makes itself too sharply felt and is seldom altogether absent. the poet is still too much possessed by his gifts rather than their possessor, too easily carried away by the delight of brilliant expression and image to steep his word always in the deeper founts of his inspiration. The poetic expression is always brilliant, but never for long together quite sure,—lines of most perfect beauty too often alternate with others which are by no means so good. The image-maker's faculty is used with a radiant splendour and lavishness, but without discrimination; what begins as imaginative vision frequently thins away into a bright play of fancy, and there are lines which come dangerously near to prettiness and conceit. Especially there is not yet that sufficient incubation of the inspiration and the artistic sense which turns a poem into a perfectly satisfying artistic whole. Young as he is, the poet has already almost all the secrets, and has only to use them more firmly and constantly. Already—in most of the poems, but I may instance *Memory*, *My Unlaunched Boat*, the three Sonnets and some of the *Songs of Sunlight*,—there is the frequency of a full and ripe expression and movement, sometimes varying from a mellow clarity to a concentrated force,—

daylight dies

In silence on the bosom of the darkening skies
And with him, every note
Is crushed to silent sorrow in the song-bird's throat,—

sometimes in a soft, clear and magical beauty,—

The Spring hath come and gone with all her coloured hours
The earth beneath her tread
Laughed suddenly a peal of blue and green and red .
And for her tender beauty wove a flowery bed
She gathered all her touch-born blossoms from bright bowers
And fled with all the laughter of earth's flowers

sometimes in a delicate brightness and richness, constantly in a daring yet perfectly successful turn, suggestion or subtle correspondence of image. There is often an extraordinary and original felicity in the turning of the physical image to bring out some deep and penetrating psychological or psychical suggestion.

Since the appearance of this book Mr Chattopadhyay has given to the public one or two separate poems of a still greater beauty which show a very swift development of his powers. We may well hope to find in him a supreme singer of the vision of God in Nature and Life, and the meeting of the divine and the human which must be at first the most vivifying and liberating part of India's message to a humanity that is now touched everywhere by a growing will for the spiritualising of the earth-existence †

‡

The most characteristic trend of recent poetry has been an attempt, sometimes lucid, sometimes half understanding or obscure, to break the doors of [this] luminous cavern and to get the seeing and phrase which would be that of this intuitive self of our intelligence and imagination and sensation and life and feeling. In a certain kind of continental poetry it is a search for the sheer intuitivities of sensation and of the more vital emotions and states and experiences and relations with objects and persons, the spirit's sense of itself, as it were, externalised and made vital and physical and some illumination of the inner meaning of this externality, that motives a new kind of utterance. Much of present-day English poetry drives in the same direction but with less subtlety and a more forceful outwardness of sight and tone. The Irish poets and in a different way the few Indians, Tagore and Chattopadhyaya and Mrs. Naidu, who have written in English or transferred their poetical thought into that medium, aim at pure intuitivities of a more psychic feeling, sensation and life-vision or a subtle and psychic or spiritualised imagination and intelligence. All, however, are secretly moved to their very different and often contradictory tendencies by the same fundamental endeavour of the Time-spirit.¹

*

If Harin had indicated that the God spoken of was not the sole Divinity he would have spoiled the poem. For the purpose of the poem he has to be spoken of as the sole Divinity. Why must we take the poem as an exercise in philosophy? A poem is a poem, and not a doctrine. It expresses something in the poet's mind or his feeling.²

*

Some of Toru Dutt's poems, Sarojini's, Harin's have been highly placed by good English critics, and I don't think we need be more queasy than Englishmen themselves.³

*

...Krishnaprem . discourages Harin's poetry on the ground of a lack of overtones.⁴

*

I received much poetry from Indian writers for review in the *Arya*, but I always refrained because I would have had to be very severe. I wrote only about Harin because there I could seriously, and I think justly, write unqualified praise.⁵

*

.Dilip has not the mystic mind and vision—Harin also.⁶

*

I had not in view the *Dark Well* poems when I wrote about Harin. I was thinking about his ordinary way of writing. If I remember right, the *Dark Well* poems came from the inner mind centre, some from the Higher Mind—other planes may have sent their message to his mind to put in poetic speech, but the main worker was the poetic intelligence which took what was given and turned it into something very vivid, coloured and beautiful,—but surely not mystic in the sense given above.⁷

*

[Discouraging the kind of English and American writing as was included in the periodical *Shama'a* Sri Aurobindo comments:]

I hope however that we shall get often a relief in strains that go beyond the present to a greater poetic future.—let us say, like the exquisite rhythm and perfect form of beauty of Harindranath's poem in the first number.⁸

*

I have never had any practical certainty or any certainty that Harin was Shelley. The question was often raised—I remember to have replied in the negative. No doubt there was a strong Shelleyan vein in Harin's poetry, but if everybody who has that is to be accounted a reincarnation of Shelley, we get into chaotic waters. In that case, Tagore must be a reincarnation of Shelley, and Harin, logically must be a reincarnation of Tagore—who couldn't wait till Tagore walked off to Paradise or Shelley must have divided himself between the couple. It may be that afterwards I leaned at a time towards a hesitating acceptance, but I am certain that I was never certain about it.

Besides, I imagine Shelley was not an evolutionary being but a being of a higher plane assisting in the evolution.⁹

*

Sarojini Naidu has at best a strange power of brilliant colour and exquisite melody which you are not likely ever to have, on the other hand she is narrowly limited by her gift. Harindranath has an unfailing sense of beauty and rhythm (or had it before he became a Bolshevik and Gandhist)—while your writing is very unequal, but I do not suppose he will ever do much better than he has done or produce anything that will put him in the first rank of poets, unless he changes greatly in the future.¹⁰

*

Your judgment is according to a fixed qualitative criterion where the form is concerned it does not differ with different writers, provided you do not add any qualifying phrase

Thus, a poem, say, by Shailen would be aesthetically on a par with one of Harin's or Arjava's if simply the remark "very good" was won by them all.

You seem to demand a very rigid and academic fixity of meaning from my hastily penned comments on the poetry sent to me. I have no unvarying aesthetic standard or fixed qualitative criterion,—not only so, but I hold any such thing to be impossible with regard to so subtle and unintellectual an essence as poetry.

My judgment does differ with different writers and also with different kinds of writings. If I put "very good" on a poem of Shailen's, it does not mean that it is on a par with Harin's or Arjava's or yours. It means that it is very good Shailen, but not that it is very good Harin or very good Arjava. "If very good were *won* by them all," you write! But, good heavens, you write as if I were a master giving marks in a class.¹¹

*

Harin's poetry deals very skilfully with spiritual ideas or feelings through the language of the emotion and the poetic imagination and intelligence.¹²

*

Arjava writes most often from the plane of inner thought and occult vision (the plane indicated in yoga by the forehead centre). As for Harin, I can't say, he varies and most often writes from several planes at a time—so it is impossible to define. (2/12/1933)

As for Harin, I never object to what he may invent in language or in grammar, because so much of mastery of language carries with it a right to take liberties with it. But I am more severe with myself and others. (25/9/1934)

I say that inspiration in poetry is always an uncertain thing (except for a phenomenon like Harin).

I do not know whom you refer as great men here, but Harin is certainly a great poet. So what is the difficulty in recognising his greatness? (2/4/1936)¹³

Look at Harin's poetry: We're so ecstatic over it here, but outside he hardly gets a good audience, not even Krishnaprem seems to like his poetry.

I don't think I can put as much value on Krishnaprem's literary judgments as on his comments on Yoga etc. Some of his criticisms astonished me. For instance he found fault with Harin for using rhymes which Shelley uses freely in his best poems.

You must remember also that Harin's poetry has been appreciated by some of the finest English writers like Binyon and De la Mare. But anyway all growing writers (unless they are very lucky) meet with depreciation and criticism at first until people get

accustomed to it Perhaps if Harin had published his poems under the name let us say of Harry Chatto, he would have succeeded by this time and no one would have talked of Oriental inaptness

You wrote to Harin that richness of image comes from an openness to occult planes, which Harin and Nishikanta have Dilip does not have it yet, it seems to me

Richness of image is not the whole of poetry There are many “born poets” who avoid too much richness of image There are certain fields of consciousness which express themselves naturally through image most—there are others that do it more through idea and feeling

. I fondly cherish a hope that one day we shall be able to write like Harin

Better, I hope.

Perhaps we may not have his fluency

So much fluency is not necessary He had perhaps too much

Do you think this recent sentimentality could be due to Harin's influence?

No

I am reading his lyrics at present, so an unconscious imitation of his style?

I don't know Harin's sentimentality is of a different kind

Certainly, your real inspiration is nearer Amal's than Harin's—the inspiration that makes you write strong and original things Under Harin's influence you seem to become second-hand and reminiscent of past poetry There is however a lyric vein of another kind which came out in your dream-poems—it is that that sometimes tries to come out in your lyrics—but it is not like Harin's

*Lonelily like a sheep I go
Along the watermark of time..*

How is this sheep? “Lonelily” Harinian?

I don't know if it is Harinian, but it is certainly impossible Sheep is too sheepish,—you might just as well say, “like a mouse”.

“Lonely” is impossible? or it’s impossible in this context? Surely you have seen Harin using it very often. If you haven’t, then I will show it to you tomorrow, or only Harin can do it?

The word simply doesn’t exist, any more than “lovely” or “silly” or “wily” You can say “lonesomely” if you think it worth while, not “lonely” Harin is no authority for the use of English words I did not correct his English when I saw his poems—I left the responsibility of his departures to himself, except when he himself asked on a particular point

. These are the usual vicissitudes of the poetic career and unless you are a Dilip or a Harin writing away for dear life every day with an inexhaustible satisfaction and producing tons of poetic matter, you can’t escape the said vicissitudes ¹⁴

!

You resemble Shelley only in the spontaneous lyrical flow and in the mystic tendency but your temperament is different from his and your mystic tendency is of a different kind, so too in you the power of poetic vision has no resemblance to his The only point of resemblance to Keats is the richness of colour, more orientally bold and vivid in your poetry than in his but here again there is no true similarity in the temperament or the vision Blake you resemble only in the fact that you have the opening on the occult planes and receive freely their images, that produces a fundamental likeness which the intellect feels so easily between all such poetry, but once again the worlds he was in touch with and the worlds from which you receive are not the same

You are being made an unusually effective instrument for the expression of spiritual truth and experience in poetry—which fulfils the prediction I made about you in reviewing your first book

The lyrics of the *Dark Well* reach the extreme of lyrical beauty The vision seems to have reached so much perfection that it expresses itself in words that appear not so much a form given to it as its natural body They seem to exist or be self-born rather than to have been written

The poems for the *Dark Well* have the quiver of the light that comes from the depths of inner vision

The spiritual poet is, indeed, there in you firmly seated in the seat of inspiration and becoming more and more perfect in a many-sided way

It seems to me that your poetry is on a rising curve which draws nearer and nearer to some predestined summit of strength and beauty

These poems create a very distinct advance on the earlier ones in the *Rose of God**, those carried a slight sense of seeking and uncertainty, a new inspiration still feeling after its right direction, force of expression, rhythmic movement, finding them on the whole, but not altogether. Here is in all those respects an assured handling and full value. The new manner is very different from the *Bird of Fire*'s—in place of the rush and volume there is a subdued but a full richness of substance and word and phrase. This creates a quite different colour, tone and atmosphere.

The poems today are extraordinarily beautiful. To all the qualities that give a sustained level to the other poems there is added that something more which is unanalysable and gives the effect of something absolute—a victorious perfection.

These poems are extremely fine. It is an expression always more developed, precise and full and a substance more and more rounded and firm in a sort of concise amplitude that is coming into being. A growing towards full poetic maturity on a high level is the promise.

You succeeded almost always in keeping a high level of image, colour and language and it is always expressive of something, not mere word and verse. The only difference is that it sometimes keeps that level and sometimes shoots up into a strange and clear-cut inevitability. The one positive defect is that sometimes the syntactical construction trails a little, or gets involved and it takes two or three readings to seize the precise significance as a whole.

Magnificent poems! The idea of *Onward* is most original and beautifully and powerfully worked out. As for the *Master Soul* I do not know how you could think of scrapping it. I have seldom read more noble stanzas than these four. Apart from such lines of exceptional vision as

Where the stars dwindle and time-lustres dim

or

The molten gold of realised dream

and others all the stanzas are cast in the style of great nobility and power.

These indeed are new qualities that are emerging in your poetry. Beauty and light and colour were there before, but not this sculptured force and height of diction! When all meet together as in *Onward* the effect is remarkable.¹⁵

NOON

The noon, a mystic dog with paws of fire,
Runs through the sky with ecstasy of drouth,

* An early anthology of Chattopadhyaya's poems —Ed

Licking the earth with tongues of golden flame
Set in a burning mouth.

It floods the forests with loud barks of light,
And chases its own shadows on the plains
Its Master silently hath set it free
Awhile from silver chains

At last, towards the cinctured end of day,
It drinks cool draughts from sunset-mellow rills
Then, chained to twilight by the Master's hand,
It sleeps among the hills

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAY

[N B Harindranath Chattopadhyaya used to spell his name without the last 'a' in his early period —Editor]

References

- 1 *The Future Poetry* SABCL, Vol 9, p 280
- 2 *Ibid*, p 321
- 3 *Ibid*, pp 454-55
- 4 *On Himself*, SABCL Vol 26, p 256
- 5 *Ibid*, p 284
- 6 *Ibid*, p 288
- 7 *Ibid*, p 289 This letter dated 5 5 1937 is apropos of Amal's query regarding the source of inspiration of Harin's *Dark Well* poems
- 8 *The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol 17, pp 322-23
- 9 *Life-Literature-Yoga Some New Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (1952), p 6 Letter dated 19 7 1937
- 10 *Ibid*, p 30 Amal adds a footnote "This remark was made before the work done during the two years spent by Chattopadhyaya in the Ashram The criticism in it may not apply to that work, part of which differed from anything done by him previously or subsequently "
- 11 *Ibid*, p 36, also in *SABCL*, Vol 26 pp 284-85
- 12 *Ibid*, p 36 Amal to Sri Aurobindo, 14 5 37 "Everybody feels at home in Harin's poetry, though I dare say that if I catechised them I might find the deepest felicities missed "
- 13 Letters written to Amal Kiran
- 14 *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, pp 70, 404, 491, 839, 971, 982, 1075-76, 1079
- 15 These few extracts (after the last star) are from the letters written to Harin in the context of questions put to Sri Aurobindo by him

“THE PSYCHIC BEING MATERIALISES ITSELF”

I HAD an experience which was for me interesting, because it was for the first time It was yesterday or the day before, I do not remember. X was there just in front of me, and I saw her psychic being, dominating over her by so much (*gesture indicating about twenty centimetres*) taller It was the first time Her physical being was small and her psychic being was so much bigger And it was an unsexed being, neither man nor woman. Then I said to myself (possibly it is always so, I do not know, but here I noticed it very clearly), “But it is the psychic being, it is that which will materialise itself and become the supramental being!”

I saw it, it was so There were particularities, but these were not well-marked, and it was clearly a being that was neither man nor woman, having the combined characteristics of both And it was bigger than the person and in every way overtopped her by about so much (*gesture surpassing the physical body by about twenty centimetres*), she was there and it was like this (*same gesture*) And it had this colour this colour . which if it became quite material would be the colour of Auroville.¹ It was, fainter, as though behind a veil, it was not absolutely precise, but it was that colour There was hair on the head, but it was somewhat different I shall see better perhaps another time But it interested me very much, because it was as though that being were telling me, “But you are busy looking to see what kind of being the supramental will be—there it is! There, it is that.” And it was there It was the psychic being of the person

So, one understands One understands the psychic being materialises itself and that gives continuity to evolution This creation gives altogether the feeling that there is nothing arbitrary, there is a kind of divine logic behind and it is not like our human logic, it is very much superior to ours—but there is one, and I was fully satisfied when I saw this

It is really interesting I was very interested It was there, calm and quiet, and it said to me, “You were looking, well, there it is, yes, it is that!”

And then I understood why the mind and the vital were sent out of this body, leaving the psychic being—naturally it was that which had been always governing all the movements, so it was nothing new, but there are no difficulties any more all the complications that were coming from the vital and the mental, adding their impressions and tendencies, all gone And I understood “Ah! it is that, it is this psychic being which has to become the supramental being ”

But I never sought to know what its appearance was like And when I saw X, I understood And I see it, I am seeing it still. I have kept the memory It was as though the hair on the head was red (but it was not like that) And its expression! An expression so fine, and sweetly ironical oh! extraordinary, extraordinary.

And you understand, I had my eyes open, it was almost a material vision

¹ Orange

So one understands All of a sudden all the questions have vanished, it has become very clear, very simple

(Silence)

And it is precisely the psychic that survives. So, if it materialises itself, it means the abolition of death. But “abolition” .nothing is abolished except what is not in accordance with the Truth, which goes away whatever is not capable of transforming itself in the image of the psychic and becoming an integral part of the psychic.

It is truly interesting.

THE MOTHER

(Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol 11, pp 238-39)

“THE WORK THAT SRI AUROBINDO HAD GIVEN ME”

I REMEMBER the time when Sri Aurobindo was there . . . Well, the inner part of the being was in a consciousness that felt, that saw things according to the higher consciousness altogether different; and then, just when Sri Aurobindo fell ill and when there were all those things, first of all the accident (he broke his right thigh) . . . then the *body*, the body was saying all the time. “These are dreams, these are dreams, this is not for us, for us, the body, it is like that” (*gesture indicating under the earth*).... It was frightful! And all that is gone. It is gone completely after so many years, so many years of effort, it is gone, and the body itself felt the divine Presence, it had the impression that all must necessarily change. And then, some days ago this formation that had left (which is an earthly formation, of all humanity, that is to say, of those who had the vision, the perception, even only the aspiration for the higher Truth—when they come back to the Fact, they stand this terribly painful thing, this ceaseless negation of all circumstances), this formation from which the body had been completely liberated has come back. It has come back, but . . . when it came back, when the body saw that, it saw it as one sees a falsehood. And I understood how much the body had changed, because when it saw that, it had the impression. . . it looked at that with a smile and the impression, ah! that it was an old formation with no truth in it any more. And this was an extraordinary experience: that, the time for that has ended—the time for that has ended. And I know that this Pressure of the Consciousness is a pressure so that things as they were—so miserable, so small, so obscure, so . . . inescapable as well, apparently—all that is gone behind (*Mother makes a gesture over her shoulders*); it is a past that has passed. So I really saw—I saw, I understood—that the work of this Consciousness (which is without pity, it does not care whether the thing is difficult or not, probably it does not even care much for apparent ravages) is so that the normal condition should no longer be a thing so heavy, so obscure, and so ugly—so low—and that it should be the dawn . . . something breaking out on the horizon. a new consciousness—something more true, more luminous.

What Sri Aurobindo says here of diseases is just that. the force of habit and of all its constructions and all that appears inescapable and irrevocable in diseases, all that, it is as though experiences were multiplied in order to show . . . in order that one might learn that it is simply a question of attitude, yes, attitude. of going beyond, going beyond this mental prison in which humanity has shut itself and of . . . breathing up above.

And it is the experience of the body. Before, those who had inner experiences used to say, “Yes, up there it is so, but here . . .” Now the “but here” very soon will no longer be. This is the conquest that is being done, this tremendous change: that physical life must be governed by the higher consciousness and not by the mental world. It is a change over of authority. It is difficult. It is hard. It is painful. Naturally there is breakage, but... But truly, one can see—one can see. And that is the *real change*, it is that which will enable the new Consciousness to express itself. And the body is

learning, learning its lesson—all bodies, all bodies.

(*Silence*)

It is the old division made by the mind· up above, it is quite all right, you may have all the experiences and everything is luminous, wonderful, here. nothing to be done And the feeling that when one is born, still one is born in the world where nothing can be done. That explains, moreover, why all those who had not foreseen the possibility that things could be otherwise, used to say, “Better to depart and then ” All that has become so clear But that change, the fact that it is *no longer* inevitable, that is the great Victory it is *no longer* inevitable One feels—one feels, one sees—and the body itself has had the experience that soon here also it can be more true.

There is, there is truly something changed in the world

(*Silence*)

Naturally, it will take some time before it is really established There, it is battle From all sides, on all levels there is an assault of things that come to say externally, “Nothing has been changed”—but it is not true It is not true, the body knows that it is not true And now it knows, it knows in what direction

And what Sri Aurobindo has written in these aphorisms, just what I am looking at now, is so prophetic! It was so much the vision of the true Thing So prophetic

(*Silence*)

And I see now, I see how his departure and his work so so vast, yes, and so constant, in the subtle physical, how much, how much it has helped! How much it has (*Mother makes a gesture of kneading Matter*) helped to prepare things, to change the physical structure

All the experiences that others have had, which were in order to come in contact with the higher worlds, left here below the physical as it is . How to say it? From the beginning of my life till Sri Aurobindo’s departure, I was in the consciousness that one can go up, one can know, one can have all the experiences (indeed, one did have them), but when one came back into this body it was the old mental laws, for-mi-da-ble, which ruled things. And then, all these years have been years of preparation—preparation—liberation and preparation, and these days now it has been ah! the *physical* recognition, made by the body, that it has changed

It has to be “worked out”, as it is said, it has to be realised in all the details, but the change *is done*—the change is done

That is to say, the material conditions elaborated by the mind, *fixed* by it (*Mother closes her two fists*), that appeared to be inevitable to such an extent that those who had a living experience of the higher worlds thought that one must flee from the world. give

up this material world if one wanted to live in the truth (that is the basis of all these theories and faiths); but now it is no longer like that. The physical is capable of receiving the higher Light, the Truth, the true Consciousness and of *manifesting* it

It is not easy, it needs endurance and will, but a day will come when this will be quite natural. It is just, just the door opened—that is all, now one must go on

(*Silence*)

Naturally, what was established clings and struggles desperately. That is the cause of all the trouble (*gesture indicating the earthly atmosphere*)—it has lost the game It has lost the game.

(*Silence*)

It took a little more than a year for this Consciousness¹ to win this victory And still, naturally, it is not visible except to those who have the inner vision, but . . . but it is done.

(*Long silence*)

It was this, the work that Sri Aurobindo had given me. Now I understand
But it is as if from all sides—all sides—these forces, these powers of the mind rose up in protest—in violent protest—to impose their old laws “But it was always so!”
It is finished, however It will not be always so There!

(*Silence*)

Something of this battle had been going on in this body these last days It was really very interesting . . . There was outside, coming from outside, an attempt to submit the body to experiences in order to compel it to recognise “No, what has always been will always be, you may try, but it is an illusion”, and so something happened, quite a little disorganisation in the body, and then the body answered with its attitude. a peace like this (*gesture of immobility*), and its attitude (*gesture of hands open*) “It is as Thou willest, Lord, as Thou willest” . . . Like a flash everything disappears! And this has happened several times, at least a dozen times in a day Then—then the body begins to feel “There it is!” It has this delight, this delight of having lived the Marvel It is not as it was, it is *no more* as it was—it is no more as it was

One has still to fight on, one must have patience, courage, will, confidence—but it is no more “like that”, it is the old thing that seeks to cling—hideous! hideous But . . . it is no more like that, no more like that

There!

(*Silence*)

1 The superman consciousness, which manifested on 1 January 1969

And this also how far, how far will the body be able to go? This also, it is *perfectly* peaceful and happy it is “what Thou wiltest”

(*Long silence*)

All the rest appears so old, so old, like something belonging to a dead past—that seeks to resuscitate itself, but cannot any more

And all, all, all the circumstances are as catastrophic as possible—the worries and complications and difficulties, all, all have risen up violently, like wild beasts, but. it is finished The body *knows* that all this is finished Perhaps it will take centuries, but it is finished For it to disappear, that may take centuries, but now it is finished

This realisation, altogether concrete and absolute, that one could have only when one came out of Matter (*Mother lowers a finger*) it is sure, it is sure and certain one will have it *even here*

(*Long silence*)

This is the fourteenth month since the Consciousness¹ came—fourteenth month, twice seven

(*Silence*)

This is the fourteenth!

Yes, the fourteenth

Then, it is interesting

(*Silence*)

How much he has worked since he left! Oh! . all the while, all the while

(*Silence*)

It seems, it seems to be a miracle in the body The disappearance of this formation seems truly miraculous

And everything is getting clear.

We shall see.

(*Long silence*)

It was relatively quick

(*Silence*)

Well.

THE MOTHER

(*Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol 11, pp 226-32*)

1 The superman consciousness, January 1969

THE MOTHER'S TALK TO HUTA

[We reproduce Huta's typescript of a talk by the Mother to her
The script was corrected by the Mother in her own hand —Editor]

It was 4th of October 1963, when I went to the Mother. I showed Her the message given by Her.

"What have you given to the Lord or done for Him that you ask the Mother to do something for You ?

She does only the Lord's work."

I wondered. What does the Lord want as He has everything, what can be done for Him, as He is capable of doing everything ?

And here is the Mother's reply....

"The Lord doesn't demand anything except Surrender. - Your wish, Your want, Your will, Your thoughts and feelings, You must offer to Him without reserve. And let His will, thoughts, feelings, wish and wants become yours. In fact, - Let His vibrations become Your vibrations. Then there is no question of such miseries and troubles. You get the Lord and You get everything. But it can only be done, when you surrender totally to Him and Him only. Not otherwise. Well, I don't say that the complete surrender is very easy. To give up everything is ~~and~~ ^{indeed} difficult.

Nevertheless, give everything; your sorrows, pains, difficulties and sufferings to the Lord and tell Him, 'these are Yours, take care of them, this is Your responsibility and not mine.' Try this and you will find the difference. Surrender everything to Him and say, 'Thee, Thee only Thee, O Lord.'

The soul who is the delegate of the Divine, ~~and~~ ^{to} represents the Divine. It tries to gather the whole being's ^{for transformation} substance together and offer ^{to} to the Divine ~~to transform them~~. The soul is ^{in proportion to} the portion of the Divine. And sufferings of the soul always ~~comes~~ ^{are} ~~of~~ its ~~own~~ strength. ~~And~~ ^{These} sufferings and pains are not only for the soul but for the whole world, because nothing is separate - ^{the whole world} ~~everything~~ is One single thing. When beings suffer, the world suffers, the soul suffers and the Divine suffers too. But the Lord doesn't want anybody to suffer. - He wants every one to be happy. ~~But~~ ^{the} It is human beings who make things difficult.

(to be continued)

This Mother - (pointing out to Herself) has physical body with only two hands, two eyes and so on... But Her Consciousness is Vast. She sends answers atonce without opening people's letters. But unhappily, most of the people are not aware and cannot receive Her answers, Her Force and Her Consciousness. - Otherwise, the work would be ~~more~~ easier for the Mother. However, Her work is to lead every one to ~~their~~ ^{his} Goal.

And when I questioned, 'This rough ugly and wretched world - would it ever become a perfect golden divine World ?

The Mother's answer is, "It is bound to be because it cannot be otherwise."

Further She said, " This world is ~~made of~~ ^{a condensation of energy} ~~matter~~; what we see - human beings, animals, trees, plants etc.. etc. are merely ~~made of~~ ^{a condensation of energy} and nothing else. -

Recently scientists have tried to ~~research~~ to find out all about the ~~earth~~ ^{material world} and ~~human beings etc. etc.~~ ^{everything is made of} and have come to the conclusion that ~~the earth~~ and the ~~elementary particles (electrons, protons)~~ ^{that are nothing but condensed energy} living creatures upon the earth are nothing but an ~~atom~~ ^{atom}. But of course! ~~very~~ ^{energy} is really ~~conscious energy~~ ^{conscious energy} and behind everything there is only the ~~One~~ ^{One} behind the ~~seen~~ ^{seen} there is something ~~there is only one~~ ^{the greater Power -} ~~The Supreme Who holds everything in Him and wills to carry~~ ^{everyone to his} ~~them all to their~~ Goal and to manifest Himself in all, and thus the world ought to become only He Who is everything." OM.

INDISTINCT

(Translation of Sri Aurobindo's Bengali poem *Asphuta*)

ALWAYS, when our thoughts fall mute,
Notes of a mysterious flute
 Seem from somewhere to come thronging;
Indistinct, the whispered strain
Wakens a delicious pain,
 Stirs the heart with love and longing

Whirling in the dim moonlight
Touches and eludes our sight
 Someone who is near us ever
Faint the rhythm of his feet,
Limbs half-seen inflame a sweet
 Hunger that is sated never.

In the dark is glimpsed a smile,
Caught, a flash of movement, while
 Nothing else reveals the Dancer.
In love with the unseen my mind,
In a cage of flesh confined,
 To its yearning seeks an answer.

Lips approach our own and fade,
On our hand a hand is laid,
 Fleeting thrills we cannot capture
Thwarting our too narrow dreams,
Frustrating our hopes, he seems
 To torture us with lures of rapture.

When will he be ours to clasp,
Laugh divinely in our grasp,
 Yield to us his bosom's treasure?—
In a touch the world's delight,
In a form disclosed to sight
 Beauty without bound or measure!

RICHARD HARTZ

**A POEM BY NIRODBARAN WITH
SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS**

ASCENT

(Original Form)

ALONE in a white deathless peace
I am merged, like a felicitous moon
Lost in the flaming ecstasies
its and
Of (a) self-wrapt luminous swoon

New centuries open their eyes
In
(With) a sudden quiver of strange delight,
New forms of splendour bathe the skies
the
With myriad hues of the Infinite.

rhythm? *excellent*

Like the passage of a bird my soul
Wings the dark distances of time
To a far heaven where stars unroll
creation's rhyme
The mystery of (the Sublime)

There all my hours are slowly shaped
Into diamond reveries of God
en
And with his gold melodies draped
Live a
(Soar) in (the) vast by thoughts untrod.

are grown
Earth's changing forms (appear) to me
Like fleeting shadows on a background
Of tarnished and faint memory—
A desert- dead
(An) echo of (a desert-) sound!

rhythm? *excellent*

8.8 37

Exceedingly fine

*“New centuries open their eyes”—
You won’t agree perhaps that centuries have eyes?*

I agree to everything and anything—let them have ears also. When one can write like that, all objections vanish

I couldn’t manage the third line, perhaps

Excuse me. You have managed very well.

*The idea of the poem is rather high-pitched, when all my chords are so low!
Please mind only the poetry*

I do—It is magnificent.

“appear” in the last stanza doesn’t appear to me very pretty

No, it isn’t pretty—it is first-class

*The last line was without any colour or sound Then I put the “echo sound”.
Approve of it?*

Echo is all right, but it is the only line that is not quite effective. However, I have remedied that

Anything to say?

I have said it Why the hell can’t you always write like that? The inspiration came clean through this time

Why the hell can’t I write? Why the hell, indeed? Because I don’t want to—that’s all!

My why the hell was an ejaculation, not a question.

*If I were to ask you that question your prompt answer would be: No poet can
always maintain a high level Wouldn’t it?*

Obviously, if it is put as a question, that is the only answer. But it wasn’t.

9 8 37

(Revised Form)

Alone in a white deathless peace
I am merged, like a felicitous moon
Lost in the flaming ecstasies
Of its self-wrapt and luminous swoon.

New centuries open their eyes
In a sudden quiver of strange delight,
New forms of splendour bathe the skies
With the myriad hues of the Infinite

Like the passage of a bird my soul
Wings the dark distances of time
To a far heaven where stars unroll
The mystery of creation's rhyme

There all my hours are slowly shaped
Into diamond reveries of God
And with his golden melodies draped
Live in a vast by thoughts untrod.

Earth's changing forms are grown to me
Like fleeting shadows on a background
Of tarnished and faint memory—
A desert-echo of dead sound!

8.8.37

MOTHER INDIA—50 YEARS A LOOK AROUND AND AHEAD

Mother India celebrates with the present issue the completion of its golden jubilee on 21 February 1999

Why did the editor decide to launch Mother India on the Mother's birthday, 21 February?

On that date the earth received into its bosom the child that was destined to become the manifestation and embodiment of the Divine Shaktī, the Mother who, sacrificing the heavens for a mortal birth, came so that she might ensure the fulfilment of the Supreme Endeavour, the Supramentalisation of earth's nature. She was destined, in this earth-drama of evolution, to play the role of Prakriti to her Purusha, Radha to her Krishna and Savitri to her Satyavan. She is the Mediator between the Light and the human consciousness bringing her Force to the disciples who could bear its Light and Power. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the guiding spirits of the Ashram. The Ashram is the nucleus of the Integral Yoga where the true Indian consciousness, the consciousness of the Divine and Eternal, is sought to be developed as the basis for a new, dynamic solution to the problems of life.

Why did the editor name the magazine "Mother India"?

K D Sethna, editor of *Mother India*, has chosen this name for the magazine, because "India is a country whose very birth-cry, so to speak, was for the Superhuman, the Divine in concrete experience. The Vedas and the Upanishads are not primarily artistic creations, structures of speculative thought or manuals of morality and religious injunction. No doubt, they are masterpieces of poetic beauty and sublimity, embalm enormous audacities of the thinking mind, fountain forth a myriad wisdom of noble living. But, first and foremost, they are scriptures of God-realisation, word-embodiments of mysticism and spirituality, testimonies of union with the Infinite and the Eternal. India, therefore, essentially represents the luminousness that is the Truth of truths."¹

Growth and decay, changes and revolutions may occur in the body of a country, in the outer form, but so long as the idea it represents is kept secure and living and conscious, there is no danger to the country. Sri Aurobindo has said, "In the worst period of decline and failure this spirit was not dead in India. . ."² He further says: "In spite of all drawbacks and in spite of downfall, the spirit of Indian culture, its central ideas, its best ideals have still their message for humanity and not for India alone. And we in India hold that they are capable of developing out of themselves by contact with new need and idea as good and better solutions of the problems before us than those which are offered to us secondhand from Western sources."³

The living idea in the inner being of Bharat is the attempt to achieve a resolution, a reconciliation, a harmonisation and synthesis of the oppositions, contradictions, riddles, and paradoxes of this world. The seers, who saw oneness in the manyness that we see around us, began to explore the causes of the apparent multiplicity, how the many are strung invisibly upon the thread of unity, how the one unites the many and how this is the answer to the problem of existence, this the explanation and this the synthesis. It was then that the idea which is the soul of Bharat was born.

What is the ideal of Mother India?

K. D. Sethna published his first editorial in *Mother India* under the title *OUR IDEAL*. I am quoting the following lines from his article: "to be luminous has been the ideal of *Mother India* from the very start. Without that ideal we would never have launched into publication. Cleverness, however penetrating, and vividness, however stimulating, were not deemed sufficient. The world is not lacking in Reviews in which the grey cells are active, much less does it lack in those where the nerves are a-tingle. Of course, even genuine brain-stuff is a rare commodity and the real life-force is not found at every street-corner. But we aimed at something more. We wanted the intellect to be an instrument and the vitality a channel of the deepest powers of man's being—the powers of the evolving God in him."⁴

Why is our magazine called a Monthly Review of Culture?

Culture means essentially inner refinement and education. It means also the outer system of civilisation, the arts and crafts, the literature, the physical and psychological sciences, the social-political organisation, the economic and industrial set-up. In a deeper and truer sense, the culture of India is a way of life intended to prepare men for a greater existence. Both the individual and collectivity seek to achieve that aim through this culture. But each depends on the other for its growth. Therefore in social orders and institutions every facility is given for man to develop and grow in readiness for the ultimate aim of life. Sri Aurobindo has explained the distinctive character of Indian Culture in his books *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Renaissance in India*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

We can sum up the distinctive character of Indian Culture in the following passages from Sri Aurobindo's writings: "the people of India, even the 'ignorant masses' have this distinction that they are by centuries of training nearer to the inner realities, are divided from them by a less thick veil of the universal ignorance and are more easily led back to a vital glimpse of God and Spirit, self and eternity than the mass of men or even the cultured elite anywhere else.. This strong permeation or close nearness of the spiritual turn, this readiness of the mind of a whole nation to turn to the highest realities is the sign and fruit of an age-long, a real and a still living and supremely spiritual culture."⁵

“Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; . She was alive to the greatness of material laws and forces, she had a keen eye for the importance of the physical sciences. she knew how to organise the arts of ordinary life But she saw that the physical does not get its full sense until it stands in right relation to the supra-physical, she saw that the complexity of the universe could not be explained in the present terms of man or seen by his superficial sight, that there were other powers behind, other powers within man himself of which he is normally unaware, that he is conscious only of a small part of himself, that the invisible always surrounds the visible, the suprasensible the sensible, even as infinity always surrounds the finite. She saw too that man has the power of exceeding himself, of becoming himself more entirely and profoundly than he is She saw the myriad gods beyond man, God beyond the gods, and beyond God his own ineffable eternity, she saw that there were ranges of life beyond our life, ranges of mind beyond our present mind and above these she saw the splendours of the spirit ”⁶

“India has been pre-eminently the land of the Dharma and the Shastra. She searched for the inner truth and law of each human or cosmic activity, its Dharma, that found, she laboured to cast into elaborate form and detailed law of arrangement its application in fact and rule of life Her first period was luminous with the discovery of the Spirit, her second completed the discovery of the Dharma, her third elaborated into detail the first simpler formulation of the Shastra, but none was exclusive, the three elements are always present.”⁷

K D Sethna has shown the highest aim of culture in his articles published in *Mother India* in the issue of March 1952 In the following passages he gave his illuminating thoughts “For a proper understanding of the cultural activity points to a spiritual origin of it and a spiritual objective In Culture, considered deeply and not as a mere inventive exercise for the adornment or aggrandisement of common life, we have two movements—the unfoldment of man’s power of the True, the Beautiful and the Good and the lifting of that power to its highest realisable creativity . . The second movement of Culture—the lifting ever higher of our power of unfolding the True, the Beautiful and the Good—directs attention beyond the intellect which seeks to catch the whole of complex Reality in logically consistent formulas, the aesthetic faculty which strives to seize in delightful patterns all the affinities and contrasts of existence, the ethical nature which longs to turn the varied conditions of life into equal occasions for striking into unegoistic shapes the interrelations of individuals The second movement does not only testify to the idealist in the thinker, the artist and the moral man: it also gives evidence of a gradation in Values Truth is seen as of many planes—outer, inner, inmost, highest Beauty is visioned as of several degrees—gross, subtle, supernatural, beatific, Goodness is beheld as of numerous poises- impulsive, intelligent, inspired, enlightened And an urge is felt to rise from stage to stage, refine and largen one’s capacity, merge one’s initiative with some in-dwelling and over-brooding Mystery that is the All-True, the All-Beautiful, the All-Good ”⁸

In what way has Mother India played a prominent part, so that the eyes of the readers anxiously wait for the coming issue every month?

Mother India stands for no narrow cult. It kindles a vision and initiates a word that bear on the whole human situation, meeting its most central and recurrent as well as its most external and diverse issues, man in every mode and field—the thinker and the scientist, the artist and the mystic. Reminiscences, messages, essays, stories, talks on Art and Culture, Integral Yoga, and world problems have poured out in abundant streams from the issues of *Mother India* for fifty years incessantly and the editor K. D. Sethna's untiring effort has been to bring out the inner truth of the manifold activities and problems of human life.

A message was given by the Mother to the society for the Spiritual and Cultural Renaissance of Bharat on 23 August 1951, published in *Mother India*.

Let the splendours of Bharat be reborn in the realisations of her imminent future with the help and blessings of the living soul.

Mother India has recorded a series of talks of Sri Aurobindo with his disciples year after year, month after month. In the course of his talks Sri Aurobindo reveals his external personality. The readers will be surprised to see the relation between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. With how much care and attention the Mother and Sri Aurobindo bestowed their Grace on each sadhak, and how affectionately they treated each sadhak according to his nature.

We can quote from Nirodbaran's *Correspondence* one example of Sri Aurobindo's relationship with his disciples. "The modern age has produced a modern Guru who could deal with each sadhak according to his nature. When I asked from what perennial fount flowed so much laughter, his cryptic answer was the Upanishadic *raso vai sah*, Verily He is Delight. In the whole of spiritual history I know of no Guru-Shishya relationship in which the Guru of venerable age and vast learning has given such unlimited liberty to the disciple, so that I could challenge his Karmayoga doctrine, refuse to accept his own example as having any validity for common people like us, carry on a long-drawn out argument on Homeopathy vs. Allopathy etc, etc. In all the examples what was remarkable was his calm and cool temper, Yogic samata, inexhaustible patience and above all his sunny humour pervading the entire correspondence."

Reminiscences by Nolini Kanta Gupta were published in *Mother India* in a series of talks from 1961 to 1964. The series gives a picture of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and how it originated and a thrilling experience of the Revolutionary Movement during the period 1905-1906. These articles were translated from Bengali into English and were an authentic exposition of Sri Aurobindo's life and work.

Nagin Doshi, an aspiring soul, came to the Ashram at a very tender age and he started his sadhana of Integral Yoga under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo. There are a

series of questions put by him to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Aurobindo's answers. These were first published in *Mother India*. We are quoting one of his letters about the Psychic Being and its action

QUESTION: It is said that if a disciple receives his Guru's touch or grace his difficulties disappear because the soul in him, the "psychic", takes charge

SRI AUROBINDO All that is popular Yoga The Guru's touch or grace may open something, but the difficulties have always to be worked out still What is true is that if there is complete surrender which implies the prominence of the psychic, these difficulties are no longer felt as a burden or obstacle but only as superficial imperfections which the working of the grace will remove.¹⁰

Now we are going to depict the Mother's relationship with her blessed child Huta, who used to receive letters and have talks—which are included in her book *White Roses*—about subjects relating to sadhana and her major work of illustrating *Savitri* She wrote an article "On Spiritual and Occult Truths", which appeared in *Mother India* on 21st February 1978 where the author quoted not only the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but also some letters and talks which are now included in her book *The Story of a Soul* serialised in *Mother India* The Mother wrote " this subtle physical (or true physical) is a world where things are and happen somewhat like in the physical here but with a harmony, beauty and truth that do not yet exist upon earth "

Huta further writes "In the beginning of 1962 the Mother and I had already started expressing through paintings the Vision of *Savitri*—the great epic poem written by Sri Aurobindo The Mother explained to me from the spiritual and occult point of view these lines of Book One—The Book of Beginnings, Canto Three, p. 25.

The landmarks of the little person fell,
The island ego joined its continent
Overpassed was this world of rigid limiting forms
Life's barriers opened into the Unknown "

What is the contribution of Mother India as regards Savitri, Sri Aurobindo's great epic?

Savitri, as we now have it, is in 12 Books of 49 Cantos But the early version in the year 1916 was much shorter and had no Books and Cantos. In the year 1981-82, K. D. Sethna published Sri Aurobindo's fair copy of the earliest version of *Savitri* The transcript was meant to serve "the critical reader, the literary historian and the studious disciple with its aim to place at their disposal as authentically and completely as possible what for all practical purposes may be designated the ur-*Savitri* " Later on, the

opening sections of the 1936-37 version of *Savitri* were published in *Mother India*

Here we see that even in 1916 some inspiring passages were already present in almost the same form as in the final version For example

A vision shall compel thy coursing breath,
 Thy heart shall drive thee on the wheel of time,
 Thy mind shall urge thee through the flames of thought,
 To meet me in the abyss and on the heights,
 To feel me in the tempest and the calm
 And love me in the noble and the vile,
 In beautiful things and terrible desire¹³

What is "Overhead Poetry"?

The editor says (*Mother India*, April 1954). "At the instance of several readers we are publishing for the first time, together with some relevant matter already published, the detailed appraisals by Sri Aurobindo of some poems by an inmate (Amal Kiran) of the Ashram who was aspiring to write, with the Master's spiritual influence and critical guidance, what the latter had called 'overhead poetry', that is, poetry whose inspiration is caught from the spiritual planes above the mental intelligence as well as above the various other levels—inner-mental, psychic, vital, subtle-physical—from which inspiration, mystic no less than non-mystic, can derive. The appraisals, with further elucidatory remarks from elsewhere interwoven in a few places and appended in one, are quoted because they serve by their many-sided analysis to educate us in discriminating from mental poetry the overhead afflatus and in distinguishing the several grades of it which have been designated by Sri Aurobindo as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. With regard to the quality of poems reproduced here, two points have to be noted. As Sri Aurobindo himself once said in a letter, 'the poetic (aesthetic) value or perfection of a line, passage or poem does not depend on the plane from which it comes but on the purity and authenticity and power with which it transcribes an intense vision and inspiration from whatever source.' At the same time his pronouncement in another letter must be remembered. 'Naturally, the lower planes cannot express the spirit with its full and native voice as the higher planes do unless something comes down into them from the higher planes.'"

There are a number of comments by Sri Aurobindo on Overhead poetry written to Amal Kiran (K D Sethna) Here is his comment on Amal's poem *Madonna Mia*

I merge in her rhythm of haloed reverie
 By spacious vigil-lonelinesses drawn
 From star-birds winging through the vacancy
 Of night's incomprehensible spirit-dawn

My whole heart echoes the enchanted gloom
 Where God-love shapes her visionary grace,

The sole truth my lips bear is the perfume
From the ecstatic flower of her face.

Sri Aurobindo's comment runs "I think it is one of your best. I could not very definitely say from where the inspiration comes. It seems to come from the Higher Mind—but there is an intuitive touch here and there, even some indirect touch of 'mental Overmind' vision hanging about the first stanza."¹⁴

K. D. Sethna in a letter dated 27.5.1992, published in his Third Volume of *Life-Poetry-Yoga*, which had previously appeared in *Mother India*, wrote to a friend about the inner meaning of Remember and Offer: "On my part I have tried to bring out a sense of the spiritual passive-active truth behind the poise of equanimity as well as the active-passive truth permeating the gesture of 'Remember and offer'. The two are really complementary. The one involves a vast withdrawal into a background peace which when brought face to face with the common world becomes a spread-out of silent power whose very presence is a pressure on things to become harmonious or disappear. The other involves a constant catching hold of things because its practitioner has to confront life and actively seek to change world-values, but lifting each event and its significance towards the Divine Mother who watches all and secretly pervades all. Thus one dynamically dissociates events from the run of daily time and refuses to deal with them from the human source of life-manipulation. Into the invisible hands of the ever-unforgotten Supreme Creatrix they are delivered with one's whole heart and then one stops worrying about them"¹⁵

Throughout his life K. D. Sethna followed the method of 'Remember and Offer'. When *Mother India* was in a quandary at the time of launching it on 21 February 1949, the editors of other magazines of Bombay discouraged him from launching the magazine on the particular date as the materials for at least six months were not ready at hand. Sethna put the matter to the Mother. In reply she sent a telegram "Stick to the date. Live on faith. Blessings Mother." With a whoop the office went into action and faith in the Mother's Grace has kept *Mother India* in action up to now.

NILIMA DAS

References

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- 3 *Ibid*, p 14 4 *Mother India*, Feb 1952, p 1
- 5 *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol 14, pp 128-29
- 6 *Ibid*, pp 400-01 7 *Ibid*, pp 402-03
- 8 *Mother India*, March 1952, pp 1-2
- 9 *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, p X
- 10 *Mother India*, Aug 1965, p 11
- 11 *Ibid*, Feb 1978 p 135 12 *Ibid* Aug 1981, p 427
- 13 *Ibid* Feb 1982, p 81 14 *Ibid*, Feb 1954, p 68
- 15 *Life-Poetry-Yoga*, Vol 3, Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna), pp 9-10

MANTRA

I AM not a writer of articles, I am a doer of things But my oldest friend here, Amal, has asked for an article, so I write this I chose Mantra because I like mantras So I share my likes with you

What is Mantra? The best, the very best definition of Mantra is the one given by Sri Aurobindo in his great work, *Savitri* There in Book IV, Canto 3 on page 375 (Cent Ed), from line 9 he writes.

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound,
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains.
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unalterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change,
He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech

Is that not a most wonderful description! As the reviewer in the London *Times Literary Supplement* writes of Sri Aurobindo "He writes as if he were standing among the stars, with the constellations for his companions" This is so especially in the last two lines quoted above

Now let us see the Mantra in action For that we have to come to His Maha-Shakti, the Mother The Mother worked on earth, flat earth She saw things eye to eye When she was with us physically, in her Tennis playing days, there was once a bad drought situation here We had had no rain for a long time and it was very hot and uncomfortable One evening after she finished playing tennis as we were going to the play-ground, I asked her "Mother, can you not get us some rain?" She said "You want rain? Why?" I replied, "We have had no rain for so long and it is very hot and uncomfortable" Then she said, "We will see," and we all went to the playground This was not yet open to all the Sadhaks, so we were just a few with the Mother from the tennis court Then Mother went into her room and brought out a stick and traced out

what she called an occult diagram on the ground, a long one, a sort of elongated figure of B. Then she asked some of us to make a chain with linked arms and to walk along this line of that diagram and recite a mantra. I asked her “What Mantra?” and she replied, “It does not matter what the Mantra is, it must be given to you by your guru. I give you this Mantra ‘We need rain, give us rain,’ just that and nothing more.” So we did say it. The sky above was hard and dry without a single cloud. It was set in bronze. Then as we recited the Mantra clouds began to appear. After a little time, rain began to fall. This fact is fully authentic. So there was the proof of this action of Mantra, and also, quite another description of it ‘of the earth earthy’.

Now we have come to a third description, a negative one where Mantra did not work. A long time after the Mother left her physical body there was another severe drought situation in South India, truly a very bad one. The Government tried everything they could including cloud-seeding, etc. But nothing worked. Then they tried what they called a spiritual method. A very long Yagna was arranged on the bed of a dry lake, with sacrificial fire, etc., and several Shankaracharyas were invited to conduct the Yagna and recite the rain-making Mantras that they knew. They did this for three days but nothing happened. The sceptics, of whom there are quite an ungodly number in our country, had a field-day and a good laugh. But to me the question was “Why did this not work?” The answer came to me from within “Because the Mantras were not given to them by their gurus, whoever they were!”

This puts me in a bit of a fix. Sri Aurobindo has given many Mantras. They have come to me largely in the Darshan cards that are distributed on Darshan days. They are very fine Mantras and I use them very regularly. But to whom were they given? Not specifically to me. But, I argued, they were given to his disciples and so, as I am one, they are given to me also. That makes me feel fine. But there is one Mantra, a very powerful one which I know was given to Satyendra, one very fine dentist-brother, who although a gold medalist in dentistry, refused to practise it because he said he did not want to have a contact with his brother disciples through pain. He was really a very beautiful person. That Mantra I give you.

Om! Sri Aurobindo Mira!
 Open my mind, my heart, my life
 to your Light, your Love, your Power.
 In all things may I see the Divine.

Truly a very great Mantra. The beginning I use as a Nama Japa in my daily recitation of Mantras.

As you may know Japa consists of the repetition of a name (or names) 108 times—(12x9). Further, one uses a *mālā* (rosary) of 108 beads. The normal *mālā* is one of Rudraksha. But I had one given to me by my very dear friend and close companion, Asher, made of Tulsi, the significance of which is “Devotion”. Now this *mālā* I used to wear around my neck the whole day long, but remove it at night when I slept and

kept it on the table at the side of my bed. Now, I began to have a doubt. Wearing a *mālā* round your neck makes you look like a holy man. And I know very well that I am not at all a holy man. Quite the contrary. So I asked the Mother, from within, one night to tell me if I should stop wearing the *mālā*. The next morning I could not find the *mālā* on the table beside my bed. We searched everywhere, but could not find it. I knew that the Mother had answered my question and was happy. A few months later, when cleaning the top of a cupboard in my room, the *mālā* was found. A rat must have taken it up there. So the rat was the Mother's messenger to bring her answer to me. Then later my good friend Aniruddha Smart from Surat came on his visit to the Ashram and we met. When I told him the story of the disappearance of the *mālā*, he told of the *hāth mālā* which was used from the Vedic times. In this the repetitions are counted on 12 joints and tips of the fingers of the right hand and 9 on the left hand totally amounting to 108. This is really very fine for me. So the Mother truly looks after her children so well. I recite my mantras daily before I go to sleep, Nama Japa and all, in a loud voice and my family and even my neighbours hear that and like it.

Now I come to other Mantras. When there was the war between India and Pakistan over Bangladesh, I asked the Mother for a Mantra for me to recite. She gave me one, a very powerful one. I give it here: "Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth, let us obey Thee alone and live according to Truth."

This and one given by Sri Aurobindo to Satyendra which I have given already, are well translated into Sanskrit by our departed Pandit Jagannath. I recite both, the English and the Sanskrit version. Now the question is: why did Sri Aurobindo and the Mother give us Mantras in English and not directly in Sanskrit? I feel that the answer to this lies in something I have been told of what Sri Aurobindo once said, though no one can find when and where he said it. He is supposed to have said: "English is no longer the language of one country or one people. It has become the vehicle of the new manifestation." I wish I could find out when and where he said this, but I accept it fully. It would be great if our country, as a whole, could also accept it and forget the aversion to the English language because of the long and dark dominance over us during the colonial rule by the English. Sri Aurobindo himself chose to forget the harsh treatment given to him by the English in his freedom struggle and he supported the English so very fully and strongly with his spiritual force to make the defeat of Hitler possible. When the government of India asked me to work in the new formed Dept of Civil Aviation in 1940, Sri Aurobindo ordered me to go. I was the only Indian Aeronautics Engineer in India at that time. After one year he called me back to the Ashram and the Mother gave me the almost impossible work of completing Golconde. The Harpagon workshop was started by me alone with the employed workers already working in the Ashram. But all that is another story.

I cannot end this article without acknowledging the fine work that Pujalal did in trying to teach me Sanskrit and especially teaching me the Mantras. He wrote a book of Mantras especially for me. And he was very patient with my failings and enjoyed my jokes. I must also acknowledge the help Sarala gave me. She was looking after Pujalal

and helped in his teaching me

In connection with my learning Sanskrit I am reminded of a humorous anecdote In the early days of my being in the Ashram I went to Amrita to learn both Tamil and Sanskrit He also was very patient and very kind and had a fine sense of humour One day I asked him why the Sanskrit letters are called Devanagari, which means God Letters He replied that Sanskrit was not devised by men, but by the Gods themselves for men Knowing Amrita's love for Tamil, I asked him, "Then what about Tamil?" He replied, "The Gods devised Sanskrit for men, but among themselves they talk in Tamil " I stop here.

UDAR

THE MASTER-LIGHT

THE silent Deep all strewn with stars
Unswayably withholds
A moon to reap the star-fraught ears
That midnight's acre folds,

Though a sickle-blade in the harvest hour
Reap all the stars away,
And the gleaner maid of dawn shall leave
The stark bare field of day

O Siva-moon be swift and raze
Number and name and form,
Leaving the boon of Wideness bright
And Peace beyond all storm

March 12, 1934

ARJAVA

Arjava. *Will the shifting of rhyme from the end to the middle of the first and third lines make for subtlety and help to avoid the 'obvious lilt' of this much-used metre? Or is it ineffective?*

Sri Aurobindo I think it makes a real difference; it does not change the characteristic movement of the metre, but it does take away all obviousness of lilt caused by the familiar recurrence of the rhymes
It is a very beautiful image and a beautiful poem.

NOLINI-DA: TO KNOW HIM

WHAT more can I add to describe Nolini-da who was considered to be the *manas putra* of Sri Aurobindo and regarded by the Mother as a ‘collaborator’? Nothing more needs to be added. However, a lot could be gained by expounding what Nolini-da represented in the pursuit of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga

One might *know of* Nolini-da that he was born on 13 January 1889 in East Bengal and during his lifetime he was the secretary as well as a trustee of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, editor of the *Advent*, the *Bulletin*, and *Vartika* and other Bengali periodicals; dean of the Faculty of Languages of the International Centre of Education, author of 8 collected works in English and 10 in Bengali, a fearless freedom fighter, athlete with zeal, excellent linguist, consummate thinker, ardent exponent of Truth and Beauty, one of the foremost followers of the Integral Yoga

But to understand Nolini-da, we need to *know him and not merely know of him*. For this, we will consider the spectrum of his motivations and aspirations, his conduct and the inspiration he received, his expressed views and experiences, his external associations as well as the ones with his inner self. In short, we will focus on the essence of his life’s journey. To know him is to recognize his work—utter dedication to facilitate manifestation of the Divine in the form of Truth, Beauty and Bliss.

Sincerity has been an essential condition in pursual of the Integral Yoga. According to the Mother: “To do the work that one does with all sincerity, as perfectly as one can, is certainly one of the best ways to serve the Divine.”¹ Nolini-da followed his inner call to serve the Divine with the utmost sincerity and consequently his conduct made him a role model for the followers of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo preferred quality over quantity with respect to his disciples: “I do not want hundreds of thousands of disciples. It will be enough if I can get a hundred complete men, purified of petty egoism, who will be the instruments of God.”² Nolini-da was, indeed, one of those disciples who met Sri Aurobindo’s expectations. His criteria for joining the Ashram in Pondicherry reveal his own mission in life: “Only the few, who possess the call within and are impelled by the spirit of the future, have a chance of serving this high attempt and great realisation and standing among its first instruments and pioneer workers.”³ The significance of this comment may be appreciated better in the light of what Sri Aurobindo had to convey to one of his notable seekers: “Yours is still a mental seeking for my Yoga something more is needed.”⁴

Understanding Nolini-da’s aspirations, commitments, conduct and expressed views enables us to understand and follow Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga as a seeker of holistic truth and a non-egocentric instrument to serve the Divine purpose. Using his life as a Rosetta Stone, one can relate Sri Aurobindo’s teaching to the day to day aspects of our lives. For instance, Nolini-da’s life is essentially a story of sincere surrender to the Divine and response to the inner call which Sri Aurobindo had emphasised time and again. In a letter to one of his disciples, Sri Aurobindo succinctly elucidated his Yoga while emphasizing the precondition of an inner call to pursue it: “This Yoga accepts

the value of cosmic existence and holds it to be a reality; its object is to enter into a higher Truth-Consciousness or Divine Supramental Consciousness in which action and creation are the expression not of ignorance and imperfection, but of the Truth, the Light, the Divine Ananda. But for that, surrender of the mortal mind, life and body to that Higher Consciousness is indispensable, since it is too difficult for the mortal human being to pass by its own effort beyond mind to a Supramental Consciousness in which the dynamism is no longer mental but of quite another power. Only those who can accept the call to such a change should enter into this Yoga.”⁵

Taking a clue from Nolini-da himself. “The full flowering of the human soul, its perfect divinisation demands the realization of a many-aspected personality, the very richness of the Divine within it.”⁶ Let us attempt to understand him, and the diverse roles he played through time. Historically, Nolini-da’s contribution transcends time and place to serve the Divine purpose. Nolini-da in his previous births was, in the Western culture, believed to be Virgil, the French poet Ronsard, the gardener “Le Notre” of Louis XIV, André Chenier, the poet of the French Revolution, and the secretary of state Sir Francis Walsingham under Queen Elizabeth I of England. Likewise, in the Eastern culture, Nolini-da was Yuyutsu during the Mahabharata era.⁷ It is a traditional Indian belief that sometimes the liberated souls come down to earth to support the Divine Purpose. And in Nolini-da we find such a liberated soul who at different places and in different times enhanced our world with beauty, truth and bliss.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo encompasses this ancient knowledge of Veda and takes it further in enabling mankind to be divinised. The essential thrust of the Integral Yoga in the words of the Mother is “The world as it is, is not the divine creation it is meant to be, but an obscure and perverted expression of it. It is not the expression of the divine consciousness and will, but this is what it is meant to become; it has been created to develop into a perfect manifestation of the Divine under all His forms and aspects—Light and Knowledge, Power, Love and Beauty. This is our conception of it and the aim we follow.”⁸ It is for this *transition to the world to be* that the Divine incarnates on earth and the kindred souls come to earth. The Mother explains about the kindred souls: “When people, far separated from one another, belonging to different parts of the world or pursuing most diverse professions, meet and gather and work for a common purpose, it means that they are kindred souls, and have met together and worked together before in other lives. They felt they belong to the same family and resolved to act together and collaborate in a common endeavour for a common ideal.”⁹ Nolini-da was one such kindred soul.

Recognising one’s mission in life and converting human existence into a life with a divine purpose is one of the dreaded riddles and enigmatic challenges for even a kindred soul. Sri Aurobindo called it ‘the Law of the Way’ and offered very poignant insight as well as assurance. “Imagine not the way is easy, the way is long, arduous, dangerous, difficult. At every step is an ambush, at every turn a pitfall. Strive rightly and thou shalt have, trust and thy trust shall in the end be justified, but the dread Law of the Way is there and none can abrogate it.”¹⁰ And like any pursuer of Integral Yoga,

Nolini-da was not immune from the Law of the Way and he had his share of anxiety, despondency, utter loneliness, weariness, brooding and the deep abyss in his formative years. During his incarceration in Alipore Jail as a freedom fighter of India from May 1908 to May 1909 he was haunted by the age-old questions “Why, and what, and where, and which way?” And, like any reasonable seeker of enlightenment, for solace he turned to “good books” like *Colombo to Almora* of Vivekananda, Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis*, Bacon’s *Essays*, Shakespeare’s *King John* and the *Vishnu Purana*.¹¹

Having established equanimity within himself during the darkest night [before dawn] in Alipore Jail, Nolini-da had the experience of something that was clear and bright and calm, “the horizons grew bright, the winds felt delightful,” as he says. Once again, in the present birth Nolini-da was getting ready for the service of the Divine Cause by experiencing the Universal Being within himself.

It is not a coincidence that we find time and again Nolini-da appearing to respond to the inner call through his action or his writing as an expression of his being in the process of becoming the Divine’s instrument. For instance, prior to his settlement in Pondicherry, he found his sentiments represented by Rabindranath Tagore

To every one Thou hast given a home,
Me only the road to press on¹²

However, this inner anguish could be viewed as a predestined path to follow in response to Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Invitation’

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?¹³

Nolini-da, after his release from Alipore Jail was undecided regarding his future and was wandering about, like floating dust. During this period he got an urge to renounce the world and take up the life of *sannyasa*. In his first attempt at *sannyasa*, he went to Belur Math to become a follower of Swami Vivekananda and his Master Sri Ramakrishna. But, to his astonishment, he was declined—maybe the invisible Divine had a different plan for him even though he had no clue of it. But, as always, sincere aspiration and commitment to the Divine remained his guiding force. During his stay in Calcutta Nolini-da, along with Bejoy, considered *sannyasa* a second time by choosing to become a wandering ascetic. Again, this plan was prevented by the Divine—the Avatar Sri Aurobindo who chose Nolini-da to work for the publications *Dharma* and *Karmayogin*. Maybe unknown to Nolini-da, the Divine-incarnate had some different plans for him. Sri Aurobindo by giving Nolini-da the news-editing work groomed him to be a journalist. At the tender age of 20 his first article was published in the Bengali paper *Dharma*. Isn’t the Divine Grace enchanting when you can surrender? Nolini-da has

also been called the Arjuna of our time and yes, like Arjuna, he knew how to surrender to the Divine unconditionally. And in return, Nolini-da received the Divine Himself—Sri Aurobindo. Arjuna had Sri Krishna as his charioteer during the War of Mahabharata; so was Sri Aurobindo there to guide Nolini-da through the maze of life with its trials and turmoils.

Nolini-da's transformative years are a poignant reminder to us that even the most chosen of the disciples have to endure the challenges of the path of Integral Yoga and that with faith in the truth of our being and the soul's mission we should remain resolute in our pursuit. Nolini-da practised what Sri Aurobindo had demanded:

Here must the traveller of the upward way—
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route—
Pause or pass slowly through that perilous space,
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name.¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo settled in Pondicherry in 1910 and within six months Nolini-da followed him. The initial period before 1914 when the Mother arrived in Pondicherry symbolised Sri Aurobindo's relationship with Nolini-da as a comrade and tutor-student. Sri Aurobindo taught the Veda to him and interpreted it in the light of his own intuitive vision along with logic. Nolini-da learnt European languages in a unique way from Sri Aurobindo who believed that the reading material must be adapted to the age and mental development of adult students. Nolini-da learnt Greek by studying Euripides' *Medea* and Sophocles's *Antigone*, Latin by studying Virgil's *Aeneid*, Italian by studying Dante and French by studying Molière's work. Those were the days of austerity for Sri Aurobindo and those who settled with him. Inadequate resources and necessity made Sri Aurobindo share some of the every-day items with his companions. This circumstantial privilege had made the group feel that Sri Aurobindo was just one of them and a dear friend even though they regarded him as a Guru.

But the Mother made all the disciples realise and recognise Sri Aurobindo as the Guru and the Lord of Yoga. Once again Nolini-da's feelings were along the lines of what Arjuna had expressed having seen Sri Krishna's all-encompassing gigantic World-form:

By whatever name I have called you, O Krishna, O Yadava, O Comrade, thinking in my rashness that you were only a friend, and out of ignorance and from affection, not knowing this your greatness, whatever disrespect I have shown you out of frivolity, whether sitting or lying down or eating, when I was alone or when you were present before me,—may I be pardoned for all that, O you Infinite One.¹⁵

In his earlier days at Pondicherry, Nolini-da used to make annual trips to Bengal and on one such occasion prior to his departure, he sought the Mother's audience and

offered his obeisance to Her. She said “Come back soon.” And that meant in the end “Come back for good.” It seems that it was the Mother who steered Nolini-da’s life to fulfill his destiny by inviting him to be permanently in Pondicherry and preventing him for the third time from taking *sannyasa* as Nolini-da puts it “by piling up against him the heaven-kissing thorny hedge of wedlock.” In studying Nolini-da’s life one cannot help noticing the effect of the invisible hand of the Divine and how much his life mirrored what Sri Aurobindo had said “When someone is destined for the Path, all circumstances through all the deviations of mind and life help in one way or another to lead him to it. It is his own psychic being within him and the Divine Power above that use to that end the vicissitudes both of mind and outward circumstance.”¹⁶ In this manner, Nolini-da became the reassuring example for the rest of the travellers of the Sunlit Path in pursuit of the Integral Yoga.

The Mother explains the Sunlit Path. “It is the path of happy progress where dangers and difficulties, violent ups and downs are reduced to a minimum, if not altogether obviated. In ideal conditions it is as it were a smooth and fair-weather sailing, as much of course as it is humanly possible. What are then these conditions? It is when the sadhaka keeps in touch with his inmost being, his psychic consciousness, when this inner Guide and Helmsman is given the charge, for then he will be able to pass sovereignly by all shoals and rocks and storm-racks, through all vicissitudes, gliding on—slow or swift as needed—inevitably towards the goal.”¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo stressed the same theme from the beginning and many times over to many of his disciples “All that is needed is for your psychic being to come forward and open to the direct and real constant inner contact of myself and the Mother—the mind thinks and the vital craves but the soul feels and knows the Divine.”¹⁸

A potential danger in this Sunlit Path is that one may not listen to the quiet voice of the psychic and be guided by the ego-centric or vital impulses. Aswapati of Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* symbolises the aspiring soul of humanity. Nolini-da’s discourse on Aswapati’s journey clarifies this issue of potential dangers of the path. “In spite of an inherent urge of ascension the way is not a straight road but devious and crooked, breaking into bylanes and blind alleys. There is a great corruption and perversion of natural movements towards Truth—falsehoods and pretensions, arrogance of blindness reign here in various degrees.”¹⁹ Time and again Sri Aurobindo cautioned his disciples about various difficulties of the path and very clearly identified the causes. “All who enter the spiritual path have to face the difficulties and ordeals of the path, those which rise from their own nature and those which come in from outside. The difficulties in the nature always rise again and again till you overcome them, they must be faced with both strength and patience. All who cleave to the path steadfastly can be sure of their spiritual destiny. If anyone fails to reach it, it can only be for one of the two reasons, either because they leave the path or because of some lure of ambition, vanity, desire, etc. they go astray from the sincere dependence on the Divine.”²⁰ It is not very surprising to notice that Nolini-da’s guidance is quite consistent with Sri Aurobindo’s teaching. After all he was one of the foremost students, interpreters as well as

exponents of Sri Aurobindo's teaching Interestingly, a clue to his greatness lies in: "To understand the Divine one must become the Divine" ²¹ The Mother had said "To know is good, to live is better, to be, that is perfect" ²² And we find Nolini-da adhering to that principle in his sadhana of Integral Yoga This is what distinguishes a sincere sadhaka such as Nolini-da from an armchair philosopher

Nolini-da had dabbled in football from the early age of five and excelled in it while still in school Sports he enjoyed but he also learnt lessons from his games He learnt a pivotal lesson from a crushing defeat when he played for Rungpore Town Club against Dinajpur Town Club in his youth Never to be arrogant like Duryodhana and be overconfident of one's own prowess and ability but be humble and, like the Pandavas, rely on the Supreme And he remained that way even after decades when he played in Pondicherry He was praised by a well-known player from Coochbehar "There is a fine individuality about your play, it is calm and steady, neat and clean and robust" ²³ Nolini-da did conduct himself as if the whole of life was Yoga for him The *song of his life* was.

Forward to the Farthest!
Upward to the Highest!
Downward into the Deepest ²⁴

Even when he was in his sixties and beyond, he remained a committed Karmayogi in the field of sports and other endeavours. At the age of 66, despite hard practice, he did not qualify for the Long Jump competition. However, he remained resolute and two years later, at the tender age of 68, he won first place in the Long Jump! He gloriously demonstrated "Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will" ²⁵ This was not a chance event. At the age of 65 he was first in the 100-metre Sprint and third in the 200-metre with timing of 32.4 seconds which he improved the following year to 31.6 seconds reminding us "All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour" ²⁶

It was Nolini-da's willingness to follow with unconditional dedication his spiritual guardians that moulded his character, his spiritual humility became the hallmark of his life His guiding light was the mantra of the Mother, dated 7 December 1912. "Like a flame that burns in silence, like a perfume that rises straight upward without wavering, my love goes to Thee, and like the child who does not reason and has no care, I trust myself to Thee that Thy Will may be done, that Thy Light may manifest, Thy Peace radiate, Thy Love cover the world When Thou wilt I shall be in Thee, Thyself, and there shall be no more any distinction, I await that blessed hour without impatience of any kind, letting myself flow irresistibly toward it as a peaceful stream flows toward the boundless ocean. Thy Peace is in me, and in that Peace I see Thee alone present in everything, with the calm of Eternity" ²⁷

In his poem of 4 October 1932 in *To the Heights*, Nolini-da's complete surrender to the Divine is vividly described

I lay myself bare—limb by limb,
 From the outmost to the inmost, from the highest to the lowest,
 From the crown of the head to the tip of the toe,
 From my senses to my soul

I lay myself bare - simply and wholly
 And bathe in the wide sunlight of the Love Divine ²⁸

This poem of his seems to resonate the theme Sri Aurobindo expressed in his *Surrender*.

O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
 O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
 Let all my mortal being now be blent
 In Thy still glory of divinity

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
 I have offered up my will to be Thy will
 Let nothing of myself be left behind
 In our union mystic and unutterable

Keep only my soul to adore eternally
 And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee ²⁹

This is not just a coincidence of commonality of literary expressions. It is an inspiring match of a foretold spiritual process set by the Guru and lived through soul-searching and offering by the disciple.

We may also attempt to understand Nolini-da through his friends and fellow sadhaks who knew his pure diamondlike being for decades.

Some extracts from a book, *Tributes to Nolini Kanta Gupta*³⁰ will help us in this process. According to Nirod-da: "He always preserved a strong strain of impersonality. A large liberality, sweetness and compassion crowned all his actions and movements." Amal Kiran found Nolini-da's humbleness before the Mother and the Mother's reliance on him most striking. Madhav Pandit considered his association with the Mother to be full of deep harmony and complete trust. According to Jayantilal: "Nolini never projected himself as a thinker, a writer, a worker or a sadhak. He lived unobtrusively like a quiet white shadow of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He never displayed any restlessness of ambition. Personality, ambition, self-importance, self-assertion of an individual were lost in his identity with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother."

Additional sampling is done from the book, *Nolini—Arjuna of Our Age*.³¹ On Nolini-da's 73rd birthday Amrita conveyed that he did not consider Nolini-da just a friend but looked upon him as his elder brother. Indra Sen regarded Nolini-da's articles

on matters occult, spiritual, literary, social, and cultural to be deep, clear, confident and illuminating V Madhusudan Reddy believed Nolini-da to be a pilgrim of the Infinite and a sadhak of Purna Yoga

To know Nolini-da's real self—his true greatness—is to know him as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother knew him According to Sisir Kumar Mitra, Sri Aurobindo told Nirod-da "I always see the Light descending into Nolini," and "his is the pure mind"³² The Mother considered that an individual is (spiritually) more receptive on his birthday And so the following successive birthday messages from the Mother reveal how and what Nolini-da was transforming into

13 January 1965

Happy Birthday Nolini' with my blessings for a decisive year of realisation in the light and harmony, Truth and Love

13 January 1966

Happy Birthday Nolini in the silent endurance, one step forward towards the victory, with the help of the eternal love

13 January 1967

Happy Birthday Nolini for taking another step on the luminous path leading to the Divine Realisation in Peace, Love and Joy

13 January 1969

Happy Birthday Nolini en route towards the superman with my love and affection and blessings

13 January 1971

Happy Birthday Nolini with my love and affection for a life of collaboration and my blessings for the prolonged continuation of this happy collaboration in peace and love

13 January 1973

Happy Birthday Nolini with my love and affection, my confidence and my blessings for the transformation Let us march ahead towards the Realisation

One cannot help noticing some of the key words used by the Mother in the birthday messages. words such as. *divine realisation* in 1967, *superman* in 1969, *life of collaboration* in 1971 and *transformation* in 1973 They are indicative of Nolini-da's spiritual milestones in his life journey The Mother regarded the 'Superman' as a being *en route* to the Supramental level It is believed that later in his life Nolini-da, for most of the time, remained in the Overmind and sometimes even beyond that The message of 1971 is the recognition and confirmation of Nolini-da's mission of *collaboration* in the service of the Divine

The message of 1973 is for the *transformation*. Could it be that the *realisation* mentioned here has to precede transformation? If that is the case, could it be that the Mother wanted to categorically communicate to him so? Could it mean that the cellular transformation was an undertaking She was asked by Sri Aurobindo to pursue but it was not yet meant for the rest of the world to embark upon until it was first thoroughly spiritualised? Could this be another indication of Her view that the path of people like Max Théon (it means, the Supreme God!) focusing on occult power and not spiritualisation of the consciousness was contrary to the pursuit of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo? The Mother had encountered Max Théon in Paris between 1905 and 1906 prior to meeting Sri Aurobindo in 1914

Auroville was a very special undertaking in Nolini-da's view. He had represented the Mother at its inauguration on 28 February 1968 when, under the auspices of UNESCO, the soil of 121 countries along with the soil of 23 Indian States and the soil from Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi were deposited into the lotus-urn to mark the living embodiment of an actual Human Unity with the hope of manifesting the world of enchanting diversity and unified aspiration to seek harmony. But the Mother warned "It is not what you do but the spirit in which you do it that is important for the integral Yoga"³³ She also said "The truth is neither in separation nor in uniformity. The truth is in unity manifesting through diversity"³⁴

After the Mother's departure Nolini-da had in June 1977 a vision of the Mother, conveying that She is still with us in the subtle physical,—just like Sri Aurobindo after His departure

One might think Nolini-da's life was a glorious undertaking. Yes, it was. But one needs to view it in the context of his ardent aspiration, sincere commitments and persistent endeavours. His life itself is a legacy to inspire us, encourage us, and guide us in discovering our own truth of being and the path to pursue. According to the Mother "Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God"³⁵ Nolini-da was indeed a true child of the Mother

ARUN VAIDYA

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DHARMA AND SATYADHARMA

SRI AUROBINDO said that after the idea of the Infinite the second major chord in Indian thought is the concept of Dharma. He has written a good deal about dharma in *The Foundations of Indian Culture, Essays on the Gita*, and numerous other places in the vast corpus of his writing. He has explained the essence of dharma and also of the possibility and actuality of its decline. He gives the root meaning of the word dharma and elaborates its significance.

Dharma, according to Sri Aurobindo, has various significances. It is juridical, moral, ethical, religious and spiritual. The most important of the senses of dharma is the spiritual Dharma which in the significance of Hinduism is said to be something that is inherent in the very nature of things. It is objective, natural and not a construction of the human mind. Dharma is said to be *sanātana*, eternal. This is because it is an expression of the will of God, the *sanātana* spiritual reality. Nevertheless, its forms change, widen and develop. This is not a contradiction, for dharma, being dynamic, adapts itself to various kinds of nature of human beings and conditions of their life. Each thing has its own nature, each constituent of the human personality has its own nature. But they call for the workings of the essential dharma in their own respective fields. The body has its own dharma, so also have the vital force and the mind. And if there be a spiritual soul in man, it has its own way of the journey to the supreme spiritual Reality and has to observe the rules of the dharma on its pilgrimage.

From the purely practical point of view dharma is a collective name of the proper ways of being and living of man which are infinitely varied and relative to the respective natures and capacities arising from them. This idea of the variety of human nature is basic in Indian thought. Apart from the common dharmas of men as members of humanity their respective stations have different duties and obligations. Dharma applied to different situations gave rise to the two systems of *varna-dharmas* and *āśrama-dharmas*. These are fairly well known and therefore it is not necessary to say a good deal about them. But it is worth pointing out that Krishna in the Gita describes the respective functions of the different orders of society in psychological terms.

The *āśrama-dharmas* take into account the different needs of human nature and each stage of human life is designed to meet those needs. The student, the householder, the man who retires from the practical business of human life and tries to develop his mind for spiritual liberation and the man who actively pursues that ultimate value, represent the different stages of life. Connected with these there is a concept of the four values—*dharma, artha, kāma, moksa*—also demonstrating the profound knowledge of human psychology the Indian sages and seers had. Financial security for oneself and one's family, the fulfilment of natural desires and spiritual liberation are not only accepted but even enjoined on people as legitimate and desirable. Financial interests and the fulfilment of natural desires however must be based upon dharma, morality and virtue. It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo gives a different interpretation of these four values. He says that the natural man, devoid of any aspiration, will pursue

financial prosperity and fulfilment of vital and emotional desires, and only late will he wake up to a need of morality and ethics

It would not be an exaggeration to say that dharma, individual and collective, has upheld, supported and maintained the life, civilization and culture of the Indian people for millennia. Not that there was and there is not adharma, and not dharma. There have always been and are people subject to their lower nature and driven by selfishness, greed, inordinate desire, etc. which lead them along the path of immorality. Krishna, it is not a wonder, speaks in the Gita of the decline of dharma. Why should it be that there should be stain on dharma, when in essence it is said to be the expression of the will of God as a rhythm, the order, the appropriate measure and steps of cosmic life? The title of the article may suggest to some people that if there is any such thing as *satyadharna*, the Law of Truth, there is also *asatyadharna*, false dharma.

Adharma has already been mentioned. The opposite of the Law of Truth is not the Law of Falsehood but the Law of Dharma imperfectly understood and lived. When we inquire into this situation, we seem to come up with basically three answers. There certainly is one Truth revealed to man in different times and ages and diverse languages and received by people with very different capacities of receptivity. Mind is man, says Sri Aurobindo. However refined, pure and open to moral, religious and spiritual truths, man is incapable of receiving integrally the Truth and its different aspects and manifestations.

In the light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga there are planes of the mental consciousness above the human mentality in which man can come in contact with and experience the spiritual Reality. Even then this does not enable him to know and realise the supreme Truth, far less live according to its Law. This is the reason why man's life is a mixed and confused phenomenon. He sees the Light and also turns to Darkness and even the best live in half-light and half-shadow. Thus it is no wonder that there should be decline of dharma.

The seer of the Isha Upanishad appeals to Surya, the Sun-God, to reveal to him the Law of Truth and Sight (Verse 16). The Isha Upanishad is a most profound scripture and treasure-house of great spiritual thoughts and experiences. Out of experience the seer speaks of the Self, of the Lord, Knowledge and Ignorance and how it is necessary to see That, the Reality, as both Death and Immortality and of the former as a passage to the latter, and so on. There is no doubt that he was a spiritual mystic of a very high order, and yet he prays for the Knowledge of the Law of Truth. Why?

Surya, in the Veda, represents the illumination of the Kavi. His principle power is self-revelation, knowledge, which exceeds mind and in the Veda is termed Sight. Surya is a sole seer, seer of Oneness and Infinite source of all existences. His realm is the Truth, the Law, and the Vast. In Sri Aurobindo's language Surya is the integral Knowledge and the Infallible Will of the Divine Seeing. He is Yama, the Controller, the Ordainer, because he governs man's existence and life by a Law of Truth and leads him to the highest sight. The rays of the sun are luminous thoughts which however are deflected, disordered by the reflecting mind which, the Isha

Upanishad says, covers like a golden lid the face of the Truth

This is the reason why Satyadharma becomes on the mental level a mixture of the Law of Truth and its distortions. It is needless to say that the Law of Truth does not govern our life. If it did, that life would not have been what it has been for several millennia. Noble and ignoble, selfless and selfish, generous and miserly, seeking Truth and quoting Falsehood, has not that been the character of human life since man appeared on the world stage? That is why the seer of the Isha Upanishad prays to the Sun-God to remove the golden lid so that the Satyadharma, the Law of the Truth may reveal itself in its essential nature and govern human life, both individual and collective, by the highest right principles of the truth of the Purusha, the spiritual soul of the universe. The rays of the Sun which are scattered by the mind have to be gathered together and marshalled to form a unified system of the Supreme Righteousness, the Law of the Truth.

The upshot of this whole discussion is that Mind has to be exceeded and consciousness in the mind has to rise to the region of the Sun, the integral Knowledge-Will, the Supermind in Sri Aurobindo's terminology.

The Gita says that whenever there is the decline of dharma and the upsurge of not-dharma, the Divine descends into the world to restore dharma to its rightful place and destroy the evil-doers and rescue the Truth and Reality of the Supermind. This will be a cosmic incarnation rather than an individual Avatar. For the universe is in travail to receive and reveal and make dynamic in its existence and its life the Law of Truth.

ARABINDA BASU

Notes

1 The word dharma means "holding" from the root *dhr* "to hold" (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, SABCL Vol 13, p 163, fn), "Dharma means literally that which holds things together: the law, the norm, the rule of nature and life" (*Ibid*, p 22, fn). For dharma, the law is that which holds things together and to which we hold (*The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10 p 459)

2 Just as dharma "holds" all things, so also man has to hold on to dharma, that is to say, he has to conduct himself according to the laws of righteousness. Adharma, not-dharma, occurs when man does not "hold on", does not observe the laws of dharma and abandons them.

3 The main discipline of the student is self-control i.e. control of the senses and the mind especially celibacy. Of course he had intellectual training, read the scriptures with the Guru and learnt the vedic lore. The householder's dharma is to marry, raise a family, earn money to support himself and his dependents and serve his community by planting trees, digging wells and ponds and building temples etc. The time comes when he has to take his mind off worldly values and turn it to cultivate aspiration for spiritual liberation. When his mind is sufficiently free of worldly attachments, he devotes himself to the attainment of spiritual liberation.

4 The common dharmas for all the people belonging to the four orders of society, and by extension, all humanity—for these four orders exhaust all kinds of human beings,—are harmlessness, truth, integrity, purity and control of the senses (*Manusmṛiti* X 63) again endurance, patience, self-control, integrity, purity, restraint of the senses, wisdom, learning, truth, absence of anger, are the ten signs of virtue (*Manusmṛiti* VI 92).

5 The Karma, "functions" born out of the nature of the four orders of humanity respectively are (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, SABCL, Vol 13, p 492, explaining the Gita, XVIII, 42-44)

The works of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, says the Gita, are divided according to the qualities

(Gunas) born of their own inner nature, spiritual temperament essential character (*swabhāva*) Calm, self-control, asceticism, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance of spiritual truth are the work of the Brahmin, born of his Swabhava Heroism, high spirit, resolution, ability, not fleeing in the battle, giving, lordship (*īśvara-bhāva*), the temperament of the ruler and the leader, are the natural work of the Kshatriya Agriculture, cattle-keeping trade inclusive of the labour of the craftsman and the artisan are the natural work of the Vaishya All work of the character of service falls within the natural function of the Shudra

It is to be noted that the work of the Brahmin and Kshatriya is to be a kind of person, and that no actual profession or even vocation are mentioned except battle in the case of the Kshatriya The actual work of the Vaishya and the Shudra are specifically mentioned Traditionally it has been always maintained that the chief quality of the Brahmin is *satva*, the principle of light, balance and contentment with *rājas* as his helping quality Kshatriya is primarily *rājasic* with *satva* as his aiding quality The Vaishya also is mainly *rājasic* but with *tamas* not *satva* as the second constituent of his inner nature, and the Shudra is predominantly *tāmasic*

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

[This article was written on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of *Vivekananda Byayam Samiti*—a physical culture club which Pranab himself founded when he was just 19 years old. The club still exists, after 58 years, with a few hundred members consisting of men, women and children from all walks of life.

The article is a remarkable revelation of how destiny guided Pranab's footsteps and prepared him for the very important role that he was to play in the Master's and the Mother's Work of Physical Transformation. What began in 1941 as a mission guiding the youth towards a vision of a greater India became a spiritual destiny of the body's journey on uncharted paths of Physical Immortality—a work embracing the whole of humanity.]

ONE day I received an unexpected letter from the new secretary of the club, Sri Niranjan Choudhury. The club was celebrating 1966 as the silver jubilee of its founding and they wanted me to send my suggestions and to write something for the publication they were planning to bring out on this occasion.

“How quickly twenty-five long years have flown!” I wondered. It was only the other day (was it in May or June?) in the year 1940, that half a dozen boys of the Bhattacharya household started a club in the courtyard of the house.

All the equipment we had then were a set of barbells that belonged to my uncle, a mirror from the house, a mat and a couple of skipping-ropes.

We took to exercising with great enthusiasm. The role of the group's instructor fell on me and I began working in earnest in order to improve the health and physical fitness of the group as well as my own.

I was taken up with physical fitness, the body's strength and its education right from my childhood. My real initiation, in fact, took place in 1937 at the Ballygunj Jagatbandhu Institution where the well-known boxer, J. K. Sheel, started teaching me boxing. Then I became a member of the Ballygunj School of Physical Culture, a club run by Biren Chunder. There I started learning boxing, wrestling, freehand, barbell, training on parallel bars, tumbling, drills, parades, volleyball, asanas and some Bratachari or folk-dances.

The enthusiasm of our physical exercising spread from the Bhattacharya house to the Bhattacharya locality. Quite a few people started joining in ones and twos in the courtyard of the house. Soon we were short of space and decided to move into the garden adjacent to the house for doing exercises.

The garden was strewn with rubble and weeds and we cleared one part of it ourselves. We set up the bodybuilding area near the door that opened onto the garden which enabled us to take out and put back the barbell, mirror, mat, etc., more easily. An entrance was provided for the members to go directly into the garden from the road. A boxing-ring was set up on one side of the garden and a punching bag was hung nearby.

from a jackfruit tree. Some space was left on one side for drills, parades, tumbling, lathi-practice and folk-dances. A pair of rings was suspended onto a mango tree. And there! the club was in full swing!

What name should we give to the club? In those days the idealistic young were familiar with Swami Vivekananda and his teaching, his attraction to physical culture, his heroic inspiring figure, his organisational strength, his preaching of power in both action and thought, his deep-rooted love for the country. He had raised for the great Indian mass an ideal based on the rich Indian heritage and his fight was against all kinds of baseness, pettiness, weakness, selfishness, unconsciousness or anything that hindered progress. There was much then that drew us to Swami Vivekananda. His message to the students, in particular, enthused and inspired us. "Make your body and muscles like iron and your nerves like steel" and "you'll attain God faster by playing football rather than by reading the Gita." And so we named our club *Vivekananda Byayam Samiti*.

The creation of an organisation brings expenses with it. Therefore, every month, it was decided to collect one *anna* from the younger ones and two *annas* from adults. Besides this, we used to save our pocket-money and contribute it to help run the club. Receipt-books and letterheads were printed. Arrangements for a roll-call were made. We didn't leave anything unattended.

However, we could not get all the equipment for the club with the members' contributions and so we had to make do with some wood and bamboo that we managed to pick up from here and there. It did not perturb us, for, after all, we were doing all this not for any personal end but for the club. Our club, however, came to be known in the area as the "*chora club*" or the club of thieves.

The club began developing very well. The boys were regular in their exercises and soon enough the whole of Behrampur knew about its activities. Boys started coming to the club from not only the surrounding areas but also from distant places and they were all students from schools and colleges.

There were requests for "demonstrations" from several places and soon our boys gained a reputation for their skills in boxing, lathi, clubs, dumb-bells, free-hand drills, roller-balancing and ground-diving. The boys' health began to improve considerably due to regular exercise.

From the club's very inception we had resolved that apart from developing physical fitness and strength the atmosphere in the club should be one that helps to raise the moral character of the students, imparts a high sense of idealism to their life and action. We had observed that the closeness we could have with the youth through sport and physical culture was not possible in any other way. And we made full use of this opportunity for the good of the youth and for moulding them into upright human beings.

We set up a library in the house of the Mandals in a room of the Thakurbari (a part of the house reserved for the worship of the family deity). Biographies, books on travel, history, health and sport, patriotic books and beautiful inspiring stories formed our

modest collection. The boys could read these books in the library. From time to time we used to meet to discuss and debate on various topics. Sometimes a member would read out something he had written. We also brought out a hand-written magazine which helped us express, in our modest way, our youthful minds, our thoughts and feelings.

When people needed help or when they were in difficulty, we tried to assist as much as possible. For occasions like Ganga-puja, the Ramakrishna Mission celebrations in Berhampur, various meetings and gatherings, charity-shows, exhibitions, we were requested for voluntary work and our boys performed their tasks to the best of their ability.

In a short time we became quite well-known for the work we did. Parents started encouraging their boys to join our club. They felt that their boys were less likely to fall into bad company and ruin their character by being in our club.

We used to watch more attentively the boys who were promising. By giving them more time and helping them in various other ways we tried to ensure that their progress was not hindered in any way. Those who showed leadership qualities were given the necessary opportunities to develop them further. And we succeeded in this. All those boys today, thanks to their ability and brilliance, are well-established in life. And I'm sure they must be quite conscious about our contribution to their success. We also noticed that in the twenty-five years of the club's existence, never did we lack good leaders for running it. Not that we had a lot of means or brilliance but we made full use of whatever we had and we also reaped the fruit of our efforts.

There was a bond of love and kinship between the members of our club. There never took place any quarrels or any groupism nor was there any struggle for selfish power or leadership. We also received a lot of sympathy and goodwill from the people of the town. Enemies we had none.

There were also arrangements for fun and festivity. During the winter we had our annual picnic and we organised it with great verve. On Vijayadashami day we used to hire a big boat and the boys of the club had a lot of fun on the Ganga. Sometimes we used to go exploring, on foot or on our cycles, distant places. During the Monsoon when the Ganga was in full mighty flow swimming was great fun.

A lot of time had to be devoted to all these various activities. College had to be regularly attended and homework had to be done too. Then, there were all kinds of house-errands. But since we did everything with sufficient concentration we never lacked any time for the running or organisation of the club. Parents never put any restrictions from their side, on the contrary, they encouraged us but on one single condition: we had to pass the examinations and on that score we never disappointed them.

Our club then was growing extremely well. The boys' health continued to improve. The equipment for exercise too began to come. The whole town of Berhampur was appreciative of the club and its activities. One day, Beni-babu, the Physical Education organiser for the districts of Nadia and Murshidabad at that time, came to visit our club and he was very happy to see our work. He especially praised the

fact that we had ourselves made most of the equipment we needed. On seeing the tumbling-mattresses he was astonished that we had made them. It was by his efforts that our club was recognised by the Government and we started getting a grant. That was, perhaps, in 1941. Subsequently the first governing body of the club was constituted.

The club then was doing really well. The regularity of the boys was irreproachable. Fortune was smiling on us from every side. Then suddenly disaster struck. The guardians of the house decided to convert the garden into a vegetable-orchard. The club naturally had to move from there.

We started looking all over the town for an alternative plot for the club. But nobody was willing to give us some land even if it lay unutilised. There was always some problem or other. Had all their appreciation for our work been merely lip-service? Something that we had created with so much effort, such a wonderful organisation couldn't disappear just for want of space, could it?

In the end, Sambal-babu (Sashankashekhar Sanyal) said that he had a piece of land on the eastern part of Laldighi. He had acquired that property to build a house for himself but until the construction-work began the club could make use of this space. We were all very happy and once again hope glimmered before us. Our hearts overflowed with gratitude to Sambal-babu.

And once again the work of converting this new piece of land into a club resumed. We cleared a veritable jungle growing a metre above our heads, filled up the holes, levelled the mounds and the place was ready. We never used any paid labourers for the club-work. We always did all the work ourselves. Two objectives were attained by this: one, it helped us economise and, two, we learnt to become self-reliant. We felt such a joy doing the club-work ourselves and it is through this work that progressively we began to understand and value the dignity of labour.

In fact, while trying to set up our club we learnt so many things that helped us immensely in life too. Learning to use the spade and the crowbar, carrying a load on one's head and all sorts of physical work, to mix heartily with the boys, to be able to establish an easy and spontaneous rapport with new people, to run an organisation, to remain calm in adversity and to try and come out of it with a level-headed solution, to stand on right principles at the required moment and then single-mindedly and firmly to follow them, to keep proper accounts, to be able to say a word or two in public, to be able to write something, these were all qualities that we developed while doing our club-work and in later life these proved to be invaluable in discharging our duties and responsibilities.

In any case, we had got the new property ready and the club was transferred from Kadaipara to Laldighi. The club looked even better now. We had quite a lot of new equipment: two sets of parallel-bars, four sets of wooden bars for dund, rings made of bamboo, a wrestling-pit, a boxing-ring, a punching-bag, two sets of barbells, two mirrors, some equipment for gymnastics, some material for folk-dances, dumb-bells, clubs, material for drills, lathis, etc. On one side of the ground a Gadi-court was made.

and, on the other, space was left for parade and drills. In one corner a room with bamboo and clay was erected to keep all our equipment like barbells, mirrors, boxing-gloves, punching-bag, etc , and the room was locked

The club resumed its activities in full swing. The members would come to do their exercises regularly. The mango, lichi, coconut trees surrounding the entire area made the place beautiful, quiet and peaceful, a place fit for sadhana. One felt as if we were in an ashram straight out of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata period learning the dharma of the student.

But then trouble came knocking once again. One day on arriving at the club I saw that the roof of the room had been broken and a lot of expensive equipment like barbells and mirrors had been stolen. However, it did not demoralise us. We set about trying to replace the stolen equipment.

When we shifted the club to the bank of Laldighi there was only one thing that was buzzing in our heads. If the club had to be saved, then the club absolutely needed its own premises. As long as we were on others' premises we could never be permanent. And if no alternative premises were found to shift to, it would mean the end of the club. That's why during our occupation of the Laldighi premises we kept looking for a plot for our club. And that is how the present premises of the club were found. How we managed to get this property is a very interesting story.

Around the same time as our club started, the Murshidabad District Sports Association led by Sri Pranab Sen was also taking shape. Inspired by Pranab Sen's enthusiasm and organising capability, our District Association grew up and progressed with new hope, energy and activity.

Our club had a very close relationship with Pranab Sen. Because we had followed his advice we had been able to come up successfully in the present premises. The club had been running almost by word of mouth. It is also thanks to his efforts that the constitution of the club was prepared and with the setting up of the club its office too came up. We collaborated fully with the District Sports Association and we also got quite a lot of assistance from it.

We used to participate regularly in the tournaments and competitions organised by the District Sports Association in football, hockey, volleyball, athletic sports and swimming. Our club used to do well in athletic sports and swimming. The volleyball team was quite good too and even though our club did not have good football and hockey teams, we would take part in the tournament. Our club was primarily for body-building and boxing. Even then we had made a volleyball, a gadi and a badminton court in our premises. We did not have our own ground for football or hockey. In those days there were many good open grounds in Berhampur. We used to make use of whichever ground was available for these games. If no ground was free then we would go to the horse-racing area and play there. Towards the end, a few days before I came away to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, we received from the government, thanks to Pranab Sen's efforts, a triangular-shaped plot. Although the plot was not very big, we could still manage to play football, hockey and practise the athletic sports. I am told that this piece

of property is no more with the club. A huge building has come up there.

Quite a few good boxers, both young and grown-up, were trained in our club. The older ones among them (from the Berhampur Krishnanath College) were sent to the Inter-Collegiate Boxing Championship organised by the Bengal Amateur Boxing Federation in Calcutta. We had a lot of problems in sending our team. The College authorities were just not willing to send their students and I had to practically fight with the then Principal of the College, Jyotish Chandra Mitra. The College did not give either the train-fare or the entry-fees for them. All the money came from our pockets. I myself could not go as I had to sit for the final year B.A. examination within a few days.

In any case, we kept following the progress of our boys in Calcutta and when we were informed that our boys from the Berhampur Krishnanath College had won the championship we went to meet the Principal. He had already read about it in the papers. On seeing us tears welled up in the old man's eyes. "You did well to send them, Pinu," he said.

Then everything happened as it should. A holiday was declared in the college and the college reimbursed all our expenses. The Principal paid a visit to the club to felicitate us. I was told later that the college had donated some boxing gloves to the club. I had by then come away to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

With the growth of our club another thing happened. Our members came from all over Berhampur. However, many found it difficult to come from distant places and so it was decided to open some more clubs in the town. They would all run independently but keep in touch with one another and extend help when needed. This had the advantage that many more people could take up physical culture and this would give a boost to physical culture itself.

And so several clubs opened: in Gorabazar under Kamaksya's guidance, in Barrack under Pankaj's guidance, in Lower Kadar under Tarit, in Babupara under Shorsu-babu, in Saidabad under Taradas and in Kasimbazar under Santosh. The *Vivekananda Byayam Samiti* remained in the same place. We used to go each day to a different club to instruct it. And even though we had no official link with the *Vivekananda Byayamagar* club run by Madan-babu next to the Berhampur Co-operative Bank, our relations with their organisers were very good and I used to go and teach them boxing. Obviously all the clubs could not develop fully and for want of the right leader some of the clubs folded up. The police closed the Gorabazar club. After Santosh passed away the Kasimbazar club also closed down. I had already come away to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram by then.

It was 1945. It was time for me to pass out of college. I had sat for my B.A. examination, the results were to be declared soon. Now I had to take my own responsibility and stand on my own two feet. I did not know still where I would go to earn my livelihood. It was difficult to say if I could continue my work for the club—a club nurtured with so much care. For the last five years the club had been all to me, my sadhana, my pursuit of knowledge, my only attachment and love.

In those five years I had seen so many boys of the club finish their studies and leave Berhampur in search of a livelihood or of some other pursuit. The sorrow of parting was felt by both those who were leaving and those who stayed on. The club too suffered their loss. Many among those who left had been excellent workers.

An idea rose in my head if I could start a factory or something in or around Berhampur then all the problems would be solved. I would not be far from the club and through this factory our livelihood would be taken care of. Besides, the club would benefit from it.

We had been in the silk-business for the last three generations. "Why not take up the same line?" I wondered. I could cultivate sericulture gardens to breed silkworms and with their excellent silk-yarn weave fine looms of cloth. Just then there arose a possibility of going abroad on a State Scholarship to study silk technology.

I started weaving all sorts of dreams. After returning from abroad I would set my silk-weaving factory and provide for the employment and upkeep of all the good workers of the club. A part of the factory earnings would be used for the development of the club and to assist other youth-oriented institutions. We would organise educational, health and various other welfare schemes. If the Berhampur clubs could all become self-sufficient then other branches could be set up in other parts of the district. Each of these clubs and their members could be supported by the setting up of an appropriate little industry in the area. Gradually, this work would spread from the district to the whole of Bengal. With all our strength we would try to recreate the *sujalām suphalām shashyashyāmālām* Bengal and infuse the Bengalis with health, knowledge and economic strength once again.

We had just opened a few centres of our club in Berhampur. Now requests were coming in from outside from a couple of places of the district to open clubs like ours there. "Things are moving just in the direction we planned," I said to myself.

But now a big problem arose, a serious questioning within. If we continued working according to our plans then perhaps one day a massive organisation would be created in the whole of Bengal which would generate a tremendous power. But what then? For what work and in which direction would that organisation and that power be utilised?

With a powerful organisation and with the energy of the people, either good or bad was possible. With a lofty ideal and great leadership abundant good for man could result. But if that same power went astray then it could also destroy man. At that time the burning example of the Second World War and its effects were hovering before me. The War was almost nearing its end. Hitler's mighty pride had been nearly crushed. All I could see was how under one man's rashness, ignorance and petty blind leadership the powerful German race was being led to ruin. What a waste of human life, life-energy and organisational power and to what a frightening end! The peace and safety of the whole world was about to be sacrificed. If our organisation too did not firmly found itself on some lofty ideal then that could cause endless suffering to human beings as well. What was that lofty ideal? What was that great Truth on which we could build our

organisation and act? Somehow I was not taken up by any of the prevailing ideologies of the time. I always felt as if there was a big gap somewhere in all of them.

When an organisation is set up man tries to serve his selfish interests in so many ways and to see how that great Force could be used for his personal ends. If we do not hold any high, powerful ideal before us then we too would end up as mere puppets in the hands of that force and dance to its tune. A proof of that I had clearly got while setting up our small club, the *Vivekananda Byayam Samiti*. It was a small club, after all, with very limited means. But even there, there was never any shortage of people wanting to use this power of the club for selfish personal ends.

On top of that I had some other personal problems too. From my very childhood I had started asking questions to which I did not find an answer. And as I grew up these questions became even more pressing and I desperately started seeking their answers. I felt no attraction for the type and pace of human life I had been used to from childhood, but then I did not know where to look for an alternative path. Who was I? Why was I born? What was life's aim? What were we moving towards? What was man's highest good? Was death an unavoidable necessity? And many more such questions echoed in my being. All sorts of books I read, all sorts of saints and hermits I met, but I could get no inkling of the path I was to follow.

I had been hearing about Sri Aurobindo from a very young age. When I was old enough I read His books. I do not myself know at what point I got attracted to Him. I started feeling that it was from Him that I would get the light I was seeking. It was on this seeking that in 1942 I arrived at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for the first time and stayed here for almost four months. That was a time when I began understanding things. And in the end I felt that it was by walking on the path shown by Sri Aurobindo that all my questions would find their answers and I would attain my goal. But then I also resolved that I would join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to take up this path only if I felt an irresistible urge from within.

Then for three years there was a relentless conflict within me: should I join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram or should I dedicate myself to the work of our youth organisation? And following my conviction I absorbed myself in the latter and as planned, after passing my B.A., I went to Calcutta in search of a State Scholarship to study silk technology.

And then what had not happened in three years suddenly was settled within a couple of minutes. I was convinced that I had to go to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Immediately I went back from Calcutta to Berhampur to bid goodbye to my fellow-workers and friends. The very next day after taking my leave from them I left for Calcutta on my way to Pondicherry to join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. While bidding farewell to my friends and fellow-workers of the club I noticed that I did not feel any pain at leaving something that I had built up with so much care and love. The decision to go forward had been taken and there was nothing that pulled me back now.

So this is the history of my association with the club. The organisers of the club have kept in touch with me even after my coming away to Pondicherry. Some of them I

have never seen or had seen when they were very young I keep getting all the news of the club From time to time they urge me to come and visit the club once Even if I wanted to, the possibility is not there My only need now is to remain here all the time I have to be present here at every moment to be able to do the work here Sometimes in my dreams or in my imagination I hop over to the club

Besides, twenty-five long years have elapsed since then And in this long period I have had so many wonderful experiences I have seen much, I have had to live through many different situations The infinite Love of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo has been with me and it is They who have been guiding me all along

I had imagined that at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram my association with physical culture and youth organisation would come to an end But within a very short time that became once again my primary work The Mother started paying special attention to the organisation of physical education at the Ashram And it is under Her direction, administration and help that the physical education department became so exemplary People from India and abroad who have come and seen our organisation have remarked that such a thing doesn't exist in this country and is quite rare even abroad

The work of forming the new humanity is vigorously going on at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram And the limits of this work have gone beyond my town, beyond my district, beyond my state, beyond my country to embrace the whole wide earth There are people here from different parts of the world and centres of the Ashram have been started almost everywhere

Did I find an answer to my personal questions? Well, that too has been taken care of What I have realised with my straight, simple understanding is this

—Man's aim is to move towards an integral perfection Life is the field of action given to us for developing that integral perfection And the path is the total surrender of our life and action

—Sri Aurobindo's sadhana does not exclude the world It is the integral transformation of the world by bringing down from the heights the Divine Consciousness

—This is not possible solely by human endeavour The human aspiration from below and the response from above it is only in the union of these two that this work can be done.

—Man with his mind can determine his conduct in the practical, material life but then the very imperfection of man's earthly life can completely unsettle everything No political ideology, no religious discipline, no philosophical system, no intellectual understanding, no ethical solution or scientific discovery can bring about that perfection until man transforms his own nature And once man's nature is transformed then every activity can be utilised for the work of integral perfection

But then the question arises Should man just twiddle his thumbs until the transformation of his nature takes place? Not at all He has first to be convinced of this

truth in his mind and life. And then keeping this truth in full view he should develop himself in all the parts of his being, keep the flame of aspiration constantly burning within him and rely entirely on the Divine Grace

Man should determine his work according to his nature, capacity and inclination since it is work that helps us in manifesting our inner truth outside. Then it is important to try and turn oneself through one's work and one's work through oneself into something as beautiful as possible.

There is no high and low in work. It is not work that makes man great or small. It is man who makes his work great or small. One can advance towards perfection through any work as long as that work is done with inner sincerity.

At the very outset there is not much that needs to be changed in life from the outside. First one has to change one's attitude in life and then that takes care of the rest.

One has to discover one's inner Truth and then allow it as fully as possible to direct one's whole life.

It is not an easy path. At every step there is risk and danger. At every step one's inner sincerity is put to test. But there is no other way.

My personal experience in my own life through all these years has shown me that an invisible Power has guided me all along this path. And it is my innermost conviction that it is this same invisible Power that will continue to guide me till the very end of my life.

While recounting how the *Vivekananda Byayam Samiti* came to be, I have also told you something about my own life. I would like to conclude with a special request to all the members of this club.

Our club was founded and built on a great ideal. And even though I am far away I have been told that the present organisers have continued to the best of their abilities to give shape to that ideal. It is my firm belief that that is the inner reason for our club having proudly survived all the ordeals and obstacles. My request to you is "Never lose sight of that real goal."

The country today badly needs hardworking, enthusiastic, honest and capable citizens. After a long period of sleep this great Indian people has re-awakened. Now it has to appear before the world-assembly with its gifts and contributions to the world. But before that, as a preparation, it has to organise its life first. And it is in this mighty sacred task that we need these innumerable, hardworking, enthusiastic, honest and capable workers. The club has limited reach and few means at its disposal. Nevertheless let it use all its energies in building this real Man. *Vande Mataram!*

PRANAB KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

BHAVANI BHARATI: AN INTRODUCTION

Bhavani Bharati is a short Sanskrit poem written by Sri Aurobindo sometime between 1904 and 1908. This is the only poem which Sri Aurobindo wrote in Sanskrit. It is patriotic in nature and contains 99 verses in the Upajati metre. The poem was untitled when Sri Aurobindo wrote it. Sri Aurobindo after writing this poem did not get a chance to see it again, for it was confiscated by the Calcutta Police in May 1908 when he was imprisoned. In the year 1985 Sri Aurobindo Ashram recovered and published it with the appropriate name *Bhavani Bharati*.

The poem begins with the idea that while Indians are sleeping happily and enjoying worldly pleasures their Motherland is being oppressed by the Titans who suck her life-blood. On one side the worldly pleasures, enjoyments, possessions, kith and kin, poetry, wife, etc., and on the other, the heart-rending cry of Mother India oppressed by the Titans. The poet who represents himself as the whole country, develops a feeling of humiliation and a sense of guilt that not only has he been unable to help Mother India in this dire situation but is sleeping happily.

At this time he hears an inner call. His sleep is disturbed by the touch of a dreadful hand. He sees Mother India standing before him in the form of Kali, a garland of human bones round her neck; a chain of human skulls on her waist; scars of Titan lashes are on her back. She is hungry. She is poor. She is fearsome. She is naked. She is dark.

नरास्थिमाला नृकपालकाञ्ची वृकोदराक्षी क्षुधिता दरिद्राम् ।
पृष्ठे ब्रणाङ्गामसुरप्रतोदै सिंही नदन्तीमिव हन्तुकामाम् ॥

(*Bhavani Bharati*, 5)

This dreadful dark figure declares that she is Mother India, the Mother of the beloved child of the gods who are invincible in the face of Fate or Time or Death.

मातास्मि भोः पुत्रक भारताना सनातनाना त्रिदशप्रियाणाम् ।
शक्तो न यान्पुत्र विधिर्विपक्ष कालोऽपि नो नाशयितुं यमो वा ॥

(*Bhavani Bharati*, 12)

Verses 13 to 31 are a remarkable portion of *Bhavani Bharati* from the point of view of national unity and strength. In those verses Sri Aurobindo has described the call of Mother India standing before him. She calls her children to protect her. She makes them aware of their glorious past. She says that once India shone on the earth like a thousand suns because of the purified strength, knowledge and severe austerities of the Rishis.

ते ब्रह्मचर्येण विशुद्धवीर्या ज्ञानेन ते भीमतपोभिरार्या ।
सहस्रसूर्या इव भासुरास्ते समृद्धिमत्या शुशुभुर्धरित्र्याम् ॥

(*Bhavani Bharati*, 13)

Here in this land the great heroes enjoyed smearing blood of their enemies on their bodies, they could not tolerate any opposition from their foes. But she regrets the pitiful and cowardly nature of her present children. She berates each of them—the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, the people of each part of this country—and calls them to arise and strive to enrich her.

In the next part of the poem (verses 32 to 47) Sri Aurobindo has given a vivid description of the miserable condition of Mother India. He gives his vision of Mother India being surrounded by the Titans who nourish their offspring by sucking her blood. They are huge and vile in their appearance. They are inflated with the pride of their strength. To defeat them the Mother herself lifts her weapon and rushes on them roaring in battle.

Verses 48 to 99 describe Mother India as being worshipped by the gods and the Rishis of the Himalayas and the people of the whole world. This part of the poem contains, mainly, chants in the praise of Goddess Bhavani Bharati in her various forms.

She is praised as Omnipotent, Terrible, Mighty, Compassionate, the Preserver, the Primeval Goddess, the Supreme Power, Bharati, the Mother of Aryans; Kali, the utterly ruthless one, Radha the incarnation of love; Annapurna the merciful and gracious one, Savitri, the radiant one, the ten-armed Durga, the thousand-armed Mother of unthinkable energy.

This, in brief, is the story of Bhavani Bharati. The story is short, simple, but vigorous, powerful, inspiring and carries the spirit of the Nation. A nation according to Sri Aurobindo, ‘‘is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a Mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation...’’ (SABCL, Vol. 1, p. 65). He further explains that this Mighty Shakti is Bhavani Bharati, Mother India. She is the Mother of Strength, the repository of infinite energy. This Mother of Strength is now ‘‘inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle of Tamas, the self-indulgent inertia and ignorance of her sons. To get rid of Tamas we have but to wake the Brahma within’’ (SABCL, Vol. 1, p. 65). This awakening of the Brahma within is possible through the real worship of the Mother of Strength. And Sri Aurobindo’s *Bhavani Bharati* in its entirety is an invocation of this Mother of Strength.

The idea of the soul of the nation as the expression of the infinite energy of Brahman has been described by Sri Aurobindo in the following verse of *Bhavani Bharati* where Mother India has been addressed as the reservoir of infinite energy, strength of the strong, gentleness of the gentle and as the omnipotent one:

अनन्तशक्त्युद्धिमशेषमूर्तिं को वक्ष्यतीमा तव सर्वशक्ते ।
तेजस्त्वमेतद्वलिना बलञ्च त्वं कोमलानामपि कोमलासि ।

(*Bhavani Bharati*, 88)

Sri Aurobindo has not only described the aspect of the power of the universal Mother in his *Bhavani Bharati*, but he has seen love and knowledge as well as beauty and compassion in her. She is all-powerful and a destroyer in the form of Kali, she is beauty

in the form of Lakshmi, she is compassion in the form of Annapurna, she is love in the form of Radha, she is knowledge in the form of Saraswati. All these aspects are present in her. Sri Aurobindo sings her praise as follows

काली त्वमेवासि सुनिष्ठुरासि त्वमन्नपूर्णा सदया च सौम्या ।
नमामि रौद्रा भुवनान्तकर्त्रिं प्रमाकुलामेव नमामि राधे ॥

(*Bhavani Bharati*, 87)

For Sri Aurobindo the nation is the Mother of Strength. Therefore the Spirit of the Nation has been invoked by him in this poem, he does it by praising the Mother in her various forms. These prayers are as powerful as the Mother herself.

In *Bhavani Bharati* Sri Aurobindo saw the future India in a completely different form than the India known to us. He saw the people of India coming forward to guard and save Sanatana Dharma. The whole world is hastening to sing her praises and the resplendent Lakshmi, with a smile on her lips, is residing permanently in this land. If he saw this vision of the country it cannot be false. India will rise again, she will smile and the whole world will respect her. What is needed is giving ourselves to her in service, immersing ourselves in her worship, invoking her presence in our hearts, we have to invoke the Spirit of the Nation in us. *Bhavani Bharati* is not just an ordinary patriotic poem, it makes us feel the presence of the Mother of Strength, creates the sense of the national spirit in us, makes us aware that we are eternal, with it we can stand against hostile Fate and Time and Death. It makes us free from self-indulgent inertia. This is the greatness of *Bhavani Bharati*.

Apart from its subject matter, this poem stands as a unique creation from the point of view of its poetic beauty. Sri Aurobindo has presented the story in a Puranic style, as we see in the *Durga Saptashati (Chandi)*. A perceptive reader with a sense of poetry can immediately experience the simplicity, power, rhythm and appropriateness of the words used by Sri Aurobindo. The Upajati metre in which this poem is composed is a marvellously befitting metre. We know that in Sanskrit this Upajati metre is generally used to express power, anger, heroism, war, etc. As *Bhavani Bharati* in its entirety is an invocation of power, strength and heroism Sri Aurobindo has chosen this metre very justly for its composition.

Hence the style and diction that Sri Aurobindo has adopted for the poem, the flavour that he has added to it by the touch of his masterly hand, the spirit that he has brought out here by his extraordinary genius,—all these have made the poem a unique piece among the Sanskrit poetic works of this century.

SAMPADANANDA MISHRA

THE GREAT AND THE EMINENT*

THE RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY TODAY

AUGUST 15 is the birthday of free India. It is also the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, one of the greatest men that ever lived. He combined an intellect of the highest order with a rarely equalled spiritual force and a vision that transcended the limits of time and space.

He had an unshakable faith in the future of this great country. Having predicted the eventual independence of India three decades before the event, he wrote a declaration for 15 August 1947, which is of momentous significance. After stating that the coincidence between the birthday of free India and his own was not a fortuitous accident, but represented the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guided his steps in all his life-work, he dealt with the evolution of mankind and India's role in the unfolding future. World movements had begun in which free India might well play a large part and take a leading position. Deploring the fact that the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seemed to have hardened, he predicted that in the years ahead, India and Pakistan would ultimately come closer together and stand united. In his own words, “. . . unity may finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go, unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.”

The Ideal of Human Unity

Sri Aurobindo gave expression to his vision of the ideal of human unity

Nature is slow and patient in her methods. She takes up ideas and half carries them out, then drops them by the wayside to resume them in some future era with a better combination. She tempts humanity, her thinking instrument, and tests how far it is ready for the harmony she has imagined, she allows and incites man to attempt and fail, so that he may learn and succeed better another time.

He foresaw a world union providing a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way, the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. “A catastrophe may intervene, and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure.”

He wanted developments such as dual or multilateral citizenship, interchange or

* Broadcast on All India Radio, Bombay, 14 August 1972

fusion of cultures. Nationalism having fulfilled itself must lose its militancy and should no longer find the international outlook incompatible with self-preservation. The European Common Market today seems to be a partial fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's prediction.

Message to Students

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy was expressed in words which are within the comprehension of any thinking man. His Message to Students is memorable. "There are times in a nation's history, when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake, train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice."

According to Sri Aurobindo, the task free India has set before herself is moral and spiritual. He believed in *dharma* as a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has to be the guardian, exemplar and missionary. He wanted the spirit of *dharma* to enter into and mould our society, our politics, our literature, our science, our individual character and aspirations.

At the same time he wanted India to benefit from the developments in the West. "India can best develop herself and serve humanity by being herself and following the law of her own nature. This does not mean, as some narrowly and blindly suppose, the rejection of everything new that comes to us in the stream of Time or happens to have been first developed or powerfully expressed by the West. Such an attitude would be intellectually absurd, physically impossible and, above all, unspiritual, true spirituality rejects no new light, no added means or materials of our human self-development."

The Role of the State

The core of Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy is that the State exists for the individual and not the individual for the State.

Sri Aurobindo expressed his views about the ideal form of government in the following words. "The Government is for the people. It must provide for stability as well as progress. Stability may be achieved by unity and co-operative action, and progress by free individual growth. The Government should be run by people who are selfless, unegoistic, scrupulously honest and capable. Their allegiance should be to the whole country, they should serve the interests of the whole country and not of any party. If the present Constitution does not permit such men, irrespective of parties, to be

in the Government, then the Constitution should be changed.”

He further observed that it is the energy of the individual which is the really effective agent of collective progress.

The Falsehood of Modern Political Life

Sri Aurobindo believed that the State failed in its duties because the ruling class did not represent “the best minds of the nation or its noblest aims or its highest instincts”. His portrait of the average politician is incisive and devastating:

. the modern politician in any part of the world... does not represent the soul of a people or its aspirations. What he does usually represent is all the average pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception that is about him and these he represents well enough as well as a great deal of mental incompetence and moral conventionality, timidity and pretence. Great issues often come to him for decision, but he does not deal with them greatly, high words and noble ideas are on his lips, but they become rapidly the claptrap of a party. The disease and falsehood of modern political life is patent in every country of the world and only the hypnotized acquiescence of all, even of the intellectual classes, in the great organized sham, cloaks and prolongs the malady, the acquiescence that men yield to everything that is habitual and makes the present atmosphere of their lives. Yet it is by such minds that the good of all has to be decided, to such hands that it has to be entrusted, to such an agency calling itself the State that the individual is being more and more called upon to give up the government of his activities. As a matter of fact, it is in no way the largest good of all that is thus secured, but a great deal of organized blundering and evil with a certain amount of good which makes for real progress, because Nature moves forward always in the midst of all stumblings and secures her aims in the end more often in spite of man’s imperfect mentality than by its means.

National Education

His philosophy regarding the ideal system of education may be summed up as follows. *First*, it is essential that society should refuse to give exclusive importance to success, career and money, and that it should insist instead on the paramount need of the full and real development of the student by contact with the Spirit and the growth and manifestation of the Truth of the Being in the body, life and mind.

Secondly, the country must give top priority to the needs of education, and organize the whole life of the nation as a perpetual process of education.

Thirdly, the country must make full and wise use of all the modern techniques of communication, such as, cinema, television, books, pictures and magazines, for spreading the ideal of perfection.

Fourthly, permanent exhibitions and museums should be planned all over the country, even in villages, which could be the centres of stimulating knowledge, including the inner significance and goal of evolution

Fifthly, teachers must grow into real examples of the perfection that is aimed at

Finally, the country as a whole should engage itself in the activity of the discovery and realization of its true mission

Above all, Sri Aurobindo believed that if India is to survive and do her appointed work in the world, the first necessity is that the youth of India should learn to think,—to think on all subjects, to think independently, fruitfully, going to the heart of things, not stopped by their surface, free of prejudgments, shearing sophism and prejudice asunder as with a sharp sword, smiting down obscurantism of all kinds as with the mace of Bhima

The Supramental

The greatest contribution of Sri Aurobindo to philosophy is the vast body of his writings which deal with the adventure of consciousness, man's striving to reach the Supramental. He believed that the next step in evolution would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness which would offer the solution for the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society

Sri Aurobindo knew that the difficulties in the way of attaining the Supermind are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome, and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. He further believed that this evolution must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness. The initiative here can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement would have to be in our country

Even when the first decisive change is reached, it is certain that all humanity will not be able to rise to that level. This endeavour to be in the supramental sphere will be a supreme and difficult labour even for the individual, but much more for the human race generally. Nevertheless, it would be a transformation and a beginning far beyond anything yet attained

It is a measure of the distressing apathy of our nation that the works of Sri Aurobindo are not studied throughout the length and breadth of India. The words of wisdom from the writings of this great spirit deserve to be taught in every school and college

No other thinker of modern times has seen so vividly the pattern of the human cycle down the ages and in the aeons of existence that lie ahead. His life-work will always remain a lasting presence, full of light

ON AVATARHOOD: SRI AUROBINDO AND T. S. ELIOT

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation —T. S. Eliot

SRI AUROBINDO himself concedes that to the modern mind “Avatarhood is one of the most difficult to accept or to understand of all the ideas that are streaming in from the East upon the rationalised human consciousness.”¹ Avatarhood is likely to be dismissed by the West as a superstition; it may be taken at the best for a metaphor for some manifestation of human power, character and genius. To the materialist, the rationalist and the deist, it merits no consideration, to the dualist, it is a blasphemy. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, takes pains to explain the possibility, the purpose and the process of Avatarhood and to interpret the Gita-concept in the most persuasive manner. The Gita makes it clear that the Avatar is a coming down of the Divine below the line which divides the divine from the human world or status and that the divine birth is that of the conscious Godhead in our humanity and essentially the opposite of the ordinary birth as it is not the birth into the ignorance, but the birth of the knowledge, not a physical phenomenon but a soul-birth. “. it is the descent of God into that divine birth of the human being into which we mortal creatures must climb..”² It exemplifies the possibility of the Divine manifest in the human being, so that man may see what that is and take courage to grow into it. Its purpose is not to give a religion, a mere creed, but a method of inner and outer living—a way, a rule and law of self-moulding by which the human being can grow towards divinity.

Applying the concept to all religions, Sri Aurobindo observes “The divine manifestation of a Christ, Krishna, Buddha in external humanity has for its inner truth the same manifestation of the eternal Avatar within in our own inner humanity. That which has been done in the outer human life of earth, may be repeated in the inner life of all human beings.”³ He adds that the Avatar is at the same time the Vibhuti, the human vibhuti, being the hero in the sense in which Carlyle visualizes him, is a power of God in man.

Sri Aurobindo glorifies this idea of Avatarhood in some of his own poems. A poem called *Krishna* in *Cretics* describes the dual phenomenon of divinity and humanity.

All He loves, all He moves, all are His, all are He!
Many limbs sate His whims, bear His sweet ecstasy.
Two in One, Two who know difference rich in sense,
Two to clasp, One to be, this His strange mystery.⁴

The sonnet entitled *Lila* describes the features of the supreme Purushottama who is at once man and god, the doer of the works of the world and “the impartial witness of the works of his own Nature.”

In us is the thousandfold Spirit who is one,
 An eternal thinker calm and great and wise,
 A Seer whose eye is an all-regarding sun,
 A poet of the cosmic mysteries

A critic Witness pieces everything
 And binds the fragments in his brilliant sheaf;
 A World-adventurer borne on Destiny's wing
 Gambles with death and triumph, joy and grief.

A king of greatness and a slave of love,
 Host of the stars and guest in Nature's inn,
 A high spectator Spirit throned above,
 A pawn of passion in the game divine,

One who has made in sport the suns and seas
 Mirrors in our being his immense caprice.⁵

Of the Western poets, it is Milton who has celebrated the incarnation in a poem of enduring value His *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* sings the heavenly birth of the King of Peace. The poet known for his 'proud humility' has composed it as a gift for Christ on His birthday It highlights the idea that God the Son who with his Father rules the universe is found crying in a stable under a shabby roof

This is the Month, and this the happy morn
 Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King
 Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born,
 Our great Redemption from above did bring .

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
 And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
 Wherewith he went at Heaven's high Council-Table,
 To sit the midst of Trinal Unity
 He laid aside; and here with us to be,
 Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day,
 And chose with us a darksome House of mortal Clay

When the Heaven-born child lies in the rude manger, wrapped in rags, there is universal peace, the stars with deep amaze stand fixed, and all the false gods stricken with fear and grief leave their shrines

Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland* dealing with the disaster in which five innocent nuns died, discusses divine providence and the paradox of God's mysterious

power with repeated references to “the Christ of the Father Compassionate” Giving a very brief but striking account of the life of Christ on earth, the poet attempts to drive home the idea that the true meaning of God as well as of creation is to be found only in the Passion of Christ, which is comparable to a cloud that produces a flood

Warm-laid grave of a womb-like grey,
Manger, maiden’s knee,
The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat,
Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be,
Though felt before, though in high flood yet

Apostrophising “Jesu, heart’s light, Jesu, maid’s son,” the priest-poet recalls the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in honour of the earthly mother of the saviour, “the one woman without stain” Christ, the poet asserts, is so merciful that he reaches out to “the uttermost mark”, to “the-last-breath penitent spirits”, to bring them to His fold He is the second person in the Trinity, at once God and man

Now burn, new born to the world,
Double-naturèd name,
The heaven-flung, heart-fleshed, maiden-furled
Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame,
Mid-numberèd He in three of the thunder-throne!

The birth of Christ is like rain falling on the English countryside, “a released shower”! Hopkins’s experience of ecstasy is evident in all his eloquent expressions of gratitude to the one that, by being born as man, redeemed mankind

The Christian faith in the Incarnation and the Hindu concept of Avatarhood mingle magnificently in a small poem by Tagore whose religion was willing to accept one of its arch-enemies, the Buddha, as an Avatar of Lord Vishnu Tagore himself has sung the glory of the Buddha in more than one poem. Immediately after the First World War he wrote a moving piece which is a prayer of petition to the Buddha and a hymn in his praise Dismayed by the slaughter all around, the poet begs the Buddha to be reborn so that the world may regain its sense and love may be restored to its rightful place

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred,
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine
Oh Thou of boundless life,
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,
let Love’s lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey
open its petals in thy light

O Serene, O Free,
 in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
 wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

The great Indian poet feels that one more Avatar of the Buddha alone can save the war-torn world

Tagore could give very sensitive expressions to a variety of nuances of the relationship between man and God, he attempts a re-enactment of the Nativity of Christ in an Indian setting in his poem *The Child*. He might have done it with a view to underscoring the Indian readiness to accept the Christian belief in the incarnation

The mother is seated on a straw bed with the babe on her lap,
 Like the dawn with the morning star.
 The Sun's ray that was waiting at the door outside
 falls on the head of the child
 The poet strikes his lute and sings out:
 'Victory to Man, the new-born,
 the ever-living!'
 They kneel down,—the King and the beggar,
 the saint and the sinner,
 the wise and the fool,—and cry
 'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living!'
 The old man from the East murmurs to himself
 'I have seen!'

God's descent into the world is celebrated here as a victory to mankind.

The incarnation of Christ may be considered the central theme of the poetry of T. S. Eliot, one of the greatest of modern poets. St. Augustine is reported to have said that in every poem there is some of the substance of God. In every major poem and drama by T. S. Eliot, the faith in the incarnation is underlined by the poet, known for his keen interest in and sound knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. In his *Journey of the Magi* based on the Biblical episode of the journey of the three wise men from the East to Bethlehem where Christ has been born, Eliot describes the difficulties faced by the magi. As interpreted by Sri Aurobindo, the Gita states that the Avatar's main purpose is to give a way of life. In Eliot's poem also, the new-born baby, who is Jesus himself, is presented as a symbol of a new religion which emphasises that the death of physical life in this world is the birth of an eternal spiritual life in heaven. The wise old men can foresee the sufferings the child will have to experience in the future and they feel uneasy as they have to give up their old religious values and adopt new ones. The speaker of the poem, who is obviously one of the wise men, after describing the unpleasant journey, comments on their experience of agony and ecstasy.

. .were we led all that way for
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
 We had evidence and no doubt I had seen birth and death,
 But had thought they were different, this Birth was
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
 With an alien people clutching their gods.
 I should be glad of another death.

It is not unreasonable to conclude that T. S. Eliot, while interpreting the incarnation, has in his mind the Gita concept of Avatarhood also, if one remembers that he was a great admirer of the *Bhagavad Gita* giving it a place next only to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. One may also recall how he advocates and versifies the cardinal message of the Gita in his *The Dry Salvages of the Four Quartets*

I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant...
 And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back
 And do not think of the fruit of action
 Fare forward

One may not fail to notice that G. M. Hopkins and T. S. Eliot speak only of Jesus Christ believing as they did in the Christian incarnation as the central episode in the history of mankind, whereas Rabindranath Tagore in his poems and Sri Aurobindo in his essays do not fight shy of bringing in the Buddha and Christ besides the Avatars of Lord Vishnu. What is more remarkable is that Sri Aurobindo does not stop with a faithful interpretation of the Gita concept of Avatarhood. He is daringly original and goes beyond all the scriptures, poets and philosophers of the world when he observes that there is the spiritual transformation before the supramental and progression after it. This statement is best elucidated by the Mother's message of 24 April 1957 and K. D. Sethna's comment on it.

Here is the message of the Mother

In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation. And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.⁶

Sethna in his comment draws our attention to the error of sticking to past realisations as if they were the ultimate of the Supermind's epiphany, thereby making it clear that even the supramental realisation is not final.

Avatarhood, essentially manifesting the supreme Godhead, takes place from

various planes of being by an incarnation of the central divine personality poised on a plane. It can take place from the Mind plane to establish the rule of an ideal and spirit-touched dharma answering to the finest mental aspiration, or from the Overmind plane to bring a many-sided direct impulsion from a spiritual state that is vaster than the mental and beyond all merely ethico-religious rule. Again, it can take place straight from the supreme Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind, where the ultimate marvel of the Transcendent is organised for time-creation and the all-transformative archetype of earth-existence is dynamic. The Avatarhood from the Supermind carries not only in the inward but also in the outward the utter Godhead and all potentialities of future Avatarhood are continuous with those which it manifests and come out not so much from a higher plane as from a plane in its own background.⁷

Sri Aurobindo's concept of Avatarhood, comprehensive and far-reaching, is of a piece with his boldest speculation that mind will one day be superseded by Supermind and that this supramental consciousness will help man create on earth the home of a divinised humanity, when

The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God's

P MARUDANAYAGAM

References

- 1 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* SABCL Vol 13, p 141
- 2 *Ibid*, p 148
- 3 *Ibid*, p 151
- 4 Sri Aurobindo *Collected Poems* SABCL, Vol 5, p 590
- 5 *Ibid*, p 142
- 6 *CWM*, Vol 13, p 22
- 7 K D Sethna, *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo* pp 159-60
- 8 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, SABCL Vol 29, p 699

THE YOGA OF THE CELLS

THIS short essay which I am presenting here is based on the prayer of July 10, 1914 from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*. Probably it is in this prayer that the Mother refers to the work of cellular transformation in her body for the first time; therefore this prayer has a great historical significance.

Most of us think that the Mother took up her work of cellular transformation after the manifestation of the Supramental Light, Consciousness and Force on 29th February 1956. This prayer of July 10, 1914 reveals that she had begun this work at least 32 years prior to the Supramental Manifestation.

To reach the summit of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, namely the transformation of the body, the transformation of its cells is the ultimate requisite. This idea of physical transformation and the body's immortality was something unimaginable and impossible before the advent of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The impossible was imagined and made possible by the Twin Avatars of Supermind. The Mother declared boldly that death is not essential. She had come down on earth to prove that immortality and divinity are not the prerogative of gods and goddesses alone, that heaven would not always be somewhere beyond. In her infinite compassion and breath-taking spiritual ambition for the world, she decided to bestow the attributes of the gods on man, to make our earth a peer of heaven.

The Mother's tapasya, her yoga of the transformation of the cells, had started long before she came to Pondicherry. In a way we may say that the yoga-tapas, the yoga-shakti that she had ingathered during her earlier sadhana prepared the ground for this manifestation of the Supermind. On July 10, 1914, barely three months after her coming to Pondicherry and meeting Sri Aurobindo, the Mother addressed the Lord thus:

O Thou who eternally, immutably art, who consentest to Thy becoming in this world that Thou mayst bring into it a new Illumination, a new Impulsion, Thou art here, manifest Thyself more and more completely, always more perfectly, the instrument has given and gives itself to Thee with a fervent adhesion, a total surrender, Thou mayst reduce it to dust or transform it into a sun, it will resist nothing that is Thy Will. In this surrender lies its true strength and its true beatitude.

These lines are of supreme importance in the Yoga of the Mother. The first thing to be noted is that by this time the Mother had already realised an identity with the Lord, who had manifested in her. Also that she was fully aware of the stakes in this endeavour for the transformation of the cells. Both the possibilities, either of failure or a glorious success, were clearly seen even then. She says to the Lord, "Thou mayst reduce it to dust or transform it into a sun," and both possibilities were accepted with a total surrender to the Divine Will. The Mother knew that her body was the field and the

laboratory of a ‘‘new Illumination, a new Impulsion’’, She had consciously accepted the task of world-redemption and had become an instrument and a channel of the Divine Force

We marvel at the similarity of the symbolism used by the Mother to that of Sri Aurobindo’s. The term ‘‘sun’’, which is the symbol of the Supermind, has surely been used here consciously and advisedly by the Mahashakti of the Supermind

In 1914 the Mother had already begun to work on the cells of her body and had realised the enormity of the difficulties on the way and that it was going to be a very prolonged and painful process. The Lord was patiently sustaining her holy body in the endeavour. The difficulties she faced and the pain that she endured can neither be imagined nor realised by us. This was to be the labour of the Avatar which only an Avatar can undertake. Realising that the work was proceeding very slowly the Mother asks the Lord

But why art Thou so considerate with the animality of the body? Is it because it must be given time to adapt itself to the marvellous complexity, the powerful infinity of Thy Force? Is it Thy Will that makes itself gentle and patient, is unwilling to precipitate things, leaves to the elements leisure to adapt themselves? . I mean—is it better thus or is it impossible otherwise? Is there here a particular incapacity which Thou dost tolerate with magnanimity or is this a general law which is an inevitable portion of all that has to be transformed?

This path is so new that the Mother is not yet sure whether there is any particular incapacity in her body or is it only thus, slowly and with patience, that the work of the transformation of the cells can be done. She has entered totally unmapped regions, where she, by herself, will have to find the means and set the pace. It is only she who could undertake this excruciatingly painful task and she would continue it for nearly 60 years

Her strength is in her total surrender to the Lord’s Will. She does not question or fret. With a serenity, which is the source of her incredible strength, she accepts without questioning all as the Will of the Lord. She writes

But it matters little what we think about it, since thus it is, the attitude alone is important: Should we fight, should we accept? And it is Thou who dictatest the attitude, it is Thy Will that determines it at each moment. Why foresee and contrive when it is enough to observe and to give a full adhesion?

There are two possible attitudes, one of striving and the other of adhesion. The Mother has chosen consciously the second poise of consciousness where her being does not ‘‘foresee or contrive’’ but observes and gives full support. Even the desire or the curiosity to know the outcome is absent. She will keep this attitude, in regard to the transformation of the cells and the world-battle being fought in her body, right to the

end of her physical sojourn on the earth She has written in *Notes on the Way*

And the only solution, at every moment and in all cases, is (*gesture of self-giving*)
 “What Thou wilt”, that is to say, the abolition of preference and desire Even
 the preference for not suffering (CWM, Vol 11, p. 222, January 31, 1970)

The body has one prayer and it is always the same.

Make me worthy of knowing Thee,
 Make me worthy of serving Thee,
 Make me worthy of being Thee. (Ibid., p. 330, December 30, 1972)

As early as 1914, the working in the cells of her body, and the marvellous results were clear to the Mother She wrote,

The working in the constitution of the physical cells is perceptible: permeated with a considerable amount of force they seem to expand and to become lighter But the brain is still heavy and asleep ... I unite myself to this body, O divine Master, and cry to Thee. Do not spare me, act with Thy sovereign omnipotence, for in me Thou hast put the will to an entire transfiguration.

This was the great sacrifice made by the Divine She asked the Lord, “Do not spare me,” and she was neither spared nor did she ever spare herself but went on trying the near-impossible, in spite of the infirmities and indignities it caused in her body She never wavered in her “will to an entire transfiguration”

In 1914 the Mother’s aim was the transfiguration of the cells which would be later upgraded to their transformation Thus she made the supreme sacrifice of her body

SHYAM KUMARI

THE STORY OF *MOTHER INDIA*

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

PLINY, the Naturalist, once said: "Visit men who are supremely great" I, for one, faithfully follow his words. But in Pondicherry, there are only a few such men. And who can top that list but K. D. Sethna, editor of *Mother India*?

Ever since he published my first review in the May 1979 issue of his cultural monthly, I found in him a heaven-sent friend. Visiting him in his study made me ecstatic. Listening to him for just half-an-hour gave me the satisfaction of having read several volumes of knowledge. His language vivid with humour always reminded me of Sri Aurobindo's words: "Humour is the salt of existence."

As our friendship thickened I began to visit him regularly. In spite of his busy schedule he found time for me.

On one such occasion, we heard the clip-clop of a horse's hooves. A smile lit his face and he jubilantly said: "Raja! Can you go out and see what sort of a horse it is?"

When I returned, eager-eyed Sethna said: "Well . . ."

I was not sure of what he wanted to know about the horse. Playing safe, I said: "Yes, Sir! You are right. It is a horse."

"I know . . . I know it is a horse. But what sort of a horse is it?" He was anxious to know.

When I blinked for an answer, he asked: "Bony or bonny?"

"Oh! It's quite lean and haggard-looking, Sir," I said and added, "like Don Quixote's Rocinante."

Afraid of further questions on the stray horse, I asked him, "Do you like horses?"

"I love them," eagerly came his reply. "I had ridden horses for nearly 15 years before I joined the Ashram." He continued, "But I could only make the horse go at a gallop or canter. Trotting I could not do with my polio leg because it involved my getting up and down in the saddle. I could only sit tight on the horse and gallop. Galloping, of course, is the most dangerous thing. Still I did it. Once I went on horseback from Dehradun to Mussoorie, a height of 8000 feet, by a winding path skirting the precipice. That was my biggest feat of horsemanship so far. When I came to Pondicherry I could not see any horse worth seeing for 5 years. Small ponies now and again I could catch sight of. . . but no animal whom I could honour with the name of horse. Only after 5 years I heard a clip-clop on the road from my room on the first floor and I looked through the window and saw a magnificent horse ridden by somebody. So I had to rush down and keep watching that horse, following it as far as I could. And on that same night I dreamt of that horse and I wished I could keep such a creature in my room."

I was taken aback. "How could one ever think of keeping a horse, however magnificent, in one's room?" I thought aloud.

“Why not? If one has genuine love for such an animal,” he said. “If I am destined to be born again in this world, I would like to be born a horse .a magnificent one at that ”

Stunned I asked “Do you attach any symbolic meaning to horses?”

“Yes!” he said. “A ridden horse is the vital force under the command of the mind—and without the horse in you, you can do nothing ”

So, readers of *Mother India*, admirers and well-wishers of K. D. Sethna, and friends and fans of Amal Kiran as he is known in .he Ashram need not be offended by the title I have given to this piece.

Now to *Mother India*, the magazine that groomed several writers and reviewers, and found its pride of place in the select list of relevant periodicals numbering only to 31 both from India and abroad that have contributed to the growth of Indian Writing in English (Amritjit Singh *Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979 A Guide to Information Sources*, USA Gale Research Company, 1981, pp 496), the magazine that enters its fiftieth year of service to the elite all over the globe, and above all the periodical which Sri Aurobindo once called “My Paper ”

From the series of twelve interviews I had with K D Sethna about his life and work on behalf of various dailies and popular magazines, I have culled my relevant questions about *Mother India* and the enthusiastic answers he gave

P RAJA *Can you trace the history of Mother India?*

K D SETHNA. *Mother India* was originally an idea of Keshav Dev Poddar, known afterwards as Nava, short for Navajata, a name given by the Mother, meaning ‘The New-Born’ He wanted to bring out a journal commenting on current topics, both national and international, but with the Aurobindonian view at the back of it The journal was not intended to be openly a mouthpiece of Sri Aurobindo. I was diffident about my own role as editor because I was not quite conversant with political themes We had two or three interviews with the Mother arranged by my friend Yogendra Rustogi. And there I told the Mother that I knew very little about politics She said, ‘I do the same ’ So I asked her, ‘How will we go on?’ She at once replied, ‘There is Sri Aurobindo He will do everything for you ’

Sri Aurobindo jolly well did, so I, who had little touch with the political world, came to be regarded as almost a pundit by my friends and, when I used to come to Pondicherry, people used to gather around me and ask my opinion on this or that current political topic Originally I had wanted somebody like Anilbaran, a one-time political activist, to touch on political themes But the Mother and Sri Aurobindo insisted that I should do it myself

In its original form *Mother India* was a fortnightly and it remained so for a couple of years or so But a little before I came to Pondicherry to settle here, it became a monthly

Discussing Sri Aurobindo’s views I found that they did not quite chime with the current political attitudes. So when I wrote about Kashmir the Indian Government did

not like it I was asked to come and face a press council They told me that I had to be careful and that I had not been careful enough in expressing my views on the Kashmir situation. I said I would like to see things very clearly in their essential truth and we would have to write frankly about certain things The Press Council advised me to be more careful because we have to think how Pakistan would treat her Hindu minorities.

All my political articles were sent first to be read out to Sri Aurobindo by Nirodbaran or Nolini Only when he sent a telegram saying 'Fully approved', did they appear in print. So, for the first year and a half or even a year and three quarters all that I wrote can be taken as Sri Aurobindo's own direct views on national and international problems After he had left his body, the Mother wished me not to touch directly on politics

When we started *Mother India*, some of the veterans in the journalistic line used to come and talk with me and discuss my plans The main question was how much material I had in stock I told them, "I have material only for one more issue" Then they said, "You'll go up like a rocket and come down like a stick You must have at least six months' matter in hand" So I wrote to the Mother and put the critical situation to her. I asked her, "What shall we do? Should we wait and collect material or shall we go into action immediately?" I said my own attitude chimed with that of Marshal Foch in the First World War, when he was asked by headquarters to send reports from the front-line. He sent the message "My right wing is broken My left wing is wavering My centre is retreating The situation is excellent I am attacking" That is what I said to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo "I feel like going on undaunted and not postponing the date of publication" They fully approved and the Mother sent me a telegram "Stick to the date, live on faith" We stuck to the date and have lived on faith all these years Nor have we ever failed to come out on time Of course after the passing of Sri Aurobindo the political aspect had to be toned down The Mother herself was not happy about politics because she didn't feel like commenting on Indian situations just as Sri Aurobindo used to do. She did not have his background of a national reputation

Soon after Sri Aurobindo's passing, the Mother shifted the *Mother India* office to Pondicherry But I was still in Bombay. So I asked her "How can I, as an editor in Bombay, run a journal in Pondicherry? And why did you shift the office like that seemingly in an untimely way?"

She said: "I did it in order to give you no excuse to linger on in Bombay" This proved true Very soon after the journal was established here, I left Bombay and came to Pondicherry for permanent residence.

Mother India's policy was broad-based Essentially we have to be Aurobindonian. But this need not demand that every article should be on Sri Aurobindo or on his yoga The only demand was that it should not run counter to Sri Aurobindo's vision So all kinds of articles—literary, cultural, artistic—were invited and accommodated in *Mother India*

At the beginning I had a co-editor, Soli Albless, a friend of mine who was by profession an architect but in whom I read signs of a future writer of some weight He

himself was surprised when I took him as co-editor. But he proved my reading correct. He was of great help to me. But somehow, owing to some circumstances, he left the Ashram and naturally ceased to be my helper. So after two and a half years or so, I had to carry on *Mother India* single-handed. For the last nearly fifty years it has been going on in that way and luckily we haven't defaulted anywhere. It has been a regular production though the original idea of its being a fortnightly was given up and it became a monthly.

The name of *Mother India* was suggested by my wife Sehra. But there was a protest against it, because a book by the same name had come out which was anti-Indian, written by Miss Mayo. But we persisted in keeping the name so as to clear its associations, and get the right kind of thought connected with that name.

In the early days, when political opinions used to be expressed in *Mother India*, somebody began to criticize some of the ideas and when this attitude was reported to Sri Aurobindo, he said. "Doesn't he know that *Mother India* is my paper?"

What are the difficulties in editing a journal which does not have a commercial aim?

The difficulty is of course loss of finance. But Keshav Dev Poddar was an idealist. And he was prepared to stand the losses, hoping that by the Mother's Grace we'd be able to pay our way. By and large, I think, we succeeded in that line.

Mother India is distinct from the other Ashram periodicals in that we are not directly financed by the Ashram. We have to earn our living independently. And by means of help in getting advertisements and by occasional liberal donations from sympathisers, the very first of whom was one Mr. Pandey from the U.S.A., we have succeeded so far and I hope to carry on at least as long as I am alive. After that I do not know what will be the fate of *Mother India*. But generally things started in the Ashram are not allowed to lapse. The Mother did not believe in accepting failure.

In getting advertisements to help *Mother India* financially we called on our friend Ms. Ruttu Patel. She wrote to the Mother asking her approval and blessings. The Mother fully approved and Ruttu Patel has carried on her work very well and most of the advertisements that still appear in *Mother India* are from her side.

Have you ever found it cumbersome to collect articles for the journal?

Occasionally the situation was a little difficult at the start. But in such a condition I had to write three or four articles per issue under different names.

Can you recollect for me the different names you have used?

One was 'Satyavan'. I also ran a column of literary titbits called 'The Owl's Banquet'. The owl is the bird of Minerva, the Goddess of Learning. Naturally the author of the column was called 'Minerva'.

Who were your early contributors?

Mostly friends of course and most of them Aurobindonians. But occasionally we

used to get contributions from outside the Aurobindonian circle and provided they were not against the trend of Sri Aurobindo's thought they were welcome

Were the writers paid for their contributions?

Yes. The contributors were paid. We carried on for sometime but after that we had to stop payment because we could not financially manage it. The payment was Rs 15 per 1000 words

To what extent have Sri Aurobindo and the Mother contributed to the growth of the journal?

Their support was quite constant. And their confidence in the editor was a great source of encouragement. When it was suggested that for certain sections somebody could be the working editor, the Mother didn't approve of it. She said he could contribute articles but the main editorship should remain with Amal.

Suppose your publishers ask you to nominate the next editor to Mother India, on whom will your choice rest?

I have no idea just yet. There are some fairly competent ashramites. Even among the youngsters of the Ashram there may be one or two who might fill the gap.

Can you name any of them?

That would be a bit invidious.

How many copies did you begin with? And what is the print order now?

We began with 2000 when we were a political voice. But when we stopped being political, we had to cut down the number. Then there arose the question of raising the price. But when we had to go from Rs 12 a year to Rs 15, at once 300 Indian subscribers fell away! It was really a matter of their sparing about Re. 1 a month. And still the response was so saddening. But none of our foreign subscribers have defaulted. Now I think we must be in the neighbourhood of about 1000 to 1200.

Have you ever been sued in the court of law for any libel?

No. As I said I was called up once before the Press Council to defend my treatment of the Kashmir and Pakistan issue. But nothing more.

I would like to add one or two special things we did. When General MacArthur was dismissed by Truman, we were the only publication in the whole world which stood by MacArthur. I published an article titled "A Defence of General MacArthur". And even when the American Consul, Henderson, was trying to be apologetic about certain utterances of MacArthur at a meeting of the Press people, I had to get up and defend MacArthur against the American Consul! I told him that MacArthur belonged to the true Kshatriya temperament which takes pleasure in fighting, especially when it knows that its cause is just. And, by the way, the Mother herself supported me in

backing MacArthur. She had a very high opinion of his military genius. She was prepared to rank him even with military captains like the Duke of Wellington.

The title of the Book Review section "Books in the Balance" in Mother India sounds quite interesting. Was it your invention or Sri Aurobindo's?

It was mine. We accompanied that title with the illustration of weighing scales. In one scale, there were Truth, Beauty and Goodness and, in the other, books. They were weighed against these ideals.

Did Sri Aurobindo approve of it?

He never objected to it.

Were there occasions in which you felt that you were not given a free hand in editing the journal?

No. I don't think there was any kind of constraint put on me. I had a completely free hand, because the final judge was not any ordinary individual, but Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. So long as they supported me, nobody could say a word.

How helpful were the printers in bringing out this journal?

Originally it was a press at Tardeo, in Bombay. They were quite helpful except when I had to make certain changes at what seemed the eleventh hour, then the proprietor of the press used to protest. But somehow after discussion I had my way. Now with the Ashram Press we have no difficulty at all.

Did the postal department ever annoy you?

No.

Do you find any marked difference between the postal department of your younger days and the present one?

I can't say anything here. Kushwant Singh has paid his compliment to the postal service in Delhi. He got a letter addressed to "The Biggest Bastard in Delhi". It was directly delivered to him by the postal service!

Do you seek any sort of help from others in editing Mother India at present?

One or two friends are there, but ultimately I have to make the final decision. But as far as proof-reading is concerned, a couple of my friends go through the galleys. My friend Ms. Minna Paladino does the proof-reading and I get very good help from her as regards certain fine points of English writing. The office of *Mother India* is under the efficient managership of my friend Ms. Nilima Das who also contributes articles.

What are your limitations as editor of Mother India?

I do not know what to say But this doesn't mean that proficiency in being an editor is unlimited

What have you achieved by editing this financially less viable journal in all these years?

At the beginning I had to consciously try to put myself in complete tune with Sri Aurobindo's mind So my editorship served as an additional yoga on my part And afterwards too I always appealed to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to help me in the course of doing *Mother India* work So it was a special line of contact with them which helped also my usual literary inner communication with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And when Sri Aurobindo passed away, I expressed a certain despair about my literary work, because I always used to turn to him for help. But when the Mother came to know about the note of despair, she held my hand and said, "Nothing has changed Ask for Sri Aurobindo's help and you will always get it " That put heart into me. I know that the help has always been there, not only in regard to *Mother India*, but also in regard to all my literary ventures

P RAJA

(The present article is based on several interviews the author had with K D Sethna a few years ago —R Y D)

GOLDEN MUSINGS ON *MOTHER INDIA*

Mother India has been of exceptional significance to me specially because it brought me close to Amal Kiran and through him to the living Presence of Sri Aurobindo

It was divine destiny that led my father and mother, both staunch freedom-fighters, to write to Sri Aurobindo way back in 1942, seeking to be accepted as his disciples. Sri Aurobindo in reply sent most beautifully autographed copies of *The Life Divine*, the Calcutta edition which appeared in three volumes. This extremely significant event in the life of our family paved for us children a natural golden path leading straight to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

In the maze of life one has often to search long for the Divine. Therefore to be born in a family that already adored the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was like being at once on the threshold of the temple.

In 1953 my sister and I came to stay in the Ashram with our mother. As children we breathed an air filled with the Presence of our sweet Divine Mother. We gathered rich and radiant memories of Her. She was there in our midst, a perfect image of love and beauty. An ethereal fragrance lingered around Her. Her clear and musical voice with resonances and echoes of some heaven's felicity enchanted our ears. The touch of Her exquisite hands, Her eyes that were unfathomable depths—all this and much more surrounded us. While the Mother was a luminous reality to us, tangible to our hands, Sri Aurobindo as yet was only an Image and a Name worshipped as the greatest, the highest and the most perfect.

Many years ago in an issue of *Mother India* I read a remark made by Amal Kiran in *Life-Poetry-Yoga* that went straight to my heart. *Life-Poetry-Yoga*, by the way, has been a very illuminating guidance in our day-to-day life. Little problems of attitude, which have a curious way of getting large and entangling us, would begin to vanish like thin air when reading Amal's insightful remarks on various aspects of life. On being asked at the gate of the Ashram if he missed going to the sea, in view of his non-cooperating left leg, Amal said something to the effect that when one carries within oneself that which surpasses the beauty of all that exists, then one does not miss going to one place or another.

A profound remark, uttered with characteristic simplicity. Amal had unknowingly added one more enthusiastic *Mother India* fan to his already long list.

Amal lives in Sri Aurobindo. He cannot help but lead his numerous friends to the Master. From him I learnt to see Sri Aurobindo as a living Person. Friend, Guide, Teacher, Guru—in fact All. From Amal I learnt to read Sri Aurobindo not only with admiration but with love. It made all the difference. Reading Sri Aurobindo was like being with Him. What else could be better? When Amal described how Sri Aurobindo laid both his tender hands on his head during the Darshan Pranam, I in my flight of imagination would try to feel the Lord's loving touch on my own little head. "This touch lives for ever," said Amal.

Each book of Sri Aurobindo one read brought one closer to Him. The mind

widened, the heart deepened. Something was surely happening. What first appeared difficult, almost incomprehensible, began to grow easy and natural. I felt my true education had at last begun. Amal's lucid, loving, ungrudging help and support was always there, like a rock.

I shall for ever be grateful to *Mother India* for helping to awaken in me this sense that Sri Aurobindo is all around us always. *Mother India* comes to its innumerable readers, month after month, carrying the voice of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, directly and through their many disciples.

Mother India points to the dreams and visions of a new age—the age of Sri Aurobindo. Some may feel dreams are after all unreal. But has not Sri Aurobindo said about “great visioned planes”—

Dream-caught or sensed, they touch our hearts with their depths,
Unreal-seeming yet more real than life,
Happier than happiness, truer than things true
If dreams these were or captured images,
Dream's truth made false earth's vain realities.¹

That *Mother India* should reach its Diamond Jubilee under the inspiring guidance of Amal and his indefatigable team is our hope and prayer. A monthly review of culture, *Mother India's* pages are filled with “laughter and fire”² and scatter Knowledge like “stars apart in a rippled sea of sky”³

ADITI

References

1 *Savitri*, p 120

2, 3 *Ibid* p 119

A LETTER

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
16 Nov 98

Dear Amal,

Yes, your letter of invitation to write for the Golden Jubilee number of *Mother India* did come as a surprise, but as a truly pleasant one, a sudden waft from some remote peak, and carrying the usual warmth of a pure ray

Mother India first appeared in February 1948 It rings a bell. That was the time when I came to Pondicherry for my first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Down memory lane appears the beaming face of Narayan Prasad, carrying the copies of *Mother India* in his hands for distribution among the inmates of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry, and I can still hear him disclose in his whispering tone: 'Sri Aurobindo says, it is my paper' He cautioned me that he was conveying the information to me in confidence, but soon I would discover that the confidential remark had been shared with quite a number of people.

Another reminiscence In April 1949 I was in Bombay for some days The work over, I was at the railway station to board the train for Madras on my way to Pondicherry for the Darshan. There a young man of my age—Hariprasad Poddar—was on the lookout for some traveller to Pondicherry who could carry some packets of the latest issue of *Mother India* His intelligent eyes fell on me and I got the load. I had my berth reserved in a four-berthed second class compartment which was more spacious than the first class of today, and the accompaniment of the precious load was no inconvenience for anyone in the compartment; nor do I remember any mishap in the change-over at Madras Central to Egmore, the starting station for the train going to Pondicherry

At Pondicherry *Mother India* had its circle of admirers who never thought like your journalist professional friends that you were in for a rash adventure Of course, the advisor friends were right in their own way and the Force behind *Mother India* was right too I remember the enthusiasm with which K R. Poddar (Navajata) used to speak about the venture It was a pleasure to see here from time to time persons like Kishor Gandhi and Soli Albless, associated with the journal from its inception I remember how I got encouragement from you as my elder brother when I wrote sometimes for the journal.

Your leading articles in *Mother India* not only dispelled my impression that Sri Aurobindo had disassociated himself from the affairs of India and the world, but also opened the windows on the wide vistas of the world-look of Sri Aurobindo Many others must have benefited similarly from the material appearing in the journal. Apart from the freshness and depth of the views on the international affairs, your articles on the National Anthem of India and on the National Flag were eye-openers which shook my belief in the heights of the wisdom of the Founding Fathers of our Constitution

Last August, on the occasion of the 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations, when it was announced that the phone subscribers would be greeted with the Bande Mataram song on the 15th, I at once remembered with joy your emphasis on the significance of this mantric song for our country, but soon after, it was shocking to note the dissatisfaction expressed in some quarters over the singing of the lines. Alas, that is the sad reality of the present times when our countrymen have chosen to ignore Mother India, Bharat Mata, but ultimately,

Great is Truth and it shall prevail

With love,

Yours sincerely,

SHYAM SUNDER

WAR

In the vast blood-stained field of war,
In the clash of arms burns thunder's flame
Aswoon, injured, dead—in unvoiced cry
Earth's dark altar-seat trembles frequently
On Bhagirathi's breast
Countless decayed corpses in close embrace
float by Victory and loss in one voice
Make futile appeal at the Creator's feet

Indifferent moves God's chariot wheel,
Without any concern! Echoes on hills and rocks
Hear the message of cataclysm in that victory-song
The seeds that were gathered in the treasure-chest,
Within the petals of primaeval creation—
The fires of victory will be aflame at dawn!

DEBASHISH BANERJI

(Translated from Nirodbaran's Bengali poem *Sangrām*)

Original poem

সংগ্রাম

সংগ্রামেব কধিবাক্ত বিশাল প্রাঙ্গণে
অস্ত্রেব সংঘাতে জ্বলে অশনিব শিখা,
মুছিত, আহত, হত—অব্যক্ত ক্রন্দনে
ধবিত্রীব নির্বাসিত আসন বেদিকা
কাঁপে ঘন ঘন, ভাগীবথী বক্ষ'পবে
অসংখ্য গলিত শব পার্শ্ব আলিঙ্গনে
ভেসে যায়, জয় পবাজয় সমস্ববে
জানায নিষ্ফল বার্তা বিধাতৃ-চরণে।

নির্বিকাব বিধাতাব বথচক্র চলে।
কোনও ভূক্ষেপ নাই! পর্বতে পাষাণে
প্রতিধ্বনি শোনে সেই বৈজয়ন্তী গানে
প্রলয় সূচনা, আদিম সৃষ্টিব দলে

যে বীজ সঞ্চিত ছিল বত্নাকব কোষে,
তাদেব বিজয়বহি মন্দিবে প্রদোষে।

(স্বপ্নদীপ, পৃঃ ১১)

Nirodbaran Guru, does it indicate a coming war? The conclusion is something like Noah's Ark?
Sri Aurobindo On the banks of the Ganges?
If it had been the Rhine or the Danube,
Well! The victory-defeat affair sounds very Spanish War!
Why Noah's Ark? Simply a highly philosophic conclusion
It May be the evening of time answering to the morning of the original creation
Nirodbaran Signal of war?
Sri Aurobindo War on the Bhagirathi bank?

EROS, THE UNSCATHED BY CHANCE

HASTENING arrow-fall of hazard flight,
Poor earthen counterpart of shooting stars,
Or meanly carven wood-block on the bench
Where no Form-spirit beats against the bars
And leaps no chaos-ending chisel-smite
To cancel Death, Time, Change, Forgetfulness
These feebly kindled tapers Time must quench
In fickle, slothful, craven years—unless
The undreamable epiphany of Light
Has flashed from other soul's most secret sky
And turned to gold and everliving flame
This tawdry candle of mortality
Life-giver to unborn gods, heaven-building Might,
Love without form, end, variance, or name.

January 25, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment

It is a very good and strong sonnet with the idea well worked out I don't think there are any weak lines—on the contrary each line is forceful and the last six are especially fine

TWO POEMS

ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP

It was night I christened the stars one by one,
then I crossed the sleeping village,
and reaching the mountain-top
I lay down to gaze at the stars
The old sorrows came back from the graves below
and called me with sweet forgotten names
but I looked at the stars and repeated their names
A moment later I was alone on the mountain-top

INSPIRATION

Perhaps there will always be some such thing
as inspiration, and perhaps poets will
always behave as magnetic maniacs
This is all conjecture but I perhaps am still right
in saying that at least some poetry that
comes out every year has a touch
that burns, something I dare
not define; it is also true that much
of what we sell as verse is only words.
Believe me I will not plague
your ears with all the namby-pamby rag
of unintoxicated vociferation. For your sake
I will compose perhaps one day, who knows,
a poem that will be "a fire-winged rose"

RANAJIT SARKAR

ILION

ILION Sri Aurobindo An Epic in Quantitative Hexameters, Second Edition, 1989
Demy Quarto, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry, pp 148
Price Rs 175 With glossary of proper names and Greek and Latin terms

The art critic Ted Phillips in his book *Aspects of Art A Painter's Alphabet* arrives at a gnomic if poetic pronouncement such as "education was the art of intense living, coloured moments, fishing in philosophy" or, "time is a country one crosses to inhale another century" These observations set off trains of memories and predictably, the first to ring in our minds is the famous sonnet of Keats, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* Whereas Phillips inhales another century, Keats could breathe 'the pure serene' of another millennium That 'deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne' and then the Greek themes flowed in and gave us *Endymion*, *Lamia* and *Hypseion* and the *Grecian Urn* Then comes to mind Walter De la Maie's *The Chinese Pot* It spans two worlds, Europe and China as well as a modern poet's aesthetic temperament and the man who fashioned the pot with life-learned skill

A Chinese ages distant Yet how clear
In all of essence to our minds most dear
This thing of beauty brings its maker near

Since this exquisite pot was made 'Sunsets a myriad have flamed and faded,' but the work continues to awaken us to 'Eternal beauty wandering on her way' The Spirit of beauty we realise is eternal and universal and it can interfuse countries that are oceans apart and lovers of beauty respond to its manifestation through the millenniums Now that men are nearing the advent of the third millennium, we can breathe a vision of the future in Shelley's Lyrical Drama *Prometheus Unbound* which peers into the future when Love, Light and Beauty will make one harmonious whole and the whole of Nature will be transformed Shelley indicates this by telling us that the kingfisher will be eating blackberries, that is to say, the bird kingfisher will become a vegetarian and the blackberry will no more be bitter and poisonous

Poet after poet celebrates the glory of the past and feels nostalgic about it W B Yeats sails off to the holy city of Byzantium because the country which he wants to leave endlessly repeats the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death and, caught in the sensual music, all neglect 'the monuments of unaging intellect'

The siege of Troy that lasted for ten years is immortally enshrined in the Homeric pantheon of epic battles Sri Aurobindo comments on the line *Bê de kat' oulumpôô karênôn chôomenos kêr* thus "Homer's passage translated into English would be perfectly ordinary His words too are quite simple but the vowelisation and the rhythm make the clang of the silver bow go smashing through the world into universes beyond while the last words give a most august and formidable impression of godhead" (*The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, p 303)

Sri Aurobindo's epic *Ilion* will bring home to us in the words of Edgar Allan Poe, like his Helen

the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome

Human history is interspersed with sharp turning-points, sudden changes in the 'soul-drifts'

New horizons beckon us and we leave behind old ideas as otiose and devoid of any value, discard earlier aims and objectives and fix our gaze on new lights. And the poets are the first to be thrilled by them. As Stephen Spender has said

Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
Drinker of the horizon's fluid line

And Sri Aurobindo in *Ahana* makes us see that

Luminous beckoning hands in the distance invite and implore us.

(*SABCL*, Vol 5, p. 534)

Even more vivid are the lines

Play-routes of wisdom and vision and struggle and rapture and sorrow,
Sailing in Time through the straits of today to the sea of tomorrow.

(*Ibid.*, p 526)

Sri Aurobindo treats the subject as a contemporary poet and adds Christian humanism to the 'glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome' when he points out

That was Greece and its shining, that now is France and its keenness,
That still is Europe though by the Christ-touch troubled and tortured ..

(*Ilion*, p 91)

In *Thoughts and Aphorisms* he writes "There are four very great events in history, the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindavan and the colloquy with Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindavan created devotional religion, (for before there was only meditation and worship), Christ from his cross humanised Europe, the colloquy of Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity. Yet it is said that none of these four events ever happened."

(*SABCL*, Vol 17, p. 83)

Hence the human soul is likely to feel more at home in *Ilion*. *Ilion* draws upon the book of history and we can test the deep truths revealed on our pulses as well as their validity in the pages of history. But the poem is all through on the human plane. Though Talthybius as the herald of Achilles has thundered and bellowed in his retort to the verbal pyrotechnics of Penthesilea his spirit is.

Vexed with the endless pomps of Laomedon Far from those glories
 Memory winged it back to a sward half-forgotten, a village
 Nestling in leaves and low hills watching it crowned with the sunset
 So for his hour he abode in earth's palace of lordliest beauty,
 But in its caverns his heart was weary and, hurt by the splendours,
 Longed for Greece and the smoke-darkened roof of a cottage in Argos,
 Eyes of a woman faded and children crowding the hearthside
 Joyless he rose and eastward expected the sunrise on Ida

(*Ilion*, p 18)

Thus ends the first book of *Ilion* on a wistful note of the human all too human. Whereas the first book of *Ilion* ends with sweet memories of a home in Greece, John Drinkwater's *X=O A Night of the Trojan War—A Poetic Play*, begins with soft memories of home by two Greek soldiers on the plain before Troy.

Pronax

So in the night often at home, I have seen
 White orchards brighter under a Summer moon,
 As now these tents under the stars. This hour
 My father's coppices are full of song,
 While sleeps in the comfortable house
 Unless one dear one wakes to think of me
 When the Trojan death
 Goes on its nightly errand

Sri Aurobindo's works are a rich quarry of most priceless insights into man's personal, social, political and spiritual life, but he makes us employ what Hermann Keyserling terms 'creative understanding' and the result is we share with him the delight of self-discovery. But in his poetry, the same truths are transformed into imaginative insights and acquire the vast suggestive forms that the imagination gives with the spirit of colour.

Because his touch is infinite and lends
 A yonder to all ends

Sri Aurobindo as an exponent of his ideas and as revealer of the same truths in his poetry is worth studying.

I have mentioned historic turning points taking place periodically—such as the Trojan war and the war of Kurukshetra and the French Revolution and the Russian and the two World Wars in the twentieth century Sri Aurobindo in his *Essays on the Gita* observes: “Then, as to human life in its actualities, we have to accept the aspect of struggle and battle mounting into supreme crises such as that of Kurukshetra. The Gita, as we have seen, takes for its frame such a period of transition and crisis as humanity periodically experiences in its history, in which great forces clash together for a huge destruction and reconstruction, intellectual, social, moral, religious, political, and these in the actual psychological and social stage of human evolution culminate usually through a violent physical convulsion of strife, war or revolution,” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 44) and the secret purpose of which is known only to the incarnate Godhead who guides it all from behind the veil of his unfathomable mind of knowledge” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 10) Now let us feel the impact of its poetic recreation with all the colour and splendours of the poet’s visionary power.

Even as fleets on a chariot divine through the gold streets of ether,
 Swiftly when Life fleets, invisibly changing the arc of the soul-drift,
 And, with the choice that has chanced or the fate man has called and now
suffers
 Weighted, the moment travels driving the past towards the future,
 Only its face and its feet are seen, not the burden it carries
 Weight of the event and its surface we bear, but the meaning is hidden
(*Iliad*, p. 2)

In Kurukshetra it is the incarnate Godhead who guides the actions from behind the veil of his far-seeing knowledge. In the Trojan war it is the gods, “Busy the gods are always” and

.What eye unamazed by their workings
 Ever can pierce where they dwell and uncover their far-stretching purpose?
(*Iliad*, p. 9)

Aeneas born of Aphrodite turned to his mighty future. He will set sail towards Italy, conquer the tribes and found the Latin race and the Roman empire. Full of contrast and allusion woven through with history and politics, *Iliad* will surely occupy a unique place in the pantheon of the great epics of the world.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

(Further studies on *Iliad* by the author are to follow —Editor)

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

THE search for truth is a fundamental part of our existence. It takes place in all fields of human endeavour. There is the search for mathematical truth, for scientific truth, for economic, legal, artistic truths, for spiritual truth, and others. Indeed, one may say that the entire process of existence itself is a search for truth.

Different pragmatic meanings are given to the word “truth” in different fields. In some fields, a precise and commonly understood formulation is given for what is meant by truth. In other fields, the notion of truth is subjective and less well-defined. In some fields, truth is communicable. In other fields, it can only be revealed. Truth in mathematics and science is well-defined, commonly understood and communicable. Truth in spirituality is uncovered through an internal subjective process, and it is progressively realised in the being.

To be true means to be in accordance with facts. What differentiates the notions of truth in various fields is the manner of acquiring facts and of showing accordance with them. In the scientific quest, facts are observations of nature. In spirituality, facts are observations of one’s self. Accordance itself varies from rigid causality in the former to intuition and realisation in the latter.

In the scientific method, observations of nature are recorded as facts. Then mathematical models are constructed to account for these facts. Those models explain the mechanisms of nature. They are used to predict additional facts about nature. When these facts are observed, the model is corroborated. Successful models are called theories. Facts that cannot be accounted for by a theory render it incomplete, and facts that contradict the theory render it inconsistent. In the former case, the theory has a limited scope of application. In the latter case, the theory is invalidated and must be rejected and replaced by a better one. It is a deep truth that all mathematical theories that cross a certain threshold of complexity are either incomplete or inconsistent.

Instruments are used to observe nature. These include our bodily senses as well as physical sensors constructed by using the principles of science. New facts are recorded by turning these instruments to new fields of observation as well as by refining the instruments in order to record more and more subtle phenomena. As successively finer observations are made of any facet of nature, old theories often get invalidated and new ones gain prominence. It is a deep truth that all instruments, however subtle, introduce errors into our observations of nature.

While scientific theories, once formulated, can be communicated and mechanically cranked to produce results, the process of formulating the theory itself is rarely mechanical and often shrouded in the recesses of solitary contemplation. Intuition leads the scientist to hypothesise a theory and often points out the main lines of its validation. Then the scientist’s professional training imparts rigour to the theory by providing a mathematical description and a proof from basic principles. This mathematical description is what gets communicated to other scientists, while the original intuition remains concealed from individuals not receptive to inner communion.

Nature is the field of the scientific quest and the self is the field of the spiritual quest. But nature and self are not exclusive. Nature expresses self and the self encompasses nature. The means of observation of the self are inner, subtle senses. The spiritual method first requires the inner self to be disengaged from the reactive part of the being. Then the character of this undisturbed inner self is observed by the subtle senses. As more and more of this self emerges into the inner view, its form and structure and action are discerned more fully. When this larger self is consciously reintegrated into the reactive part of the being, dynamic spiritual action issues forth.

The search for scientific truth consists of progressive refinement of the outer senses, a more complete understanding of nature, and a more perfect construction of the instruments of physical action. But the scientific quest is hampered by uncertainty and incompleteness. Nor is the purpose of action itself within the scope of science.

The spiritual method parallels the scientific method by progressive refinement of the inner senses, a more complete realisation of the self, and a more perfect tuning of the instruments of action to the dictates of the realised self. Can the spiritual quest be complete, certain and effective? These are important questions that need answering. But it is clear that the spiritual quest will aid the search for truth in all other domains by inspiring the intuitive process that underlies the divination of new truths.

AKASH DESHPANDE

SRI AUROBINDO—POET-PHILOSOPHER-YOGI*

SRI AUROBINDO IS KNOWN all over the world for his masterly prose writings. His *Life Divine* has remained in illuminating prose the beacon light to humanity. His *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* and his studies on the Upanishads and the Vedas, and *The Foundations of Indian Culture* are monumental contributions to the realm of English prose of thought topping all others existing anywhere in the English-speaking world. Yet all his creations carry a distinctive mark of his own creative genius.

Even though he is universally considered a giant of a philosopher his creations were never laboured or mentally prepared objects rather, he ever remained a willing instrument or passive agent to allow expression through him of whatever supermental inspiration and realisation that sought to be expounded. Or, he was never a philosopher in the popular and accepted sense of the term. Let us quote in this connection his own words. "Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never, never was a philosopher—although I have written philosophy which is another story altogether because I had only to write down in terms of intellect all that I have observed and come to know in practising Yoga daily and the philosophy was there automatically. But that is not being a philosopher! ."

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration, today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom Immortality (*The Life Divine*)

This is sheer prose and yet incandescent poetry that radiates light and music through it. Or again here

This then is the supreme movement, this complete surrender of your whole self and nature, this abandonment of all Dharmas to the Divine who is your Self, this absolute aspiration of all your members to the supreme spiritual nature. If you can once achieve it, whether at the outset or much later on the way, then whatever you are or were in your outward nature, your way is sure and your perfection inevitable (*Essays on the Gita*)

* Paper presented at the seminar in Rajendra Bhavan, on the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's 125th Birthday Celebration organised by the HRD Ministry, Govt of India

Here the poet and the Yogi speak in the same breath, the poetic and the yogic consciousness mingle and coalesce and form one essential substance and personality

Whitman, Carpenter and A E (George Russell) sought to remove the dividing line between prose and poetry, and more, they gave drab and dull prose wings to fly in the sky. "Whitman writes with a conscious sense of his high function as a poet, a clear self-conception and consistent idea of what he has to cast into speech,—

One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person,
 Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En Masse
 Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
 Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
 The Modern Man I sing

Or,

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only
 For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

Or again, when A E speaks out

We bade adieu to love the old,
 We heard another lover then,
 Whose forms are myriad and untold,
 Sigh to us from the hearts of men

"The poetry of A E. is still more remarkable What the others suggest or give us in more or less luminous glimpses, he casts into concentrated expression from a nearer spiritual knowledge. "

Or yet again this, where one peering within,

Is thrilled by fires of hidden day
 And haunted by all mystery

While surveying this novel expression of a new emerging poetic consciousness Sri Aurobindo observes—

And whatever poetry may make its substance or its subject, this growth of the power of the spirit must necessarily bring into it a more intense and revealing speech, a more inward and subtle and penetrating rhythm, a greater stress of sight, a more vibrant and responsive sense, the eye that looks at all smallest and greatest

things for the significances that have not yet been discovered and the secrets that are not on the surface. That will be the type of the new utterance and the boundless field of poetic discovery left for the inspiration of the humanity of the future

We have seen how the poet in Sri Aurobindo revealed himself through the stupendous mass of *The Life Divine* and *The Essays on the Gita*. The prose here is entirely different from Arnold's, Pater's and Wilde's. It is neither aestheticism nor the impressive grand style. It is luminous here, vibrant with hope and uplifting for the reader. The poet here has crossed a long distance from the early *Songs to Myrtilla* to emerge into a new realm of poetry of the pure spirit. Didactic and metaphysical poets took faint and faltering steps towards this consummation. Donne and Blake could ask for nothing more. Now listen to Sri Aurobindo's

Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me,
 Murmurs of silence that steep mind in a luminous sleep,
 Whispers from things beyond thought in the Secrecy flame-white for ever,
 Unscanned heights that reply seek from the inconscient deep.
 Distant below me the ocean of life with its passionate surges
 Pales like a pool that is stirred by the wings of a shadowy bird.
 Thought has flown back from its wheelings and stoopings, the
nerve-beat of living
 Stills, my spirit at peace bathes in a mighty release
(Trance of Waiting)

Poetry at its deepest state and greatest height becomes a mantra, the evocative power of the Word to awaken in the reader a realisation of the truth intimately visioned, its rhythm heard, *satyashrutah*. One remembers those prophetic lines:

A wonderful face looked out with deathless eyes;
 A hand was seen drawing the golden bars
 That guard the imperishable secrets
 A key turned in a mystic lock of Time
 But where the silence of the gods had passed,
 A greater harmony from the stillness born
 Surprised with joy and sweetness yearning hearts,
 An ecstasy and a laughter and a cry
 A power leaned down, a happiness found its home
 Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.

(Savitri)

One immediately recalls the verse of Vasishtha in the Rig Veda:

*Devānām caksuḥ subhagā vahantī,
śvetam nayantī sudrśīkam aśvam,
Usā adaraśi raśmibhur vyaktā
citrāmaghā viśvam anu prabhūtā (VII 77 3)*

“Happy, bringing the gods’ eye of vision, leading the white Horse that has perfect sight, Dawn is seen expressed entirely by the rays, full of her varied riches, manifesting her birth in all things” (*The Secret of the Veda* by Sri Aurobindo)

This then is the supreme function of the poet—to awaken godhead in man, to raise him to his divinity

The force in lines such as these wafts us to a region and poise of inner consciousness where we feel ourselves bathed in a divine light—

*Madhu vātā ritāyayate, madhu ksaranti
sindhavah, mādhvīrnah santosadhīh.*

There “The winds are blowing sweetly, the rivers are shedding honey, may the herbs be sweet unto us”

SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

FRANCESCA OF RIMINI

(From Dante's *Inferno*—Canto Five)

Francesca, daughter of the Lord of Ravenna, was given in marriage to the Lord of Rimini, a man of extraordinary courage but deformed in appearance. His brother Paolo, who possessed great personal charm, was sent by him as his representative. Francesca and Paolo fell in love and being taken in adultery they were both put to death by the enraged husband. Dante, guided by Virgil, meets their souls in the second circle of hell and she tells him their story.

“My land of birth is seated on the shore
Whither in quest of peace the Po descends
And all his tributary waters pour
Love, to whose call the warm heart quickly bends,
Attracted him with my once-comely shape
Now lost in cruel mode which still offends
Love, whose desire no loved one shall escape,
Caught me for being found so beauteous
That never he from mine diverts his step.
Love to one single ruin guided us
But deep hell waits the soul who spilled our youth ”
Then by the anguish she had spoken thus
Moved to a silence of unbearable ruth,
I looking down drooped long my countenance
Until the Poet questioned: “Why so mute?”
And I replied: “Alas, by what intense
Sweetness of yearning thought could these have come
To such a dolorous fate?” Turning my glance
Upon the pair I said “Your martyrdom,
Francesca, wrings my heart till tears arise.
But tell me how, in hours unwearisome
When every sigh was sweet, love’s full surprise
You felt and by a kindred passion’s glow
His own obscure desire could recognise ”
Whereon she cried “There is no greater woe
Than to remember days of happiness
In misery—as well your Guide must know.
Yet if your touched soul craves now to possess
My story, then our love’s prime root I will,
As one who murmurs though he weep, express,
One day for joy we read what deep love’s thrill

Bound by its tyranny even Lancelot
 Alone we were, with no suspicion still,
 But often o'er the script our glances sought
 Each other and our cheeks changed hue the while.
 Only at one sole point our doom was wrought
 When read we of that long-desired smile,
 Kissed by a lover of such ardency,
 Then he whom nought can far from me beguile
 Kissed me upon my mouth all tremblingly
 Love's tempter proved for us both scribe and book
 That day no further page could draw our eye ''
 As told one spirit thus, the other shook
 My heart with pity by the tears he shed,
 Until my sense a mortal darkness took,
 And, swooning, I fell down as fall the dead

AMAL KIRAN
 (K D Sethna)

Sri Aurobindo's comment

The translation is very good—though not Dantesque at all points

IN GOD'S TRANSFIGURING HOUR

THE transfiguring hour is already upon us, but how few of us are prepared! We are like the bridegroom's attendants in the biblical story, who fell asleep while waiting for the bridegroom to arrive, and whose lamps once lit to escort him through the darkness to the house of the bride had flickered and gone out. The flame of hope kindled by Sri Aurobindo, the light so lovingly tended by the Mother, must not be allowed to burn low. Without its guidance we will lose our way in the gloom and chaos of this time of transition between the old world and the new. There has to be a call from below—a call in the form of a burning human aspiration—to bring down the answer from above that our future depends upon.

Even the word *Supermind* is not always rightly understood. In these days of supermarkets and supermodels and superstars, the prefix *super* has quite lost its original meaning, *above*. In current usage this word denotes more of the same, or a superior grade of the same. But Supermind is not a superior grade of mind, neither can it descend and fix itself here using mind as a base. Not even the higher ranges of mind can bear that charge. Supermind can reveal its glory on Earth only when it has taken possession of all the forms, including matter, in which it has veiled itself. To reach even a faint idea of what that might mean is impossible without a surrender of all that our education has given us labelled 'knowledge'.

We have heard Sri Aurobindo's prophetic message. "All things shall change." Let us not turn that bright promise into a catastrophe by refusing to let go of some long-cherished illusions about ourselves and the world about us. For if we cling too tightly to the past the future will leave us behind. The inevitability of change is one of the few things we can be sure about, so the need now is to follow the example of the Mother and surrender the old certainties once and for all. Only then will we be able to build for the future on the firmer ground of the revelation that has been made to us. The Mother herself, at the time of her fateful first meeting with Sri Aurobindo in 1914, had erected (as we all do in the course of our lives) a complex mental construction elaborated over many years of self-dedication and study. All that had to be demolished and swept away before she could begin her task of building the foundation for a new age of humankind, a house without walls for the spirit's home in material existence. She did not hesitate:

"There are many things in my life that have completely disappeared—I don't know them any more, they have gone from my consciousness—all the things that were useless. Yet the vision of everything that prepared the Jiva for its action here is very clear. Even before I came here, before I left to meet Sri Aurobindo, I had realised everything that was needed to begin his yoga. It was all ready and classified and organised—magnificent! A superb mental construction! In five minutes he completely demolished it.

Oh, how happy I was! That was the reward of all my efforts. Nothing! I knew nothing, I understood nothing, there wasn't an idea in my head. All that I had built up through all my experiences over so many years of conscious yoga (more than thirty-

five) of life, of experiences lived and classified and organised (Oh, a monument!)—all overturned in an instant. It was magnificent. And I had not even asked him .

.And then very gradually, drop by drop, something new came in. But now there were no limits, it was as wide as the universe and wonderfully luminous and calm. Nothing in my head but THERE (*gesture above the head*) and afterwards I began to see everything from there. And it has never left me ”

We too have our wonderfully elaborate mental constructions, and for the most part we are content to embellish them with beautiful pictures of deities and saints, or furnish them with libraries containing the masterworks of the past, while the deep cellars of our subconscious selves and the unlit foundations of our being remain unvisited and unexplored. Even the conscious mind is for most of us a lumber room in which the old ideas we have questioned perhaps but never quite managed to throw away take up most of the space.

In this transfiguring hour it is not enough to build extensions and additions to the old framework to accommodate the growing body of scientific knowledge. The need of our time is to re-examine the framework itself in a new light—and where necessary to pull it down. This does not have to involve a strenuous intellectual effort.

There is a way that is simple and accessible to all. The Mother has revealed it in her words and by her own example. It is to read Sri Aurobindo with a silent mind. The human mind delights in its doubts and demands and arguments; it is a jungle crowded with transient speculation and exotic theory and long established giant certainties. A space has to be cleared for the truth-seed to grow. We are born into this jungle and spend all our lives exploring it—so we never ask the crucial question: What might grow *now* in this soil, if everything else were cleared away?

Again and again, reading Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with a silent mind, we experience the power of their words to shatter the illusions we have so long taken to be immutable laws of Nature. One of the first to go is the illusion of our incapacity to change anything in ourselves or in our world. *Human nature does not change*. So runs the old axiom etched deeply into our consciousness. We cannot leave it there and at the same time really accept (and allow to rearrange our thoughts and influence our actions) Sri Aurobindo's revelation that human nature can and does and indeed, *must change* because such change is the secret goal and purpose of Nature.

He writes, “There is nothing that can be set down as impossible in the chances of the future, and the urge in nature always creates its own means.” The Mother goes further and affirms from her own experience the possibility of the direct influence of the Divine on the cells of the body. This means that we can no longer accept any limitation to the potential for change no matter how ‘unreasonable’ this position may appear. We begin to understand why Sri Aurobindo could say “reason was the helper, reason is the bar ” Reason has made us what we are (or what we think we are), so are we now going to set all rationality aside? This is a great difficulty for modern man, who has so identified himself with the rational part of his nature that a step into the unknown

feels like an extinction of his very being. Yet the goal of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is a fivefold freedom, part of which is non-identity with mind.

Mental silence is the first requirement, the first step towards that goal. Faith in the revelation given to us through Sri Aurobindo replaces for a time our mental struggle to understand a teaching that overturns all our mental assumptions, before a new kind of knowledge (the truth-vision based on identity, as Sri Aurobindo describes it) becomes established in us. Until then, we must accept that our thinking has been based upon illusion 'aping law,' just as we have been forced to accept many a scientific 'fact' that contradicts the evidence of our senses. Our minds being constructed with a bias towards analysis, we have split the original harmony of creation into opposites and contraries, separated phenomena into cause and effect, made the words 'either' and 'or' indispensable to our logic. The Mother puts it as clearly as ordinary speech will allow:

"One could say that this present creation is a creation of balance, and that the mental error consists precisely in this: that one wants to choose one thing and reject the other. But all things should be together—what we call right and what we call wrong, what we call good and what we call bad, what seems agreeable and what seems disagreeable—all that should be together. This morning the discovery came that it is through the separation—that separation described in so many ways—sometimes as history, sometimes in purely abstract terms, sometimes in a philosophical way—all those are only explanations, but there is something, probably just the objectivisation (*Mother makes a gesture to indicate the universe emerging from the Unmanifest*) but that too is another explanation. This so-called separation, what is it exactly? We don't know (or if somebody knows, I don't). That was what created (let us take the colours) black and white, day and night (there you have a beginning of mixture—but black and white are also mixed), but the tendency is there to make two poles: the agreeable and good, the disagreeable and bad. And as soon as one begins to return towards the origin, the two tend to converge. Then the balance is perfect, that is to say there is no longer any possibility of making a division between them and neither one has more influence over the other—or the two have become one, to make perfection that we are trying to reconquer. To reject one thing and accept the other is childish. It is ignorant."

In the mind's silence 'the perfection that we are trying to reconquer' begins to create some pale reflection of itself, and we begin to understand the importance for us of the ancient axiom *as above, so below*. Sri Aurobindo promises us a fivefold freedom: a self-existent *ananda* to replace the illusion of incapacity to meet the demands of the spirit, a stable peace to replace the frustration of our efforts to reconcile illusory opposites, the knowledge that is by identity to abolish the illusion of separate existence and death, freedom from bondage to the workings of nature in us to break the 'iron chain' of cause and effect, and non-identity with mind. It is in the mind's silence that non-identity with mind, or at least the possibility of it, begins to come at last within our reach.

The two most pervasive of the illusions we have to dismiss from our consciousness are the conviction that we are separate, and the inevitability of death. They are

linked of course being part of the falsehood (the origin of all illusion) into which we are plunged from the moment of our birth “into this universe terrible and sweet” A rebirth awaits us into a consciousness in which all things are made new We have only to accept the invitation—and to understand that we cannot take anything of that outworn mental baggage with us Once we realise that we are not separate but heirs to a life that is universal and has no term, then death is a word with no meaning J K Mukherjee captures in few words the subtle link between the illusion of separate existence and death when he writes “The kingdom of death cannot be overpassed, the state of immortality cannot be attained, unless and until the individual existence renounces the fetters of its separative ego, merges its will with the All-Will, becomes one with the All-Force and in that process changes the straining rapacity of its hunger into the motion of the free and all-possessing bliss of the Infinite ” (*The Destiny of the Body*, p. 252)

The Truth-Vision that brings this kind of realisation on a carrier wave of certainty may be very far beyond us in the present stage of our evolution—that does not mean that we cannot accept Truth in whatever form it presents itself to our consciousness, and hold firmly to *that*, rejecting everything that contradicts its presence in us Long before we gain access to those regions of light described by the Mother as “Higher than any thought there is a vision of knowledge, in a domain that is extremely luminous, where the vibrations are very clear and very strong” we are capable of accepting that these regions exist, that they are as active in us as we allow them to be, and their light can come in *very gradually; drop by drop*, to change our perception of reality into something closer to the truth.

We can accept even the riddle of this world, that the evil afflicting us so painfully is not rooted in any ultimate Reality and is therefore part of the Great Lie The sweet-tasting wisdom that is born in the mind’s silence confirms this A time will surely come when the fivefold freedom of the spirit replaces the old illusions. Our ego-constructed sense of separate identity will dissolve in the knowledge that comes by identity with everything that is and a divine laughter sweep away our cherished contradictions and our misplaced anxieties “Blessed are those who take a leap towards the future,” said the Mother There can be no better time than now

SONIA DYNE

THE LAND OF 'NITYA-BRINDAVAN'

EVER SINCE I VISITED Pondicherry more than three decades ago, and revisited several times this beautiful Union Territory town of India, which symbolically represents the Indo-French culture (and in a way too the confluence of the culture-streams from the Orient and the Occident), I had simply fallen in love with the spiritual institution called the 'Ashram', its surroundings and also the devoted people who live there in the midst of the cosmopolitan cultural panorama. It was undoubtedly my love-at-first-sight for Pondicherry (which had been the "cave of *tapasyā*" for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother) and also the upcoming international 'City of Dawn' at Auroville, located nearby. I had always countenanced a peculiar thought-wave within the *sanctum sanctorum* of my heart to the effect that if there could be a streak of Heaven (and 'Nitya-Brindāvan') on our strife-torn Earth anywhere, it was unmistakably "here and now" at Pondicherry (which is the European derivative from the local name "Puducheri", the ancient Vedapuri in Sanskrit).

Several thousand years ago, the great sage and seer, maharshi Agastya, who is highly venerated by one and all, and even by the celestial beings, had established his grand *Alma Mater* on the coastal belt of the beautiful place for the study and *sadhana* of the Vedas and other holy scriptures. The Vedas are the holiest and highest scriptures of the Hindus (and also many non-Hindus who study them in their search for knowledge), to whatever sect or denomination they may belong. They are the extant spiritual literature, serving as the beacon-light today and they form the cornerstone of the Indo-Aryan culture's edifice. The contents of the Vedas and Vedanta are not mere speculations but the sanguine record of the loftiest spiritual experiences of an entire galaxy of seekers, their actual realisations or superconscious perceptions.

Bertrand Russell had pointed out that man is perennially engaged in three basic conflicts (a) against Nature, (b) against other men, and (c) against himself. Inheriting this classification, Huston Smith says "Roughly these may be identified as man's natural, social and psychological problems. The great surviving cultural traditions are also three—the Chinese, the Indian and the Western. It helps us to understand and relate the unique perspectives of these three traditions if we think of each as accenting one of man's basic problems. Generally speaking, the West has accented the natural problem, China the social, and India, the psychological."¹ Now it is well known that Asia includes several cultural areas and streams, although the term "Orient" is used in a very broad sense of one culture common to all Eastern countries.

In Indian philosophy, the individual soul is given the metaphysical status of a permanent substance, "Co-eternal with God". As Dr. D. N. Datta says: "Emphasis on the importance of the individual is common to all the Indian systems of philosophy."² It is worthy of special note that even those who believe in God as the Creator do not hold that the individual soul is created by God. "God creates only the material objects, including the human body. But the soul is co-eternal with God."³ According to the common ways of thinking of most Indians, the essence of the individual or the

particular is no more than the Universal by virtue of which the individual or the particular is grounded and realised. We will observe from the following paragraphs how the individual being, as a seeker of Truth, Love and Divinity always prefers absolute self-effacement at the time of its complete merger with the all-loving, all-pervading Universal being and the One Transcendental Reality.

Hegel confirms the description of Indian philosophy as “the growing of the mind inwardly” in the most abstract way and calls it “intellectual substantiality”. This characterisation by Hegel is not correct in the case of the Vedanta Philosophy, which has been the main flow or mainstay of Indian philosophy; however, the endowment of concepts with substantiality can be regarded as a prominent characteristic of most schools of Indian philosophy. According to Sri Aurobindo, the real object and value of philosophy is to “prepare a basis for spiritual realisation and the growing of the human being into his divine nature”.⁴ About the problem and the three inherent and basic conflicts faced by mankind (as mentioned by Bertrand Russell), Sri Aurobindo has mentioned that the “right remedy is not to belittle still farther the age-long ideal of India, but to return to its old amplitude and give it a still wider scope, to make in very truth all the life of the nation a religion in this high spiritual sense”.⁵

Sri Aurobindo has further said that “this is the direction in which the philosophy, poetry, art of the West is, still more or less obscurely, but with an increasing light, beginning to turn, and even some faint glints of the truth are beginning now to fall across political and sociological ideals. India has the key to the knowledge and conscious application of the ideal. She can, if she will, give a new and decisive turn to the problems over which all mankind is labouring and stumbling, for the clue to their solutions is there in her ancient knowledge.”⁶ For, the Avatar on the Earth, Lord Sri Krishna, lays no exclusive stress on this one form of his human birth, but on that which it represents, The Divine, the Purushottama. The way declared by Krishna on the Earth is indeed announced as the way by which man can reach the real knowledge and the real liberation, but “it is one that is inclusive of all paths and not exclusive. For the Divine takes up into his universality all Avatars and all teachings and all Dharmas.”⁷

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is described in our holy scriptures as *Adhoksaja* which indicates that He is beyond the perception of all material senses. He is present in everyone’s heart. At the same time, He is present everywhere by His all-pervasive feature, *Brahman*. “All three transcendental features of the Absolute Truth (*Bhagavān*, the Personality of Godhead, *Paramātmā*, the localized Supersoul, and the all-pervasive (*Brahman*) can be realised simply by studying the condition of the *gopīs* in their meeting with Uddhava, as described by *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*.”⁸ It is said by Śrīnivāsa Āchārya that the six Vaishnava Goswāmīs were always merged in the holy thoughts about the spiritual activities of the *gopīs*. Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has also recommended the unique and special method of worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as “super-excellent”.

Not daring to place the holy dust of the feet of the *gopīs* on his own head, Uddhava (the great scholar, sadhaka, devotee and trusted friend of Lord Krishna) aspired to have

a future-birth in the position of a clump of grass and herbs of Brindāvan, so that he would be able to have the sacred dust of the feet of the *gopīs*. A pure devotee of Lord Krishna, having *Rāgānugā Bhakti* and *Kāntā* or *Madhur Prem* in his (or her) heart never desires to be promoted to the heavenly planets or even to *Vaikuntha* or *Goloka* because he (or she) nurtures no desire (or ambition) at all for personal satisfaction. Such a true and pure devotee of Lord Krishna regards both Heaven and Hell to be of equal level, for, without Śrī Krishna Heaven is Hell and with Śrī Krishna Hell becomes Heaven.

According to Śrī Aurobindo the *gopīs*, in the proper sense of the word, are not ordinary people—they are “embodiments of a spiritual passion, extraordinary by their extremeness of love, personal devotion and unreserved self-giving”⁹. The story of Brindavan (which is not territorially confined to Mathura District of U P) does not enter into the main story of the Mahābhārata and has a Puranic origin and it could be maintained that it was intended all along to have a symbolic character. Śrī Aurobindo says “At one time I accepted that explanation but I had to abandon it afterwards, there is nothing in the Puranas that betrays any such intention. It seems to me that it is related as something that actually occurred or occurs somewhere”¹⁰. The *gopīs* are to them (i.e., our ancient people) realities and not a symbol. It was for them an “occult truth”, and the occult and the symbolic are not the same thing, the symbol may be only a significant mental construction or only a fanciful invention, but “the occult is a reality which is actual somewhere.” behind the material scene as it were and can have its truth for the terrestrial life and its influence upon it may even embody itself there. “The *līlā* of the *gopīs* seems to be conceived as something which is always going on in a divine Gokul and it projected itself in an earthly Brindavan and can always be realised and its meaning made actual in the soul. It is to be presumed that the Puranas took it as having been actually projected on earth in the life of the incarnate Krishna and it has been so accepted by the religious mind of India”¹¹.

In one of his significant letters addressed to Dilip Kumar Roy, Śrī Aurobindo had written about Śrī Krishna and his own work “He is here in the Ashram and it is his work that is being done here. If you reach Krishna you reach the Divine, if you can give yourself to him, you give yourself to me”¹². Almost all the Krishna-bhaktas in the Ashram identify themselves with the Spirit and the eternal longing of Śrī Radha, who is the Doyen among the *gopīs* and also the highest embodiment and the glowing incarnation of Śrī Krishna’s Divine Love. The ‘Service’ tree (name given by the Mother) with its yellow flowers near the Samadhī in the Ashram is called *Radhā-chūdā* in Bengali. It reminds us about Śrī Radha’s eternal yearning to be integrally united with the Supreme Lord, in body, mind and spirit. Similarly, the Mother has given a beautiful name to the dark-blue (and also white) flower *Aparājitā*—she calls it *Radha’s Consciousness*. We adorn with these flowers the lotus-feet of the twin Avatars throughout the year. Lastly, what better prayer can exist on the Earth than the famous prayer of the Mother, called *Radha’s Prayer*? It depicts the Divine Mother’s blazing mood of absolute and integral surrender.

O Thou whom at first sight I knew for the Lord of my being and my God, receive my offering

Thine are all my thoughts, all my emotions, all the sentiments of my heart, all my sensations, all the movements of my life, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood I am absolutely and altogether Thine, Thine without reserve. What Thou wilt of me, that I shall be Whether Thou choosest for me life or death, happiness or sorrow, pleasure or suffering, all that comes to me from Thee will be welcome Each one of Thy gifts will be always for me a gift divine, bringing with it the supreme Felicity

SURESH

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MOTHER INDIA—“MY PAPER”

MOTHER INDIA'S 50th anniversary of Independence has just been celebrated throughout the country while *Mother India* is going to celebrate its golden jubilee by publishing a special issue in February, 1999. Though I was asked to contribute an article for this very special issue (many thanks for the affectionate letter from Amal Kiran), it is taking shape spontaneously as a sort of research work

Bharatmata—whose physical body has been frescoed by the Divine Mother herself on the wall below the Projector Room in the Playground and holds the Mother's symbol on her breast—is the deity installed and worshipped in the hearts of all those who claim to be Indians. And the journal which carried this frescoed map on its front cover for fifty years and is going to celebrate its golden jubilee with its head high with the motto “Great is Truth and it shall prevail,”—must necessarily be very dear to them

It is a privilege to love and adore Mother India for us all when Sri Aurobindo says. “India is the guru of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit.” (SABCL, Vol 1 731)

“Already the Vedanta and the Yoga* have exceeded their Asiatic limit and are beginning to influence the life and practice of America and Europe, and they have long been filtering into Western thought by a hundred indirect channels. But these are small rivers and underground streams. The world waits for the rising of India to receive the divine flood in its fullness ” (SABCL, Vol 3: 344-45)

Again in his message on August 15th, 1947, Sri Aurobindo tells us about five of his dreams of which the first “was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India ” He says. “India today is free but she has not achieved unity . But by whatever means, in whatever way the division must go, unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future...

“.. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow, amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice

“The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.” (SABCL, Vol 26: 404-406)

* Sri Aurobindo later explained what this Yoga means. “Yoga is communion with God for knowledge, for love or for work. Pranayam and Asanas, concentration, worship, ceremonies, religious practice are not themselves Yoga but only a means towards Yoga ” (SABCL, Vol 3 345)

In another message Sri Aurobindo further confirms “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 united people.” (*SABCL*, Vol 26 407)

When the Lord himself assures us of such a glorious future, naturally we feel blessed And *Mother India* which carries in its breast, so to say, our Mother India becomes very dear to us in the same breath But, nay, it did not carry Mother India with the emblem of the Divine Mother at its centre from the first issue! And here starts my research work

According to Amal Kiran’s letter dated 1 10 1998 “*Mother India* was first a weekly and then a fortnightly as a bold experiment before it settled down, at the Mother’s suggestion, into a monthly review of culture ” Amal Kiran also told me on enquiry that the weekly and the fortnightly editions were in *Blitz*-size newspaper form, and that the present form with the frescoed map on the front cover came into being as it settled into the monthly version

But in reality the newspaper-size *Mother India* came out as a fortnightly journal on February 19, 1948 and continued to be published on alternate Saturdays* till 23 7 49 i e , Vol I, No 12 Then there is a gap of 23 days and the Special Number August 15, 1949 was issued on Sri Aurobindo’s birth anniversary day and again there is a gap of 19 days after which the alternate-Saturday issues started again It is not quite clear to me why the date of the first issue was selected to be 19th of February instead of 21st (the Mother’s birth anniversary day), but once that date is selected and most probably it was a Saturday, it is understandable that the alternate-Saturday-issues continued till 23 7 49 and the continuity was broken with larger gaps before and after 15 8 49 for the Special Number But it is not at all clear why an odd issue—Vol I, No. 25—was issued on 4 2 50 making the number of issues 25 instead of the usual 24 each year and also knowing fully well that the Vol II, No I is going to be the first and Special Number on the occasion of Mother’s birth anniversary day i e , 21 2.50.

The number of days between 21 2 50 and 4 3 50 is less than fourteen, understandably to bring out Vol 2, No 2 on a Saturday and alternate-Saturday-issues continued till 22 7.50 and the break is for the Special Number on 15 8 50 (Vol II, No. 13) But only after four days i e on 19 8 50 another issue was brought out presumably to keep the number of issues to 24 per year and also to start on a Saturday But, again I find no reason why after 25 11 50 the last three issues of Vol II were issued erratically with longer gaps than a fortnight

It is in this 1950-51 archival volume that we find four issues of *Bharat Mata* in Hindi which are termed Hindi Supplement by the Archives, and each of these issues contained only the first article of the particular issue of *Mother India*—the rest of the four-page supplement contained other articles of the Hindi editors’ choice But this Hindi Supplement must be given the credit of putting a small sketch of United India

* The error has been corrected in the *Introduction to India and the World Scene* by K D Sethna published on 15 August 1997 —R Y D

with the symbol of the Divine Mother at its centre on the front page top in between ‘Bharat’ and ‘Mata’ long before *Mother India* started doing the same, of course in a more beautiful and grand way, in its finally settled monthly version

The third year of *Mother India* completed its publication of 24 issues without any deviation from the usual mode and the last issue (i.e., Vol. III, No. 24) came out on 19 1 52. But strangely enough I find a big oversight on the part of the Editor or the Managing Editor or whosoever is responsible for it, in the Special Number February 21, 1952, where in the very first article “Our Ideal” the editor declares: “*Mother India* begins today its fourth year of publication. And the fourth birthday is marked by a change from Fortnightly to Monthly and from newspaper size to magazine form” The issue is without the necessary ‘Vol. IV, No 1’ printed on it, and this oversight unfortunately continued for three years till the January, 1955 issue. Then, with a sigh of relief, I saw that the ‘February 21, 1955. The Mother’s Birthday’ issue of *Mother India* bore the correct volume no & issue no (Vol VII, No. 1), and thenceforth it continued without interruption till now

I am thankful to the Ashram Archives for all their help and for supplying me with photocopies of the appendices.

The reader of this article must be wondering by now why I have not yet said anything about “My Paper”-part of the article. And he will surely be happy when I say that it has got a sweet anecdote which will add a special glory to this Golden Jubilee of *Mother India*. Here is the anecdote. When the first issue of *Mother India* came out in newspaper form on 19th of February, 1948, a sadhak said that certain views did not agree with our Yoga. When this was reported to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo remarked “Doesn’t he know that *Mother India* is my paper?”

SATADAL

THE INTEGRAL YOGA

AN OUTLINE

THE world is changing at a very rapid pace, so much so that it is difficult to recognise in the present world the world even of a century before, not to speak of the remoter past. Change is the law of life and existence and, as such, the contributions of the electronic age are in keeping with the nature of things.

In the same way our Ashram has also changed tremendously, so much so that it is difficult to recognise in the present Ashram the Ashram of even fifty years before, not to speak of the still further past. Still more is there a basic difference between the life in the Ashram and that in the world outside.

We are in the Ashram for Yoga, Integral Yoga, as it is known to all of us. What does Yoga generally signify? Literally speaking, it means a kind of communion with higher powers and forces but in its deepest sense it implies union with the Divine. This seeking for union has up till now been undertaken mainly in three different ways, Karma, Bhakti and Jnana; thus giving birth to three Yoga systems, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Without entering into the details of the systems, it can be assumed that we are more or less conversant with their nature.

But how does the Purna or Integral Yoga differ from these traditional Yoga systems? Does it mean an amalgam of the three or has one to practise them one by one and attain purnata or integrality in Yoga? It is a very difficult question to answer in an intellectual way and in a few words, nor perhaps is it worthwhile understanding it in that way unless we can have the realisation of its essence in our heart. Moreover, all the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are there for the aspirants to study and practise and grasp the truth behind the word.

We can give here simply an outline and idea of what is meant by Purna or Integral Yoga and for that presumably it is better to state *how* the sadhaks do this Yoga than to tell *what* they do. If any of the Ashramites, elderly or young, educated or otherwise, is asked what he is doing here, it will be difficult for him to formulate a clear reply. Most of them have taken up the path so spontaneously that they have no distinct idea about what is Yoga and what is not Yoga. Their each and every activity, eating, sleeping, singing, playing, writing, reading, teaching, nursing, etc., is Yoga. They do not know how to unite with the Divine through karma, bhakti or jnana but whatever they do they seem to do it for the Divine by the Divine and with the Divine and in a most natural way. They and all their activities, mental, vital and physical, are charged with the Divine, as if they had sunk deep into the Divine, and so this is called the Purna or Integral Yoga which advocates neither world-shunning asceticism nor all-engrossing materialism.

In the Ashram most of the world activities, namely, education in different subjects including physical education, industry, agriculture, business, medical service, dance, music, drama, etc. are carried out on a small scale with this difference that whereas in

the outside world they are done for their own sake or for the sake of the individual, the party or the nation, here they are done for the Divine. To make the point clear, we shall discuss the matter by taking into consideration one aspect of such activities which has gained international acceptance and reputation. That is physical education *i e* athletics, games, swimming etc.

Physical education has been treated from ancient times as a means to maintain health and fitness of the body, to increase its alertness and flexibility and to make it adaptable to circumstances like war and national defence. It also gives innocent pleasure and healthy recreation. All this is very good. A sound and healthy body is an asset, if not indispensable for any kind of pursuit whether intellectual, moral, religious or spiritual. In Yoga also the same necessity exists. But it will not be wrong to state that, in the Ashram, physical education has been undertaken not only for the above gains. To quote the Mother, "What do you want the Yoga for? To get power? To attain peace and calm? To serve humanity? None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the path." Naturally, other inferior motives are out of the question on the path. In other words, physical education activities are not practised in the Integral Yoga with the same objectives as in the outside world. It is not merely for good health, individual or group pleasure or vanity or for any kind of reputation. But, just like other things in Yoga, they are done for the sake of the Divine.

Everything in Yoga is done as an offering or sacrifice to the Lord of works. Practising with faith and determination, *nisthā*, this sacrifice of work to the Divine, the sadhak reaches a stage when the Divine Himself takes up the work. He Himself becomes the initiator, the worker and the work itself. With the sadhak as instrument, the Divine pours down His treasure of power, light, consciousness and Ananda, etc. into the material plane so as to awaken the divinity hidden in matter.

In Yoga body-building, games, swimming, athletics, etc. are a kind of Divine Work. By the movement of limbs, running, jumping, etc. the sadhak invokes the Divine with the body. So when he plays, his motive should be not to defeat his opponents in a rigid assertive way, but simply to play as best he can, offering the action to the Divine and invoking His force to conduct his action. If he wins, well and good, if not, that is also good because he has the satisfaction of performing the work assigned to him by the supreme nature.

In the works of art, *i e*, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, etc., the value of the work is determined mainly from two points of view: one is its structural perfection, aesthetic attainment, technical refinement and grandeur, and the other is its content value, what is expressed in the mould of form, language, rhyme, tune, etc. Does it reveal the breath of the Unmanifest, a smile of the Eternal or the sound of His footsteps? If it does, the quality of the work changes profoundly and whoever has a true vision and feeling cannot but help appreciating the work even at the cost of technical defect and structural imperfection here and there.

In games and sports also one cannot lose sight of these two aspects. Of what kind of force does one become the vehicle in the physical movements and actions? And how

does one perform them, with what style, technique and skill? At first sight these two may seem inseparable, one who has style and skill surely expresses some superior force. And when one is expressing a higher force one will surely have a better style, skill and technique. The question is whether one allows the Divine to play through one or shuts out His entry by fetters of skill, technique and assertive action. If there is a divine intervention, the nature of one's performance will improve no doubt, but that may not be in line with what one has learnt with mechanical precision. Perhaps one will have a wider and profounder basis and achieve a new orientation in bodily construction. Probably one will be in tune with Sri Aurobindo's

The body burns with Thy rapture's sacred fire,
Pure, passionate, holy, virgin of desire¹

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

¹ *Collected Poems, SABCL Vol 5, p 155*

THE CLIMB

WE have flamed to the glory of other seas
And to the rhapsodies of other stars—
 The white increase
 And release
Of whitenesses beyond the shadow bars.

With burning hands and winged feet have climbed
The loneliness of other nightingale-joys,
 Endlessly have chimed
 And rhymed
Our desert-longing to another voice

Silence is below, a hush is above, beyond,
The far greatness of light's zenithal flare
 To which we are bound
 Unconned
The god thunder-felicity to share.

29 12 1962

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

GOLDEN MOTHER INDIA

FOR me, my natal home has itself been a Sri Aurobindo Ashram. As consciousness blossomed in me in childhood, my mother taught me to revere the portraits of the Divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I watched her string *pāryāta* blossoms to make garlands for the portraits and soon I was old enough to do that also. But only in the early fifties I became sufficiently proficient in English to draw near the various books and periodicals on father's table. I could not understand what was in them, but I just read them, thinking that those who watched me would go away with the impression that "a scholar's daughter—it is but natural!"

Among the periodicals, *Mother India* attracted me most. It arrived with clocklike regularity and I would see father reading it immediately and jotting down points on the margins. There was—and is—a map of undivided India on the cover, always in blue. During those years of my formative period, the portrait and the title registered in me a deep love for my motherland. Not the truncated one but the spiritual motherland. For, father explained to me that despite what my history books said and how I answered my question papers in the examinations (Q. When was India partitioned? A. 1947), this was the true map of India blessed by the Mother. I should not think in terms of Pakistanis, Burmese, Ceylonese. I should think of everyone as an Indian, for India is one and indivisible, whatever the politicians may do. He also used to repeat to me how the Mother unfurled the spiritual flag of India to mark the day of freedom in 1947 and how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother always spoke of the spirit of India which can never be destroyed by partitions. As the Mother said a few years later in her message for Independence Day:

Let the splendours of Bharat's past be reborn in the realisation of her imminent future with the help and blessing of her living soul

It was under such auspicious benedictions that we entered the fifties and I took to reading *Mother India*. In spite of the map and the title, it was not a political magazine. *Mother India* dealt with the nation's soul, not the external hucksterings of the political marketplace. And yet, the editor, Sri K. D. Sethna (then a superb scholar whom one gazed at from a distance during one's occasional visits to Pondicherry but now a very, very lovable guide who teaches how to *live*, by smiling through life), never made the magazine dull for the earnest teenage reader. Of course, there would be plenty about integral Yoga and sadhana and the levels of consciousness above the mind, but there was also much to rivet my attention. K. M. Munshi's visit to the Ashram recounted by him and reported with appropriate comments by Sri Sethna in the September 1952 issue, for instance. Sri Munshi who had been Sri Aurobindo's student at Baroda had come to the Ashram (with some curiosity, as he confesses) to know about the Mother. The questions that assailed him had assailed the teenage reader too who had been brought up to think of spiritual personalities as very serious, almost silent, grave persons.

A tennis-playing, silk-garmented lady of seventy-five, carrying a tenuous veil and saluting the Ashramites at the march past day after day, was not exactly a symbol of spirituality to the normal mind. Was she a miracle-worker or just an artist? Was she carrying forward the Master's work? Was this how it should be carried on?

Questions that swirled within me but which I dared not ask my father due to the innate Indian upbringing in which you did not question elders on seemingly silly problems. But *Mother India* made it easy and I walked with the distinguished guide again and again through its pages. Things became crystal-clear.

We ourselves put on silks, eat machine-ground flour, play tennis, but for our spiritual uplift we want only ways considered acceptable five thousand years ago.

And that is why perhaps, subconsciously, we keep the spirit away from modern life.

Then what about Janak Videhi? And what about Sri Krishna, the Lord of Yoga Himself?

If the spirit has to permeate and transform life, it must be through life as we live it, and that is perhaps the Ashram's speciality.

There were no pontifical articles here, and spirituality was channelised to flow in our veins through invisible inlets, opened up by the style of writing. If Sri Sethna wrote about Aurobindonian Yoga, it could be an exciting shower of phrases making you run for the dictionary, and look misty-eyed into a vague scenario trying to understand this brilliant English style. As in his essay *Towards the Illimitable* (October 1952).

You must be considering my mystical megalomania the pursuit of a majestic mirage. What will you think if I fling at you the sublime perverseness of a nympholept? You will deem me not just reverie-infested but also a Grand Inquisitor putting the human heartbeat on the rack.

There were other voices familiar ones like Dilip Kumar Roy and Sisir Kumar Mitra, my father K R Srinivasa Iyenger and uncle R Bangaruswami reviewed books which made me hesitantly ask father "Can I buy Kapali Sastri's book on Veda and Tantra? It is only four rupees. And the reviewer says in *Mother India* it is illuminating." Pat the answer would come "No, no, you will not be able to understand the book as yet. However, I have the book and you can look into it."

By the sixties I was given full entry into the Aurobindonian world because my thesis on *Savitri* had been published and had received a very good press. Not surprising, for Sri Sethna, advised by the Mother, had patiently gone through the thesis and suggested improvements before it was sent for publication. *Mother India* continued to light my pathways because it contained much significant matter superbly edited, each

issue was read and underlined by father. Now I was able to follow with some comfort if Sri Sethna published a study of Teilhard de Chardin in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the ancient Vedanta or Jugal Kishore Mukherji wrote on the destiny of the body. The material envelope being quite important in the Aurobindonian Yoga, the scientific flashes from such articles were most welcome.

The editor reserved some space for creative writing as well. A story of Manoj Das, a poem by Margaret Forbes, a translation from Iqbal, a thought from Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg on East-West encounters in philosophy. Or Sri Anirvan on the yoga of translation, so beautifully flashed in a casual letter (February 1967) commending Srimati Vidyavati Kokil for her Hindi translation of *Savitri*.

I am glad to notice that you have diligently searched for what Sri Aurobindo used to call the 'inevitable word' in your translation and in most cases you have been able to hit on it. I have also marked that your style has become plastic and spontaneous as you have progressed with your work.

Since by then I had begun my own adventures as a translator from Tamil into English, Sri Anirvan's words came as if he were blessing me in person and encouraging me to keep on and face the agony and ecstasy of being a translator. The seventies opened and *Mother India* progressed with its steady tread dispensing light, encouragement, knowledge. The problems of youth were not ignored and there were articles on youth unrest and the youth revolution. Things appear bad but is it cause for despair, asked Marjorie Brahm (October, 1971) and said the youth was perhaps in search of alternative paths to the ones pursued by their parents. "witness the throngs of young Westerners coming to India to experience the traditional spiritual wisdom that lives here. They want to find—in their words—'where it's at'—and I don't think the search will stop until they know. Perhaps, in the process, their elders may find out—or rediscover—'where it's at' for themselves."

Those were happy days indeed. Father reviewing a book of Sri Sethna's in *The Hindustan Times Weekly* and Sri Sethna replying to the review in *Mother India*. Two affectionate children of the Mother holding hands and lovingly indulging in meaningful fencing, both exhibiting an extraordinary generosity of understanding. 1972 opened beautifully with the curious incident of Sri Aurobindo's version of Sri Sethna's *Sakuntala's Farewell*. What an Acharya, this Sri Aurobindo! How could that Himalaya of the Spirit contain such glowing humility! This was the Sri Aurobindo centenary year and *Mother India* joined the rest of the world in celebrating the event with a special number.

1973 also seemed to open auspiciously. The Mother's answers to the questions of disciples were read avidly by us. One could almost see her in person even if far away from Pondicherry as she put the emphasis on a word here and there, as in this passage on the *fundamental virtue*.

I have said this many times, but this is an opportunity it is sin-ce-ri-ty

A sincerity which must become total and absolute, for sincerity *alone* is your protection on the spiritual path. If you are not sincere, the very next step you are sure to fall and break your head. All kinds of forces, wills, influences, entities are there, on the look-out for the least little rift in that sincerity and they immediately rush in through that rift and begin to throw you into confusion.

This Mother of infinite love withdrew from the physical plane in November 1973. If the younger generation was able to carry on with the same faith as before, it was entirely due to sadhaks like Sri Sethna, Sri Nirodbaran and Dr. Kishor Gandhi. Having reached the heights, they stood unperturbed and *Mother India* continued to light the pathway since the material world had become quite incomprehensible due to political and sociological and financial uncertainties. It was a revelation to know that Sri Aurobindo would jot down accounts of expenses once in a way (brooms, barber, spices, S's cigarettes, charity). Nirodbaran comments (November 1977) that here lies the vast difference between the spiritual practices of all our yesterdays and the one initiated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the future.

However pressing the want, the expenses over a broom, a piece of soap, etc., are not such that the world-economic laws would get unbalanced if he did not keep these accounts. Could it be his fancy? I do not believe so, for he was never driven by any fancy. No great man was moved by fancy. I cannot imagine Buddha keeping a daily bazaar account. He was a world-renouncing Avatar, he did not touch money. To the bhikkus money was untouchable. Shankara was a sannyasi and an illusionist. Ramakrishna, though not an illusionist, would not touch money. We remember how once tested by Vivekananda his whole being cried out in pain by his contact with the hidden money.

Among the yogis, we see only the Mother and Sri Aurobindo dealing with money and considering money as a divine power. They were very scrupulous guardians of this money-power and never wasted a single pie.

Thus *Mother India* became the instrument to teach me the Mahvakya "All life is Yoga." Articles scoured from significant publications, poems, stories, choice passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, reviews here was always God's plenty. The Eighties were all beauty and happiness. There was Nirod-da's account of a picnic to Kanchipuram (March 1980) that combines attention to detail and the "vast, immortal look." The Varadaraja temple enthralled the Ashram party and there is the Hundred-pillared Hall.

Its exquisite carvings on each monolithic stone-pillar kept us spell-bound, the carvings depicting the worlds of the gods, demons, men and subhuman species, brought into an instant focus the cosmic vision of the Indian sculptors.

As one stands before this vision, a mood of reverie falls upon the mind and waking into a dream-world, the pilgrim-soul sees and hears the chantings of the priests, the many other souls bringing their heart-offerings and laying them at the feet of the Lord. One breathes an atmosphere suffused with the presence of the Gods and is cradled in the calm bliss of Eternity.

There were the moments of helplessness too when a dear worker of the Mother was gathered to other dimensions. Like Navajata to whom Maria Luisa offers a tribute of rare perception in the issue of April 1983. But the periodical moved steadily on its royal journey despite several setbacks to the editor's health. But he is Hercules as Editor, and is, as always, protected by the Mother's Force. Many children of the Mother—Dr. Kishor Gandhi, Parubai Patil—moved away to higher regions. It has been our good fortune that Sri Nirodbaran and Sri Sethna hold the fort to comfort and inspire us. Familiar names and new names appear in *Mother India* and every one is lighted by the Agni of Sri Aurobindo's Vision. Reading *Savitri* is yoga, and reading *Mother India* becomes *upāsana*, a worshipful act.

To have been so close to *Mother India* as a journal has itself been a shower of grace for me. It has taught me to love my motherland, taught me to write good English, do my best to sustain by my speeches and writings its spiritual unity unfailingly emblazoned on its cover, love good books, revere the true children of the Mother. The September 1998 issue carried a passage from *Savitri*, the words spoken by Aswapati to Rishi Narad. As the issues of the five decades flit through my mind as in a cinematograph, I marvel at this Amrita Surabhi (the Vessel of Nectar in the hands of Manimekalai, a Tamil epic heroine) that Sri Sethna has garnered patiently and heroically and as all the issues take the form of *Savitri*, the Incarnate Word, the means of our transformation, I realise how apt the quotation is for blessing the magazine. Who am I, an ignorant mortal, to 'bless' this divine image? But such is the intensity of feeling, *bhāvotkarsha*, experienced by many before, among them Vishnuchitta who blessed the Lord himself in the Tamil hymn *Tiru-p-Pallandu* more than a thousand years ago that I too can bless *Mother India* with hands held in salutation for its equally purposeful, beautiful future.

Behold her, singer with the prescient gaze,
And let thy blessing chant that this fair child
Shall pour the nectar of a sorrowless life
Around her from her lucid heart of love,
Heal with her bliss the tired breast of earth
And cast like a happy snare felicity

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE VEDIC-UPANISHADIC LIGHT AND SIGHT

His is a search of darkness for the light

(*Savitri*, p 71)

A progress leap from sight to greater sight

(*Ibid* , p 177)

“OUT of our thoughts we must leap up to sight . ”¹ such, indeed, is the command on all those who would aspire after the pristine glory and the absolute inevitability of true Knowledge, for, then alone, when the “Mind motionless sleeps waiting Light’s birth,”² in that “seeing silence”³

the Unmanifest reflects his form
In the still mind as in a living glass .⁴

As a matter of fact, since the earliest dawn of man’s awakened thought, in all ages and climes, the call has gone forth from his heart for light—the true light, *ṛtam jyothih*⁵—and for sight and more sight, *drstaye*.⁶ The supreme aspiration of the Upanishadic Rishis was to be ever *asuptadrk*, “with the eyes unclosed”, and Patanjali went so far as to declare that the fullness of Selfhood lies in the fullness of untrammelled vision, *drgeva ātmā*

Indeed, a deeper perceptive probe cannot but reveal that in this world of evolving manifestation, all manifesting units are ‘seeing’ all the time, in various ways and measures and on various levels. This is what is meant by the cryptic Upanishadic utterance *sarvam paśyati, sarvah paśyati*⁷ (‘Everybody is the seer and everybody the seen’) But the clarity, the intensity, the quality, and the reach and range of this sight are evidently dependent on the stage and status of manifestation so far attained. All are not yet endowed with the ‘divinely perceptive regard’, the *praceta* in the words of the Vedic mystics. Some are awake, some half awake, some are dreaming and some others are in slumber (Cf *kāni svapanti kāni asmin jāgrati katara esa devah svapnān paśyati*⁸)

In fact, the totality of manifestation, both in its involutory and in its evolutionary phases, can be adequately viewed and interpreted in terms of the two cardinal concepts of Light and Sight. What is after all the basic nature of this manifestation? In the epigrammatic words of Sri Aurobindo

In a sense, the whole of creation may be said to be a movement between two involutions, Spirit in which all is involved and out of which all evolves downward to the other pole of Matter, Matter in which also all is involved and out of which all evolves upwards to the other pole of Spirit⁹

Now, these two phases have been respectively imaged as the 'closing in' (*nimīlana*) and the 'opening out' (*unmīlana*) of the Eyes of the Supreme. At other times these have been represented as the processes of 'looking in' and 'looking out' (*parāg dr̥stir unmesah, pratyag dr̥stir nimesah*¹⁰). The cardinal difference between diverse forms in existence, between plants and animals and men, between inert and inanimate matter, living physical bodies and a creature like man in whom the mind-consciousness has emerged into the open to look around and wonder, lies in the fact of "the more or less involved or more or less evolved condition of consciousness"¹¹ As a matter of fact, consciousness is quite involved and asleep in a state of self-oblivious absorption in the bosom of inconscient Matter, "hesitating on the verge between involution and conscious evolution",¹² between a state of profound sleep and "a dim unclosing of the eye", in the first non-animal forms of life, half-awake and somewhat consciously evolving in "mind housed in a living body",¹³ and ultimately destined to be fully evolved and awake "by the awakening of the Supermind in the embodied mental being and nature."¹⁴

It is amply evident that this progressive awakening of consciousness out of the original nescience, the starting-point of the evolutionary ascent, has not yet arrived at its noontide effulgence. The cosmic sleep and the somnambulist dream-state of the waking soul have by no means terminated with man and mind-consciousness. In fact, man's present status is at best a state of half-sleep and half-waking, a state of veritable somnambulist torpor with "the inconstant blink of mortal sight"¹⁵ For, from the spiritual point of view, sleep denotes a poise of consciousness in which we are completely ignorant of the fundamental truths of existence,—of existence individual, cosmic or transcendent,—and of the Reality that is at the basis of all things, while the dream-state signifies that particular status in which we may be aware of this "reality" but only in a distorted, disfigured and topsy-turvy way.¹⁶ Man, thus, proves to be a creature asleep in most parts of his being and dreaming in the little part in which he has managed to gain partial awakening. Mind-consciousness is thus seen to be only an intermediate stage

. through which we pass
On our road from Matter to eternal Self,
To the Light that made the worlds, the Cause of things¹⁷

The evolutionary awakening of consciousness has still to proceed until what Sri Aurobindo calls the divine Supermind or Gnosis, the power of Truth-Consciousness (*rta-cti*) of Sachchidananda (the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss absolute) emerges in terrestrial evolution to become the overtly governing principle of embodied physical existence. For, then, the manifested being will be in secure possession of an integral consciousness and an integral Sight and "dwell in the unwall'd light of a divine knowledge."¹⁸ Sachchidananda will in that everlasting Day stand fully revealed in His robe of Matter, and

. Nature steps into the eternal Light,
Then only ends this dream of nether life ¹⁹

But that Golden Dawn, the overt emergence of the Supramental Sun, heralding the annulment of the nescient sleep of Avidya-Night, is still lying in the womb of the future, although the crimson signs of its imminent advent are already caught by discerning eyes. But, in the meantime, for the individual spiritual pilgrims the journey continues along ‘the road that winds towards the Sun’,²⁰ for,

Night is not our beginning nor our end,
We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go.²¹

And in this adventure of the Apocalypse to discard our present ‘time-born eyes’ and their ‘small moment look’ and instead grow into divine vision with the divine Eye, *divyam caksuh*,²² every single experience on the way is ‘a long march towards Light.’

In this ascent towards the Sun, consciousness and vision grow together, and at each plateau of this ascent, on each level of the hill of our being (*adreh sānu*), new vistas of light open to the sight of the aspiring soul. Evidently this light is no ordinary light, nor is this sight the mortal vision of the sense-bound mind. It is the supernal light, *jyotsām jyotih*, and the divine perception, *daivya ketu*

The Vedic seers have always sought and eulogised this faculty of constant awakening and growing perceptive vision which they termed *ketu* in order to distinguish it from the eye of sense or even of reason (*caksuh*). This supramental light and sight can be attained only when we transcend the boundaries of our thought-mind (*mano javistham, matinām pārāya*²³). It is through the fulfilment of this divine vision (*ketu*) alone that we can expect to be possessed of the happy truths of existence (*cikītvit sunṛtāvart*²⁴) and loosen the iron-grip of mortality (*amrtam aśnute*²⁵). With the opening of this supernal Sight, one acquires at the same time the perception of the Oneness of all beings (*ekatvam anupaśyatah*²⁶), one sees nothing as non-self (*neksate prthak*²⁷).

To the Vedic mystics (otherwise called the Seers or the Rishis, for they did not think out the truth but rather ‘saw’ it²⁸), Light and Sight stood for supreme powers of manifestation of the Spirit²⁹. In particular, light (*jyotih*) symbolised for them all the splendour and glory of the highest reaches of our being. And what about the Sight, the goal of achievement for the Vedic seers? It is, in the esoteric sense of the Veda, the self-revelatory knowledge of Surya, the Sun-God. And who is this Sun-God? In the words of Sri Aurobindo

the Sun-God represents the divine Illumination of the Kavi which exceeds mind and forms the pure self-luminous Truth of things. His realm is described as the Truth, the Law, the Vast [*satyam, rtam, brhat*]. He is the Fosterer or Increaser [*Pusan*], for he enlarges and opens man’s dark and limited being into a luminous and infinite consciousness. He is the sole Seer [*ekarṣe*³⁰], Seer of oneness and

Knower of the self, and leads him to the highest Sight The result of this inner process is the perception of the oneness of all beings in the divine Soul of the Universe ³¹

What is important to note here is the spiritual fact that this Sight at its highest is not only revelatory, it is supremely creative at the same time It is Sight-Will or rather Seer-Will (*Kavi-Kratu*) in the language of the Vedic mystics For at that supreme elevation, Will is not divorced from Sight and the effectivity of the Will-Sight is omnipotent and immediate Indeed, it is the primal Vision of the Supreme, termed in the Veda *iksā* or the 'Power of Sight', which is the real determinant of the worlds And this Sight, as we have just now pointed out, is one with Will *Iksā* is at the same time the Truth-Will (*satya-samkalpa*) and the Will-Perception (*samkalpa-darśana*) Thus, the Upanishadic seers, while describing the very first act of creation undertaken by the Supreme, have used the expression *sa aiksata, seyam devatā aiksata* ³² the Spirit 'looked' and the creation arose with the primal splendours of Light, *Jyotir upakramatu*.³³

About the supremely creative self-vision of the "all-creating Eye"³⁴ that presides over the worlds of manifestation, Sri Aurobindo writes

every seed of things is the Truth of its own being which this Self-Existence sees in itself, the resultant of that *seed of self-vision* is the truth of self-action, the natural law of development, formation and functioning which follows inevitably upon the self-vision and keeps to the processes involved in the original Truth All Nature is simply, then, the Seer-Will, the Knowledge-Force of the Conscious-Being . ³⁵ (Italics ours)

Thus, "The world expresses a *foreseen truth*, obeys a predetermining Will, realises an *original formative self-vision*,—it is the growing image of a divine creation "³⁶ (Italics ours)

Such, then, is the primal Sight, *parā drk*, the original self-creative Knowledge-Vision of Sachchidananda. It is "the intense original Flame",³⁷ the "Fire that is the beginning of the world" (*lokādīm agnim*)³⁸ And this is the fundamental power of the Supermind or divine Gnosis For, it is the Supermind, otherwise termed by Sri Aurobindo the 'Real-Idea', which represents the nodus of the self-determining creative truth-vision and the direct power of manifestation of the All-Existent Transcendence

But this Self-Existent Sachchidananda is not merely a transcendent supra-cosmic Creator He Himself has at the same time become this universe, for He is in the language of the Isha Upanishad *paribhūh*,³⁹ "the One who has become everywhere" Thus, the one and the only Creative Light is at once the source, the content and the continent of everything (*jyotir ekam bahubhyah*)⁴⁰, and it is ever shining even in the blind darkness of Matter (*andhecit tamasi jyotih*) so much so that to the eye of intimate vision

The world quivers with a God-light at its core. ⁴¹

But how is it then that our eyes do not ordinarily meet this hidden Light (*gudham jyotih*⁴²)—the Light that is at all time the unique sustainer of everything in this manifest universe? How is it that we, human beings, fail to discover the one Form behind all forms, indeed “the Form that is the One to look on everywhere” (*tad asya rūpam pracaksanāya*⁴³), for even as one Fire, entering the world, shapes itself to the various forms it meets, so likewise there is one Spirit within all creatures, but it has shaped itself to form and form (*rūpam rūpam pratirūpo babhūva*⁴⁴)

This incapacity on our part to vision “the Lustre that is the most blessed form of all” (*rūpam kalyānatamam*⁴⁵) and the supremely desirable of all things (*varenyam*⁴⁶), lies in the fact that He who is the Luminous, being manifested, has set Himself “close within, moving in the secret heart” (*āvih sannihitam guhācaram*⁴⁷) beyond the ken of mortal eyes

Thus, to be able to see this Splendour of splendours, we are in need of another light and another sight than the ones that we possess at present. For, as the Katha Upanishad says, His abode (*dhāma*) is a station where “the sun cannot shine and the moon has no lustre all the stars are blind there our lightnings flash not, neither any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness..”⁴⁸

It is evident by now that to look at the Supreme in His glory of supernal Light (*parājyotih*) our normal gaze that is turned outward (*parāk-drsti*) proves to be utterly inadequate to the task. Hence the Rishis of the Upanishads never tired of pointing out the insufficiency of our ‘mortal sight’ in the matter of apprehending the supreme Truths of existence. Thus, the *Katha* declares that the Purusha “has not set His body within the ken of seeing, neither does any man with the eye behold Him”⁴⁹ “[Indeed], He is by no means attainable by the mortal eye”⁵⁰ And the *Mundaka* says that “Eye cannot seize Him. Only when the inner being is purified by a glad serenity of Knowledge, then indeed, meditating, one beholds the Spirit indivisible”⁵¹

Thus, in order to have a vision of the Golden Purusha (*Hiranmaya Purusa*) who is seated in the heart of every single created object, we have to have our eyes turned inward and upward (*avrtta-cakṣuh*⁵², *ūrda-netrah*) and plunge our regard into the ‘Blue Infinity’ (*nīlam parakṣnam*).⁵³

For it is only in this way, when the veil has been lifted from before our eyes,⁵⁴ when we are blessed with the gift of ‘divine Sight’ as was Arjuna by the Charioteer of Life,⁵⁵ when we become *paśyah*⁵⁶ or ‘seers’ in the language of the *Mundaka* Upanishad, that we can expect to have the luminously direct and absolute knowledge of the spiritual verities. This luminous seizing and contact, this internal spiritual sight, *drsti* or *drk-śakti*, “is to the spirit what the eyes are to the physical mind and one has the sense of having passed through a subtly analogous process. As the physical sight can present to us the actual body of things of which the thought had only possessed an indication or mental description and they become to us at once real and evident, *pratyakṣa*, so the spiritual sight surpasses the indications or representations of thought and can make the

self and truth of all things present to us and directly evident, *pratyakṣa*”⁵⁷

It is under the stress of such a supernal sight that the Dravida saint Parakala could exclaim in his hymnal *Perya-Tirumozhi* “I have seen, I have seen!” (“*Nān kandu-konden!*”) and the Sufi mystic Abu Said could throw the challenge “Of what use is hearsay to one who knows by vision?”

In fact, this seer-knowledge is always much more authentic than the thinking knowledge, for, a consciousness proceeding by sight has a much greater and more direct access to the truth of things than the consciousness relying on the crutches of thought alone. The true knowledge, the essential knowledge, is not an intellectual conception of the truth; it is above everything else a ‘realisation’, in the complete sense of the term,—a knowledge by absolute identity, *tādātmya-jñāna*. Has not one Upanishadic Rishi declared, “To know Brahman is to be Brahman” (*Brahmavid Brahma eva bhavati*)?

Thus the commanding word to the *jjñāsu*, the seeker after true knowledge, in his upward journey to the Vedic “Sun of Gnosis”, has always been to replace his “seeking Mind” by the “seeing Soul” and to acquire a cognitive status in which “Sight was a flame-throw from identity”⁵⁸ For then alone will man be made a Rishi or Kavi and no longer a mere thinker. We should not forget in this connection that a Rishi or Seer “does not need the aid of thought. as a means of knowledge, but only as a means of representation and expression. If a further extension of knowledge is required, he can come at it by new seeing without the slower thought-processes..”⁵⁹

But it goes without saying that in his present normal status, man, the mental being, cannot at all command this supreme vision, “the lucent clarity of a pure regard.”⁶⁰ Instead, the human mind, in its search and feeling out for truth, relies at its highest on the staff of support of conceptual thought. But whether we consciously know it or not, we are, let us repeat, always ‘sons of Light’ (*Jyotsām putrāh*). Our evolutionary ascent has commenced from the blind immensity of the Inconscient’s Night, but, in the inevitability of the destined process, we are “to eternal light and knowledge meant to rise”.⁶¹

Thus the Pilgrim’s Progress cannot stop short with the visionless mind’s circumscribed gaze and sooner or later, today or tomorrow, we must come out of

the confines of thought

To where Mind motionless sleeps waiting Light’s birth⁶²

And once we outgrow the “mortal mind’s half-look on things,”⁶³ we are sure to encounter on our ascending march a series of hierarchised luminous planes of consciousness that will offer the pilgrim soul an ever heightening and deepening power of sight. These planes, ‘exposed to the lustre of Infinity’, are in the ascending order, in the terminology of Sri Aurobindo

(1) the *Higher Mind*, whose action, in terms of the Vedic image of the Sun of Truth, is of the nature of “a composed and steady sunshine”,⁶⁴

(ii) the *Illumined Mind*, that has for its characteristic action “an outpouring of massive lightnings of flaming sun-stuff”;⁶⁵

(iii) the *Intuition*, which with its faculty of Truth-vision acts as “a projecting blade, edge or point of a far-off supermind light”;⁶⁶

(iv) *Overmind*, which is characterized by an authentic universal gaze but somehow covers with its luminous corona, with its brilliant golden lid (*hiraṇmayena pātrena*⁶⁷), the face of the supreme Truth;

(v) and finally the *Supermind* or Gnosis, the plane of absolute Light and Sight, that transcends altogether the *aparārtha* or the lower hemisphere of existence

It is only with the attainment of this divine Supermind that the ascent of Sight can come to its integral fulfilment For, as Sri Aurobindo has revealed, the supramental or gnostic being, the *vyñānamaya purusa*,

lives in the Sun itself, in the very body and blaze of the true light, he knows this light to be his own self-luminous being and he sees the whole truth of the lower triplicity and each thing that is in it He sees it not by reflection in a mental organ of vision, but with the Sun of gnosis itself as his eye,—for the Sun, says the Veda, is the eye of the gods ⁶⁸

We have come to the end of the elaboration of our chosen theme, the Growth of Light and the Ascent of Sight in the Vedic-Upanishadic mysticism We have noted that we are now only half way through the ascending march and our spiritual climb has to continue till we reach the Solar Supermind and embody its effulgence and power of Sight, even in this material world of ours, even in this very earthly body. The goal set before the seekers of Truth-Light is to shoot out of the confining bounds of mind and rise in consciousness on to the aforesaid “radiant altitudes” of the Spirit where, at present, “man can visit but there he cannot live”⁶⁹ But the time has come when the representative men of the age have to consciously make these successive ascents and dwell permanently upon the summit-altitude in the full blaze and glory of the Sun And when that happens,

Life’s tops shall flame with the Immortal’s thoughts,
Light shall invade the darkness of its base .
The supermind shall claim the world for Light
And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
And place Light’s crown on Nature’s lifted head
And found Light’s reign on her unshaking base ⁷⁰

Notes and References

- 1 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* p 276
- 2 *Ibid* , p 383
- 3 *Ibid* p 32
- 4 *Ibid* , p 276
- 5 *Rg-Veda*
- 6 *Isa Upanisad*, 15
- 7 *Praśna Upanisad* 4 5
- 8 *Ibid* 4 1
- 9 Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, p 129
- 10 *Tīrpādvibhūti-mahānāravana-upanisad*
- 11, 12, 13 & 14 *The Life Divine* p 706
- 15 *Savitri*, p 343
- 16 Cf *amathā gīhatah svapno nidrā tatrām ajānatah* (Gaudapadacharya *Māndūkya-Kārikā* 1 15)
- 17 *Savitri*, p 166
- 18 Sri Aurobindo *The Synthesis of Yoga* p 456
- 19 *Savitri* p 154
- 20 The expressions put within quotation marks but bearing no specific references are all taken from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*
- 21 *Savitri*, p 601
- 22 *Bhagavadgītā* XI 8
- 23 *Rg-Veda* VI 9 5 1-46 7
- 24 *Ibid* , IV 52 4
- 25 *Isa Upanisad* 14
- 26 *Ibid* , 7
- 27 *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad*
- 28 Cf '*Rvī daśanār*' (Yaska's *Nirukta* II 3 3)
- 29 Compare
 'all Creation is an act of light (Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* p 298)
 '' all-knowing Light'' (*Ibid* p 121)
 ''A knowledge which became what it perceived'' (*Ibid* p 28)
 'This seeing was identical with the seen'' (*Ibid* , p 546)
 The Knowledge by which the Knower is the Known (*Ibid* p 297)
- 30 *Isa Upanisad*, 16
- 31 Sri Aurobindo *Isha Upanishad* (1951 edition) pp 12-13
- 32 *Chāndogya Upanisad*
- 33 Vyasa, *Brahma-Sūtra*, 14 9 Compare
 The world is but a spark-burst from its Light,
 All moments flashes from its Timelessness,
 All objects glimmerings of the Bodiless
 (Sri Aurobindo *Savitri*, p 548)
- Also *Katha Upanisad*, 2 2 15
 tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti (By His shining all this shines)
- 34 *Savitri* p 547
- 35 *The Life Divine* p 129
- 36 *Ibid* , p 120
- 37 *Savitri* , p 18
- 38 *Katha Upanisad*, I 1 15
- 39 *Isa Upanisad* 8
- 40 *Rg-Veda* I 93 4
- 41 *Savitri*, p 168

- 42 *Rg-Veda*, VII 76 4
 43 *Ibid*, VI 47 18
 44 *Katha Upanisad* II 2 9
 Agniḥ tathāiko bhuvanānāṃ pṛaṇisto rūpam rūpam pṛatirūpo babhūva,
 Ekas tathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā rūpam rūpam pṛatirūpo bahiḥca
- 45 *Isa Upanisad* 16
 46 *Mundaka Upanisad*, II 2 1
 47 *Ibid*
 48 *Katha Upanisad* II 2 15 (in Śrī Aurobindo's translation)
 Compare Śrī Aurobindo's *Ilion* in *Collected Poems* p 496
- There our sun cannot shine and our moon has no place for her lustres
 There our lightnings flash not, nor fire of these spaces is suffered
- 49 *Katha Upanisad*, II 3 9
 No sandīpe tiṣṭhati rūpam asva
 Na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścānānam
- 50 *Ibid* II 3 12
 Prāptum śakyo na cakṣuṣā
- 51 *Mundaka Upanisad* III 1 8
 Na cakṣuṣā gṛhṇate jñāna-pṛasādena viśuddha-sattvāḥ tam paśyate dhyanamānah
- 52 *Katha Upanisad* II 1 1
 53 *Chāndogya Upanisad* I 6 6
 54 Cf We have stripped the veil from thine eyes and thy sight to-day is keen (The Holy Koran)
 55 *Gīta* XI 8 *Divyaṃ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ*
 56 *Mundaka Upanisad* III 1 3
 57 *The Synthesis of Yoga* p 803
 58 *Savitṛi*, p 301
 59 *The Synthesis of Yoga* p 803
 60 *Savitṛi* p 101
 61 *Ibid* p 240
 62 *Ibid* p 383
 63 *Ibid* p 35
 64 *The Life Divine* p 278
 65 *Ibid*
 66 *Ibid* p 948
 67 *Īśa Upanisad* 15
 68 *The Synthesis of Yoga* p 462
 69 *Savitṛi* p 659
 70 *Ibid* p 707

MEDITATION WITH THE MOTHER*

A LOOK formidable,
intense and penetrating
every inch of the way,
sets a fire my body,
life, mind and soul,
dissolving every atom
of separate existence
with its vehement call,
and commands my being

Calm and still, it works
in one concentrated gaze
till there remains nothing
but a splendid glow
of golden Fire sparkling
A Fire of Consciousness,
radiantly luminous,
illumines my being
I bathe in its coolness
and feel light and pure—
free of all thoughts
and every feeling,
but conscious still
of Fire, all-pervading

Then, comes a smile,
soft and sweet,
intimate and endearing,
to nestle me on her lap,
where in deep peace I lie
of never-ending oneness,
invincible and safe

The soft touch of her fingers
wakes me in mute adoration

to drink deeply her tender Love
And I kneel and bow
at her puissant feet,
giving her all I am
and all I have
In silent surrender.

Her power of Will
raises me up
to regard her
in her full glory
of Consciousness-Force
and supernal Bliss
I remain awhile
charged by her splendour
fixing my eyes into
her divine eyes of
Grace and Beauty

As she captures me
by her steady gaze of Light,
pouring herself incessantly
till my being is soaked
with her presence marvellous,
infinite and ineffable,
I am conscious of her alone,
unique and absolute

Then, she seals it all
with her indelible kiss
filling my being
with her inviolable Bliss

KAILAS JHAVERI

* The meditation with the Mother was on 17 August 1964

THE BOOK OF JOB AND THE BHAGAVAD GITA

No two Scriptures appear so totally different and so completely unrelated to each other as the *Book of Job* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The Hebrews and their attitudes were farther from the Hindus and their attitudes than from the Hellenes with whom Matthew Arnold has ably contrasted them. Above all, the situations in which Job and Arjuna were placed bear no comparison

And yet a close study of both the works helps us to see a resemblance that is not immediately obvious. To see the comparison we must shift our focus from the so-called “innocent suffering” of Job to what is more central to the work, the evolution of Job’s consciousness which he himself indicates when he tells God

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, / but now mine eye seeth thee

At the time when the Lord Himself seems to praise Job as one who is perfect and upright or blameless and one who fears God and avoids evil, the Lord means that Job knows God only by the hearing of the ear and has no direct awareness or experience of God. The very words, fearing God and avoiding evil, indicate an action of the Will. When God tells a person like Abraham,

Walk with me and be thou perfect,

it is a far higher kind of perfection that is meant. A man who walks and talks with God need not “*eschew* evil”, he has no need to do it at all.

Is it not Job’s excruciating agony of the body and the mind that leads to the state of seeing the Lord with his own eye? And is it not the Lord who brings it upon him using Satan as his instrument for raising Job from one kind of perfection to a far higher kind? N. C. Habel states more than once that it is the Lord’s mention of Job to Satan that begins all the drama that follows. *The Hymn to Wisdom* (Chapter 28), which is often dismissed as an interpolation, presents two kinds of wisdom, one accessible only to God and the other possible for Man, “to fear God and *eschew* evil.” We see Job in the so-called perfect state fearing God and *eschewing* evil, and yet at the end we see Job rising to a higher state. It is obvious there is another kind of wisdom than the highest Wisdom accessible to God alone and what is possible for the normal man at his *best*.

It is here that the *Bhagavad Gita* becomes relevant. The Hebrews, as the Biblical scholars and exegetes often remind us, were not “philosophical”. They made no clear distinctions between one state of consciousness and another. We know how the word “*nepes*” served for the soul, heart and appetite. The *Bhagavad Gita* defines for us in clear terms the various states.

We said that the situations in which Arjuna and Job are placed bear no comparison. But their natures are almost identical and the ways in which they evolve for all the wide difference have yet a similarity.

Starting with the same state of consciousness Job and Arjuna respond to their crises in life, the sudden affliction suffered by one and the unlooked-for shock the other finds on the battlefield, in a similar way: both become despondent,—one shrieks out in despair, the other drops his great bow, *gāndīva*, and refuses to fight. In the case of Job for whose suffering the Lord who is responsible is physically away from him and creates a situation when he is roused from despondency and is made to argue with well-meaning friends who claim to have their own kind of “wisdom” With it they seek to “educate” him. Arjuna, on the other hand, has the Lord by his side, in the human disguise of a charioteer and a friend, raising him from one rung of wisdom to another. The climax in the experience of both is the Darshan of the Lord. Kathleen Raine, the great Blake Scholar who has given us a remarkable interpretation of Blake’s illustrations of the *Book of Job* says

Then follows the tremendous epiphany of the works of God comparable surely to the passage in the *Bhagavad Gita* where Lord Krishna shows himself to Arjuna in the universal form

The epiphany is followed by each rising to a state when he arrives at the supreme wisdom possible for him.

Sri Aurobindo’s description of Arjuna before he breaks down makes us see how close to him is Job

Arjuna, is in the language of the Gita, a man subject to the action of the three Gunas or modes of the Nature-Force and habituated to move unquestioningly in that field, like the generality of men. He justifies his name [Arjuna white-pure] only in being so far pure and *sattwic* as to be governed by high and clear principles and impulses and habitually control his lower nature by the noblest Law which he knows. He is not of a violent Asuric disposition, not the slave of his passions, but has been trained to a high calm and self-control, to an unswerving performance of his duties and firm obedience to the best principles of the time and society in which he has lived and the religion and ethics to which he has been brought up. He is egoistic like other men, but with the purer or *sattwic* egoism which regards the moral Law and society and the claims of others and not only or predominantly his own desires and passions. He has lived and guided himself by the Shastra, the moral and social code. The thought which preoccupies him, the standard which he obeys is the *dharmā*, that collective Indian conception of the religious, social and moral rule of conduct.

A word about what Sri Aurobindo calls the *gunas* or modes of Nature-Force would be helpful. He uses the word *sattwic*, the adjectival form of *sattwa* (*guna*), the highest mode of nature-Force, the mode of purity, poise and peace in which a person follows the best ideals of the race. Job’s perfection and blamelessness, his fearing God and

eschewing evil denote his *sattwic* state. When suffering is inflicted upon Job and when Arjuna is shocked by the battle-scene, both fall down to the lowest mode of nature-force, *tamas* or *tamo guna*, the state not only of darkness, ignorance and inertia but of despondence and the state of self-pity. The other mode is higher than the last state but lower than *sattwa*, *rajas* or *rajo guna*, the state of kinesis, passion and action. As a warrior Arjuna has *rajo guna* and Job's *rajo guna* is roused when his friends attack him and dub him a sinner which he is not.

If Arjuna justifies his name by being pure, Job justifies his by aspiring for God. The original form of the name from which *Iyyob* (Latinized to Job) is derived is *Ayab* (Where is my [divine] father?) Before the infliction of pain and suffering on Job his seeking is purely mental. He knows *about* God, not God. He fears God (holds to him with awe and devotion). As he progresses during the discussion with his friends the need to see God face to face increases and intensifies if only to know the reason for his suffering. When his mind falls into a state of silence and transcends the *gunas*, the qualities of nature, he is able to see Him face to face.

Job's problem after he is afflicted with pain is why he should suffer. In the state of *tamas*, *vishāda* (despondency), he shrieks out why he was born and why he did not cease to be immediately. After being attacked by his well-meaning friends he feels he has never deserved the suffering. As against his friends who hold that he suffers only because he has sinned he asserts he has never sinned and therefore he should not suffer. Both err equally. It is Elihu, who speaks after the friends and before the Lord speaks through the Whirlwind, who says that God is above innocence and guilt, virtue and sin. In fact Elihu says that one should cease to think of oneself and think only of God. Once Job has the Darshan of God he no longer wants to "know" anything, reasons for his suffering or anything else.

In the *Gita*, of course, we move on a different plane altogether. Lord Krishna himself admonishes Arjuna for his despondency, gradually takes him rung by rung to the highest reality revealing it from various angles of vision.

For one who is neither Jewish nor Christian the Lord in the *Book of Job* appears to reveal an aspect not seen elsewhere in the Jewish Books. Sri Aurobindo, who does not so much as mention Job in his vast output, quotes his words with a slight alteration in a context in which one does not normally look for words from Job. In his *Essays on the Gita*, in the Chapter on "Man and the Battle of Life" Sri Aurobindo stresses the need for man to see the power that causes pain and suffering and death as also God and says,

Finding himself in a world which is menaced from every side by pain, suffering, evil and destruction, he has to see the omnipresent Deity in it all and conscious that of this enigma there must be a solution and beyond this Ignorance in which he dwells a Knowledge that reconciles, he has to take his stand upon this faith, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee."

The text, in Job (13-15), actually reads,

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him

The modern editors change it totally to make the words give an opposite meaning! Sri Aurobindo is adapting the text to make a point in the context.*

The *Book of Job* stands unique among the Jewish Scriptures presenting a vision that is nearer that of the *Gita* than that of any other work of the race. The Lord does not approve of the point of view of the three friends who believe in retributive justice.

There are of course terms like the *fear of God* for devotion, adoration, typically Jewish. There are a number of elements which could be called local and temporal. But the work as a whole is “spiritually” nearer the Indian scriptures, especially the *Bhagavad Gita*.

K B SITARAMAYYA

* Sri Aurobindo very rarely gives verbatim renderings of the ancient writings, the intention always being to bring out their revelatory significance —Editor

THE YOGIC VISION OF TANTRA

THE Indian Tantra was perhaps the most daring spiritual synthesis ever conceived in the spiritual history of mankind. Amazingly comprehensive in its vision, profoundly intuitive in its conceptions, strikingly bold and innovative in its methods, Tantras contain some original psychological intuitions which have a living relevance for the student of Yogic psychology.

The Tantra-Darshan

The path of the Tantra, viewed in a broad perspective, is the translation of a spiritual vision, *darshan*, into concrete realities of the inner and outer life through a psychological and social discipline. So to understand the psychology of the Tantras we should have some understanding of the Tantric vision.

The central feature of the Tantra-path is its aspiration for Wholeness and Perfection. The tantric vision makes no unbridgeable distinction between the secular and the spiritual or the worldly and other-worldly experience. The highest experience is the experience of the perfect whole of the Spirit, *samvit*, issuing forth as Shiva-Shakti, and becoming the world. The nature of this tantric experience is a dynamic identity with the creative cosmic Energy, Shakti, of the transcendent and perfect whole, *samvit*. In this experience all the subjective and objective experiences of the world within and without are felt as vibrations of Divine Bliss, *ānanda-lahari*, and the world itself is seen as waves of divine beauty, *soundarya-lahari*. For the tantric yogi life and the world are not a painful illusion or a snare of Maya but a glorious expression of the power, beauty and bliss of the Divine Mother. Even the ugliest, vilest and the most grotesque aspect of life is only a deformed expression of some truth of the Divine Shakti.

According to Sri Aurobindo the well-known double paths of Tantra, technically known as *dakshina mārga* and *vāma mārga*, and popularly called the right and left hand paths, actually refers to the path of knowledge and the path of delight. Dakshina Marga, which means the path of discrimination, tries to arrive at liberation through right knowledge and discrimination and Vama Marga tries to arrive at the same goal by right enjoyment—enjoyment of the essence of bliss in every movement of life. The God-lover, *bhakta*, tries to sublimate all desires by turning them towards the Divine. The sage or *jñānī* rejects all desires as snares of maya by right discrimination. The tantric Yogi tries to transform desire by penetrating into the bliss-essence of life of which all pleasures derived from the satisfaction of desire are a deformed expression.

But the most important part of tantric Yoga is the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti lying dormant or asleep at the base of the spine, Muladhara. As the Kundalini moves upwards she opens the various energy-centres in the human body which enable the Yogi to come into contact with or enter into different levels of consciousness with their corresponding world-systems, beings, psychic states and greater faculties of knowledge, power and enjoyment. And, finally, when the Kundalini Shakti arrives at

the Sahasrara and unites with Shiva, which leads to the great Liberation, that is the consummation of tantric Yoga

Thus the tantric system is not a path of negation but a path of affirmation involving a progressive integration and assimilation of the cosmos into the self, it aims at a comprehensive spiritual perfection of which Mukti or liberation is only one aspect or part of the goal. The other aspects of the tantric goal are Siddhi or perfect knowledge of and mastery over the laws, processes and energies of Nature in the self and the world and bhukti or enjoyment of the cosmic life as a blissful Leela of the Mother

Man as a System of Energy

This brings us to one of the fundamental psychological intuitions of the Tantras: it is the idea of man as a system of energy. The human being with various energy-centres located in his body is a living battery or dynamo in which the various forms of cosmic energy are received, processed, transmitted and transformed. Man according to the Tantras is a microcosm of the Macrocosm. His individual energies are waves of the cosmic life-energy, his soul is not merely a part but one with the creative Energy of the cosmic and transcendental Being, Shiva, and can contain and exceed the universe in its highest being. But even in his body, life and mind he is not just a part but potentially commensurate with the cosmic mind, life and body. The physical, vital and mental ego of man prevents him from realising this universality. The soul of man is free from ego and therefore feels spontaneously its universality and transcendence as its inherent and essential nature. If the body, life and mind of man can also be liberated from ego, they can also, like his soul, realise their universality and oneness with the cosmic Body, Life and Mind of the Spirit.

Thus man and the Universe are the equal self-expressions of the eternal Consciousness-Energy, Chit-Shakti of the Spirit. All the physical, biological, psychological and spiritual elements in man are the different forms of the divine Consciousness-Force, Chit-Shakti. His physical and biological instincts and the urge for food, sex and sleep, his vital emotions and feelings and desires and the urge for work and action and love and enjoyment, his mental will, volitions, thoughts, perceptions, ideas, his spiritual intuitions, illuminations and inspirations and the highest aspiration of the soul of man for Truth and God are the manifestations of the progressively evolving divine Shakti in man in the various levels of his being.

The tantric psychology resolves all these energies in man into three broad categories: Kriya-Shakti, energies of work and action, Ichcha-Shakti, energies of will, desire and emotions, and Jnana-Shakti, energies of knowledge.

The Principles of the Path

The practical implication of this tantric intuition for Yoga is that, since all the energies in man are in essence the expression of the Divine Shakti, none of the

activities, urges and motives of human life has to be unduly suppressed, denied or rejected. All of them, from the grossest material actions like eating, sleeping and sex to the highest spiritual actions have to be made conscious expressions of the Divine Shakti.

The tantric Yogi agrees with the Vedantin that the central obstacles to this realisation are the twin knots of ego and desire—the commonly accepted diagnosis of the human malady by Indian spiritual doctors. But in the method or therapy applied to cure this human malady and in the nature of spiritual fulfilment, the tantric Yogi differs from the Vedantin—not much from the classical Vedanta of the early Upanishads but from the later post-Upanishadic Vedanta.

This later Vedanta in general tends to view the energy of being as a Temptress and a bewitching Creatress of Illusions, Maya, who snares the soul with her desires and passions and the urge for action and therefore this Vedanta tries to escape from her into the passionless and actionless peace of the pure Being. But the tantric Yogi views the energy of being as the adorable Divine Mother who is the repository of all blessings and grace—spiritual as well as secular—and the source of all knowledge, power, freedom, mastery and delight.

Therefore the tantric sadhaka never tries to escape from life; he tries to see his adorable Mother behind all her good, evil and beguiling masks, for the Shakta all is She, even the needs, desires and passions of the lower nature and all that is bad and the ugly and the mean and the macabre in it. So the tantric Yogi systematically trains himself to think, feel and see the Divine Mother not only in all that is good, luminous, beautiful and true but also in all that is evil, dark and terrible in life.

All that is repulsive or terrible to the ordinary man, sinful to the moralist, inauspicious to the religious, unspiritual to the saintly, the tantric Yogi regards with an altogether different attitude. He confronts them with the faith and intuition of the divinity hidden behind even in these dark aspects of life and tries to understand the deeper truth and law and purpose and process of the Divine Shakti in them. By this understanding he discovers the secret of sublimation and mastery over the forces of his lower nature. He learns to rise spiritually by the very things by which the ordinary man falls. This virile and heroic spirituality is the general attitude of the tantric Yoga. But the tantric masters are wise enough to perceive that all are not capable of such a heroism. So the tantric path maps out a system of graded ascent to the ideal.

Thus in the tantric vision the higher adhyatmic or spiritual experience does not deny the lower ordinary or samsaric experiences of the world. The higher experience of the universal and the whole of the spirit fulfils and perfects the partial experience of the individual ego in the world. The world-experience of the ordinary man is a limited, partial and distorted reflection in his ego-centric desire-tossed consciousness—of the whole, perfect and blissful experience of the spirit or the soul which is one with the transcendent and universal Shiva-shakti. This limitation or distortion is due to the gradual compression or constriction of the unbound consciousness of the spirit by the Mayic power of Shakti or Maya-shakti through the principle of ego and the triple

qualities of Prakriti, that is, Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa. So the human Jiva in this tantric vision is nothing but the divine Shiva imprisoned within the body and chained by ego, desire and the qualities of Nature. Every activity, need, desire, urge, aspiration and experiences of the human life however perverted they may be by the greed and lust of the human ego are a limited, partial or distorted expression of some truth or power of the divine Spirit and its Shakti which is within every human being. When these distortions are removed all these activities of human life will take their right place in the whole, will function according to their deepest truth and law and purpose in the whole, and will become pure, luminous, blissful and playful expressions of the Divine Shakti in man.

M S SRINIVASAN

ASWAPATI IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

I

I WOULD like to begin this brief study of Aswapati as we encounter him in Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri*¹ by raising what might look like a quibble but I hope to show that it provides us with an important clue to the poet's conception of the character of Aswapati.² *Savitri* is organised in 3 parts and 12 Books and has 724 pages (the Fourth Revised Edition) Part I runs into three Books and covers 348 pages, and Aswapati, the King of Madra and the father of Savitri, is the protagonist here. It is the story of his spiritual adventure that is the theme of all the 24 cantos of Part I except the first two cantos of Book I. And yet "Aswapati", the name of this central character, for that matter the only character³ in this part of the poem, occurs just once⁴ on page 341, just 7 pages short of the end of Part I. The second occurrence of this word is found on page 369,⁴ when we are already well into Part II. Almost all the time, in Part I, the third person masculine, singular pronoun "he", or its other morphological variants, namely, "him", "his", and "himself"⁵ are used to refer to Aswapati. The titles of cantos 3 and 5 of Book I, however, make it amply clear that it is "The Yoga of the King" that is being described here, and on the very first page of canto 3 (page 23), we have an adequate description of the king, although his name is not mentioned here either. Then again on page 348 (in the last line but one of Book III) we have the phrase "the Lord of Life", which clearly refers to Aswapati. And yet the quibble⁶ remains. Why does the word Aswapati not occur at all until almost the end of this Part, and then too occur only once just 7 pages before the conclusion of this part, when all these 326 pages (348 minus 22) are about Aswapati's Yoga?

For an answer to this question, we must consider closely Aswapati's character as delineated by Sri Aurobindo. In the "Author's Note"⁷ which appears at the very beginning of the Fourth Revised Edition (1993) of *Savitri*, he describes the tale of Satyavan and Savitri as a story of conjugal love conquering death recited in the Mahabharata, and as "one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle." Referring to the symbolic significance of the various characters he adds "Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, he [Savitri's] human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes." He further points out that this legend is not a mere allegory and the characters in it are "incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch," and that "they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life" (emphasis mine). This would suggest that Sri Aurobindo assumed the existence of some living and conscious forces whose purpose is to aid man to grow from his mortal to the immortal state, and that Aswapati, Savitri, Satyavan and Dyumatsena were incarnations of such forces. The existence and the function of these forces has to be understood in the context of Sri Aurobindo's theory of spiritual evolution. Evolution on

earth, Sri Aurobindo maintains, is a development, a growth of consciousness in material forms, which becomes more refined and complex as the growth proceeds until the form can reveal the indwelling spirit "Man is a transitional being, he is not final. For in man and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees that climb to a divine supermanhood. There lies our destiny and the liberating key to our aspiring but troubled and limited mundane existence" (*The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol 17, p 7) The manifestation of God in man and the realisation of God within and without are the aims towards which evolution is leading us. These conscious forces, to whom Sri Aurobindo refers to above, play a useful role in helping man in his evolutionary ascent. The legend of Aswapati, Savitri, Satyavan, Dyumatsena, etc., related in the Mahabharata is the story of one of the incarnations of these forces in the Puranic times. These forces must have incarnated in other ages under different names and their relationship to one another too must have been varied according to the exigencies of their work in each age. In our own age, the saga of man's evolutionary journey is not only continuing but has also reached a very critical juncture and this would naturally bring about the incarnation of these living and conscious forces which participate in this saga.

Whether Sri Aurobindo himself was the Aswapati of our age is a matter I do not wish to go into here. But he must have found it easy to identify himself with Aswapati's character because their inner selves and their aspirations were very much alike, although in the external circumstances of life there were such obvious disparities. Sri Aurobindo, like Aswapati, was "a thinker and toiler in the ideal's air." Like Aswapati, his soul too "lived as eternity's delegate, / His mind was like a fire assailing heaven, / His will a hunter in the trails of light." Like Aswapati he too devoted many long years to intense tapasya, and became "the lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour," the aim of which was to help mankind to rise "from the mortal to the immortal planes." His major works like *The Life Divine* are shot through and through with this spirit. He too anguished like Aswapati over the riddle of this world and like him always remained optimistic about its future. Like Aswapati he too hoped that in the course of evolution man will be followed by a divine successor who will realise terrestrial perfection.

All we have done is ever still to do
 All breaks and all renews and is the same
 Huge revolutions of life's fruitless gyre,
 The new-born ages perish like the old,
 As if the sad Enigma kept its right
 Till all is done for which this scene was made
 Too little the strength that now with us is born,
 Too faint the light that steals through Nature's lids,
 Too scant the joy with which she buys our pain
 In a brute world that knows not its own sense,
 Thought-racked upon the wheel of birth we live,

The instruments of an impulse not our own
 Moved to achieve with our heart's blood for price
 Half-knowledge, half-creations that soon tire
 A foiled immortal soul in perishing limbs,
 Baffled and beaten back we labour still,
 Annulled, frustrated, spent, we still survive
 In anguish we labour that from us may rise
 A larger-seeing man with nobler heart,
 A golden vessel of the incarnate Truth,
 The executor of the divine attempt
 Equipped to wear the earthly body of God,
 Communicant and prophet and lover and king
 I know that thy creation cannot fail

(*Savitri*, p 342)

Like Aswapati again he also hoped.

Even as of old man came behind the beast
 This high divine successor surely shall come
 Behind man's inefficient mortal pace,
 Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears
 He shall know what mortal mind barely durst think,
 He shall do what the heart of the mortal could not dare
 Inheritor of the toil of human time,
 He shall take on him the burden of the gods,
 All heavenly light shall visit the earth's thoughts,
 The might of heaven shall fortify earthly hearts,
 Earths' deeds shall touch the superhuman's height,
 Earth's seeing widen into the infinite

(*Ibid* , p 344)

It might be said that Aswapati in *Savitri* was entirely Sri Aurobindo's creation and therefore he cast him in his own mould. Of course, this is precisely what I am saying. He felt a close affinity with Aswapati's role in the *Savitri*-legend, he probably felt that he too was playing a similar role in the evolutionary drama unfolding in our times. Since this identification with Aswapati came to him so naturally, Sri Aurobindo was able to describe in such detail the spiritual experiences of Aswapati. In fact, one cannot write in so much detail about the spiritual experiences of anyone other than oneself. So in writing about Aswapati's Yoga, Sri Aurobindo was describing his own Yoga. In other words, Aswapati's Yoga is in fact Sri Aurobindo's own Yoga. That is probably why Sri Aurobindo did not feel the need to mention Aswapati specifically by name again and again while talking about his Yoga. In his poetic consciousness both had

merged into one, and he thus went on freely writing about his own personal Yoga, and yet it reads every bit like Aswapati's Yoga. This then is the answer to the question we raised at the beginning of this paper. Sri Aurobindo was in fact describing the experiences of his own Yoga and it was therefore natural not to bring in the word Aswapati too obtrusively. As already mentioned earlier, there are a few pointers, such as the repeated use of the word "King" in the title of certain cantos, for the guidance of the careful reader.

II

In a real sense the first three Books of *Savitri* tell us a lot more about Sri Aurobindo than all the biographical details that are available. For example, there are questions like what was Sri Aurobindo doing for 40 long years in Pondicherry⁸ even after he had acquired most of the highest siddhis of traditional Yoga, such as the Nirvanic experience (acquired in Baroda) and the experience of the Immanent Divine (in Alipore jail), and the experience of dwelling in the Parabrahman (which he had soon after he settled down in Pondicherry)? Sri Aurobindo was emphatic in stating that no one really knew anything at all about his life "because it has not been on the surface for men to see." To a would-be biographer he once wrote "But why write my biography at all? Is it really necessary? In my view, a man's value does not depend on what he learns, or his position or fame, or what he does, but on what he is and inwardly becomes." (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26 opening material) Sri Aurobindo devoted most of his life to Yoga, he spent all the forty years of his life in Pondicherry in intense tapasya until his passing in 1950, and even his giving up the body was a yogic act of great significance to the future of mankind. To understand and appreciate Sri Aurobindo's greatness is given to very few because his one aim in life was the sheer surpassing of the human level, the continuous union with the Supreme Being and the manifestation of this Being in all the ways of our nature. Now it is all this that we see described in Aswapati's Yoga in *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo could not have written 326 pages devoted to a description of Aswapati's Yoga in any other way. For, the legend as narrated in the Vana Parva in Vyasa's *Mahabharata* did not contain any material which he could have used for this purpose. In Vyasa's story Aswapati was "a saintly king, devout and follower of the dharma", he lived in the company of the brahmins, and "he was united with the truth, and had conquered the senses". He was of a forgiving nature, truthful and had subdued the senses. But he had no issue and his advancing age increased his affliction greatly. "Therefore he resorted, with the concern of getting a child, to holy austere practices, only at fixed times he ate a little, and he observed continence, and restrained the senses fully. Daily a hundred thousand oblations he, the most excellent among the kings, offered to Savitri,⁹ and it was only in the sixth part of the day that he took a small quantity of food. Eighteen years passed this way, he being given to observances of such rules of penance, at the end of the eighteen-year period Savitri was much pleased with

him'' (The material within quotes in this paragraph, which is a translation of Vyasa's Sanskrit, is taken from R Y Deshpande, *Vyasa's Savitri*, 1996.)

This is all the description of Aswapati's penance that Vyasa gives—just 6 brief lines. In Sri Aurobindo's version, this part of Aswapati's Yoga¹⁰ (cantos 3, 4 and 5 of Book I and all the 15 cantos of Book II) is described in approximately 8700 lines. All this material, extensive enough to require 8700 lines, could not have come from the poet's imagination. Yogic experiences do not sound authentic that way. They can only be Sri Aurobindo's own yogic experiences. And Sri Aurobindo himself has said in this regard: "Savitri is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind." Again he has said in the same letter: "I have not anywhere in *Savitri* written anything for the sake of mere picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect, what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced." (*SABCL*, Vol 29, p 800) "Something seen, something felt or experienced", but by whom? Of course, by the poet, Sri Aurobindo himself.

This should enable us to see the dual significance of Aswapati's character. He is, of course, an important character in the legend of Savitri and Satyavan, but the importance he has in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is far greater because of the significance of his tapasya for the symbolism of this poem. In Vyasa's legend, Aswapati performed the arduous yajna *apatyotpādanārtham* (for the purpose of progeny), while in Sri Aurobindo's poem Aswapati's Yoga was meant to convey "the world's desire" to the Supreme and it is this that "compelled Savitri's mortal birth." Sri Aurobindo was interested in retelling the story of Savitri and Satyavan for the symbolic load he believed it was capable of bearing. For the purpose of the story, Aswapati is the King of Madra, the father of Savitri, who lived in the Puranic times. But why should we be interested in his story? Because he is also Sri Aurobindo, who lived in our century and, as his life and writings show, who "worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much" for mankind. Aswapati's Yoga then acquires for us a new significance; it is the story of Sri Aurobindo's quest and this is what makes *Savitri* an epic for the modern man which addresses primarily our concerns and our existential angst.

I am not using the word 'modern' here to characterise any span of time but a stage in human evolution. Man has achieved the highest and the best that mental consciousness can give and yet finds himself unfulfilled and still confronting the age-old problems of death, suffering, inadequacy and ignorance. We still keep hoping that changes in our political, social and economic institutions will eradicate all the inadequacies of our individual and collective life. History has shown us clearly that, in fact, it is the inner limits to our consciousness that translate themselves as inequality, corruption and exploitation in our social, economic and political life and as arms race, war, terrorism, and as economic aggression in the relationship among nations. Many have been the prophets and sages, revolutionary thinkers and economic reformers who have tried to change this situation and bring fulfilment to man and perfection to his life. And yet they have all failed and each time the nature of the excuse given for the failure

is different, which has made many observers of the human scene such as Arthur Koestler (*Janus*, 1978) and Konrad Lorenz (*The Waning of Humaneness* 1987) declare that humanity is a doomed species without any future. *Savitri* was born out of Sri Aurobindo's concern for mankind and its future, it delineates the precise nature of the crisis mankind is facing and shows the way to resolve it. No other epic in human history has dealt with a theme as vast and as grand as this, and the epic is precisely the literary form best suited to handle such a theme. Thus, the Vedic myth of the Savitri story earns a new lease of life in Sri Aurobindo's epic and becomes the symbol of the evolutionary saga which has reached a critical stage in our times.

But Sri Aurobindo makes Aswapati our contemporary without making modernity intrude into this Puranic tale in too obtrusive a manner. For one thing the poet has kept the details of the local colour to a minimum. We learn from the first three Books of *Savitri* a lot about Aswapati's inner life, his aspirations and his gradual evolution, but nothing or next to nothing about his external life, about how he lived his life. For example, an anthropologist wanting to reconstruct life in Aswapati's times will be able to gather very little material for such a study from Part I of *Savitri*. What modernity there is belongs to the narrator's language; he uses modern, 20th-century English. For example, in the following lines he makes use of the words belonging to the printing trade:

Then in Illusion's occult factory
 And in the Inconscient's magic printing-house
 Torn were the formats of the primal Night
 And shattered the stereotypes of Ignorance
(*Savitri*, p 231)

The word "television" occurs twice in the poem:

As through a magic television's glass
 Outlined to some magnifying inner eye
 They shone like images thrown from a far scene
 Too high and glad for mortal lids to seize
(*Ibid*, p 119)

And again,

Impure, sadistic, with grimacing mouths,
 Grey foul inventions gruesome and macabre
 Came televised from the gulfs of Night
(*Ibid*, p 212)

All these words are a part of the common vocabulary of modern English, and so are words like "protozoa", "gene" and "cell" found on page 518. As I said above, the

use of such words does not affect the local colour of the Puranic times. They are seen as belonging to the language of the narrator of the story.

Savitri is much more modern in its thought structure as I have stated above. Thus, for example, most modern philosophies figure in the long debate the God of Death has with Savitri in Part III of the poem. The triumph and frustrations which modern science and technology have brought to man figure in many places in Part III. Canto Five of Book II (pages 158 to 172) tells us the story of the evolutionary progress of man on earth. The triumphs and limitations of the Physical mind, Vital mind and Rational mind are recounted in Canto 10 of Book II. The Aswapati who stands before the Supreme Mother as a supplicant is no mere Puranic King, he is the representative of modern man, as Sri Aurobindo himself was, in the following respect. He knew what modern science and technology as well as ancient religions and spirituality had to offer to mankind and He yet found them inadequate. He was tired of listening to the passing feet of gods, and had seen all revolutions, including the Communist Revolution and the French Revolution, ending in frustration. And yet most of this is suggested and not overtly articulated. And finally, when Aswapati concludes his prayer to the Supreme Mother, he does so in words which could have been used by a king of the Puranic age.

Mission to earth some living form of thee.
 One moment fill with thy eternity,
 Let thy infinity in one body live,
 All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
 All-Love throb single in one human heart . .
 Let a great word be spoken from the heights
 And one great act unlock the doors of Fate.

(*Savitri*, p 345)

This then is the nature of the modernity of *Savitri*

III

Basically Sri Aurobindo in his epic poem adheres very closely to the Savitri storyline as found in the *Mahabharata* legend. We have already seen that Vyasa's Aswapati performed a rigorous sacrifice for 18 years, and the purpose of this austerity was to get a child. As described by Vyasa this sacrifice entailed performing certain rites like offering daily a hundred thousand oblations into the sacrificial fire with the chanting of the appropriate mantras, and observing certain holy austerities like maintaining continence and restraining the senses fully and eating a little and that too in the sixth part of the day. In Sri Aurobindo's poem, this gets transformed into Aswapati's Yoga. This too is a sacrifice but in the spiritual sense, the offering of oneself, one's being, mind, heart, body, will, life, actions to the Divine so that one attains union with the Divine. Yoga generally means getting into a consciousness in which one is no longer

limited by the small ego, the personal mind, vital and body but is in union with the supreme Self or the universal consciousness. We find in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* two instances of this transformation of a ritualistic sacrifice into a spiritual Yoga—Aswapati's Yoga, and Savitri's Yoga. In Vyasa's story, when Savitri finds that the day of doom foretold by Narad was close at hand, she undertakes the severe *trirātra* vow (of standing night and day at one single place, without taking food, for three days and nights.) In Sri Aurobindo's poem, this is transformed into Savitri's Yoga and occupies the whole of Book VII consisting of nearly 100 pages.

This transformation of sacrifice into Yoga is characteristic of the transformation the Savitri legend undergoes in the hands of Sri Aurobindo. Performance of sacrifices and observance of vows are a part of popular Hindu religious practices. They generally have a deeper psychological and spiritual significance which becomes explicit in the concept of Yoga. The culture of India from time immemorial had a perception of the latent possibilities of man and it sought to realise them through various methods. This has meant an effort at self-development, self-unfoldment or self-realisation and has been called Yoga in this country. Yoga literally means a contact, union or identification with the highest, the largest and the widest, the Supreme Existence. This is the aim of Yoga, and the practices leading to it are also called Yoga. We have thus Hathayoga, Rajayoga, Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Karmayoga. Then there are also the Tantric Yogas which aimed not only at a union with the Supreme but also at a dynamisation of the normal human nature.

The Yoga that Sri Aurobindo developed marks a new departure from the traditional Yogas in some ways and is intimately related to contemporary life. It consciously embraces the total human situation and is collective in its objective although it is individuals who practise it. Furthermore, this Yoga is evolutionary in its basis. It regards evolution as primarily the evolution of consciousness, and affirms that so far, Matter, Life and Mind have been the stages traversed along the evolutionary route. There are other and higher levels of consciousness yet to be realised and the Supermind which will replace the present egoistic separateness of the human mind by a living sense of oneness, harmony and unity is the next stage of our evolutionary journey. This would need a heroic effort at self-exceeding and self-transformation. Thus Sri Aurobindo's Yoga aims not only at a union with the Supreme but also at transforming life in all its domains and parts. Such an integral transformation of life would also bring about a progressive change in collective life.

Aswapati's Yoga in *Savitri* is described in 22 cantos and falls into three parts. In the first part, which is described in cantos Three, Four and Five of Book One, Aswapati is achieving his own spiritual fulfilment as the individual. Aswapati's spiritual development consists of two parts, one a psycho-spiritual transformation described in Canto 3, and the other "a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power," described in Canto 5. Between these two cantos there is canto 4 in which we have a "description of the secret knowledge to which he is led and of which the results are described in the last canto." (Canto 5, Book I) In the second part of Aswapati's

Yoga, "he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness" and this is described in the 15 cantos of Book II. But this too is a victory limited to Aswapati alone. "Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and a new creation." That is described in the 4 cantos of Book III (*Savitri*, pp 773-74, Revised Edition, 1993)

This is the Triple Yoga of Aswapati, too vast a subject for us to deal with adequately here. Here, no more than a brief overview is attempted. Aswapati has a mighty task to perform—that of carrying the "world's desire" to the transcendental Supreme, of persuading the Supreme to take up the evolutionary work and bring it speedily to its destined fulfilment. This would entail sending to this earth a human embodiment of the Supreme, an Avatar, who will be the pathfinder and the pioneer. Savitri is intended to be such an Avatar. If all this has to come about, Aswapati has to undertake an arduous tapasya (askesis) and that too on a vast scale. He has to proceed from the Individual through the Universal to the Transcendental. This is Sri Aurobindo's conception of the Integral Divine. In a letter to one of his disciples, Sri Aurobindo once explained the objective of each aspect of this Triple Yoga as follows:

The aim of the yoga is to open the consciousness to the Divine and to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the inmost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and be in union with the Divine Knowledge, Will and Love. Secondly, to develop the yogic consciousness, i.e., to universalise the being in all the planes, become aware of the cosmic being and cosmic forces and be in union with the Divine on all the planes up to the overmind. Thirdly, to come into contact with the transcendent Divine beyond the overmind through the supramental consciousness, supramentalise the consciousness and the nature and make oneself an instrument for the realisation of the dynamic Divine Truth and its transforming descent into the earth-nature.

(*SABCL*, Vol 23, p. 509)

This gives us a broad map of Aswapati's Triple Yoga. The ordinary human nature lives in the Ignorance and does not know the Divine. The forces of our Nature weave a veil of ego and desire which conceals the Divine from us. The first stage of Yoga is therefore to get into the higher and deeper consciousness which knows and lives luminously in the Divine. This brings to us the realisation of the Individual Divine, the Master of our own being within us, whom we have to serve and whose will we have to learn to express in all our movements so that we may grow out of the ignorance into the Light. Until one has arisen above the ego, discarded the veil of the Ignorance, one cannot see the world objectively. Those who hope to help the world need to be able to see what exactly is the problem the world is suffering from.

There is a clear parallel to this, stage one of Aswapati's Yoga, in Sri Aurobindo's

Yoga As he himself has told us, he had turned to Yoga in the first instance because he believed that Yoga would give him the power and support he needed for his political action But as he progressed in his Yoga, his perspective of the world changed For one thing it was clear to his yogic insight that India was destined to get freedom. But then he began to see that real problems were going to begin for India only after she had won her freedom Furthermore, he saw that India's problems were only a particular manifestation of the difficulties that human nature was facing everywhere He found that everywhere human nature was caught in the shackles of ignorance and, so long as this situation continued, the solution of one problem would only give rise to another So the problem was not with India or with Indians alone but with humanity as a whole The human species was caught up in an evolutionary crisis No resource that the mental consciousness could provide was going to solve the problems created by this crisis

Where then was help to be sought? The stage in Yoga described above is generally followed by the realisation of the Cosmic Godhead. This, to be sure, is a very wide realisation because one loses in it all personal self and one becomes a mere channel of the universal Power and there is no personal or divinely individual consummation for the individual here. One can of course take a third step and shoot up to the transcendental realisation only, but then one loses there both oneself and the world in the transcendental Absolute This is the point Aswapati reaches in Book III, Canto 2, as he is about to take a plunge into the experience of Nirvana But Aswapati, we must remind ourselves, is Sri Aurobindo, who was not interested in losing either himself or the world in an experience, however beatific it might be His aim was not only to realise the Divine but also to manifest him in the world Therefore, while on the verge of Nirvana, Aswapati draws himself back with these words which will for ever ring in the corridors of human history

O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
 Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
 Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;
 But where hast thou thrown Self's mission and Self's power?
 On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?
 One was within thee who was self and world,
 What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?
 Escape brings not the victory and the crown!
 Something thou cam'st to do from the Unknown,
 But nothing is finished and the world goes on
 Because only half God's cosmic work is done
 Only the everlasting No has neared
 And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart
 But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,
 The passion and the beauty of the Bride,
 The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,

The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?
 This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life....
 A high and blank negation is not all,
 A huge extinction is not God's last word,
 Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,
 The meaning of this great mysterious world .
 To free the self is but one radiant pace,
 Here to fulfil himself was God's desire

(*Savitri*, pp 310-312)

What Aswapati needs for the purpose he has in mind, that of manifesting the Divine in the world, bringing perfection to terrestrial life, is to bring down a yet unmanifest power, namely, the supermind. This requires the harmonisation aimed at by this Triple Yoga, because, since this power is not yet manifest in the cosmic formula, he must bring it down from the unmanifest Transcendence. Therefore he needs to reach and realise the Transcendent Divine as well. Since he has to bring it down into the cosmic formula he must not only realise the Cosmic Divine but become conscious of the cosmic self and the cosmic forces. This is the purpose of his exploration of the various planes of consciousness, which is described in the 15 cantos of Book II. And this new power has to be fixed in the physical world and this can only be done through the Divine in the individual. And it is to this vast Yoga that Sri Aurobindo devoted the 40 long years in Pondicherry, in his "cave of tapasya"

MANGESH NADKARNI

Notes

- 1 The page numbers of *Savitri* given in this article refer to those in the Revised Edition of 1993
- 2 The only other character that appears in this part of the poem is the Divine Mother who participates in this story only in the last canto of Book III
- 3 It occurs in the possessive form—Aswapati's
- 4 The word "Aswapati" occurs eight times in the entire poem of 724 lines inclusive of its three occurrences in the possessive form
- 5 And yet the density of the occurrence of *he* and its morphological variants is not jarring, or unusually high, as can be seen from the following figures. The number of occurrences of each of these words in the 348 pages of Part I is as shown here, the figures in parentheses show the number of occurrences of each of these words in the whole book of 724 pages: *he* 585 (1090), *him* 137 (285), *himself* 40 (84), *his* 798 (1660)
- 6 For an illuminating comment on this quibble, see Amal Kiran (K D Sethna) in *Inspiration and Effort* (1995), pp 240-42
- 7 It was also included in the twelfth impression (1988) of the Third Edition
- 8 There is a continuing misunderstanding among several influential groups in India about this, they tend to think that Sri Aurobindo was too lost in some sort of mystic trance to be bothered about the country or mankind. Even Tagore tended to think this way until he was obliged to change his mind after he had a personal interview with him in 1928
- 9 *Savitri* here is the name of the Goddess to propitiate whom the austerities were undertaken by Aswapati
- 10 There is one more part to Aswapati's Yoga and that is the theme of Book III of *Savitri*

THE MOTHER AWAKES

(A free rendering of Sri Aurobindo's Bengali poem "Jagila Janani")

In the deeps of the night sleeps the world,
Lapped in darkness lies the earth,
The sky slumbers, stilled are the wrathful winds
Through the dense heart of darkness no stars shine
The birds sit, self-lost, self-wrapped
Drawing their wings across their eyes,
Heard is no footfall of beasts or men
And then the Mother awakes
With a mighty roar she awakes,
She opens wide her fiery eyes
Shining like two suns.
She awakes

When the Mother arises, no leaf stirs
Nor flickers the flame of the lamp
Burning dimly in the room
The streets are silent and empty,
Empty the fields and woods and hills,
Plunged is the heart of the world
In the deepest sleep
The singing seas break not laughing on the shore
The silent waters are stretched out, motionless, still
Why, then, does the Mother awake?
What sound is it or whose
Silent, yearning hymn in the night
Has brought forth her terrifying war cry?

When the Mother had fallen asleep
None had dared hope for Her awakening,
Yet out of the blind abysmal darkness
The heart, broken irredeemably by grief
And hopelessness and night,
Shivers into awareness at the fall of a leaf
The glorious, mighty, imperial Demoness
Cunning and proud and terrible
Had overwhelmed the earth,
Then suddenly the Mother roars,
Suddenly the Mother roars with the voice of a thousand oceans

Loud like a thunderbolt her cry
 Shatters the sleep of her sons

Was there not a heart awake that night,
 Racked by grief calling out to her?
 Ascetics there were, a few, orange-robed,
 Sitting in the temple, sword in hand
 Worshippers of Kali they were, the Mother of Might
 They sought in the night to wash the feet of their goddess
 With the redness of their own blood
 Therefore the Mother awakes
 With a mighty thirst awakes the wrathful Mother
 Her lion roar fills creation
 And the universe with her awakes

Loud laughter bursts from her mouth,
 Lightnings flash from her eyes
 Her rage flowers blood-red and terrible
 Swinging two Titan heads from her hands
 She sends forth her awful war-cry

Who art thou, in this dead of night
 Titan heads swinging from thy hands
 Who rains blood over the earth?
 Terrible art thou, O our Mother,
 As with eyes ablaze thou walkest
 Over the trembling soil of this land
 Thou callest aloud, "Arise, arise!"
 And thy mighty voice chases away
 All sweet indolence

Such is our Mother
 The eye of Death burns on her forehead
 She dances to the beat of clashing human skulls
 As she approaches
 "Arise, arise," the cry goes forth anew,
 Demons and gods and men respond
 Eagerly or with secret mutterings
 To my Mother

The eye of Death shines bright on her forehead
 As she comes dancing to the beat of the skulls

In the raging battle, swords clang, bodies clash
Fire rains down from deafened skies,
The fierce cry and crash shake the earth, burst the ears,
Swift streams of blood flow everywhere

When shall we really know the Mother?
Only when, with her oceanic roar and fiery breath
She wipes away the demon empire,
And the conquering laugh of the warlike Goddess approaches
Then shall we know the Mother,
When washed in flowing streams of blood,
She dances
Then surely shall we know it is She,
The Mother, stark awake

JHUMUR

N B The original Bengali poem appears in *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol 4, pp 24-26, April 1980 along with a translation by Nolini Kanta Gupta. The translation was reproduced in the September 1998 issue of Mother India —Editor

MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

TEXT, TRANSLATION AND NOTES

Text

आंमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं, भूतं भवद् भविष्यदिति
सर्वमोङ्कार एव । यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योङ्कार एव ॥१॥

सर्वं ह्येतद् ब्रह्म, अयमात्मा ब्रह्म, सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥२॥

जागरितस्थानो बहिष्प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः स्थूलभुग् वैश्वानरः प्रथमः पादः ॥३॥

स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तःप्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः प्रविविक्तभुक् तैजसोः द्वितीयः पादः ॥४॥

यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते, न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति, तत् सुषुप्तम् ।
सुषुप्तस्थानः एकीभूतः प्रज्ञानघनः एवानन्दमयो ह्यानन्दभुक् चेतोमुखः प्राज्ञस्तृतीयः पादः ॥५॥

एष सर्वेश्वर एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष योनिः सर्वस्य प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम् ॥६॥

नान्तःप्रज्ञः न बहिष्प्रज्ञः नोभयतः प्रज्ञः न प्रज्ञानघनः प्रज्ञः नाप्रज्ञम् ।
अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं
प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते स आत्मा स विज्ञेयः ॥७॥

सोऽयमात्माध्यक्षरमोङ्कारोऽधिमात्रः पादा मात्रा मात्राश्च पादा अकार उकारो मकार इति ॥८॥

जागरितस्थानो वैश्वानरोऽकारः प्रथमा मात्रा, आप्तेरादिमत्त्वाद् वा,
वा, आप्नोति ह वै सर्वान् कामानादिश्च भवति य एव वेद ॥९॥

स्वप्नस्थानस्तैजसः उकारो द्वितीया मात्रा, उत्कर्षादुभयत्वाद् वा,
उत्कर्षति ह वै ज्ञानसन्ततिः समानश्च भवति, नास्याब्रह्मवित् कुले भवति य एव वेद ॥१०॥

सुषुप्तस्थानः प्राज्ञो मकारस्तृतीया मात्रा, मितेरपीतेर्वा, मिनोति ह
वा इदं सर्वमपीतिश्च भवति य एव वेद ॥११॥

अमात्रश्चतुर्थोऽव्यवहार्यः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवोऽद्वैत एवमोङ्कार आत्मैव,
सविशत्वात्मनात्मानं य एव वेद य एव वेद ॥१२॥

Translation

I *Basic Definitions*

- 1 This is the exposition of OM, the Imperishable and the Word, which is all this ¹ All that was, all that is, all that will be is OM All else that exists beyond Time is also OM ²
2. All this is verily Brahman and the Brahman is this Self This Self is fourfold.³

II *The Fourfold Self*

3 The first quarter is Vaishvanara who is the object of the wakefulness⁴ and who is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed ⁵ He is the knower of the external world and the enjoyer of the gross objects ⁶ He is the first

4 The second quarter is Taijasa who is the object of the dream⁷ and who is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed ⁸ He is the knower of the internal world and the enjoyer of the subtle objects⁹ He is the second

5 Deep sleep is without any desire and without any dream The third quarter is Prajna who is the object of the deep sleep ¹⁰ He is born from the One He is a mass of conceptive forms founded upon knowledge.¹¹ A being of Delight,¹² he enjoys the delight of possessing all in their original conceptive forms and of bringing to fruition their natural impulse for manifestation in subtle and gross objects In fulfilment of the urge inherent in these forms, his face is turned towards conscious Mind by which all are turned into perceived objects ¹³ He is the third

6 This is the all-ruler, the all-knower, the inner Controller, for this is the source of all This is the origin and dissolution of all beings ¹⁴

7 Not inward knowledge, not outward knowledge, not knowledge which is both inward and outward, not knowledge which supports the mass of conceptive forms, not knowledge of any other description, not a void without knowledge,¹⁵ not seen by the eye, not subjected to any kind of action, not grasped by the sense-mind, not possessed of features, not thought by the thinking mind, not possessed of a name, the one Atman which holds in its knowledge all in their essence, and in its absolute tranquillity the power of world-manifestation and which is yet tranquil, blissful and non-dual—this the wise consider to be the fourth quarter ¹⁶ That is the Self, That is to be known ¹⁷

III *The Fourfold OM*

8 Taken as the Imperishable, OM is this Self, the fourth quarter, taken as the Word, the letters A U M are the three quarters of the Self and the three quarters are the three letters ¹⁸

9 Vaishvanara, who is the object of the wakefulness, is the first letter A, the letter which pervades the others and precedes them. He who knows thus, attains all desires and becomes foremost among men.¹⁹

10 Tajasa, who is the object of the dream, is the second letter U, the letter which increases and equalises. He who knows thus, increases the bounds of knowledge and rises above the level of difference. In his family none who is not a knower of the Vedas is born.²⁰

11 Prajna, who is the object of the deep sleep, is the third letter M, the letter which represents a measure or a state of absorption. He who knows thus, measures all events by his life and absorbs them as the appropriate results of using such a measure.²¹

12 Letterless is the fourth quarter of the Self which is not subjected to any kind of action.²² Yet it holds the power of world-manifestation in its absolute tranquillity and continues to maintain its blissfulness and non-duality.²³ Thus is the letterless OM. He who knows thus, becomes the very Self²⁴ and with this Self makes a perfect entry into the Self.²⁵

Notes

1 OM is significantly called Aksharam. Aksharam stands for both the symbol and the thing symbolised. As the symbol, it is the sacred Word of the Vedas, OM; as the thing symbolised, it is the Imperishable Brahman.

2 The world is a triple becoming in Time as well as the eternal Being beyond Time which thus triply becomes. OM is therefore the manifest world as well as the eternal Being beyond the world.

3 All this is the fourfold OM. OM is Brahman and the Brahman is this Atman. Therefore this Atman is fourfold.

The definition that the Self is fourfold implies that it must be considered as such and not otherwise under any circumstance. It has been designed as the central key to all that appears to be difficult for comprehension. With this a right and proper understanding of the Upanishad is ensured. More importantly, the fourfold Atman represents the essence of the Mandukya Upanishad.

4 Vishva is the object of the wakefulness, because during the waking condition the object of the ignorant soul is none other than His world. He is the lord of the external world who is aware of all gross objects and controls them through his all-pervading Mind. Unlike him, the waking soul is limited. It is not the lord of the external world. Nor can it know the whole world, much less control it or possess the power of all-pervading Mind. Therefore it is wrong to identify the waking soul with Vishva.

5. Vishva is said to be seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed, the exact significance of which is not known. However, one thing is certain; they refer to the powers of the all-pervading Mind by which gross objects are projected and enjoyed.

6. The word *prajñah* means a knower, a wise person. It is always applied to one who has discrimination and clear knowledge, not to one who is devoid of discrimination and confused in his understanding. Here it denotes one who knows and sees according to truth. The word *bahis-prajñah* denotes one who knows and projects the external world according to truth, the truth derived from Tājasa. When he enjoys the gross objects of the world, he does not fall into bondage, because his enjoyment is the result of true knowledge.

7. Tājasa is the object of the dream, because during dream the object of the ignorant soul is none other than His world. He is the lord of the internal world who is aware of all subtle objects and controls them through his illumined Mind. Unlike him, the soul in dream state is limited. It is not the lord of the internal world, much less knows the whole world and controls it or possesses the power of the illumined Mind. Therefore it is wrong to think that Tājasa and the soul are identical.

8. See note 5 above. Here “the powers of the illumined Mind” is to be substituted for “the powers of the all-pervading Mind”.

9. The words *antah-prajñah* and *pravivikta-bhuk* are to be understood on the same lines as in note 6 above. The first word refers to one who knows and projects the internal world according to truth, the truth derived from Prajna.

10. During deep sleep the ignorant soul catches a glimpse of the world of Prajna. Even though its knowledge is limited to a glimpse the soul’s object during deep sleep is none other than His world. Hence He is the object of the deep sleep. The soul in deep sleep is entirely unlike Prajna (see note 11 below). Hence it is wrong to equate him with this soul and treat him as having gone into deep slumber which is a state of oblivion and unconsciousness.

11. Prajna is born of the One, *ekibhūtah*. But his birth is not a fall from the knowledge of the One, for the principle of the Many he represents is the truth of the One, the eternal principle founded upon the all-originating Atman. The word *ghana* refers to the mass of conceptive forms from which subtle and gross objects arise. Embodying the principle of the Many in himself, Prajna is indeed the mass of conceptive forms. *ghana eva*. He is *prajñāna-ghana* because he is the mass of conceptive forms founded upon the knowledge of the One. There is nothing in the text to suggest that Prajna is in a state of total oblivion, not knowing either his own self or others, as is made out by Gaudapada (1-12) *na ātmānam na parāmscaiva...prājñah kiñcana saṁvetti*. If he were in that state, then the seer of the Upanishad would not have called him *prājña* (possessor of all-wise intelligence).

12 Since Prajna's appearance out of the One does not separate him from the One and since he is in possession of the knowledge of oneness, he is full of delight, the delight natural to the One, *ānandamayah*

13. By their very nature conceptive forms are driven to fulfil themselves as subtle and gross objects, even as a seed is impelled to do so as a plant and a tree Hence the face of Prajna is turned towards conscious Mind, *cetomukha*, by which both Tajasa and Vishva perceive their objects

The Upanishad, in obedience to its central teaching, is very particular about affirming that in the fourfold Atman all its steps are integrated and form a harmonious whole. Already it has emphasised the harmony between the one Atman and Prajna by describing the latter as the child of the One, *ekibhūtah* Now it proceeds to bring out the harmony between Prajna and the other two, namely, Tajasa and Vishva.

Prajna represents not so much a negation of Tajasa and Vishva as an affirmation of their true essence preserved in the Ghana, his conceptive forms, otherwise nothing can originate from him, much less the subtle and gross objects. Hence he is very aptly described as the ultimate source of all, *yonih sarvasya* Just as Prajna is derived from the One, so too are Tajasa and Vishva derived from Prajna. Prajna's face is eternally turned towards the two because they are his self-extensions representing the perfect fulfilment of his original conceptive forms He is Anandabhuk both in possessing and manifesting the conceptive forms

14 Prajna, being the ultimate source of all, *yonih*, is extended in both Tajasa and Vishva. In order to bring out in vivid terms his integral relationship to them many epithets are applied to him in this mantra He is *sarveśvarah*, because he rules over the worlds of Tajasa and Vishva by being the lord of his conceptive forms. he is *sarvajñah*, because he knows the worlds by knowing his own world, he is *antaryāmī*, because he controls the worlds from within by being seated in the heart of each conceptive form, he is *prabhava apyayau bhūtānām*, because he is in possession of all the above epithets by being the very essence and origin of all beings. subtle and gross Prajna's epithets bring out not only his integral relationship to Tajasa and Vishva but also the fact that he possesses simultaneous relations with them

15 There are two lines in mantra 7 Both of them speak in similar terms The first line begins by denying all affirmed of the triply manifest Atman in the previous mantras—not inward knowledge (mantra 4), not outward knowledge (mantra 3), not knowledge which is both inward and outward (mantras 4 and 3), not knowledge which supports the mass of conceptive forms (mantra 5), not knowledge of any other description (mantra 6) Then the line closes with a remarkable expression *na aprajñam* (not a void without knowledge) If the Fourth, *caturtham*, is not a void but a supreme Knowledge, then we have to put into all the earlier denials a qualified sense. Now the line does not really aim at an unqualified denial of the definitions Its aim is merely to deny that the supreme Knowledge in view is limited by any or all of those definitions. It

is therefore wrong to interpret the line to imply that the Fourth is to be attained by eliminating all the definitions as false, *māyāmātra* (Gaudapada, 1-17). Such is the real significance of the expression *na aprajñam*

16 If we take the clue provided by *na aprajñam*, the Fourth described in the second line exceeds all and does not deny them as its real expressions—*drstam, vyavahāryam, grāhyam, laksanam, cintayam, vyapadeśyam* If it thus exceeds all and is not limited by any of them, then it must be the very source of all, the one Self which holds in its knowledge the essence of all things, *ekātma-pratyaya-sāram*, and in its absolute tranquillity the power of world-manifestation, *prapañca-upaśamam* * However, by possessing the essence of the world or the power of world-manifestation the Self does not fall from its tranquillity and bliss or from its oneness For it is eternally tranquil, blissful and non-dual In short, since the Self is one and does not deny the forms of the world, it is necessarily the supreme source from which they come into manifestation

17 A true knowledge of the Self is not possible through negations or affirmations, for in either case the knowledge is incomplete A complete knowledge of It is possible only through both negations and affirmations That is the Self the ancient sages had known, that indeed is the Self to be known by us also, *sa ātmā sa vijñeyah* The words *sa ātmā sa vijñeyah* admit of another interpretation also That which is necessary for the attainment of the fourfold Self is the one Self, *sa ātmā* Hence that Self is to be known, *sa vijñeyah*.

18 A perfect correlation between the symbol and the symbolised is here established Just as the Imperishable Self has four parts, the Word also is shown to be of four parts—A U M and the letterless OM This brings out the idea already implied in the opening mantras of the Upanishad

19, 20, 21. Mantras 9 to 11 deal with the results of knowing the Self as it appears in the first three quarters In each case the ascending soul develops a certain likeness to the Self, but in no case is it able to realise oneness with the Self As a result, it does not possess the necessary qualification for realising the fourfold Atman, *caturvidhātma-siddhi*.

22 The letterless OM is the fourth quarter Just as the letterless Word is not bound by the letters A U M, so also the Imperishable Self is not bound by the manifold work of manifesting the world, *avyavahāryah* The work of manifestation is triply done through Prajna, Tajasa and Vishva which are a triple becoming of the Self Be it a triple mode of manifestation or a triple becoming of the original existence, they are works But the Self is unbound by them, because It is eternally greater than its works

* Literally, *prapañca-upaśamam* means world manifestation together with tranquillity

23 Since the Imperishable Self does not deny the work of manifestation but limitation by its work, it is the very source from which the immense work proceeds, even as the letters A U M proceed from the letterless OM. In its absolute tranquillity is involved the power of world-manifestation, *prapañcopaśamaḥ*. But yet it never falls from its bliss or from its oneness. For it is eternally blissful and non-dual. Since this power is none other than the Self, the Self continues to be one and undivided even while holding the power, *ekātmā*

24 The Brihadaranyaka (1-4-7) speaks of two conditions of Atman. (i) one manifest in forms and works, *karma-nāmanyeva*; (ii) another with which forms and works have become one, *sarva ekam bhavanti*. If a person tries to know Atman through any of the forms and works, he cannot know it, *na sa veda*. For it is incomplete there, not known in its fullness, *akrtsnah*. On the contrary, if he knows Atman with which all forms and works have become one, he knows it. For it is known in its entirety, *krtsnah*. With this Atman he knows everything else, *anena hy etat sarvam veda*. In other words, the manifest Atman is known only through the eternal Atman beyond manifestation.

This explains why in the Mandukya the soul ascending the three steps of Atman possesses a mere likeness of Atman and not Atman in its essential nature, *svarūpa*. When the soul crosses beyond the manifest forms and reaches the Fourth, it is in possession of the essential nature and becomes verily Atman, *ātmaiva . ya evam veda*

25 The soul's aim does not come to an end when it becomes Atman, though it is very necessary for realising its real aim. It is only a means for another more important realisation. It is not enough if it sees Atman beyond the bounds of time, *trikālātītam*, it must also see the Atman as the Atman sees Itself—to be beyond time as well as within the bounds of time, to be possessed of all its four quarters, *catuspāt*. This perfectly agrees with the teaching of the Brihadaranyaka (1-4-7) that having known the real Atman, all else must be known through this knowledge, *anena veda*

In this mantra, as was already pointed out, the eternal and imperishable Atman is described as the very foundation of the world (see notes 16 and 23). Possessed as it is of this supreme knowledge of Atman (see note 24), the liberated soul conquers the Atman triply manifest in the world, *ātmanā ātmanam*. Hence its goal is self-conquest, not self-extinction.

Its conquest is so perfect and absolute that no part of the triple Atman remains unpervaded by the eternal Atman, *samviśati*. It now realises that it is reproducing in its fourfold Atman the perfect self-extension eternally accomplished in Brahman, *sarvam hi etad brahma ayam ātmā brahma*. Such is the grand result of knowing the eternal Atman, the letterless OM *

N JAYASHANMUKHAM

* K D Sethna's *Mandukya Upanishad* (1995) is a pointer to the need for breaking away from the tradition of Gaudapada and looking at the Upanishad from its own point of view. His is perhaps the first attempt to view the Upanishad in the original light of Vedanta.

NOW

How does one live in the now? What are the ups and downs, is it a straight road to a delightful living?

“Start living in the now Start loving instead of bothering about whether to live or escape ” It was Amal who gave this advice in one of his letters published in *Mother India*—an advice, which has been given, again and again, by countless thinkers over the ages as the essence of the art of living It is the way to get out of the revolt of life, miseries more often than not created by the mind, nurtured by the vital being frustrated of its desires, and used by Nature to prod man forward. Living in the ‘now’ is the way to progress happily and swim forward consciously in the stream of the ever moving time instead of being “borne helplessly forward clinging to the old that disintegrates in spite of our efforts and shrieking frantically to the dead ghosts and dissolving fragments of the past to save us alive ”¹ What can be more pitiable?

Gradually, my own reflections and those of others spell out for me the various reasons why to live in the now is the key to live life fully It is the key to the doors of wisdom and beauty and progress while living life with all its vicissitudes Practice of the magic formula so often reiterated and explained in *Mother India* by its Editor in Chief, “Remember and Offer”, makes it easier to live in the now

There are many reasons why living in the now or the present becomes a wise and real living Which reason appeals depends on one’s life situation The mental man of today has to know before he can decide to act

We all know that death is unpredictable But it is only when we recognise that death comes without asking our permission, without even any warning, that we understand that THIS MOMENT, whatever its time span, could be the last, and our last chance to really LIVE it IS NOW

When we see how much of the present is occupied by the thoughts of the past and the expectations of the future, we do realise how much we waste, adulterate, shrink, and veil the present And why we are unable to enjoy the present

It is often in retrospect that we recognise in the immediate past the wonderful gifts we constantly receive from our Lord, gifts we could not then see because of blinkers of the past, gifts we could not relish and enjoy because our mind was occupied by the expectations of the future. We see the gifts come and go like the passage of beautiful models in a fashion parade in front of blind eyes We know somewhere within, strongly, that

The present is an ever-blooming rose,
The ever-free bird, a freshness
Unsullied by the past,
A beacon not darkened by shadows cast
By dreams from the future

We start practising living in the present, refusing to be bothered by who or what is coming tomorrow and by the guilt of what we did yesterday. Often we come across situations and life-encounters that remind us of our losses, our mistakes and regrets and guilt. We do not get out of these situations or visions or writings or scenes on the screen but we allow our past to cling to us. Instead of laughing at them, or switching off the television, closing the book or magazine, we indulge in that nostalgia, in the aches and pains which like some cuisine from Andhra Pradesh—full of chillis and spices—titillate our palate by its pungency and poignancy. We like these swings. At the same time something within us recognises these situations as disturbing to our peace and adversely affecting our relationships. We then resolve to live more in the present. When we do, we find a rhythm in this ‘living in the now’.

It has a rhythm, this living in the present
 That varies as silence and joy meet,
 Unite and part, creating each time
 A new melody,
 Sweet and full of joy in union,
 Haunting and melancholic at parting,
 Mixed as it is with many thrills
 Of past delight and pains
 And future hopes and dreads
 When the yesterdays and tomorrows
 Usurp for a time
 Today's throne.

One persists, again and again, in living in the present. For somewhere in our depths there is a conviction that this is the way really to live and enjoy each gift of the Omnipresent and share it.

Gradually the ghosts of the past and the dark fairies and ghouls of the future withdraw exhausted. More and more we then live and love in the ever changing delights of the present, ever new gifts from the Divine, ever new challenges from the creation which as if renews and recurs but is ever new each moment.

The past is neither the present nor a mirage, it is a record to refer to and learn from. The past is a script often misread and needs revision at leisure and in tranquillity again and again. Later a study of the would-have-beens slowly bakes the bricks that we can use to build the future, to manifest the present in the ever moving today.

The future is neither hope that goes up in smoke or dreams that only partially manifest. The future is tomorrow's present made and packed by the Divine and us together, by our will becoming similar to and later one with the Divine Will. Then every next moment is a revelation, yet one more gift given to us and to be enjoyed after offering it back at Her feet.

About the now or the present Sri Aurobindo says ‘. the present [is] a horizontal

and constantly shifting line without breadth between a vast realised infinity that both holds back and impels and a vast unrealised infinity that both repels and attracts''² It is easy to understand that the past is a drag, a baggage we carry refusing to believe that it is often garbage. Often it is amorphous garbage where the form is destroyed, forms that had to go, but the essence remains, to be recycled and reused or allowed to decay and spread its stink and illness potential. That essence lives veiled in the present and lives on in the future.

It is the force in a man's past that gives him the courage to face the unknown in the future. It is this feeling about the unknown in the future that we naturally shrink from, that repels us. It is also the possibility of the wonderful and life-fulfilling in the future that attracts.

What is the true approach, the attitude to living in this world movement of past, present and future? Sri Aurobindo says that the true thinker

will strive to see this great divine movement as a whole, to know in its large lines the divine intention and goal in it without seeking to fix arbitrarily its details; he will strive to understand the greatness and profound meaning of the past without attaching himself to its forms, for he knows that forms must change and only the formless endures and that the past can never be repeated, but only its essence preserved, its power, its soul of good and its massed impulse towards a greater self-fulfilment, he will accept the actual realisations of the present as a stage and nothing more, keenly appreciating its defects, self-satisfied errors, presumptuous pretensions because these are the chief enemies of progress, but not ignoring the truth and good that it has gained, and he will sound the future to understand what the divine in it is seeking to realise, not only at the present moment, not only in the next generation, but beyond, and for that he will speak, strive, if need be battle, since battle is the method still used by Nature in humanity, even when all the while he knows that there is more yet beyond beside which, when it comes to light, the truth he has seized will seem erroneous and limited. Therefore he will act without presumption and egoism, knowing that his own errors and those which he combats are alike necessary forces in that labour and movement of human life towards the growing Truth and Good by which there increases shadowily the figure of a far-off divine Ideal.³

Let us live and love in the 'now' seeking the Divine in every moment, in every movement of life

DINKAR D PALANDE

THE LEGEND OF SAVITRI WITH SOME DEPARTURES MADE BY SRI AUROBINDO

Part I: Introduction

THE story of Savitri is an ancient story. Perhaps it belongs to the early Vedic times. Perhaps it may go back even to a yet deeper past. It is both myth and pre-history. Its character is occult and its contents are spiritual. Given as a human tale the story has several connotations and is loaded with supernatural significance. In fact, its symbolic nature is quite suggestive of the issue involved in this mortal creation, *mrityuloka*, the creation to which we belong. The issue is of divine manifestation in an evolutionary way, evolution that has its immediate beginning in Inconscience.

Ours is not a typical world. A typical world is a world of fixed forms and possibilities,—as is, for instance, the world of the gods. The world of the great gods, the Overmind world, is no doubt splendid, but it stays as it is, is tied to its own kind. From it no other aspects of the multifold Transcendent can emerge, no change or progress is possible in it. In fact, if the gods should wish to get out of it and go to higher worlds, make progress, they must be willing and prepared to be born in the mortal world. In that sense this world of ours, this earth, is unique, it is a place where progress is continuous and interminable.

The story of Savitri has such an occult basis as its background and therefore it distinctly foresees the prospects of enlarging consciousness in the splendour of love, beauty, joy, knowledge, power, sweetness, harmony, the creative working of the Truth-Idea in the richly effulgent and ever-growing dimensions of the Infinite. Though not expressly stated so, the suggestions in the story are unmistakable.

There is a long spiritual tradition which carries in its experience the esoteric sense purported by the story. That it has occult-mystical bearings is pretty obvious from its very tone. Actually this implied meaning is written on its face in bright and bold characters. It is perhaps for this reason that its essential core has endured the long passage of time.

But thick coats of unregenerate times have also accumulated over it. The living spirit of the story has got buried under the dense layers of ethical-moralistic ideas and notions. Sri Aurobindo himself says that originally the Mahabharata story was symbolic, but later it became socio-religious. Now the story is narrated to project Savitri as a role-model of an ideal woman, with fidelity in conjugal relations as its chief and foremost concern.

The Savitri-tale appears early in the Mahabharata, in the third of the 18 parts of the monumental work. It is placed in the Vana Parva and is called Savitri Upakhyana, a Minor Episode in the Book of the Forest. It has also a subtitle, Pativrata Mahatmya, indicating the nature of the story. The Sanskrit word *mahātmya* means greatness, grandeur, glory, majesty, it also means a narration of heroic or marvellous deeds, a legend, a romance, an epic. We may quite justifiably say that the Upakhyana is both it

is a noble mini-epic. It describes in great and dignified style the marvellous deeds of a married woman who is faithful and chaste, who observes virtuous rites and rituals, performs diligently the acts of ascetic sacrifices and offerings. Indeed, such a *pativrata* sees the very presence of divinity in her husband. The story is thus significantly charged with the resplendent and creative dynamism of the Dharma, the path of active and living Righteousness. The word dharma has the sense of the inner law of conduct natural to one's soul and one's spiritual build-up, one's *swabhāva*. It promotes superior and richer values, gracious merits which the soul cherishes and carries with itself from life to life. That is the true basis of the Upakhyana.

When did Vyasa compose his Savitri-story? Sri Aurobindo remarks that it belongs to the poet's early days, still fresh "with the glow of the youth and grace over it". It looks as though the later compilers of the Mahabharata neatly incorporated the tale in the main sequel of the Great Epic. It does certainly fit in very well in one of the story-sessions we have in the Book of the Forest when the Pandavas stayed as exiles in the woods.

The metre in which the poem is composed is mostly Anustubha and there are exactly 300 shlokas or 600 hemistichs covering the entire story. A shloka is an unrhymed Sanskrit couplet, of 32 syllables in 4 equal divisions, and is the most common form used for a narrative. Vyasa's recitation of Savitri in this metre moves forward with epic grace and swiftness, rushing from event to event with confident ease. Divided in seven sections, the little heroic poem has metrical power to win back the Word of Truth from the inconsiderate and suffocating darkness of Death.

Savitri the Princess of Madra is of course the most important character in the story. The other persons present are Savitri's parents Aswapati and Malavi, then, there is the heavenly sage Narad who pays a purposeful visit to Aswapati at a most crucial juncture in the life of Savitri. This happens when she is about to disclose to her parents her choice of marrying Satyavan, Satyavan, his mother Shalbya and blind father Dyumatsena, once the ruler of the Shalwa country, are staying as exiles in the forest. In the forest there are sages and learned ascetics engaged in holy spiritual practices, one prominent and well-respected among them being the sage Gautama. Yama or the God of Death is at once frightful-dark and kind-gracious in the benignity of the Upholder of the Order of the Worlds. Princess Savitri's own birth was in response to Aswapati's prayer to the goddess Savitri who incarnated herself as his daughter in fulfilment of the exceptional boon granted to him, through her, by the Creator-Father Brahma himself. A cosmic-transcendental dimension is thus already set in the story narrated as a simple human tale belonging to early times.

The Pandavas have lost the game of dice and have been ordered to live for twelve years in a forest. This is to be followed by one year of living incognito. It is towards the end of this twelve-year period that Rishi Markandeya visits the Pandavas again and in response to the query of Yudhishtira narrates to him the story of Savitri.

Yudhishtira's puzzlement is simple. He knows that noble Draupadi, the common wife of the five Pandavas, is chaste and virtuous,—born as she was in the purity of the

sacrificial flame. Yet in life she is seen to face most difficult hardships and suffer humiliation at the hand of the evil-minded. Virtue always seems to be helpless against the harshness of life and is ever afflicted, as if it were incompatible with it. But the Rishi assures the desolate that, in the manner of Savitri, the disgraced shall, by her great womanly power, the power of chastity, prove to be a fortune-bringer to them. Savitri had suffered greatly for her husband's sake and won from Yama, the King-Father Lord himself, noble boons including the exceptional boon of winning back Satyavan's life. Through the Savitri-example which he prefers to give to Yudhishtira, Markandeya is actually holding out a splendid promise for the Pandavas. With this preliminary background begins the remarkable narration.

But does the story speak of the ideal of womanhood only in the context of building up a healthy society? Is such a woman just a desirable and genial archetype, a *beau idéal*? Has the whole concept been put forward particularly as an ethical self-righteous view to emphasise upon the laity and the common people to adopt and follow a fixed set of rules of conduct, a set of commandments to govern their daily life? In the face of life's severe contradictions, where often virtue not only goes unrewarded but seems to be punished, does it merely try to din into our ears the efficacy of the dharma in spite of these thousand evils which we have to encounter every day? Is the alleviation of grief and suffering the main intention behind the narration? Are the examples of Sita, Savitri, and Damayanti, proclaimed and upheld by Vivekananda even today, any more relevant, appropriate enough in the modern unavoidable circumstances? Are they secular in character?

But if Markandeya is a Rishi with high spiritual attainments and an immortal, *chiranjeeva*, it is quite inconceivable that he would come down to the level of the ordinary and provide such a superficial consolation to the afflicted who himself is a man of great accomplishments. Nor would the seer-poet indulge in this quick luxury to squander away his poetry on the routine and the common-place. If Savitri and Draupadi were born from the sacrificial flames, we must immediately recognise that in this secular garb we have in fact something deep, something that is luminously mysterious if not profoundly esoteric. The Savitri-tale is not a mere pious holy tale meant for the God-fearing and the credulous, for small minds, for young simple housewives, but is actually a strong effective symbol charged with the high potency of the supernatural, even that of the transcendental which is pressing forth to establish itself in this world of suffering and grief and death. Savitri herself was a highly proficient and skillful young woman, with the knowledge of both the worldly and the spiritual; she was a *tapasvini* of exceptional merit. This we ought to remember in understanding the text which is very terse and compact in its presentation. It is a Yogic-spiritual document indeed. It is a revelation.

Therefore looking at the Savitri-tale as a revelation will perhaps be the best way to profit from it. This knowledge in the tradition was always there in its background, but it had got lost in the course of time. Sri Aurobindo has renewed it, putting his own Yogic-spiritual power into it. He has put the fire of his own soul in its body and in its spirit.

We must bear in mind, and recognise, that the tale is an occult-spiritual tale involving cosmic powers and personalities with a concern for the evolutionary manifestation upon the earth. We should take the story accordingly, in the know of its occult connotation, which is suggestively clear from the intention and mode of its narration. Hence we may say that the characters in the story are much more than even some exceptional human figures, howsoever these human figures in their glorious proportions may appeal to us in their nobility and stature. They are more than that, they are incarnations.

If so we can well appreciate why Sri Aurobindo treats the Savitri-story both as a legend and as a symbol. No wonder also that his elaborate presentation of the theme in his epic should essentially focus itself on occult-supernatural actions and eventualities.

This may prove to be a great stumbling block to both the modern and the traditional sets of thinking. Modern man very often adjudges it as a narrative in some rarefied abstruse and obscure domain, with one steep rock of abstraction climbing to another, he starts wondering if anything is happening in any definite manner or all is simply a dubious play of words with high-sounding appellatives like Infinity, Eternity, Inconscience, Non-being, Void, Nature, Spirit, Matter, and so on. Frequently his charge is that, apart from the names of some Gods and Goddesses, there are only five proper names in the whole epic which runs to about twenty-four thousand lines: Satyavan, Savitri, Aswapati, Dyumatsena and Narad. The required support for thought and imagination, support in the form of characters of flesh and blood, is not available in this epic. The complaint is that the human framework is too thin for the story to remain even as a legend, the entire thrust being theoretic-metaphysical. Quite knowledgeable critics refuse even to call it a poem. But this is patently a limitation of the professionals who ought to come out of their academic preconceptions and allegiances. We have to be in tune at least with the intuitive perception and suggestiveness that the aesthesis of Savitri gives to us in rich and radiant plenty. Take an example. Aswapati the Yogi has explored the eighteen worlds of Consciousness, eighteen universal and transcendental *lokas*, in eighteen cantos of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, and found the true meaning of this Creation. He has now discovered the nature of the problem and the difficulty that stands in the way of a happy manifestation here in the fulfilment of this great and godly endeavour with which all began in Time. The exceptional Yogi has, after a long and arduous tapasya, gathered in his spirit that strength by which a totally new and effective process can be set into motion. It is then that he becomes the Lord of Life, becomes Aswapati. Ashwa, the Horse, is a Vedic symbol of Life-Energy, the Consciousness-Force in its defeatless dynamism. It is therefore very appropriate that the poet should have identified and named him only after his getting this most remarkable *siddhi*, the power by which he can shape the course of events. This takes about ten thousand lines of the epic and even then one at times gets an impression as if the poet was hurrying through.

In contrast to this the traditionalist has a tendency to see the Savitri-tale as a tale of a faithful and chaste woman, without recognising the fact that it is an episode of a very rare and singular spiritual personality who has met and triumphed over the God of

Death Vyasa was fully aware of the profound and mystical contents of the story and what he wrote with the élan of an inspired Rishi has the luminous power to lend to the legend symbolic and supernatural substance and meaning To an apparently household event taking place in the Vedic times he has given a measure of the cosmic-transcendent The Savitri-tale is much more than a dharmic illustration of holy and pious living meant for devout and faithful creatures. When Vyasa says that Aswapati engaged himself in the worship of Goddess Savitri for eighteen years, or that his radiant daughter was of gentle birth and virtuous, or was an adept in the Yoga of Meditation, was accomplished in scriptural and secular learning, or that Satyavan was such an ocean of noble qualities that Yama himself had to come to snatch his soul, then he as the narrator of a simple-looking tale has already spoken of many details of the science and philosophy of spiritual practices His language is compact and pointed, suggestive of every aspect of a deeper life lived in the splendour of the spirit. The traditional religious mind totally misses this aspect

It is with this background that we should read the ancient tale of Savitri as given to us by Vyasa and adapted by Sri Aurobindo for his epic bearing appropriately the name of its heroine Doing so, we begin to appreciate its sweet transformative power.

Part II: The Story

King Aswapati is an ardent follower of the dharma and is firmly established in the truth He rules over his kingdom with love and concern for its citizens He is a performer of Yajnas and keeps the holy company of the learned and the virtuous. But he is issueless With the passing of time, and with the advancing of his age, this causes him great affliction. Therefore, with the intention of getting a son, he engages himself in arduous tapasya He retires to a forest and for eighteen years worships goddess Savitri Observing the strictest rules of conduct and of worship, he offers every day a hundred thousand oblations to her

Pleased with his sincerity and devotion, the goddess emerges out of the sacrificial flames and grants him the boon of a daughter She assures him that she had approached Brahma the Creator himself and it is actually he who has bestowed this boon upon him She adds that a beautiful and effulgent daughter will be soon born to him, *kanyā tejasvini*.

Given as she was by Savitri, who was pleased by the Savitri-oblations, the father and the wise ones named her too Savitri [Note 1, p 284]

(shloka 1:24)

Fair and beautiful like the goddess Fortune Sri, the adorable princess soon grows into proper maidenhood She looks like a heavenly damsel, *devakanyā*, who has taken birth as Aswapati's daughter And, indeed, because of the beauty and fiery splendour of her

youth, no prince dares to approach her, extending his hand in marriage

Once on an auspicious day, *parvati*, at the turning of the lunar fortnight, Savitri takes a holy bath, goes to the temple, and offers prayers to the gods, and gives ritual oblations to Agni. The wise ones recite the hymns of benediction, *swasti-mantras* Worship done, she takes some flowers and a portion of food-offerings to the deities, *prasād*, and goes to give them to her father. She touches his feet in obeisance and, after giving him the flowers and *prasād*, stands respectfully with folded hands by his side.

Seeing his daughter grown to full youth, and beautiful like a goddess, *devarupini*, and yet unmarried, Aswapati is very much distressed. He tells her that she should go out in search of a young man of her choice to espouse, one endowed with qualities like her own. It is quite appropriate for her to do so, he explains, as none has come as a suitor asking for her hand. He also mentions to her that a father becomes open to reproach when, according to the dharma, he fails to give his daughter, of the right age, in marriage [Note 2, p 286]

Savitri sets out on her search and travels to different kingdoms and lands. On her way she visits palaces and holy places, and offers worship to the deities, also, she gives away great wealth to the learned. In the course of her journey, as she passes through the green wooded regions, she makes respectful obeisances to the sages and Rishis staying in the sacred hermitages [Note 3, p 286]

In the meanwhile on a particular day the revered sage Narad and king Aswapati are in council in the royal palace [Note 4, p 287]

About the same time, as if by coincidence, Savitri returns to her father's house. There she sees her father in the company of the heavenly sage. She, bright and graceful like a bride, bows down to them, touches their feet, and offers worshipping respects. Narad looks at her and immediately makes several inquiries about her. He asks Aswapati on what mission his daughter had gone, and why he has not yet given her in marriage. Aswapati explains to the sage that it was precisely with this intention that he sent her abroad, to find a suitable prince to marry, as none had come seeking her hand. He also surmises that she must be now returning after having successfully accomplished her mission. He asks her to recount the details of her journey and to reveal the name of the one whom she must have chosen for a husband.

Savitri narrates the sequence of her journey. She tells that she had gone to the far Shalwa country, once ruled by the noble and righteous king Dyumatsena. But, then, as fate would have it, he becomes blind. A neighbouring king, his past enemy, takes advantage of this situation and invades his kingdom. Dyumatsena is defeated and driven out. With his wife and child-son he retires to the forest and engages himself in tapasya. The child, named Satyavan, grows in the hermitage under the tutorship of the sages and Rishis of the forest. Savitri discloses that it is Satyavan whom she has chosen as her life's partner.

But Narad at once rings a note of alarm, even of deep regret. He tells Aswapati about the grave nature of the choice made by his daughter. It is a matter of serious concern that Savitri should have chosen Satyavan for a husband, he forewarns.

Alas! Savitri has, O King, done something accursed, that forebodes a great evil, unknowingly she has made the choice of Satyavan, taking him to be one of high merit.

(shloka 2:11)

True, born as he was of noble parents, he was named Satyavan, the Truthful. As a lad he was fond of painting, and drew figures of horses, and therefore he is also often called the Painter of Horses, Chitrashwa. Narad further says that Satyavan is bright like the sun, has a sharp intellect like that of Brihaspati, is munificent like Rantideva, the son of Sankriti, and like Yayati is exceedingly bounteous, in the manner of Shibi, the son of Ushinar, he is respectful to the learned and always speaks the truth, he is handsome like the moon and people often wonder whether he is one of the Ashwinkumars. He has mastered the senses and subdued passions, is a youth of heroic deeds, and is yet soft-natured and friendly to everybody. The forest sages are endeared to him and speak highly about his qualities. But, at Aswapati's insistence to know also if Satyavan has any defects, Narad tells him that there is one blemish, that one year after the marriage Satyavan is to die on that very day. Savitri's choice of Satyavan therefore becomes accursed.

Aswapati advises his daughter to proceed again on her quest. He tells her how nullified all his virtues and all his noble qualities stand, she should not, counsels he, accept what is blameworthy, particularly when made known well in time.

Savitri is, however, firm in her resolve. She asserts that it is her inner being who has actually made the choice. She further adds that that alone will govern her in every respect. It is the entire judge and authority for her, *pramānam me manastatah*, as Vyasa puts it. She argues that only once can the family wealth be divided between the brothers and not a second time, only once can a father give his daughter in marriage and not again, and once only does a philanthropist speak the word of charity and abide by it. It matters not for her if Satyavan has a long life or a short one, has virtuous qualities or is without them, because only once will she make her choice and not a second time. She elaborates her point by invoking a greater truth of the higher life.

By perception does one first come to a certain conclusion and then one holds it by speech, only afterwards is it put into action. That perception of mine for me is the one single authority here.

(shloka 2 28)

Savitri reiterates that this is exactly what she has done and firmly adheres to her choice.

Narad sees in Savitri's resolve a wholesome as well as profound and elevating sense of perception. He further recognises that she is determinedly treading the path of dharma from which none can take her away. Considering also that the qualities of Satyavan cannot be matched in anybody else, he recommends their marriage. He blesses them and wishes the marriage to proceed unhindered, without any ill-happening. [Note 5, p 287] Then

invoking propitious things of life, and good fortune for all, he leaves the Palace for his home in Paradise

(shloka 2 32)

Aswapati attends to the details of the marriage and proceeds to the forest-hermitage where presently lives Dyumatsena. Following the tradition of proposing a marriage, he requests Dyumatsena to accept Savitri as a bride for his son Satyavan. Dyumatsena is somewhat hesitant in the beginning and also has apprehension whether the young princess would adjust herself to the cloistral life and bear hardships. But Aswapati assuages his fears. Finally, Dyumatsena accepts the offer and the marriage is duly solemnised.

Satyavan is happy that in Savitri he has a beautiful wife with all the exquisite qualities of a high-born virgin; Savitri too is joyous that her heart's desire has been so well fulfilled.

(shloka 3 17)

The marriage-party leaves for Madra and Savitri adapts herself to the life of the hermitage. She looks after the physical needs of her parents-in-law, speaking always to them with a sense of humility and reverence. She also performs, with noble composure and grace, the various household routines, of attending to the kitchen-fire and using broom and jar. In a like manner, and always remaining calm and contented, employing soft and sweet language, mindful of her husband's wants and desires, in their public life and in their privacy, she keeps Satyavan happy. This way, and absorbed in tapasya, a lot of her time goes by.

But, within, the virtuous woman suffers greatly. With each rising sun, or while sleeping in the night, at every passing moment, she remembers Narad's words and feels the cruel day approaching closer. When she counts that only four days are left, and Satyavan will be living no more afterwards, she resolves to perform the three-night vow, *trivātra vrata*, of fasting and standing at one single place through the entire period [Note 6, p. 287]. Dyumatsena dissuades her from carrying out the difficult vow. Savitri, however, tells him that he need not have any apprehension in her fulfilling it. Remaining erect like a stick, without moving from the chosen spot, and without taking any food for three days Savitri, by the power of her strong will and a woman's strength to suffer, completes the vow.

On the fourth day, the destined day of Satyavan's death, she gets ready well before sunrise, and lights a bright fire, and makes offerings to the gods. [Note 7, p. 288]. Then she goes to the parents-in-law and to the various hermitages around and makes obeisances to the Rishis. They all bless her with auspicious things dear to a young devout wife. Savitri, accomplished as she is in the Yoga of Meditation, *dhyāna-yogaparāyanā*, wills in her heart for their blessings to come true. On returning to the cottage she sees Satyavan, with his axe on his shoulder, leaving for the forest, she halts

him and tells him that, on that particular day, she will accompany him to the forest. But he advises her to get the permission from his father Dyumatsena, recollecting the past one year, notes that ever since her father had left her in his charge never for anything did Savitri make any request to him. But then counselling Savitri not to be inattentive in duty, he permits her to go with Satyavan to the woods.

The young couple set out happily, hand in hand. Satyavan shows to Savitri the sacred rivers and trees laden with flowers. In the lovely and delightful forests, with the flocks of peacocks dancing there joyously, they hear all around a soft lyrical note of gladness. In that gladness Satyavan speaks to her in honey-sweet words.

And Savitri too, delighted by the beauty of the surroundings, and in the company of her lover, responds with equal sweetness. But she is constantly watching her husband in all his movements and does not allow him to go out of her sight. Remembering Narad's words, she knows that his life is now in hours and he will die with the arrival of the Time-Person, *kāla-purusa*. Within, she is in great agony all the while. Yet, accomplished in austerities as she is, and reckoning the swift-approaching fatal moment, she remains calm.

Satyavan, lustrous in his strength, collects a basketful of fruits with the help of Savitri. Then he starts cutting the firewood. He wants to complete the day's task quickly and spend the rest of the time with his beloved. But, due to overwork, he suddenly feels exhausted and begins perspiring profusely. He suffers from a severe headache, a pain in the limbs and an intense burning sensation in the heart. He lies down. Savitri immediately goes closer to him and takes his head in her lap. She knows that the foretold moment has arrived and that the *kāla-purusa* will soon appear.

Presently, Savitri sees a bright Person standing in front of her. He is luminous, is beautiful in his red attire, and is wearing a splendid crown over his head, it seems to her that the Sun-God himself has come there. His body though dark is lustrous in hue and through his red eyes he is looking steadily at Satyavan. He is carrying a noose in his hand which inspires great dread.

On seeing him, Savitri lays aside her husband's head and stands up with folded hands. Her heart is trembling but she asks that Person who he is and why he has come. That Person introduces himself as Yama and avers that he could converse with Savitri because she is a devout and chaste woman, a practitioner of difficult austerities. Yama praises the soul of Satyavan, but now as his life here is over he has to take it away with him, the soul that is no bigger than a thumb, *angusthamātraḥ purusam*. He throws the noose around it, pulls it out and starts moving towards the South. Satyavan's lifeless corpse appears very dull and frightful. Savitri, afflicted with agony, follows Yama.

A little later Yama looks back and notices Savitri following him. He advises her to return, as she has paid the debt to her husband by accompanying him over the permitted distance. He further reminds her that she has to attend to the funeral rites of the deceased. Savitri does not accept Yama's advice. She has walked with the God seven steps and therefore a friendly relationship is established between the two. She tells him so and argues extensively with him on fundamental issues, he being the son of

Vivasvan, the Sun-God, knower and upholder of the Law of Truth obtaining in the mortal creation

You are the mighty son of Vivasvan and that is why the learned call you Vaivasvat, to all creatures you are fair and you uphold the dharma. For that reason you are, O Lord, also known as Dharmaraj.

(shloka 5 41)

Her speech is perfect, observing the rules of grammar and syntax, complete in knowledge of etymology, prosodically well-structured, also her reasoning is flawless and logically impeccable. She tells him that her own place lies near her husband and she will not go back without him, firmly fixed as she is in the dharma. By the merit of austerity, devotion to the preceptor, love for the husband, observance of the sacred vows, and by the grace of Yama himself there is nothing, she tells him, which cannot be accomplished by a woman. Further, she asserts that holy people always abide in virtuous conduct, and never have they sorrow, nor are they any time afflicted. Greatly rewarding is indeed the company of such pious ones and therefore one should be ever close to them. In the fellowship of the saints and sages, without a doubt, all fear disappears. For this reason, more than himself does a man trust holy persons, and so does he give more of his love and respect to them. Then, in a tremendous moment of mantric utterance, of revelation, she discloses that

...it is by the Truth that the saints lead the sun, by askesis the saints uphold the earth; in the saints all the three divisions of Time find their refuge, noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief.

(shloka 5 48)

The illustrious and the excellent help each other in the conduct of the dharma and do not do hurt to others. Therefore they prove to be the protectors of the entire world.

Immensely pleased with the sublimity of these utterances Yama grants her boon after boon. Indeed, the more she speaks the well-adorned and well-cherished lofty things of the dharma, acceptable always in the conduct of life in every circumstance, to the same extent his admiration for her grows. By the first two boons she desires eyesight for her blind father-in-law and his lost kingdom; in the third boon she asks for a hundred sons for her father Aswapati, true and heroic brothers to her. By the fourth boon she would have got a hundred sons for herself, but she argues that this boon is of a different kind than the other three. It cannot be fulfilled without proper matrimony. She therefore reiterates her request for the life of Satyavan. Without him, she tells Yama, she herself would be dead, she would abstain from any pleasure, even that of entering heaven. Without Satyavan the boon would thus be waste. Then, in a kind of dialectics, she points out the strange anomaly in Yama's words and actions.

You have given me the boon of a hundred sons and you yourself are taking my husband away; for that reason I again ask the boon of life for Satyavan, by which your words shall come true.

(shloka 5.54)

Yama, gladdened by Savitri's Words of Dharma, says 'Let it be so,' and releases the noose from around the soul of the dead. He tells her that Satyavan is now in good health and fit to return with her to the earth. Further, he grants a life of four hundred years for him to live with her and, for the welfare of the world, to perform the holy Yajnas. Then Yama, blessing Savitri and sending her back with the soul of Satyavan, returns to his own Abode deep in the South [Note 8, p. 289]

Also, Savitri returns to the earth with the soul of Satyavan.

After the departure of Yama, getting her husband back, as Vyasa puts it, Savitri comes to the place where his dead body has been lying. She again takes his head in her lap. By now Satyavan regains consciousness and looks affectionately at Savitri, he begins talking to her like one who has returned from a long journey. He feels that he is waking from some deep sleep, but then he also carries a faint recollection of the dark-hued and terrifying figure who has dragged him to some dreadful and unknown world. He asks Savitri whether she knows anything about him. She tells him that it was the great God Yama himself, the Ordainer of the Creatures, who had come there; she, however, quickly adds that it is now all over and that he has left the place. Satyavan wants to know more about the entire episode, but Savitri postpones it by saying that she will narrate it the next day, pointing out that a thick darkness is fast enveloping them in the forest.

Satyavan looks around and realises that he has not returned to the hermitage yet. He is quite worried, lest his old and helpless parents get disturbed, not seeing him back in spite of the growing night. But Savitri is somewhat hesitant. She sees that Satyavan is still weak and doubts whether he is in a condition to walk the long distance back to the hermitage. Getting lost in the darkness can also be risky. Besides, she herself is somewhat scared and tells Satyavan to that effect:

Those cruel-voiced prowlers of the night are moving freely now; and listen to the sound in the fallen leaves as the wild beasts go about in the forest. This fearsome howling of the she-jackals in the south, and in the west, is causing my mind and my heart to tremble greatly

(shlokas 5.75-76)

But Satyavan insists on returning forthwith. He is unable to bear any longer the separation from his loving parents. He tells Savitri that his blind father and the old mother must be frantically looking for them, going from hermitage to hermitage, inquiring about him and about his welfare. He does not wish to delay their going back any further.

Realising how true her husband is as a follower of the dharma, Savitri agrees to return at once. She gets up and knots her loose hair, then, holding both the hands of her husband, she helps him to stand. Then encircling his waist with her right arm, his left on her left shoulder, they start walking slowly. Satyavan chides her that she is a timid woman and assures her that he is quite familiar with all the paths in the forest and can tell the correct one simply by looking at the stars. He points out to her that they are actually on the same path they had taken in the morning while coming to the forest. Indicating that at the bifurcation near the group of *palāśa*-trees she should take the path leading to the north, he prompts her to quicken the pace that they may reach home as early as possible.

In the meanwhile Dyumatsena receives his eyesight. But he is very much disturbed, since Satyavan has not yet returned home. His mind begins wandering wildly, thinking of ominous and untoward happenings. A great fear grips him. The worried parents go from cottage to cottage inquiring about their son and daughter-in-law. They are concerned to such an extent that they rave almost in madness.

Seeing their distressed plight, tormented as they are by evil suggestions, the sages of the forest gather around them and console them.

Suvarchasa, ever the speaker of the truth, assures them that as Savitri is a woman of exceptionally noble and virtuous qualities, and is fixed in dharma, and has made great progress in her tapasya, nothing injurious can happen to Satyavan. Bharadwaja also expresses the same conviction and holds that Satyavan is hale and living. Gautama asserts that he has studied all the six branches of the Vedas, accumulated great might of askesis, observed strict celibacy since his early age, and pleased his preceptors and the Fire-God well, by that power of austerity and by the concentration of his will, he contends, he knows all the movements of others. Stating so, he affirms that Satyavan is alive. Gautama's disciple vouches that never a word uttered by his Guru has turned out to be untrue or wrong, therefore he feels confident that Satyavan must be living. Dalbhya points out that Dyumatsena's getting his eyesight back in such an unexpected way augurs auspicious happenings, he also says that the way Savitri observed the very difficult three-night vow, and the fact that she accompanied her husband to the forest without breaking the long fast, means complete safety for Satyavan. Apastambha sees in the tranquil benign surrounding, and in the manner and movement of the dumb animals and birds, a secret presence of harmony, indicating that there is nothing which should really perturb them. He too is sure that Satyavan is alive. Dhaumya proclaims that Satyavan has the marks of a long life and hence he must be living.

This way the great Rishis assuage the fears of the worried parents. Then, not too long afterwards, Satyavan and Savitri arrive at the hermitage, immensely happy. There is great jubilation amongst all present. Indeed, in the union of the father and the son, in the blind king's receiving his sight, in Savitri they see agreeable portents of the future. Kindling a bright fire they all sit around it and throw a volley of questions at Satyavan. They wish to know why Savitri and he are late in returning home when the night has grown dark in the jungles. Quite understandably, they want to know everything in

detail to their satisfaction. But Satyavan simply tells them that, while collecting the firewood, he suffered a severe headache and had suddenly become unconscious, without awareness of anything around. For the delay there is no other reason, he informs them. But Gautama is not quite convinced. Moreover, Dyumatsena's regaining his eyesight so unexpectedly still remains a mystery. He therefore turns towards Savitri and expresses his eagerness to know the entire secret from her. He tells her that she alone can unravel it.

O Savitri, I am eager to hear of it from you, you know, O Savitri, all that is far and near, that belongs to the past and to the future, you understand it, one like Goddess Savitri herself as you are, with her effulgence. Surely, you have the knowledge of its cause and its purpose, and therefore speak the truth of it, if there is nothing in it to hide from us, tell us all of it.

(shlokas 6 34-35)

Savitri narrates everything in detail, right from the beginning, how Narad foretold the impending doom of Satyavan's death, and the reason for her undertaking the three-night vow, and of accompanying her husband to the forest on that particular day. She tells them that at the noon hour Yama entered the forest to snatch the soul of Satyavan. As he was carrying it away with him, she too followed him and offered him high eulogies with the utterances of Truth. The mighty God, the Upholder of the Dharma, was immensely pleased, and had become happy with her beyond bound. She then narrates how she received the five boons and how Satyavan regained consciousness.

The Rishis bless the young devout woman and in happiness depart to their cottages, hailing her as the Saviour of the House.

The House of the King was plunging more and more into darkness, assailed by misfortunes, but you of noble birth and a virtuous wife, sweet and amiable in nature, and an observer of the vows, one given to meritorious conduct, redeemed the family from doom.

(shloka 6 43)

But the next day they all, rich in austerities, completing the morning fire-rituals, gather once again around Dyumatsena. They speak of the extreme good fortune, *mahābhāgyam*, of Savitri, and are not contented even though they repeatedly narrate it.

While in wonderment they are talking thus, a group of citizens of the Shalwa kingdom unexpectedly arrive at the hermitage. Extending their greetings to Dyumatsena, they inform him that his enemy has been killed by his own minister. They also add that in the capital everyone has resolved that Dyumatsena should occupy the throne again, as he is its worthy and rightful heir. Thus, imploring him to return, they tell him that the army with all its four divisions is ready at his command. They are also happily surprised to see Dyumatsena with his eyesight regained.

Dyumatsena worships the Rishis reverentially and, receiving their blessings, departs for the capital Shaibya along with Savitri rides a richly decorated gold-panelled car and, escorted by the army, leaves the hermitage. At the capital the priests sprinkle the holy water and perform Dyumatsena's coronation ceremony. Satyavan is also made the Crown-Prince. In the course of time all the boons of Yama given to Savitri get fulfilled [Note 9, p. 290]

Part III: The Tale of Satyavan and Savitri—A Letter of Sri Aurobindo

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes, Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life (*SABCL*, Vol. 26, p. 265)

Part IV: Notes

Adaptations made by Sri Aurobindo

Note 1 (p. 275)

In Vyasa's Savitri the description of Aswapati's entire tapasya and his getting the boon are covered in just about twenty shlokas. The king has no son and in order to get a child he sets himself upon the dharmic path of sacrificial worship, Yajna. The traditional issue is the continuation of the ancestral line for the welfare and maintenance of the order of the worlds, the order which is maintained by making to the gods appropriate offerings accompanied by the hymns of solicitation and praise. The gods grow by these offerings and in return give gifts to the devotees. The help of the gods is always for promoting Righteousness. If the society has a certain foundation based on it, then it is obligatory for the righteous to affirm it in everyday conduct and in every respect. One aspect of it is to see that in all its glory it is perpetuated from generation to generation. The Law of the Right, *ritam*, was the ancient Vedic ideal that prevailed in

the dynamic Age of the Truth, Satya Yuga, and of it Aswapati was one ardent and devout votary

But then Aswapati's tapasya was not just a part of the fulfilment of this social obligation of his. We must also look into the plausibility that the intention behind the narration was to present a deeper and truer issue through the medium of a story. It appears that, in this human tale, Vyasa quite meant it to be so.

In spirituo-metaphysical terms it is the possibility of a divine creation arising out of the inconscience, out of the nonmanifest that has become the unmanifest. If by the Force of Concentration, Tapas-Shakti, the Supreme created the Void and became inconscient, did the Yoga of Self-Sacrifice, triumphantly chanted in the Veda as the Holocaust of the Supreme, then by another Force of Action he has to emerge out of this state, out of utter forgetfulness, and establish the unfailing and inexhaustible delight of existence everywhere. For this to happen, the Supreme has to do Yoga in the earth-consciousness itself. And this has to happen in the face of his own stubbornness, for he himself has become the Inconscient. One visible sign of this stubbornness of the inconscient Supreme is the presence of Death—the manifesting Supreme surprisingly encounters the obstacle of the antagonist Supreme as Death. In that sense the tale of Savitri also becomes the Epic of the Divine Creation. In Sri Aurobindo's epic Aswapati comes to the world of birth and does the Yoga of the Supreme. This is necessary in order to tackle, through birth, the divine issue present in this world of birth, in the mortal creation, *mrityuloka*. He realises that the issue can be handled victoriously only if the divine Shakti would condescend to come down upon the earth and deal with the otherwise obstinate and intractable problem of mortality, presented in the Figure of Death. She agrees.

Savitri comes down here as an incarnate force and espouses the cause of the evolutionary travail's death-bound life in the fulfilment of the Will of the Supreme himself. But this descending ocean of dynamic consciousness has to be upborne, lest it drown the very Void out of which it is intended to emerge, with the awareness of the multiple splendour, a manifestation with the growing richness of the being of delight. Aswapati's tapasya is for this purpose, to prepare a safe base for the fiery power's transforming action. The needed Yogic support for her arrival and for her action is provided by it. Aswapati climbs to the summit of this creation and meets her, he prays to her to take human birth and accomplish the glorious miracle. In response to it she comes down as his own daughter.

Thus Aswapati's eighteen-year tapasya presented in Vyasa's brief narrative, already full of spiritual glow, becomes in Sri Aurobindo a glorious and laurel-crowned Odyssey of mounting the mighty steep World-Stair that rises from Matter's inconscient base to the splendours of the superconscient Spirit. He goes yet beyond, crossing the triple Glory. Even as he approaches the Worlds of the Unknowable, the creative-executive power of the Supreme answers him and grants him the exceptional boon that one shall come and change everything. All shall be done for which this mortal world was created—he is told.

In the legend of Savitri the issue, albeit briefly and indicatively stated, is yet well focused in the inescapable death of Savitri's lover and husband Satyavan. This death indeed becomes a glorious occasion for the incarnate Power's action to deal with the universal Adversary standing in the way of the intended divine manifestation

What was brief and suggestively succinct in Vyasa, given to us in just twenty swift shlokas, Sri Aurobindo elaborated in his epic to the great length of about ten thousand lines. But it is not wholly a poetic or thematic elaboration or expansion to this disproportionate size, merely for the sake of self-blissful indulgence. The existence of the World-Stair is not entirely new to the Yogic experience. But Aswapati's exploration of these worlds, his moving through them, putting upon their breast his footsteps is an occult action and has an occult meaning and purpose. It is not just the journey of an indifferent passerby, he leaves behind in them his dynamic and luminous Yogic presence itself. It is the presence of the Avatar left behind in those worlds which is going to prove beneficent to this world of our mortality. It is by this presence that these countless worlds are to participate gloriously in the process of the new creation for which Savitri is about to begin her work. Perhaps it was too early for the tradition to realise this, but it seems that it certainly had a distant intuition of it.

Note 2 (p. 276)

Sri Aurobindo describes the event in a somewhat different manner, with Aswapati as a Yogi in communion with the spiritual planes and forces that constantly exert their influence upon us, which govern and mould all our movements and actions. He has a sure intuition that a greater nobler destiny lies in wait for us though at present we strive only for little gains, though we are unable to receive the celestial gifts, hold them when they are given to us in God's plenty. But Aswapati hears a heavenly voice and sees in the person of Savitri a bright promise, "a shining answer from the gods" to all these thousand questions that baffle and torment life and belittle it. He tells her to proceed forthwith and put her "conquering foot on Chance and Time". He has a feeling that the heavens guard her soul for some mighty work and that her fate and her work are kept somewhere afar which she must discover and attend to. She is bidden to ascend from Nature and meet a greater God, that together they shall tackle the issue of this mortal creation. The great commanding word from her Yogi-father is received by Savitri and she at once awakes to the mission of her spirit and her soul. Deep in her consciousness it sinks and begins to work with the full power and certainty of the mantric utterance itself.

Note 3 (p. 276)

At this point Sri Aurobindo brings out explicitly, and with sweet lyrical enthusiasm and enchantment, the meeting of Satyavan and Savitri in the Shalwa woods, of which in Vyasa no hint whatsoever is available. They meet, they fall in love with each other, they recognise the purpose of their union and the task they have together to attend to. In the acceptable tradition of the Gandharva marriage, and with Nature and

the gods as its witnesses, they get indissolubly united. All this is absent in the *upākhyāna*. But then what is absent in the *Legend and Symbol* is the traditional ritualistic marriage which is solemnised later, in spite of Narad's frightful prophecy. Not on socio-religious or occult-dharmic aspect but on spiritual content, with its meaning and its value, is the important thrust put in the latter. Perhaps this emphasis, rather than the departure from the established norm and convention, is quite understandable. The marriage itself is an exceptional marriage, marriage of two exceptional incarnate beings.

Note 4 (p. 276)

Vyasa does not mention if the queen, Savitri's mother Malavi, was also present during the meeting, although it is presumed that she was there. Even if actually present, she did not participate in the discussion. This seems to be the classical ideal in which the woman left all matters of deliberation and decision to her husband and accepted his word as final in every respect. She always remained in the background with her force of dynamism supporting her husband from behind. On the other hand, in Sri Aurobindo's presentation the queen, though full of human frailty, plays a crucial role in the discussion and raises subtle points of fate and free will in human transactions.

Note 5 (p. 277)

In Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* we see Narad asserting the divine will behind this marriage and, though apparently tragic, makes it firm. There is no doubt that it was for this purpose that he had undertaken the long and arduous journey from his home in Paradise to Aswapati's palace at Madra on the banks of the Alakananda, a difficult process by which the spiritual becomes the earthly substantial. Narad is one of those very few who can move freely in all the worlds and can also take a human form, of flesh and blood. He knows the occult secret by which this can be done and as an aspect of the divine working, and in the imperative of its purpose, he participates whenever such crucial events are about to occur. Sri Aurobindo's Narad has a mission to accomplish,—to deliver the Word of Fate. It is the Word which is going to determine the entire course of the earthly future. On the other hand the Mahabharata story looks more like a homely narrative. In it Narad is taken as a household figure intimate to the inmates, with their concern in his heart. His present visit to Aswapati is therefore just a part of that extreme goodwill of his for them.

Note 6 (p. 278)

In general we may say that the mention of *trivātra vrata* in Vyasa has been fully utilised by Sri Aurobindo in his epic to describe the Shakti Yoga of Savitri, a description which runs to more than three thousand lines. In the entire Occult-Yogic literature this is undoubtedly unique, the most definite disclosure, indeed a revelation and an application accompanying its practice. We have here the true meaning and purport of the Tantrik sadhana, Shakti Upasana, as a means for the effective trans-

formation of Nature from her inconscient mode of working in the dumb inconscient body into a luminous dynamism of her consciousness-force. It is only when this is carried out in the bodily existence that there is a possibility of conquering death and attaining earthly immortality in the light and splendour of the triple Divine. That would be the genuine and actual resolution of the issue of this mortal world, this *mrityuloka*. It is on that path Savitri has now set herself, so that this difficult missioned task be done.

The cause of her husband's death in the story is the immediate occasion for doing the Yoga of Transformation. Certainly this aspect of earthly immortality is not present in the tradition, nowhere has it been explicitly taken as a part of the spiritual sadhana. From death to immortality, *mrityormāmrtam gamaya*, has all along been the ancient prayer. It is again in that context that we see in the Upakhyana of the Mahabharata Yama granting wonderful boons to Savitri, but then Yama as immortal Death still remains there, yet to carry on the work of upholding the worlds. We cannot therefore say that the *trirātra vrata* has the power of the Shakti Yoga to bring about a totally radical change in Nature, particularly in the stubborn inconscient aspect of Nature, to altogether displace death from her. And yet the benign figure of Yama has to find its full meaning and appurtenant significance in this mortal creation. The Vedic-Tantrik sadhana did not explore the possibilities of the Shakti Yoga in this transformative endeavour though it may have had an inkling of it. The fact that it was a three-night vow makes it symbolically weighty and consequential, the three nights of the physical, vital and mental ignorance that constitutes our existence. But the full implication of it, both Yogically and Occult-operationally, perhaps remained unexplored. Perhaps for good reasons too.

Note 7 (p. 278)

On the fourth day, the destined day of Satyavan's death, Savitri gets ready well before the sunrise, and lights a bright fire, and makes ritual offerings to the gods. In Sri Aurobindo Savitri worships goddess Durga on the fated day before setting out to the forest with Satyavan. The image of the goddess was carved by him on a stone. In the Upakhyana Satyavan is presented as a painter of horses whereas Savitri makes him a sculptor. But, more importantly, Durga is the Protectress of the Worlds and worshipping her is praying and asking for her protection in the most dire moment of life, the moment confronting death itself. Arjuna at the suggestion of Krishna had so worshipped her at the very beginning of the Mahabharata war. That was however for winning a victory over the enemy and not to conquer death. Therefore if Savitri is going to worship Durga, that goddess must be more powerful than Yama in order to prevail over him. She is the transcendental Shakti of Savitri herself and hence there is the inevitability of the result in her favour in the deep battle of life that is soon going to be waged against death. That such a living goddess was present in the rock sculpted by Satyavan adds yet another transcendental dimension to the story in the hands of Sri Aurobindo. The symbol is really very rich.

Note 8 (p. 281)

The parts dealing with the colloquy between Yama and Savitri are the most complex, most profound and occult in Sri Aurobindo's epic. In it Yama, rather Death, the embodied Nothingness, is standing as a stubborn antagonist against God's work in this mortal creation and has no mercy to show to anyone or to anything. He is learned, he is powerful, he is relentless and inexorable, and all that he knows is his Law. He sees things and beings as a "pitiful dream" and looks at the delight of Nature with utter disdain. In fact, he is the very incarnation of Inconscience. He derives all his power from the dark Abyss and he cannot accept any trespassing of his edict. Savitri's following him and challenging him to claim the soul of Satyavan is an affront made by her to his sovereignty and he cannot brook it in the least manner. She must pay a heavy price for this transgression. The figure that finally stands in front of her is a huge terrifying mask, a "grandiose Darkness of the Infinite". He has embodied in his shadow-self the entire might of God's Nothing and, in the present process of evolution, defeating him is defeating that Nothing itself. Therefore he is standing there in all his formidable strength. But the great incarnate Goddess in the form of Savitri throws aside the veil and the Deity dwelling in her secret depths readies herself for the decisive assault. A mighty transformation comes upon the extraordinary Yogini and the Kundalini-force descends from above into her entire being. The Tantrik World-Yoga of the Divine, the Shakti Yoga of the Supreme, finds its culmination in this most decisive, and marvellous, action of the great incarnate Goddess. But then Yama in the role of Death yet resists. Finally, however, to her mastering Word he succumbs and gets dispossessed of his paled and defeated will. He takes refuge in the "retreating Night" unable as he is to withstand the lustre of the divine Immortal.

But then he reappears as the Tempter of the Worlds and offers easy boons to Savitri. She at once sees the trap and does not fall into it, to live with Satyavan in the heavens of the deathless gods. Her concern is for the soul of man, Satyavan's soul to do God's work in the world of the mortals. Earth is the chosen place and it is this earth which in the splendour of the triple divinity must be fulfilled. Savitri is firm-willed and adheres to the choice of her soul and her spirit. It is then that in the benignity of her choice she receives the supreme gift from the Supreme, a gift to celebrate the arrival of the new creation with the soul of Satyavan at its forefront and as its initiator. Even the bright illusion that could have fallen over her sight and distracted her from her single purpose has now been dispelled and there is only the light of the everlasting day. The work of the incarnation has been accomplished and now things will unfold in the process of endless Time.

Can we say that both these aspects, the aspect of the embodied Nothingness and the aspect of the bright Tempter, are present in Yama of the tradition, because Yama given to us by the tradition is unmistakably at once frightful-dark and kind-gracious? He inspires fear in us and also he is the giver of happy boons to us. We may therefore clearly see both these figures behind him, though perhaps not in their detailed operational bearing and sense. Even if we are to take it that way, it has never been made

explicit and functionally meaningful in the ancient writings. It is very likely that they had the intuition of it, that behind this twofold Yama there is only one single Supreme, or rather it is the Supreme who himself is present in these two poises. But the point is not about the intuition of it. The Rishis of yore might have had that knowledge and that definite perception which had remained unrecorded in the annals of spirituality. We may even give them the benefit of the doubt that it was not to be inopportunately disclosed, very explicitly stated. Or else, perhaps more appropriately, the completeness of the experience was still very much wanting for it to have become in the evolutionary process operationally decisive.

But for us what is necessary is to recognise the fact that Savitri's entry into the very world of dense ignorance and death is an absolutely unique and unprecedented event. It was as if Satyavan's death became a pretext for it to happen. With her Occult-Yogic might Savitri steps into the inconscient regions and establishes in them the expressive power of the supreme Word, the Word by which things take place and get luminously fixed. If Aswapati's tapasya led him through the different worlds in which he left his presence behind, Savitri's Battle in the field of Darkness is to eliminate the elemental forces from which arise the crookedness and the evil in the evolutionary manifestation. Therefore the Yama-Savitri debate is not a mere verbal duel, a logomachy, a metaphysical engagement, a conjuration of one-up-manship. Great powers are released even as they speak, the powers of opposition and negation and the powers of advancement and affirmation. Each utterance lets loose its charge with occult might clashing against formidable occult might. It is in their wake that things have to transpire, events founded in the future and not in the obscurity of the past, to get organised and configured so that the new order of the world is born. Ultimately the Gnostic Word is established in those very suffocating and terrifying nether depths where lived uncompromising death and suffering and evil. Great is Truth and it does indeed prevail. Savitri has made it greater by making it prevail even in the absolute darkness of Inconscience. What was promised long ago now gets unconditionally fulfilled. Once for all the issue of the mortal creation is resolved and the path of ever-widening and everlasting progress opened out.

Note 9 (p. 284)

Sri Aurobindo's epilogue does not have these details. Did he intentionally drop them, considering them as irrelevant to the main Yogic-spiritual message the epic is to give? Or did he sort of hurriedly round off the story keeping in regard the view that, after receiving the supreme Boon, there is really nothing more that need be wished or willed, need be said? After completing the final revision of the Book of Fate, in the middle of November 1950, just three weeks before his passing away, Sri Aurobindo had asked if something else was still remaining to be taken up for revision. When told that the Book of Death and the Epilogue were still to be attended to, he remarked "Oh, that? We shall see about that later on." That "later on" was never to be. Would Sri Aurobindo have incorporated in the Epilogue the gathering of the wise and the elders

around Satyavan and Savitri when they returned late in the evening from the forest, recreated with his poetic genius the ancient scene of the hermitage and the dwellers gathering at the moment of concern and at the moment of jubilation? Possibly the sages and the Rishis would have told us about the nature of the new creation and about the divine life received as a boon by Savitri from the Supreme, the ‘‘life that has opened with divinity’’. Similarly, the Book of Death, which presently has only Canto Three, entitled *Death in the Forest*, might have been taken up by him later, perhaps to indicate the difficulty of the cellular transformation,—the difficulty of the inconscient will in the body to change and accept the Truth-Will in it. But these are possibilities about which nobody can say anything and it would be quite improper to even hazard a guess. Besides, it is likely that these are futuristic matters and it would be best to leave the future to determine its own course of progress and action when the future is going to be fully governed by the future and not by dead compulsions and constraints of the past. The story of the mortal world, *mrityuloka*, is an endless saga, and a glorious saga full of happy surprises, and it must be allowed to unfold in its own creatively glorious way, the Way of the Truth. Sri Aurobindo has set it into motion and the auspices of eternity’s Time will take it over to make dynamic divinity its executive in the endless delight of existence.

R Y DESHPANDE

TWO POEMS

WHITE

WHITE—colour of the moon poised on high in an autumn night—
The soothing peace, the quiet heave of an in-gathered rapture!

White—colour of the sun glaring overhead in a midsummer sky—
White heat of the Energy that quickens the universe,
The creative ardour of the light of truth!

White—colour of the pearl reposing in the womb of the mother-of-pearl—
innocence of a little heart, delicate and fine and strong in trust

White—colour of the diamond, miracle of the black-souled ore transfigured—
The immaculate consciousness of the Mother, the Mother yet of a sin-bred earth!

White—colour of the snow piled on wind-swept peaks grim and bare—
Naked and frigid austerity that juts sheer into the inviolate worlds beyond!

White—colour of the foam, breaking and bubbling exultant—
All the passions of my entrails surging and speeding to the tranquil refuge of Thy
embrace!

White—colour of the jasmine so candid and pure and unpretending—
The smiling perfume of the grace that has touched my soul!

White—colour of the lotus—
The endless commiseration of my Lord that has taken body upon earth!

October 30, 1936

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RED

Fire Red—the red wrath of Rudra
that burns the dead mass of earth, melts and consumes it
into tongues of leaping ardour
that cry out for beatitudes beyond

Sun Red at dying eve—the breath of a god
sweeping over the darkening horizon
the debris of a vanishing life and world,
scattering the last shreds of mortal ties that yet strive to linger

Blood Red—the red sap of life
that anoints the far Spirit and sets it throbbing
and welling out into an earthly mould—
immortal's homage to flesh-throned mortality

Wine Red—the quenchless thirst and passion,
even the lust of the body
wholly uplifted and transfused into the ethereal bliss,
Bliss made here and now a sensuous rapture—
poignant and exhilarating and undecaying.

Ruby Red—the concentrated essence of the supreme substance
brought down into our lower sphere
and glowing and blushing with new-born love
in a human frame

November 28, 1936

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

ON TEACHING POETRY

I TEACH poetry, English poetry, and have been doing so for the last forty-three years during which period crossing and recrossing the school corridors, marching in and out of classrooms looking into the eyes of children of all ages, listening to colleagues' comments, much have I seen and known: ever changing moods and fancies of children, unexpected retrograde reactions from faculty fellows, periodic arbitrary announcements of change in policies by those in authority. All of these have endeavoured to convince me that poetry is a subject not worth teaching. But being an old horse who cannot be taught new tricks, so far I have managed, at the risk of mixing a metaphor, to stick to my guns.

Apparently I am not the only one at the receiving end of the slings and arrows of the outrageous anti-poetry clique. From magazines and newspaper articles I gather that in today's world such outrage is universal. With the utmost sympathy I listen to each fellow sufferer saying his say, his scheme of the weal and woe of teaching poetry. One worthy educationist has fallen into such a slough of despond over establishing a poetic rapport with the minds of children studying in government-run village or metropolitan schools, that he advocates scratching Wordsworth's *Daffodils* from their school curriculum and substituting the following from *Just Desserts*

All on a suddlington, Major Smythe-Buddlington
Fell off his charger called Rocket.
His rifle was broked
And his bum was all soaked,
But his yogurt was safe in his pocket !

To justify such a substitution he argues that daffodils are totally foreign to the experience of Indian village children, but once the English snobbery involved in spelling Buddlington when it is pronounced Budden (thereby rhyming with sudden) and one or two other words such as broked and bum and desserts and yogurt are explained to them, they will readily be able to identify themselves with Major Smythe-Buddlington who managed to save his precious yogurt! I refrain from commenting on his idea except to say that it is not he but his despair speaks.

That a branch of Art which by definition is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling should find itself incapable of smoothly flowing into and inundating young hearts and souls, boggles the mind. "'Sblood", as the Prince of Denmark would exclaim in sheer exasperation, "There is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out." Well, we need not tax philosophy with this problem, simple economics can sort it out. The modern world is financially motivated. Mammon rules it with an iron hand. Breathing in the money-vapour from their early childhood, even young adolescents become worldly-wise. Subconsciously they tend to associate poetry with poverty, for poets are proverbially poor. One cannot build a lucrative

career, they argue, on poetry, the teacher himself being a case in point. No lucre, no lure.

There is of course another factor conducive to the present lack of appreciation of poetry. It is the modern jet age, these most brisk and giddy-paced times, as the bard puts it so graphically. Everything moves fast. Everybody is in a hurry, when leisure—time to stand and stare and meditate—is a must for poetic enjoyment.

These then are the obstacles that a teacher must overcome before he can hope to light even a glimmer of interest in his young students. A Herculean task indeed—it is as though one has to bring time to a stop, at least temporarily, and transport the children to “a shadowless place in the core of this shadowy world,” the SOULSTEAD of Arjava. There, I have said it, the keyword—the soul.

If we study the gradual development of a child year by year, we make a startling discovery. At a tender age no child is ever immune to the charms of the rhythmic word. Beginning with *Jack and Jill* and *Little Jack Horner*, graduating to “Twinkle, twinkle, little star” then “Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever” and finally to “In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest, whose is the hand that has painted the glow?”—they are irresistibly drawn to poetry. They love to learn poems by heart, recite them and keep them locked in their memory. The reason is not far to seek. Children love poetry because their psychic being is very much in the forefront and the soul of the poet finds no difficulty in speaking to their soul.

But then, alas! “Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy”! The psychic being recedes to the background and worldly considerations rear their ugly heads. Almost overnight the young student finds poetry sissy, useless, a waste of time.

This is the most challenging period for the poetry teacher. It is now that he has to hold on to the student’s attention with his heart and nerve and sinew lest it is washed away by the current of currency notes. He has to be prepared to face the struggle that the student will put up like any drowning man. And yet at this stage the teacher cannot afford to be strict. He has to handle the situation with kid gloves. Without in any way antagonising the student, the teacher has to prove conclusively that poetry is neither sissy nor easy, for youngsters are great votaries of proof. Usually a few *koota shlokas* like the ones Maharshi Vyasa is said to have used to stymie Ganesh do the trick. Lines, such as Wordsworth’s

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay

or

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality

thrown as an intellectual challenge to the adolescent minds soon convince them that poetry is no cake-walk that it can be as intellectually stimulating as a problem of mathematics. Any student worth the name is now ready to come out of the protective shell of his inertia and bias. To bring him out further still now is the time for the Assyrian came down

like a wolf on the fold,
His cohorts all gleaming in purple and gold

What I mean is that the time is ripe to assail his sensual ear, and by and by his inner ear, with a melopoetic broadside of

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free

or

Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky
Sought an escape from that wide trance of heat

or other lines of similar calibre. The sleeping musician in the student cannot but sit up and take note. A few logopoetic buckshots, that is, the student's attention drawn to the felicitous use of words in poetry especially conveying thought-speech, will not fail in carrying out a little mopping up operation at this stage. I am thinking of Sri Aurobindo's use of the word "surprise" in

Avoiding sword, avoiding lifted arm,
The blade surprised the Rajput's throat

or Milton's use of the word "forget" in

held in holy passion still
Forget thyself to marble

To raze the last bastion of resistance to the ground, the teacher should now use the heavy artillery of phanopoeia or word-imagery, (the *sine qua non* of poetry, since the poet is essentially a seer) starting with Coleridge's

Like god's own head
The glorious sun uprist

Shelley's

a poet hidden in the light of thought,

Thompson's Evening lighting

her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities

and going on to Sri Aurobindo's

Moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss

and not stopping till Beauty conquers the resisting mind and the student is left breathless with adoration. Not only that, sometimes he is even inspired to compose striking poems of his own.

Well, that is the sure-fire scheme bound to succeed, at least theoretically, in building the golden bridge between this mundane world known to the adolescents and the aesthetic-psychic world of poetry. But alas! What happens in actual fact is that just when their young eyes grow sudden fair, with dawning answers there, the school bell rings, the year draws to a close and the cruel hand of Necessity literally drags them away and places them in other environments, often non-poetic or even anti-poetic.

The poetry teacher who has himself spent the past year in a dream world of his own, interacting with the young students, clearing their doubts, mollifying their disbeliefs which in spite of Coleridge's exhortation they were unwilling to suspend, cajoling, explaining, entertaining, observing the glow on their faces, getting overjoyed with a bit of positive response, is now left high and dry with only a distant hope that perhaps all the golden seeds that he had sown have not fallen on stony ground, perhaps a few will germinate and flourish in the right soil, perhaps a few students will learn to interpret the "recondite beauty and bliss" revealed by poetry in vision's "hieroglyphs of mystic sense".

ANIRUDDHA SIRCAR

ON SRI AUROBINDO'S POEM *CHITRANGADA*

SRI AUROBINDO'S *Chitrangada* is supposed to have been completed as a longer poem which never reached us. But these 242 lines give us a good enough idea of the perfection that it could have embodied. It is a well-knit composition, strong and masterly in its treatment of the oft-quoted story of Arjuna in Manipur, during his year-long penance.

Strangely enough, in this poem no effort has been made at all to narrate the story. From the very first line we enter the inner core of the tale, the human side of the two characters who in the course of their dialogue reveal the real motivation of their acts. We look at the whole from the point of view of the princess Chitrangada, hence the title.

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THE PLAN OF THE STORY AS DEVELOPED IN THIS POEM

The year is at an end and Urjooon must leave soon. Chitrangada is trying to feel that near future when she would have to stand alone and face her new life, almost as a new beginning "of grey realities". On the other hand, on waking, Urjooon finds her looking at the morning sky, thoughtfully, "like one from whom joy is cast down".

(lines 1 to 14)

Urjooon cannot understand why someone who has a protector like himself should feel any sorrow or insecurity. The princess explains in her own royal fashion the destiny that each of them has yet to fulfil and which cannot be denied.

(lines 15 to 40)

With this the whole mood is set for us to journey through a world not ours any more but in surroundings where the individual's actions play a role unknown to modern man. There is a strange sense of Time, past, present and future contained in the next few lines where Urjooon shows his understanding of existence and his faith in a guidance that cannot fail. He also seems to imply that solemn musings on the meaning of life and the world should be left to the ascetic and the dying man, while others take their own existence as it comes their way, within the limits set for them by Fate.

(lines 41 to 45)

But Chitrangada urges him on to his own task

Why shouldst thou linger here
Vainly? How will it serve God's purpose in thee
To tarry soothing for her transient hour

Merely a woman's heart, meanwhile perhaps
Lose some great moment of thy life which once
Neglected never can return

Deeply moved, Urjoon wondered how from the eager gladness of the young mountain-queen who had received him with open arms, she had become the woman, "too like a mind matured by thought and pain" She had once given up everything including "her noble ancient right" to rule, for his sake, only for love, as if driven by some foreknowledge—"Diddst thou know?"—Does she ever recall those happy hours of her own life—"Dost thou remember?" .

(lines 82 to 109)

We enter then the inner thoughts and feelings of a well-known character—the princess Chitrangada—who has never been seen from this point of view She reveals through the next part of the poem the secret of her strength and wisdom She speaks passionately with deep pathos and understanding of the little kingdom of the hills where she has lived. Her sensitivity is universal, not bound by any age or clime, so that the reader, even today, is touched by the sincerity with which she was able to face her father's death, her own love for Urjoon and was made ready eventually to shoulder her ultimate destiny

This whole passage can be divided into several parts, as the princess speaks from her heart about herself—

At first she reassures Urjoon about her own love for him, saying very simply that she can never forget that year of his stay in her kingdom.

What other thing can I
Remember, till forgetfulness arrives?

It was difficult for her to imagine days when she would wake alone and rule her kingdom without any help But she could not be bound by personal happiness only—

And yet
This year of thee is mine until the end
The gods demand the rest

(lines 110 to 123)

After explaining the reason of her thoughtfulness that morning, she describes to Urjoon the scene of her father's death through whose wisdom she could wait for him to come

I praise my father's wise and prescient love
That kept me from the world for thee, unsought .

She seems to have discovered the special traits of her countrymen that year, that day, when her father lay dying, and she saw the “stone visages of un-Aryan gods” carved on the walls of that sombre cave and noticed the grim war-lords over whom her father had ruled undisputedly—“Manipurian lords with faces fierce and gnarled”—

To them he entrusted me, calling each name,
And made their hearts my steps to mount a throne

ordering them to protect their daughter from any wrong alliance as she was “the stem” from which their future kings would rise. No unworthy wayfarer must usurp her days, none but the greatest who trace their lineage to the gods must be allowed to approach her. Thus had she lived “alone in this wild, faithful, barbarous world” and ruled over “rugged hearts”, “a little queen adored”—until at length Urjoon came.

(lines 124 to 191)

The vivid description of Urjoon’s arrival in their small world turreted by high hills follows. Unsurpassable in grandeur, these lines stand apart. The harmonious flow of the narrative changes into a rapid succession of movements. The words resound with a harsh clamour. One picture follows another describing the reaction of the two sides. The warlords get ready to defend what they think is an attack on their country, while their queen wants to receive the newcomer as a guest

(lines 192-220)

The last dialogue rings out in pride and heroism—one of the unique examples where the same sentiment is expressed by two warriors, one young and unformed, the other mature in strength, for his power springs from self-control and an inner guidance

(lines 221-242)

We can almost perceive a smile on Urjoon’s face while he sits listening to his own exploits told by Chitrangada herself for the first time the other side of the picture comes home to him—their fear, their resistance and his conquest. These lines are striking in their graphic picturesqueness and their charm, for, the very words uttered by Urjoon are related by Chitrangada herself in front of him. This detailed account is a proof of her admiration.

These lines (192-242) bring a sudden burst of energy to the narrative leading it up to a climax. They join the young princess, as she was, to the full-fledged queen she becomes through the first part of the poem. It is through a flashback that this passage placed in the middle of the story has to lead us to its conclusion. And that finale is contained in the heart of the speaker who knows that she had to let Urjoon leave, that she is destined to live alone, “enringed” and upheld by these memories for the rest of her days. Urjoon comes to know the impact of his entry into the life of these dwellers of the hills and especially what Chitrangada would cherish most after his departure: the

human bond beyond the customs that formed the protection of her people; the strength with which he had to face unarmed the bravest of her warriors young and old, and, above all, it was clear that she would consider this part of her life as her own father's wish fulfilled

*

CONCLUSION

The poem begins with a picture which directly brings us in touch with a human moment, then it grows like music, filling our mind with varied tones—harsh and soft, flowing undertones with trumpet blares, or simply marching onwards in a progressive succession. It rises at times as a single instrument with Chitrangada, unafraid, in the midst of an orchestra creating the matrix of the scene, at others as a duet where image and sound combine most intricately, pastel shades of characters that hum in the background a rugged and awesome tune; and then, a pause, the stillness of a silent thought that grows in us

In the last part, this heroic poetry builds itself like a stairway, one flight of words after another—the chariot, horse, hooves, the clamour in the wide stone-paved hall; and after that, in spite of the welcome that their queen wishes to offer to the stranger, the resistance; lastly, the challenge from a youth whose boldness is answered by Urjoon with inimitable power of thought.

Never throughout these 242 lines does the intensity of the dramatic poetry fail us, for, it is sustained by a strange combination of description and dialogue, not always in the order of events as they took place, but recalled,—almost as in the chorus of a Greek tragedy

. not for war
I sought this region nor by death equipped,
Inhospitable people who deny
The human bond, but as a man to men
Alone I came and without need of fear .

Chitrangada recalls,—in front of Urjoon—as Urjoon had spoken once to her people in Manipur when he first came and changed her world and theirs. It stops there, as if to tell us we must remember that others have lived and loved before us, that they have lived their own destiny and faced the consequence of their acts without flinching, that they have lived to fulfil their greater aims and not lose themselves in the mire of personal satisfactions and selfish ends. Chitrangada here proves herself to be a woman beyond the ordinary, as she shows how from a young girl protected by her father she became, after meeting Urjoon, the queen, revered for her wisdom and loyalty.

*

A NOTE

Most of us are familiar with a dance-drama created by Tagore around the same story. The dialogues are songs which have to be danced by the performers while the singer sits visibly on the stage or is unseen. There are a few joining sentences which have to be spoken. On reading, we may wonder if it was not meant to be edited in the form of an opera.

The subject-matter is dealt with in a totally different light—it is a fantasy where the poet recreates the supernatural atmosphere connected with mountain-life along with its rugged ways. Two aspects of the princess are highlighted—the one who wants to charm and conquer and the one who likes to be herself and be the queen, strong and powerful among her people. In the story the princess who is afraid of being rejected seeks to be remade into an attractive and enticing woman who could win the attention of Urjoon, while he was absorbed in meditation. She seeks the blessing of her family deity who then through “Madan”, the god of love, intervenes and her looks change. She becomes an attractive woman. And Urjoon comes out of his penance to satisfy her desire. She constantly feels uneasy about this subterfuge and, therefore, feels much relieved when Urjoon admits that he would love her quite as much and more as the strong mountain queen who could wield a sword quite as deftly as anyone of her warrior tribe. She even offers to defend him in battle if need be, and prove her allegiance to her master. Several other characters are brought into play in order to testify to a well-established kingdom.

The inner transmutation of human nature is much more explicit in the more austere *Chitrangada*, the dramatic poem we have analysed earlier, as it was not written for performing artists to display their talents on the stage.

ANONYMOUS

TWO LYRICS

I

CALL the silence, hold the power,
Do not trouble in this hour.
The Lord is with you, lights descend,
His love will guard you till the end

Who is he who hesitates?
Who is he appropriates
The miracle the godheads lay
Upon the tremor of our clay?

Arise in pure simplicity
And bear their workings, fearless, free,
And if they whirl you through all space,
Discover that too as their grace

II

When Your lovely rhythms flow,
The heart of love is all a-glow,
With sparkles on the inner sea
Of dense and vibrant melody

Wrapped in the circles of that power,
I sit within the magic hour;
Then music, meaning, mantric spell
Pour down into the spirit's well.

Within the inmost secret space
Forms now the image of Your face,
Out of the pure felicity
That fills the soul and sets it free

TEHMI

THE CLOCK

It is the morning of 4th April. A significant day for all those who have been touched by Their Grace. You enter the Ashram, inwardly fully prepared for this eventful and all-important day. The preparation on this special occasion is for gathering as much inner experience as possible, to progress as much as one is capable of. The surcharged atmosphere in the Ashram will help one in this endeavour. As you enter the Ashram, the clock on the wall catches your eye and you check the time with your own watch. Yes, the time is correct. The clock is synchronised with your watch, so too your inner aspiration synchronises with the day's charged atmosphere.

To progress is all you want. As the time on the clock progresses, so too your inner being will move forward towards the future.

You approach slowly a full-bloom Samadhi. The flowers smile at you, the leaves jostle for your attention, the sun sparkles in the unnoticed spots. Everything is in an aspiring blissful mood on this auspicious day. You set your inner being in harmony with the decorative Samadhi and proceed towards Pujalalji's room. The clock on its outer wall has moved on faster, so does your spirit as it synchronises your progress with its time. In five minutes one has made a progress of ten minutes! That is the speciality of the day.

You move on towards the Meditation Hall. The Service flowers dropping here and there give you the feeling of heaven showering blessings all over the place. It is a sanctified territory.

You look expectantly at the grandfather clock near Nolini-da's room to measure your progress. You are dumbstruck. According to its time, you have not reached the Ashram yet! Where is your progress? you ask yourself. You are very retarded! Maybe because it is a grandfather clock it is slow in moving! You try to give a mental explanation. No mental jocularities here—says your stern inner being. Don't you know in Sadhana there are periods of progress and also of non-progress, when one assimilates or gathers the progress already made and makes oneself ready to take a backward step to move forward by two more? Better sit down in the Meditation Hall, gather all your parts, aspire and pray for the progress instead of mental joltings.

So you wait patiently and expectantly and sure enough in time the call comes. Slowly with each step upward on the stairs, your inner being moves upwards too, having had that rare opportunity to visit the Lord's room on this anniversary of His arrival in Pondicherry. You sit down in the room and suddenly realise—if He had not come here on this day in 1910, where would you be on this day in this year, in 1998! A sort of shock and fear grips you. You would be a lost soul among the millions of human beings. Not an aspiring one at all. That moment, the music in the clock upstairs chimes. With its sweet but powerful sound your fear, your worry, your shock vanish. The music and its chimes take you up—up to a boundless infinity where there is only light. The soothing vibrant light not only touches your inner being, its warmth penetrates your body—your every cell quivers to an awakening beyond the limit of human understanding.

Slowly, tranquilly you pay your homage to Them. You pour out your heart in gratefulness. But to your amazement you find the outpouring insufficient. Your mind joins your heart in gratitude. Alas, it is not enough. You get dissatisfied with your own self. The outpouring is not adequate to what They have done for the world, for humanity, for your very own self! You bow down again—your mind, your heart, your vital being, your physical being, with every cell of your body combining in a perfect harmony and full determination—in gratitude. The void remains, your dissatisfaction increases. You are weary of your limitation.

Slowly you walk with your limitation hanging heavily in your heart. The burden of your own problem—how to be totally grateful to Them? You take a last look at the room when your eyes fall on the timepiece kept on a low table. The time is 1.25. A shock! Your progress has not reached the dawn yet. Your inner being is still in the darkness of past midnight. Then the mind intervenes—it could be past midday! You have made a tremendous progress—in half an hour you have reached the sunlit path!

The dilemma—which assumption is correct?

You look at the timepiece again. The arms are static. This is the clock that stopped the moment He left His body on 5th December 1950. You remember. The time stood still. The void in you starts getting filled as realisation dawns that progress is not time-bound or space-bound. Neither is gratitude limited to time and place. It is automatic, involuntary, vital and constant. In a moment the heart-strings are rent and you are thrown into a timeless, spaceless infinity of gratefulness and blissfulness.

Oh! to be grateful with every breath one takes!

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

OUR MOTHER OF RAINBOWS

A Musical Play in One Act

[Time:

Now

Place:

An abandoned warehouse in Los Angeles converted to a shelter for homeless runaways

Cast

(in order of appearance) Brother Sandy Francisco Assisi County Parole Officer, white skin

Sister Surya novice of a nursing order, golden skin

Red Hawk: young Native American drummer, red skin

J'Han Muhammed. Muslim youth in his teens; olive skin

Angelica: African American teenager; black skin

Bo Bo. Angelica's baby brother, black skin

K K Bully Boy: A skin-head, sallow white-supremacist

The Reverend Blaggart: T V. Evangelist, apoplectic ruddy-red, white & shaven blue

Wing Woe: an exploited child from Bangkok; yellow skin

Voices Juvenile Court Official (Woman's), Missy Melodie (Young Girl's)

Setting:

Warehouse interior used as a shelter has been severely damaged by the recent earthquake and further vandalized by race-riot looting. Furnished hastily with cots & blankets, it now serves as a first-aid station

A roofless ruin, the gaping hole above the leaning walls and roof-beams can become in a changing light an overhead opening to a strange sky of wonders . and miracles

Fronting and supporting the dangerously askew walls are two bill-board-sized maps of Planet Earth whose East & West hemispheres illustrate predicted earth-changes in startling images, according to prophecies of ancient spiritual traditions as well as those of contemporary environmental scientists

Note.

Mantric poetry of Sr. Surya's chant for her *Fire Dance* and *Dance of the Universal Mother* from Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri a Legend and a Symbol*.

Through the pre-dawn darkness the giant globe-maps of earth in space appear to be swimming in a blue-space mist as photographed by the Apollo astronauts

Figure of Brother Sandy Francisco is visible in silhouette as he stands on an

improvised ladder wiring the Earth globes with a signal-light system and telephonic communication network His long flowing blonde hair tied and tucked under a rescue-relief worker's helmet, uniform of a County Parole officer in cover-alls resembling the cassock of a Franciscan monk and an astronaut's "habit", the bird perched on his shoulder and above all the radiance emanating from his face and figure, remind one of St Francis of Assisi His smiling serenity is unshaken by the din of a race-riot at its terrorizing worst going on in the streets of L A outside the shelter

Sounds

Ambulance sirens scream, police cars shriek, fire alarms and engine companies clanging, shake the night.

As Morning Light Rises

Sister Surya, a novice of a religious nursing order, is moving gently among the motionless Quake Survivors lying on improvised cots. She is attending their wounds with motherly tenderness. Her sari-like nurse's uniform, like her unmistakably South Indian features, lend an ageless otherworldly atmosphere to the scene

As Sounds of Race-riot Recede

Sr Surya turns on music-tape of a tiny portable player she carries in her sari. Sunil's Music, ethereal, softly evocative, is suddenly punctuated by a Voice.]

Voice on Tape (The Mother's)

"The world is preparing for a big change Will you help?"

Br Francisco:

(turns from globe-map) Who was that speaking, Sister?

Sr Surya:

Our Mother In India

Br. Francisco

(wonderingly) And our Mother in India said . "The world . ."

Sr Surya

"The world is preparing for a big change "

Br. Francisco

Would we help...!

Sr. Surya

(Nods Rewinding tape to play message again, softly)

And she is helping us now Through *this* big change.

(Light Bulb on California area of map suddenly goes on. Br. Francisco touches it reflectively.)

Br. Francisco:

(descending ladder, bemused, goes to Sr Surya)

But I thought the Mother in Pondicherry was dead. Years ago.

Sr Surya:

(amused) Are *you*, Brother Francis dead in Assisi?

(A woman's voice, harsh, authoritative, suddenly blares through sound system. Simultaneously, light bulb on California area of map dances menacingly.)

Official's Voice.

Officer Francisco! Officer Francisco! Parole Patrol Section JD! Are you there! Signal back at once! at once I said!!!

(As he hastily does so)

Emergency! Jail-break of juvenile offenders & inmates reported from prison row section JD. Police squad reports runaways heading toward your outpost zone

(Garbled transmission with Police whistles & sirens)

Assemble riot control equipment at once!!!—Answer me Officer Francisco! riot control *E-eeee-eeeekkkkkk*

(Native American boy Red Hawk, a patient, leaps up from cot to pound on his bed-board as a drum Sr Surya hurries to his side to calm the frenzied boy, taking him in her arms while Br. Francisco attempts to repair the broken sound system still *Eeee-kkkking*)

Red Hawk.

(sobbing in Sr Surya's embrace)

Lemme drum *our* war-dance t'raise *our* dead-warriors!!

(Breaking away, resumes drumming on bed. Other patients stir awake, weakly joining in to drum on floor beside their cots.)

Br. Francisco & Sr. Surya.

(transforming the rhythmic drumming into invocatory prayer)

O Mother Mary

O Mother of all

Come to your Children

Come! Come! We call to you

O Mother Mary, Mother of all.

(The wild, frenzied drumming becomes childlike, the praying softly imploring Patients spontaneously form a circle with Red Hawk to chant & sing their individual improvised prayers together. Forgotten songs from childhood mingle with pop-song snatches to blend into a heart-warming, healing choir of young voices.

The spell is shattered as the warehouse door is shaken violently
J'han Muhammed, a Muslim youth in his teens, enters gesticulating wildly)

J'han

(breathlessly)

Sister! Brother! Brothers! They're headin' this way Klan .of Koo-Koos. Burnin' crosses Settin' a Black church... on fire!

(Repeatedly prostrating himself in prayer, inches across floor to Circle of Patients)

Allah Allah Allah save us
From the mischief appearin'
on seas and on lands
because of the evil deeds
done by men's hands.

(Exchanging meaningful glances Br Francisco & Sr. Surya arrange protective tent of blankets to cover Circle of Patients & J'han It has a faint resemblance to a temple or mosque. Angelica, a beautiful young African-American girl of 15 carrying the limp body of her little brother & hugging a statue of the Black Madonna in her arms, stumbles in weeping.)

Angelica.

Yeah yeah.. Mother of God! Burning' crosses. 'N' burnin' burnin' .Our brothers .'N' sisters . 'N' Mother of God ..

(To Br. Francisco who has hurried to her)

Whole church on fire, Brother Sandy, 'N' little Bo Bo .

(As he takes the little boy's limp body from her, hysterically)

Daid as a door-nail... Kilt at the feet of our Weepin' Madonna...

Br Francisco

(touching eyelids of the little boy)

Was it in your church, Angelica? Down the street from us?

Angelica

Yeah They're smashin' 'n' lootin' the altars White skin-heads. With burnin' crosses —Is Bo Bo breathin'?

Br Francisco

We'll take him into our prayer tent

(As Angelica starts after them, the skin-head K K Bully Boy armed with a riot-gun bursts into warehouse He is dragging with him an exquisitely beautiful Thai girl of 14, Wing Woe, whom he throws to the floor)

Bully Boy:

(levelling riot-gun at Angelica, shouts to mob behind him in the street)

Caught her red-handed! With the loot!

(Advancing on Angelica threateningly)

Turn over that statue! Or ya dead as yer black kid

Angelica.

(hugs the black Madonna more closely, defiantly)

Never

(Shouts from the street make Bully Boy hesitate

The Rev Blaggart, TV Fundamentalist Preacher, idol of thousands of Los Angelonos worshipping the charismatic Evangelist, strolls in and surveys the scene.)

Rev Blaggart:

(fatherly hand on Bully Boy's shoulder)

Not yet, son

(Bully Boy lowers riot-gun)

Well, did you find her?

Bully Boy

(points to Wing Woe crouching where he has thrown her)

Yessir, Reverend.

Rev Blaggart

(sharply)

Not that one, Boy. I asked you to pull my daughter, my *white* daughter, out of the black Moslem church.

Bully Boy:

But I found this Chinee girl where you said *she* was, Reverend—

Rev Blaggart:

(shortly)

Well, look again That's where my Melodie was seen taking refuge We must get her out of there before the TV News crews get wind of it

Bully Boy·

(crestfallen before Angelica, gives a parting kick to Wing Woe)

Yessir, Reverend Sir. We'll get yer Melodie out of hidin' and into yer Mercedes before the Riot Squad cleans out that Black Moslem hide-out.

(Struts to door, then runs, riot-gun levelled)

Rev Blaggart

(To Br Francisco who has been quietly observing him while rocking the little black boy in his arms)

Do you know who I am, Officer?

Br Francisco:

(with a faint smile)

Yes, Reverend sir

Rev. Blaggart

You've seen my Born-Again TV program, Officer? Are you a Christian?

Br Francisco:

(humbly)

I hope so, Reverend. Born again and again

Rev Blaggart.

Then you've attended—with the more than 15000 people who pack the Los Angeles Sports Arena—my revival meetings? Officer—?

(At his silence. modestly)

I take it that my work is a help to yours with juvenile offenders, like this one—

(Indicates Wing Woe with a kick)

she had to be thrown out of my Good Samaritan orphanage You know about our chain of Good Samaritan orphanages—?

Br Francisco

No, Reverend

Rev Blaggart·

Well, we do our heavenly best to save their little outcast souls from hell and damnation—

(Suddenly stops He has noticed movement under the blanket-tent & heard whispers from it)

What's that?

Br Francisco

Some of our young patients praying—

Rev. Blaggart.

Your runaways? Hiding *here*?

(Striding to blanket tent, throws coverings over to glare around the circle of young faces To them, harshly)

Have any of you seen my 14 year old TV revival singer Missy Melodie? No? You're sure? Any information regarding the missing young lady will be amply rewarded. *We* must know who kidnapped her—before the TV News hounds get wind of them. Understand? *Amplly* rewarded. In cash

(To Br. Francisco who has, with Sr. Surya, been tending to W. Woe, tersely)
Thank you. I trust you and your ‘papist’ Sister here will also help us save Missy Melodie’s soul.

(Strides out After Rev. Blaggart’s exit, Sr. Surya & Br. Francisco widen the Circle in the Prayer Tent)

Wing Woe.

(Prayer of Desperation)

Où êtes-vous mère Kwan Yin?

Où êtes-vous, douce mère?

Venez! venez! O mère

I am lost I am fear'

No one to suc-cour

Ton enfant in de-spair

Où êtes-vous, mère Kwan Yin?

Oh! répons à ma prière

Venez viteement, Kwan Yin

Ou I die in de-spair.

(Apparition of Goddess: Mother Kwan Yin appears in answer.)

Music & Dance of Kwan Yin

Wing Woe:

(raptly)

When zey throw me.. in ze street.. 'n' I pray to die... I hear zat musique... But now She come to me. See, see? See zat Light dance? It Kwan Yen Madonna, La Mère—She is yellow, like me!

(Warehouse Interior Darkens)

Chorus of Young Survivors

(in Prayer Tent murmur fearfully)

Now the Light's goin' out!

All over the city...

All over the *country*!

All over the world .!

Angelica:

(placing statue of The Black Madonna in centre of Circle, prays to Her imploringly)

O Holy Mother! O Mother of God! Come back to us! With Your Light, protectin' like You did in Your church—when Missy Melodie stole in runnin' from the Rev Blaggart's Ku Kluxers—who come in to kill her— And smoke done poured through the aisles 'n' around Your own altar. And You plumb wrapt little Missy Melodie in Your arms for safety . Holy Mother of God, where is Missy now?...

(A shaft of light pierces through the opening in the roof, embracing the circle. A young girl's voice, exquisite, ethereal, is heard singing, coming from somewhere above the Prayer tent)

Missy Melodie's Voice

(Sings *anthem of the soul*)

Angelica

(when the high, sweet voice, clear as a bell, dies away: hushed, thrilled)

That's *her*. That's Missy Melodie..

(Kneeling at the Black Madonna's feet in tears)

Thank You, Holy Mother of God

(Sounds of thunder rumbling)

Sr. Surya & Br. Francisco gather the terrified survivors in a circle of love, Wing Woe & Angelica help to comfort & reassure the other young Runaways)

Survivors

Another quake! Followin' us sinners—Satan's haulin' us into Hell ag'in— Won't touch us here, will it Brother Francis? *Francisco*, I mean— This quake's at Flash-Centre—that's hell enough for me! What if the walls come tumblin' down like Jericho? Then we enter the promised Land wid Joshua!

Gospel Singer:

I wrestled wid Satan, I wrestled wid sin
Stepped over hell an' come right back ag'in

Cause Old Satan can't pre-vail long 'gainst my Lawd
I believe 'n' I know wid a faith like a sword

That nothin' is done in all Heaven or hell
On all Earth or His Waters for good or for ill

Under Moon, under Sun, under Starlight or Sea
But by His lovin' Will enfoldin' me.

(Fire Flames & Roars around Warehouse walls)

Survivors

(crouching together, awed)

Ain't comin' in on us—Walls of Hellfire—
 Lord's lovin' Will enfolds us all—
 Black Madonna's protectin' us—'
 And Melodie's White Mother Mary—'
 And Wing Woe's yellow Mother Kwan Yin'

Red Hawk:

(springs up to window watching flames, amazed)

There She is—Red like the canyon-lands—Red like those leapin' flames!
 (Drums his excitement, with an increasing vibrancy that catches all the
 Circle up in its pulsing rhythms)

Song to his Red Canyon Mother

Mother Earth You're a-tremblin'
 Mother Earth's troubled sore
 Mother's Earth's gurgitatin'
 Hot lava, and more—
 Your mountains upheavin'
 Your coastlines You're cleavin'
 Your sea-babies grievin'
 And dyin', believin'
 Your creatures You're leavin'
 O Mother Earth tremblin'
 We pray on Your Wheel
 With our love and our carin'
 Your deep wounds to heal'

Sr Surya.

(swaying in Fire-dance patterns goes into a trance-state)

O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the Universe...
 I know that Thy creation cannot fail
 For, even through the mists of mortal thought
 Infallible are Thy mysterious steps,
 And, though Necessity dons the garb of Chance,
 Hidden in the blind shifts of Fate she keeps
 The slow calm logic of Infinity's pace
 And the inviolate sequence of its will'

Circle

(nudging one another excitedly; whispering)

Look at Sister Surya! What's she sayin'?

She ain't sayin' it She called to the Mother of the Universe who's sayin' it! And dancin' it for Sister! See the Light shinin' in her?

Sr. Surya:

All life is fixed in an ascending scale

And adamantite is the evolving Law

(Mesmerized, Br. Francisco, rocking Angelica's baby brother, joins the stately dance & beckons Circle to sway in Sr Surya's steps with them.

Dance of the Universal Mother becomes a ritual processional)

O Wisdom Splendour, Mother of the Universe. .

This strange irrational product of the mire,

This compromise between the beast and God

Is not the crown of Thy miraculous world.

I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,

At one with Nature and at height with heaven,

A Spirit vast as the containing sky

And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,

A god come down and greater by the fall

Sr Surya

A power arose out of my slumber's cell

It saw from timelessness the works of Time....

The unfolding Image showed the things to come

(Ambulancesirens&policeriotsquadalarmsshake Warehouse&CircleDancers,
but Sr Surya grows stronger, her dance almost violent in its power)

A grant dance of Shiva [tears] the past,

There [is] a thunder as of worlds that fall;

Earth is o'errun with fire and the roar of death

Clamouring to slay a world his hunger [has] made,

There [is] a clangour of Destruction's wings:

The Titan's battle-cry [is] in my ears,

Alarm and rumour [shake] the armoured Night

(She pauses, arrested, transfigured by what she sees next Breathlessly)

And now—I see—

(Motioning onwards opening in the roof, seizes hands of Survivors to point them to the vision)

I [see] the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
 Forerunners of a divine multitude
 Out of the paths of the morning star they [come]
 Into the little room of mortal life

Br. Francisco:

(Caught up in the vision, shares it with Survivors exultantly)
 See them, see them? Coming out of the Morning Star? God's flaming pioneers—!

Sr. Surya:

I [see] them cross the twilight of an age,
 The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn—

Br. Francisco:

(repeats lines as chant, encouraging Survivors to join him in a Circle Chant
 which becomes a free improvisatory Circle dance)

I [see] them cross the twilight of an age—
 Come, come O "sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn!"

Sr. Surya:

The great creators with wide brows of calm...

Br. Francisco & Circle Chorus.

The great creators with wide brows of calm .

Sr. Surya:

The massive barrier-breakers of the world
 And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will

Br. Francisco & Circle Chorus.

(Pantomiming images as they dance and chant)
 The massive barrier-breakers of the world
 And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will.

Sr. Surya.

The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
 The messengers of the Incommunicable,
 The architects of immortality

B1 Francisco & Circle Chorus

The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality!

Sr Surya

(weaving in & out of the Circle of Dancers, embracing each in turn)
Into the fallen human sphere they [come],
Faces that [wear] the Immortal's glory still...
Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire

Br Francisco

(Following Sr Surya's dancing steps)
Into the fallen human sphere they [come],
Faces that [wear] the Immortal's glory still
Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire.

Sr Surya

Swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering Earth
And justify the light on Nature's face

Br Francisco:

(in an exaltation of joy to the Dancers)
O Swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering Earth
And justify the light on Nature's face.

(A peal of music Love's Laughter & Rapture descends through opening in roof Sr Surya comes out of her trance-vision. All look at one another in wide-eyed wonder.

Music of Love's Laughter & Rapture is accompanied by an arc of Light in a Rainbow of Colours)

Sr Surya

(When the music dies away, hushed)
The rainbow . of our Mother of Radiances

Angelica

(nodding ecstatically)

Shinin' through the tears of the Weepin' Madonna Look! Look!

(Her little brother sits up weakly in Br Francisco's arms craning to see She rushes over to him)

She bringin' my brother back to life!

Red Hawk

There She is! Red! Like the canyon-lands!

(Drums his excitement, tentatively at first, then with an increasing vibrancy that catches all the Circle up in its pulsing rhythms)

Angelica

(transported, points to little brother swaying to the beat)

Look how he's dancin' for his Red Canyon Mamma and Black Madonna!

Wing Woe

An' Yellow Kwan Yin!

Angelica

White, too, like Melodie's Mother Mary!

J'han Muhammed

(not to be left out)

And brown! Like our lady Fatima, my Mother—

Br Francisco

(dancing with Angelica's little brother)

She's our Mother of Rainbows, and we are Her sun-eyed Children, cared for and tended to by Her angels!

Chorus.

(eagerly as they sway to the drum beat)

And Her messengers, She said!

And Her barrier-breakers—

Her *wrastlers!* That's for me!

Her swimmers— 'N' dancers—

(*Chorus*)

Carryin' Her magic word *Love* an't that right?

That's right That's *right* That's *right!*

(When the joyous hubbub has subsided & the Circle is one embrace swaying raptly to Red Hawk's drumming, Sr Surya, glowing, goes to him)

Sr. Surya.

(softly)

She appeared to you in the prayer Lodge, Red Hawk . didn't She.

(Red Hawk nods)

What did Red Canyon Mother tell you?

Red Hawk

(with difficulty)

“Walk your talk, Red Hawk,” she told me. “Sun-dance your chants *Be-come* My Sun-dancin' Warrior. make you a tribe of My Sun-dancin' Warriors 'n' dance over the length 'n' breadth of My lands chantin' My chants—'n' My warnins...”

(A sudden silence. Then a ripple of whispers.)

Chorus

Our Mother says... to make us a tribe of Her Sun-dancin' Warriors. .

To dance Her warnin's ...

To chant Her warnin's..

Her messengers over the length 'n' breadth of Her lands...

Red Hawk

“Care 'n' tend to My sufferin' Eart,” She told me,

“as I care 'n' tend to My sun-eyed children.

Walk your talk, dance your chants, plant your plants

of love 'n' hope . Sow 'n' grow as you go, startin' *now*

For the time is a-comin', the time is near

when the mountains will move 'n' all earth shake in fear

'n' My seas swallow continents, canyons divide

the worlds that are fallin' in fire at high tide

But—” She said—“your prayers 'n' rememberin'

your nature divine, will act with your Father creator

with Mine . ”

(Pauses· swallowing hard)

“As you walk your talk of love

Dance your chants of love

Plant your plants of hope

Live your lives as My Children of God. ”

(Stopping, covers his face, streaming with tears, abashed)

Chorus

(one by one they leap to their feet)

Ho! Mother of Rainbows, we'll make us a tribe

of Your Sun-dancin' messengers! Warriors of love!

'N' You planters of hope! 'Til You give us the sign
 that our prayers are answered—the Earth saved in time!
 (As they gather up their knapsacks & few belongings, Sr. Surya & Br
 Francisco helping them pack, Angelica takes the Black Madonna in her arms
 then hurries to her little brother)

Br Francisco.

(gently)

Best to leave Bo Bo with us, Angelica You'll be gone a long time

Angelica

You 'n' Sister are stayin' behind!

(All pause, looking expectantly for the answer)

Sr Surya

Our post is here, dear Pioneers, where our prayers and Her messages for her Sun-
 Dancers are relayed through the world . in its Big Change.

(A long pause)

Red Hawk

(manfully, drawing himself up tall, begins to drum softly)

Let's be on our way, Sun-Dancers. All who've heard our Mother of Rainbows
 speak to our hearts

Angelica

On our way 'n' our work, Pioneers from the Mornin' Star! *Startin' now!*

(Linking arms, they start to dance out.

Melodie's song is heard, her voice soaring joyously above them)

You're comin' with us, Melodie?!!!

(They pause for the answer)

All

Our Mother's Melodie is singin' *Yes!!!*

(They dance out Lights on globe-maps come on, winking merrily after
 them)

THE END
 A BEGINNING

SEYRIL SCHOCHEN

THE SHORELESS SEA

I AM the shoreless sea, O child,
To dwell upon me is to be
 within me, part of me
I am your creator and maintainer,
 transformer and my removing element am I

When you dwell upon me,
 you are in my heart
 How can we be separate
when I receive you
in your state of ecstasy
intoxicated at the thought of me

I am your Alpha and your Omega
and all that exists and moves
 between them—
I am the sacred syllable you utter

Thrice I visit you..
 In your cosmic form I enthuse
 you to love me,
In your celestial and transcendent form
 you exist, o child, because
 you and I are one

Behold, the great Surya
 sustains my earth,
Chandra lights up the sky
 when it is dark, and
 protects the Amrita, which
 the antilords covet
The Gods serve and worship me,—
 where am I not?

Sky, sea and earth hold me,
 because I contain all,
The Shoreless Sea I am

GEORGETTE COTY

ECONOMIC BARBARISM: “ITS CULMINATION AND ITS CLOSE”

SOME seventy years ago, Sri Aurobindo foresaw the end of the era of what he called “economic barbarism.” A brief quote from a chapter in *The Human Cycle* may suffice here

But if Science has thus prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture and if in spite of and even partly by its materialism it has rendered impossible the return of the true materialism, that of the barbarian mentality, it has encouraged more or less indirectly both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism,—for it can be called by no other name,—What of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which is now progressing to its culmination and its close. This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life.... The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society.¹

Voters in democratic nations often fall prey to the delusion that the governments they elect will faithfully fulfill their aspirations. But it is an open secret that Big Business interests—the occult rulers of society—have systematically achieved a stranglehold on the economic agendas which, in large part, several governments, especially those in the advanced industrialised nations, pursue.

I remember the day when an euphoric *Wall Street Journal* carried the banner headline on its front page: “Socialism Collapses Capitalism Triumphs” Poor benighted souls! It was not socialism that had collapsed, but the tyranny of the communist systems devised by Stalin and his ilk. Little did they realise then that the *moment of Truth* for the fiercely competitive free market capitalist system was not long in the future.

That brutal awakening may be more visibly in process now. In October last year a singularly perceptive French analyst, Philip S. Golub, writing in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, commented. “Before the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, most economists believed that the collapse of statist development models would usher in the ‘the second great age of global capitalism since the end of the 19th century’—an age of sustained growth, free trade and world economic integration. The East Asian miracle was held to be a landmark of globalisation and a singular example of the efficacy and power of American-styled market liberalisation and deregulation policies.

“Asia’s precipitous plunge into depression has greatly undermined this Utopian vision. Brought on by massive and rapid capital outflows, the Asian crisis has revealed the destructiveness and basic irrationality of unregulated collective market behaviour.

¹ SABCL, Vol 15, pp 72-3

In little over a year, the crisis has wrecked the economic and social prospects of emerging Asian countries, contaminated Russia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, and spread deflation to the international commodity markets''

Mr. Golub went on to reveal what the western media in general, largely owned or funded as they are by Big Business, have chosen to overlook as not being of sufficient 'news value'' ''The scale of the disaster is more apparent in the social sphere. In the downward spiral of depression, the middle classes are being proletarianised while the proletariat sinks into absolute poverty. The post-crisis social stratification in East Asia is a throwback to the feudal order which existed before the miracle years: a pyramid with, at its top, a small cast of the super-rich protected by the armed forces; at its bottom an ocean of voiceless poor. The economic contraction is accompanied everywhere by an explosion of unemployment in countries which, for the most part, lack even elementary social safety nets''

However things may actually turn out, the all too patent failure of the free market gospel in large parts of Asia, ominously extended now to Russia and Eastern Europe and already threatening the economies of Latin America, have brought fears of a global recession and the incalculable social and political consequences that must inevitably follow to the capitals of North America and the European Union, even if they have thus far emerged relatively unscathed by the economic meltdown elsewhere. The fears are amply justified, considering that the world is a single organism, and it is clearly inconceivable that if three continents are already seized by creeping economic paralysis, the others can remain healthy.

Right now they nervously watch Russia paying a very heavy price for having rashly imported American style capitalism into a country clearly not prepared by its history, culture and innate national genius for so hazardous an experiment. That price is paid in terms of near-total bankruptcy, unpaid wages, massive unemployment and chronic undernourishment at near-starvation levels for millions of Russians. The powers-that-be in India too, if with a degree of ambivalence these days, have undertaken a similar experiment against which Sri Aurobindo had warned long ago. As early as August 1915 he had written. ''That stupendous effort [of Western materialism and civilisation] is over, it has not yet frankly declared its bankruptcy, but it is bankrupt. It is sinking in a cataclysm as gigantic and as unnatural as the attempt which gave it birth. On the other hand, the exaggerated spirituality of the Indian effort has also registered a bankruptcy; we have seen how high individuals can rise by it, but we have seen also how low a race can fall which in its eagerness to seek after God ignores His intention in humanity. Both the European and the Indian attempts were admirable, the Indian by its absolute spiritual sincerity, the European by its severe intellectual honesty and ardour for the truth, both have accomplished miracles, but in the end God and Nature have been too strong for the Titanism of the human spirit and for the Titanism of the human intellect.''²

Again, more pointedly, in 1920 he had cautioned. “The scientific, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation of the West is now in process of dissolution and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at this moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation. When the most advanced minds of the occident are beginning to turn in this red evening of the West for the hope of a new and more spiritual civilisation to the genius of Asia, it would be strange if we could think of nothing better than to cast away our own self and potentialities and put our trust in the dissolving and moribund past of Europe.”³

Alas, that is precisely what India did and continues to do, with all too deplorable consequences that the best Indian minds and spirits have become painfully aware of.

Giant multinational conglomerates which, in Sri Aurobindo’s words, “are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society” use a casuistic catchword to mislead the unwary: globalisation. What they have in mind is certainly not the globalisation of the highest attained values and perceptions of human consciousness in all continents. Far from it. They only mean the globalisation of unfettered monetary greed—an ideology that serves the interests of those with money at the expense of those without. “Moneytheism” is the name of the religion rigorously practised by these behemoths. In truth, the much-prated globalisation process has really been in the spheres of Big Money operating mainly via border-spanning multinationals and reckless hedge funds and currency speculators out to ceaselessly augment their ill-gotten billions. In this sense, “globalisation” really means westernisation, *not* the emergence of any living sense of human unity and transnational values.

On the contrary, we might with more justification speak of the globalisation of degenerate tastes and appetites as evidenced, to give just one instance, by the unprecedented vulgarity of most of the film productions from Hollywood in America to Bollywood in India, of quick-fix techniques and electronic wizardries. The great majority of Internet junkies, for instance, are addicts of things like pornography, political (even terrorist) propaganda, and hooked to the not-so-hidden persuaders of dubious products and services: precisely why Sri Aurobindo called it the Age of the vital man (he was referring to the lower vital).

In this general darkness that threatens to engulf humanity, one discerns a promising flowering among some international Sri Aurobindo circles who have embarked on attempts, not merely in theory, but to consciously work towards the initiation of successful practical demonstrations of alternative systems of wealth creation, production, exchange and dispensation, and of life-styles.

The mind-boggling accelerations in all fields of life we witness today are not in the least surprising in the light of the Mother’s message of 24th April 1956.

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here (emphasis added), and one day will come when the most

blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognize it

The minority of mankind spread over all climes which has already begun experimenting with different life-style alternatives to economic barbarism are inspired pioneers who have dared to venture outside the beaten tracks of current scientific and economic paradigms in order to take a leap towards the Future. And we recall the Mother's New Year message of 1971 "Blessed are those who take a leap towards the Future"

The Future the Mother had in view was not just patched-up human institutions with new-fangled political, social, economic and technological notions and nostrums for an "improved" human world. The Future she envisaged was a more than human consciousness, divinely impelled, that would lead the world to something else altogether.

Human deprivation is no stranger to the richest country in the world. We also know that multiple barbarisms like fiercely politicised ethnic and religious differences and the conflicts arising from them have resulted in several killing-fields in our benighted world. Such happen to be some of the charming offspring of human civilisation.

But more and more people the world over are awakening to the sombre realisation that mental man has reached the end of his tether, and have become increasingly receptive to the liberating messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The most fascinating question for awakened souls these days is not the next ideological revolution but what lies beyond the human species on our planet.

However, let us not commit the meretricious folly of altogether denigrating the achievements of mental man. Mental development was a very necessary and important prelude to a vaster evolutionary scheme. Sri Aurobindo confirmed this, as did the Mother, on several occasions. One such cautionary note was sounded in *The Human Cycle* "Even in its negative work the materialism of Science had a task to perform which will be useful in the end to the human mind in its exceeding of materialism."⁴

We might also recall the marvellous concluding lines of his sonnet *The Greater Plan*

There is a need within the soul of man
The splendours of the surface never sate,
For life and mind and their glory and debate
Are the slow prelude of a vaster theme,
A sketch confused of a supernal plan.
A preface to the epic of the Supreme ⁵

By the same token, no rung of the evolutionary ladder up which we have climbed

4 SABCL Vol 15 p 71

5 SABCL Vol 5, p 137

deserves opprobrium. Nothing has to be either cancelled or escaped from. There are no escape routes available anyway for men or nations, for the good reason that nobody is saved unless all are saved. Whether consciously or unconsciously, all things move towards a great denouement—the most potent transmutation of consciousness in evolutionary history.

Mental men (including this writer) have often behaved like lemmings. The vast majority of us still do. I once came across a “profound” doggerel (in the open pages of *The Wall Street Journal* of all places) that went

Lemmings are a strange species
That suffer from an illusion
They've never learned the fallacy
Of jumping to a conclusion

Unlike lemmings, the mental conclusions we jump to are not always immediately fatal. More often than not, we merely end up nursing bruised egos or bumps on our heads. For instance, several western economic whiz-kids believe that the leaks the global economic boat has sprung can be plugged with some ingenuity and eventually all things will revert to *status quo ante*. What they fail to appreciate is that they deal with a no longer serviceable boat that has already sprung multiple leaks and is destined to sink into merciful oblivion in the depths. For, evolutionary pressures keep mounting to oblige the race to get into a new and altogether different boat.

Many economists and government leaders, especially in America, still entertain the delusions of Mr. Fukuyama, who a few years ago wrote an enthusiastically reviewed best-seller with the fatuous title *The End of History*, in which he made the case that the age of recessions and depressions was over, and globalised capitalism would bring about unending progress. It is a wonder that so many westerners (as well as gullible easterners) had only the day before yesterday, so to speak, readily swallowed such a highly dubious thesis.

In truth, the growing suspicion these days is that what we are really tuned in to today are the death rattles of prehistory. History has yet to begin. Indeed, it may already have tentatively begun in the increasing number of men and women who experience unaccustomed stirrings in their souls prompted by a Divine Consciousness, which *willy-nilly* impel them to stop treading the ever circling tracks of mind and to explore vast inner dimensions of consciousness instead. This minority of mankind scattered all over the world is probably more than we think, but let us hope not less than the critical number of awakened humans required to preclude purgation by “Kalki's Sword”.

Such an outcome cannot be altogether discounted, in the light of two of the Mother's messages. One was her grim warning in 1967

Men, countries, continents!
The choice is imperative.
Truth or the abyss

Even earlier came a statement she made in 1963:

I cannot promise you that the Divine's will is to preserve the present human civilization

Whether it's worth preserving is not a moot issue with many, including this writer.

The Future the Mother would have us leap towards lies above and beyond the achievements of mental humanity, for it would be a leap into a suprahuman dimension of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had seen and experienced that mentally inconceivable Future right down to their bodies, and the integral Yoga they offer is an effective way to attempt that leap, not up to heavens beyond, but *here, in life on earth*.

Our psychic being is the launching pad for that take-off into the multiple infinities of the Supreme Mediatrix. The few who have taken that leap towards the Future dedicate their lives and aspirations, thoughts and actions, towards manifesting, in whatever field of activity they may find themselves in, something of the power, light, harmony and beauty they have experienced or have had glimpses of. Willy-nilly, we are obliged to radiate what we are within ourselves to our surroundings, to the human beings we relate to or to the kind of work we do in our separate fields, whether these be individual, collective, social, national or international ones. No domain of human life or activity is foreign to the Divine labour in mankind. On the contrary, all domains of human endeavour on our planet need to be annexed to the *new consciousness* that presses to be born. In all circumstances we need to be guided by the infallible axiom that the human condition without is very much the result of the human condition within.

There can be no better introduction to the global reversal of consciousness than the Mother and Sri Aurobindo called for than the following glowing paragraph culled from the *Synthesis of Yoga*.

The Divine that we adore is not only a remote extra-cosmic Reality, but a half-veiled Manifestation present and near to us here in the universe. Life is the field of a divine manifestation not yet complete: here, in life, on earth, in the body,—*ihava*, as the Upanishads insist,—we have to unveil the Godhead; here we must make its transcendent greatness, light and sweetness real to our consciousness, here possess and, as far as may be, express it. Life then we must accept in our Yoga in order utterly to transmute it, we are forbidden to shrink from the difficulties that this acceptance may add to our struggle. Our compensation is that even if the path is more rugged, the effort more complex and bafflingly arduous, yet after a point we gain an immense advantage. For once our minds are reasonably fixed in the central vision and our wills are on the whole converted to the single pursuit, Life becomes our helper. Intent, vigilant, integrally conscious, we can take every detail of its forms and every incident of its movements as food for the sacrificial Fire within us. Victorious in the struggle, we can compel Earth

herself to be an aid towards our perfection and can enrich our realisation with the booty torn from the powers that oppose us ⁶

Are there enough intrepid souls on our planet to accept that challenging invitation? It would be a messy affair if there weren't. But we have the high assurance that the *transformation* will be, whether the culmination of the mental human prelude proves messy or propitious.

In any case, all speculation on the subject falls silent as we listen to Sri Aurobindo's words in *The Hour of God*. "Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear, for it is the hour of the unexpected."

C V DEVAN NAIR

A DREAM

I HAD the following dream on 14th February 1998 at 4 in the morning. It was written down immediately when everything was still very fresh and clear in my memory.

It was our beloved Mother's Birthday. This time the visit to the Mother's Room was going to be in the evening. The Darshan would start at 5 p.m. No definite time was mentioned for closing the Room. It was as though a Force pulled me to go to the Mother's Room. The Mother's Room that I visited in the dream was very different from her actual Room. I walked quite a bit towards it, but then suddenly I fell down. I could hear people talking: "Oh, my God! she has fallen down...." They fanned me and sprinkled water on me, but I did not get up. Somebody said: "Call Dr. Pal. She is bleeding profusely. She has cut her lips; blood is oozing out of her forehead and arms and legs."

A man in Army-uniform and wearing a turban, with a big prominent badge denoting his rank, was frantically searching for a bullet there. The condition was very grave and grim, very worrisome. This man had removed the bullet and hidden it somewhere in the Mother's Room. But now he could not trace it. "Where has it gone? I had kept it here. Hardly a minute ago. Now it has disappeared." I overheard what he was saying. I murmured: "But the bullet is there under the pot-stand, very near where I have fallen."

But, alas! no one heard me. I felt I was losing more and more energy. But, simultaneously, a very clear voice spoke to me: "Please, my child, don't lose your consciousness. Try, try hard and gather all your senses. It is extremely difficult for you, but you alone have to do it. I know it is a question of life and death for someone. Get up. It is only you who will succeed. Make a last sincere effort. Have full confidence in me. I'll *help you to succeed*."

With a lot of difficulty I stretched my arm and screamed: "There it is." People asked: "Where? We can't see anything." I again made an effort and said, still stretching my arm: "Please see under the pot-stand." And lo! the bullet was visible to everyone. The Army officer was so happy and grateful. People started paying me more and more attention. Again somebody said: "Go, hurry up and call Dr. Pal." Dr. Pal came running; he saw me and said: "She must be treated here itself. There is no time to take her to the Dispensary on a stretcher." A nurse rushed to the Dispensary and brought all that was needed. Dr. Pal bandaged my arms and legs and stitched my lips. He started shaking me and calling me: "Ila, Ila, open your eyes." Slowly I opened my eyes. He was glad to see me open them.

People present there wanted to take me down on a stretcher. But I refused and said: "I'll walk down slowly. It doesn't matter even if it hurts me." As my lips were stitched I could not talk, but through gestures I made them understand. Then I realised that I had not yet been before the Mother's Chair. Someone helped me to go near the Mother's Chair.

I walked down slowly and came to the meditation room. After some time the army

officer came running down, shook my hands and said ‘‘There was surely some occult Force around you. I could not believe my eyes how that bullet had disappeared. It was you who alone could see it and none of us! I feel that your going to the Mother’s Room was significant in a certain sense You were perhaps made an immediate instrument to stop the catastrophe that would have taken place’’

ILA JOSHI

THE TIME HAS COME

THE time has come with open eyes to see
That every separate me is but illusion
Because in a deeper sense there’s only we
And all that separates is I-possession.
For in God’s heart we all are one.

The time has come for the Lord’s own seeds to grow
In spite of all dark forces’ opposition.
So let’s unite, together let us strive
To outgrow our petty limitation
For in His heart we all are one

The time has come for the Mother’s sacrifice
To bear the fruit of luminous transformation
For Her humanity’s avant-garde to seize
When soon the Supramental Sun will rise
For in Her heart we all are one

The time has come with open minds to will
That Love should take the lead at every turn
And to surrender to the Saviours’ skill
In all those works divine that we must learn.
For in Their hearts we all are one

The time has come with open hearts to feel
This truth, profoundest of all truths sublime
That we together strive with all our zeal
Towards fulfilment in a life divine
For in truth’s heart we all are one

RUTH

THE SOUL OF A CITY: THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL AS ORGANISING METAPHOR AT THE BAUHAUS

THE BAUHAUS, founded in 1919 at Weimar, Germany, by Walter Gropius, was arguably the most influential school of design in modern times, set up in the form of a residential creative community of designers, craftsmen, architects and artists “The Crystal Cathedral” is a familiar name in contemporary Southern California and stands, almost literally, for what it says—a religious monument with the appearance of a transparent four-pointed crystal. It was designed by Philip Johnson and completed in 1980. Johnson is an American architect, who entered the limelight in 1932, the year of the closure of the Bauhaus at Dessau, Germany, with the publication of an article called *The International Style*. One may call this piece the clarion call heralding the approach and dominance of the “Bauhaus idea” in the U.S. since the International Style was that style of modern architecture that was “crystallized” at the Bauhaus from important, often contradictory ideological approaches to individual and social identity and form which had come into prominence at the turn of the 20th century and its pre-World War I years.¹ Clarion call also, of course, since the next few years were to see the emigration to the U.S. of several major creative personalities from the Bauhaus, including both its founding and terminating directors, the architects Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, and the consequent shaping of modern American and world architecture by the ideas of this school.² In this, the “synthesis” that was creatively realized in Weimar, Germany, may be seen, like the Hegelian *Zeitgeist*, to have migrated to a more favourable environment for its manifestation and further evolution—America, the nation with no history, the “international nation”, where “starting from zero” (Gropius’s term),³ mankind might build the structure of the ideal life, “like the crystal symbol of a new faith”⁴

Though, by 1980, when the Orange County “Crystal Cathedral” was being built, Philip Johnson, in typical “modernist” style, was re-identifying himself, altering his stance from that of the founder of the “International Style” to that of the originator of “Post-modernism”, the shift was to be seen as not a break but a modification and an evolution, a “re-dressing” of some of the issues implicit in the International Style, which had, since, more clearly articulated their cohabitational discomforts. Nor are these discomforts absent from Johnson’s structure, the anticlimactic appropriation of visionary idealism and architectural genius by questionable dehumanizing and

1 See Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House*, Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 1981, pp 37-8. The article was co-authored by Johnson with Henry-Russel Hitchcock as an essay in the catalogue of the 1932 Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition of photographs and models, introducing the Bauhaus to the U.S. The term “International Style” was taken from a book written and published by Walter Gropius in 1925, titled *International Architecture*.

2 *Ibid*, p 45

3 *Ibid* pp 12-14

4 Gropius “Programme of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar”, April 1919, quoted in Eva Forgacs *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, CEU Press, 1991, p 27

mediocratizing interests, be they garbed as consumerism, socialism, nationalism, or religion, being the ironic and somewhat quixotic adventure of modern architecture in its search for the perfect structure to house the human spirit. In this adventure, a grand initiatory note is struck by the Bauhaus, Johnson's work being a continuation of the ongoing text. Johnson's "Crystal Cathedral" is prefigured in the Bauhaus Manifesto, as hinted already, both terms of his appellation being present in it. The Manifesto is illustrated by Lyonel Feininger's woodcut, "The Socialist Cathedral", and Gropius's text mentions "the crystal symbol of a new faith"⁵. Moreover, several other features of resemblance between the two are noteworthy: 1) Feininger's soaring cathedral spires are illuminated by five-pointed stars, an echo of which may be seen in the four-pointed star shape of Johnson's cathedral. 2) Though the illustration supposedly shows a Gothic cathedral, the depiction of space in it is complicated by deliberate continuations in lines constituting the cathedral, as if through transparencies, the emphatic verticality of sheer rising columns, surrounding and including the cathedral lines, and oblique rays streaming out from the three apical stars. These create the impression of the cut faces of a crystal, with its multiple internal reflections, while being echoed also in the vertical glass faces of Johnson's cathedral. 3) Gropius's text invokes the image of the cathedral of the "future", therefore presumably built with new "futuristic" materials, "rising towards heaven", emphasizing the verticality. Finally, as if inviting the association between this "future" and its content, comes the phrase, "like the crystal symbol of a new faith"⁶.

At the outset, the ideas of "crystal" and "cathedral" as references in the Manifesto seem innocent enough. But more persistent attention draws out a complexity of connotation that relates these terms to varied idea-forces that can be seen as trying to define individual and social identity in terms of structure, material and function. Spiritual, social, political, economic and aesthetic issues clamour for dominance behind this symbol of the future trajectory and habitation of the universal human. In this essay, focusing on the metaphor of the "crystal cathedral" as central to the Bauhaus idea, I will attempt to identify what these background issues were and how they were sought to be harmonized by the style and community that evolved at the Bauhaus.

The turn of the 20th century, in Europe in general and Germany in particular, was an extremely fertile period for the shaping of new ideologies. Rapid industrialization in the latter part of the 19th century had introduced pervasive social changes, giving rise in result to humanistic reactions against mechanization. These reactions took many forms, ranging from the proliferation of esoteric cults to the study of metaphysical writings. The teachings of German mystics such as Jacob Boehme and Meister Eckhart became popular, as did non-western philosophies, such as Hinduism and Buddhism and esoteric "sciences" such as Rosicrucianism and Theosophy. On the other hand, German imperialism and nationalism were on the rise, and were contended by ideas of democracy, anarchism and socialism. Creative artists of all kinds felt and spoke about a

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ *Ibid*

crisis of the human soul and strove to load their work with the messages which would shape a new individual in a new society. In this sense, the creative artist took on the role of the prophet, the soul or conscience of afflicted humanity, who as the founder or follower of an ideological stylistic movement, saw his or her work as significant and propagative of transformational values.⁷ This background is important in understanding the artist's perception of him/herself as fulfilling a self-appointed sacred function in society and of the creative act as an independent power, equal in importance to political or economic agendas.

One such stylistic movement that swelled in its importance in Germany and elsewhere in the European continent, influencing varied practices until the 1920s, when post-War disappointment discredited it, was Expressionism. The stylistic category Expressionism first came to be used to describe the brilliant colour effects and textures originated in French Fauve painting and carried over into the works of the Brücke and the Blaue Reiter in Germany. Among the artists of the Blaue Reiter, Wassily Kandinsky published, in early 1912, his *On the Spiritual in Art*,⁸ equating abstraction with spirituality. Prior to Kandinsky, the art historian Wilhelm Worringer had published a treatise *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1908, linking abstract styles with transcendental points of view.⁹ Kandinsky and the other members of the Blaue Reiter were familiar with Worringer's ideas, and his publication combined with their group's artistic practices became instrumental in the relating of abstraction and Expressionism, and with the equation of antinaturalism with antimaterialism and antipositivism to such an extent, that this new style was soon perceived as a means for expressing visions of an utopic spiritual world.

Kandinsky's interest in eastern philosophies and his explicit affiliation with Theosophy and the ideas of the leader of the German Theosophical Society, Rudolf Steiner, played no meagre part in the development of his own artistic ideas and those of many of the creative personalities of his time.¹⁰ Moreover, the universalism of Theosophy and its development of correspondences between shapes, colours, sounds and psychic states led him to see in abstraction an international visual language, equally applicable and influential for all humanity.

An important publicist for transcendentalist Expressionism was the art dealer Herwarth Walden, who operated the Sturm gallery in Berlin. Through his exhibitions, publications and the periodical he edited, *Der Sturm*, an entire generation learned about Expressionism and abstraction as the essence of the international modern movement and Kandinsky as its high priest.¹¹ Soon, architects too began to claim the term

7 Long, Rose-Carol Washton, "Expressionism, Abstraction, and the Search for Utopia in Germany", in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, LACMA, 1986, p. 201.

8 Wassily Kandinsky "On the Spiritual in Art" (1912), in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Virgo, G. K. Hall, Boston, 1982, 1, 197.

9 Wilhelm Worringer, quoted in Long, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

10 Long, *Kandinsky, The Development of an Abstract Style*, Oxford, 1980, 26ff.

11 Long (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 206.

Expressionism for architectural innovations and to use Kandinsky's theories and interpretations of colour as support for new theories in architecture

As in the visual arts, in the field of architecture, important innovations were in progress. The impact of the Industrial Revolution in England had already resulted in a decided reaction in decorative style, with William Morris and his Arts and Crafts movement, which sought to resist mechanization through the preservation of fine craftsmanship.¹² This revivalism of the mediaeval organization of decorative practice in the form of craftsman's guilds and the abolition of distinction between artist and craftsman became part of Germany's ideological matrix, elements of it showing up prominently in Gropius's Manifesto: "Artists, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts! For art is not a 'profession'. There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency in a craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies the primary source of creative imagination. Let us create a new guild of craftsmen, without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist."¹³ However, the contrary view of architecture as allied to industry, conditioning it aesthetically, while utilizing its new materials and enhanced handling methods, was even more prevalent.

Gropius's own designs for the Fagus and Werkbund exhibition factories bear testimony to this trend. Important in the establishment of the close relationship of industry and craftsmanship in German architecture was Hermann Muthesius, who in 1907 founded the Deutscher Werkbund, the first of many societies which sprang up throughout Europe to improve standards in design and industry. Its aims, laid down in its statutes, were to unite "artists, craftsmen, experts and patrons, intent on an improvement of production through the collaboration of art, industry and the crafts."¹⁴ This statement can be seen to be very similar to Gropius's Manifesto, except for its conscious inclusion of "industry" (omitted in Gropius), and its prosaic lack of mystical romanticism. Gropius was a member of the Werkbund, as was Bruno Taut, a close associate and friend of Gropius. Bruno Taut was also closely connected with Herwarth Walden's Sturm circle, and befriended there the poet, Scheerbert, whom Walden called "the first Expressionist."¹⁵ Since the 1890s, Scheerbert had been associating with the Theosophists and drew on their theories as well as Eastern spiritual writings and the works of Boehme and Meister Eckhart to describe the coloured lights of the astral planes. Taut met Scheerbert in 1912, and was impressed by his views on architecture as an art which could transform human consciousness through the induction of meditative processes. Just before the outbreak of World War I, at the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition at Cologne, Taut collaborated with Scheerbert on a glass pavilion where

12 Gilian Naylor *The Bauhaus* Studio Vista, London 1968 p 12

13 *Ibid* p 50

14 *Ibid* p 20

15 Herwarth Walden 'Paul Scheerbert' in *Der Sturm* 6 nos 17/18 (Dec 1915) 98

coloured glass and Scheerbert's mystical inscriptions were combined to evoke a transcendental atmosphere. Scheerbert's aphorisms reflected both men's mystical faith in colour and light: "Light wants to penetrate the whole cosmos and is alive in their crystal"¹⁶ Clearly, once again, the crystal cathedral!

The polar ideas of the new art and architecture as being, on the one hand, a revival of the German Gothic in modern times, and on the other, an international futuristic style, persisted in the perceptions of both commentators and practitioners of these arts. Where Walden saw Expressionism as an international drive against materialism, Paul Fetscher in his 1914 book, *Expressionismus*, emphasized its rootedness in the communal metaphysical tradition of the Gothic.¹⁷ In his essays in *Der Sturm*, Taut emphasized the "religious intensity" needed to strive for forms expressive of metaphysical thoughts. He extolled the Gothic period as a time when artists had collaborated to create monumental works, but also urged architects to use new materials—glass, iron and concrete—in designs that would intensify spiritual feelings as they worked with other artists to create a temple to art.¹⁸

Gropius's views were influenced to a great extent by Taut. Immediately after the November Revolution, Taut and Gropius formed an artists' council based on the Soviet model, the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Work Council for Art). The aim of this council was to unite art and the people by reforming art education, organizing exhibitions and bringing together all the arts to build a great temple to the future.¹⁹ Taut's theories dominated the *Arbeitsrat*. He advised architects to learn from such painters as Kandinsky methods that could assist in the creation of an ideal communitarian society. As symbols of such a society, he envisaged monumental coloured-glass temples of culture rising from the centres of small, decentralized communities.²⁰ In 1920, Taut published *The Dissolution of the Cities*, which he called a parable for the "Third Millennium", and in which he advocated a form of architecture combining coloured glass and music to create meditative environments, in which individuals would become one with their community and ultimately with the universe.²¹

These ideas had a strong influence on Gropius. In April 1919, he teamed up with Taut and Adolf Behne to organize "The Exhibition of Unknown Artists", inviting architects, painters and sculptors who had "faith in the future" and believed that "one day a philosophy of life [would] exist and then its symbol, *its crystallization*—architecture—[would] also exist"²² (Italics mine). A majority of the exhibitors presented

16 Rose-Marie Haag Bletter, *Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbert's Vision: Utopian Aspects of German Expressionist Architecture*, PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1973, pp 78-85

17 Paul Fetscher, *Expressionismus*, R. Piper, Munich, 1914, pp 24-29

18 Marcel Franciscono, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar: The Ideals and Artistic Theories of its Founding Years*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1971, 98ff

19 Iain Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982, pp 232-33

20 Long (1986), *op cit*, p 209

21 *Ibid*

22 Bruno Taut, untitled essay, in *Exhibition of Unknown Architects* (1919) in *The Architecture of Fantasy*, ed Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sprelich, Praeger, New York, 1962, p 173

representations of visionary structures, a typical case being that of Johannes Molzahn, illustrating crystalline tower shapes as exemplary monuments of a future utopian society. In fact, the intersection of Molzahn with Gropius and Taut was not coincidental. An important participant of Walden's Sturm group, Molzahn lived in Weimar, and though he never joined the Bauhaus faculty, was closely connected with it, recommending other young artists such as Georg Muche for appointment to the school.²³

In the same month as "The Exhibition of Unknown Artists", Gropius opened the Bauhaus. The idea of the merging of all arts in order to create the transformational structures for society, along with Gropius's choice of painters to lead the design and fine arts courses from among the proponents of abstract transcendentalist Expressionism, established the tenor of the Bauhaus as the think-tank and the experimental society for fashioning the future crystal cathedral. With the exception of Gerhard Marcks, the major fine arts instructors, Johannes Itten, Georg Muche, Lyonel Feininger, and eventually, Kandinsky—all shared Gropius's mystical, utopian vision of transforming society through architectural and educational reform. When he wished to appoint Paul Klee and Schlemmer to the staff, Gropius had to write to Edwin Redslob, minister of culture, for assistance in dealing with the new government's fears that the two Swiss-born artists were "more wildly expressionistic than the artists already present."²⁴ In making the Bauhaus a residential educational system, organized in the fashion of mediaeval guild societies, with the instructor addressed as Meister, Gropius echoed traditional German metaphysics as well as some of the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movements of England.²⁵ However, a third connotational component went into this choice—that of the secret esoteric lodge, whose members practised magical ceremonies, seeking the collective experience of a higher consciousness. In an early speech to Bauhaus faculty and students in July, 1919, Gropius drew explicit attention to this reference, as, once again, to the image of the crystal cathedral. He mentioned that they should all see themselves as part of a "secret lodge" that would help work out a "new, great world idea", and that the times were a catastrophic period of world history in which much misery and privation would have to be endured before "spiritual and religious ideas" would find their "crystalline expression" in a great "cathedral [shining] its light into [the] smallest things of everyday life".²⁶

A brief consideration of some of the artists spoken of also reinforces the prevalence of these ideas, both as pre-Bauhaus tendencies in them and as shaping influences during their Bauhaus days. The case of Johannes Itten is perhaps the most striking. Itten had also been acquainted with the Expressionist circles around Walden and had exhibited at the Sturm gallery in the spring of 1916. During these years, his experimentation with abstraction as a transcendental style intensified, and he explained in a letter to Walden that his paintings would henceforth be directed towards "primary

23 Long (1986), *op cit.*, p. 210

24 Gropius, letter to Redslob, 13 Dec. 1920, Bauhaus Archives, Berlin

25 Naylor, *op cit.*, pp. 50, 52

26 Gropius, typescript of speech to Bauhaus faculty and students, July 1919. Bauhaus Archives, Berlin

matter’’ through the search for crystalline shapes, referring to the crystal as ‘‘fermenting mother’s milk’’²⁷ Like Scheerbert, Itten used the crystal metaphor to convey his own commitment to communicating spirituality through the purest means. In the fall of 1916, Itten moved to Vienna, where he remained till he was invited by Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus. It was here that he read Indian philosophy and pursued Theosophy, to which Gropius’s first wife, Alma Mahler, is said to have introduced him. In 1918, he found the theosophical text *Thought Forms*, by Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, and noted that after comparing their charts with his paintings, he was impressed by their equations of colour and psychic states.²⁸ At the Bauhaus, his spiritual interests further intensified, as he turned, with cult-like intensity, towards the practice of the principles of the Zoroastrian-based Mazdavian ideology, with its heightened awareness of a battle between the forces of Good and Evil and the need for conscious choices at every instant and in all one’s works.²⁹ Itten’s spiritual extremism combined with his dominating personality at the Bauhaus soon plunged the community, willy-nilly, into a disciplinarian environment of yoga practices and vegetarianism,³⁰ ultimately leading to a split into two camps and Itten’s resignation from the Bauhaus in 1922.³¹ However, two facts are noteworthy and often overlooked in discussions of Itten’s contribution at the Bauhaus:

- 1) Itten’s own artistic style at the Bauhaus showed a subtle shift from figurative references through abstraction to a play of pure geometric form and luminous colour. The paintings of this period, apart from the experiments using artistic lettering (and often, even there) resemble kaleidoscopic visions, as seen through the impact of light on multicoloured crystals.
- 2) The fact that Itten could succeed in determining Bauhaus communal practice so completely for a while may be seen as at least partially due to the ideological orientation given to it by Gropius from the beginning, with the expectation that members of the community were participants of a model society leading to an utopian future. Post-Itten Bauhaus veered away from spiritual extremism to a more moderate idealism and a greater concern for the prevalent social condition in the environment. Moderatism also in the alignment with industry as against an uncompromising visionary stance was emphasized by Gropius, both in recognition of the need for architecture to engage with mechanization and its dependence on industry and government for funds to survive.³² However, Gropius did not abandon his idealism due to the Itten episode, bringing in Kandinsky, who had returned from a disappointing liaison with Communism in Russia, to fill in Itten’s place.

27 Itten to Walden, 21 April 1916, in Long (1986), *op cit*, p. 211

28 Itten note, 6th July, 1918, in Long (1986), *op cit*, p. 212

29 Eva Forgacs *op cit*, p. 51

30 *Ibid*

31 Naylor *op cit*, pp. 66, 70

32 *Ibid*, pp. 70-71

Considering that Kandinsky was already considered one of the founders of transcendentalism in art, Gropius's choice evidences his continued faith in the power of spirituality to shape art and identity³³

Though Kandinsky's contribution to the fundamental ideas that went into utopian expressionism have already been discussed, his stay at the Bauhaus saw a shift in his own artistic expression. While his earlier abstract forms had a more free-flowing appearance, his choice of forms now, like Itten's, began showing a greater concern for geometry. Typical paintings of this period are "Circles within a Circle" and "Several Circles",³⁴ where circular forms seem to reflect and refract one another, as in a regular transparent coloured object struck by light—another echo of the crystal. With the closure of the Bauhaus, Kandinsky's abstraction returned, once again, to a new direction—this time, the exploration of more organic forms, resembling microbiological life-forms as seen under a microscope. Thus, the Bauhaus period seems unique in Kandinsky's output, determined quite probably by the guiding influence of the symbol of the crystal cathedral.

Feininger's cubist-influenced crystalline human and other natural forms and apparitional presences manifesting in intersecting light rays, Georg Muche's cosmic themes and Josef Alber's colour experiments may all be seen in this light. The matter can be fruitfully further investigated, however, it may be more useful to draw together, at this point, the various meanings that the metaphor *crystal cathedral* had/has become associated with at the Bauhaus, as form representative of identity.

- 1) Crystal as pure—As in crystalline. The idea of a transformed identity as being purified of its "mire and complexities"³⁵
- 2) Crystal as transparent—The idea of identity as fully articulated and thus without the need for hiding anything. Gropius advocated the exposure of inner processes to the outward gaze as conducive to a total view of identity. Of course, this is an extreme form of idealism, open to abuse by unscrupulous elements in an egoistic society. It can work only in a sufficiently psychologically transformed community of trust, but the faith of Gropius and others of his leaning in the shaping power of architecture as a transformative influence caused him to espouse this view.
- 3) Crystal as reflective and refractive—The idea of identity as revelational and polyvalent, holding within itself living images of its community (refraction) and mirroring its community (reflection).
- 4) Crystal as vibrational—The idea of identity as sympathetic, vibrating in unison with others of the community at a pre-verbal level of consciousness.
- 5) Crystal as sacred—The idea of identity as historically linked to occult traditions.

33 Long (1986), *op cit*, p. 213

34 See *ibid.*, pp. 214, 215 for a discussion of astronomical influences on these paintings.

35 Yeats, W.B., from 'Byzantium' 1927, in *Collected Poems*.

- and magical practices in all times and societies and housing a powerful mystery
- 6) Crystal as international—The idea of identity as lacking any historical or national bias. This became the foundation of the International Style
 - 7) Crystal as futuristic—The idea of identity as materially constituted so as to evidence miraculous powers of control and handling. This idea leads to the alignment and fascination of the Bauhaus with modern technology, and combined with its international styling, to contradictions with mediaevalism, nationalism and decentralization
 - 8) Crystal as perfection—The idea of identity as partaking of the miraculous regularity of perfection evidenced in the natural world through the crystal
 - 9) Crystal as synthesis—The idea of individual and social identity as being the minimal distillate of many forces or varied individualities/particularities uniting in the crucible of transformation and emerging as simple identity, an alchemical usage
 - 10) Crystal as united diversity—The idea of individual and communal identity as united but not through the suppression of individual expression, these having become articulated as the different facets of the crystal
 - 11) Cathedral as the temple—The idea of identity as sacred space. The difficulty here is what is installed at the centre of this sacred space. In transcendentalist terms, it is a formless mystery, the source of creative inspiration and mystical revelation that is installed here. But that interpretation has been and remains constantly subjected to the manipulative impulses of partial, partisan answers—the nationalist Swastika, socialist or industrial uniformity, religious dogma

As examined in Philip Johnson's building, near to us in time and space, this organizing metaphor of the Bauhaus idea can be seen to be still very much alive and among us. Also, as in that example, its anticlimactic and dubiously compromised character continues to be equally evident,³⁶ spotlighting a central deficiency in the image of the architect as an independent creative shaper of society through spatial and environmental conditioning.

The crystal cathedral as an utopic form representative of identity in the future, as envisaged by Gropius and his associates, thus remains unmanifest, in spite of its many approximations and compromises with false gods, its idealism a magnetic image whose subtle pressure continues working on human identity, its transformative influence more astral than material. It is a structure whose idea was before its time and doomed to remain so until mankind changes.

Or could there be a structure, the soul of a decentralized utopic collective, as Taut envisaged, whose sheer perfection could transform identity in the community at whose centre it stands? If so, perhaps the aspiration for perfection of identity in these inhabitants would need to reach a critical mass before such a structure could fully

36 The Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, California, U.S.A. is a church run by Robert H. Schuller

manifest An uncompromising purity, a will to Harmony, a clear discrimination and a refusal to suffer conditioning by the forces of the falsehood in a sufficient number are perhaps the exacting psychological conditions that need to be fulfilled. Are we not speaking here of the Matrimandir?

DEBASHISH BANERJI

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AWAY FROM WORDS

AFTER these many years of secret-splendoured singing
The poet-heart is turning gently
away from words

The inner ear is listening
for new chords
other tunes
leaning ever more intently
to catch the remote sweet hum
the Mother of all universes croons
cradling her burgeoning offspring-worlds

Do not try to hold it here
tie it down to this sublunary sphere
of worry and duty

Let it go
soaring or drifting free
to revel and bathe in the flow
of yet-unexpressed beauty
maybe to capture
a foam of lyric droplets
from the unimaginable glow
waiting to gush out and ambush with rapture
our astonished future selves

SHRADDHAVAN

THE NEW PARTNERS OF GLOBALISATION: ACTORS OR SUBJECTS?*

HUMANITY today stands at a crucial crossroads in its long and tortuous destiny on Planet Earth. It now has the resources and technology to abolish hunger and illiteracy, want and unemployment from the face of the earth within the next two decades. But what it lacks is the wisdom and compassion to achieve this goal. We have broken the space barrier, explored the planets and are reaching out for the stars themselves, but we have not been able to break the shackles of poverty and hunger, despotism and malnutrition that still hold over half the human race in servitude.

The history of humanity over many thousands of years can be conceptualised as a series of transitions, first from the caves to the forests, then to nomadic, pastoral, agricultural, pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial civilisations. It is now clear that we are involved in what is perhaps the most fundamental and difficult of all transitions, the transition to the global society. Powered by multiple revolutions in science and technology, all aspects of life on this planet are in the process of globalisation. Politics and economics, trade and commerce, industry and communications, as well as cultural aspects such as dance and music, food and drink, are all in the grip of the globalisation process. The Internet now provides a unique methodology in interaction cutting across all barriers of nationality or religion, sex or economic status.

While many of these developments are obviously positive, because for the first time they are knitting the human race together as in the ancient Puranic concept of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*—the world is a family—we cannot deny the fact that there are also some very negative aspects. Drugs and drug-trafficking, terrorism, arms-trafficking, sexually transmitted diseases, and a steady diet of horror and violence, ultra-consumerism and hyper-promiscuity, a curious obsession with death, disaster and dinosaurs on film and television, all represent dangerous and negative trends. Whether we like it or not, the processes of globalisation have become virtually irreversible, and as we enter the third millennium a.d. we must seriously consider how the positive aspects can be highlighted and the negative ones counteracted. Are we the inhabitants of a neo-Atlantis, a version of the fabled continent rich and glittering with untold wealth and material affluence, which one night sank below the waves, unable to survive its own technological ingenuity? Are we a gigantic Titanic, full of hubris and arrogance, speeding inexorably towards a fatal encounter with the primeval forces of nature? These are questions we must all confront.

Are we going to be active partners in the process of globalisation, or simply passive onlookers blown away in the typhoon of change that is sweeping across the world? Will globalisation result in the permanent domination of one nation and one culture, or will we move into a pluralistic, multi-polar and multi-cultural society in the

* Address delivered at *Forum 2000* in Prague on 12 October 1998

century that lies ahead? And what is the role of the individual in confronting these monumental alternatives that now beset the human race?

The answer to these questions will depend on several factors. To take the political factor first, it is essential that the whole United Nations system should be restructured in order to make it more responsive to the realities half a century after the end of the second world war. At present the five permanent members of the Security Council represent just about 1/3 of the human population, while 2/3 is placed in a secondary position. This situation emerged at the end of the war when the victors understandably arrogated to themselves a special status. However, the world has changed dramatically since then. It is clearly anomalous that countries like Germany and Japan with their amazing post-war resurgence, huge nations like India and Brazil, and the whole African continent should remain outside the pale of permanent membership of the Security Council. A creative restructuring of the United Nations is long overdue and, although discussions have been going on for some time, it would be most appropriate if the matter is clinched in the year 2000 so that in the next millennium there could be a more equitable world order.

The second aspect is the economy. The global fiscal and financial structures are facing severe pressures, and the ongoing crisis in Asian markets represents a major challenge to the present system. If we plan to be actors and not subjects, we surely cannot accept the complete and permanent domination of the World Bank/IMF monetary policies. While these estimable institutions have no doubt provided invaluable support over the last half century, it is necessary for several strong regional economic groupings to emerge so as to ensure a more equitable world order. One can immediately identify at least 10 such groupings, North America and the European Union, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and, SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation), Latin America and Australasia, China and Japan, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world. The European Union, of which the Czech Republic is an important partner, represents a dynamic model for other regions. It is truly amazing that countries of Europe which were literally at one another's throats for a thousand years have, as a result of economic compulsions and enlightened political leadership, transcended their traditional animosities and forged an economic, monetary and quasi-political union. It is my sincere hope that this will be the path adopted in South Asia, the region to which I belong, so that the recently acquired nuclear capabilities are put to creative rather than destructive purposes.

The third element is the cultural factor, in which I would include the educational dimension. What the global society requires is not a homogenisation of culture, but rather a situation in which each civilisation makes its special contribution to the rich mosaic of the emerging global society. Asian cultures, of course, go back unbroken to the dawn of history thousands of years before the birth of Christ. These cultures, particularly the Indian and Chinese traditions which between them represent 40 per cent of the human race, must play an appropriate role in the global cultural renaissance if we are to become positive actors and not passive subjects. I would like here to point out

that “we must be guided by the Utopian aim of steering the world towards greater mutual understanding, a greater sense of responsibility and greater solidarity, through acceptance of our spiritual and cultural differences” What in fact is needed is a creative symbiosis between science and spirituality, whereby alone can we achieve our collective goals

As far as the environment is concerned, the situation as we enter the 21st century is very disturbing. The hopes that were raised have not been fulfilled, mainly because the developed nations have not lived up to their commitments. On the contrary, the situation appears to be steadily deteriorating. If we are to move towards any kind of sustainable society in the next century, we will have to reverse the plundering of planet earth that has been such a tragic feature of the twentieth. Mother Earth, *Gaia* in the Greek tradition, *Vasundhara* in the Hindu, has nurtured consciousness up from the slime of the primeval ocean four billion years ago to where we stand today. We have to repay our debt to Nature by reversing our narrowly anthropocentric policies of exploitation and dominance, and begin the long process of nurturing the earth and healing her wounds. If this is not done, actors and subjects alike will be overwhelmed by the processes of environmental destruction. The population bomb is also ticking away, specially in those countries that can least afford these exponential rates of growth, and if this trend continues, the world will face a major food and water crisis in the course of the next century which can cause domestic and international havoc and chaos.

Finally, there is the critical role of religions which continue to influence the behaviour of billions on this planet. While there has of late been an upsurge in the world's great religions, it is essential that this should be channelised towards a new level of understanding based on mutual respect which is the basic premise of the Interfaith movement, and not allowed to slide back into the age of the crusades and jihads that devastated the planet centuries ago even with primitive military technology. International terrorism based upon religious fanaticism is emerging as yet another major threat to a sane, global society, and its malign effects are already becoming visible on several continents. A creative reinterpretation of great religious texts is urgently necessary if religion is to live up to its name as a force that unites rather than divides human beings. Cultural empowerment, specially of women, is often determined by the prevailing religious tradition. Women can no longer be relegated to a secondary position in the new globalism. Indeed the suppression of the feminine, as several creative thinkers have pointed out, has been at the root of much of the horror and violence that we have witnessed in our own century.

This leads to the spiritual dimension which transcends all differences of race and religion, creed and nationality, sex and sexual preference, and represents the real link between individual human beings on this planet. Fanning the spiritual spark within each one of us into the blazing fire of spiritual realisation is the next major goal of human evolution. What the Bible calls, “the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” and what the Rishis of ancient India speak of as “the Great Being shining like

a thousand suns beyond the darkness,' describe that inner light which resides in the deepest recesses of our consciousness. In the final analysis, the extent that each of us is able to experience that light may well determine whether we will be passive subjects or dynamic actors, as we hurtle headlong into the next millennium astride the irreversible arrow of time.

KARAN SINGH

20 AUGUST 1975

How much longer this being here,
 this being here, in the visible world?
 When, for this time, will
 the mission assigned be complete?
 Only in the quietest hours
 do Space and Time dissolve;
 and the brief visit home
 leaves knowledge behind
 and longing for the eternal Source
 But also knowledge of what
 must be brought
 out of the darkness here into the light
 How much longer, this time,
 this toil in the darkest dark
 of the mine?
 For the heart as already been transported
 into the transparent clarity of the Whole
 From there it speaks to me.
 And penetrates with its glowing light
 into the deepest chambers
 of space, of time

JO GEBSER

TO BE OR NOT TO BE...

AN INTROSPECTION

MANY of us who are now in Pondicherry took birth when Sri Aurobindo was here physically on this marvellous planet earth Marvellous—because it is only this planet which is evolutionary In fact it is this wondrous entity of a planet that has caused Sri Aurobindo's descent on it time and time again to lead the evolution The reason for his descent in the present era is indeed crucial, for it involves the final and supreme decision to be taken by man whose conscious collaboration is needed by evolutionary Nature to accomplish her task For it is in this final phase of evolution that the spiritualisation of mental beings who have emerged out of matter has to be completed.

And it is in this crucial era that an unseen or secret power drew many of us from our ordinary habitat in different parts of the world to the "Cave of Tapasya" of Sri Aurobindo as is evident from Shyam Kumari's very interesting narrative under the title *How They Came to the Ashram* published in *Mother India* serially from December 1989

The unseen power which is obviously non-human has certainly had some pre-determined plan to materialise in which the individual souls that it has brought here must have definite roles to play It may be that it intended to guide the souls in their effort to take the next decisive step towards their further progress Is it not then incumbent upon us to remain fully and wholly aware of this supernatural phenomenon in which we are involved, and be vigilantly conscious of it all along in our day-to-day activities?

It was also expected of us that we should make a scrupulous appraisal of the difference between the life we had lived before we came here and the life which we are supposed to live here. Perhaps by this time many of us if not most have realised the difference and are progressing Yet it is a cardinal point to be remembered at every forward step For we very well know that the ordinary life which we have lived before is a round of multifarious desires and greeds So long as we remain attached to that mode of living and preoccupied with it, assuredly we fail to make any positive progress here Are we not therefore supposed to discover a way out of the round? Or should we tend to build up a middle way with the materials of compromise? Our aptitude in our 'Life before Pondicherry' for getting associated with people—known and unknown or very little known alike—and spending time with them in gossiping, chatting or talking on issues relating mainly to physico-vital problems of the day was highly appreciated, for that proved that we were social, but this very aptitude proves here wholly damaging not only to ourselves but also to the atmosphere that has been created and developed for our living

So, to get rid of this sort of harmful eventuality are we not expected to develop an attitude of indifference when we come into close contact with such persons?

And there is also what is called atavism which generally proves unhelpful for the

life we are to live here. Perhaps we have already got rid of all these problems since they were to be dealt with in the early years of our arrival. Nonetheless, it is better to have an inlook.

Of course we certainly know we are transitional beings, and not final. We are somewhere in between animal and god. And it is a fact that with animality, that is to say, with animal mind and instinct we started our journey, but divinity is the destination we must reach. Or, in other words, we are to unfold the Truth-Consciousness which is latent in our being to reach the end of our journey. Are we on the right track? The question arises because we know that more often than not we are overridden by the animal in our nature and that we are not keen enough to intensify our effort to make our nature wholly obedient to the divinity in ourselves.

Not that we do not know that at present we are undergoing an evolutionary crisis when we are to choose once for all to be or not to be wholly god! That is to say, whether we are determined to make further evolutionary progress to ensure the unfoldment of a higher and more elevated consciousness than the mental and rise above what we are at present, or to remain ever in the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death.

Have we chosen? Or are we yet to choose?

Half-animal as we are, we have not been able as yet to live in the soul. Perhaps we still live in the yester-era, and are nurturing the idea like men living in the world outside that to be wholly god—to be more than man—is something abnormal to ourselves.

Of course those among ourselves who are ahead of our times may say that to indulge in such a way of thinking means to avoid the travail of completing the journey through the only way, which is long and arduous.

There is no denying the fact that the present age is predominantly materialistic, commercial and economic when the thinking mind of man devotes all its knowledge to a tremendous expansion of the vital and physical life, even though it seems paradoxical that Reason instead of guiding them to their further progress has become a docile servant of the physical and vital nature. And we are caught, sometimes very acutely, in the vibration of such people when we cannot avoid coming into contact with them.

Is it not a fact that most of us still live on the surface of our being, exposed to the touch of external influences? And perhaps that is why we are oblivious of the life which we are to live here. Were we not born to achieve the highest ideal? Else why were we brought here?

We know that “Man cannot by his own effort make himself more than man, the mental being cannot by his own unaided force change himself into a supramental spirit.” Yet we attach more importance to our own poor personality.

As a matter of fact, we have been brought here individually and not *en masse*, from different places in the same or different years. It is also a fact that many of those who came of their own accord felt an intense inner urge to settle here to offer themselves to the service of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. They also came not in a group but individually from different places in the same or different years. This excludes those who came here long ago and are still with us and who have had a very intimate

connection with Sri Aurobindo as his very close disciples.

Perhaps we also know why it so happened. In this age of individualism which is otherwise known as the Rational Age, spiritualisation of mental man has to be accomplished first in the individual then in a great number of individuals, later it can lay effective hold upon the community. We are therefore expected as individuals to recreate ourselves in the Spirit and then communicate our idea and its power to persons living in the world outside when they come into contact with us instead of getting influenced by their vibrations.

We have learnt that the mental beings we are at present cannot be the last term of evolution and that our mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it. And so "evolutionary Nature keeps alive her ulterior intentions in the minds of a few and uses man's greater mental evolution to raise them to a higher plane." We have also learnt that "it is always the individual who receives the intuitions of Nature and takes the step forward dragging or drawing the rest of humanity behind him." For it is the individual who is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement. It is he who finds himself and who becomes conscious of the truth and power of the spirit.

Hence arises the question: are we among those individuals whom evolutionary Nature raises to a higher plane? Or are we yet to prepare ourselves to become such individuals?

To know what really we have become we have to dive deep below our mental surface and the physical surface of Nature. To rise above mind is our final aim. Hence we are supposed to know rightly the bounds of our mind and how to cross over them. The mind of mental being, though it is still in quest of truth, is the highest status of consciousness emergent out of matter in this ignorant world. And with this obscured mental power we have reached the utmost consciousness and knowledge of which we are capable. If we try to go further we have to move in a cycle, for mind cannot go outside its own cycle. And this is our *limitation*, for we are still individual mental beings. But as a matter of fact we are not content with what we have become. Instead we feel an intense inner urge to discover what is still latent in us and how to manifest it in our outer existence.

For to be fully and wholly conscious of our own being is Nature's aim in us. To realise our true self or the truth of our being is our real business. But our mind, though it has reached its summit, proves incapable of making us wholly aware of what we are within. It is, therefore, necessary for our mind to become illumined with the light of the spirit so that it may reflect something of divinity. Hence we need to get our mental substance spiritualised. For the spiritual change we aspire for begins by an influence of the inner being and the higher spiritual mind.

Is it not that this inner urge may become more and more intense if we rise above the mixture of falsehood and half-truth of our outer existence? If so, for our inner development, is it not necessary for us to become uninterested in affairs of the outer world which are not our concern, and remain detached from their vibration and become completely free from attachment? For it is then only that our higher and inner being,

now unknown to us, will become ourselves. So, we are yet to go a long way as many of us have already realised. There is nothing to be depressed about; the one thing that we need most is *Resolution*. Resolution indeed is the master-key.

SAMAR BASU

A HEART OR WHAT?

A HEART or What
of unknown Immensity,
adorned with exquisite love
and ineffable joy .
I peep at the door
overwhelmed and fumble,
but who allowed me
to step inside?

O boundless Heart!
Now dare I swim in
Your perennial stream
where I and my foes
would together lodge
most intimately,
most cordially—
like caressing sweethearts.

O nameless Immensity!
A berth is surely
reserved for me
by Your compassion
for the clasp
of the Timeless
even in uneven times.

ASHALATA DASH

BIRDWATCHERS' DELIGHT—A TRIP TO KALIVELI

THE five of us arrive in a rattling taxi. We leave the car on the old Madras road, where the small sandy path to Kaliveli tank starts. It is still dark. The February moon lights the landscape with a silvery sheen. Silently we cross the soft ground, winding our way between paddy-fields hedged with agave plants. A telegraph pole, a lonely palm tree whose stiff leaves swish and clash in the morning breeze—these are our landmarks. Then the path opens up into a wide expanse. We can sense the lake ahead before we can see it. The cool breeze increases carrying the scent of water, mud and reeds.

A hundred paces further on we try to find a place to sit down facing the water, without getting our behinds soaked on the monsoon-saturated ground. Five motionless figures in a row, blending into the thorn-bushes, the piles of sand, the stillness and vastness all around.

Suddenly there is the rush of a thousand wings beneath the night-blue sky, passing swiftly over our heads towards the surface of the lake. Then other speeding flocks follow. Like strong gusts of wind they approach with a sudden crescendo, then vanish with a whisper, a dying sigh in the darkness.

Our planet rolls on. From the velvet-black ground, the slightly curved grey line of the horizon can now be distinguished. A trace of light appears above it in the east. Squawks and chirrups break the silence as the hungry birds arrive and start fishing in the shallow waters. Ellen pours tea from her thermos flask. Anne lifts her binoculars. "An egret!" Mary makes a sound of delight, pointing to the north. "Another egret?" I ask. "A tree-trunk," someone contradicts. But no, it is a fisherman, wading in the shallows on the lookout for food, just like the birds. At a little distance stands a crane, erect and aristocratic, clad in silver grey, he eyes the water pensively. Little sand-coloured balls are rolling to and fro among the short grass. Rainpipers, their legs moving invisibly with the speed of whirling drumsticks. Flocks of duck fly by with glistening wings—they have come all the way from Siberia. As they land on the water we see a brownish mass, wriggling, cackling and spluttering with contentment.

The sun rises, oversized and glowing red, pouring its light of molten gold over the lake. Now we can see the countless white, black and grey birds that have arrived from every side. Black storks hold meetings, a group of spoonbills stand in silent contemplation, and between the bigger birds are smaller species, harder to identify as they shoot close above the surface of the water, zigzagging, dipping their beaks and wing-tips into the ripples and calling to each other.

We find ourselves sitting within a Chinese water-colour painting. Like inky brush strokes grasses stand up against the water, a milky fog arises, and a filigree line of palm trees is outlined upon the horizon. All shades of grey and silver are to be seen in the undulating hillocks and the clouds above them. Stilts gracefully walk the muddy beach, their overlong legs like stalks of wheat. Poking their long pencil-thin beaks, upturned at the end, into the soft ground, they seem to perform a kind of dance with their spindly legs.

We start to move slowly westwards. Some pelicans come towards us, sailing solemnly along, their huge bills carried with ease upon their curved necks. Small egrets dot the water with their dazzling white plumage, now and then unfolding their wings and lifting in a slow glide.

Ellen points to the west. Mary lifts her binoculars with a little cry of excitement. Anne waves her hat in the air—there they are! A pink and white dotted row far out over the water—the flamingos. With awe we watch the hundreds of large birds slowly moving on in the shallows. Their strangely formed beaks are dipped into the water, to filter out the microscopic plankton on which these huge birds live. They stay together in a flock, keeping their distance, and moving along like a pinkish cloud that has settled on the water.

We choose a small sand-dune for our picnic. By this time the sun is high and hot. Anne sticks a piece of black paper over her delicate nose to prevent sunburn. Ellen ties on her straw hat with a silken scarf for better protection. I don a butter-yellow cotton hat to shade my eyes. We get Alix to open her bird book and she supplies names and information about all the species we have seen. On a world map we follow the migration routes of ducks, storks and many other birds. The cranes' route crosses Kivik in southern Sweden. I have friends there who watch these same birds every spring. For many years they have touched down on the same fields to rest, and each year they are fed winter potatoes by the farmers there. I try to imagine the long flight of our winged friends over the endless distances. As they cross above Istanbul they are observed by enthusiastic birdwatchers from all over the world who gather there every year for the event.

Finally we plod back to our waiting taxi—hot, tired, happy, with grateful hearts.

Will the next monsoon bring enough water to Kaliveli tank again? Shall we be able to repeat our birdwatching? Will this haven remain undisturbed? We pray silently for all this and more, each in her own way.

SIBYLLE SHARMA-HABLIK

THE RED RED SIGNATURE

A SHORT STORY

OLD Dharmadas suddenly came to a halt before a multistoreyed building under construction, not far from the New Market in Calcutta.

“What happened?” I asked.

He did not answer immediately but, on my repeating the question, said, his voice betraying a subtle irritation. “Does anything really happen? The old mansion is gone And with my death would vanish the memory of Karim and Bablu. Who would then know what had happened to those two chaps here, in that house that is lost? And, if an incident is not remembered, what’s the assurance of its ever having happened? The old mansion, the backdrop of the incident, has vanished to its last brick!”

As he paused, I said bluntly, “Dharmadas-ji, this is philosophy. I’m interested in an account of the bare incident should you be pleased to tell me ” Dharmadas was too gloomy to speak immediately, but he did come out with his account after all, which, in brief, is this:

Karim who hailed from a village near Digha, had been in Calcutta for many years, serving several masters as a chauffeur Well, those were days—the early forties of this century—when if you put a question to a villager hailing from the common borders between Bengal and Orissa whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim, a Bengali or an Oriya, he would first wonder why the hell was that question at all important, before giving you an answer

The orphan Bablu, who tended the Zamindar’s cattle, met Karim on one of the latter’s occasional visits to his village. “Karim Kaka, can’t you find me a job in Calcutta?” the boy asked

“Why not?” responded Karim, proud to be in a would-be promoter’s role.

“Karim Kaka, will you make me a great driver like you?”

Karim laughed and said again, “Why not?”

Karim was not unhappy to visualise himself in the role of a trainer either But he added, “That will take time First you must become a great sweeper or a great servant. Slowly you must grow familiar with the life of the great city; next, with its intricate and dangerous roads, lanes and man-eater traffic, and only then with the steering wheel. My boy, that is not going to happen in a day!”

Indeed, Karim did find a job for Bablu in the household of a jeweller in Bow Bazar and, whenever he happened to drive to that area running his master’s errands, looked his ward up and bought him a one-anna milk-icecream or a packet of biscuits “Before long I will broach to my boss the proposal of taking you as my assistant, and will see to it that you become a greater driver than even I!” he would assure Bablu from time to time

Neither he nor Bablu was aware of the rapidly changing air in the city except in a superficial way Jinnah, Pakistan and Partition were by no means more important words

to Karim than Mohammedan Sporting, Mohanbagan or East Bengal. There were processions, meetings, skirmishes and clashes, but Karim spent his leisure in a small gambling den and occasionally drinking a peg or two and going to a cinema.

It was a bolt from the blue when, one night, his master called him into the privacy of a dusky corridor and hemmed and hawed and finally said, 'I'm sorry, Karim, but for your own safety you should find a job with a Muslim. There are so many of them in business or in politics or occupying high positions!'

Not that Karim was enamoured of his employer, but the logic behind his dismissal surprised and depressed him. For the first time he remembered his Muslim acquaintances, sifting them from the Hindu ones.

No sooner had he found a new master than he made a trip to Bow Bazar, but only to learn that the entire family of Bablu's employer had left Calcutta for their native town in far Rajasthan.

Did they take Bablu also with them? Nobody was there to satisfy his query.

By and by Karim realised that his own melancholy perfectly matched the ominous air enveloping the city. One midnight a terrible fire raged along the horizon not far from his cabin behind his master's garage in Alipore. In the morning he heard two different versions of the holocaust, one asserting that the Muslims had massacred a slum of poor Hindu labourers and the other attributing with equal vehemence the carnage to the Hindus, Muslims being their victims.

Karim's suave new master, a success in both politics and business, treated him with courtesy and friendliness and often explained to him the *raison d'être* of Partition. Karim did not know when his imagination was ignited enough to reveal to him in the utopia of Pakistan his spirit's salvation, when even in his distant memory the Zamindar who had once harassed his father had ceased to be a mere mean human being and had become the very symbol of Hindu tyranny. He even ignored the latest message from his widowed mother—that she had fixed up a bride for him. Wedding, certainly, would be a grander affair in the El Dorado his master and his friends were trying to realise, in Pakistan!

He became a member now if not of the inner circle, planning what they called 'direct action', at least of the larger circle around it, ready to act out the strategies drawn up by the former.

And he hardly knew when, one night at his master's command, he was out in the streets, armed with a lathi and a dagger, in the company of equally or more ferociously armed gangsters. Haunted and desolate, it was a chunk of an unfamiliar Calcutta and a strange and nightmarish darkness for Karim.

"The double-storeyed red house at the north-eastern corner of the New Market is the *Adda* of the Hindu hoodlums under training to attack us. Tonight we invade the fortress and pre-empt their design," their leader told them.

They advanced and lay in ambush in darkness. As soon as the main gate of the red mansion opened to let some guests leave, Karim was pushed forward with a few more to crash into it. The others were to wait at the gate to cut down the escapees.

“Thrust your dagger into whomever you see and at the greatest speed you can muster Push your way in You invite danger only if you allow the inmates time, only if you hesitate or pause .” had been the leader’s last command

But Karim had to pause, for, whom should he see midway the staircase but Bablu staring him in the face!

“Karim Kaka! How much I’ve been longing to see you! Karim Kaka, I had no opportunity to inform you when my former employers left me here! Let’s go back to our village!” Bablu rushed down and hugged Karim

Karim’s head and heart were in perfect turmoil. Once again he did not know when all the effect of his recent brainwashing had been wiped out by Bablu’s blabbering—when the utopia had been overpowered by the reality of Bablu who breathed the air of his village on the sea, the warbling of the doves, the smiles and tears of the old familiar faces and his pride in the proposed making of Bablu into a great driver!

“Come on, boy, let’s go!” he said in a whimper and began dragging Bablu away

“Shoot down the fellow!” someone shouted from the top of the staircase “He is kidnapping our servant!” There was a gunshot. Karim fell down. Next moment his companions rushed up There were more gunshots, yells and shrieks and piercing cries. Hell broke loose and spread to the rows of houses flanking the red mansion. But before long the patrolling army forced in and quelled the riot They carried away the dead and maimed

“Is Bablu safe?” Karim, upon regaining consciousness at a nook of the overcrowded hospital, asked Dharmadas, again and again

“Bablu escaped,” bluffed Dharmadas, one of those volunteers who had braved the hell and nursed the miserable

Karim breathed his last on the third day, with his vision of Bablu back in the village driving his cattle home through the mist of the twilight, while, in fact, Bablu had been stabbed to death, his blood mingling with that of Karim then lying senseless—like a signature of Hindu-Muslim unity, at the bottom of the staircase of the mansion.

The old Dharmadas ended his narration and coughed and dared me to answer, “Who would appreciate that red red signature? Who cares?”

MANOJ DAS

A SPIRITUAL VERSION OF POLITICS

In the message that Sri Aurobindo broadcast over All India Radio on 15 August 1947—which was both his own birthday and India's first Independence Day—he spoke of five great dreams that he had cherished. These were a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India, the resurgence and liberation of Asia and the revival of her great role in the progress of human civilisation, a world union that would form the basis of a nobler life for humankind, India's gift of spirituality, which would grow despite the disasters of the time; and, finally, that crucial step in evolution which would raise man to a higher consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo identified India's struggle for independence with the universal quest for spiritual regeneration. As early as 1909, he had written in the weekly *Karmayogin*, which he edited: "It is a spiritual revolution we foresee and the material is only its shadow and reflex." India, in his view, had a mission—to transmit its distinctive vision to the world, the fruit of its spiritual traditions which would complement the pragmatic rationalism of the West. It was to fulfil this mission that India had to be free, not just to exercise its right to freedom.

Revered variously as mystic, nationalist, scholar, teacher, interpreter of the Vedas and poet, Sri Aurobindo led a life informed by the fundamental recognition of the spiritual reality underlying all life. He believed that the distinctiveness of the Indian mind lay in its inward turn, its propensity to test experience in the light of spiritual knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo viewed nationalism as not merely a political concept, but as an impulse guided by the great power that oversaw India's destiny. "Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live," he wrote. "to live your nationalism, to realise the strength within you, try to bring it forward so that everything you do may be the doing of the Truth within you."

The British Government accused him of mixing religion with politics. He faced similar charges from some of the moderate members in the Congress, who branded him an extremist. In his recent book *The Essential Writings of Sri Aurobindo*, Peter Heehs has attributed such criticisms to a misreading. Sri Aurobindo did not have Hinduism or any other traditional faith in mind as the basis for nationalism. It was not a religious nationalism that the seer had in mind, so much as nationalism as religion.

Charged with sedition, Sri Aurobindo had to spend one year in Alipore jail as a remand prisoner. When he came out, he had been spiritually transformed. As he said: "There I waited day and night for the voice of God within me to learn what I had to do. In this seclusion the earliest realisation, the first lesson came to me. I looked at the jail that secluded me.. it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned, no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there.. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me."

Gradually, his vision of the future became clearer. As he could foresee the eventual independence of India, he no longer found it crucial to play a directly political

role. Before settling in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo had already attained two of the four great realisations on which his Yoga and spiritual philosophy are founded. The first was the awareness of the timeless and trans-spatial Brahman while meditating with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele of Gwalior [later he shifted to Pune]. The second was the experience of the cosmic consciousness of the Divine in the Alipore Jail. The other two realisations were that of the Supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahma as its two aspects, and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading up to the Supermind.

Through his theory and practice of the Integral Yoga, this modern-day Rishi demonstrated that Yoga must aim, not to escape from life, but to transform life through the realisation of the Divine. This realisation is not merely for the sake of the individual, taught Sri Aurobindo, but has a cosmic significance. And in its quest for the total and integral change of consciousness, it treats such methods as *dhyana* or meditation only as aids and not as ends in themselves.

In his theory of evolution, Sri Aurobindo synthesises matter and spirit. The journey from spirit to matter is known as involution or descent and the journey from matter to spirit is known as evolution or ascent of the Spirit. The Supermind which is the ultimate evolutionary goal is conceived of as endowed with both intuition and cognition, reasoning and intellect. At this point, the human consciousness is seen to transcend its mundane limitations and attain to the Sublime that lies beyond words.

M N CHATTERJEE

(Courtesy *Times of India*)

WHAT NATIONALISM MEANT TO GANDHI AND NEHRU

WHAT constituted nationalism other than an anti-colonial consciousness is not a question alien to the intellectual history of Indian nationalism. The limitations of political nationalism were marked in the beginning of the 20th century itself.

The inadequacy of the anti-colonial nationalism to fully occupy the nation was articulated by Ananda Coomaraswamy and Mahatma Gandhi in 1909. Setting their sights beyond the ‘negative’ and oppositional politics of the anti-colonial movement, they underlined the different dimensions of nationalism—cultural and civilisational. Coomaraswamy argued in his ‘Essays in National Idealism’, published in 1909, that the significance of the national movement was the attainment of spiritual and mental freedom. The political and economic victory ‘are but half the battle’, for an India free in name but subdued by Europe in its innermost soul ‘would ill-justify the price of freedom’. National unity, ‘needed a deeper foundation than the perception of political wrong’ and this could be provided only by ‘the great ideals of Indian culture’. ‘Nations,’ he said, ‘are made by artists and poets, not by traders and politicians.’

Gandhi provided an all-comprehensive meaning to nationalism—political, economic, civilisational and moral. To him freedom from the British subjection did not necessarily mean the attainment of ‘swaraj’. He held that only a civilisational self-confidence could bring about the real swaraj. In the conception of both Coomaraswamy and Gandhi, the national identity was not rooted in a particular religion, but shaped by the endeavours of diverse religious denominations.

The early political and economic critique of colonialism tended to take an overarching view of the relationship between colonialism and the people of India. By and large, it overlooked the internal structures of exploitation—economic, cultural and social—which excluded an overwhelming majority from the resources of the nation. Whether the nation can come to its own without taking cognisance of this exclusion raised the question of the relationship between the people and nationalism in a fundamental way. The nature of exclusion was varied and complex. It manifested in different ways in economy and socio-cultural practices. Among the many who brought this issue to the foreground were Jyotibha Phule, E. V. Ramasami Naicker, Narayana Guru and Bhimrao Ambedkar, on the one hand, and the socialists and communists, on the other.

Unlike the mainstream movement, led by the Indian National Congress, which underlined the primary contradiction—the binary opposition between the people and the British—those who focused on the internal contradiction—caste, class and gender—sought to recover the rights of the oppressed and the marginalised. Rhetorically marking the limitations of anti-colonial nationalism, Ramasamy asked: Is the Brahmin’s rule swarajya for the ‘paraya’? Is the cat’s rule swarajya for the rat? Is the landlord’s rule swarajya for the peasants? Is the owner’s rule swarajya for the worker?

“The moment of equality of the subordinate social groups alone could signify the arrival of the nation ”

By doing so, they sought to assign the people their rightful place in the nation and thus establish what Antonio Gramsci called the identity between the national and the popular

A religious conception of nationalism which developed during the 20th century tended to blur the distinction between religion and culture. More important, it sought to establish an identity between the two which in turn undermined the territorial and secular nationalism

Drawing upon the process of regionalisation and communalisation during the colonial period, such a tendency gained ground among both Hindus and Muslims. The ideology of Hindu nationalism took a qualitative leap in the Twenties, as reflected in both the scholarly and popular interpretations of the past. In a lecture delivered in 1921, Radha Kumud Mookerji, author of *The Fundamental Unity of India*, traced Indian nationalism to the ancient cultural and religious practices

This rather ahistorical concept of nationalism found further expression and elaboration in the writings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, particularly in his pamphlet, *Hindutva*, and his interpretative work, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*. Savarkar conceived of India as a Hindu nation as evident from his insistence on the necessary identity with *Punyabhū* (holyland) and *Pitrubhū* (fatherland) and the view of Indian history as a continuous struggle between the Hindus and foreign invaders, be they the Huns, the Turks, the Mughals or the British

The elaboration of Savarkar's formulations into a coherent ideology was undertaken by later Hindu nationalist ideologues. Foremost among them is M. S. Golwalkar, whose ideas are particularly important for two reasons. First, he sought to establish the primacy of culture over politics. More important, he equated culture with religion. Secondly, he formulated and justified a majoritarian argument claiming that the nation rightfully belonged to the Hindus. “The national life in Bharat,” he claimed, is “the Hindu national life.” The idea of religious nationalism also found advocates and adherents among the Muslims. The communitarian outlook of the Aligarh movement prompted by an apprehension of the possible deprivation of opportunities to educationally backward Muslims later transformed itself into a religious nationalist perspective. Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah imparted to it an ideological and political content

A religion-sectarian concept of nationalism became integral to the politics of the anti-colonial struggle, which led to communal strife and Partition. Yet, the secular-territorial nationalism remained influential, as evident from the nature of state and the polity the Indian Constitution adopted in 1950

The choice of a secular polity in 1950 was a negation of the premises of religious nationalism. Among them the congruence attributed to religion is the most obvious, as such a congruence was not part of nationalist cultural practice. Instead, the culture of nationalism, which formed a terrain in which modernity was articulated and negotiated,

transcended the religious sectarian boundaries. Also, it sought to reformulate the existing cultural “commonsense” in the light of the emerging popular aspirations. Such a tendency was reflected in literature, painting and theatre as well as in everyday cultural practices. The works of Vallathol Narayana Menon in Malayalam, Subramania Bharati in Tamil, Premchand in Hindi and Tarashankar Bandopadhyaya in Bengali sought to project the universal in Indian culture. So did the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose. Some of the traditional art forms, *Harikatha* and *Burakatha* in Andhra Pradesh, *Ottamthullal* in Kerala, *Powada* in Maharashtra and *Jatra* in Bengal shed their religious themes and became vehicles of the secular nationalist ethos.

A search for the secular-national also embraced everyday practices like the mode of dress. The sartorial habits, particularly of the elite, were considerably influenced by the interaction with other cultural groups. The initial response to the European mode of dress was to adopt a combination of the European and Indian dress. Such a mode was quite popular in the 19th century among the educated middle class. Most of the delegates to the first session of the Indian National Congress wore a combination of dhoti, coat and cap.

But this ensemble did not satisfy the nationalist urge. Jyotirindranath Tagore tried to evolve a national dress by decorating the trousers with a dhoti fold in the front and by combining turban with topee which, according to his brother Rabindranath, was so fearsome that “no person of ordinary courage would have dared it”. Discarding the Indo-European style, Rabindranath sought a solution in a Hindu-Muslim combination and adopted *chapkan* as a suitable Indian dress.

The use of popular symbols for mobilisation during the national movement is of great relevance in this context. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in a quest for an idiom of communication with a larger audience, invoked as a religious symbol, Ganesha. But in the actual mass phase of the movement, Gandhi resorted to secular-material symbols like khadi and salt. Even the Rama Rajya to which he referred as an ideal past was not a religious but moral concept. At any rate, Rama was not a symbol of mobilisation in the national movement as salt and khadi were.

However, a question remained to be addressed. What were the social and political implications of nationalism ceasing to be an instrument of mobilisation against colonialism and becoming an ideology of the masses, drawing upon either religion or race? The propensity for violence and aggression which nationalism in the West, particularly under fascism in Europe, had already betrayed, created serious apprehensions. Rabindranath Tagore—whose works along with those of others who championed freedom were burnt by the Nazis in 1933—considered aggressive nationalism “a great menace” which was taking the West through a path of suicide. In the context of fascism, Jawaharlal Nehru too viewed nationalism in Europe as “a bane and a curse”. Recognising the antagonism, aggression and strife inherent in the nationalist ideology, Gandhi advocated a nationalism tempered with morality and not based on force, coercion and hatred.

How such an ideal nationalism without the religious and sectarian underpinnings could be achieved was the concern of many. While Nehru sought a solution in democracy, Tagore believed in social emancipation. In Nehru's conception, rationalism can be a reality only if it identifies with the people, without any distinction of religion, caste or class. The people cannot belong to the nation unless the nation belongs to them, politically and economically. Nehru thus posited a secular and democratic ideal of nationalism, fundamentally different from that of Golwalkar and Jinnah.

Tagore's emphasis, on the other hand, was on the importance of social emancipation. "The thing we, in India, have to think of is this—to remove those social customs and ideals which have generated a want of self-respect and a complete dependence on those above us—a state of affairs which has been brought about entirely by the domination in India of the caste system and the blind and lazy habit of relying upon the authority of tradition that are incongruous anachronisms in the present age."

Tagore and Nehru thus envisioned a concept of nationalism which comprehended within it political freedom, economic justice and social solidarity, in sharp contrast to the divisive and exclusivist character of religious nationalism. It is the former which informed the Constitution and the polity of independent India, though without complete success in practice.

K M PANIKKAR

(Courtesy *The Hindu*, 22 February 1998)

MYSTIC VOYAGE: *THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE* AN EMERSONIAN APPROACH

OPINIONS about Stephen Crane's art have been sharply divided between extremes although none has doubted his genius. If you give a cursory glance at the critical pieces on him, you will be quick to pick up labels like 'impressionist', 'realist', 'naturalist', and 'psychologist' and quite a few others. If you concentrate on places where they seek to specify Crane's sources, you will get names like Tolstoi, Kipling, Zola, Flaubert, Turgenev, Maupassant.

I don't wish to speak against Berryman's view that Crane's reading has been underestimated, because he can also accept the fact that "It is not easy to think of another important prose-writer or poet so ignorant of traditional literature in English as Stephen Crane was and remained." (Berryman, 1950: 24) What I wish to stress in this paper is that Crane is a 'scholar' in the Emersonian sense and that reading is certainly not his primary material in *The Red Badge of Courage*. The theory of tradition and individual talent so famously associated with T. S. Eliot had been explained by Emerson much before 1919 in *The American Scholar*, a text many of us tend to forget. It is time we took Eliot's essay as a supplementary reading of Emerson's text, his famous Phi Beta Kappa address delivered at Cambridge on 31 August 1837. Emerson had accepted the idea of tradition in his own way, the way every inward voyager accepts it. The conventional cannot be entirely excluded and books tend to pile up like at an early stage of the scholar's life. But books, according to Emerson, are for 'the scholar's idle times'. "When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings." (Emerson, 1983: 50)

A little earlier in the same essay Emerson's view on books and the active soul are significantly related to Crane's art. "They who are for nothing but to inspire, I had better never see a book, than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although, in almost all men, obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or creates. In this action it is genius.." (*Ibid.*, 57)

Crane's Blakean irony on orthodox Christianity in the poems, tales and that vital letter which projects his dislike for religious suggestions (Bradley, 1976: 123) has diverted our attention from a mystic novel based on the Heraclitean principle of productive battle.

There is nothing or very little of orthodox religion in *The Red Badge*, and therefore it has been a fashion over the years to summarise the theme as man's growth into manhood. It is an acceptable view, but it appears too indefinite if we see the Dantesque pattern of the structure moving from darkness to a kind of enlightenment. The last sentence of the novel may not conclude the inward voyage; there may be layers of darkness again, as Crane's assortment of the sun and rain suggests. But that does not

obscure the Dantesque movement. Quite often Henry Fleming is seen coming out of darkness into a pleasant landscape. Such movements remind us of Dante's words in *Hell*, Canto XXXIV, 11-134. After the horrible experiences in hell, he exhibits his relief at coming back to light.

Back to the lit world from the darkened dens

(translated by Dorothy L. Sayers)

Also, the overall ironic attitude of Crane conceals the sense of an illumined adventure of consciousness through the battlefields. War, said Heraclitus, is the "father of all and the king of all" (*Hippocrates*, 1953, 485). War is the condition of progress, the king idea. Crane might not have known Heraclitus or *The Bhagavad Gita* directly, but he certainly could not miss the influence of Emerson. Let us listen again to the voice of Emerson: "Inaction is cowardice but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. The true scholar judges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power." (Emerson, 1983, 60)

The passage works upon the tradition of the *Gita* and Heraclitus. This, I believe, is the real tradition behind *The Red Badge of Courage*. Here, Crane is trying to reconstruct his vision of a mystic journey through an imagined battle, which turns out to be very realistic. A detailed reading of the text will show how Henry Fleming is always thinking in terms of an illumined walk searching for a sunlit track and failing often in his early approaches to a half-known destination. These are the experiences of only two days and they do not seek to specify a total spiritual awareness of Fleming. His fears are the real fears of an inward voyager. As Crane's vision is limited, he has mystified this eternal quest. Instead of a direct spiritual adventure, it becomes a mystic quest jacketed by Crane's irony.

The death of Jim Conklin in Chapter 9 and the deep emotional responses of Henry to Jim's death are just a few signs of man's ideal destination, Christ knowledge, which cannot be reached without war or contraries. Critics have already marked the initials of Jim Conklin (J.C.). The narrator sees his "tall figure stretched itself to its full height". The youth is "spellbound". He sees it as a "ceremony". Stallman believes: "Henry's regeneration is brought about by the death of Jim Conklin, his friend since childhood." (Stallman, 1970, 199)

The stylistic features of Crane quite often indicate a movement, a walk in front, a crossing of fences and borders through smoke and fire—as if Henry has rejected God in favour of a hidden splendour, which he wishes to reach by fighting. He does not know much about it, as I have already indicated. These are the blind gropings and foretastes of a world he is going to discover. Sri Aurobindo would have called it "a blank prescience" that yearns "towards distant change" (Sri Aurobindo, 1968, 2)

I have selected a few passages where the inner voyages of Henry are symbolically

presented by the narrator. Christopher Benfey, one of the recent biographers of Crane, comes close to the idea when he says: "The fogs and hazes often seem as much inner as outer weather, for Fleming is constantly trying to clear his head to make sense of what is happening to him" (Benfey, 1992: 110). But Benfey does not suggest that this fighting is actually a search for an illumined soul status. There are other passages where Henry meditates on his experiences. Together they give us the impression of a walk on the razor's edge.

Action and observation are often combined even in the early stage: "The youth tried to observe everything. He did not use care to avoid trees and branches, and his forgotten feet were constantly knocking against stones or getting entangled in briars" (Chapter 3).

Henry Fleming climbs hills, crosses valleys, walks alongside the rivers and sees visions amidst colourful sunrises and sunsets and also amidst the dark. Alternating phases of light and darkness relate the novel to Dante's epic. Nature often becomes beautiful amidst chaos, as if to indicate the Grace in the graveyard: "As he gazed around him the youth felt a flash of astonishment at the blue, pure sky and the sun gleaming on the trees and fields. It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment." (Chapter 5).

Courage comes through suffering. For Fleming, courage brings in what Hemingway later calls 'true pride' in *The Old Man and the Sea*. True pride is certainly more honourable than fear and cowardice. But Fleming leaves pride behind in search of a peace beyond the smoky lands of strife and death and destruction. By Chapter 7, he passes from the fields into a thick wood, where everything becomes joyful with sunrises, rhythmic noise of the insects and happy birds. Then he enters a place which is too obviously symbolic of a more enlightened existence: "At length he reached a place where the high, arching boughs made a chapel. He softly pushed a green door aside and entered. Pine needles were a gentle brown carpet. There was a religious half-light" (Chapter 7).

After this, Henry sees the dead man looking straight at him. A momentary peace is immediately followed by an uncanny atmosphere. He is terribly afraid. The image of the journey is continued in the next chapter: "He went rapidly on. He wished to come to the edge of the forest that he might peer out" (Chapter 8).

Now we can see for certain what Crane symbolises here. He speaks of a 'forward way' and then of obstructions, onward journeys and then of visions of a bloody battlefield.

The metaphor of fear and Crane's consistent use of irony about Henry Fleming are two aspects which distract our attention from Fleming's mystic journey. But fear is also related to the mystic voyage of self-discovery. Fear is a dangerous enemy of the seeker of light, and irony reveals the falsities which have to be rejected from his nature. Fleming is a flaming soul in the midst of smoke and fire and blood. He aspires for peace, light and self-knowledge. Manhood is a vague term. A secret thrill of love has also touched him at the time of Jim's death.

Even if he has not acquired a very high soul-status at the end of the novel, he has reached a better phase

And at last his eyes seemed to open to some new ways.

The omnipresent narrator admits the fact 'some new ways', not the end of the way. The 'leaden rain clouds' still threaten 'the golden ray of the sun'. Fleming has crossed one area of darkness; many more await him. That is the meaning of the last sentence

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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REALITY

REALITY doesn't take flight
disappear like a dream.
Neither a whisper nor the ringing
of bells can dispel it
Nor does a cry or a thud
split it up

Dreams are confused and ambiguous—
it's possible to explain
the image we see in dreams
in many different ways
The real is the real,
an even greater puzzle

We have keys to dreams.
Reality opens by itself
and cannot be quite shut.
It scatters about
school certificates and stars,
butterflies fly out
souls of old irons
heads without hats
and potsherds of clouds
This adds up to a riddle,
an insoluble crossword

Without us there would be no dreams.
A being without reality
is unknown
The product of his sleeplessness
becomes known to everyone
on waking up.
Dreams are not mad,
reality is madness.
For instance, look how stubbornly it clings
to the course of events

In a dream our loved one
recently deceased, still lives,
he even enjoys good health
and has recovered his youth,

Reality puts before us a corpse,
The real doesn't retreat by a single step

Because dreams are so fleeting
memory easily shakes them off
Reality needs not fear oblivion
A tough customer
It sits on our back,
presses on our heart,
crashes at our feet

There is no escape from reality—
it is our companion on every flight.
And there is no station
on our journey's itinerary
where it is not waiting for us

W SZYMBORSKA

(Translated from the Polish by Marta Guha)

PARALLELISM BETWEEN MODERN PHYSICS AND VEDANTA

MODERN science and technology undoubtedly command a prestigious and dominant position in academic circles and in global economics as well, in view of their unique achievements. It may moreover be noted (a) that 'science' in the sense of 'systematic studies of natural phenomena', at least in so far as its present state of development is concerned, is different from supra-intellectual spirituality in that spirituality is concerned with the totality of human experience whereas science limits itself to a study of the outer physical world to the total exclusion of higher levels of human consciousness, and (b) that 'science' though closely allied to, is yet not the same as, 'technology' or the applied sciences. Science, being concerned with a genuine quest for (i) reality or truth, and (ii) unifying principles behind the phenomenal world characterized by changeability and diversity, consists primarily of intellectual activity, and therefore cannot do any harm to humanhood. On the contrary, technology can do not only good but also great harm such as the threat of nuclear weapons, rapid depletion of non-renewable resources, environmental pollution, to mention a few.

Based on the world-view they provide, there exist some notable differences between what is known as 'Modern Physics' and the 'Classical Newtonian Physics'. The former includes the revolutionary Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics as well as other recent developments. In classical physics, for example, 'matter' and 'energy' were taken for granted as two entirely separate entities and one considered the conservation of matter and the conservation of energy separately. This barrier has been broken down by the theory of relativity and the two entities are established to be interconvertible and blended into a matter-energy continuum. Similarly, in modern physics 'time' and 'space' are no longer considered to be two entirely disconnected variables. One now talks of a four-dimensional continuum comprising time and the three-dimensional space. Modern physics has moreover shown that the 'observed' cannot be completely isolated from the 'observer'. The very event of observation introduces some change in the 'observed', which change is of course of very small magnitude for massive objects but has to be taken into account in the case of very small sub-atomic particles. Modern physics thus leads us towards a (w)holistic world-view.

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

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

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

b) One of the conclusions of modern physics is that the innumerable creations and destructions which are observed to occur all around and at all times, are only apparent, and that in reality they are transformations of *one* indestructible entity which sometimes manifests itself as gross material objects and at other times as diverse subtle forms of energy. This is in close harmony with the Vedantic truth that the Reality¹ is ONE, the changing universe of diversity is but an appearance.

c) Since spiritual experience is beyond the mental, it is impossible to express the same in ordinary language, as language itself consists of symbols created by ordinary mind and intellect. Huxley⁴ rightly points out: "So far, then, as a fully adequate expression of the perennial philosophy is concerned, there exists a problem in semantics that is finally insoluble. The fact is one which must be strictly borne in mind by all who read its formulations. Only in this way shall we be able to understand even remotely what is being talked about."

Ordinary language is similarly found inadequate for describing quantum mechanical conclusions. Elementary particles, for example, are no longer 'material' in the same sense as objects of daily life such as trees, stones, etc., are. As Heisenberg says: "But we cannot speak about atoms in ordinary language." An atom is an idea which, we are now told, we cannot even picture. If an atom itself cannot be pictured, what to speak of an electron, a still smaller particle?

d) Mysticism defies our ordinary concept of space, time, matter and conventional logic. So also does modern physics. A few examples thereof are: (i) When an electron transits from one orbital to another in an atom, it is supposed not to traverse the intervening space, (ii) Feynman's diagram depicting an electron moving forward in time can be taken to depict a positron (an anti-particle capable of annihilating an electron) moving backward in time; (iii) The unconventional yes-and-no logic is invoked for explaining the duality of particle-wave nature of a sub-atomic entity. Koestler⁵ sums up: ".physics turns into metaphysics with a flavour of mysticism."

e) The failure of the principle of causality and determinism at the sub-atomic level has led many outstanding scientists, including Einstein, to speculate about some 'hidden variables' which, according to them, perhaps rule and determine these seemingly indeterminate processes. While in the micro-world of atoms and sub-atomic particles, the events are indeterministic, in the macro-world, in contrast, a deterministic pattern is observed. We must not fail to note that each macro-event consists of a large number of micro-events at the atomic/sub-atomic level.

In view of the above, many eminent physicists have postulated that the aforesaid 'hidden variables', though non-physical, are yet real in nature. Some of them are of the opinion that mind/consciousness may be the non-physical entity.⁶

Several outstanding Western scientists and scholars have of late come out openly in favour of spiritualizing science. Moreover, a feeling is growing that Eastern mysticism in general, and Indian spiritual tradition in particular, could provide the necessary insight.⁶

The discovery of the harmony between modern science and the ancient spiritual wisdom has been possible, not only because the dogmas and taboos of the nineteenth century physics have got demolished, but also because the scientific thinking and methodology have undergone a revolutionary change. The 'systems approach' is one such methodology which is pregnant with far-reaching possibilities. Instead of concentrating on basic building blocks for the understanding of a system as a whole, the systems approach emphasizes basic principles of organization in a whole system. The specific structures of the wholes arise from the interaction between and interdependence of their parts. The nature of the whole may be different at times from a mere sum of its parts. Thus, one has to take the total system into consideration even while one tries to understand a part.

This approach is indeed closely akin to the comprehensive and integral approach of all schools of spiritual thought.⁷

The universe is seen as a dynamic web of inter-related events. None of the properties of any part of this web is fundamental; they all follow from the properties of other parts, and the overall consistency of their inter-relation determines the structure of the entire web.⁸

As a corollary, it appears also that the study of a part gives an insight into the whole on 'the analogy of a hologram, in which each part, in some sense, contains the whole. If any part of the hologram is illuminated, the entire image will be reconstructed.'⁹

As is said by the ancient seers, what is in the *brahmānda* is in the *pīndānda*. This is reminiscent of what is said in the *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*.

Dear boy, just as through a single clod of clay all that is made of clay would become known, for all modification is but name based upon words and the clay alone is real, just as through a single ingot of gold, all that is made of gold would become known, for all modification is but name based upon words and the gold alone is real, just as through a single nail-parer all that is made of iron would become known, for all modification is but name based upon words and the iron alone is real.¹⁰

Indeed the microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan as pointed out by Swami Vivekananda ¹¹

ARDHENDU SEKHAR GHOSH

(Courtesy *Prabuddha Bharata*, September 1997)

Notes and References

1 A little more elaboration regarding 'Reality' is perhaps in order. All of us, without exception, perceive with our eyes that the sun rises and sets. Yet when the same phenomenon is viewed through the intellect and not the senses, e.g. when examined by the science of astronomy, it is concluded that the sun does not move the way the eyes see it. This clearly reveals the inadequacy of our knowledge gained through our senses as compared to that through the intellect which thus belongs to a higher hierarchical level. As a matter of fact the existence of different hierarchical levels of knowledge, or of awareness, is admitted not only by the ancient rishis² but also by modern writers.³ Since an intellectual being remains bound by the limitations of the ego-consciousness, he is unable to realize the 'Absolute Reality'. In order to get rid of the aforesaid limitations, one has to transcend the multi-dimensional realm to the realm of spirituality through *sādhana*.

2 See, *Māndūkya-Upanisad*, for example

3 See, for example Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (London: Pan Books, 1981), ch. III

4 Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989)

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8 *Ibid.*, p. 84

9 Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983), pp. 87-8

10 *Chhāndogya-Upanisad*, 6.1.4-6

11 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Adwaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 448

SPINOZA

SPINOZA (1632-77), or by full name Baruch Spinoza, hailed from a family of Portuguese Jews, named Espinoza, settled in Holland, under Christian protection Spinoza, however, forsook his given name 'Baruch' in favour of the Latin 'Benedict' in the year 1654, when he was twenty-two

Spinoza's father was a successful merchant, but young Spinoza had no leaning to such a career and preferred to spend his time in and around the Synagogue, of which he was a student from his early days, absorbing the religion and the history of his people He was a brilliant scholar and very soon passed from Bible to the exaltingly subtle commentaries of the Talmud, from these he went to the writings of the great physician Moses Maimonides, to Levi Ben Gerson, Ibn Ezra and Hasdai Crescas

Spinoza was struck by Maimonides's identification of God and the universe, by Ben Gerson's idea of the eternity of the world and Crescas's notion that the universe of matter is the body of God

Spinoza also sought to know what the Christian world thought on the great questions of God and human destiny Among the earlier Greek and Roman thinkers he preferred not Socrates, Plato and Aristotle but the great atomists, Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius Also the Stoics left their mark upon him very deeply He read the Scholastic philosophers, and took from them not only their terminology, but their geometrical method of exposition by axiom, definition, proposition, proof, scholium and corollary He studied Bruno (1548-1600), that magnificent scientist who was burnt at the stake by the Inquisition Spinoza was struck by Bruno's master idea of unity: all reality is one, and God and this reality are one

Spinoza was however most influenced by Descartes (1596-1650) Descartes's famous *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) was not of much interest to Spinoza What attracted him was Descartes's conception of a homogeneous "substance" underlying all forms of matter, and another homogeneous substance underlying all forms of mind. ('Substance' was a term for an 'ultimate reality' to many preceding philosophers and thinkers, including Bruno The word means 'anything that stands under', i.e., stands under a process of change.) Anyhow the Cartesian separation of reality into two ultimate substances was a challenge to the unifying passion of Spinoza What attracted him, however, was Descartes's desire to explain the entire world by mechanical and mathematical laws with God and the soul lying beyond these laws It may be mentioned that the only work published under Spinoza's name during his lifetime was the *Principles of Descartes's Philosophy* (*Renati Descartes Principiorum Philosophiae*, 1663).

Spinoza was excommunicated by the Synagogue on 27 July 1656, for holding views heretical to Christian faith and spreading them abroad (Perhaps the Synagogue could not do otherwise, since Christian toleration and protection was so very necessary to the Jewish group in Amsterdam) Spinoza was also completely forsaken by his family and his race. He chose to live alone, in a quiet place outside Amsterdam It was at this time, probably, that he changed his name from Baruch to Benedict His hosts

were Christians, but sympathetic to the heretic Spinoza made his living, first by teaching children and then by polishing lenses. In 1660 Spinoza moved to Rhynsburg, near Leyden, accompanying his hosts. The house in which they lived is still there and now bears the philosopher's name.

We will not trace the life of Spinoza in any further detail. He had some degree of economic security and had influential and congenial friends. Among the persons who visited him or had correspondence with him, mention may be made of Henry Oldenburg (secretary of the 'recently' established Royal Society of England), von Tschirnhaus (a young German inventor and nobleman), Huygens (the Dutch scientist), Leibnitz (the philosopher), Louis Meyer (a physician of the Hague) and Simon de Vries (a rich merchant of Amsterdam). That, despite ex-communication and interdict, he won appreciation of his contemporaries is clear from the offer for the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg he received in 1673. Of course, Spinoza had to decline the offer, for he felt that it might interfere with his intellectual freedom.

Spinoza succumbed to phthisis in 1677, before completing 45. He had come of a consumptive parentage and his profession as a lens-cutter as well as the environment in which he had to live were perhaps the cause of his illness and early death.

Spinoza's work comprises philosophy, ethics, some amount of science and also grammar. We shall devote ourselves to his philosophy, and shall be mainly concerned with his ontology. It is intellectually and emotionally most gratifying to know why Spinoza gave up everything for the sake of philosophy. "I determined," he said, "to inquire whether I might discover and attain the faculty of enjoying throughout eternity continual supreme happiness. The love towards a thing eternal and infinite alone feeds the mind with a pleasure secure from all pain." In this connection Spinoza talks of intuitive knowledge which he describes as a perception *sub specie eternitatis*, in eternal aspects and relations. In fact, Spinoza in the initial section of his incomplete work *De Intellectus Emendatione* concerned himself with the question of what it is that urges us to philosophy.

The basis of Spinoza's philosophy rests on three terms—substance, attribute and mode.

'Substance' is what we have already explained. It means anything that 'stands under', i.e. remains invariant under a process of change. It is thus the unchanging stuff of all reality or, simply, is the ultimate reality. An 'attribute' is that which the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting one of its essential features. A 'mode' is the affection of the substance, it is any individual thing or event, any particular form or shape which reality transiently assumes.

Spinoza identifies substance with nature and God. Very much like the scholastics, he conceives nature under a double aspect: as active and vital process, which he calls *natura naturans* (nature begetting) and as the passive product of this process, the material and contents of nature, which he calls *natura naturata* (nature begotten). It is in the former sense and not in the latter one, that Spinoza identifies nature with substance and God.

Here we shall have to stop for a while and state what our viewpoint is on the matter in question

That God is not identical with the passive products of the active nature is well accepted. But we would not like to fully identify God even with the active nature, the nature begetting, *natura naturans*. We are no doubt of the opinion that God's creative aspect is also an eternal aspect of God, manifesting itself through an endless game of creations, for the present creation is, we think, finite in time and it would be an oddity to think that an eternal being should enter into action for the first time at any point of time, after remaining inactive for an infinity of time. But apart from this active aspect, which is the immanent (*viśvagata*) aspect of God, there is also a permanent substratum or changeless inactive aspect of God which is his transcendental (*viśvāīta*) aspect. These two aspects have been very vividly described in the Katha Upanishad, (2.2.9):

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

Just as the fire entering the world takes different shapes in different things, so also the one, the inner self of all things, takes different shapes in different things and is yet beyond them all

Or, we may recall the single compact line of the Isha Upanishad (shloka 5):

tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ

It is within all things and is yet beyond them all

The ultimate reality is called Brahman in Vedānta and is described as having two aspects: the active and the changing aspect, engaged in creation, through self-deployment, called the *kshara* aspect, and the inactive and the unchanging aspect transcendental to creation, called the *akshara* aspect.* Brahman is accordingly referred to as the Kshara Brahman and the Akshara Brahman. Again, Brahman itself, as possessing both these aspects, is referred to as the Para Brahman. It may be said that Spinoza's *Natura Naturans* is the Vedāntic Kshara Brahman. But we must not lose sight of the transcendental aspect also. It may be mentioned that Spinoza too has categorised his substance or God as transcendental. But he has done that in the sense that substance is inscrutable and beyond empirical perception. We surely consider God to be transcendental in this sense, *anirvacanīya*, but we also consider God to be transcendental in the deeper sense that, God, while indwelling and pervading the world, also transcends the world and all worldly principles.

* *ksarah sarvāni bhūtāni kutastho'ksara ucyate* —Gita 15.16

The greatest merit of Spinoza however lies in the fact that he conceived of the world as a creation of God out of its own stuff. This is what was uttered by the Indian Rishis long ago, as already noted. We may also recall the well-known bold assertion, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*, all this verily is Brahman. Thus for Vedanta, as for Spinoza, God is both the efficient cause and the material cause of the world. Spinoza's ontology has been described by his followers as 'pantheism' which means 'All is God'. Vedanta philosophy is also being described as 'pantheism' in the Western world, and is being regarded as that of the earliest time. It is true that Vedantic notions of immanence and transcendence of God are akin to the notions of Hegel whose philosophy is known as 'panentheism', that everything is held by God. Since God is God and everything that is held by God is also (essentially) God himself, we think 'pantheism' is a better description of the Vedantic viewpoint. Spinoza's viewpoint may be regarded as a particular form of 'pantheism'.

Spinoza holds that the universal laws of Nature and the eternal decrees of God are one and the same thing. Therefore the will of God and the laws of Nature being one and the same reality, all events are the mechanical operation of invariable laws and not the whim of an irresponsible autocrat seated in the stars. Thus, mechanism was seen by Spinoza not in matter and body alone, but in mind and God as well. According to him the world is a world of determinism and not of design. Spinoza also does not admit any teleological purpose at the back of creation. In this connection, however, we must add that there are philosophers who think that the creation is suggestive of a design and leads our thought to a teleological purpose behind. In fact, one of the standard proofs, perhaps the most cogent one, for the existence of God rests on the notion of design which is suggestive of a teleological purpose. This is known as the design argument or the teleological argument. The argument occurs in philosophical literature from Plato's *Timaeus* onward and occurs as the last of Saint Thomas's five ways. The argument as found in William Paley (1743-1805) deserves mention. Paley says that, while the presence of a rock lying beneath the ground in a desert may be attributed to chance operation of natural forces, such as wind, rain, etc., the presence of a watch therein cannot be so. Paley then argues that the natural world is as complex a mechanism as is a watch and is suggestive of a definite design behind it. We may move one step forward and say that the design also has a deeper undertone and the creation is manifestly designed for evolution of consciousness. This should not be judged as wishful thinking on the part of humankind. It may be mentioned that in recent times, regarding many cosmological and other phenomena, certain scientific viewpoints are tentatively taking anthropomorphic angles. Sri Aurobindo envisions the supreme consummation as divine life for man.

The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine

(*Savitri*, p 711)

(This itself is a consummation of the Platonic-Gnostic idea of the Demiurgus, the creation of the world and man. Vide ‘‘Sri Aurobindo and Plato’’ in *Aspects of Sri Aurobindo* by K. D. Sethna)

We have already mentioned that the greatest merit of Spinoza’s ontology lies in the fact that he conceived of the world as a creation of God out of God’s own stuff. This immediately led Spinoza to his master idea regarding the ultimate reality. It is clear that he did not believe, as does an idealist, that the ultimate reality is consciousness and consciousness alone, and that matter was produced out of it. Similarly, he did not believe, like a materialist, that the ultimate reality was matter and matter alone, and consciousness was produced out of that.

For Spinoza, the ultimate reality was one, but one that was an inseparable union of consciousness and matter. This matter is not gross empirical matter, but something that infinitely transcends it, though can procreate it when dictated by the consciousness-part. Spinoza has expressed this by the simple statement that substance has an infinite number of attributes of which only two are cognisable by the human intellect and these two are thought and extension. A difficulty might arise as regards extension, namely, that any extension is, so far as we understand, plural and limited. But both of them are inadmissible when we come to the ultimate reality which is one without a second. Spinoza, when he goes into detail, talks of infinite extension. In fact, he purports to say that the ultimate reality is co-extensive with space. To be fully consistent with the oneness of the ultimate reality, we think that we have to take space itself as belonging to the being of the ultimate reality. It must belong to the non-consciousness part of the ultimate being. Then the question neither of limitedness nor of plurality can arise. The question of limitedness cannot arise because the whole of space now belongs to the ultimate reality, the question of plurality cannot arise because space itself now belongs to something that is ‘one’. But then there can be another line of thought holding space itself as a creation. We may refer to the five elements (*panca bhuta*) of the Indian System, of which one is Sky, *vyoma*. However, this issue is not important here. What is significant is that Spinoza conceived of the ultimate reality as one without a second, but that one having two parts, the consciousness-part and the material-part (in the essential sense of the term) which are inseparable from each other, in it the material part is such that, through its medium, the ultimate one can produce empirical world-matter.

In this context we may recollect Hegel who, in his later days, must have been doubtful about consciousness producing matter. Yet he was an absolute idealist and viewed the dialectical power of consciousness producing matter. His pupil Karl Marx turned into a materialist, was an admirer of dialectics. He said that the ultimate reality is matter, but matter having a dialectical power through which it produces consciousness. Spinoza, it is clear, would not have endorsed either way of thinking. He was a monist, as were Hegel and Marx, but his monism itself was of the dialectical kind. It was neither the dialectical spirit nor the dialectical matter but the dialectical union of the spirit and the matter, that was for Spinoza the ultimate reality.

The notion of union of the consciousness part and the non-consciousness part in

the ultimate being is actually not anything new to India. In the Nasadiya Sukta of the R̥gveda we find the lines

*tucchyena āvu apihitam yadāsīt
tapasastanmahimā ajāyata ekam*

which mean. "The one that was there, covered by a paltry sheath, expanded itself by self-energizing itself" It is evident that the paltry sheath cannot be anything external to the ultimate reality for, then, the question of its expansion through self-energizing could not arise. It is unfortunate that this R̥k did not get its due importance in the Indian system of thought. This is because *tucchya* was interpreted as 'non-existent' by the strong school of the Mayavadins and the creation looked upon as an illusion. Sri Aurobindo did not share this viewpoint. He described the ultimate dynamic reality as "Conscious non-Force", this goes to show that he was aware of the non-consciousness part of the ultimate one, which was to him (as to many relativists) more force-like than matter-like. Sri Aurobindo said, "... even in the view of the world as essentially an act of consciousness, an act is implied and in the act movement of Force, play of Energy." (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 82)

Spinoza believes in the will of God and, as already mentioned, he equates it with invariable laws of Nature. But he denies free-will altogether, even for God. His pantheism, for this reason, appeared to be very mechanical to many and they have declared it to be a veiled form of atheism. But we cannot go that far. We must not forget that he also talked of the loving nature of God. All through his life he talked of God, thought of God and dreamed of God. He was indeed a God-intoxicated man, as very correctly held by posterity in general. Bertrand Russell described Spinoza as the noblest and most lovable of all great philosophers. Spinoza's ethics is equally important as his ontology, but here we have restricted ourselves only to his ontology.

Let us conclude with a touching line from a historian. At the dedication of Spinoza's statue at the Hague, in 1882, Renan delivered an address and ended it with the following words: "Ages hence, the cultivated traveller, passing by this spot, will say in his heart. 'The truest vision ever had of God came, perhaps, here' "

ASOK KUMAR RAY

THE MODERN NOTE IN CHAPMAN'S *THE REVENGE OF BUSSY D'AMBOIS*

IN HIS book, *Tragedy Shakespeare and the Greek Example*, Adrian Poole says, "Tragedy affirms with savage jubilation that man's state is diverse, fluid and unfounded. Tragedy diversifies man's universe, severing the certainties that seem to bind human beings together, to make men and women at one with each other, with themselves, with their world. It shatters the assurance of the first person pronouns, 'I' and 'We'."¹ This runs counter, of course, to Aldous Huxley's proposition that tragedy cannot convey the whole truth. However, the most modern element in tragedy seems to lie in man's utter loneliness in the face of what Lever, in his book, *The Tragedy of State. A Study of Jacobean Drama*, has called 'impersonal power drives'.² Dr Stockmann in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, a modern tragedy, says at the end, "It is this, let me tell you, that the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone." Strength lies in loneliness, or loneliness is strength.

George Chapman's Clermont in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, a 16th century tragedy, strikes the keynote of the tragedy of modern man. Goodness or greatness—what is of more significance in this world of ours? Politics played its gruesome role in Chapman's tragedy. Renel exclaims at the end of Act I, Scene 1:

Oh, what is man
Unless he be a politician?

Chapman really blinks at the politicalizing nature of man. Here, of course, we scent nothing of the aroma of the Aristotelian cognition of the inherent goodness of man. It is rather the Machiavellian blending of the ferocity of the lion and the shrewdness of the fox in the individual, and Clermont, Chapman's 'Senecal man',³ throws a challenge to this blending. The deviousness, machination, maliciousness, false deceptions, etc. have been exposed with a rare zeal by Chapman in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, the like of which we have not found in Shakespeare. The age itself was one of 'confusion and ferment',⁴ as Christopher Hill has put it, and the tragic writers were wont to present the darker, meaner and more sordid aspects of human nature.

Lever, of course, has presented the tragedy of state in his remarkable book aforementioned, and dealt at length with the domination of the machinations of state over the individuality of character. But in his over-emphasis on the state and its evils, he has lost sight of the heroic ethos of the tragic protagonist in the face of this grim and gruesome power. Chapman's Clermont is incapable of siding with what is mean, unjust and evil. In fact, the element of the heroic ethos which is the essential staple of the Restoration tragedy was not something extraneous, but was germinated in the tragedies of Chapman and other Jacobean playwrights.

Clermont is caught in the meshes of state. In a society totally degenerate and dehumanized, in a world which is completely dominated by power, Clermont would

kill himself rather than live its slave Baligny, the Lord-lieutenant, like Leslie in Henry Glapthorne's play, *The Tragedy of Albertus Wallenstein*, affects a partnership with the faction against the state, while, in fact, he searches for all such malcontents and their designs Baligny says after Renel has left him in the very opening scene of the play.

All restitution to your worthiest lordship,
Whose errand I must carry to the King,
As having sworn my service in the search
Of all such malcontents and their designs,
By seeming one affected with their faction,
And discontented humours 'gainst the State

(Act I, Sc 1)

Baligny himself is a malcontent, just as Guise is in *Bussy D'Ambois* A malcontent is defined by McAlindon in his book, *English Renaissance Tragedy* "The malcontent is no imaginative Titan who will challenge kingdoms or 'the universal body of the law' What he wants is a lucrative place at court, and his offences are the consequence of his inability to find employment with great men other than as pander to their vices and executant of their vendettas"⁵ Baligny plays his part well as a malcontent.

In an age when there was a general decay of all values, it was quite pertinent for Chapman to scoff at the insolence of high birth and greatness which were not the natural possessions but acquired by fortune. Guise who is found here in a different role from that in the earlier play, says about Monsieur, the brother of the king

the insolence
Of his high birth and greatness (which were never
Effects of his deserts, but of his fortune)
Made show to his dull eyes, beneath the worth
That men aspire to by their knowing virtues,
Without which greatness is a shade, a bubble

(Act I, Sc 1)⁶

One really wonders whether Chapman was advocating gentleness of birth, of nature. But this much is clear that mere acquirement of goods does not guarantee goodness in man During the crowning years of Elizabethan tragedy, man was conceived as a being of infinite potential. Shakespeare himself said, though in a different context, in *Hamlet* "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!"⁷ But during the decadent phase of drama in the early seventeenth century, the political life of England underwent a radical change Craftiness and cozenage reigned supreme in the consciousness of man The generosity of outlook which could embrace all the discordant elements of human nature in 'a telos of

harmonic integration'⁸ was now replaced by the politicalizing propensity of man

In this age, treachery to brother and father was considered truest loyalty to the king. The word 'treachery' was equivalent to 'grave deep policy'⁹ (Act II, Sc 1). To live a life deprived of the king's grace and countenance was the most languishing, tedious kind of life. In such an age when men were apt to devise Machiavellian stratagems and deadly machinations, when power was used as a thing amoral which carries the scantiest respect for morality, Clermont, depleted of humanity in consequence of the acquirement of too much of learning and wisdom, is set to perform his task of revenge for his murdered brother, Bussy. Like Hamlet who was born to set right a world which was out of joint, Clermont, 'a most accomplish'd man' (Act II, Sc 1),¹⁰ as Guise says of him, is set to accomplish a task abhorrent and repulsive to his nature. He does not believe in avenging a villainy with villainy. He does not have the vicious fury of his brother, Bussy. He knows well that virtue cannot proceed from fury, and, therefore, refrains from undertaking the enterprise of throwing a challenge to Baligny and the King. While Baligny plays on both sides, Clermont cannot brook the state of affairs when 'souls are smother'd in the flatter'd flesh' (Act II, Sc 1).¹¹ Flesh or the body or, for that matter, the state was given preference to the soul or the individual moral concerns of man. In this sort of situation, Clermont is incapable of coping with the moral and political questions fair and square. His virtues are 'past the reaches of this age' (Act II, Sc 1),¹² as Baligny himself admits. The idea of Renaissance over-reaching is cast in a different mould and given a significant twist in the character of Clermont. The course of the Universe should not be inverted, he thinks. If anyone crosses God in his own work, he is doomed to perish. He says

I know 'tis better

To live with little, and to keep within
 A man's own strength still, and in man's true end,
 That run a mix'd course. Good and bad hold never
 Anything common, you can never find
 Things outward care, but you neglect your mind
 God hath the whole world perfect made, and free,
 His parts to th' use of th'all, men then that are
 Parts of that all, must, as the general sway
 Of that importeth, willingly obey
 In everything without their power to change
 He that, displeas'd to hold his place, will range,
 Can in no other be contain'd that's fit,
 And so resisting th' All, is crush'd with it.
 But he, that knowing how divine a frame
 The whole world is, and of it all, can name,
 Without self-flattery, no part so divine
 As he himself, and therefore will confine

Freely, his whole powers, in his proper part,
Goes on most God-like!

(Act III, Sc 1)¹³

The Elizabethan tragic hero over-reached himself and that way brought about his own downfall. The idea of heroism for Chapman does not consist in performing heroic deeds in the battlefields, but in choosing to lead a life of contentment within man's 'native noblesse' and within the limits of his capacity, and in forbearing to transcend the demarcating line of ability. It is really a detestable sight to see a man hovering round with false pretensions of nobility. Rather, true manliness lies in keeping one's own way straight and serving the world in one's own humble fashion, with whatever little possessions one has at one's disposal. Clermont, like Hamlet, thinks himself to be ill at ease with the goings-on of the world. But what is more is that Clermont is capable of holding unto himself the 'most God-like' elements in this kind of sequestration. In a world full of deceptions and flattery, it is better not to think of the Everlasting fixing his canon against self-slaughter of which Hamlet was so scared, but to leave it, disdaining to remain its slave. Thrust, like Bussy, into a world of inverted values, Clermont feels that all the discipline of manners and manhood is contained in this

A man to join himself with th' Universe
In his main sway, and make (in all things fit)
One with that All, and go on, round as it,
Not plucking from the whole his wretched part,
And into straits, or into nought revert,
Wishing the complete Universe might be
Subject to such a rag of it as he

(Act IV, Sc 1)¹⁴

This is the highest level of wisdom realized by Clermont that if he has to remain in this world he has to fit himself in with this world of inverted values. It was not for him to bind himself inextricably with the evils of the State. It was, therefore, befitting on his part to commit suicide in the end rather than to surrender his life to State power. The King himself uses his minion, Baligny and the captains of his army to render Clermont culpable to the effect that he is a traitor with some close stratagem. Because of his credulity, Clermont comprehends only belatedly why he is apprehended. But he is as astute as ever. He says, "Who breaks no law is subject to no king."¹⁵ His 'laws are not so true to him as he'.¹⁶ It is the treasonable enterprise of Baligny which is at the core of Clermont's tragedy. The King has fondly believed in Baligny and therein has erred, has misused his regal power. The Countess of Cambray brings in the metaphor of archery for elucidating the relationship between the King and his subjects

Kings are like archers, and their subjects, shafts,
For as when archers let their arrows fly,

They call to them, and bid them fly or fall,
 As if 'twere in the free power of the shaft
 To fly or fall, when only 'tis the strength,
 Straight shooting, compass given it by the archer,
 That makes it hit or miss; and doing either,
 He's to be praised or blamed, and not the shaft .

(Act IV, Sc. i)¹⁷

The creed of absolutism has borne the fruits of corruption and treachery. The breach of faith between friend and friend, between the King and his subjects, has cast its ominous spell over the State.

Clermont's stoical endurance and temperance have made him bear the hazards and the fortunes as well with the same equanimity of mind which he has developed in himself by loving nothing outward. Guise, enthralled by Clermont's inherent goodness and virtue, says to him,

How strangely thou art loved of both the sexes;
 Yet thou lovest neither but the good of both.

(Act V, Sc. 1)¹⁸

The debate between free choice on the one hand and necessity and compulsion on the other provides also the social framework of the play. Man neither lives nor dies by his free choice, but according to the law of necessity. Therefore, he should not resist this frame of necessity. That is wisdom, and heroism lies in the will and the free power of disposing of the good and the bad with fortitude and temperance. Chapman offers a new dimension to heroism. It is the kind of heroism which is bereft of romantic chivalry and swashbuckling adventures. It is heroism mollified and graced with humanity which is capable of transforming the society and binding it with reason. As fixed as ever in himself, whatever chance may befall him, Clermont turns out, indeed, to be a 'Senecal man'. But Chapman is adept in exhibiting to us how this Senecan fortitude in Clermont led to insurrection by his realization of instinctual relationship amongst men, which for ever exists even in the face of political enticements and machinations. In a society divested of all things human and replete with things fiendish, Clermont visualizes himself as bogged down in a savage sea in a ship whose negligent sailor he is, left to 'all the horrors of the vicious time'.¹⁹ Therefore, in this power-dominated world—a world feeding thieves and beasts, he will not at all remain a 'slave of power'.²⁰ He renounces the world by killing himself, to meet his master Guise in the happy bourne of heaven where the mind is free of the soul, the soul of the spirit, and the spirit of the body. In this act of self-immolation, Clermont emerges as a tragic hero who is most human with heroic grandeur and nobility undimmed by paltry intrigues and macabre dealings of a dehumanized society.

Chapman has shown his dexterity in creating the framework of opposites for the

full elucidation of the heroic ethos in Clermont. The dichotomy between the natural and the feigned, for example, has been brought to the fore for the purpose of highlighting natural sorrow. The Countess of Cambray says:

As a tree fruit bears,
So doth an undissembled sorrow, tears
(Act IV, Sc. 1)²¹

As Clermont gradually 'unclothes' himself, the apparent hiatus between appearance and reality comes to the fore:

The garment or the cover of the mind,
The humane soul is, of the soul, the spirit
The proper robe is, of the spirit, the blood,
And of the blood, the body is the shroud
With that must I begin them to unclothe,
And come at th'other
(Act V, Sc. 1)²²

In a world of irreconcilable opposites, Chapman's use of images and symbols is natural and befitting. In *Bussy D'Ambois*, Guise and Monsieur are 'fate's ministers' for Bussy's end, even as they are cruel policy-mongers in the court. Both Bussy and Clermont are conceived on a heroic scale against all the motivations of power and the spoils of State. Ben Jonson had discarded the providential view of history in *Sejanus, His Fall*. Chapman in the *Bussy* plays brought to perfection the tragedy of State and envisaged the cleavage between the plebeians and the patricians, between the people's voice and the voice of God. Chapman justifies his conception of tragedy which he has laid down in his dedication to the play, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* to Sir Thomas Howard, wherein he speaks of 'excitation to heroical life' and of 'material instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to virtue, and deflection from her contrary, being the soul, limbs, and limits of an authentical tragedy'²³

Chapman, in striking this note of 'authentical tragedy', really strikes a modern note in that goodness to be great pushes a noble man into an irreconcilable position of estrangement from the corrupt scheme of society, and for this remarkable achievement Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* is still worth its weight in gold.

PRANABANANDA BANDOPADHYAY

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PILGRIMAGE

THE pilgrim started on his way
To distant land as he heard them say—
The idol there of wonder be,
A living presence for all to see—
He journeyed forth, a wealthy man,
In comfort, with a caravan.
His humble heart ahead of him,
Eager to reach his land of dream

Then one day at the fall of dusk,
When wore the weary sun a mask
Of fading red, and nature sang
A farewell song of love and pang,
When last few drops of cloud-rinsed ray
On palm leaves fell to fade away,
And a lone gull cried on the sea-shore sand,
The pilgrim reached his destined land

The rolling breakers all night long
Echoed Creation's ancient song
And the sigh of foam on sandy beach
The pilgrim's pining heart did reach.
With eyelids wide he dreamt the hue
Of fluttering feather green and blue,
The beckoning song of idol mute
With floating fragments from a flute

The following morn the rising sun
Guided him as the day begun.
The singing birds, the fragrant air,
The ringing bells, all joined to ensnare
The pilgrim awed, who reached the shrine
And saw the blue idol divine,
And stood transfixed with folded hands
Lost to the world, in ethereal lands

Ever a little did the feather shiver,
Ever a little did those red lips quiver,
Ever a little did the eyelids wink,
The fingers on flute moved in a twink.

Blessed are those who call on the Lord
 Whose remembrance ripples the heart's inner chord
 But he is bound to Him forever
 Whom the Lord Himself has called His lover.

Back home, the restless spirit longed
 To break the shackles of ignorant bond
 He set out again to roam the land
 Of snow-clad mountains and burning sand,
 Where meadows unfurl the horizon clear
 And rivers glide and disappear
 Beneath the waves of foaming seas;
 The chosen land of great Rishis

Sitting by the Ganges at evenfall
 He watched the small waves rise and fall
 And heard the carol of rolling river,
 A journey begun, proceeding forever,
 Ever changing yet the same -
 From life to life with a different name,
 A ceaseless endeavour in eternal time,
 An infinite loop in the plan divine.

As his thoughts flowed along with the tide,
 The cloak of night fell far and wide.
 Here and there on the earthly plane,
 Imitating the starry game,
 The lights lit up, an assurance clear,
 Dispelling darkness' morbid fear
 The light within when lit will shine
 And guide the soul to destiny's shrine

Then a flame flickering from afar
 Came into view, as black night's scar,
 Floating and dancing in a little cup
 Woven from leaves Then more came up.
 From darkness emerged then drifted away
 And fused in the night with gentle sway
 Floated by hands that hope their wish
 Might someday find a ground to flourish.

Born in time, on the bosom of fate
 We go back thence to eternity's gate.

The little journey undertaken here,
 Reveals its value only to the seer
 Late into night the pilgrim stayed,
 Deep he delved and sought unafraid
 Till all was silent. His destiny found,
 He journeyed back where his heart was bound.

When he the seashore shrine had reached,
 He ran to the idol and beseeched—
 ‘‘Lord, I have given Thee all I had
 In loving return Thou hast me clad
 In saffron robe and given me
 The sky for my roof and earth to be
 My regal home, and nature vast
 My true companion, friend steadfast

‘‘But now I offer without reserve
 All that I am and Thee ever to serve
 My thoughts, my acts and all my passion
 Be Thine, to mould in Thy sun fashion.
 I have sought Thee down the ages long
 And awaited Thy call in every song
 Never again shall I part from Thee—
 I am Thine for all eternity.—

Ever a little did the feather shiver,
 Ever a little did those red lips quiver,
 Ever a little did the eyelids wink,
 The fingers on flute moved in a twink.
 The temple bells began to ring,
 A fragrance did the zephyr bring,
 A tune enchanting, soft and clear,
 Of a flute was heard from ever near

D. L

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

THE GRAND OLD MAN OF *MOTHER INDIA*[†]

I OWE K. D. Sethna much debt not only for the things he has done to me but also for the power, intellectual and spiritual, I have derived from him. I feel happy now to write a review-article broad enough in scope incorporating in it my indebtedness to him. After going through the *festschrift*, I wonder what I am to add to what has already been said by a galaxy of scholars through the gleaming pages of the celebration volume. The *festschrift* itself is a broad-based approach to a full study of the spectromatic 'Clear Ray'. As a result, mine is in fact a minuscule re-view of what the contributors have done in their ebullient encomiums for the grand old disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the guardian-spirit of *Mother India*.

No other account of Amal Kiran can be so brief and beautiful as the sketch from the editors' desk. "Amal-Kiran is a polymath, knowing many arts and sciences, a learning lifted by enlightening intuition and deepened by spiritual insight. Confined now to a wheel-chair, like Stephen Hawking, the legendary Cambridge theoretical astrophysicist, though hardly as a near-physical wreck, he can see with his mind's eye—or is it with the Upanishadic Eye of the Eye?—bright worlds stretching beyond our visible universe. His literary output in quality and quantity is comparable to that of any outstanding figure in the present age. In fact had he lived in, for instance, Hawking's England he would have received a much wider recognition as a man of letters. His cultural and intellectual achievements would have surely made a mark of their own in that circle of the élite. If his monumental *Collected Poems* running to something like 800 pages is a work of exceptional merit, his prose writings cannot be contained even in a few dozen books. And what diverse topics! Poetry-criticisms shedding light on Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Mallarmé, Sri Aurobindo; scrutiny of scientific thought while grappling with the philosophical questions of Relativity Theory and Quantum Mechanics no less than problems of biological thought, chronological researches in the history of ancient India and the beginnings of history for Israel; Christian traditions and the problems of early Christianity; Fate and Free-will, comments and opinions about national and international issues and events, hundreds of letters to friends and admirers dealing with matters spiritual, yogic, literary, personal, editorship of the monthly review of culture *Mother India* for more than 45 years, and above all, interpreting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in a most luminous way as something coming from his full-fraught spirit—any one of these should be sufficient to place Amal-Kiran in the top rank of intellectuals."

The main *festschrift* volume falls under four major sections distinguished by phrases from *Savitri*: A CONTINENT OF WARM SUNSHINE, HIS STUDY OF DIVINING THOUGHT, A NAME SUNG BY THE POET, FAME AND THE WIDE MAGNIFICENCE OF MOOD. The main col-

[†] Niroobaran and R. Y. Deshpande (ed.) 1994 *Amal-Kiran: Poet and Critic*, pp. 457 Rs. 150
Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, 1994 *The Wonder that is K. D. Sethna alias Amal Kiran*, pp. 42 Rs. 25

lection is accompanied by a separate booklet comprising the article *The Wonder that is K. D. Sethna alias Amal Kiran* by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee. In the first section (pp. 1-36) of the volume we find the facsimiles of some of the letters written by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to Amal Kiran and also a few other important letters received by him. The second section (pp. 37-112) makes a quick selection of the writings of the prolific author. The third section (pp. 113-432) has essentially articles and tributes from 36 writers, past and present. In the last section (pp. 433-457) there are pencil sketches made by Sethna himself and a set of photographs of him symbolizing various stages of his life and also other miscellaneous matters like book reviews and blurbs.

This abundance of contributions is a credit to his sweet and charming manners which have their plenteous source in his soul that is indeed ever full of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This overwhelming response to the idea of celebrating Sethna's 90th birthday (in 1994) was due to his innate qualities of extending a helping hand to and casting a radiant smile on anyone who approaches him for support and guidance. Though the title of the collection has limited its scope to highlighting Amal-Kiran mainly as a poet and critic, after reading it one can have the satisfaction of refreshing one's mind about the entire personality of the living *littérateur*-colossus with his multi-dimensional vision. There is a strong case for perceiving an epoch behind the nonagenarian Sethna.

Born in a family of Parsis of Bombay on 25 November 1904 as Kaikhushru Dhunjabhoy Sethna and 'reborn' in the Pondicherry Ashram as Sri Aurobindo's Amal Kiran (The Clear Ray) on 3 September 1930, his life has been flowing quietly since his 'rebirth'. "The rebirth in the Ashram was," says K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "really the awakening to the 'sweetness and light' of the psychic being within." Amal Kiran describes his spiritual experience in the period between his first darshan on 21 February, 1928 and the second on 15 August the same year. ". the sweetness in the experience is of a bliss which has no cause; a self-existent bliss is there. It is not dependent on persons, occasions, circumstances, objects. To be there, deep within, to feel oneself there is to be perennially, and I might even say unbearably, happy. The light is present because some kind of natural truth-feeling is experienced, which guides you all the time ... On the negative side...one is not depressed, one does not bewail one's lot any more, secondly, one does not rebel, either against the Divine or against human beings."

Amal Kiran's 'Prayer for Perfection' (1963) is his soul's cry wherein he implores the Mother to bless and perfect him by way of answering his earnest prayer one day. The Mother blessed him and assured him that "One day is sure to come..". The day soon came and what we see now in Amal Kiran is a perfected soul, though he himself would demur vehemently to such a description. It is not a momentary achievement but a lifetime of momentous achievement. Sethna has been a committed and dedicated and evangelistic Aurobindonian and he is the best informed, the most perceptive and the most illuminating of the critics of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. His consistency in faith and

conviction has enabled him to get chosen as the 1994 recipient of Devavrata Bhisma Award by the International Institute of Indian Studies (IIIS) in recognition of his contribution to international peace and world-order on the basis of universal Vedantic values.

A graduate in philosophy from Bombay University, with a prize in General English, young K D S. got fully engaged in the Aurobindonian Integral Yoga of self-change and world-transformation. On 19 February 1949, *Mother India* as a fortnightly with Sethna as Editor was launched in Bombay. A few years later, the journal along with the Editor was shifted to Pondicherry, and has since been appearing as a monthly Review of Culture Under Sethna's missionary editorship, *Mother India* has sustained its original robust and spiritually valid 'cartographical aggression' for more than 45 years with its beautiful blue map of undivided cultural India on the cover. In the words of Iyengar, "*Mother India* growing in knowledge, wisdom and benevolence is now grandmotherly in her global sweep of understanding and unfailing goodwill." Earlier Sri Aurobindo and the Mother often spoke through him to the outside world, but now all the three merge in the cumulative light—the Clear Ray—radiating from *Mother India*.

The first section of the main volume is in all respects a continent of sunshine that brings to light Sethna's reverential, intimate and spiritual association with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as some great ongoing movements in the world that aim to cleanse the world with the remedial treatment of humanism and mutuality. It also contains a few poems of Sethna's with the comments by Sri Aurobindo, whose insight into the different levels from which poems originate is so new and valuable. His letters to the Mother trace the origin of his spiritual aspiration and its growth and development. His doubts and fears were brushed aside by the Mother who instilled into him confidence to be The Clear Ray among the confused and murky assemblage of wavering lights.

Sethna's poetry speaks from that paradisaical vision to which every great soul aspires. As Kathleen Rane (who is 85 but believes she is still young by Sethna's standard) points out in her letter dated 31 December, 1993, "A life of aspiration to 'the divine Vision' cannot but bring its reward, not in the poems only but in other ways—all ways.. " How Sethna has done it in other ways too is amply illustrated by the sincere and affectionate articles by several writers in the third section. The accompanying booklet by Jugal Kishore, a monolithic sketch in words, serves as a synopsis of the third section to the reader They all sing happily in unison 'a name sung by the poet Fame'. Their assessments of Sethna are not exaggerated ones out of a blind affection and overflowing enthusiasm but indisputably real, though their accounts at times appear to be too enthusiastic or strange, perhaps stranger than fiction. It happens to a personality like Sethna who is an open-ended system with an in-built device for more and more evolutionary vistas.

To Aditi Vasishtha, Amal is a golden bridge to Sri Aurobindo and his glowing heart 'knows strange depths'. Amal's delightful daily pilgrimage begins with his visit to

the Ashram, to the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A happiness hovers around him. The young boys of the Ashram who help him go about, do so with utter love and devotion. Even the simplest of actions with and around Amal becomes a prayer, an offering, an oblation. For Amal constantly lives in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. As he reveals in *The Secret Splendour*, he is forever in a 'heavenward groping mood'. Therefore, to merely know him is not enough. He has to be experienced. His poetic spirit is "in a spirit wideness sown with spirit stars". His poems sometimes emerge on the spur of the moment. *God's Steep* is a very powerful little poem which was written at past midnight on tissue paper by torch-light in a railway compartment on his way to Pondicherry from Madras. Not all poems are born so suddenly. *Tree of Time* is a poem that grew within over a period of nine years marking his close association with a tall silk-cotton tree seen from the old Guest House terrace. He parallels himself to the tree as his soul then was waiting to enjoy the stirrings of spirituality initiated by Sri Aurobindo.

I am tree of time, a swaying shadow
With one sole branch lit by eternity—
All of me dark save this song-fruitful hand

Amal sees poetry, lives poetry and therefore his world, though outwardly simple and spartan, is inwardly rich beyond measure. To be in touch with his mind is, Vasishtha avers, to constantly grow and learn more and more. He invariably takes his friends nearer Sri Aurobindo, because such is the luminous stuff he is made of. He is a beautiful Consciousness crystallised around a flame lit by Sri Aurobindo.

Aniruddha Sircar regards Amal as a legend—"...a very fair, handsome, tallish man with a bright face and twinkling eyes, a romantic Byronic limp and an irresistible charisma." Sircar remembers with gratitude Amal's kind heart and sympathetic attitude towards fledgling poets, for instance, the weightlifter-turned-poet Sircar himself. Amal's lectures combined erudition with hilarity in equal measure. He would tell jokes and funny anecdotes and endeavour to make work seem play. The secret of his erudition and popularity lies in his being a fit disciple of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The mantra of his life is contained in Sri Aurobindo's words: "Adore and what you adore attempt to be." Amal adores Sri Aurobindo, so he faithfully follows in the Master's footsteps. He is also an accomplished artist. He has done some of the most beautiful designs for the Mother's saris, dresses, headbands and sandals.

In the estimation of Arabinda Basu, Amal is nothing if not versatile; he is nothing if not a virtuoso. He is a teacher who in his lectures on poetry makes the Muse come alive. As a writer, he turns into gold all that he touches. He is a master of the poet's craft. His knowledge of the technique of poetry, its language, diction, prosody, metre and rhythm is truly authoritative. He has a very sensitive ear which enables him to appreciate and at the same time communicate to the reader the reason for his admiration for a poem, a passage or even a single line. This point is further strengthened by V. N. Bhushan who sees Amal as truly a 'Spirit-Illuminated Son of Song' of whom Indo-

English poetry may feel legitimately proud Amal's poems are characterized by an illumined power of consciousness and a striking inwardness of word-suggestion and sound-suggestion that carries a concrete sense of occult and spiritual realities.

Two Birds (written by Amal at 33) is a poem that belongs to the category of a profound and revelatory disclosure. R. Y. Deshpande observes that "it is one of the most lyrical moments of mystic poetry, powerfully evocative in shades and thoughts and contents, bringing the full subtlety of the ancient Vedic-Upanishadic parable to us. It is said that Persian poets were poetry itself and we may apply the same to this Parsi poet, Amal Zarathustra formed his religion by praising beauty in Nature and Amal as his descendent has taken the liberty, under the wide and luminous wings of Sri Aurobindo, to go one step farther in praising the beauty of the spiritual Muse, and in the process do away with all religion *Two Birds* unmistakably demonstrates that the path chosen by Amal is aesthetic-spiritual and that is a great success indeed in the direction of the future poetry as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo."

The 71-year-old C. V. Devan Nair admires Amal, the 'Interpreter of the Divine Word' not only for himself, but for the entire context of space, time and atmosphere which engendered so variegated a flower. Amal is a bloom "so multi-hued and multi-scented that one does not know where to begin" in order to honour him. Indubitably, Sri Aurobindo was at once the first prophet and practitioner of the WORD of a divine dawn of consciousness on our planet. He saw, like the Vedic rishis, that all our dawns had always been early prefigurements of wider and more brilliant dawns to come. Among the great interpreters of Sri Aurobindo's writings, be it *The Life Divine* or *Savitri*, Amal is the most authoritative living force. With his innate poetic genius, his phenomenal memory of everything he reads, and an extraordinary sensitiveness to ever-so subtle nuances of word and significance, Amal has proved to be an uncommonly clear conduit for the Truth-burdened word and phrase. Nair chooses Amal's two poems *This Errant Life* and *The Master* and recalls Sri Aurobindo's own comment on the former. Amal would take his "place among English poets and no low place either", if he wrote always like that. In his humour, Amal goes unabashedly for the belly. Here is an autobiographical account of Nair for a sample. Nair once in an article for *Mother India* referred to "persons turning their noses down" on things they deemed beneath them. Amal's corrective response can cause anyone to laugh till his belly aches. "As far as I know, elephants are the only animals which can turn their noses up and down and side-ways."

Amal is a 'Poet and Pioneer in Conscious Literature,' says V. Madhusudan Reddy. In its highest form and expression, literature tries to "bring out and raise the soul and life of the living and the ideal mind of a people, an age, a culture, through the genius of some of its greatest or most sensitive representative spirits". Amal is no doubt one such genius and his poetry truly can induct us into the inner workings of the author and can be the first introduction to his inner being and the inner mind. P. Marudanayagam deals with Sethna's *Talks on Poetry*, wonders at the critical thought they contain and concludes that the Indian's view has added a new dimension to assessment of English

Romantic poetry. Goutam Ghosal is rhetorical but sincere in his admiration. "One look anywhere at his work, at any paragraph or any stanza, is enough to open our eyes to the mind behind the words." Within the texture of logical prose, poetry and argument have coalesced to form a unique structure which not many can bring about. Sethna does it frequently. He is a living exponent of Aurobindonian aesthetics. His textual commentary on Sri Aurobindo's poem *Rose of God* amply illustrates this point.

For Sethna, Prema Nandakumar says, writing poetry is yoga and in yoga there can be no place for sadness, hopelessness, death. Life is a seamless spread in the Time-Space continuum and Amal's *The Secret Splendour* (1991) is full of various shades of a childlike joy. This is truly Ananda Yoga, the creative joy that unites the dancer and the dance. Ranjit Sarkar makes a serious attempt to portray Amal as a poet of the spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo has said that it is an error to think that spirituality is a thing divorced from life. Amal followed this Yoga to develop the fine forces of the world's life. He never imitated his Master but was influenced by him. Although his poetic personality is formed by his Master, he has a voice that is personal. It is because, as Sunetra Chattopadhyay points out, Sri Aurobindo insisted on originality that Amal has a distinct voice of his own. It becomes clear when we listen to what he says. "Poetry is a window opening through Form on the Divine, on a realm of archetypes." This view is very similar to that of ancient Indian poetics which regards poetry as the 'togetherness' of sound and sense, *śabdārthau sahitaū*.

Sachidananda Mohanty outlines the correct approach to the poetry of Amal. Elucidating spiritual or mystical poetry is clearly not an easy task. Amal's poems cannot be analysed, they can only be felt. One great way of reading his poetry is, therefore, to first try and formulate an approach in the light of the aesthetics proposed by Sri Aurobindo who serves as the poetic role model for Amal. This approach enables us to read his poems with an attitude of spiritual empathy. Then we are amazed to discover that in Amal's best poems

Words have not come to measure things that are,
They plunge to the unheard, leap to the unseen ..

Sonia Dyne suggests that any reader not already familiar with Amal's work would be well advised to begin with the section entitled 'Overhead Poetry'. Amal's poetry is unique in that the process itself is a major theme running through poem after poem and reaching a peak of intensity in *The Adventure of the Apocalypse*, where poet and spiritual seeker finally renounce their separate identities. In his Review-Article (published 50 years ago) on *The Secret Splendour* (1941), Kishore Gandhi pointed out that each line of Amal's poems is pregnant with a subtle, luminous, intense inspiration which seems to come from some hidden depth or height of the being.

Jayantilal Parekh reminds us that, as a writer in English, Amal earned a special mention from Sri Aurobindo—"He (Amal) knows how to write English," which he could not say about many others. Sethna's interest did not stop with English poetry.

His interesting in-depth analysis of Mallarmé's symbolist poetry entitled *The Obscure and the Mysterious*, Jayaraj Daniel says, must have certainly encouraged scholars to make a comparative study of Mallarmé's works and Sri Aurobindo in the light of *dhvani* technique. Sethna has thus been encouraged and inspired by the example of Sri Aurobindo's exceptional and truly catholic range of interests. Pradip Bhattacharya assesses Amal's high adventure in Historiography. No other follower of the Master penetrated these areas nor ventured into territories such as science and history. Here is where Amal stands distinctly apart. *The Problem of Aryan Origins* is a phenomenal deep-delving, wide-ranging inquiry into the foundations of our past. Amal plunged into the oceans of the mind, and thus acquired a vast body of knowledge at an early age—so much so that Sri Aurobindo once jokingly remarked (Nirodbaran recalls): "He (Amal) has learned too much. He must start unlearning now."

J N Chubb along with his friend Amal likes philosophical discussions, both taking an excursion into the Unknown. Chubb's article *Are Philosophical Questions Self-Answering?* throws light on the philosophical depth of Amal's character. We cannot but agree with Dick Batstone when he says that "Behind all Amal's writing there is a perceptible sense of the far horizon towards which he is moving, and an ingredient of lightness and humour that leavens his multifarious learning, and keeps it from dryness and irrelevance." In the poem *The Parsi*, Amal asks, "What country shall I take as mine?" Not Iran, nor can "Europe's large earth-richness" nor "India's infinite Unknown" totally claim him, but "My country's a future where all dream-lights merge." It is this pilgrim aspiration that is evident in his book, *The Spirituality of the Future*.

Amal has impressed Dilip Kumar Roy so deeply that Roy considers him a priest of high spiritual-journalism. Roy admires his alert common sense and admits that Amal scores over the other Aurobindonians in his *gurubhakti*. Amal never flaunted the initial advantage he had in coming to Sri Aurobindo with a clean heart-tablet on which no other holy figure had been etched. This was assuredly one of the reasons why he received so much from Gurudev, especially insight into mystic poetry. He is to Dinkar D. Palande a continuation of the two Gurus, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Mangesh V. Nadkarni's article on Sethna's Master implies that paying tribute to Sri Aurobindo is also paying tribute to his disciple, a continuation of the Master. Huta always sees her wonderful teacher Amal as 'The Clear Ray' since Amal's consciousness is flourishing in Sri Aurobindo's Light and his psychic is constantly nestled in the Mother's arms. Similarly Shyam Kumari tells us that the secret of Amal's prolific output and all his other nice qualities is to be found in the infinite Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on one hand and Amal's tremendous receptivity on the other. Nilima Das is indisputably right when she says "To have known Amal Kiran is a grace, an unanticipated and clearly an undeserved benediction."

One trait in Amal's character Udar admires (and we all admire) a great deal is his courage. Amal has had various falls in his life because of one leg having been affected with polio during early boyhood. In spite of his crippling affliction, he does not ever

bemoan it but carries on as if it were a great opportunity for further adventure and progress. When troubles and tribulations fall on us, instead of looking on them as misfortunes we should take them as challenges for development. Amal exemplified this on several occasions in the past. Nilima Das offers a first-hand experience. Amal had a nasty fall on 15 October 1991 and got his right thigh fractured. He was kept under traction. Amal felt that it might not be possible to continue *Mother India* under these circumstances. As the manager of the monthly, Nilima reminded him of the Mother's telegram at the time of the first publication: "Stick to the date, live on faith, Blessings." He immediately said an emphatic "Yes." He was able to bring out subsequent issues very meticulously without any difficulty. Amal is invincible and indefatigable. As Dhan Palkhivala rightly says, "Kekoo Uncle [Dhan's affectionate epithet for Amal] never changed his attitude in distress and had not one single word of complaint for his discomfort." Amal's yogic attitude must be an eye-opener to people who grumble and complain about illness.

Dr Nirodbaran has experienced sixty years of unbroken friendship with Amal. "With such an extraordinary man," says this mystic medico, "I find myself an ignoramus by comparison." He gives authentic, interesting anecdotes about the multi-faceted Amal and concludes that we are very fortunate indeed to have two exceptional persons whose intellectual accomplishments are a thing of wonder to us. Amal is one of them and the other is Nolini Kanta Gupta. This aspect is reinforced by Sita Ram Goel. He says that when scholars were using the modern lore—linguistics, comparative mythology, archaeology and the rest—for denigrating and dismissing India's indigenous historical traditions, Sethna was employing the same lore for vindicating and sustaining those very traditions.

K. B. Sitaramayya brings our attention to the fact that Amal's personal letters reveal a facet which is more precious than the iridescent ones: his deep humanity. The reader is asked to particularly go through the article *Amal's Epistolary Wonder* by PR in order to taste Amal's live humour in epistolary communication. Here, a warm humorist and wit with a rich and robust sense of life and understanding of human nature stands in front of us in pure gleaming colours that are deeply satisfying. P. Raja, as a true disciple of Amal's, narrates Sethna's journey to Pondicherry seeking Truth in a style, I am sure, cultivated from his long association with Amal's infectious humour. It is quite surprising to know that Sethna, despite his polio leg, had ridden horses for 15 years before he became Amal. The same spirit of self-confidence still remains in him. Readers are again requested to enjoy reading his letter to Sudha Umachigi's father. It illustrates his wonderful sense of humour and his capacity to laugh at himself.

Shraddhavan, an Englishwoman from Auroville, offers a three-dimensional character sketch of Amal. Sadhak, Poet, Friend. He is a "living example of what a follower of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be." He has sustained a very high level of poetic achievement for more than sixty years. As a friend, his qualities include an open-heartedness, a simple and unassuming companionableness which dissolves formal barriers and allows a spontaneous intimacy, an immense loyalty and a capacity

for wordless communication. The vast ocean that is Amal Kiran—who knows how many more gems of purest ray are not hidden in his unfathomed depths?

The beautiful photographs of Amal from the front cover welcoming the reader to the last on page 446 of the main volume seem to symbolically represent the various stages in the evolution of Amal's spiritual progress from the early 30s to the early 90s—from the birth of the Clear Ray to the ever widening horizon of its clearest spiritual perfection. One can go back in time to the point at which Sethna, on becoming Amal Kiran, promptly started a correspondence with Sri Aurobindo in the thirties, run along time to glance through the various spiritual experiences that shaped him within and without and reach the point at present to be happily struck by the sadhana of "the Wonder that is K. D. Sethna alias Amal Kiran". The *festschrift* volume suffers from the

inescapable inherent weakness of its genre—repetition. Mention should be made about the meticulous care and effort of the editors in depicting the Spiritual Ray in a most elegant get-up and attractive print. After finishing the volume with its accompanying booklet, one feels that one has experienced Amal for a lifetime. Amal is experienceable and is worth experiencing. "Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!"

D GNANASEKARAN

STUDENTS' SECTION

NAPOLEON

I. EARLY YEARS

Boyhood

NAPOLEON was born on August 15, 1769, at Ajaccio, on the island of Corsica in the Mediterranean Sea. He was the fourth child and second son of Carto Maria de Buonaparte (later given the French spelling Bonaparte) and Letizia Ramolino. His parents belonged to noble Italian families and his father practised law.

Genoa had ceded Corsica to France in 1768, after a series of revolts on the island. During these troubled times, Napoleon's father skilfully followed a policy most likely to benefit himself and his family. He obtained for Napoleon an appointment to the military school at Brienne. The boy spent a few months learning French, then entered the school at the age of ten.

Napoleon was soon transferred to the royal military school at Paris. He found the discipline here stern and the teaching more skilful. Napoleon did not have a brilliant scholastic career, but he showed a special aptitude for mathematics and history. He had great confidence in his own judgment and displayed persistence in carrying out decisions.

At 16, Napoleon received a commission as a second lieutenant of artillery in January, 1786. He had joined an artillery regiment, and within three months had gone through the grades of private, corporal, and sergeant. Napoleon tried to master all the details of his new profession and devoted much of his time to study.

Napoleon had an unimpressive appearance, but he carried himself well. He stood slightly below average height. His courage and short stature led to his early nickname of "le Petit Caporal", or "the little corporal". He had heavy eyebrows and a weak mouth, but his powerful personality shone in his eyes.

The French Revolution broke out in 1789. In 1792, when the mob attacked the royal palace called the Tuileries, Napoleon was in Paris. He became an artillery captain that year. He handled his artillery command with great skill and received a prompt promotion to brigadier general.

Napoleon's real military career began at this time. He developed a principle of war that formed the basis of his future campaigns. He learned to seek a weak point in the enemy's line and throw all his strength against it at the decisive hour of battle. With the point broken or weakened, the enemy collapsed.

In 1794 Robespierre fell from power in the new French Government; the army suspended Napoleon and put him briefly under arrest, as a reaction to the violent reign of Robespierre.

Fame at 26

A poorly clad, ill-fed Napoleon waited in Paris for a change in his fortunes. The Convention that governed France grew steadily weaker, and many people began to long for the monarchy again. Later in October nearly 30,000 national guardsmen massed against the Convention, which was protected by 4,500 troops under Vicomte de Barras. Barras had seen Napoleon in action at Toulon and now sent for him. The Convention appointed Napoleon Barras's assistant. Napoleon showed superb resourcefulness by placing his artillery so that he cleared the streets of Paris "with a whiff of grapeshot."

5 October 1795 became a red-letter date in the history of Europe. Royalism had been crushed and Napoleon had paved his own road to power. Barras appointed Napoleon his Second-in-Command in the army of the interior. The Directory succeeded the Convention as the government of France. But, in time, Napoleon would crush democracy and monarchy alike, concentrating supreme power in one person—himself.

Marriage

On 9 March 1796 Napoleon married Josephine de Beauharnais, a beautiful Creole from the West Indies. Her first husband was guillotined two years earlier because he had opposed Robespierre's revolutionary government. Josephine had become one of the society leaders of Paris by the time Napoleon first met her. The young general fell violently in love with her. She was six years older than he, and he had no money. But he determined to marry her. Two days after his wedding, Napoleon left Paris for Italy. He had prepared a plan to drive out the Austrians.

II. FIRST VICTORIES

Triumphs in Italy

The Austrians had occupied large parts of northern Italy. After a series of triumphs, Napoleon forced Naples, Parma, and Modena to sue for peace. His armies then crushed the Austrians. In 1797, Austria made peace with the treaty of Campo Formio. Napoleon, now a national hero, returned in glory to Paris.

Egypt Invaded

Some men in the Directory feared, envied, and distrusted the young hero. Napoleon had great prestige in the army, and his men idolised him. Members of the Directory decided to get Napoleon out of the country. Great Britain had become France's bitterest enemy; but Napoleon advised against an invasion of the British isles. The Directory then ordered him to invade Egypt, a Turkish province, to avenge supposed insults to French merchants.

Napoleon's expedition of 35,000 men reached Alexandria in July 1798. He defeated the Mamelukes within sight of the Egyptian pyramids. But Lord Nelson's

British fleet followed Napoleon to Egypt and defeated the French fleet in the Battle of the Nile. A tight blockade cut Napoleon's supply lines. The Turks declared war on France, and Great Britain and Russia formed an alliance with Turkey. Austria then re-entered the war. The French forces, marooned in Egypt, advanced in 1799 into Palestine and then into Syria. The Turks and British checked Napoleon in Syria. He retreated to Egypt and routed the Turkish army there. Napoleon learned that the Second Coalition, which included Austria, Britain, and Russia, had defeated the French in Italy. He also heard that Josephine had been unfaithful to him.

First Consul of France

Napoleon gave the command of his army to General Jean Klber and sailed to Paris. He crossed the Mediterranean Sea in a small boat and avoided the British blockade. In a bold move called the "coup d'état of Eighteenth Brumaire" he and his followers seized power on 9 November 1799. Napoleon abolished the Directory and set up a government of three members called "the Consulate". He became the First Consul. Napoleon now ruled as the dictator of France.

The French people soon discovered that Napoleon had great gifts as a statesman. His government codified and revised the laws of France so well that today the "Code Napoleon" remains the basis of French law. In 1800 Napoleon set up the Bank of France. He negotiated the concordat of 1801 with Pope Pius VII, ending the confused Church-State relations caused by the French Revolution. He also founded the Legion of Honour in 1802 to honour soldiers and civilians who had made contributions to France.

III. THE NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE

Wars Against Austria

Napoleon ruled France with wisdom and vigour. But he found it difficult to settle down to peacetime government. His thoughts drifted to plans of conquest. Austria still controlled parts of northern Italy. Napoleon planned to strike a quick blow at his old enemy. In 1800 he led a famous march across the Alps, through the Saint Bernard Pass, into the Po Valley. His army clashed with the Austrians at Marengo in June. Napoleon's troops would have been cut to pieces if reinforcements had not arrived. A near defeat was turned into a victory. Austria agreed to sign a peace treaty on 9 February 1801, at Cuvillie.

Only Great Britain remained as France's major active enemy. The British and Turks drove the French from Egypt in 1801. This defeat shattered Napoleon's dreams of an empire in the Middle East and India. On 27 March 1802, after long negotiations, Great Britain kept Ceylon and Trinidad, but gave up its other colonial conquests to France and its allies in the treaty of Amiens. France enjoyed its first real peace in 10 years. But the peace proved short-lived.

Napoleon felt that as long as Britain opposed him, his gains were not secure. But he needed more money to carry on any new wars. In 1803 he sold the Louisiana territory to the United States. On May 16 Britain declared war on France. Napoleon prepared to invade the British isles.

Crowned Emperor

The French people in 1802 had voted Napoleon the title of First Consul for life. But the restless Napoleon was not satisfied. To strengthen his own authority he began to whittle away all powers of the government that he did not control. In May 1804, the French Senate voted him the title of Emperor. The coronation ceremony took place at Notre Dame Cathedral on December 2. As the Pope prepared to crown him, Napoleon snatched the crown and placed it on his own head, to show that he had personally won the right to wear it. He then crowned Josephine Empress.

Napoleon is probably most famous for his military achievements. But he guided the internal affairs of France as closely as he directed its armies. He set up a strong central government and appointed prefects to lead the territorial areas called departments. He reorganised the education system and founded the Imperial University. These measures later caused a break between the government and the Roman Catholic Church.

Dominates Europe

In 1805 Austria, Russia, and Sweden joined Britain in a new coalition against France and Spain. Emperor Napoleon I abandoned plans to invade Britain and prepared to fight on the Continent. On 2 December he smashed the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz in one of his most brilliant victories. Later that month, Austria signed the peace of Pressburg, and Russia stopped fighting. But off the southern coast of Spain, Lord Nelson had defeated the French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar on 21 October.

Napoleon now began to change the map of Europe. He believed that the "object of war is victory. The object of victory is conquest. And the object of conquest is occupation." Great Britain finally felt strong enough to strike at Napoleon on land. The British invaded Spain and began the bloody Peninsular War which lasted five years. Austria also declared war on France. At the end of the four-month campaign in 1809, the Austrians were completely defeated. The Peninsular War raged on.

IV. FALL FROM POWER

Divorce and Remarriage

Napoleon left the battlefield and returned to Paris. He began to develop a growing concern about the future of his vast empire after his death. Josephine had no child by Napoleon, and he had no heir to his Empire. He decided to divorce Josephine and on

2 April 1810 married Archduchess Marie Louise, the daughter of Emperor Francis I of Austria. She bore him a son in 1811. The son received the title of King of Rome.

Disaster in Russia

Napoleon had signed an alliance with Czar Alexander I of Russia in 1807. But the Russians did not fully carry out the Berlin Decree to close their ports to British trade. In 1812 Napoleon decided to teach the Russians a lesson. Long years of war had weakened France but he raised an army of 600,000 men. His allies and subject nations furnished many of these conscripted soldiers. Napoleon's Empire now stretched from Spain to the fringe of Russia and from Norway, an ally of France, to Italy.

Napoleon's army swept across the Neman River in the spring of 1812 and marched eastward. The Russians retreated slowly and destroyed everything of value. At Borodino the French overwhelmed the Czar's troops, but the main Russian force escaped eastward.

Napoleon pushed on to Moscow, where one of the greatest disappointments of his life awaited him. Most of the people had left the city. Those who remained set fire to it, and Napoleon soon found himself surrounded by ruins. The freezing Russian winter was approaching. The Russians rejected the French offer for a truce. Napoleon had to turn back and begin the long retreat from Moscow. His troops struggled homeward against snowstorms and terrible cold. Hunger and the piercing cold accomplished what enemy armies had not been able to do—defeat the Grand Army. Of the 600,000 men in his forces, over 500,000 were killed, captured, or deserted, or died of illness in the campaign and in the retreat from Russia.

The disaster proved to be the beginning of the end for Napoleon. He left Colonel Murat in command and hurried back to Paris to organize a new army before the news from Russia could reach his enemies. But the news swept across Europe like wildfire. Napoleon's reputation as a military genius suffered a fatal blow. Hope sprang up in countries that had long been under his heel.

The Enemy Alliance

Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and Austria allied themselves against Napoleon. With a great effort he raised another army. He battled with his old brilliance and defeated the allied armies at Hitzler, Bautzou, and Dresden. But he could not match the strength of his enemies. Nationalism had flared up throughout Europe as a result of his dictatorial rule. It now turned against Napoleon.

Exile to Elba

One by one Napoleon's friends and allies began to desert him. By April 1814 he had decided that his cause was hopeless. The French Senate called for the return of a

Bourbon king to the French throne. Napoleon's commanders insisted that he give up the throne. On 11 April he abdicated at Fontainebleau. The French invited Louis XVIII and crowned him king. Napoleon was made ruler of the tiny island of Elba off the coast of Italy, supposedly exiled from France forever.

Europe heaved a sigh of relief. Its diplomats met in the Congress of Vienna to undo many of Napoleon's numerous changes. But his exile lasted less than a year. In February 1815 he escaped from Elba. On the first of March he landed in France with a handful of followers and began marching to Paris. Troops under Marshal Michel Ney sped from Paris to arrest him. But when they saw their old leader, the men joyfully joined him and hailed him as their emperor. Louis XVIII fled Paris as Napoleon approached. Once again, allied armies took the field against Napoleon.

The Hundred Days

The period from Napoleon's escape from Elba to his final defeat at Waterloo has been called the "Hundred Days". Napoleon ruled once again. On 12 June he left Paris to take personal command of his troops. The Duke of Wellington and Marshal Gerhard von Blucher led separate armies against the French. Napoleon defeated Blucher at Ligny on 16 June. Ney forced Wellington back to the Belgian village of Waterloo. On 18 June Napoleon attacked Wellington in one of history's most decisive battles. Wellington counted on either nightfall or Blucher's reinforcements. At the decisive moment, Blucher's troops were seen approaching. The British and their allies fought with renewed courage, and Napoleon suffered a crushing defeat.

Napoleon fled to Paris, abdicated, and tried to escape to the United States. But he failed, and surrendered to the captain of a British warship at Rochefort on 15 July. The allied nations made him a prisoner of war. They took him to England, and exiled him to the barren island of Saint Helena, off the west coast of Africa.

Napoleon spent his last days under the care of a stern British Governor. He died of cancer on 5 May 1821 and was buried on the island. In 1840 the French government took his body to Paris. There, beneath the majestic dome of "Eglise du Dôme", the body of Napoleon Bonaparte was laid to rest. The famous monument is known as *Les Invalides*.

ARCHIPAL GHOSH

N B For Sri Aurobindo on Napoleon see *The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol 17, pp 382-87

THE CAUSES OF WORLD WAR II

THE years between World Wars I and II covered a dubious period in history in which the struggle for world peace resulted in failure. It was a dismal period during which those who had the power to enforce peace failed to act and during which the aggressors encouraged by such failure took up war and oppression again as a means of accomplishing their objectives. They were completely insensitive to the destruction and human suffering that their reckless actions would cause.

World War I had been sufficiently vast and destructive. It had induced mankind to search deeply for the means of avoiding another such convulsion. Many high-principled but practical leaders rose after that conflict and devoted all their energies to the establishment of a form of society which would bring security and peace to the world.

The First World War came to an end in 1918 after the signing of the famous 'Treaty of Versailles'. Around the time the news of the German surrender broke out, an Austrian Army Corporal was accidentally blinded by an enemy nerve gas and was rushed to a hospital in Munich where he had to be admitted for emergency treatment. The startling news made Adolf Hitler, the 29-year-old Corporal, vow to himself then and there to redeem the lost glory of Germany. But contrarily, following the all-important Versailles Treaty, the German war machinery came to an abrupt halt and as stipulated by mandatory sanctions Germany had to relinquish all foreign territory that she held.

The resulting treaty presupposed the continuance of English and U.S. military support which was induced by a basic sense of security to rest its full faith in the League of Nations.

The United States' refusal to support France by a military alliance and Britain's unwillingness to give her any kind of guarantee seriously compromised the principles on which the treaty was drafted. This only exposed its fatal character. Even France's plea for an international police force was scornfully rejected.

Meanwhile, after being discharged from hospital, the demoralised Hitler was initially forced to earn his livelihood by selling his paintings at the crowded street corners of Vienna and Munich. He eventually met a tailor named Anton Drexler, whom he befriended. The two met daily and their conversations attracted many youths who began to attend them in big numbers. And following these exchanges a common manifesto began to emerge containing the dangerous seeds of Nazism. With these ideals in mind Hitler founded the National Socialist Party. Eventually, this was to become Hitler's political platform to launch himself as a dictator. Realising that it would take too long to come to power democratically, he organised a coup in 1924 which was named the Beerhall Putsch, meaning the coup started in the beerhall, which saw the participation of a sizeable mass of people. However, its result was catastrophic. For Hitler was first fired upon and then caught while trying to flee. Eventually, he was imprisoned. Nine months after his release from jail he published *Mein Kampf*, a book

written during imprisonment dealing principally with his personal struggle in life. The part of this book which contained the *Lebensraum*, meaning space for expansion, underlined the basic need for Germany's territorial growth in the direction of Russia. And the dangerous portents of anti-Semitism, i.e. hatred for the Jews, can also be traced back to *Mein Kampf*.

While Hitler considered the Germans to be an elite race, calling them the Aryan or the blue-blooded race, he scornfully relegated all others to the category of sub-humans.

In the meantime, following the crippling sanctions from the international community the German economy collapsed and the inevitable recession set in. The Deutschmark plummeted by over a 1000%, roughly symbolising its paper's worth. Following large scale choking of industries, unemployment began to rise. Living conditions became so degraded that the archaic barter system had to be revived. Happily, after witnessing such a major economic collapse the outside world reacted positively. It was decided not to let the prevailing economic situation sink any lower and certain emergency measures, like the pumping in of essential capital, began. But although the economy revived and living conditions improved, political turmoil set in pushing Germany inevitably into several non-productive elections between 1930 and 1933.

Initially, Hitler's National Socialist Party could win only 4 seats and the election brought majority to no other party. After this, Hitler took up a massive public relation programme, organising public meetings and giving talks. As a result, the political situation began to change in his favour. And predictably, the ensuing elections in 1933 gave the National Socialist Party of the Nazis a clear majority. It had successfully turned the tables on its opposition by winning a landslide in the Reichstag, the German parliament. This resulted in bringing about the phenomenal rise of Adolf Hitler to the post of Chancellor, the German equivalent of Prime Minister.

A retired Field Marshal named Hindenburg was then set up as President of Germany as the nominee of Hitler's party. Hindenburg however was a Hitler-hater, always keeping an observant eye and restricting Hitler's movements. But his untimely death paved the way for Hitler to abolish the constitutional post of the President and amalgamate its power with that of the Chancellor's. This gave him the incontestable power of the Führer! His effrontery made him change the constitution, stipulating that the people must henceforth swear neither by God nor by the nation but by the Führer himself!

Next, he created the SS and the SD^{*} forces in the army. Their equivalents in English are the Brownshirts (SD) and the Blackshirts (SS). While the Black Shirts represented his own personal private army, the Brown Shirts were taken charge of by a trusted friend named Lieutenant Roehm. But Hitler soon found out that Roehm was planning to shelve him and become an all-powerful leader with his new-found clout. As this would have neutralised Hitler's hold on the army and the nation, one night Hitler

* SD = *sicherheits dienst*, SS = *schutzstaffel*

suddenly caused a blood-bath in which between 4000 to 5000 men were killed. Any leader or any person that he suspected to be connected with this organisation was picked up and shot dead without trial. Roehm was apparently captured and offered a pistol to shoot himself. But when he refused, an over-zealous sentry shot him dead.

Soon the public began to see Hitler as an invincible leader. And coupled with this surge of victories within the government came the welcome reversal of the negative economic growth. This was quickly counterbalanced by a hefty growth in the militarisation of the country. Very soon, the state's underlying strength began to reflect outwardly for everyone to see and the Fuhrer's hold over his country and people became total and complete.

When Hitler wanted to eliminate the last menace caused by his Communist foes, he simply set the Parliament House on fire. This infamous incident known as the Reichstag fire, was cleverly attributed to the Communists themselves. They were rounded up and mercilessly shot dead. After this masterly purge Hitler became an all-out dictator whom the European nations tried to appease in vain.

Endowed with incomparable powers of oration and mass-magnetism, Hitler then managed to capture the minds of his people by indoctrinating his theories of Nazism. Quite miraculously too, he succeeded in reviving the state's economy and built up a new armed force. He also industrialised Germany extensively. The whole industrialised belt of Germany was known as the Ruhr. Soon Germany became one of the world's largest industrialised nations. As his might began to grow, Hitler started exerting his ideal of Lebensraum (expansion) openly, rudely defying the disarmament programme imposed by the Versailles Treaty. But the Western powers, ably headed by England, were still very strong and tried hard to contain his evil designs.

Following the German revival Hitler soon entered into a secret agreement with Russia's Stalin, Italy's Fascist dictator Mussolini and Japan's Emperor Hirohito, not to attack these countries first in the event of a war. This laid the foundation of the group of four nations that would ultimately form the Axis Powers during the Second World War.

Hitler's government was also known as the Third Reich. This followed the precedents set by the Holy Roman Empire of the medieval ages and the second one of Bismarck's more recent kingdom. The First Reich had begun in A.D. 962 with the imperial coronation of Otto and ended with the death of Frederick I better known as Frederick Barbarossa in 1152, thus lasting nearly two centuries. The Second Reich was created under Otto Von Bismarck, known as the 'Iron Chancellor' from 1815 to 1898. Eventually, Hitler's Third Reich came into existence in 1933, which he predicted would last a thousand years. But, thankfully, it lasted just twelve years and three months until May 1945.

After becoming a dictator, Hitler's first military action was his annexation of Austria, vulgarly nicknamed 'Anschluß', meaning the rape of Austria. This was done with the plea that Austria had forever been an integral part of Germany. Austria had always been a sovereign nation, but unfortunately she now found herself to be part of the German empire. After Hitler's first barbaric act of Austria's annexation, his evil

eye fell on Czechoslovakia. And the pirate-like act was perpetuated, but it was strangely overlooked in the context of a weak European community.

Hitler quickly claimed that Czechoslovakia would be the last country to be captured. But in September 1939 he attacked Poland, thus precipitating England's decision to declare war on Germany. This, in short, is the story of how the Second World War began. Hitler then ran over Poland. And when the brave Polish people put up a tough fight, he compared their resistance to that of an orange in front of a steam-roller, in blunt appraisal of his own superior military might. And due to this uncommon resistance, Poland bore the brunt of Hitler's anger. Hitler then divided his army into 300 divisions. The ensuing brutality and the savagery unleashed on the Polish people was, to say the least, gruesome and horrifying. Later, all the major concentration camps were built on its soil. The various camps in which Jews were mercilessly exterminated were also erected on Polish soil.

In spite of the brave fight put up by the Polish people, it took Hitler just four days to capture Poland. Eventually, when war was declared against Germany, the English and French forces entered Germany through the 'Siegfried line' at the border of Germany and France. But in the meantime Hitler had tactically fled through Belgium. He took his armoured cars via Belgium to France and cut off the supply and retreat lines of the French, literally scorching and burning down everything on the way so that the enemy would starve and collapse within a mere month's time.

By then the whole of the north-west European belt had been captured by Hitler. This is when the famous Dunkirk evacuation took place. The operation was carried off by the B E F, or the British Expeditionary Force, to salvage whatever it could. The B E F was sent to France expressly to pull out to England as many stranded troops as possible through the coastal town of Dunkirk. Meanwhile, Churchill had replaced Chamberlain as Britain's Prime Minister and publicly stated that he would keep fighting even if they were driven back to the sea. He suggested that he would even go to America and fight. But, above all, he promised not to give up under any threat.

Now, by the intervention of providence, Hitler had committed his first strategic mistake. Having captured the entire area of the north-western belt of Europe he had failed to take the most logical step – to cross over the English Channel and invade England. Strangely, the Fuhrer felt no special hatred for England and as such treated the English as his equals – that is, another blue-blooded race like the German one. This perhaps was principally due to an earlier inter-marriage between the British and German monarchs. At any rate, it was Hitler's firm belief that he could bombard England into submission whenever he wished.

The 'Battle of Britain' of 1940 was actually an all-out air-battle, in which series of Luftwaffe bombers would stealthily fly in, bombard and go away. Hitler's overbearing confidence in his superior air power made him rule out the invasion of Britain to conquer her. And that, no doubt, was Hitler's first grave mistake. For had the Germans landed in Britain, she would have probably been captured and history would have had to be written differently.

Hitler's second and fatal mistake was the opening up of the front against Stalin's Russia in gross violation of his own earlier no-war pact. Initially, German troops went into Russia and were within 40 miles of Moscow. Here, however, Stalin had a marked tactical advantage, as Moscow lies very near the European border, and gives Russia two thousand miles of Siberian land to fall back upon. Hitler was bent upon capturing Moscow first. But contrarily, his war advisers wanted him to go for the Caucasian oil fields and the granary of Russia. Hitler refused both. His obvious aim was to capture the Russian capital first as that in itself would certainly have scored a thumping moral victory.

By then the terrible Russian winter set in bogging down the German army in snow, and causing Germany its first defeat in the war. This decisive battle became known as the Battle of Leningrad, an irreversible turning-point of World War II.

Meanwhile German forces were also facing stiff resistance in North Africa. Simultaneously, another very important event took place at Pearl Harbour. Here, the Japanese air force mounted an unprovoked attack on the American naval fleet on 7th December 1941, waking angry passions in the country which had held itself scrupulously out of both the world wars, and inadvertently causing it to step in. Following the bombardment of Pearl Harbour an emergency conference was held in Cairo in which Churchill, Stalin and Truman of the U.S.A. took part. This is where the grand alliance was formed. Britain and its colonies, the Americans and the Russians formed a common front to fight Germany and Japan. And the entire untouched resources of America suddenly became available to them.

Soon, the well-armed American troops landed in Tunisia to fight the Germans while the British invaded from the Egyptian front. The Tunisians themselves suddenly attacked from the west and forced the Germans to beat a hasty retreat. This compelled the Germans to withdraw to Sicily after their defeat in Africa.

By now the tide of war had turned completely. In the summer of 1943 the Allied landing took place in Sicily from where they kept advancing until the whole of Italy was conquered and Mussolini was vanquished.

In the Far East too, the Axis force led by Japan had run into serious trouble. After advancing through Burma up to the borders of India and actually threatening to invade Imphal and Kohima, they suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Allies and were forcibly made to retreat.

By the way, one interesting sidelight of Hitler's passion for playing to the gallery came to light after the fall of France, when in his inimitable style, he went to the very spot in Versailles where the Versailles Treaty had earlier been signed, there he defiantly tore up the Treaty.

Afterwards, the Allied forces landed on the coast of Normandy and began beating the Germans back from the Atlantic. In 1944 and 1945 the Axis powers were rapidly losing ground on all fronts. Elsewhere, the Americans were squeezing the life out of the German war machine in the steaming Ardennes jungles. This battle, known as the "Battle of the Bulge", was aimed at the last stand of the Germans. The Allied invasion

of Sicily, following the disastrous Axis defeats in Africa and the bombing of their cities, gave the Italians their fill of the war. Their final clamouring for peace led to Mussolini's overthrow on 25 July, 1943. And after British troops in Sicily crossed into Italy, they met with practically no resistance. On that very day Marshal Pietro Badoglio who had succeeded Mussolini had agreed to quit fighting. Five days later, on September 8, he surrendered unconditionally to the Allied forces.

In May 1945, the war came to an abrupt end as the guns of Russian armoured cars began pounding their guns at the gates of Berlin. To an avowed eccentric like Hitler, to whom only victory mattered, there was no other option left but to commit suicide. A day before that, in an act of uncommon grace and touching humility, he had legalised his marriage with his mistress Eva Braun. Then, in a series of gruesome actions, in an underground bunker, Hitler made her drink poison and shot his beloved dog Blondy. In a last bid to snatch a moral victory, he issued strict orders to his trusted lieutenants that after he had shot himself his body should be cremated and not buried according to custom, so that the Allies would never have the satisfaction of finding his remains. Hence, while shells were exploding outside the bunker, the Fuhrer and Eva Braun's bodies were being burnt in accordance with his last wishes.

The long exodus of the Germans was now on. Hundreds of war criminals were captured and tried in Nuremberg. The famous Nuremberg trials were war-crime trials to help justice prevail. Most of the guilty victims were hanged but a few proud Germans managed to get lethal capsules and committed suicide.

There can be little doubt that through the thirteen years he had risen to power, Hitler had single-handedly taken Germany from the lowest point of humiliation to the highest pinnacle of pride. But unfortunately his genius was an evil genius that sought to dominate through coercion and war and not through love and peace.

Sri Aurobindo left his characteristic interpretation of these historical events through these masterly lines in *Savitri*

The giant's and the titan's furious march
 Climbs to usurp the kingdom of the gods
 Or skirts the demon magnitudes of Hell;
 In the unreflecting passion of their hearts
 They dash their lives against the eternal Law
 And fall and break by their own violent mass..

SOMEWHERE, SOME MORN

SOMEWHERE, some morn,
In the song of the air,
Suddenly I found a path
That was endless, I swear

The swift endless path
Had a mute destination;
I couldn't speak of it,—
It was past imagination

If the path was endless
How the day had it sought?
This was the great question
About which much I thought

At the time of the dusk
I found as if all was over,
I then gave up and slept,
And yet peeped in no lover.

Then in the deep night
Someone came to me;
“You are the path,” he said,
“And you the destiny.”

SHRUTI

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY*

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FAIRYTALES

Introduction

THE aim of my project was to find the hidden significance of myths, legends and fairytales because when I was a kid these were the stories I loved. But just when it seemed that I had outgrown these stories they came back to my life through my literature classes which were suddenly filled with references to them. And since I have continued with literature in “Knowledge”, they still form an important part of my life. I have named my talk *The Story Behind the Story* because I did not want to give the idea that this was going to be a very scholarly dissection of the old stories, which would rob them of their charm and magic and the deeper truth behind. These stories are full of symbols that add another dimension to them and we find in fact that there is a story behind each story. Every great civilization has its own treasury of myths and legends and it is impossible for any one person to study them all, so I have narrowed my project down to just a few of the Greek and Indian myths.

But isn't it ironical that these stories that are considered to be the wealth of a nation, the basis of its culture and the upholder of its values, are ridiculed today, spoken in terms of denigration? If one wants to say that something is unreal, untrue or even illogical, one says that it is a myth or a fairytale. But the problem is perhaps, as Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine* (p 867), as follows.

As man discovers the secrets and processes of physical Nature, he moves more and more away from his early recourse to occultism and magic, the presence and felt influence of gods and invisible powers recedes as more and more is explained by natural workings, the mechanical procedure of Nature. The occult elements .. buried in rites and myths, lose their significance and diminish and the intellectual element increases. . . A complete denial of religion, occultism and all that is supraphysical is the last outcome of this stage, a hard dry paroxysm of the superficial intellect hacking away the sheltering structures that are refuges for the deeper parts of our nature.

But the rigid rationalism that was gathering momentum over the past few centuries is now by its own movement revealing an underlying spirit of Nature hitherto unfelt by them. But what kind of help can these apparently quaint stories offer to man on the brink of the twenty-first century, insecure in his knowledge of science and his ability to take care of himself?

It is generally understood that myths and mythologies have in some obscure way

* Based on the Year-end Talk given at “Knowledge”

evolved from folktales, but their actual occult development is dismissed by saying that it has a long, complicated history. Myth holds a great deal of information not only for historians and sociologists, because it holds the clues to understanding a culture, but also for psychologists who want to better understand human nature

But it is the thread of mysticism running through the story that gives it its real value and substance, reveals a greater truth behind it. This truth holds answers to some of the oldest questions—like the origin of creation, purpose of life, concept of Karma, mystery of death, life hereafter, enigma of good and evil, secret of happiness. The answer, however, is masked behind the beautiful shell of the story, much like the Vedas where the meaning is hidden behind physical symbols, leaving the reader to interpret it according to the depth of his perception. In fact, in all the ancient cultures the actual significance behind a story was revealed only to the initiates.

Already today much of that symbolism is lost as the stories are written and rewritten with each writer interpreting them according to his own needs and the needs of his time. Again, because of the influence of modern philosophers and psychologists, much of the mysticism in European literature is glossed over. One knows poor Oedipus not as a lone heroic figure, representing man pitting his will against forces that are greater than he, having the courage to take responsibility for his own actions, but as a fellow who married his mother, giving us the infamous Oedipus Complex. But the character of Oedipus goes much deeper than that. If we consider the story of the Sphinx, he is the man who knows himself, albeit at the mental level. The answer to the riddle asking who moves first on four legs, then on two and finally on three, represents the riddle of the universe which is not impossible for man to answer because the answer is himself. And yet so many failed to answer it, meaning that man is not even aware of who he really is. Because of these concealed truths, the mystic element in the myth should not be ignored or dismissed.

The mystic element that I am talking about denotes a spiritual quest for hidden truth or wisdom, the goal of which is union with the Divine. But talking about mysticism is as incomprehensible to a scientist as is his talking about “quantum field fluctuations in a primordial nucleosynthetic universe” to a lay person.

The questions that arise despite cultural and historical differences are the same everywhere and the answers that the wise of that region have found are also very often the same. But some truths that are easily accepted in one region need the protection of the myth in another. For example, the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx illustrates the Upanishadic and Puranic doctrine. Man dies because he does not know himself. The day he knows himself, it is death that will die. The composition of the Sphinx, according to some, indicates its own unreality—it has the face of a woman, the body of a lion, the tail of a serpent and the paws of a dog.

“Myth is a true story,” says R. Pettazzoni, “because it is a sacred story, not only by virtue of its content, but also by the concrete sacral forces it sets to work.” All great myths are archetypal, as is the story of Prometheus.

I think everyone knows the story of Prometheus, the Titan who gave man fire,

making him less helpless against the elements. His other gifts are said to include language, science and art. For this he is punished by the imaginative gods by being chained to a rock on top of a mountain where vultures would eat at his entrails all day, only to be restored to health at night so that the whole painful process could be repeated *ad infinitum*.

But the gift of fire symbolises the psychic being by which man will be able to progress from one plane of consciousness to another. Prometheus himself represents the indomitable spirit of man and the spirit of progress. The gods, who are actually typical beings, which means that they are fixed in a certain plane of consciousness and can never progress, are jealous that man may one day become greater than they. So they keep him chained to a rock, symbolising the lower nature, while his entrails are pulled out and then restored again like the endless cycles of birth and death. In the original story it is Hercules who rescues him, but in Shelley's beautiful poem *Prometheus Unbound* it is his wife, interestingly enough called Asia, representing love.

In an article called *The Voice of the Martyrs*, Sri Aurobindo describes the myth thus:

Prometheus chained to the rock and gnawed by the vulture's beak endured in the strong hope of man's final deliverance from the tyrant powers of the middle-heaven who sought to keep him from his divine destiny; but the human race for whom he suffered forgot Prometheus, forgot the dazzling hope to which his life had pointed them and, involved in petty cares and mean ambitions, allowed their champion to suffer in vain and their destiny to call them to no purpose.

In my search for interpretations of myths I came across a very interesting one for the story of Adam and Eve. Eden in Hebrew means bliss, meaning that the couple are living in union with God; but, unlike the usual interpretations that explain this story as the fall of consciousness, this one says that the garden of Eden was the vital world—a seemingly perfect paradise where there was no death, no sorrow, no ugliness. Man lived there happily enough until the serpent came and sowed the seeds of doubt and dissension and awakened the mental being in man. He made him wonder for the first time why he should not taste of the Tree of Knowledge. Man till then was not even aware of himself, he lived in a pleasant animal-like state and might have continued to do so forever. But the serpent, shown as an instrument of help in setting man on the road to progress, seems benevolent while the gods seem to be anti-progress. With the mental being came all the dualities, so man has to find again that feeling of oneness which he had in Eden. But this time it has to be on a higher plane of consciousness than the mental since it is pointless if he has to fall back to the vital world.

Before proceeding, for those who believe that the story of Ulysses is just about a poor navigator who lost his way on the seas and had weird adventures, I would like to quote a few lines from *Savitri* (pp. 69-71) which describe him for what he really is, a traveller of the inner occult worlds:

This is the sailor on the flow of Time,
 This is World-Matter's slow discoverer
 A voyager upon eternity's seas
 A seeker of the islands of the Blest,
 He leaves the last lands, crosses the ultimate seas,
 He turns to eternal things his symbol quest
 He has crossed the limit of mortal thought and hope,
 He has reached the world's end and stares beyond .
 His is a search of darkness for the light,
 Of mortal life for immortality.

Sri Aurobindo Answers his Brother

Before proceeding to Indian myths I would like to give some excerpts from a letter of Sri Aurobindo which he wrote in answer to a letter from his brother Manmohan's letter "contained an unreserved condemnation of Hindu legends as trivial and insipid, a mass of crude and monstrous conceptions, a lumber-room of Hindu banalities The main point" is that there was "nothing in it simple, natural, passionate and human, that the characters were lifeless patterns of moral excellence"

Sri Aurobindo agrees that the Hindu myth was too austere and idealistic to have the warm passionate life of the Greek Oedipus and Agamemnon are outside its creative faculty. But it has another quality, "a superior spiritual loveliness and exaltation"

"The difference between the Greek and Hindu temperaments was that one was vital, the other supra-vital; the one physical, the other metaphysical, the one sentient of sunlight as its natural atmosphere and the bound of its joyous activity, the other regarding it as a golden veil which hid from it beautiful and wonderful things for which it panted." While the Greek aimed at perfection within limits, the Hindu mind "moved habitually in the sublime"

In this context he recounts the story of Ruru and Priyamvada divested of its subsequent puerile developments. Ruru, who became later a great Rishi like his fathers, in his youth was in love with a beautiful girl, Priyamvada But she soon died by the fangs of a snake, like Eurydice, and he inconsolable in his grief wandered miserably consuming the universe with his grief until the Gods took pity on him and promised to give his wife back, if he sacrificed for her half his life He agreed gladly and the lovers were reunited

Orpheus, the Greek famed for his skill as a musician, had a wife called Eurydice who died of snakebite Inconsolable he arrived at the gates of Hades where with the magic of his music he managed to get in and even got permission to bring his wife out. but he was warned not to look back as he was leaving He walked ahead with her following but just as he neared the gates of Hades he could not resist the temptation of looking back once and he turned to see Eurydice fading away The similarity with the tale of Ruru and Priyamvada is apparent but the distinction too comes through clearly:

“ the tragic loss of her at the moment of success through a too natural and beautiful human weakness, has infinite fancy, pathos, trembling human emotion The Hindu tale, barren of this subtlety and variety, is bare of incident and wanting in tragedy Yet what an idea it supplies! How deep and searching is that thought of half the living man’s life demanded as the inexorable price for the restoration of his dead! How it seems to knock at the very doors of human destiny; and give us a gust of air from worlds beyond our own suggesting illimitable and unfathomable thoughts of our potentialities and limitations.”

Indian Myth

Keeping this in mind we can now pick up a few Indian myths One of the most ancient and popular of these is the Samudra Manthana.

Samudra Manthana

The Devas had discovered the secret of Amrita but they realised that the task was too difficult to handle on their own So they asked for help from their rivals, the Asuras. The Asuras agreed on the condition that they get a share of the nectar. Thus good had to mingle with evil, the ideal with the real, the soul with the senses, virtue with sin During the churning many treasures came up and they were all shared, but, finally, when the nectar came both sides rushed to grab it and the Asuras got it. Then a beautiful enchantress Mohini appeared on the scene. The Asuras were so besotted with her that, to flatter her, they asked her to distribute the Amrita Before they realised what was happening, she gave all of it to the Devas.

The story is not just about rivalry for possession but two sets of values in terms of the evolution of consciousness on earth.

In Indian mythology the Gods did not always win the battles against the Asuras, driving home the point that a temporary setback of good was part of the process But, though the war is long, the fate of the Asuras is practically sealed by the conclusion of the Manthana However, they are not irredeemable because they too have in them a promise of transformation, they had Amrita in their possession.

Sati and Shiva

Daksha’s fifty daughters were married to various Gods and early Rishis, constituting the entire motherhood of mankind I think the horoscopes as are prepared in India do have something about that too. Leaving twentieth century scepticism aside, isn’t it an uplifting idea to be able to trace our ancestry to a Rishi instead of an ape?

Daksha’s youngest daughter, Sati, however got married to Shiva despite the fact that Daksha did not consider him a worthy groom This is why when Daksha arranged for the great Fire Sacrifice, or Yajna, he did not invite the couple

Despite Shiva's warnings Sati still attended the Sacrifice Her view that a daughter had a natural right to come into her parents' home whenever she thought it necessary, became one of the unwritten laws governing the Indian social consciousness; the doors of the father's house could at no time be shut on a daughter.

Sati, unable to bear the abuses Daksha threw at Shiva, killed herself or, as many say, went into a meditation and left her body

After breaking up the Yajna, Shiva roamed over all the world, carrying the body of Sati Vishnu knew that while her body was there, there was no way that Shiva would be able to get over his grief and he might even end up destroying the universe, so with his *chakra* he cut the body into pieces Shrines for the worship of Sati—who was an incarnation of the Divine Mother—came up wherever a limb fell.

Purushottama and Padmavati

Purushottama was the king of Puri and Padmavati was the princess of Kanchi There was a decision to form an alliance between the two kingdoms by getting them married The King of Kanchi sent an emissary to Puri to report on the prospective groom It happened to be the time of the Jagannath festival and the king, as per tradition, was sweeping the path in front of the chariot It was a gesture to show that even the king is a servant of God But the emissary went back and reported that the king is no better than a sweeper With this accusation the King of Kanchi calls the wedding off. Purushotama attacks Kanchi, but is defeated. He invokes God and demands justice "For you I'm insulted and you don't even let me get my honour back by defeating him" God promises not to fail this time So he attacks a second time, wins and carries off the princess He then calls his minister and orders him to find a suitable sweeper for her A year goes by and the chariot festival comes around again As the king sweeps the path a garland falls around his neck and he looks up to see the princess standing beside the old minister who explains humbly that nobody can be a more suitable sweeper for her than he And then they get married and live happily ever after. The story of the war is true and even the marriage is a historical fact But this part of history has become a legend

Legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Some of the most popular legends are those about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table But the interest of adventure in these has degenerated into purely social and genealogical matter Themes that must once have been enacted on a higher mythical stage now appear obscured and encumbered with the trappings of chivalric pride and family intrigue But there is a very deep significance and symbolism in these stories Let us take the one about Sir Gawain and the Green Knight "On New Year's Eve, when the old year takes to its deathbed, and life, having passed through its longest night, begins to disentangle itself from the grip of wintry death, during the spell

between the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany when ghosts and spectres are supposed to be abroad, the Green Knight made his unheralded appearance at King Arthur's court. He rode into the hall, a man of gigantic stature; his armour and horse, his face and weapon, were green, and what he carried was not a sword but an archaic battle-axe''

But then he threw out a very strange challenge demanding that it be met on his own terms. The knight who would dare to arise and champion the reputation of the court should take his axe and cut his head off (of the apparition, that is). The sense of unease grew as no one stood up to accept it. Finally, when King Arthur himself made a move to save the honour of the court, Sir Gawain interposed and accepted the challenge. The Green Knight dismounted, handed his axe to Sir Gawain, and bent his neck for the blow. Gawain gripped the weapon and then in one mighty stroke cut the head off. But the stranger behaved as though nothing had happened. Calmly he retrieved his head, holding it by the hair, took the axe from Gawain's unresisting hands; then he rode away with the decapitated head, bidding him not to forget his turn the next year.

The next year came around and everyone lamented Gawain's departure, sure that he would never return. But Gawain himself was quite cheerful. After all, what else can befall man except that he should meet his destiny? He set off riding towards the North, but no one along the way could point out the way. So he just followed his inner voice, but the journey was long and soon he was riding hopelessly astray.

Suddenly he came upon a mighty castle deep in the wilderness. The tall, sinister-looking host and his beautiful wife made him welcome. And they promised to show him the way to the Green Chapel. Since he still had some time in hand, he agreed to spend the next three days there at their behest. The next morning the host set off for the hunt. The night before, he and Sir Gawain had jokingly decided to exchange whatever they might get during the day—one at the hunt, the other at home. As soon as he left, his wife came to Gawain's room and made advances to him. Gawain was moved by her beauty and grace but he was bound, being a knight, in duty to his host. He resisted and all she could do was to give him a kiss. When the host came back, laden with quarry, he gifted it to Sir Gawain, and got a peck on the cheek in return and they had a good laugh over it.

The next day, after the host left, she was more bold in her advances but only succeeded in giving him two kisses, both of which he gave to the host at the end of the day. On the final day she was even more desperate and Sir Gawain's resistance was wobbling. After all, he was a young man and, moreover, facing imminent death. But still he resisted, bound by chivalric obligation to his host.

Heinrich Zimmer explains.

''He was tempted to renounce, for one moment of self-indulgence, his life dedicated to the perfection of chivalry. Were he to yield, his fault would not be carnal licence but insincerity and infidelity, and this would have signified the disintegration of the self-consistency of his being. For Sir Gawain was an initiate—one of the leading initiates—to the sacred circle of the Round Table, dedicated solemnly and seriously to the

model of the chivalric ideal. To have succumbed to the allure of one episodic love adventure at the cost of his career would have been to betray not his host only, but himself. If life was destined soon to end, let it then continue to the end. Let it not collapse in a transitory hour of luxurious chance ”

But the woman now was in a dilemma. She needed some concession on his part to save her face. He would not accept her ring because the ring is a symbol of personality, and to bestow a ring implies the surrender of one's being and it would keep him bound to her. Finally, she came upon a small piece of green lace hanging at her waist, a mere trifle. She pressed it upon him. He hesitated. She pleaded saying that the wearer of this would never come to harm. He wavered and then accepted. And the next day, while taking leave of his host, it was the only thing he held back. The wife, watching anxiously, relaxed with a look of grateful joy. Sir Gawain set off but this time feeling less frank, less bright, less conscious of his own valour. In a short time he arrived at the gloomy chapel. And soon the sinister knight arrived. The meeting was brief and Gawain was led to the place of execution. He stood silently with bent neck but shrank a little as the axe rushed upon him. Another symptom of the weakness that made him take the lace. The Green Knight seeing him flinch checked his stroke and rebuked him for cowardice. He protested that he was not ready. The second time he stood straight without flinching. But the knight again checked himself to say that that was better. Gawain was getting exasperated. The knight lifted the axe again but he missed, just nicking him slightly on the neck. Gawain leapt up ready to fight, now that the stipulated one blow was over. The knight stood calmly leaning on his axe, then said, “Twice I checked because you kept your pledge to me—but the third time you failed. But I only marked you because you did it not out of self-indulgence but out of love of life ” He went on to explain that the girdle was his and he had sent his wife to tempt him.

Sir Gawain flushed with shame and yelled “Curses on the two of you—Fear and Desire! You are the destroyers of manly valour and heroism ” He tried to return the lace but the knight would not accept it so he kept it tied in a hidden knot on his arm to always remind him of his failure. He returned to the court where all were happy to see him and made little of his failure and much of his victory. The story ends here.

But the question remains: who was the mysterious Green Knight with the authority to challenge, test and pass sentence? A person who could tuck his head under his arm and then appear with it in place again and whose wife is the fairest temptress in the world?

In folklore and fairytale the dead often carry their heads to frighten people and play ninepins and ball with it. (Recall the fairytale of a boy who knew no fear.) Pale green is also the colour of livid corpses and is used to denote anything appertaining to the kingdom of the dead. So we can assume that this green stranger carrying an archaic battle-axe instead of the contemporary, chivalric Christian sword represents Death. He appears before the champions of the Round Table, whose fashionable tournaments and battles were conducted with swords and lances, bearing over his shoulder a large ancient battle-axe, a clumsy weapon reminiscent of the long-forgotten Age of stone.

Death, caring absolutely nothing about progress and the developments of human invention, remains unalterable, and, despite everything man may do to change him, sticks to his tradition

In Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, subtitled *A Legend and a Symbol*, we have the perfect example of what truths a legend, given the right interpretation and form, can reveal

Fairytales

Now finally we come to the part about fairytales. Their creation is actually as mysterious as that of the myths—but again they will be merely dismissed as having evolved out of folktales. There are actually two kinds of fairytales: the one which has come down by oral tradition and the other known as the art fairytale in which there is a conscious, conceptualised creation of stories, but it never gains lasting popularity as much as the other. Here the writers include Oscar Wilde, Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, who wrote the *Water Babies*, and John Ruskin, who wrote *The King of the Golden River*. The master of the art fairytale, whose works rank with the traditional stories in universal popularity, is the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen. His stories have their roots in folk legend but are personal in style and contain elements of autobiography and contemporary social satire.

Twentieth-century psychologists like Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Bruno Bettelheim have interpreted elements of the fairytale as manifestations of universal fears and desires.

In this world oneness has become an abstraction. Scientific insistence has divested the universe around us of all mystery and wonder and posited it as a strictly material order in terms of fact, figure and formula. We might discern that, despite all these scientific triumphs, the explaining principle, the rationale, the significance of the whole remains as dark and mysterious as ever. Nonetheless, the exalted marvels of today are the creation of the engineer and technologist. These circumstances prevailing, it is hardly surprising that the gods of the Veda have been degraded into 'Nature gods' and that the ancient wisdom-tales have become fairy stories for children.

Today the credit for revitalising these stories will go to Walt Disney who has greatly popularised these old tales. What has evolved most in these stories is the character of the heroine. More and more of these stories are getting female-oriented and her person grows stronger and stronger. She will not have her life decided for her any more. In the original Story of Aladdin for example, the princess has no say really in the proceedings but in the modern version she does a lot of the talking because she does not see why she should be married off to anyone without her prior consent.

We are indebted to countless generations of faithful story-tellers and finally to the brothers Grimm for the preservation of these tales. Piously handed down through the ages, carefully worded to survive centuries of scrutiny by the hostile Inquisition, they are yet pregnant with hidden meaning and a source of eternal knowledge for those who are ready and willing to receive it.

They are like an ancestral memory or a subconsciously understood residue of a higher consciousness. But to understand them one must know how to recognize the symbols. One of the most common and most significant of these is the journey which every prince in the story has to undertake. But then there is the other kind of fairytale where the heroine is the main character, representing the soul. In fact the daughter is a favourite and beautiful metaphor for the soul, as in Francis Thompson's poem *The Kingdom of God*

Yea, in the night my soul, my daughter,
Cry clinging heaven by the hems
And lo Christ walking on the water
Not of Genesareth but Thames.

In fairytales, the parents often indicate the physical consciousness and siblings the mental and vital consciousness. The prince then represents the Divine who has come in response to her aspiration.

In the much-scoffed-at ending of 'living happily ever after' there is meaning, because it is not the transitory human happiness that is described here but that ultimate happiness or Bliss that man seeks with its sense of permanence. The 'ever after' is not ever after till the end of life, but ever after into eternity.

SHARMILA GANGULY

BORROWED LIGHT

A SHORT STORY

“Shona..” —I sat up straight on my bed “I am coming, grandmother,” I replied Today promised to be a special day

I turned to my side and opened the window In came the cold breeze, I knew it was waiting I got off my bed and cautiously moved towards my grandmother’s room. Everything was dark, but I knew my way

Taking my hand in hers, my grandmother said, “Isn’t it refreshing to have a bright sun after two weeks of continuous rainfall and cloud-cover?”

Bright? I can only feel its heat at noon I was born blind and thus I had spent eighteen years of my life—suffering and enduring the agony, the embarrassment brought about by the fact that I was born blind. But from today my life would be different. Today my eyes will let fall the veil of darkness and finally the long night will light up into a brilliant dawn

“Shona,” that was my mother. “Don’t you want to go for a walk today?”

Of course! For quite some years now we went out for morning walks and I took great delight in them for that was the only time of the day I went out of my house and had my mother all to myself.

My mother helped me to dress, gave me my dark glasses, and with my walking-stick in hand we wandered off into some open fields

How I wished to see the world of colours Amidst the familiar odour of crushed grass I remembered my childhood days which were filled with struggle and pain. I had no friends, no one other than my mother and my grandmother to talk to How I wished to share my thoughts and emotions with someone of my own age, to be understood by another girl I wanted to be treated as a human being But alas! I was created not to live, but to just exist There were days when I would rest my head on my grandmother’s lap and cry my heart out Not once do I remember her losing her temper with me She too shared and endured the pain and embarrassment with me She would embrace me and say, “Don’t cry, Shona, you are not alone in this world. You have a mother who loves you After your father’s death, she has been looking after our family business, all alone. Yet she finds time and energy to be with you, to cook dinner for you, to put you to sleep and then wake up early to go out with you And besides you have God, the eternal companion who can wipe your tears of loneliness and who with a single touch of his pure bliss light up a smile on your face. My dear, I am now old, a terminal patient, I can only comfort you by words In all these years the one thing I have learned is that, those who are deserted by all, have God as companion ”

The warmth of a mother’s hand and the calm of the open fields were now in harmony with my inner state

“Shona! Shona?”

“Hmm ”

“What was it that you were thinking? I have been speaking to you without any reply ”

“Oh! nothing, nothing really.”

“I have something to tell you ”

“What is it, ma?”

“Do you remember, Shona, I used to tell you that one day I would get your eyes checked by a specialist?”

“Yes, ma ” How could I ever forget that promise

“Well, I have requested an eye specialist to come home today, his name is Dr Sanjay Mehta.”

Could this be possible? “But when? Where? You never told me that you had been to a hospital!”

Laughing a little she said, “I didn’t, my dear, you see, his wife Mrs Riya Mehta happens to be a customer of mine and we got acquainted As a matter of fact I have never seen her husband, it was she who suggested he should come home and see you.”

I stood perfectly still, with tears brimming in my eyes I lifted my hands and she understood what I meant to say and took me into her loving arms I burst out crying on her shoulder. These were the first tears of joy that I had shed after a long time

“Oh! I can hardly believe what you have just told me, ma!”

“Yes, I know, our dream is going to materialise and very soon you will be able to see.”

I could only say, “Yes, yes it will.” We then returned home The clock seemed to have stopped, hours didn’t pass It was only eight o’clock, still an hour and a half to go Every now and then I asked my mother for the time. She would tell me nearly the same time with a minute or two more Finally the long-awaited hour arrived, bringing with it Dr. Sanjay Mehta

“This is my daughter Nisha ”

How strange it was to hear my real name from her. Since childhood she had always called me Shona

“Shona, Dr. Mehta.”

I heard him say, “Hello ”

I didn’t trust my voice to speak, so I merely smiled and folded my hands and did namaste. He took them in his huge engulfing hands and patted them warmly. I heard him place a heavy object on the table and make some arrangements.

“Come and sit here, Nisha,” my mother guided me “Yes, now come close to this machine, yes.”

It seemed ages but I remained perfectly still, when at last he told me to sit back and relax I have waited to hear that one sentence and it came, but very slowly. In all these years of blindness I had developed a sixth sense and I could feel that the atmosphere had changed

“Yes, she will be able to see, but not with her own eyes,” said Dr Mehta

“But won’t it be possible even after an operation?” asked my mother hesitantly.

“Yes, it will be possible, but her eyes will have to be replaced ”

“Transplanted?” asked my mother losing her poise

“Yes, and for that you’ll have to pay quite a large sum to the relatives of the deceased ”

My dream crumbled I knew how my mother had worked hard during the past years just to raise money for my operation But the extra money for a new pair of eyes? Even if we somehow acquired a sum, so what of it? No one likes to donate his eyes, that’s what the doctor had just said

I rushed into my grandmother’s room, and hid my face in her sari, lost in the world of darkness The ray of hope that I had taken so long to build with my mother’s help, died so suddenly that I wondered if it had been there at all.

My grandmother took my face in her hands and said, “Don’t lose hope, Shona, I could hear everything. Surely there will be someone who after his death will donate his eyes to this hospital where Dr Mehta works.”

Days followed weeks, weeks followed months, and probably a year passed Things ran as smoothly, except my grandmother’s cancer was getting worse Mother and I still went for morning walks except on the days when she used to be away for business trips In her absence a maid looked after us and attended to our needs

On one such day when mother was not at home the callbell rang I told the servant to tell the visitor that mother was away She returned saying that it was of much importance and that a certain Dr. Mehta wanted to see me

“Dr Mehta? Ask him to come in ” How well I remembered his name.

“Hello!” he said warmly.

This time I was perfectly calm I said politely, “Hello! How do you do?”

“Fine! It’s nearly a year since we met ” I didn’t reply and he continued, “I have very good news for you, we have contacted eye banks in the country and are expecting a pair of eyes.”

I was all ears then, could it be true? How I longed for my mother to share the good news!

“ You’ll have to be admitted right away and tomorrow we will operate on you.”

“Right away? But that surely is not possible, Dr Mehta; my mother who means everything to me and has worked so hard for this day should know first. How can I go? No, I will wait for her to return.”

“Yes, that is very true; she must be there ”

There was a minute of silence

“Nisha, come here,” I heard my grandmother call I went into her room “You go with Dr Mehta, I will let your mother know as soon as she returns. Imagine the joy, the happiness she will get You have to keep in mind that the eyes were donated free of charge and they cannot be preserved for long. Such opportunities come once in a lifetime ”

I thought for some time What she said was true. Yes, mother would be the

happiest person on earth when her daughter would at last be able to see Her struggle wouldn't have been in vain

I was taken to the hospital, and lying there, sleep stretched out her little finger and touched my eyes. I dozed off into a deep and heavy sleep

Ten days had passed since the operation had been done a week earlier
I was filled with a mixture of fear and happiness when my bandage was being removed

“Gently, very gently, sister; yes, now listen, Nisha, don't open your eyes until I tell you to Okay?” So cautioned Dr Mehta.

I heard someone draw the curtains

“Yes, now slowly, very slowly open your eyes.”

A shiver ran through me Will I be able to see? I opened my eyes slowly. The first person whose form I saw with my eyes was that of a lady who, I was certain, was my mother She was standing right in front of me, tears of joy running down her cheeks We held each other in a tight embrace I had seen so far with my touch but now I was touched with what I saw

Later that evening I was discharged. On our way home my mother told me, “I returned early this morning and your grandmother told me about your operation.”

“I am waiting to see her,” I interrupted She of all had most wanted to see the sparkle of youth in my eyes

We reached home and I stealthily approached my grandmother's room There standing in front of the door I flung away the curtain

“Grandma.”

There she was lying on her bed with a bandage on her eyes

DEVJYOTI

MEHANDI HANDS

A SHORT STORY

“I’m getting married tomorrow,” Gurmeet whispered in awe to herself, alone in her room. It was more a question, an attempt to convince herself of this novel fact than anything else. The young brat who ran barefoot in the fields hardly a month ago, who climbed trees to steal mangoes and tamarind and tore her clothes everytime she went out to play was no longer around. Her very existence was denied. Instead Gurmeet was to become a woman now, she was to act all of her fifteen years, a dignified daughter of a respectable zamindar, she was not to go romping in the fields or mix with the servants’ rowdy children.

She remembered clearly the day Bibi had found her playing with them, a few weeks back. Bibi was a poor relation of her father, the Zamindar. Years back, he had taken her under his care and made her a part of his family. His wife, the Malkin of the house, had taken to this solid Punjaban like a sister. As she herself was of a frail constitution, coming from the mountains to live in the extreme climate of rural Punjab, Bibi nursed her and managed the household. She was the disciplinarian of the house and it was she who had brought the children up. The day Bibi had found Gurmeet in the fields, the girl had been playing *pitthoo* with the others. Right in the middle of the game, when Gurmeet had been piling up the stones despite the attacking team’s efforts, Bibi had come upon her. Furious, the Punjaban had pulled Gurmeet up by her ears, forgetting that she had long overgrown this punishment, and had marched her off, leaving her playmates behind, astonished.

“Don’t you ever play with them again,” she’d admonished. “You are getting married into a Lalaji’s family and you yourself, our Malik’s daughter... You should not forget your place. You are anyway too old for such games.” She’d gone on mumbling in that vein, shoving Gurmeet ahead from time to time.

Meanwhile, Gurmeet had begun to get used to the changes in her life; it was only to be expected, for was she not getting married soon? Vira, her youngest brother, had shared her room till a month ago. Now that she was getting married, she had suddenly gained status and was given sole proprietorship of their room. Vira had moved in with Raja, the middle brother, who was always in bed, weak and ill from birth. Gurmeet had often wondered whether this illness ran in the family.

As her wedding approached, she began to feel more and more like a guest in her own house. Everything was changing and she was being treated as someone special, delicate and precious. Food only of her choice was cooked. Why, even her ill mother, whom she knew vaguely as some silent authority inert in her dark bedroom, had called her often and talked to her for long hours. It was always her mother who talked, in short sentences when she was unwell, of the time when she herself had got married and had come to this place with its flat green expanses, quite different from the high peaks of the Himachal, whence she came. Her husband had been a stranger to her whom she saw

only once or twice a day. He used to be so busy, and she, she lay all day in bed, weak and ill. Then she spoke to Gurmeet of men in general, that she should stay away from grown men and that she should never raise her head and talk to her husband, she told her daughter to cover her head whenever in company of men, she spoke of many other things which Gurmeet couldn't grasp. The previous day, her mother had been very ill. She'd said that she would not be able to attend to the festivities. "Listen to Bibi, puttar, she loves you and wants you to live happily. She will come and stay with you for the first few days, it will break her heart to leave you behind when she comes away.. Love and respect your husband, he should be your God."

Thinking of these words, Gurmeet began to braid her long hair in front of the window. Outside, a quarter moon shone on the mustard and paddy swaying gently in the late night breeze. She breathed deeply the fragrance of the land, the soil, the crops and the cows, knowing in her heart that this may well be the last time she could do it. For the next day, once the marriage rituals were completed, she would leave Apra, her village and her world, for good. She would leave it to live with a man she had never seen, in a place she had only heard of. She gazed out at the moonlit scene. How would he like her? She knew she was not perfect. There had been times when people had commented on her simple beauty and even on the little she could cook, but deep down she knew she had many faults, and a secret, a very sad secret.

One day, the previous year, Bibi had decided that as the daughter of a wealthy and reasonable Zamindar, Gurmeet would have to be capable of managing the household on her own, she would have to learn everything from cooking to handling the dairies and the produce from the fields. She was to start from the bottom and was sent to the kitchen to clean rice under the cook's sharp eye. It was a tedious job, and so, the moment the cook turned her attention to something else, Gurmeet took her chance and bolted to the fields. She could still see herself as clearly as if she had been a spectator that day.

She came running into the golden field, making a pretty picture: a young girl in dark green clothes surrounded by acres of golden mustard dancing under the afternoon sun—a vivid contrast to the clear blue sky. She looked the role of a perfect royal rebel, head thrown back, laughing and panting at the same time, tears streaming down her cheeks,—suddenly she felt dizzy and sat down on the soil. That was when her whole body had begun to quake uncontrollably.

Later she was told that, when she was nowhere to be found, even at dusk, Bibi had become worried and had begun to look for her puttar. She was about to inform the Zamindar of his daughter's disappearance when Gurmeet dragged herself zombie-like across the threshold of the house. The convulsions had left her weak and feverish and she remained ill for many days. Though she recovered soon enough under Bibi's constant loving care, she knew that the convulsions were the symptom of serious illness. She had, since then, changed, she became quieter and withdrawn.

Will it affect my married life? The question struck her hard. Will he accept me anyway? She wondered, stunned at the possibility that he might not want to marry an ill

girl. She realised that she knew nothing about the man apart from his name. Considering the fact that they had never met, it was not strange. Sharad That was all she knew She said it aloud, pronouncing each syllable with a tangible relish Sharadji, she corrected herself, brushing the end of her long plait She had no face to fix the name to, no person to call her husband. She knew not whether he was tall or short, thin or muscular, whether he chewed paan like her own father; she could not picture his smile nor a twinkle in his eyes .

She sighed. She pulled back the covers on her bed, fluffed the pillow and lay down The ceremonies of the last few days had left her weak and tired For a moment she feared she would be ill again. She tried to sleep, to relax and turn her mind away from the next day's events Though she would have welcomed sleep the blessing was denied to her She tried to visualise her husband-to-be She saw a young man, tall and fair, with short black hair, a wide brow and dark sparkling eyes. His pearly teeth glistened in a lustrous smile. Infectious laughter, a bubbly cheerful nature, gentle, caring . She saw herself bending in all her wedding finery to touch his feet, he whom, as her mother had said, she'd come to worship and, as she hoped, to love. She saw him as the protector and the centre of her life. She wondered how life would be with him, away from home and from the people she called family. She'd learn to call his mother Ma and his father Papaji

She saw herself laughing at some remark her Sharad made, as he teased her she blushed crimson A child, a little girl ran into her picture and flung her arms around her She lifted her daughter up and the girl gurgled with pleasure Sharad approached and tickled their daughter's chin The picture of a perfectly happy family—her family. Feeling as if she had already known her family and experiencing a unique poignant love for them, a love so deep it hurt, Gurmeet drifted off to sleep with a satisfied glow on her face

*

“Hai Ram!” Bibi's cry rent the household early the next morning when she found Gurmeet's lifeless body She had gone to wake her puttar up on the auspicious day, but when, after repeated calls, Gurmeet didn't respond, she got worried Gurmeet was a tranquil sleeper by habit and rarely tossed or turned about in her sleep but the bed was thoroughly crumpled as if someone had thrashed about in it all night According to the doctor, called all the way from the city, Gurmeet had breathed her last in an epileptic fit The rituals and ceremonies of the past few days had wrought havoc with the delicate balance her body was managing to keep Probably the strain had been too much for her, he said But, he also added, for such an aggravated case of epilepsy, it was strange that the family had realised nothing Bibi, overcome by grief and self-condemnation, blamed herself silently for this carelessness How could she not have noticed her puttar wasting away quietly in this illness? Busy caring for the ill Malkin and Raja, she could not see the same demon eating away inside her puttar . It was true, though, that she

had begun to look tired and ill most of the time since the previous year..

It was a sad day for the Zamindar's family. On the night before her wedding day, their eldest daughter had died of a malady they had never even noticed. Now the bride lay bedecked in all her wedding finery, contrary to the customary white robes for the dead. Mehandi covered her hands and wrists, on her face was the traditional wedding make-up with red and white bindis on the forehead along the eyebrows. But her maang which was to be filled that night was void—instead of the sacred red of youth and love there was a deathly pale line where her hair was parted.

Among the mourners also came the baratis-to-be—the bridegroom's family and friends and Sharadji the dulhah of Gurmeet's dreams—a forty-five-year-old, fat, balding Lala, with shifty eyes and tobacco-stained teeth.

ANUBHA SUD

AT THE PORTALS OF A NEW LIFE

A SHORT STORY

THE note was left on the circular dining table. It lay there askew against the clean, checkered yellow and white tablecloth like a deadly mine. A small, starkly white paper, obviously torn from a spiral pad, it waited in the half-light of the Rajasthani dusk for one man to pick it up and reach a momentous decision that would make or break him, that would reveal himself to himself.

Michael O'Brian was that man and he felt the weight of decision push him down. He had just entered and standing with his back to the sculpted door, he looked at the note several metres away and felt disturbed. This coupled with the falling night only intensified O'Brian's sense of doom.

He strode towards it, willing himself to move, thinking that for all his education he couldn't shrug off the primitive fear that the darkness brought. He recognized that his feeling that things had gone too well was irrational—if the Vishwas Group was prospering it had nothing to do with luck or fate.

He was 32 years old, single, unlike his four partners, and splendidly formed with a well-proportioned physique that was often found among the poorer, young people. He had the handsome features of a Rajasthani that he was, the native intelligence and sound common sense that was the only inheritance his poor but educated parents had left him—apart from his charming Irish name—but which along with his thirst to lead had put him in the highest categories in the Department of Architecture at IIT Kanpur. From there it had been a matter of perseverance. He had worked harder than anyone he had encountered and slowly, like a painting taking shape, he had formed his own company—the Vishwas Group. The nucleus of this group comprised five young, sharp and equally dedicated partners. They dreamt grandly of a small empire of their own, weaving a tapestry of life at its best, young, talented minds looking at the world afresh.

They had been contracted six months ago by the government to come to Ramgurh, a one-street town 60 km east of Jaisalmer, first to survey then to construct a series of bridges over the Indira Gandhi Canal. Until then they were ahead of time but soon they would require the co-operation and, preceding that, the respect of the Rajasthani locals.

O'Brian picked up the note and for a moment he couldn't grasp what he read. The note simply went "Rajesh is dead."

O'Brian looked at the note unbelievably. "Oh, my God," he said senselessly drawing out the words. His mind was a tumble of questions. Grabbing his motorcycle keys he stumbled to the door, trying to put his thoughts in order. Roaring out of the apartment complex, he cursed himself for having left for Jaisalmer that same morning, wishing that Rajesh wasn't actually dead, trembling at the thought of the condition of Anisha, Rajesh's teacher-wife. He reached the Indian Coffee House where he had observed Mukesh's jeep while heading home. A huge 18-wheeler Ashok-Leyland truck was parked in the spacious sand square that served as a parking lot for the house.

Wondering whose it was, O'Brian pushed open the restaurant's double doors

Instantly he caught sight of his dear friends, sitting in a corner. Deliberating what he would say he strode up to them. Raj, his closest friend, who had a key to his flat got up and embraced him. "You got my message?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," O'Brian replied slowly. "What happened? Where is he, Chota?" he asked Raj.

"He's dead. We couldn't reach the clinic in time. I'm terribly sorry, O'Brian," answered Sangeev.

Something was wrong, something was missing, he thought. For a moment there was silence and O'Brian glanced at each of them wanting to empathize with them, to

"You can get me something more than just a beer?" A big fleshy Pathan called tauntingly to Sweta from the middle of the room.

O'Brian turned, shocked and furious that anybody could imply such a thing for Sweta-didi, whose husband had followed the company and opened the canteen and who served on Mondays when most of the staff got their leave.

The obnoxious man was a stranger—a rare thing—the type whom O'Brian tried to avoid, despite his own great size, because they were always hunting for trouble. The Pathan was a big man with hefty, hairy hands of an anaemic white hue and dirty, hay-like hair. That he had an ugly streak was evident. O'Brian hated crass people like him. It was usually not his business to interfere, but then this was Sweta-didi, Rajesh's sister-in-law.

Sangeev, the eldest among them, must have read his mind.

"Sit down," he said. "We've been watching him for quite some time now."

It suddenly struck O'Brian what was odd. The house was usually peopled in the evenings, brimming with life and music. But today just their two tables were being used, the music was mute, and only two 60-watt bulbs were lighted giving the place a heavy, silent, almost deathly atmosphere, broken only by the insensible Pathan's disquieting laughter. Outside the night was hushed and even the crickets were silent.

Sangeev spoke with his eyes still on the stranger, "O'Brian, that man is responsible for Rajesh's death."

"What?"

"After you left this morning we went to check on the Brazil bridge."

The Brazil bridge was the second bridge among a series of eight bridges that spanned the Indira Gandhi Canal and started 2 km before Ramgurh. Ramgurh itself was placed in the centre. Brazil was still in its final stages with iron rods protruding at some sections. Its name had been chosen by the children as the most interesting word. There was only one narrow road on their side of the bridge, so narrow that there was barely enough place for two lorries.

"So?" asked O'Brian.

What followed burned itself into O'Brian's core.

"Rajesh was checking the foundations of the first column when he slipped. One of the iron rods ran through the left side of his chest very close to the heart. He screamed

for help and I picked him up and carried him to my jeep O'Brian, that picture of him bleeding and moaning will always haunt me ”

O'Brian was stunned, Sangeev would have had to climb up from the canal bank to the road—a forty-degree slope that ran all along the Canal, in order to reach his jeep. Although it was a mere ten meter stretch, to do it with a heavy man....

“We got into the jeep and I drove,” continued Mukesh.

“Surely there was enough time to reach the government clinic: it's barely two kilometers to Ramgurh!” exploded O'Brian, recalling their statement about being too late

Mukesh looked up at him sobbing softly. “I tried, I promise you I tried. He was the best man at my marriage, I wanted him to live ” He pounded the table quietly, crying uncontrollably

“Mukesh did his best, better than any of us could have done He flew until we met him,” proceeded Sangeev nodding his head towards the stranger Pathan. “Mukesh tried to pass him but he refused to give way We blared our horn, we screamed trying to make him understand that somebody was dying. But he still wouldn't let us pass ” He continued to swerve completely blocking us, waving a fist at us. By this time Rajesh was unconscious and there was blood trickling out from his mouth, the rod had pierced his lung. The doctors later told us that it had collapsed. We didn't know what to do and we were so frustrated that we rammed into his lorry. Finally, Mukesh said that he was going to drive down onto the left incline and try to overtake. He swerved to the right allowing the juggernaut to smash into the front fender Then he spun the wheel to the left out of the Pathan's view. The slope...it was too steep and the sand was giving way We knew it would have been impossible to make a sudden acceleration the moment we got into his view. It was terrible. There was nothing we could do, not even turn back so Mukesh just fought with the wheel Suddenly the jeep crabbed downwards and lurched into the canal We managed to haul Rajesh out but he was dead From a distance we saw the school bus coming Mukesh signaled for the driver not to stop knowing Anisha and Rohan would be inside I shall never forget how Anisha pressed her face against the rear pane and hugged her son, while we wept like children ” He stopped, overcome by grief “We were picked up later, the driver must have sent word.”

O'Brian turned towards the centre of the room where the Pathan sat, embarrassed to see a tough man cry There was a heavy silence

“Since when have you all been sitting here?” asked O'Brian not waiting for a reply, aware that it was an irrelevant question It annoyed him that his friends had thrust this burden of decision on his shoulders and he looked away from their trusting stares

It occurred to him that everyone was waiting for his reaction It was almost a political move especially with the locals, since upon his actions would depend the respect or the disdain he would receive and its fruits in terms of co-operation He shook himself ashamed of his calculative thoughts

“Were the police called?”

“No,” said Raj, “They’d nothing but harass Anisha.”

O’Brian exhaled and got up to leave “You did the right thing Goodnight I’ll see you all in the morning Could you pass by home, Raj?”

O’Brian left for his home. Clarity of thought evaded him, burning sorrow and furious anger had replaced it. His eyes glazed over with hate, he felt like an animal and he wanted to lash out Unable to sit down he left a note for Raj, saying “I’ll call later” He took his car up to a place he always went when he wanted to be alone It was a beautiful, high clearing with big trees and a grand view of the river and the surrounding hills. Today its sanctity would be sacrificed at the devil’s altar He sometimes felt frightened to be alone there at night, today his anger overwhelmed every other emotion But another part of him asked strange disturbing questions Could he really take revenge? Was he over-reacting? *Certainly that animal had to pay!* And he knew that he’d regret it if he backed down—for he knew from experience that there was none of the proverbial joy in overlooking an insult, an injury, it only rankled and embittered Then why was he hesitating, he asked himself He realized that beneath every man’s skin all were children afraid of forcing events. He wondered if this was the reason he always advocated peace It troubled him to admit his own spinelessness and he wanted to purge himself of it—was he unconsciously testing himself? He asked himself, “What would I prove? And to whom?”

He felt confused and lonely, resentful that this decision had been thrust unanimously upon him. He was reminded of something he had learnt in life’s School of Hardknocks *Everyone is alone*. Each is born alone, lives alone and dies alone. Coming to think of it he really didn’t know who Rajesh was He thought. “I don’t have an inkling of his thought, of how his mind functioned, of what he thought of himself, of what image he wanted to project to the world, of his highest interpretation of the truth, of what made him tick, of what he truly believed ” Then he came back to something that had bothered him for sometime: he had no idea from where his thoughts came, what he ultimately wanted to accomplish He wasn’t even consciously aware of his fingers It struck him that he was standing at the portals of a new life, of a great decision, of a chance to start over again with higher motives It would need courage, for he would have to give up a lot He stood irresolute, his anger would not be stilled or pacified.

He had read somewhere that the mind is a field of dualities, of arguments and counter-arguments. And he knew that he was afraid, that he was not yet prepared to enter So he listened to the voice of his emotions, of his passions He sat there a long time in agony Later he picked up his handphone and called Raj

Raj sat grimly after receiving the call It was the law of survival, he thought He too lifted up the phone and made calls to his friends and to Sweta Nothing would be told to Anisha

O’Brian woke up, his exhausted body aching from having slept in the car. He felt strangely aloof and alienated He knew that last night’s experience was something special It was dawn and in the distance he saw some activity in the restaurant’s square

Raj was walking around the 18-wheeler truck still parked in the open lot. He stepped into the driver's seat and a moment later climbed down.

In the coffeehouse the Pathan sat down bleary-eyed and dishevelled. It was still early and the cafe was empty.

The Pathan shouted irritably, "One cup tea and make it quick." Sweta approached him a moment later.

"Here's your tea, big man," she said. "Is there anything else you want?"

"Maybe."

"Wait," interrupted Sweta, her eyes flashing as she stood up. "Here is a gift," she said, as she threw a motorcycle key on the table. "And here is a second gift, from a friend." She rolled across an empty bottle with the international skull and crossbones symbol of poison branded on it in red. "You might live if you reach the clinic, it's just two kilometres down this road. So run, big man, run."

He stared at her in disbelief. Grabbing the key he rushed out, making straight for the lone Yamaha. Within seconds he had thundered out of the square, fear and panic written on his face.

A couple of hundred meters away on that narrow, steep-sided road an old army-issue jeep pulled out from the side. A composed Mukesh finished his morning prayers and hearing the sound of a motorcycle engine break the morning's stillness, glanced into the rear-view mirror.

From atop the hill O'Brian scanned the far horizon and spoke softly with a deep tone, "Rest in peace, my friend."

SUNIL SHAH

REMEMBRANCES

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—IX

BIREN CHUNDER

The Legend

BIREN CHUNDER, better known here as Birenda, was born on 10 4 1915 in Barurpur—24 Parganas. In the Ashram he was fondly known as Budo. He came here from Calcutta back in 1945, same year as I did, on the 11th of August. He was well known there as a boxer. He was Pranabda's teacher in Physical Education and more he was a friend and even looked up to as an elder brother.

Calcutta—1937-1945

During this period much of India was again seething, trying to throw off the foreign ruler. The war too was on (1939). There was unrest and uncertainty. Youth all over the country was roused to action. Birenda, a young man of 23, full of strength and energy was naturally eager to take part in some nationalistic movement. His youthful strength, based on a strong sense of morals, itself backed by fearlessness and a sense of duty, would have in all probability made of him a dangerous man in British eyes. But that was not to be. His guru, a fiery revolutionary named Alok, discouraged him from joining any movement. These movements, he said, were mixed with politics and self-interests. He wanted rather that Birenda prepared young men of strong and good character. This was more useful and important for the nation. So, Birenda started a club where the young could, through physical exercises and games, learn to be disciplined, know the values of collective organised effort, how to lead or follow, etc. They were at the same time taught same moral values and slowly infused with a national spirit. Birenda learned his boxing skills under J K. Sheel and went on to become the champion of Bengal. He won all his fights decisively, that earned him a title of "K.O King"—i.e. Knockout King. He went through some training in wrestling and picked up folk and Bratachari dances. He gathered quite a bit of knowledge on weight training and lifting, freehand exercises and drills and last but not least of all he learned some physiotherapy and massage. He refined and improved upon this last item and that served him and others greatly in the latter part of his life.

During one of his wrestling bouts he broke one of his knees. That put an end to competitive boxing. This knee plagued him right through, till the end of his life. It was about this time that a young boy came under his influence—who later was to have a great bearing on his life. The young boy came to Calcutta for his studies around 1939. B. took him under his wing, saw great possibilities in him. Both were drawn to each other. B. often escorted the boy home. The relationship developed into a brotherliness.

and gradually B became a family member in the boy's home. The young boy was none other than our Pranabda (Dada) of the Dept of Phy Edu. When Pranabda was to go back to Behrampur B gave him the same advice that he got from Alokda—i.e. to prepare the youth—which he did. Incidentally—Pranabda and B were once having a friendly boxing bout. Their skills were keenly honed. Pranabda landed a swift and hard blow and B was k o 'd. He was up in a few minutes, the fight continued and boom—B landed one on the younger man's jaw—and down he went k o 'd. B was mighty pleased that his student had achieved what none of his opponents (usually British Tommies) could. He treated Pranabda to a sumptuous snack of sweets.

B knew no fear. Once in Calcutta, when he was crossing a lonely area, he heard a woman's cry for help. He rushed to the spot and saw a man molesting a woman. He was obviously a man of some standing as he had a Gurkha bodyguard standing nearby—unheeding, B. rushed forward—the Gurkha ran away. B grabbed the man and dealt him a pile-driver that put him down. B picked him up, shook him and “wham” another blow and down he went. This treatment was repeated half a dozen times. B left the place. Happening to pass that way after an hour or so, he saw a crowd of people but did not approach to enquire or see what held the crowd.

On another occasion B went after a local goonda right into his lair. B's friends had warned him not to, for the man had a gang and he was dangerous—more so in his own area. But B went, dragged the man out, gave him a warning and went away. None moved in the goonda's defence and none dared touch B.

In 1947, on the night of August 14th there was an attack on the Ashram, by a mob. Why? Who was behind egging them on? Probably politicians were behind for some motives of their own. Many knew an attack may take place. When it did come in the early part of the night, there was a music programme in the Ashram (A few programmes were held in the Ashram in those days—Dilip Kumar Roy, Omkarnath Thakur, etc. had sung in the Meditation Hall.) B and another person were going to the Playground. They were met by the mob near the Post-Office corner. The mob fell on B. He caught hold of two of his assailants by their chaddars—kept twisting the chaddars like a tourniquet and dragging them back towards the Ashram gate. All this while blows were raining down on him with sticks. One of his captives dug his teeth into B's hand and managed to escape. For some reason the Ashram gate was closed—the only help came from one lone Nepali boy named Birsing. He jumped into the fray to ease some of the pressure off B. Fortunately, some time later some young men opened the gate and rushed out. The mob dispersed. The police came to pick up the crumbs.

Pondicherry

Pondicherry, 1945—Pranabda came here a couple of months ahead of B, i.e. in May 1945 and took up the just nascent Physical Education (Ashram School). He invited B to come and help him in this work. B came, looked, and liked what he saw. Awhile

he wavered Common and worldly sense urging him to go back to family, friends, business, etc. and a small voice within equally urgent saying, “Stay, stay—there is more than meets the eye here.” Fortunately for him and many of us here the “small voice” came out best in the tussle—and B stayed. He joined hands with Pranabda and together they started building brick by brick, from the foundation, this great and beautiful edifice—“The Education of the Physical”

B was an instant success Young boys always admire physical prowess, and he embodied quite a bit of it He was solidly built, but never looked heavy or moved heavily In fact he bounced like a rubber ball, in the ring—“flitted like a butterfly and stung like a bee” (Cassius Clay—M Ali) He was of average height or maybe slightly on the shorter side as per present standards—about 168 cm. He cut a clean muscular figure. Arms, shoulders and chest well formed—carrying terrific power Not an inch of fat Pinch him and the skin came up in a silky thinness and smoothness Legs well- and long-sinewed A well-chiselled head and features sat atop this body The eyes gave away the man They were shining, questing and held a sparkle of boyish merriment The mouth too was ready to join the eyes, laughter ready to tumble out The jaws were a wee bit too large and square This was what met the eye, but there was more that drew us, his students, near He had in him what made a great teacher. He knew so much about so many subjects. He had much to give As he could smile so could he growl. All this backed with patience and persistence made him into this “instant success” Of course, his reputation as a “Knockout King” helped He was an ideal teacher for a group of growing, strong and strong-headed boys

B was already past his prime when he came. Both knees were broken Yet to us he was a giant We had no equipment to speak of The only ground was the Playground A few balls did exist Football was played when and if the Military Ground (Terrain Militaire—now Indra Gandhi Stadium) was allotted to us—once a week or once in two weeks. Otherwise some drills, a few exercises, Volleyball or Circle Ball formed our daily activity. But strides forward were being taken

B went to Madras and bought some boxing gloves, a vaulting box, a spring-board. A few mattresses were made Never had we seen such apparatus. This heralded a new era of our gymnastics An old barbell (Udar’s—yet in service) was also acquired The next great advancement came when the Tennis Ground was created out of an ugly mound of garbage-dumping ground Then the Body Building Gym was made ready—it was previously our kindergarten section and the children’s courtyard B was given charge of this B B Gym. He had by now stopped coaching any group This job was taken up by newer, younger members—now captains, who had worked up from the ranks, but all under Pranabda’s supervision. To crown all these steps and hops forward, came the Swimming Pool A long cherished dream at last became a reality On 21st Feb 1957 the Mother inaugurated the Pool B was one of the most ardent dreamers of the Pool and he pulled us into his dream. Long before 1957, in the late 40s he showed us the spot where now stands the “Le café” (in front of the Marie on the beach road) as the site for our Pool! We believed, waited and watched Nothing happened. Next he

showed us the Park Guest House lawn as the site. There was a great hollow in the ground, constantly eroded by the sea. There was a broken wall. The waves came in under the wall and washed away the soil. An engineer did come from Madras to construct a wall to contain the sea—but to no avail. The project was aborted. Then it was that the present site was chosen and the dream turned into reality. B. was appointed coach at the Pool.

B. was a teacher par excellence. To some his methods of teaching seemed harsh and old-fashioned. This was true for some, who had a first glance and turned away or were turned off. A lot depended on how much one really wanted to learn. Once the mind was made up, one had only to have full faith in B., closely follow him and his instructions. One learned fast and for good. Experience, it is said, is a hard task-master. She gives the test first and the lesson afterwards. One would think of B. as this “Experience” personified. His lessons were given in a forthright manner. Bitter pills were often preferred to sugar-coated ones. The strong-gutted took them. The queasy ones shied away and quit. Thus were sown seeds of many a controversy and debate. But for me and many others nothing better could have happened. Even hindsight has not changed our opinion. A few examples could vindicate or further vilify the above opinions. Either way they are interesting.

Boxing

He (B.) shows you the basic stance, the straight left and a bit of footwork. He says “Keep your hands up, head down and use your left—if your left reaches its mark, your right is sure to land.” Then for two rounds—two long minutes—you keep chasing him round the ring. He ducks, guards or slips your blows with minimum effort. He jabs you sharply if you don’t go for him or your guard is down. You are panting by the end of round 2. Come round 3—the roles are reversed. He is chasing you all over the ring. Sharp taps on any exposed parts (nose, chin, stomach) rain down on you accompanied by his exhortations “Hat tol, matha nama, amay dek”, etc. (lift your hands, keep your head down, look at me, i.e.—see where the blow is coming from). All this when your gloves seem to weigh 10 kg each and you can’t gulp in enough air. All you want to do is get out of the ring. The last minute seems an eternity. You come back for the next lesson or not? You have to pass your own muster—lily-livered or lion-hearted, one with common sense to avoid the avoidable or brash, brave enough to come back for more?

Weight-training

The first day anyone above 16 years who comes along is told very casually, “Ek sho dund, dui sho baithak” (100 push throughs, 200 deep knee bends). No more is said, no word of encouragement, not even an enquiry—perhaps you don’t even know if he is looking at you. After you complete the quota—an hour or two after—you go to B. and

say, “B., I have finished (or I am finished)” Two words “Badī Jao” and you are dismissed. If you endured this distant, cool treatment for a week or two, you were “admitted in”, i.e. given closer, more warm and personal attention. He then taught us many exercises with weights, insisting on correctness of style. He trained us in weightlifting too. He would say carrying heavy weights is partly a matter of habit.

Swimming

The controversies may be more bitter in this sport. The element being foreign to humans, his or her true colours were more easily bared. Not many relished this. In the olden days, before the Swimming Pool was even thought of, swimming in the sea was not permitted. We couldn't even wet our feet in it. It was with B. that a few of us started the sea-swim craze. It grew until even up to a hundred swimmers or bathers were in the sea on a Sunday or a holiday. Very often, after a good oil massage, B. and some of us walked up to the Park Guest House (all along the beach—there was a beach then) and swam back to the Tennis Ground Beach. We had also to jump off the end of the 4-m-high old pier into the sea. This when we had hardly picked up the rudiments of swimming.

In 1957 the Swimming Pool was ready. The Mother opened it on Her birthday, the 21st of February. B. taught swimming in the Pool. The methods of teaching were more or less of the same forthrightness. There you are hanging in the water at one end of a rope tied round your waist. B., on the deck, is holding the other end, supporting you to the degree he wants. This, on day one, two, three—till he judges that the rope can be discarded. Then, he is in the water and expects you to jump in and splash your way up to him or to the other side of the Pool. An involuntary gulp or two of water was of not much concern. If you had enough faith in him, you jumped in and no harm befell you. He saw to it. If no faith—and no jump—may the gods help you!

Outing

B. had great love for nature and the outdoors. That love he instilled into some of us boys. There it took root and grew. The first ever outing I remember was back in 1946. B., Pranabda, Chimanbhai (teacher de la Fond), Narayan (my brother) and I, set out at about 2 p.m. (God alone knows why 2 p.m.) I don't remember if we carried any water. I remember Narayan and I at least were barefooted. We set out actually to find out what, where and how is Lal Pahar. We entered a broad ravine—a dry riverbed. The cliffs grew higher and the bed narrower as we proceeded. The cliffs were a deep rich red, the sand quite clean white. Palm trees, dwarf neem, and some cashew trees grew here and there. It was beautiful but infernally hot. We were like biscuits baked from above and below. We scurried from shade to shade. When the ravine was narrow, B. shouted Jai, Jai Bombhola and we all repeated. There was none to witness our brief madness. We returned a hot, dirty, tired lot—but wiser and happier.

B took a batch of us a few weeks later to Arikamedu (Roman ruins) settlement near the Ariankuppam village and the river of the same name. We didn't know about any route to the place. We took the shortest one. We got on to the beach beyond Parc-à-charbon and reached the ruins on the far bank of the river. We looked at the diggings. Someone suggested we take a brick and give to the Mother. The brick was about 28 cm × 30 cm or 45 cm × 7 or 8 cm. B agreed with our plan. The brick was placed on one of our heads and we started back homewards. We had not taken into account the risen sun. No shade and no water. The brick changed heads often—but we reached Parc-à-charbon, guzzled down a gallon of water each and proceeded to the Ashram. We gave the brick to the Mother at the vegetable Darshan (Near Nirodda's room). She used to inspect and bless the Ashram's garden produce everyday at about 12 noon. She smiled and accepted the brick.

The above excursion inspired us to go on more such outings. We organised ourselves, collected a water bottle or two and started going out every fortnight (on Sundays). We carried bread and bananas and milk in a brass jug to brew some coffee. Later the Mother sanctioned two tins of condensed milk a week. All this was done with B reporting to the Mother and with her permission. Next we went to the Lake for a whole day. At about this time B along with Atindra (Irena, Nivedita's father) and Hriday (Pranabda's brother) went on bicycle to the Gingee Fort. They took two days to do it. B talked about it to us and also to my uncle Pantulu. He arranged that epic voyage of ours to Gingee—we became fullblooded explorers. (A more detailed description of this trip given in R S Pantulu ATNSG VI—*Mother India*, March and Feb 1997.) We, of his original group, had grown up, and taken off on our own. Yet his interest never dwindled. He went, now by bus or train, to Mysore, Madurai, Rameswaram, etc—all over the south.

Work

B was a good worker. Some of us being very close to him followed him. Though it was difficult in the beginning, he pulling us along and we willing to be pulled—it became easier and later a good habit. He said and showed that no work is too low or demeaning. Much of this experience was gained during the regular "harvesting" that all we students and teachers and some others went for to Cazanove or Rizièrè or Highland (Ashram's rice fields). The school remained closed during those 4-5 days and we worked from morning to evening. B was one who inspired us young ones on this occasion. It was backbreaking work—bending and cutting with a sickle and then hand-threshing the paddy, stacking up the hay, etc—specially to those unused to it, like us. But we kept at it and soon were enjoying it. I dare say some of the girls were ahead of most of the boys. Pushpa, Kumud, Mridula and Bhavatarini were terrific with the sickle. All these girls and some of us, Pratip, Prabir, Narayan, Richard and I naturally gravitated around B—it was a nice group.

B is gone, but his pioneering spirit has broken quite a few frontiers. I believe it

was he, with our batch of boys, who started sea-swimming and the picnics and outings
That “spirit” is still alive

A new chapter in B’s life opened. The New Bindery was opened with him in charge. He was older now—yet strong, active and enthusiastic enough. He did some good work there. He went every morning up to the Mother (at about 6 a.m.). Richard and I had the good fortune to accompany him up, first as his crutches (He had his leg in a plaster-cast) and later independently, as just Her children. She wrote a message in his Report-Diary (These messages were brought out in book form by Borun Tagore.) Sometime during this period he cut off most of his connections with the Playground activities. Not many noticed his retreat—but a legend was lost

The Legend Found—The Man with the Miraculous Hands

B soon resurfaced—in the field of Physiotherapy—if I may dare use that name, risking a frown from the numerous conventional doctors. Here too B’s methods provoked controversies, even condemnations. Here too his methods seemed crude, and old-fashioned and harsh. Yet some will swear by him and speak of the results with awe and admiration.

B did not stumble on to physiotherapy all on a sudden. He had it already in his hands, mind and heart. I have seen him setting bones most casually, but surely, way back in the mid-forties.

One day B and some of us were in the Dining Room ready for dinner (after the Mother’s Distribution in the Playground)—Jayantibhai was brought in, forearm held at a curious angle. We, still very young, were surprised. B. held the arm and showed us along with a commentary the why and how of the dislocation (for it was one). Sitting there, he just pulled, pushed and “click”—put it back in place. Off went Jayantibhai—no bandage, no fuss. Through the years I witnessed more such “resetting” of bones: my own knee, Arvind Sajjan’s shoulder (several times) were as easily reset by B.

His massage, its varied applications, methods and results are numerous, out of the common and wonderful.

I had tonsils (enlarged)—so said my medical check-up. B said “Oh! that can be cured by breathing exercises.” He showed me some, to be done every morning. I did them. I don’t know when I stopped, but the doctors did not see the tonsils any more.

I had also a deviation of the nasal septum. This also was found by our doctors. This B. cured by massage.

His massage was often a tough one. He kneaded and seemed to be breaking the stiff, resisting muscle. The patient might wince with pain—but came back for more. As was the case of a small child I saw. He would massage and the child lay writhing in pain. But when he stopped for resting (himself and the child), the child hugged and kissed him and played with him. One would expect a child to cringe from him and even run away. An onlooker, a German, surprised, asked him, “Why does the child come

back and submit itself to so much pain?" B. laughed and just said, "You must love the child!"

One of our girls here was suffering from a stiff neck, painful and unresponding to conventional treatment. She went to B. He passed his index finger, hardly touching, down her spine. Suddenly he stopped and pressed between two vertebrae—a small twitch from her, and she found herself much better, her neck released. How or what did he feel? When asked he merely said it was quite simple—he could feel some vibration!

The following incident occurred when B. was quite old, past 70. He sat hunched, chin sunk on his chest. He was very deaf too. His fingers were all crooked and bony. A middle-aged couple came. The husband was bent to one side (fixed in that position). He had suffered a stroke. B. asked the husband to recount his woes, and closed his eyes and sat looking small and helpless in his chair. The man was talking. Once or twice the wife whispered into her husband's ear. Sukhen (B.'s student) who was sitting nearby, could not hear, far less understand, what she whispered. Suddenly B. sat up, eyes burning, and shouted at her "Get out—you don't want your husband cured—get out." Sukhen was, to say the least, surprised. The woman was taken aback and frightened. She apologised and quietly retreated. The man continued. Then B. asked him to lie down and himself massaged and manipulated—and when he had finished with him, the man got up with the bend more than half straightened out!

On another occasion an old gentleman (a Bengali) came, accompanied by his doctor son. They came from Tripura. They said the old man had Parkinson's Disease. He shook all over. They had tried the usual, conventional medication. (They came here as one of B.'s old acquaintances had met them on a train, and told them to try this B. whom he knew about.) B. hadn't much esteem for doctors. He asked the son, "What is wrong with your father's coccyx?" The doctor-son replied, "Nothing." Then B. with a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his lips asked Rajnish (a student of his) to give some vibration (by hand only—B. detested mechanical vibrations) to the old man's coccyx. Rajnish did so—and wonder of wonders—the old man stopped shaking. The doctor watched wide-eyed and stunned. B. burst out laughing and asked "kí holo—lèje kichchu hoyni bolle?" (what—you said there was nothing wrong with the tail—coccyx?)

Rajnish, knowing B., was not as stunned, but not unmoved or unintrigued. He naturally questioned B. later. B. just looked at him and said "Tumi Gita podoto—bujhte parbe" (You read the Gita—you will understand). That was all—for the moment. Days later Rajnish, not much enlightened, got B. alone and asked him again. B. in a softer and more expansive mood explained about "Chakras" and centres, about how the coccyx is the "mooladhar", etc., etc. He further explained that suppressing some movements of the "vital" in man—without transforming them nor giving them an expression, i.e., venting them—often creates problems at certain centres, the idea is to release this suppressed energy etc., etc.

He used to say all good things, like happiness, tend to expand the person; even his face, eyes expand in laughter or merriment. But sadness, depression contract a person.

Similarly an injury or ailment contracts the muscle or organ. By massage he said we can dilate, thereby increase the circulation and reach oxygen to the ailing organ. Then there is every chance of cure. And, lastly and most importantly, remember the Mother while dealing with a person. Feel him, his vibrations, and then take him. On one or two occasions he forbade his student to massage certain individuals—he himself treated them. He felt the young student would fall ill if he (the student) massaged.

A couple brought in their small girl to B. They had taken her to different hospitals, and when they went to Cluny the Sisters there told them to try a certain masseur in the Ashram (B). They were not sure if the man treated non-ashramites, but maybe he would. They said he was reputed to bring about some remarkable cures. So the couple came. The child was in a pitiable state. She was all cramped up, arms and legs folded stiff, tongue hanging out, eyeballs rotated up, the whites showing. She could not utter a sound. Any movement had to be helped. B. was sure of a cure but he warned the parents it would be a long, hard climb. They seemed to agree—but B. said (afterwards—aside) that probably they would leave before long.

B. started the massage. The head, face and throat, arms, legs—all were rubbed, vibrated (manually). This went on day after day. Slowly the tongue retreated into the mouth. The eyes rolled back into focus. The arms and legs could be stretched, but often cramped back as of old. She could even utter some sound. She seemed to be responding well. Then they stopped coming. Why? None knew at that time. This often happened. Some doctor or adviser watching from the sidelines would turn people away, convincing or giving them hopes of an easier way. It was even found that it was a doctor who had tried, failed and brought them over to B. and then was mean enough to entice them away. B. knew of this and even predicted it. He did his best and let it go at that. I later learned that the parents were told that someone in Kerala could cure quicker—so they left! The move was proved unwise. They came back, but too late. B. had had an accident and was not able to take the case up again. The child too, later had an accident, broke her thigh bone. What a pitiful and miserable tale!

These and many more “stories” that could be told and retold. We believe what we want to believe. A proof is difficult to get, and convincing someone is more difficult. B. himself did not do much to convince others. If a person came to him he tried his best to help. B. had faith in some methods and means—if anyone had the same faith he/she could come to him. The rest could and should stay away (what “faith” is it—that needs “proof”!) From where did B. learn, and get all his knowledge and his methods? Once, in the later days when he was in a “down” mood, he was in tears thinking aloud “E shob Mayer junish—keu nite ashche na.” (These are all the Mother’s things—no one is coming to take them.) But I would think that all is not lost. He has left enough bits and pieces behind for another, who with some diligence, faith and love, can put together and carry on. He, I believe, gave to all his students as much as each could take (the more the vessel was empty the more he could fill!)

I have sung of the several faces of Birenda—as a tribute to the man who has given me much and asked for very little. There are others who have reaped as much as I from

him To me and to my sister Bhavatarini and brother Narayan he was more than just an instructor. He was a friend (family friend), a big-brother or fatherly figure He instilled in us many higher and deeper values through sports and work There was hardly any preaching. Rather he set an example or a challenge and teased, invited or dared us to pick it up Only once in a rare while was it a useful drubbing. I once, in my childish ignorance, complained to him that someone (captain or referee) had been partial to another vis-à-vis me He sharply reacted, saying “Never say that and shed tears for yourself (self-pity) strive till you get what you deserve—and you will get it” (. There is a French saying ‘L’amour propre et le plus sot des amours’—self love/pity is the most foolish of all loves) Yet another day he said, “Never get angry in a game—you may lose it ” His goading us on then, to do more and better in the B B Gym and on the paddy-field, still goads us on. It is as if he keeps fuelling that small flame in those of us who worked alongside him. He steeled our bodies and minds

I hope this use of 1st person is pardonable and justified. I had not much personal contact with his later massaging days I have seen just a bit and heard much more from his students or shall I say “Chelas”. Maybe one of them will eulogise him and his achievements in that field too. I merely heard but believed what they told me

I close with a final salute to this great person, with great hopes that some one—a “Chela” at least—will pick up what he has dropped—both in the field of Sport and Physiotherapy. That would be a greater tribute than these few pages of praise. That would gladden his old heart no end. That brave old heart beat for the last time in the wee hours of the 17th of March 1997. But the Legend once lost—found—must live on—in us, through us

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

1913-1999

JAYANTILAL PAREKH was born on 21 June 1913 in a village near Surat, Gujarat. His father was a pioneer in the Indian banking industry, his mother a deeply religious woman who had a strong influence on her six sons and two daughters. Jayantilal attended a progressive high school in Bombay, where he excelled in his studies and developed his inborn artistic talent. After spending a year in the Bombay School of Architecture, he entered the Kala Bhavan (art school) of Vishwabharati, the college that grew out of Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan. Here he studied painting under the renowned artist Nandalal Bose.

While at Vishwabharati, Jayantilal had the opportunity of travelling in Tagore's entourage to places like Bombay and Ceylon. During trips to the south, he visited his friend Krishnalal Bhatt in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. A reading of some articles by Sri Aurobindo during one such visit touched a deep chord in Jayantilal, after finishing his course in Vishwabharati in 1935, he came for a longer stay. In 1938 he settled permanently in the Ashram.

The Mother entrusted Jayantilal with work of different sorts and encouraged him to continue his drawing and painting. His flower drawings, nature studies and town-scenes show a keen sense of beauty and refined artistic technique. Jayantilal played a significant role in the development of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press and was the dynamic force behind the publication of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. In 1973 he established the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives, which continues the work of preserving and publishing the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In 1995 he initiated the publication of the Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo.

Early in 1998 Jayantilal began to experience respiratory problems as a result of cancer of the thyroid. After suffering in silence for a number of months, he agreed to go to Germany in January 1999 for a surgical operation. He died there—before the operation could be performed—shortly before midnight (German time) on 25 January.

Jayantilal will be remembered by all who knew him as a self-effacing disciple of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and who quietly produced lasting results.

P H