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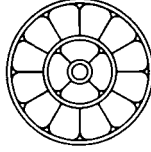
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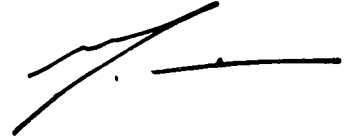


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LII

No. 4

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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MY HEART CHOOSES NOT AGAIN

“ONCE my heart chose and chooses not again.
The word I have spoken can never be erased,
It is written in the record book of God
The truth once uttered, from the earth’s air effaced,
By mind forgotten, sounds immortally
For ever in the memory of Time.
Once the dice fall thrown by the hand of Fate
In an eternal moment of the gods.
My heart has sealed its troth to Satyavan,
Its signature adverse Fate cannot efface,
His seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve.
Those who shall part who have grown one being within?
Death’s grip can break our bodies, not our souls,
If death take him, I too know how to die
Let Fate do with me what she will or can,
I am stronger than death and greater than my fate;
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me
Helpless against my immortality
Fate’s law may change, but not my spirit’s will
My will is part of the eternal will,
My fate is what my spirit’s strength can make,
My fate is what my spirit’s strength can bear;
My strength is not the titan’s, it is God’s
I have discovered my glad reality
Beyond my body in another’s being
I have found the deep unchanging soul of love.
Then how shall I desire a lonely good,
Or slay, aspiring to white vacant peace,
The endless hope that made my soul spring forth
Out of its infinite solitude and sleep?
My spirit has glimpsed the glory for which it came,
Beating of one vast heart in the flame of things,
My eternity clasped by his eternity
And, tireless of the sweet abysms of Time,
Deep possibility always to love.
This, this is first, last joy and to its throbb
The riches of a thousand fortunate years
Are a poverty. Nothing to me are death and grief
Or ordinary lives and happy days
And what to me are common souls of men

Or eyes and lips that are not Satyavan's?
I have no need to draw back from his arms
And the discovered paradise of his love
And journey into a still infinity.
Only now for my soul in Satyavan
I treasure the rich occasion of my birth
In sunlight and a dream of emerald ways
I shall walk with him like gods in Paradise
If for a year, that year is all my life
And yet I know this is not all my fate
Only to live and love awhile and die
For I know now why my spirit came on earth
And who I am and who he is I love.
I have looked at him from my immortal Self,
I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan,
I have seen the Eternal in a human face.''
Then none could answer to her words Silent
They sat and looked into the eyes of Fate

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL Vol 29, pp 432-36)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of January 1999)

THE VISION OF THE WORLD SPIRIT

OUR honourable friend Bipin Chandra Pal speaking about the Vision of the World Spirit by Arjuna in an article entitled 'Bandemataram' has written that the vision of the World Spirit described in the eleventh chapter of the Gita is entirely fictitious, that it is purely and simply poetic imagination. We are obliged to refute this statement. The vision of the World Spirit is a very necessary element of the Gita. Sri Krishna dispersed the doubt and the hesitation that rose in the mind of Arjuna with logic and words pregnant with knowledge. But the foundation of the knowledge derived from logic and good counsel is not solid. It is only when the knowledge is realised that it becomes firmly established. For this reason, invisibly impelled by the Divine within, Arjuna expressed his desire to see the World Spirit. Once he had this vision of the World Spirit, his doubt vanished for ever. His mind then became cleansed and purified, worthy to receive the supreme secret of the Gita. The knowledge described in the Gita prior to the vision of the World Spirit is the external form of knowledge useful to any spiritual seeker. But the knowledge unfolded after the vision is the most hidden Truth, the supreme secret, the eternal precept. If we characterise the description of the vision as a poetical metaphor, then the truth, the depth and solemnity of the Gita are destroyed and the most profound instructions obtained by Yoga are reduced to a few philosophical views and a collection of poetical fancies. The vision of the World Spirit is neither a fiction nor a poetical metaphor but truth, it is not even a supernatural truth. The universe being included in Nature, the World Form cannot be a supernatural phenomenon. The World Spirit is a truth of the causal world, and the forms of the causal world are visible to the eye of Yoga. Arjuna endowed with the eye of Yoga saw the form of the Universal Spirit in the causal world.

The Form and the Formless

The worshippers of the formless Brahman without qualities dismiss any statement about its qualities and form as being only metaphors and similes. The worshippers of the formless Brahman with qualities deny its lack of attributes by explaining the Shastras in a different way and dismiss any statement about its form as being only metaphors and similes. The worshippers of the Brahman with form and attributes are up in arms against both of them. We hold all the three views to be narrow, incomplete and born of ignorance. For, those who have realised the formless Brahman and the Brahman with form, how can they hold one view to be true and discard the other as being false and imaginary, and thus abrogate the ultimate evidence of knowledge and confine the infinite Brahman within the finite? It is true that if we deny the formlessness

and the lack of attributes of the Brahman we belittle God. But it is equally true that if we deny the qualities and the form of the Brahman we belittle Him again. God is the Master, the Creator and the Lord. He cannot be tied down to any form; as He is not limited by His form, so also He is not limited by His formlessness. God is all-powerful. If we feign to catch Him in the net of the laws of the physical Nature or of Time and Space and then tell Him, "Though you are infinite, we shall not allow you to be finite, try as you may, you will not succeed, you are bound with our irrefutable logic and arguments like Ferdinand with Prospero's magic." What could be more ludicrous, impertinent or ignorant? God is bound neither by His form nor by His formlessness, He reveals Himself in a form to the seeker. God is there in His fullness in that form, yet at the same time pervades the whole universe. For God is beyond time and space, unattainable by any argument, time and space are His toys. He is playing with all beings caught in his net of time and space. But we shall never be able to catch Him in that net. Every time we try to achieve this impossibility with logic and philosophical argument, the Jester eludes the net and stands smiling in front of us, behind us, near us and far from us, spreads out his World Form, and the Form beyond the universe, defeating the intellect. He who says, "I know Him," knows nothing. He who says, "I know Him yet I do not know Him," has true knowledge.

The World Form

The vision of the World Form is very necessary for an adorer of Shakti, a Karmayogi or one who is missioned to do a specific work as an instrument of the Mover of instruments. He might receive the divine mandate even before he has the vision of the World Spirit but as long as he does not have the vision the mandate is not fully endorsed; it has been registered but not yet authorised. Until that moment, it is a period of training and preparation for his work. Only when he has the vision of the World Spirit, does the real work begin. This vision comes to the sadhaks in different ways according to their nature and their sadhana. In the vision of Kali as the World Spirit, the sadhak perceives a feminine form of incomparable beauty pervading the universe, one yet in multitudinous bodies, her jet black hair spreads out like a compact darkness over the entire sky, the lustre of her scimitar dripping with blood dances everywhere dazzling the eyes, the continuous peal of her dreadful laughter resounds, smashing and crushing world after world in the universe. These words are not simply poetical imagination or a futile attempt to describe a supernatural experience in inadequate human terms. This is self-revelation of Kali, it is the true form of our Mother, the true and simple description without any exaggeration of what has been seen by the eye of Yoga. Arjuna did not have the vision of the World Form of Kali, he had the vision of the World Spirit as Time the Destroyer. It amounts to the same thing. He saw it with his eye of Yoga and not in a trance insensible to the outer consciousness. Rishi Vyasa has described, without any exaggeration, exactly what Arjuna has seen. It is not a dream or imagination but the truth, the living truth.

The Form of the Causal World

Three different states of the Self are mentioned in the Scriptures. Prajna, the spirit of the secret superconscient omnipotence whose place is in perfect slumber, Tajasa, the Inhabitant in Luminous Mind, the spirit of the subtle and internal whose place is in dream, Virat, the spirit of the gross and external whose place is in wakefulness. Each status of the spirit is a world in itself: the causal world is in perfect slumber, the subtle and internal world in dream state and the physical world in wakefulness. Whatever is decided in the causal world is reflected in the subtle world beyond our time and space and partially enacted in the physical world according to the laws of the physical world. Sri Krishna told Arjuna, "The sons of Dhritarashtra are already slain by me," yet there they were on the battlefield, standing in front of him, alive and engaged in fighting. The words of the Godhead are neither a false statement nor a metaphor. He has already slain them in the causal world, otherwise it is impossible to slay them in this world. Our real life is in the causal world, only a shadow of it falls on the physical world. But the laws, time and space, name and form are different on the causal plane. The World Spirit is a form of the causal world which became visible in the physical world to the eye of Yoga.

The Eye of Yoga

What is the eye of Yoga? It is not imagination or poetical symbolism. Three different powers of perception are obtained by Yoga: the subtle vision, the direct spiritual awareness and the eye of Yoga. With the subtle vision we see mental images in dream or in wakefulness. By the direct spiritual awareness we see in trance the images and symbolical figures of the names and forms belonging to the subtle and the causal worlds reflected in our inner mental sky. With the eye of Yoga we perceive the names and forms of the causal worlds in trance as well as with our physical eyes. If anything invisible to the physical eye becomes visible to it then it must be understood as an effect of the eye of Yoga. Arjuna saw the World Spirit in the causal world in waking state with the eye of Yoga and was delivered from doubt. The vision of the World Spirit, though not a truth perceptible to the senses of the physical world, is greater than any physical truth—it is not a fiction or an illusion, neither is it a poetical symbol.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Niranjana)

FATE AND WISDOM

अम्भोजिनीवनविहारविलासमेव
हसस्य हन्ति नितरा कुपितो विधाता ।
न त्वस्य दुग्धजलभेदविधौ प्रसिद्धा
वैदग्ध्यकीर्तिमपहर्तुमसौ समर्थ ॥

WHAT can the extreme wrath of hostile Fate?
The swan that floats in the cool lotus-wood
She from his pleasant mansion can exclude
His fame remains, in food adulterate*
Who could the better choose, the worse discern
Fate cannot touch glory that mind can earn

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

* The swan was supposed to have the power of separating milk from water when the two were mixed

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of January 1999)

My dear Mother,

My mind has become very active It catches all sorts of nasty suggestions, two of which are prominent "Relieve me from Aroumé" and "Can't You manage to send me away from here?"

WHAT IS this nonsense Surely you will not listen to that!

I do not think that any part of my being will ever accept them, and yet I pray for Your help and protection

Yes, the help and protection are always with you—but you must quiet your mind or get out of it, look at it from above and control all these absurd suggestions

Always with you my dear child

2 March 1936

My dear Mother,

Whatever the suggestions may be, I know that they are all hostile influences trying to disturb the sadhana. The work at Aroumé needs a very clear mind and vital, free from all likes and dislikes

When the mind is struck by such adverse suggestions, you must not get nervous or fear but consider them as mere nonsense and push them away as you would push away a fly or a mosquito and then remain very quiet until the attack is over

All love and blessings to you my dear child

2 March 1936

My dear Mother,

I am getting a negative reaction from the workers about the special dish they have to prepare on Wednesdays. After each cooking of this kind, I find unhappiness, disharmony and bitterness among the workers.

Perhaps it gives them more work and they dislike it It can be stopped if it is a source of difficulties

When will a largeness and vastness come into the mind and heart? When will a good feeling come and not the feeling of a scorpion bite?

This can come only when the consciousness of the workers will shift from the mental-vital to the psychic

5 March 1936

My dear Mother,

How is it that L has learnt to utter such ugly things about You? Why such a grudge! Where is the reason for dissatisfaction? She has freedom in work, freedom to move about where she likes In the kitchen she was required to be exact and regular—but now!

The more a mind is ignorant, the more easily it judges everything it does not know or is incapable of understanding

12 March 1936

My dear Mother,

Whenever I have been stiff, harsh, stubborn or rough, it was all ego And I see before me many people, both men and women, hurt by that ego I ask Your Grace for pardon May my consciousness grow and become a part of Your Consciousness

Yes, my dear child, your aspiration is sure to get fulfilled and your consciousness to unite with the Divine Consciousness

Always with you

16 March 1936

My dear Mother,

People are unsatisfied with the food Was it not good?

It was very good.

Were there not a variety of dishes? Was the food not clean and well cooked?

All was all right

Then why were people unsatisfied?

Because it is almost a principle with most of them to be unsatisfied

According to them we are not spending enough for food and because of economy we are not giving the proper food, etc , etc You have read M's note to you—he wrote a much more violent letter to us, and so many of these letters we have received! I felt

quite disgusted with it And what I meant is that I do not want the kitchen workers to take any extra trouble for such ungrateful people

I pray to You with a quiet force of aspiration for a complete victory over these lower vital and physical forces of desire, etc

Yes, all these lower movements have to be conquered if ever anything divine is to be established upon earth

All trust, love and blessings to you, my dear child and faithful worker

18 March 1936

My dear Mother,

What shall become of the soup? People are always complaining about it and about the vegetable we use for dinner after straining the soup. It is cow's fodder for them Shall we stop it?

No, this soup is very good and wholesome It is better to continue

I have received the nick-name "miser" from those nearest to me My one consolation has always been Your trust. And whenever I have been called this name, I have gone within me and found that my being is sincere and stands purely for You

Yes, it is true and you are not at all a miser. Simply you are not wasteful—people cannot tolerate that; they want to waste and waste and waste always (naturally so long as it is not *their own money* that is concerned)

19 March 1936

My dear Mother,

Let me tell You very honestly, wherever N has worked he has been treated kindly, nobody has treated him as kindly as You have, and yet he has proved himself ungrateful to everybody If he finds happiness elsewhere, he can go; but I think he will not.

Each one carries his capacity of happiness in himself, but to tell the truth, I am convinced that those who cannot be happy here can be happy nowhere

Personally, I was happy nowhere before, it is only here that I am happy Since 1924 not a single doubt has passed in me. My Mother is the supreme Truth—this remains unchallenged.

Yes, my dear child, you are mine and I am always with you, present near you and in you

14 April 1936

My dear Mother,

How is it that my co-workers think so badly of me that I am deprived of even an ordinary human courtesy! Things are getting worse Perhaps there would be a lighter air if I were not there

Do not take these things so much to heart. If you give them no importance they will have none—and if a man truly misbehaves it is he who must feel for it, not you

My dear Mother, I am completely given to You

Let this consecration be for you the means of a complete liberation My help and protection are always with you on the way—my dear child

22 April 1936

My dear Mother,

P is going through a bad disturbance, but the cause is not known, she does not want to speak May her normal consciousness come again to the front, the consciousness that feels the loving Presence of her dear Mama

Yes, surely it is not good when there are already so many difficulties, to open one's door also to disturbance. At the time of the battle the soldiers are expected to pick up all their courage and endurance

Always with you, my dear child.

28 April 1936

My dear Mother,

I understand that we have come here and are allowed to stay here with the clear understanding that we accept Your word, Your guidance and follow You in every way This is the simple beginning of Yoga

My dear child, I wish that many would think and feel like you—it would make things so much easier!

All love and blessings to you, my dear child

29 April 1936

My dear Mother,

My yoga means a complete union with You and I know not any yoga except that

Yes, my dear child, you are mine completely and I am always with you, around you, in you

29 April 1936

(To be continued)

THE ARYA

(Continued from the issue of January 1999)

WE close this month the fourth year of the “Arya” and bring to a conclusion at the same time the “Psychology of Social Development”, the “Ideal of Human Unity” and the first series of the “Essays on the Gita”. A few more Chapters will complete the “Life Divine”. We are therefore well in view of the completion of the first part of the work which we had proposed to ourselves in starting this philosophical monthly and we take the opportunity to say a few words upon the principle which has governed our writing and which the difficulty of a serial exposition on several lines at a time, scattering and breaking upon the total impression, may have prevented some of our readers from grasping in its entirety.

We had not in view at any time a review or magazine in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say, a popular presentation or criticism of current information and current thought on philosophical questions. Nor was it, as in some philosophical and religious magazines in India, the restatement of an existing school or position of philosophical thought cut out in its lines and needing only to be popularised and supported. Our idea was the thinking out of a synthetic philosophy which might be a contribution to the thought of the new age that is coming upon us. We start from the idea that humanity is moving to a great change of its life which will even lead to a new life of the race,—in all countries where men think, there is now in various forms that idea and that hope—and our aim has been to search for the spiritual, religious and other truth which can enlighten and guide the race in this movement and endeavour. The spiritual experience and the general truths on which such an attempt can be based were already present to us, otherwise we should have no right to make the endeavour at all, but the complete intellectual statement of them and their results and issues had to be found. This meant a continuous thinking, a high and subtle and difficult thinking on several lines, and this strain which we had to impose on ourselves, we were obliged to impose also on our readers. This too is the reason why we have adopted the serial form which in a subject like philosophy has its very obvious disadvantages, but was the only one possible.

Our original intention was to approach the synthesis from the starting point of the two lines of culture which divide human thought and are now meeting its apex, the knowledge of the West and the knowledge of the East; but owing to the exigencies of the war this could not be fulfilled. The “Arya” except for one unfinished series has been an approach to the highest reconciling truth from the point of view of the Indian mentality and Indian spiritual experience, and Western knowledge has been viewed from that standpoint. Here the main idea which has governed our writing was imposed on us by the very conditions of the problem. All philosophy is concerned with the relation between two things, the fundamental truth of existence and the forms in which existence presents itself to our experience. The deepest experience shows that the

fundamental truth is truth of the Spirit, the other is the truth of life, the West and the East have followed divergent lines. The West has laid most emphasis on truth of life and for a time came to stake its whole existence on truth of life alone, to deny the existence of Spirit or to relegate it to the domain of the unknown and unknowable from that exaggeration it is now beginning to return. The East has laid most emphasis on truth of the Spirit and for a time came, at least in India, to stake its whole existence on that truth alone, to neglect the possibilities of life or to limit it to a narrow development or a fixed status, the East too is beginning to return from this exaggeration. The West is reawaking to the truth of the Spirit and the spiritual possibilities of life, the East is reawaking to the truth of life and tends towards a new application to it of its spiritual knowledge. Our view is that the antinomy created between them is an unreal one. Spirit being the fundamental truth of existence, life can be only its manifestation; Spirit must be not only the origin of life but its basis, its pervading reality and its highest and total result. But the forms as they appear to us are at once its disguises and its instruments of self-manifestation. Man has to grow in knowledge till they cease to be disguises and grow in spiritual power and quality till they become in him its perfect instruments. To grow into the fulness of the divine is the true law of human life and to shape his earthly existence into its image is the meaning of his evolution. This is the fundamental tenet of the philosophy of the "Arya"

This truth had to be worked out first of all from the metaphysical point of view; for in philosophy metaphysical truth is the nucleus of the rest, it is the statement of the last and most general truths on which all the others depend or in which they are gathered up. Therefore we gave the first place to the "Life Divine". Here we start from the Vedantic position, its ideas of the Self and mind and life, of Sachchidananda and the world, of Knowledge and Ignorance, of rebirth and the Spirit. But the Vedanta is popularly supposed to be a denial of life, and this is no doubt a dominant trend it has taken. Though starting from the original truth that all is the Brahman, the Self, it has insisted in the end that the world is simply non-Brahman, not-Self, it has ended in a paradox. We have attempted on the contrary to establish from its data a comprehensive Adwaita. We have shown that mind and life and matter are derivation from the Self through a spiritual mind or supermind which is the real support of cosmic existence and by developing mind into that man can arrive at the real truth of the Spirit in the world and the real truth and the highest law of life. The Self is Sachchidananda and there is no incurable antinomy between that and the world; only we see the world through the eyes of the ignorance and we have to see it with the eyes of the Knowledge. Our ignorance itself is only knowledge developing out of its involution in the apparent nescience of Matter and on its way to return to its conscious integrality. To accomplish that return and to manifest spiritual life in human existence is the opportunity given by the succession of rebirth. We accept the truth of evolution, not so much in the physical form given to it by the West as in its philosophical truth, the involution of life and mind and spirit here in Matter and their progressive manifestation. At the summit of this evolution is the spiritual life, the life divine.

It was necessary to show that these truths were not inconsistent with the Vedantic truth, therefore we included explanations from the point of view of the Veda, two Upanishads and the Gita. But the Veda has been obscured by the ritualists and the scholiasts. Therefore we showed in a series of articles, initially only as yet, the way of writing of the Vedic mystics, their system of symbols and the truth they figure. Among the Upanishads we took the Isha and the Kena, to be full we should have added the Taittiriya, but it is a long one and for it we had no space. The Gita we are treating as a powerful application of the truth of Spirit to the largest and the most difficult part of the truth of life, to action, and a way by which action can lead us to birth into the Spirit and can be harmonised with the spiritual life. Truth of philosophy is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived, and we have therefore tried in the "Synthesis of Yoga" to arrive at a synthetical view of the principles and methods of the various lines of spiritual self-discipline and the way in which they can lead to an integral divine life in the human existence. But this is an individual self-development, and therefore it was necessary to show too how the ideal can work out in the social life of mankind. In the "Psychology of Social Development" we have indicated how these truths affect the evolution of human society. In the "Ideal of Human Unity" we have taken the present trend of mankind towards a closer unification and tried to appreciate its tendencies and show what is wanting in them in order that real human unity may be achieved.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(As quoted by Anilbaran Roy in his unpublished book *The Prophet of the New Age* —Editor)

WHEN THE GRACE ACTS

The Grace is something that pushes you towards the goal to be attained. Do not try to judge it by your mind, you will not reach anywhere. For it is something immense which does not explain itself by human words or feelings. When the Grace acts, the result may be pleasant or not—it takes no account of any human value, it may even be a catastrophe from the ordinary and superficial point of view. But it is always the best for the individual. It is a blow of the Divine sent so that the progress may be by leaps and bounds. The Grace is that which makes you march swiftly towards the realisation.

THE MOTHER

OMNI-REALISM

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A KEY TO THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION

(Continued from the issue of January 1999)

BESIDES, the acceptance of intuitiveness as basic to perception involves a world-view in tune with the world-view of the great mystics and yogis. For, what after all is intuition? It is the seizing of the nature of a thing by a flash, as it were, which brings us to our knowledge as if this knowledge were waiting ready within us, hidden in our own being: such knowledge can arise only if the knower's being is secretly one with the nature of the thing known. Intuition is knowledge by self-identification of our consciousness with a thing's nature. The fundamental term, therefore, of existence must be consciousness: the world is a conscious being deployed into finite centres of knowing and omni-qualified objects to be known. Of course, the experience of a Jesus, a Buddha, a Krishna may not be confined to perception, by intense intuitiveness, of the world of which our bodies are a part and which we ordinarily know with sense-contacts serving as occasions of knowledge by consciousness in its own right. Intuition may perceive other universes that are occult, other ranges of existence than what we know as physical. A great mystic's and yogi's perception of the physical world itself as a divine conscious being does not preclude such perception. On the contrary it renders it most plausible. But we are not here concerned with the latter and it is sufficient for our thesis to say that the former is, on the strength of Omni-realism's implications, no "error" or "illusion" but the deepest and highest knowledge because the act of intuition which Omni-realism implies points unmistakably to the world having as its essential reality a universal consciousness and such a consciousness renders most plausible an assertion like the Mundaka Upanishad's: "The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the north and to the south of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal."¹

Nor have we exhausted by the above discussion Omni-realism's implications in favour of the pro-mystic and pro-yogi attitude. The omni-realist world-view, while rejecting all philosophies of human subjectivism, takes note that Berkeleyanism and Kantianism lay bare situations which are not properly interpreted by them, yet which have to be reckoned with. Berkeley proved that the primary qualities of things are not unchangeable and ever-present nor independent of circumstances but are on all fours with secondary ones. His own conclusion was that the primary qualities no less than the secondary are subjective, existing only in perception. But when we do not accept his conclusion we are led by his abolition of the barrier between the qualities to the statement that both kinds are objective and that not only is there an external world but

1 Sri Aurobindo's translation

also is there in all human perception a disclosure, un-affected by constructs, of the external world in some degree or layer of reality. However, a difficulty crops up at this point. What we perceive are only aspects—visual, auditory, tactual, etc. When we ask what else than aspects we perceive of a thing, we get no answer. If we cut up a thing we get more aspects; we cannot get closer to a thing than to its aspects. Both Berkeley and Kant recognised this, but they considered the aspects to be mind-cooked. When we accept Omni-realism, the aspects have to be accepted as disclosing objects independent of our minds and as part of what a thing is. Yet, we must not forget that an aspect is what a thing appears to be from a position outside it. As Whitehead insists, it is not “simply located.” it does not simply inhere in a particular place. It is “in a place from a place”. All that is seen or heard or touched is “there from here”. So an aspect is at once part of a thing and dependent on a position outside a thing. Since there is an infinite number possible of outside positions, a thing’s reality is constituted not only by that which presents aspects to all possible positions outside but also by all possible positions from which aspects can be observed. A thing possesses a dual reality, as that which presents aspects it is utterly individual and has an existence of its own, while as that which depends for its aspects on the rest of the universe it is just a focalisation, so to speak, of the rest of the universe and exists in so far as the whole universe is implicit in it in the way an organism is implicit in every member of the system which it forms. When, in view of this dual reality, we inquire what, on any level, a thing in itself is, we must aver it to be both that which is the same while presenting different aspects of its sameness to all the various positions and that which is the same from all the various positions in spite of the differences according to each position. A thing has two samenesses, the first “out there” in its own right, the second “out there” as would be found if a thing were perceived from everywhere else instantaneously. Neither of the two samenesses can be perceived by means of our sensory and intellectual equipment, for, the first requires us to surmount the impossibility of getting behind the aspects and the second requires us to surmount the impossibility of being present instantaneously in the infinite number of possible positions from which aspects can be observed. With regard to human perception the two samenesses are an external reality whose nature is never revealed. Hence to the conclusion, reached by us in refuting Berkeley and Kant, that all the qualities we perceive disclose objective reality in some degree or layer and are not subjectively conjured up or constructed, we must add the conclusion that these qualities yet leave in a double sense objective reality always undisclosed to perception. Thus Omni-realism takes up and reinterprets not only the Berkeleyan putting on a par of all the qualities of a perceived object but also the Kantian X. What is more, the X is logically found to be a system which is organic and in which the parts and the whole are real.

Arguments for this conclusion can be presented in also another way than the above. An aspect is always a relation between what we name an object and the position from which it is observed. What is the status of the relation? Does the relation belong to the object or not? If it does not belong, nothing can be known of the object by observing

it, for when an object is observed we know only its relation to the observing standpoint. And if nothing can be known of an object by observing it, we cannot even know that it exists. the Kantian dilemma occurs. So the relation has to be thought of as belonging to an object. Is the object, then, made up merely of the relations it has to all the possible standpoints of observation in the whole universe? If we answer "Yes", then we have relations with nothing to be related! If A is wholly its relation to B, then what does the relation relate? There must be a term which is related and which cannot be its own relation. This term must be thought of as that whose relations are observed. But since, in order to avoid the Kantian dilemma the relation must be regarded as belonging to the object and revealing its characteristics, this term cannot be different in kind from them, except that they vary and it must be the invariant which is variously observed from outside. Hence an object is at the same time its own varying relations and an independent invariant term resembling them in some way. When, however, we shift attention from this term and consider the object as consisting of its own relations we find it infinitely diffused or else concentratedly infinite; for, if the relations have to be thought of as belonging to an object, their existing not only because there is an object revealing its own characteristics but also because outside the object there are standpoints without which there can be no relations renders the object just a state of the All. A is related to B no less because B exists than because A exists. the existence of all imaginable B's—that is, the existence of the whole universe outside A—constitutes A's relations, as much as the existence of A itself does. Therefore A is really present in an implicit manner everywhere or else infinity is really present in an implicit manner in A. The concept of the organic whole comes in—the universe as a system in which the character of each part is not definable without reference to the whole. Mind you, the whole here is not an aggregate. an aggregate exists as the sum of the individual items. Here the whole permeates and interpenetrates the parts and is their *raison d'être*, their ground of existence. It is an existent in itself as no mere aggregate can be. It is what philosophers essentially mean when they speak of the Absolute.

The Absolute, however, does not negate the reality of the parts. This whole is not like Hegel's Absolute in which there are relations but no term and which is therefore constituted, as it were, of nothings and which provokes Hegel's critics to remark that it should be spelt H-O-L-E. The parts and this whole are co-equal realities constituting a diverse oneness, because the terms and the relations are also realities co-equal and a diverse oneness constitutes them. And both the parts and the whole are outside the realm of perception since perception deals only with aspects or relations.

Are we not speaking of a marvellous or miraculous X akin to what mysticism might claim to realise in some supreme, plenary, integral moment beyond all the perceptual reach of the mental human consciousness? Omni-realism finds its grand logical terminus in the ineffable Spirit, the eternal One-in-Many who has to be known by direct intuition and identity of inmost being with the beings of that which is known.

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Only one postscript is required to finish our treatment of the problem of “subjective” and “objective”. We have said that reality is a diverse oneness and that the organic whole and the parts are equally real. Now we must ask. What do we mean by parts? What are the parts? In the first place a part is the cohesion of qualities which we have called a thing or object. Every cohesion is just as much a part as any other. Thus, a hill is a part, but so also is any bit of a hill. It is not possible to exclude any bit of anything from itself being a part. Whatever is perceivable is *ipso facto* a part and therefore a real co-equal with the whole. In the second place, a part is the unknown X whose cohering qualities we perceive, just as the whole is the unknown X whose perceivable system of relations is implicit in each quality. In the third place, if the ultimate reality is the ineffable Spirit, a part which is a real co-equal with this Spirit can only be a soul—a soul whose individuality it is that variously plays in secret the role of a part in the other two senses.

The Spirit and the souls, the one supreme Self and its many individual centres of differentiation—this is the mystery with which Omni-realism completes and crowns its philosophical structure. The many-souled Self and Spirit, the only existence with nothing outside it, must be declared to make subjective constructions within itself of its own stuff and according to its own constitution and activity. Reality, therefore, is in the final analysis omni-subjective. But to reach Omni-subjectivism through philosophical logic treating the problem of “subjective” and “objective”, we have to start by rejecting every argument for the subjective world-view and setting up Omni-realism as the master-truth.

(Concluded)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

WHO IS HUTA?

ONE of the events which took place in Auroville on August 15, 1998 to celebrate Sri Aurobindo's 126th birth anniversary was a slide-show in Pitanga Hall of paintings inspired by some of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. The paintings were done in 1967 by Huta, the artist with whom the Mother worked to create over 600 paintings relating to Sri Aurobindo's mantric epic *Savitri*

Huta, born Savita Hindocha into a Gujarati family settled in East Africa, had a number of experiences indicating that she was destined for a spiritual life, even before she first came into contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in 1954. She was able to visit the Ashram and meet the Mother for the first time on November 1, 1954. Thereafter, the Mother considered this her "spiritual birthday" Shortly afterwards, on February 10, 1955, she was able to move to the Ashram, and the Mother gave her the name "Huta - the offered one" Thereafter she enjoyed a unique relationship with the Mother, which is recounted in her autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, parts of which have appeared in serial form in *Mother India*, and which is now being prepared in book form. The Mother gave this message for the work

This is the interesting story of how a being discovers the Divine Life.

In addition to the *Story*, Huta has brought out a number of books that are of great value to aspirants to the New Creation, because they contain what she has received from the Mother. Most of them were given titles by the Mother herself. *Salutations*, for example, recently reissued by Havyavahana Trust, contains the prayers written by Huta to the Mother while she was still in East Africa, before coming to Pondicherry for the first time. On these the Mother commented,

This is how all sincere aspirations are fulfilled

Then there are the three volumes of *White Roses*, letters from the Mother to Huta, which were later brought out all together in a handsome one-volume facsimile edition. These letters, immensely valuable to any spiritual seeker, are gradually being translated into different languages, and the Tamil version has recently been released. Another facsimile volume, *Gems from the Mother to Huta*, contains in the Mother's handwriting inspiring messages and quotations from wise men from many times and cultures, which the Mother sent on cards to Huta through the years. Another treasure is *Victory of the Truth*, where photographs of the Mother's hands in various mudras are presented along with the Mother's explanations and comments, and relevant quotations from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Huta has collected much of what the Mother said or wrote to her relating to Auroville, and especially the Matrimandir, in *Matrimandir—The Mother's Truth and Love*. A new revised and enlarged version of this, to be entitled *The Spirit of Auroville*, is now in preparation.

It was from 1956 onwards that the Mother, herself a gifted artist, started training Huta in oil-painting. It seems she had a special purpose in this, for she stated that she

had earlier tried with several other people, before Huta was born. She wished to find someone with the right kind of receptivity, to be able to give expression through painting to Her own vision. Several of Huta's visionary paintings were selected by the Mother to be published as New Year cards. These were later brought out in a folder entitled *Some Paintings*, and in book form with some explanations as *Here is Bliss*, in 1983.

It was in 1961 that they started to work on *Savitri*. The Mother herself has described how they worked:

Savitri, this prophetic vision of the world's history, including the announcement of the earth's future. — Who can ever dare to put it in pictures?

yet, the Mother and Huta have tried it, this way.

We simply meditate together on the lines chosen, and when the image becomes clear, I describe it with the help of a few strokes, then Huta goes to her studio and brushes the painting.

It is in a meditative mood that these 'meditations' must be looked at - to find the feeling they contain behind their appearance.

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Of course the Mother would see the completed painting, and sometimes asked for changes to be made before she was satisfied. The resulting 468 paintings, entitled *Meditations on Savitri*, were exhibited in the Ashram all together in February 1967. It was for this occasion that the Mother gave the following message

*The importance of
Savitri is immense
Its subject is universal
Its revelation is prophetic
The time spent in its
atmosphere is not wasted.
It will be a happy compensation
for the feverish haste men
put now in all they do.*

10-2-67.



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10 2 67

The Mother had some of these paintings published in book form from 1962 onwards, in four volumes covering Book One, Cantos One, Two, Three and Four. Huta then began work on illustrating some of Sri Aurobindo's poems, selected by the Mother. The resulting 54 paintings were exhibited in the Ashram in February 1968. Both the *Meditations on Savitri* and the paintings inspired by Sri Aurobindo's poems were photographed and made into slide-shows by the Aurovilian Richard Eggenberger, whom the Mother named Narad. Later the Mother gave blessings to another Aurovilian, Michel Klostermann, to make films of the *Meditations on Savitri*. He has recently completed this work and the paintings of all the twelve books of *Savitri* are now available as video-films.

The tape-recordings which Huta made of the Mother's readings of the selected passages from *Savitri* were used with the Mother's own organ-music as a sound-track for the slide-shows and the films. They were also given to the Ashram musician Sunil Bhattacharya for him to prepare music to accompany them. His wonderful compositions have been a source of inspiration and delight to many people, but unfortunately he was able to complete only Book Nine and a part of Book Ten up to his passing away earlier this year.

On 26 December 1967 Huta took to the Mother a file containing all the passages of the *Meditations*, and asked her,

Mother, will you please explain them to me and allow me to take down your explanations on the recorder? Then surely people will understand the *Savitri* paintings more easily.

In reply the Mother said enthusiastically,

If I have to explain these passages, I would prefer to start from the very beginning and give a full explanation of the whole of *Savitri*.

Already in 1954, Amal Kiran reports, the Mother had told a small group of sadhaks,

Savitri is occult knowledge and spiritual experience. Some part of it can be understood mentally, but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it. Nobody except myself can explain *Savitri*. One day I hope to explain it in its true sense.

From January 1968 up to July 1970 she met Huta regularly for this work. The first volume of the Mother's explanations, covering Book One Canto One and accompanied by paintings of Huta, was published in 1972 under the title *About Savitri*. The remaining three volumes, with the Mother's explanations up to the middle of Book One Canto Four, have yet to appear.

In addition, to complement the work she was doing with the Mother, Huta studied *Savitri* intellectually with Amal Kiran, as arranged by the Mother, as well as pursuing her own background research. The result of all that research is also in the process of preparation for publication.

Another treasure yet to be published is the record of the Mother's conversations with Huta in the course of interviews. Huta used to note down these talks from memory and then show her notes to the Mother, who would make corrections in the notebook itself. Then Huta would type out the accounts and again show them to the Mother, who would again add changes, sometimes quite extensive, to make the pieces ready for publication. To these talks the Mother gave the title, "You said so." Some of these will appear at the relevant points in Huta's *The Story of a Soul*.

We feel very fortunate that Huta is taking great interest in our Savitri Bhavan project in Auroville, to which she has donated a lot of valuable materials relating to *Savitri*. Amongst other things, she has allowed us to make reproductions of all the many sketches which the Mother gave for her guidance while they were working on the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings. A few of these reproductions were exhibited in Pitanga Hall during November 1998 to mark the fourth anniversary of the Savitri Bhavan project, and to give a small foretaste of the riches it hopes one day to house. We are immensely grateful to Huta for her work and all that she has made possible, and to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for their unstinting Grace.

SHRADDHAVAN

**“You will perhaps be aware that *Mother India*
is shortly going to enter its
Golden Jubilee year from Feb. 1999.”**

WITH this introduction Amal’s letter invited me to contribute an article on “whatever theme you like in its spirit suitable for a monthly review of culture ”

Yes, Amal, of course, of course, though on receipt of your letter I didn’t have, and even at this moment, while sitting down to write, don’t have even an unsuitable article in my head.

What prompts me to take up my ballpoint is a heart full of gratitude and love for its founding editor, Amal Kiran, Amal Sethna

For from my very first days in the Ashram, Amal, you showered me with kindness and encouragement and even practical help for my travel arrangements when I had to leave the Ashram briefly to settle my affairs, taking with me your presentation copy of *The Secret Splendour*, your poems which ignited my inspiration all the way to Madras and during the long plane flight.

Dear Amal, your letter brings all this back to me and I could not get down to the business of *Mother India* without releasing what came, what comes from an overflowing heart.

Now as for *Mother India*, you know, it came as a shock to realize that it has been appearing for 50 years *Mother India* has for me an eternal quality like Sunil’s music and the Ashram meditations, as though they had always been and would always be

Well, now I shall try and say what *Mother India* means to me and I shall no doubt fail

First of all, paradoxically it always comes as a surprise Whether it is discreetly left on my verandah table or garden chair or thrown over my wall or even placed in my hand, I invariably get a little thrill.

Why there should be this element of surprise I do not know since *Mother India* appears with such regularity, but there it is. When I see the blue heart shape swimming in that sea of white, something stirs inside me Something inside me knows that there will be a revelation, that I will meet an old friend through his or her poem or make a new one in the same way. I may be given unexpected insights into the Mahabharata, or the Vedas or Upanishads, or Blake or Yeats or Shakespeare. I may be drawn into unspeakable enchantment by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya’s cascading poetry, or awed by Amal’s erudition, or impressed by the heart-warming trouble he takes to answer his correspondents, or Romen will speak to me again from beyond life’s confines What a delight it must be to receive one of those letters from Amal whether one is Kathleen Raine or just plain Mary Jane or Rani Rao—Amal pulls out all the stops whoever he is counselling or talking to

But so much has been written about Amal and his literature and his gifts and his life that I won’t try to add to it here

Our business, as his invitation letter says, is *Mother India*, the paper which Sri Aurobindo called “my paper”. Its motto is, “Great is Truth and it shall prevail,” and indeed it does

A “suitable article for a magazine of culture”? Well, trusting that you mean “culture” in the very widest sense, in the Mother’s sense, I choose a subject which I’ve been wanting to write about for a long time, which was dear to the Mother’s heart, which is in a sense the basis of true culture, at least one of its corner-stones, and without which there can be no hope of the peace in which culture thrives.

That subject is harmony

It is something that I’ve given a lot of thought to And I give more thought to it each day as I am about to enter my 39th year in the Ashram and my 50th year of Yoga. (You see, Amal, my conscious yoga is as old as *Mother India*)

Harmony is the name the Mother gave to an exceedingly graceful delicate little flower with heart-shaped leaves that comes in shades of pink and white, *Antigonon leptopus*. It is a fairly modest flower Most white flowers that grow in the tropics have a heavy, almost intoxicating night perfume Harmony has none For all its delicacy it is a courageous climber and with its fine tendrils can stretch up three-storey buildings and higher. But there is nothing intoxicating about it It is, in fact, the symbol of something which calms wild passions

In the Mother’s book of flowers, *Antigonon* expresses a general aspiration:

Let us strive that the day will come when this will be the means and the end

The words seen for “Harmony in the Material Vital” (deep pink) are

No disputes, no quarrels—the sweetness of a life without clashes

For “Harmony in the Vital” (bright pink)

To harmonize the vital is a psychological masterpiece. Happy is he who accomplishes it.

And for “Integral Harmony” (white):

Harmony between things,
 harmony between people,
 harmony of circumstances
 and above all harmony of all
 aspiration directed towards
 the Supreme Truth

I remember reading to the Mother the letter of a devotee recounting the incidents

of her relationship with another devotee with whom she simply could not get on The Mother listened in silence, chin on chest, eyes closed The letter requested an answer, a solution For a long time after I had finished reading there was silence. Then the Mother shook her head. She looked as though she were going to say something Then, taking a breath, she shook her head again, and closing her eyes went inside herself

Having to read certain letters regarding situations of human conflict to the Mother was not a comfortable or comforting task, and yet I could not refuse these letters. For one thing the Mother had given me this work asking me to help put out the fires whenever possible The little fairy which she said inhabited me had a flair for fostering peace. And actually, whether under the influence of the “petite fée” or not, I have for a very long time known that it is worth putting in a lot of work to avoid conflict and misunderstanding which waste time and energy.

Still, this particular occasion marked a conscious reformation of my attitude to conflict, because when the Mother finally opened her eyes she stroked my head, which was lying on the arm of her chair, and said, “Mon petit¹, people do not understand, when there is no harmony I cannot enter. It is like a barrier, disharmony is a barrier which keeps me out. Very few people understand this They want my help They want my blessings, but...” and here she pointed at the letter in my hand, “they behave like that They keep me out They make no effort ” She took the letter and wrote that the only solution was to surrender all difficulties to the Divine And then she closed her eyes again and put her head down You must have seen her do this many times, Amal

For all the time that the Mother was silent and turned within, and while she was writing, her words were working inside me so strongly that a vivid image of a closed door formed inside my mind I had never seen it so clearly before One invoked a higher energy, the Mother’s force, but if one were in disharmony with oneself or others it was like shutting the door in Her face It was a disturbing realization, one of those times when one hears or reads something that makes such a deep impression that life is never quite the same afterwards

The Mother could see what had happened to me because she leaned forward to embrace me and then asked me to read the next letter.

I can only say that the person who walked out of the Mother’s room that day was not the same person as had walked in. Not that I have always succeeded, but it is deeply embedded in my heart and mind that one must never begrudge the time and effort to try and establish harmony, and I believe that when one fails it is because one is awkward and probably not entirely sincere, the attempt coming more from the mind than from the heart.

But mostly it requires very, very little time or effort. The Mother says that if you smile at your enemy you disarm him

Sometimes years of bitterness and resentment can be avoided if one takes the trouble, if trouble is the word at all, to write a note which says, “In case there was a mis-

1 “Mon petit”, used in the masculine, is a term of endearment for which there is no exact translation

understanding, I want you to know I didn't mean it that way .." or, "If I have offended you I want to tell you how much it means to me that ." or, "How sorry I am "

It is often easier and more effective to clear things up in writing, which gives the other person time to cool down, to be touched, whereas to meet someone head-on, even when one goes with the best of intentions, often ends in a collision, but if one does meet the person before the letter is written, a smile is recommended by the Mother, a gesture. In the Ashram the Mother has given us the delightful possibility of communicating in the language of flowers. Harmony, Collaboration with its spicy smell, or that big floppy good-natured looking flower called Goodwill.

At times, intentionally or unintentionally, we all do fairly hurtful things to one another. How much suffering could be avoided if one could simply, honestly say, "Sorry ." And as the Mother says, there is so much suffering in the world that one should not add a single drop to it, a single tear.

On a couple of occasions the Mother left me speechless by apologising. Once she had given me the work of writing out some passages of *Savitri* in very, very large letters so that she could read them by herself. She provided me with some beautiful thick felt pens and some refill ink since the large writing used a lot of ink. The next day she apologised several times for not having shown me how to remove the pen cap to refill the pen. She said she hadn't been able to go to sleep thinking of how thoughtless she had been not to show me the way to fill the pen and how I might be struggling with it. On another occasion the Mother had mentioned a piece of personal information regarding someone whose letter I had read to her and I had sent a note up to the Mother saying that I wouldn't want that person to think I had been divulging this personal matter. The Mother wrote back explaining why she had mentioned it, but that she would be more careful in future!!

Once when Dilip Kumar Roy was very upset by something Sri Aurobindo had written, Sri Aurobindo wrote back gently that had he known the effect his letter would have had he would not have written it. That the Divine can come down to us in this manner gives one pause.

It is astonishing how many people doing yoga, our yoga, still say. "But why apologise if you're in the right, if you never even intended to give offence. It's their problem ." Well, for one thing we're told on great authority that when there's an argument both sides are in the wrong. But the thing to remember is that we are closing the door not only on the other person but on something much more important, on Divine help. But what to do when one tries to maintain harmony with people who appear totally unreasonable, specially if you are in a situation in which you work together? To a letter from Dyuman the Mother gives a simple answer. Here is the letter.

My dear Mother,

B has put forth a proposal to get the milk in the morning in two trips instead of one. The dairy servant would have to carry the milk-can on his head in the dark. The Aroumé servants would have to be made free for the first boiling, which

*would disturb the kitchen work Since it is only a matter of a few days, I do not see why so many people should be inconvenienced permanently
C is much displeased with me because I do not agree with him in his ideas and he is insisting on them.*

The Mother's answer

You are quite right in this affair and it is quite unreasonable to ask for these two trips But B is very sensitive—he is getting more and more nervous. He says he has lost his peace. He needs affection and kindness I suppose if you approach him in a friendly way, things will become all right

23 December 1935

So it seems whether one is in the right or in the wrong, one has an obligation to maintain and create harmony. The Mother bids us to go out of our way to approach others with kindness, gentleness and understanding when necessary.

How important is it when people disagree, when devotees disagree among themselves? Probably most people have felt, even if briefly, at some time or other, “After all, we're only human. It's not possible to go through life without some bumps Everyone gets irritable sometimes, and anyhow, some people really deserve...” Well, when the Mother met the Asura who inspired Hitler, she said to him, “I'm going to do with your people what you're always doing with my children ” And she set about pitting Hitler against Russia Evidently, when we dig our heels in to justify ourselves and maintain a position, we are being inspired by none other than what fosters world wars, concentration camps, holocausts and so on There's a thought!

In his book *Down Memory Lane* Shyam Sunder reports on one of his daily meetings with the Mother “She laid stress on harmony,” he says, and there follows this exchange

“When I am not here, what will you do?” she asked

“Mother, kindly don't say this.”

“I don't like quarrels. Whether I should be here or not is in the balance Such things put a pressure on me to depart I am not here for these things. I am busy with transformation You have to find a solution among yourselves ”

It's a fact Each of us holds the universe in his hands We're all responsible for everything in a very real sense because each act, even each thought produces universal ripples

Sri Aurobindo on the very second page of *The Life Divine* says.

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered

agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilized, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour

We all know the ideal of offering our difficulties to the Mother, and Christ's teaching is to leave your sacrifice at the temple door and go and make peace before offering it, which derives from Judaic law you may not enter the temple unless you have first dissolved your quarrels. Indeed you cannot receive unless you observe this precept. Which brings us back to the Mother. The door is shut when there is no harmony in you. And there is no harmony in us when we harbour enmity and resentment.

Konrad Lorenz, that great observer of animal behaviour! Amal, you are such an encyclopedia that you probably know even more than I do about that fascinating Konrad Lorenz. Anyhow, he has reported some truly revealing solutions to the bellicose instinct which pervades the whole animal kingdom. In most species, when two animals are fighting, if one bares the neck, thus exposing the most vulnerable portion of his anatomy, the other will acknowledge the sign of surrender and submission and retreat, even and especially wolves, considered the most savage of animals. Many animals, including dogs, will often roll over onto their backs in submission, offering the soft belly which could easily be ripped open. If a horse, that noble animal, is attacked and he turns away, refusing to acknowledge the action of the aggressor, he is allowed to canter off. Another way to allay a horse's violence is for the victim to nibble the aggressor's neck affectionately to bring him to his senses. But by and large, only in war does man seem to observe this code. Animals, wolves, all this seems to take us a long way from the little white or pink flower from which we started, but it is perhaps not useless to remember what happens when we fail to use that instinct which animals have. It is reason that allows us to put it aside.

You will agree that few have said it better than Goethe

He calls it reason and only uses it
To be more beastly still than any beast

When Konrad Lorenz was asked what he thought was the missing link between animal and man, his answer was simply: "The missing link? That's us." Ha!

I would like to relate an incident which moved me deeply and which is fresh in my mind because I read the relevant letter only this week. It is from a little boy in a

boarding school This boy felt that people “did not care about me so much That thought made me unhappy ” Then he received a letter reporting that one of the bigger girls in his school had said that he was full of goodness and that everybody loved him Here is a paragraph from his reply “There is a boy who was my enemy I used to just try to ignore him After I got the letter, there was something so strange in it that by that evening he helped me to make my bed Even though he was my enemy, it’s better now ”

By that same evening a small miracle had happened His “enemy” no longer was his enemy When we are able to make good energies circulate through our speech and thought, a sphere of harmony is born in which seeming miracles take place But they are not miracles They are the norm, because behind all appearances is joy

Somewhere the Mother says that before being able to jump into a higher reality man has to follow the process of Buddha’s eightfold path Once we have become the noble being as prescribed by Buddha we are ready to become aspirants for the new being But it is unlikely that we would be acceptable to that highest Truth-Consciousness until that delicate little climbing flower which symbolizes harmony is firmly rooted in us

I was trying to find a suitable quotation from the Mother on harmony for this article without much success when a faded blue card slipped out of one of a collection of Paola’s books sent to me after she left her body In Paola’s handsome script was written the Mother’s commentary on Sri Aurobindo’s aphorism 138

Human beings are in the habit of basing their relationships with others on physical, vital and mental contacts, that is why there is almost always discord and suffering If, on the contrary, they based their relationships on psychic contacts (between soul and soul), they would find that behind the troubled appearances there is a profound and lasting harmony which can express itself in all the activities of life and cause disorder and suffering to be replaced by peace and bliss (*CWM*, Vol 10, pp 247-8)

Harindranath’s poem makes the Mother’s point in the last verse

YOU SIT IN JUDGMENT

You sit in judgment over me,
O outer man with vision blind
As a grey bat’s, and cannot see
Beyond the little dusk of mind

The being that I am is rife
With deepest glories interspun.
How shall you know my inner life
Who have but lived an outer one?

Withdraw, O outer man! withdraw
 Into yourself, and then behold
 Your inner self and mine with awe,
 For both are elemental gold

These few verses of mine were published in *Mother India* many years ago

MY OTHER FRIEND

Within me smiles that other me
 who knows in you that other you,
 who though you speak with harshness now
 looks through darkness and archaic pain,
 and while your outer lips curl with disdain
 and loveless shape their cruel row of words that hiss
 and sear into my heart,
 behind the words there smiles my friend, my friend,
 who looks with love,
 sweet-wounds me with a mystic kiss

Well, there you are. Amal Thank you for inviting me to write this piece I have enjoyed doing it Once I started it began to write itself I had wanted to do it for a long time and actually had the first page but was doubtful and hesitant about it, and so of course nothing happened Have you had that experience, Amal? Perhaps not I think you once told me you got up in the morning and practically immediately started hammering at your typewriter (I'm probably exaggerating) But I have found that in writing, as in all things, once one is committed, if it is a true thing, help comes towards one from unexpected sources All sorts of things begin to happen as though unseen presences get to work In this case everything began to flow towards me Paola sent me what I was looking for (It is not the only time she has bailed me out She seems to be quite active on the other side) Two notable items came to me in the latest issue of *Mother India*, Harindranath's poem and Mother's letter to Dyuman I had finished the whole thing when I picked up Shyam Sunder's book *Down Memory Lane* and read for the first time his entry for 1972. And all this flowing together is part of the harmonious flux of life itself when that Presence intervenes, bringing together such diverse strands of existence and experience as a problem in the Dining Room, a poet's appeal for the recognition of his soul, a little boy in boarding school, horses nibbling each other's necks and dogs turning onto their backs, all cells of the one consciousness, that great symphony of Life which Sri Aurobindo calls "The secret harmony" that "steals through the blind heart " I think, dear Amal, you will agree that to quote the poem in toto is a good way to end this—I don't know what to call it—article no It has overflowed the bounds of an article It's more like a letter, this love-letter

THE DIVINE HEARING

All sounds, all voices have become Thy voice
Music and thunder and the cry of birds,
Life's babble of her sorrows and her joys,
Cadence of human speech and murmured words,

The laughter of the sea's enormous mirth,
The winged plane purring through the conquered air,
The auto's trumpet-song of speed to earth,
The machine's reluctant drone, the siren's blare

Blowing upon the windy horn of Space
A call of distance and of mystery.
Memories of sun-bright lands and ocean-ways,—
All now are wonder-tones and themes of Thee.

A secret harmony steals through the blind heart
And all grows beautiful because Thou art

Sri Aurobindo, 24 10 1937

Goodbye for now

MAGGI

P S · Amal, that's not quite all Bear with me I opened the Mother's *Commentaries on the Dhammapada* and this last-minute arrival insists on being included in our letter, which I admit is coming apart at the seams

It is taken from the 22 August 1958 at the end of the chapter entitled *The Bhikkhu*

One piece of advice given here is that one should always be kind It should not be mistaken for the sort of advice people normally give It says something interesting, even very interesting. My comment is: Always be kind and you will be free from suffering, always be contented and happy, and you will radiate your quiet happiness. (*CWM.*, Vol. 3, p. 292)

P P S I had already sent this article to *Mother India* when I received two other books belonging to an Italian devotee who had left his body in the Ashram, Elio Uccelli His wife brought them to me. One was a little book of daily messages that the Mother wrote for an Ashramite in 1954 *Mantras of the Mother* My mind was still very much on the subject of harmony and when I opened it the very first mantra was “When you start a

quarrel it is as if you were declaring war to the Divine's work '' I could not avoid the feeling that souls who have left their bodies are working to create harmony to remind us of the issues at stake

But everything is working in that direction,—and certainly the Prosperity department When I received my Prosperity box just after sending this article to *Mother India*, on the 1st of February, my eyes fell upon a cloth entirely printed with little deep pink flowers and green heart-shaped leaves Yes, *Antigonon leptopus*, Harmony in the Material Vital In Her words

No dispute, no quarrels—the sweetness of a life without clashes

PURPOSE

I HAVE come to the windless place,
 To the high rock set
 In the midst of the tedious valley
 Where the embrangled joys and sorrows race
 And will nowise let
 Fulfillings and intendment tally

I have come to the lonely place
 Of friends unmet—
 One sole resolve upbears me
 ‘‘May the rock melt and breathe itself to space
 Rather than I forget
 The so-long-striven-for goal now near me’’

March 9, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is very good—though, with a different turn, it has the qualities of the previous lyric

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE MEANING AND CONTENT OF TRUE EDUCATION

THE world knows Sri Aurobindo as a Mahayogi, a great philosopher, a renowned poet and an accomplished literary critic. But not many people know that he has been a great educationist as well. Even those who are aware of the fact that Sri Aurobindo was a very successful teacher, first at the Baroda College during the years 1899 and 1906, then in the Bengal National College, Calcutta, in the years 1906-1907, have not cared much to study his educational thoughts and insights or even be cognisant of the other fact that the great propounder of the Integral Yoga kept up a lifelong interest in the subject of what true education should connote and imply. Although Sri Aurobindo had contributed his first thoughts on education as far back as 1894 in the journal *Indu Prakash* of Bombay and expressed his views on the same subject for the last time in 1949 in the quarterly *Bulletin of Physical Education* published from the Ashram, it came as a pleasant surprise to many of his admirers to hear from the Mother in 1951 after the passing of the Mahayogi that “one of the most recent forms under which Sri Aurobindo conceived of the development of his work was to establish at Pondicherry an International University Centre open to students from all over the world.” The Mother became more specific when she revealed on 24 April of the same year at the inaugural session of Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention held in Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p 112)

All of us know that an integral divine transformation of human life and existence in all its manifold expression has been the one consistent and persistent occupation and preoccupation of Sri Aurobindo during the last forty years of his life. Hence, when we come to know from the Mother, his spiritual collaborator in the same great enterprise, that the establishment of a right kind of Centre of Education was conceived by Sri Aurobindo as “one of his most cherished ideals” (*op cit*, p 112), we cannot but feel eager to know how education can possibly play such a momentous role in the achievement of total spiritual transformation of man and his life—his life outer as well as inner. For, the type of education that we are habitually acquainted with, that we see practised around us, does not offer any hope, even the slightest hope, of accomplishing this great task of human transformation. Sri Aurobindo the Integral Yogi has envisaged. Thence arises our natural curiosity to know with precision Sri Aurobindo’s idea of genuine education, its essential character and traits, also its method of execution so that it can smoothly and infallibly advance towards the fulfilment of the great and noble task

the Mahayogi has assigned to it. The present essay is a humble attempt to satisfy this curiosity, although in brief, for, the short compass of a few pages cannot possibly do justice to the adequate presentation of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts in all their multi-splendoured rich significance.

To understand well the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in all its bearings, to comprehend the logical justification and interrelation of all its principles and practices, we must first try to understand the basic vision of Sri Aurobindo as regards man, Nature and the world-process. For, everything in him and all his views and formulations, whether literary, philosophical or spiritual, derive organically from his fundamental world-vision. And education is no exception to this general proposition. Sri Aurobindo's educational outlook is entirely moulded by and draws its inspiration from his integral-synthetic theory of Reality.

After all, this is as it should be. For, sincerity demands that our metaphysical knowledge, our view of the fundamental truth of the universe and the meaning of existence should naturally be the determinant not only of our thought and inner movements but of our whole conception of life, our attitude to it and the trend of all our life-activities.

Now, the integral theory of existence as advanced by Sri Aurobindo looks upon our earthly existence as a Becoming with the Divine Being for its origin and object, a progressive evolutionary manifestation with the timeless spaceless Supracosmic as its source and support, the Other-worldly for a condition and connecting link and the Terrestrial for its field with human mind and life for its turning-point of release towards a highest perfection. It should be noted that the supracosmic Reality is the supreme truth of every individual's being, to realise it is the highest reach of our consciousness and we have to realise it if we would like to be really perfect.

But this highest supracosmic Reality is not cut off from the world of manifestation. It is at the same time the cosmic Being, the cosmic Consciousness, the cosmic Will and life, it has put these things forth, not outside itself, but in its own being as its own self-unfolding and self-expression in the framework of Time and Space. There is a divine significance and truth in this cosmic becoming. The manifold self-expression of the Spirit is its high sense.

Thus, a perfect self-expression of the Spirit is the only object of our terrestrial existence. This cannot be achieved if we do not first grow conscious of the supreme Truth of our being, for the direct touch of the Absolute alone can possibly make us arrive at our own absolute.

But neither is our perfect individual self-expression feasible if we exclude the cosmic Reality. The individual will ever remain incomplete, bound within the confines of a separative ego-consciousness, if he does not open into universality and thus become universal himself.

It follows that a consciously realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an essential condition for the intended fullness of the self-expressing Spirit. Now, this material world, this earth and this life have, as we have noted above,

their divine possibility; but that possibility is evolutionary. A progressive evolution of consciousness is the secret sense of our birth and terrestrial existence. Earth-life offers the field for a continuously ascending self-unveiling of consciousness and an adventure of self-discovery. The partial consciousness already evolved upon earth is a portent for further evolution and must surely develop in the very nature of things into complete consciousness with all its attendant accomplishments. A perfected and divinised life is what the earth-nature has always been seeking.

In its progressive evolutionary development, consciousness appearing upon earth has been at first rudimentary, half subconscious or just conscious instinct. Advancing step by step it developed into intelligence in animal man. Advancing still further it has elevated the thinking animal into the status of a reasoning mental being. But even in his highest elevation man is still weighed down by a heavy stamp of original animality. Therefore mental man has still to evolve out of himself the fully conscious being, a divine manhood which shall be the next product of evolution.

A great responsibility lies with man: for with his advent upon the earth-scene, the evolutionary movement has entered a new phase. It has become conscious of itself. The process of evolution has now the possibility of proceeding ahead with the conscious and deliberate co-operation of the species called man. Man should not therefore be satisfied with the leading of a gloriously opulent intelligent animal existence. He should become awake and aware of his spiritual destiny. An enlightened aspiration, will and seeking, should actuate all his movements. He should offer his participating will to the urge of the indwelling Spirit to come out into the open in full glory.

For man as he is now cannot be the last term of earthly evolution. He is too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, his mind and life too limited forms and instrumentation. He is only a transitional being. A greater destiny beckons him and he should heed the call of the New Adventure. The very various tasks set before man, the unique species, by evolutionary Nature, may be succinctly described in the luminous words of Sri Aurobindo.

Man is there to affirm himself in the universe, that is his first business, but also to evolve and finally to exceed himself: he has to enlarge his partial being into a complete being, his partial consciousness into an integral consciousness; he has to achieve mastery of his environment but also world-union and world-harmony; he has to realise his individuality but also to enlarge it into a cosmic self and a universal and spiritual delight of existence. A transformation, a chastening and correction of all that is obscure, erroneous and ignorant in his mentality, an ultimate arrival at a free and wide harmony and luminousness of knowledge and will and feeling and action and character, is the evident intention of his nature. . But this can only be accomplished by his growing into a larger being and a larger consciousness. self-enlargement, self-fulfilment, self-evolution from what he partially and temporarily is in his actual and apparent nature to what he completely is in his secret self and spirit and therefore can become even in his

manifest existence, is the object of his creation (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, p 684)

The above quotation from Sri Aurobindo demands close and attentive perusal from the readers, for it puts in a nutshell the whole meaning and purpose of man's existence upon earth, his role as a biological species, and the all-important programme that Nature or/and the Divine has set before him. A simultaneous awareness of man's actuality and his great potentiality makes it clear to us that a proper kind of educational system has to be developed which, when rightly conceived and clairvoyantly put into practice, will help man the individual and man the collective being to realise the great destiny that is awaiting his race. And, be it noted, all the principles of education enunciated by Sri Aurobindo are designed to fulfil this sole task.

We have advisedly employed the expression "man the individual and man the collective being". For, the insistent problems of man do not pertain to his isolated individual existence alone, they urgently concern his group-life too. Since the beginning of his appearance on earth, man has always dreamed of establishing a fourfold harmony: (i) a perfect harmony within his own subjective being, (ii) harmony between individual and individual, (iii) harmony between an individual and the group/s of which he is a part, and, finally (iv) harmony between group/s and group/s. But the deplorable fact is that all these four types of harmony have eluded the grasp of man. Even a cursory look at the affairs of the world and a glancing introspection into the state of his own inner being cannot but convince any discerning man that something is terribly amiss somewhere in his upbringing and education which has brought him to the brink of the abyss. All man's age-long efforts at remedying the situation have inevitably miscarried, because the conventional educationists have not cared to probe the problems at their depths, they have mostly confined themselves to the task of whitewashing the surface and offering palliatives. To solve the problems of man one has perforce to comprehend the complexity of his composite nature and provide for the harmonious fulfilment of all the facets of his being.

It is high time that we renounce the old and effete superstition that the mind of man is the same everywhere and can therefore be passed through the same machine and uniformly constructed to order. There are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education: (i) the man, the individual in his commonness and uniqueness, (ii) the nation or people, and (iii) universal humanity. For, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out,

within the universal mind and soul of humanity is the mind and soul of the individual with its infinite variation, its commonness and its uniqueness, and between them there stands an intermediate power, the mind of a nation, the soul of a people (*SABCL*, Vol 17, p 196)

And if education is to be a true building or a living evocation of the latent powers and

possibilities of the mind and spirit of the human being, and not just a uniform machine-made fabric, it has to take into consideration all the three factors mentioned above. To quote Sri Aurobindo again.

that alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member (SABCL, Vol 17, p 198)

A further truth that Sri Aurobindo insists upon is that man is not just a living body somehow developed by physical nature which has evolved in him certain vital propensities, an ego, a mind and a reason. Man is not pre-eminently just a reasoning animal of the genus *homo*, nothing more than a thinking, feeling and willing natural existence, a mere mental product of inconscient physical Nature. For if such is the view we take of man—and this view is tacitly adopted by most of the secularist educationists—the business of educating a child cannot but assume an erroneous character, both in its meaning and content and in its application. For, then, education reduces itself to the task of culturing the mental faculties of the student, training him into an efficient, productive and well-disciplined member of the society and the State as a political, social and economic being. The whole life and education of the individual man will, in that case, be turned towards a satisfaction of his legitimate vital propensities under the precarious government of a trained mind and reason and for the best advantage of the personal and collective ego.

But Sri Aurobindo cannot accept this view of man nor, therefore, these goals of education as ordinarily envisaged. He does not, of course, deny that the things alluded to above *do* represent aspects of human being and living in their actuality and must be given due importance in the early undeveloped stage of humanity but they are only outward things, parts of the instrumentation, mere accessories and *never* the fundamentals or the whole of the real man. All these are powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all that the soul is.

These remarks naturally lead us to the question: What is, then, man? And what should be the aim and purpose of his education?

Sri Aurobindo sees in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit, at the summit of his ascent man is bound to rise to something greater than his physical, vital and mental personalities, to his spiritual being. And therein lies the supreme manifestation of the soul of man, his ultimate divine manhood, his real *paramārtha* and the highest *puruṣārtha*.

Sri Aurobindo sees in the nation or the people not merely an organised State or an

armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the national ego, but a great collective soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a *svabhāva* and a *svadharma*, and has embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture

Sri Aurobindo sees in humanity the Universal Spirit manifesting in the human race, evolving through mind and life but with a high and ultimate spiritual aim. There is a spirit, a soul of humanity which is advancing through whatever struggle and concord towards an ultimate human unity, a unity which will at the same time preserve a needed diversity through the varied culture and life-motives of different peoples. A perfectibility in the life of the human race as in that of the individual is the intended goal of earthly evolution.

If we take such a view of man and his destiny—and, of course, this idea may be disputed by many,—the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the Spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation and the human race. And for that the very first thing the educationist has to do, whether he be the teacher or the parent, is to approach things from the subjective standpoint, know accurately and profoundly the psychology of each child as he grows into man and to base the system of teaching and training on that inner reality alone. There has to be a new psychic dealing of man with his own being, with his fellow-men and with the ordering of his individual and social life. The aim in education should be to help every individual child to develop his own intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and capacities. Thus the distinctive individual psychology of the child should be the guide in the matter of his upbringing and education. For each human being is a self-developing soul and the sole task before the parent and the teacher is to enable and help the child to educate himself, to develop his potentialities and grow freely as an organic being, and not to knead and pressure him into form like an inert but plastic material.

In true education, one should not regard the child as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher according to the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideal of the teachers and parents. And this is what we have been doing all the time in the prevalent systems of education with some cosmetic embellishments here and there. Mostly ignoring the individuality of each child, we seek to pack much stereotyped knowledge into the student's resisting brain, impose a stereotyped rule of conduct on his struggling impulses, and mechanically force his nature into arbitrary grooves of training and conditioning—all decided upon from above and outside by authorities entrusted with the charge of 'teaching'. This sort of 'loading process' cannot fail to damage and atrophy the faculties and instruments by which each individual human being is expected to assimilate, grow and create in his self-chosen fields of endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo invites us to discard the lifeless 'academic' notion that the studying of subjects and the acquiring of this or that kind of information is the whole, at least the central matter in the undertaking called 'education'. No, the acquisition of various

kinds of information from outside is only one and by no means the chief of the means and necessities of education. The central aim of education should be the building of the powers of the child's mind and spirit, the formation or rather the evoking of knowledge and will from within, and developing the capacity to use knowledge, character and culture for the highest all-round development of personality. This at least if no more, but there is much more as we shall presently see when we come to deal with the education of the future

(To be concluded)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

MYSTERIOUS MYSTERY

AN ethereal staircase
 hanging and seemingly feeble,
 at times visible—
 when everything fails,
 when I betray myself,
 when everything is in chaos
 and nothing more to boast of

Not knowing, where I am,
 I kiss the azure sky,
 and lean to hug
 the green grass:
 and listen in silence
 to the secretmost symphony.

What is this wonder-worker?
 I am lured and I search
 but as I seek, it slides away
 plunging me in perpetual hide-and-seek
 yet inspiring and unfolding
 the marvels unknown

ASHALATA DASH

THE JOURNEY ETERNAL— THE POETRY OF K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR*

I AM not prepared to say that I bring a critical eye to the poetry of my father, K R Srinivasa Iyengar. But then, I do not care to be an academic critic of the poetry gifted by the serious practitioners of verse who belong to the best in our glorious heritage. There really is no need to be critical, for these poets have always had an innate self-criticism imbedded in their approach to India's Sanatana Dharma. For several centuries, Indian poets have made it their task to retell our ancient myths and legends with a contemporaneous thrust. Sometimes they have succeeded in a brilliant manner, as Kalidasa, more than a thousand years ago. From Kalidasa onwards, great poets have acted as 'massive barrier-breakers' to keep their generations connected to the springs of a healthy moral and spiritual life to be found in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Itihasas and the Puranas. Sri Aurobindo prepared the pathway with the English language. Among the significant writers who have been traversing this pathway is father.

I do not think father wrote serious poetry in his earlier days. He has always loved reading English poetry aloud and is drenched in Shakespeare, the Romantics and the Moderns. Serious work as well as relaxation for him was always opening a volume of poetry: it could be Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo. He has himself told me that it was while waiting in airports and when he had exhausted the books on hand that he began to count syllables and write lyrics. Another incentive was keeping a spiritual diary in the form of a poetic recordation. Father's involvement in the Aurobindonian ambiance has been total but he has never been demonstrative. His silent hours with reading or writing have marked his meditation, his tapasya.

In 1973, he was in Visakhapatnam to take part in a seminar on Sri Aurobindo at the Andhra University. I remember Sri Navajata was also there. It was 17th November, and when the news came that the Mother had withdrawn from the physical, Sri Navajata was sent to Madras-Pondicherry by plane while my parents left by the Howrah Mail at noon. The journey and the experiences after led father to deep reflections. I had the privilege of publishing a volume of verses chosen from his poetic diary in 1974. *Tryst with the Divine* is, as the blurb says, "a sequence of reflections occasioned by three visits to Pondicherry during 1973, attempts to evoke the atmosphere of the Ashram, the Centre of Education and Auroville, and recalls the unique ministry of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the context of the current crisis of survival for man and the world."

The brief epigraph captures the transformatory battle the Mother is constantly engaged upon to usher in the life divine on this flawed earth.

Fosterer of the cells' new consciousness,
Fosterer of life and mind

* K R Srinivasa Iyengar will be completing 91 years on 17 April this year —R Y D

Giver of the soul's freedom in Knowledge,
Giver of the highest Good.

Supreme solvent of inadequacies,
Accept this flawed offering

A student of Aurobindonian teachings, a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, father has never had any doubt about their predictions of a Greater Dawn. But *how* to go about the task of transformation? Can this ageing body help throw out the ego? How make of one's devotion a thunderbolt to achieve transformation? The answer comes to him. cry like a babe! The mother is sure to rush to his side. He records on 20 February, 1973

Nor time, distance, nor impediment can
intercept such calls for help

Always when the cry is from the parched heart
there's instantaneous rain

'Look Homeward!'' said an unstruck piece of song,
and it was not far to go

So the aspirant goes to Pondicherry and compresses all the experiences he gained, in ever so many visits to the Ashram since 1942, in a description of the Service Tree, Sri Aurobindo's Room and a brief note on the history of the Ashram. Always the thoughts turn towards transformation, especially for the reason that the outer world gets to be increasingly daunting because of politics, internal dissensions and external aggressions. Whenever life outside becomes suffocating, the aspirant turns towards Vedapuri for a recharging of the cells. The journey never fails to rejuvenate the heart. The fellow-pilgrims are always so many inspirations and together like the cowherdesses in Brindavan, they send forth a united aspiration at the time of the Balcony Darshan

The day is still dark, and the hour of noon
is darkest, and men are blind.

But Mother's sovereign Grace is ultimate
Power, and we wait for her

And she appears above the human sea,
the brief nectarean Dawn

Walking with trembling steps and clutching at
the railing,—Mother of Love!

Father's great faith, *mahāviswāsa*, is something palpable in these pages. The Mahapremi will never fail her child! And yet, even this Total Faith, Mahaviswasa, has a momentary shock at 'the hour before the gods awake' on 18th November 1973. He is yet to receive the news of the Mother's withdrawal, but already the child is disturbed in distant Visakhapatnam by an ominous dream at half past three in the morning:

It was a grim-faced messenger thrusting
a letter I wouldn't receive.

I got up to greet the awaited dawn,
and was tired I knew not why

Sitting up with his books till late at night or getting up a little past midnight and working at his typewriter is a way of life with father, but today it was just different and soon the news came.

A narrow strip on the brink of unknown
Time—I felt the slap of fear

Now a Courier came in, and faltered
as he conveyed the message.

The ground below seems to give way, the very cells rebel, there is a stab of pain. But soon the moment passes, the shaken tree stands still, and there is a return to mental stability. How else can it be for the true child of the Mother? Hasn't she aspired to make of her children hero-warriors of the spirit? Once again the darshan that has followed so many, at the balcony, the window, the terrace, during birthdays, pranam, but this darshan is, of course, different. This is to be the "one last tryst with the visible Divine" "An undeserved hour for a prayerful session" is granted to my parents and thoughts swirl around sattwically and come to rest with an unspoken assurance as in the *charama śloka* of the *Gita*:

The airs gently played on the rustling silks,
and almost she seemed to breathe

And we fondly thought her hand had risen
in a gesture of blessing

Still came the stream unending of children
flowing and ebbing away

Rivers, rivulets, have sought the sea,
now merged in ocean oneness

The Infinite in its omnipotence
has multiplied endlessly

Then, now, hereafter—ever and always—
her Grace Abounding rules all

The poem closes with a firm faith in this Living Flame. The struggle is behind the devotee. The Mother is the victress. And behind her march the children. Father now takes up his pen again for revising his biography of the Mother to get it ready for the centenary in 1978. Permission for this revision was one of the last messages executed by the Mother and conveyed to father through a letter by Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta. The revision was yet another tapasya and came to a triumphant conclusion when *On the Mother: The Chronicle of a Manifestation and Ministry* was released during the birth centenary celebrations of the Mother. As for the manner in which the revision was done, the seemingly endless number of volumes and manuscripts read by father and the tomes in which he took notes and wrote and revised what he wrote, what is it that I can say? It was a daily miracle and my mother alone the constant witness. All the rest of us—family, friends—came, conversed and went, but they two were together every moment engaged in this tapasya, she guarding his physical well-being, he a tapaswin serene. Seeing him motionless except for turning a page, or writing or typing now and then, I was often reminded of the lines in *Savitri*:

His living, sacrificed and offered heart
Absorbed in adoration mystical,
Turned to its far-off fount of light and love

After the publication of *On the Mother* offers flowed in for his writing this or that. There were tempting offers to write the biography of some well-known educationist-statesmen and lawyer-politicians of this century. Father was well-equipped for the tasks. With his phenomenal memory and deep interest in public affairs and abiding contributions to journalism, he could be an ideal, impartial biographer. But he declined every one of them. When I asked him about this he said with childlike simplicity, “How can I write about someone else after having had the privilege of writing about our Mother?” That was that.

This is how he became a poet in a big way. Apart from his spiritual jottings, he did note down his reactions to contemporary affairs once in a way as poems. The Emergency, especially, brought him deep anguish. Some of these verses were collected in 1979 as *Leaves from a Log, Fragments of a Journey* and give us a clear idea of the glory and good in our culture as well as the adventures in which we are engaged in all

the time. *Freedom at Midnight* on the Partition makes us “shiver in shame” even today, as does the series on the Emergency *The Unreal City Delhi* in those days reveals the Mother of Evil and the Children of Darkness with passionate sorrow but the book itself is made to conclude with a ray of hope That is the Aurobindonian method we have only divine comedies in Indian culture and must ever look to the Greater Dawn Emergency has shown us Power at its worst But when Mother Might comes along with Mother Grace, then will life on earth become life divine

Australia Helix A Spiral of Verse Sequences (1983) has one hundred and one poems on men and matters, nature and continents Mainly about Australia (which he visited twice), the poems touch upon such subjects as consumerism and ecology Good people are good everywhere, and sincere devotion exists in all the parts of the globe There are warnings about nuclear power and the long poem *Zero Hour* has moments of terror and maddening perplexity Father reiterates the Aurobindonian call for breaking out of the egoistic shell of separative consciousness, and once again the concluding lines spell hope if we pull back from the brink by a supreme act of ego-negation

Acquire the key to transformation,
Achieve retrieval from the brink,
And activate the serried ascent
Of this knot of matter, life and mind
Up the stairs of ancient askesis
Forward to the sunlit summit-realm
of peace, fulfilment and delight

Microcosmographia Poetica is a critical testament on Aurobindonian lines about the name and nature of literature. What was Sri Aurobindo’s tapasya? At least one aspect of the askesis was writing poetry The Sahitya Purusha is the inspirer, the *kavir-maneeshi*, the poet-thinker As Purasu Balakrishnan insightfully commented on the poem.

While *The Waste Land* embodies the bareness and sterility of modern society, the drought and detritus of modern civilisation, *Microcosmographia Poetica*, drawing on the evidence of history and biological evolution and the philosophy and realisations of Sri Aurobindo, intimates the mellow land from which mankind may stretch its arms to the promised land of divine life

It so happened that as father plunged deeper and deeper into Valmiki’s *Ramayana* for preparing his translation of the *Sundara Kanda* (*The Epic Beautiful*), he began to look at the epic as “Sita’s great story” (*Seetayah charitam mahat*) Discussing with my mother on the epic characters gave further inspirations As one belonging to the Srivaishnava heritage of South India, the *Ramayana* is an inalienable part of his consciousness One of the Srivaishnava Acharyas has said that the epic speaks of the

greatness of the imprisoned lady, *sirai irundhaval etram sollugirathu* Sri Aurobindo's call for Indian poets in English, written at the close of the last century but published for the first time in *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* in 1972, may have also had something to do with his taking up the pen for a sustained narrative on an epic heroine. Sri Aurobindo was defending the secular legends of ancient India and he pleaded for a reappraisal and retelling of these legends.

And yet very simple and beautiful, in their peculiar Hindu type, were these old legends with infinite possibilities of sweetness and feeling, and in the hands of great artists have blossomed into dramas and epics of the most delicate tenderness or the most noble sublimity.... To take with a reverent hand the old myths and cleanse them of soiling accretions, till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and solemn depth of beautiful meaning, is an ambition which Hindu poets of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour.

The same article also refers to the inward look of the Indian creative genius at all times:

Yet are these great figures, are Rama, Sita, Savitrie, merely patterns of moral excellence? I who have read their tale in the swift and mighty language of Valmēkie and Vyasa and thrilled with their joys and their sorrows, cannot persuade myself that it is so. Surely Savitrie that strong silent heart, with her powerful and subtly-indicated personality, has both life and charm, surely Rama puts too much divine fire into all he does to be a dead thing,—Sita is too gracious and sweet, too full of human lovingness and loveliness, of womanly weakness and womanly strength!

Father had felt that he could not write any more on politicians, philosophers or educationists after having written about an incarnation like the Mother. Now there were suggestions from friends who had read his *The Epic Beautiful* for either a fuller translation or re-telling of Valmiki's epic. So he was drawn deeper and deeper into meditative recordations of earlier incarnations of the Divine Mother and *Sitayana* (1987) was born.

Sitayana sees the whole of the epic action from Sita's side. Thus her childhood and girlhood are retold in *Mithila*, the palace revolution in *Ayodhya*, the abduction in *Aranya*, the imprisonment in *Asoka*, the great battle in *Yuddha*, the reign of Rama in *Rajya* and the second exile and withdrawal in *Ashrama*. Books. In effect, the epic has become a legend of good, great women. There is an attempt to minimise physical novelties (the ten heads of Ravana, for instance) and the supernatural is kept in a low key. Father writes in the introduction.

Sitayana is the story of Sita, and of the vicissitudes of her human relationship with Rama the rest will have to be accepted if necessary with 'a willing suspension of disbelief', a very legitimate preparation while approaching literature After all, once logical reason sets up an inquisition, inventiveness and imagination will have to fold up and retire

Not that there is a need for any disbelief, since the story is too well known and has been flowing in our veins down the centuries. Sita is real; she is a symbol Sita is a princess; she is a significance. Sita is a queen; she is a presence Sita is a renunciate; she is an inspiration. Such has been father's absorption in Sita's tale that he has seen the Mother in Sita's story and Sita in the Mother's image. Even the so-called separation from Rama in the forest, or in the Ashram of Valmiki or in the bosom of Mother Earth is but a lie

But she isn't really separated from Rama; she is also enshrined in the hearts of Lakshmana, Hanuman and Trijata. And in our hearts too.

The epic has a Miltonic beginning

Of womanhood I write, of the travail
and glory of motherhood
Of Prakriti and her infinite modes
and unceasing variety .

O Mother, mighty, fair, immaculate,
your compassionate descent,
your divine ministry of sufferance
amidst us, hasn't been in vain.

Not in vain, for although the average
and even the elect fail
Oftentimes in charity, yet we know
your Grace will redeem us still.

Like Aswapati performing askesis in *Savitri* for the birth of a child, Janaka initiates a sacrifice and turns the sod "to cleanse the site once more / for the ancient ritual." Father's English steeped in Sri Aurobindo glows with echoes from *Savitri*:

For Janaka, a King of the Videhas,
it was a prayerful act,
a planted king-idea germinating
and ready for fulfilment

The “wondrous golden child” is discovered. Janaka and Sunayana bring up Sita and her sisters with love and care. The girls get educated in Ashramas, master knowledge, the fine arts and even the martial games. It is an integral education indeed. Presently Rama breaks the bow of Shiva and the princesses are married to the princes from Ayodhya. An ideal daughter-in-law, Sita is also a brave heart ready to face Rama in an argument. She wins her way to the forest by taunting Rama—and father does not flinch from reporting the false steps taken by Sita either. But he goes to the heart of the matter. What Sita demands is equality, not condescension nor negligence. Sita is speaking for the Indian feminist who will hold on to the time-tested heritage of womanhood, who is aware of her rights as well as her duties. Unfortunately she is often misjudged.

This, my lord, this popular assumption
that we're but Doll's House creatures
foolishly engrossed in colourful clothes
and glittering jewellery,

happily contained by domestic chores,
the securities of home
and boudoir, and the throes of child-bearing
and rearing, is mere fancy

Sita had “been schooled in Mithila's famed Retreats / in seasoned austerities,” and sacrificing comforts comes easily to her. There is then, the manner in which she sends Lakshmana to help Rama and thus in the sequel makes herself vulnerable to Ravana's depredation. It is a human tale, after all. Her “ruminations and lacerations” are veritably a descent into Night; for she fears that her forced stay in the Ashoka garden might make Rama reject her. In this she is but indicating the manner in which Indian womanhood has suffered down the ages. The woman is always in the wrong! Her fears are not unfounded and the dread moment when Rama rejects Sita is upon us. It is tight-rope walking for the story-teller who does not want to show Rama in a bad light. The first poet, Valmiki, had felt the sting, and father, who will not be the last poet to take up Sita's story, also feels scorched with the battle of words. Sita makes adequate amends for her intemperate scolding of Lakshmana in the forest by calling him now “my son” and requesting him to light her pyre. Who else but the son has the right? Trijata's howl sweeps through the ages, keening for abandoned womanhood by a pitiless society during the last several millennia:

Is there none here to rush to the rescue
of abandoned innocence?
Must the world reap the wages of the sin
of driving the pure to die?

Another miracle which is yet no miracle takes place Agni does not touch Sita but cleanses “the mist of misapprehension and misery” in the hearts of the people around Life has chased away Death

Did the events in Uttara Kanda take place? There are scholars like C. Rajagopalachari and poets like Kamban who have concluded with the coronation of Rama But the story of the second ordeal and final self-exile has been nurtured by the Indian psyche for so long that father too cannot avoid retelling the saddest part of Sita’s story. The canto *Calm of Mind and Nightmare Visions*, while Sita is in Valmiki’s ashram, is a tour-de-force The pain and terror and anger that have swirled in father when he was engaged in writing upon the dangers of nuclear proliferation find eloquent recordation as Sita’s thoughts turn to the future. This destruction of greenery, these jungles of concrete, these inventions of science, these instruments of dire technology—where are we going?

Would Man one day, drunk with Asuric milk
and weighted with Rakshasa
armour and overweening ambition,
dare the final sacrilege?

Ah, set up the witches’ cauldron and brew
the critical concoction
that will fission the atom and invoke
the Shatterer of the Worlds?

Tear apart the filmy life-protector,
charge and change and carbonise,
infect the elements with lethal fumes,
and decree the end of life?

Sita shudders, prays, worships the Rising Sun, recites the Gayatri and goes back to her cottage. This prayer assures the god-touch for man, though Sita herself withdraws, as an incarnation must, when the time comes. But her grace abides, for Sita, Mother Earth, Sweet Mother, will never abandon her children

The Earth never tires or stales or despairs,
for the pulses of Sita’s
heart of compassion sustain and foster
our evolving Life Divine

(To be concluded)

THE RIDDLE OF THE MAIDENS FIVE*

A traditional Sanskrit exhortation runs thus:

*Ahalyā Draupadī Kuntī Tārā Mandodarī tathā—
panchakanyā smaranīyam mahāpātaka nāshaka—*

Remembering ever the maidens five—
Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and Mandodari—
Destroys the greatest sins

Two things strike us in this verse: the epithet *kanyā* (virgin, maiden), not *narī* (woman); and the unusual combination of names that redeem the sinner from faults, howsoever grievous. There is another traditional verse celebrating five *satis*, chaste wives, among whom are counted Sati, Sita, Savitri, Damayanti and Arundhati. Are, then, Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and Mandodari not chaste wives because other than her husband each has “known”, in the Biblical sense, a man or more than one? If so, why should their memory be extolled as redeeming? And why should they be termed *kanyā*?

Of the first group, three—Ahalya, Tara, Mandodari—belong to *Ramayana*, the first *mahakavya* composed by Valmiki, the first seer-poet, *ādi kavi*. Draupadi and Kunti are celebrated in *Mahabharata*, *Harivansa*, *Markandeya*, *Devi Bhagavat* and *Bhagavat Puranas*. Of the *satis*, many *Puranas* recount the story of Sati, while *Mahabharata* contains the accounts of Savitri, Damayanti and Arundhati. Sita’s life is found in both the epics.

The first point to keep in mind is that Valmiki and Vyasa’s great compositions are both designated as *kavyas*, that is truth that has been perceived by *kavis*, seer-poets, whatever the level of that vision might be. Hence, when evaluating the characters created by them it is necessary for us to probe consciously beneath the surface reality to reach the eternal verities on which they are founded. Further, when an exhortation such as this has been handed down in society over centuries, it cannot be dismissed as a meaningless conundrum. Particularly in the context of the strong wave of feminism sweeping in from the West, we need to comprehend what is sought to be conveyed through this riddling verse.

The name Ahalya itself has a double meaning: she is one who is flawless, she is also one who has not been ploughed, that is, a virgin. The myth of her origin [*Ramayana. Uttarakanda*, 30] states that having created this flawless beauty from what was unique and loveliest in all creatures, Brahma handed her over to the sage Gautama for safe custody. After a long time, presumably when she had reached maturity, Gautama handed her back to the Creator, who was so pleased with Gautama’s self-restraint that he gifted Ahalya to him as his spouse. Indra, lord of the gods, enamoured

* This article appears in an abridged form —Editor

of her beauty, had presumed that this loveliest of women was meant for him and resented that a forest-dwelling ascetic should become her spouse. In the *Adikanda* (48) Vishwamitra states that assuming Gautama's form in his absence, Indra approached her seeking union with her. Ahalya, despite knowing the disguised sage to be Indra, out of curiosity consented to the game of love with him. Thereafter, before Indra could depart, Gautama returned. By the curse that followed Ahalya was to do penance in that terrible forest, hidden from all, fasting, subsisting on air, sleeping in ashes, tormented by her guilt. By offering hospitality to Rama she would be purified of delusion and greed. Then, restored to her pristine form, she would rejoin Gautama.

The *Adikanda* account is characteristically quite frank regarding Ahalya's deliberate choice, arising out of curiosity, to taste forbidden fruit. The beautiful woman in creation, she is the eternal feminine responding characteristically to the ardent, urgent, direct advances of the ruler of heaven who is such a dazzling contrast to her ascetic, aged, forest-dwelling husband. Mortal woman welcomes the intimate touch of heaven's immortal.

In this unique type of encounter with one-other-than-the-husband that is neither rape nor adultery lies the key to the mystery of the five 'virgin' maidens.

The next two, Draupadi and Kunti, are closely related to each other as daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

Like Ahalya and Sita, Draupadi is *ayonijā*, not born of woman. Where Ahalya is the Tilottama prototype and Sita is ploughed up from a furrow, Draupadi is invoked by a sacrificial rite to wreak vengeance. Like Athena, she springs full-grown, in the bloom of youth, blue-lotus dark and fragrant, from the *yajna vedi*, not requiring the matrix of a human womb. Like that Hellenic goddess, she is a virtual *kritya*, relentlessly, single-mindedly, pursuing the destruction of the Kauravas.

Kunti, like Ahalya, is curious. She wishes to test whether Durvasa's boon really works. Perceiving a radiant being in the rising sun (confirmed in *Chhandogya Upanishad*), she invites him, using the *mantra*. Surya assures her of unimpaired virginity and threatens to consume the kingdom if denied. Mingled desire and fear overpower Kunti's reluctance and she stipulates that the son thus born must be like his father. Thus, she wins two boons from the encounter.

In this respect she is remarkably akin to her grandmother-in-law, Satyawati. Parashara assures her of her son's fame as arranger of the Vedas and author of the Puranas and, having sated himself, bathes in the Yamuna and leaves, never to have any contact with her again.

The remarkable character of this fisher-girl is what emerges from this interaction. Though she has just reached puberty, she is not over-awed by a sage, howsoever famous he might be. Instead, she reads him quite a lesson in propriety, resisting his advances with remarkable presence of mind. Only after the practical aspects have been taken care of does she allow the eternal feminine to come forward, desiring to remain forever young, forever fragrant—a gift that was Helen's and one that all women of all time, everywhere, have always craved.

Indeed, Satyawati takes Hastinapura by storm, ensuring that it is her blood which runs through its rulers by forcing her princely son's widows to have children by her illegitimate mixed-caste offspring, Vyasa. Neither Dhritarashtra nor Pandu carries any of the Puru dynasty's blood in him.

Let us return to Kunti, Satyawati's granddaughter-in-law, a remarkable study of womanhood. She chooses the handsome Pandu in *svayamvara* only to find Bhishma snatching away her happiness by marrying him off immediately to the captivating Madri. She insists on accompanying her impotent husband into exile and faces a horripilating situation: her beloved husband insists that she beget son after son from others. It is in this husband-wife encounter (*Adi Parva*, 120-124) that Kunti's individuality shines forth. At first she firmly refuses saying, "Not even in touch will I be embraced by another" (121.5). This might strike us as somewhat ironic as already, we recall, she has embraced Surya and regained virgin status after delivering Karna. It may also be evidence of her resolve to maintain an unsullied reputation after marriage, because of which she does not emulate her grandmother-in-law by acknowledging her pre-marital son. Nothing must interfere with the chances of a restoration to the throne. That is why she does not tell Pandu about Karna despite his frantic desire for a son even when he enumerates various categories of sons including one born to the wife before marriage. Children born with the sanction of her husband would be a completely different proposition from one born to her as an adolescent unmarried princess. Nothing moves Kunti, whose character is far stronger than her husband's. She gives in only when Pandu abjectly begs her:

Sweet lady,
I fold my palms
joining the tips
of my lotus-leaf fingers
and I implore you,
listen to me!

(129.29, the P Lal transcreation)

Look at the sheer grace and power of her reply:

Best of Bharatas! Great adharmā
it is for a husband to ask
repeatedly a favour. shouldn't a wife
anticipate his wishes?

(122.32)

With delightful one-upwomanship, she reveals that where he had wanted her to approach some eminent Brahmana, she has the power to summon any god to her bed. Like her grandmother-in-law revealing her final weapon, Vyasa, to Bhishma only in the last extremity, Kunti shares the secret of her mantra only after Pandu has been brought

to his knees How pregnantly succinct is Vyasa's account of the first encounter, that of Kunti with Dharma He smiles and asks, "Kunti, what do you want?" Kunti smiles and answers, "A son." Does this not remind us of another woman whose smile was also so full of mature understanding, the adolescent Kali smiling at the obsessed Parashara?

Thereafter, too, Kunti has the last word where Pandu's desires are concerned Very much like his grandmother, Pandu urges Kunti to give him more and more sons. Kunti bluntly refuses, quoting the scriptures to him just as he had quoted Shwetaketu to her

Her mastery of scripture is admirable, but her words also give her away. Actually she has had relations with four different *men* If she has been summoning gods, the scriptural prohibition should not have been invoked by her. Pandu would, then, have seized upon this flaw and again commanded her to gratify his hunger for sons. His accepting her argument shows that the fathers of her sons were not gods. Thus, out of her own mouth Kunti appears to slur her character. Her last words are also replete with tragic irony, for that is precisely the fate into which she thrusts her daughter-in-law, Draupadi

Kunti's determination to protect her interests, Satyavati-like, is brought to the fore when she flatly refuses Pandu's request to help Madri in having more children Despite the bravado he displays before Madri ("I know that if I ask Kunti/she will not refuse me"), Pandu slinks away before Kunti's fury

Madri's tribute to Kunti brings out the beauty of character which makes her a true leader "Could I bring up your children/as if they were mine?" Madri, having that firmness of will which rises above the ego's petty bounds, continues

You are blessed. There is none like you
 . . . you are my light,
 my guide, most respect-worthy,
 Greater in status, purer in virtue

(125 66-68)

How true a thumbnail sketch of Kunti! She brings up five children in a hostile court, bereft of relatives and allies except for the servant-maid's son Vidura. Neither Kuntibhoja nor the Vrishnis come forward to provide shelter or support. Once Bhishma has provided a roof over her head, it is solely Kunti who guards her children The insecurity is of such dimensions that she dare not inform Bhishma of the attempt to poison Bhima. It is she who alerts Yudhishtira to mull out the secret message in Vidura's strange parting words couched in *mleccha* dialect. It is she who gets the Nishada woman and her five sons drunk in the House-of-Lac so that no evidence is left of the Pandavas' escape from the gutted dwelling "Instigating Macbeth-Bhima (to set fire to the house)", writes Professor P Lal, the eminent transcreator of the epic, "was Kunti, bringer-forth of men-children only" In the forest, with what unerring instinct she is able to rally the drooping spirits of her sons

Hai! I am Kuntī, mother
 of five sons, and I thirst
 for water sitting in their midst!
 (153 13)

Again, where Yudhishtira stops short with preventing Bhīma from killing the infatuated Hidimba, Kuntī, with remarkable foresight, seizes on this fortuitous occurrence to cement an alliance for the friendless five

I can see no way
 of taking fit revenge
 for the terrible injustices
 that Duryodhana has done us
 A grave problem faces us
 You know Hidimba loves you .
 Have a son by her.
 I wish it He will work
 for our welfare My son,
 I do not want a 'no'
 from you I want your promise
 now, in front of both of us
 (157 47-49)

We know how useful the fruit of this union, Ghatotkacha, was for them during their exile and as Arjuna's saviour from Karna's infallible weapon at the cost of his own life. It is again Kuntī who instructs her first grandchild so as to ensure his loyalty:

You are one of the Kurus.
 To me you are like Bhīma himself
 You are the eldest son of the Pandavas,
 Therefore, you should help them.
 (157.74)

Thus, the Pandava dynasty is slowly but surely being structured into an entity with multiracial affinities. Earlier, we have seen how, because of Kuntī, Bhīma is befriended by the *nāga* Aryaka, her father's maternal grandfather. Now an alliance with the forest-dwelling *rākshasas* is established. Later Arjuna will forge alliances with the Nagas and others.

Kuntī teaches her children a lesson in attending to the welfare of the common man even at the risk of their lives. In Ekachakra she overrules Yudhishtira's frantic remonstrance and deposes Bhīma to meet the ogre Baka as the substitute of the impoverished Brahmana who has given them shelter. In this exchange between mother

and son, Kunti, as earlier with Pandu, emerges totally triumphant Yudhishtira exclaims,

The man who gives us
 confidence that one day we will rule
 the world's wealth after
 killing the sons of Dhritarashtra,
 Mother, what right had you
 to expose him like this?
 have you lost your reason?
 have our sufferings unbalanced you?
 (164 10-11)

Never again will he upbraid his mother in such strong terms. The only other instance occurs after the war when she reveals that Karna was his elder brother. Yudhishtira's outburst only shows his failure to appreciate the profound wisdom and practical sense underlying this apparently rash decision fraught with life-risk to their sole protector. After pointing out that they ought to repay the kindness of their host, for "He indeed is a man whose gratitude / exceeds the favour he receives," (164 15) she reminds Yudhishtira of Bhima's extraordinary strength and then teaches him a lesson in kingship: "It is a king's duty to protect / even the Shudra if the Shudra / seeks protection" (164 28) It is in failing to protect them that Bhishma's greatest failing lay as a Kshatriya Kunti now pulls up her son masterfully and then explains the reasons for the decision:

I am not foolish: don't think
 me ignorant; I'm not being selfish
 I know exactly what I am doing
 This is an act of dharma
 Yudhishtira, two benefits
 will follow from this act—
 one, we'll repay a Brahmin,
 two, we'll gain moral merit
 a Kshatriya who helps
 a Brahmin gets the highest
 heaven in his after-life.
 (164.20-22)

Kunti's maturity and foresight, the ability to observe life closely and use the learning from experiences to arrive at swift decisions benefiting simultaneously both society and her children, set her apart from all in the epic except Krishna.

In her command to Bhima to marry Hidimba Kunti showed her clear desire for righting the injustices done to her and her sons Her proceeding to Panchala is another

step in that direction winning Draupadi, as Vyasa advises them in Ekachakra, to forge a princely alliance with the traditional enemy of Hastinapura and challenge the Kauravas. In Panchala she chooses to stay in the hut of a potter, lower down in the social hierarchy both economically and caste-wise than even of Ekachakra. She brings her sons up from virtually the lowest rung of society to become rulers of the kingdom. In that process she turns necessity to glorious gain. The enforced exile brings her sons into intimate contact with the common people, so that they develop that feeling for the felt needs of the vast majority which equips them as true *rajyas*, that is, those who discharge the duty of pleasing their subjects.

Kunti's foresight perceives that any split among the united five will frustrate the goal of mastering Hastinapura. Hence she plays that grim charade of pretending not to know what Bhima and Arjuna mean when they ask her to see what they have brought home. In 190-29 we find Yudhishtira and the two Madreyas slipping out of the *swayamvara* after Draupadi has been won. These three are already with their mother when Draupadi is brought there. Kunti knows that the only way to forge an unbreakable link among the five is not to allow them to get engrossed in different wives. So long their lives have been governed by her and have revolved only around her. She can be replaced only by a single woman, not five, if that unified focus is to persist. It is as though she were bringing into practice the Atharva Vedic injunction:

May your drink be the same, may your food be common
I bind you together with one common bond.
United, gather round the sacrificial fire
like the spokes of a chariot-wheel round the nave

(III 30.6)

Hence she deliberately asks that whatever has been brought should be shared and enjoyed as usual. After "discovering" her "mistake" her only worry is that something must be done so that her command does not become untrue (193-4-5). Yudhishtira's speech to Drupada amply clarifies that the decision is Kunti's though the brothers have eagerly acquiesced, each having Draupadi in his heart (123.12). It is also a magnificent tribute to the total respect and implicit obedience paid by the brothers to Kunti which is unparalleled in the epic. Despite all the paeans to Gandhari's virtues, her complete failure as a mother to command any respect from Duryodhana only serves to highlight the qualities which make Kunti pre-eminent among all women in Mahabharata:

My mother's will is my will
because I think she is right. .
Isn't it said that obedience
to gurus is a supreme virtue?
What greater guru than one's mother? .
To me this is the highest dharma

(197-29, 198.17)

It is instructive to see how desperate Kunti is that her stratagem should not be foiled. She immediately appeals to Vyasa as Yudhishtira finishes speaking:

What dharma-firm Yudhishtira says
 is right. I fear my words will
 become as pointless as lies
 And if that happens, will I
 not be tainted with untruth?

(198-18)

As usual, Kunti ensures that she has her way, this time with the help of Vyasa, who is actually her grandfather-in-law. Kunti's ambition for her children is finally voiced openly when she formally blesses Draupadi after the marriage ceremony.

May you be queen of
 the kingdom of the Kurus
 with your dharma-loving husband
 in the capital of Kurujangala.

(209-9)

Her nephew, Krishna, comes forward with Yadava wealth to build up the power of the Pandavas. How correct Kunti's stratagem was is proved when the Kauravas plan to destroy the Pandavas.

Hereafter, Kunti retreats into the background, giving up pride of place to Draupadi just as Satyawati had yielded centre-stage to Kunti. An indication of this is seen in the strange fact that the Pandavas do not consult their mother when invited to the dice game. Presumably she stays back in Indraprastha when they leave with Draupadi for Hastinapura. Yet, thrice she intervenes with decisive decisions. When her sons are exiled, she decides to stay back in Hastinapura as a silent but constant reminder to the Dhartarashtras of her sons' violated rights. In the *Udyoga Parva* she tells Krishna, who has come on a peace embassy, to urge Yudhishtira to fight for their rights as Kshatriyas must. To inspire him she repeats a tactic used in the Varanavata exile:

Can anything be more humiliating than
 that your mother,
 friendless and alone, should have to
 eat others' food?
 Strong-armed one, recover the ancestral
 paternal kingdom
 use gentleness, dissension, gifts, force
 or negotiation
 Follow the dharma of *rajas*, redeem
 your family honour

Do not, with your brothers, watch your
merits waste away.

(132.32-34)

To inspire him further, she assumes the persona of Vidula to her son Sanjaya /
Yudhishtira who is reluctant to face battle after defeat

Flare up, even if briefly, like
tinduka wood
Do not smoulder away in billowing
fireless smoke.

(133 14)

To these twin spurs to prick her sons on, Kunti now adds the climactic motivation
of avenging the insult to her daughter-in-law, mincing no words in upbraiding the five
to arouse their hibernating manhood

The princess of Panchala followed all dharmas,
yet in your presence
they mocked her—how can you ever
forgive this insult?
The kingdom lost did not hurt me,
the defeat at dice
did not hurt me; the exile of my sons
did not hurt me
so much as the humiliation of Draupadi
weeping in the sabha
as they mocked her. Nothing more painful
than that insult.

(137 16-18)

To secure the safety of her sons she takes the conscious decision to undergo the
trauma of acknowledging her shame to her first-born, kept secret so long. Not knowing
that Krishna has already approached Karna with the same secret, loading his bait with
the temptation of having Draupadi as his wife, and failed,

The Vrishni lady, the Kaurava wife
waited;
she wilted in the sun's heat like
a faded lotus garland
She sheltered in the shade of Karna's dress

(*Udyoga Parva*, 144 29)

Though rejected by Karna, in that apparent failure Kunti turns her loss to glorious gain, obtaining his promise not to kill any but Arjuna. Moreover, she has effectively weakened him from within. For, while he knows that he is battling his mother's sons, they only know that this is the detestable charioteer's son who must be slain for his crimes against Draupadi and Abhimanyu.

Kunti has that rare capacity to surprise us which distinguishes the *kanyā*. When all that she had worked for has been achieved, she astonishes everyone by retiring to the forest with, of all persons, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, to spend her last days serving those who were responsible for her sufferings. Kunti's reply to her bewildered sons is that she had inspired them to fight so that they do not suffer oppression, and that having glutted herself with joy during her husband's rule (whose span, we recall, was extremely short), she has no wish to enjoy a kingdom won by her sons. She dies calmly seated as a forest fire engulfs her.

As much as, and perhaps even more than Satyawati, Kunti is a "virgin" in the Jungian sense. The boon of virginity which both have in common is not just a physical condition but refers to an inner state of the psyche which remains untrammelled by any slavish dependence on another, or on a particular man. Madri, Ambika, Ambalika and Subhadra present the exact opposite concept of the "married" woman who is dependent on what others think and therefore does what she may not actually approve of. "She is not one-in-herself," says M. Esther Harding,¹ "but acts as a female counterpart or syzygy to some male." On the other hand, "the woman who is psychologically virgin is not dependent in this way. She is what she is because that is what she is. one-in-herself (and) does what she does not because of any desire to please, not to be liked, or to be approved, even by herself but because what she does is true. Her action may, indeed, be unconventional." Does this not describe Satyawati and Kunti?

What of Draupadi? Mysteriously born from the sacrificial altar, dark like Gandhakali, hence named Krishna, and gifted with blue-lotus fragrance wafting for a full *krosha* like Yojanagandha, she "knows", like her mother-in-law Kunti and great grandmother-in-law Gandhakali, more than one man, but, unlike them, all within the sacrament of marriage. Like them, she regains virginity after each marriage, and has a mind of her very own. She shocks everyone by challenging the Kuru elders' very concept of dharma in a situation where any modern woman would collapse in hysterics. None can answer her. As Karna directs that she be dragged away to the servants' quarters, she cries out to her silent husbands. Finding no response she, with quicksilver presence of mind, seizes upon a social ritual to wrest some moments of respite from pillaging hands. What she says drips with sarcasm. The elders whom she ceremoniously salutes, deliberately using the word "duty", have remained silent in the face of Vidura's exhortation to do their duty and protect the royal daughter-in-law. Look at the words she uses

One duty remains, which
I must now do. Dragged

by this mighty hero,
 I nearly forgot. I
 was so confused
 Sirs, I bow to all of you, all my elders
 and superiors Forgive me for
 not doing so earlier.
 It was not all my fault,
 gentlemen of the sabha.

(*Sabha Parva*, 67)

It is a “mighty hero” who is dragging his sister-in-law by her hair, clad in a single cloth. She has “nearly forgot” her duty, while the elders are wholly oblivious of theirs despite being reminded by a servant-maid’s son. It is surely not her fault that she is being outraged, and certainly it is not she who is “so confused” but rather the Kuru elders of whom Bhishma says:

Our elders, learned in dharma,
 Drona and others, sit
 Here with lowered eyes like dead men
 with life-breaths gone.

(*Ibid*)

She does not rest till the revenge for which her father had invoked her manifestation is complete and the insult she suffered has been avenged in blood. She never allows her husbands and her *sabhā* to forget how she was outraged. She alone can upbraid Krishna, saying, “No husband have I, nor son, nor brother. So much so, O Madhusudana, that even you are not mine” (*Vana Parva*, 10.125) and demands that he is bound to protect her because:

For four reasons, Krishna, you
 are bound to protect me ever.
 I’m your relative, I’m renowned,
 I’m your *sakhi* and you are lord of all.

(*Vana Parva*, 10.127)

Like the vengeful Amba who undergoes a physical rebirth to extract blood-price for her outraged femininity through Bhishma’s death on the battlefield, Draupadī is veritably a goddess of war, virgin like Artemis and Athene and, like the latter, born full-grown, not from a womb. Indeed, in the cult of Draupadī still prevalent in Gingee (Tamil Nadu) she is worshipped as the virgin goddess Vira-Shakti, a manifestation of the all-destroying goddess Kali, supping full of horrors on the Kurukshetra battlefield, of whom her husbands are terrified. When Jayadratha abducts her, her conduct shows

how she retains full control of her faculties. Having repulsed him so hard that he falls to the ground, she voluntarily mounts his chariot on finding that he is bent on forcing her, telling the family priest to report to her husbands. Then, as her husbands close up on Jayadratha, she taunts him with an elaborate description of the prowess of each and the inevitable trouncing that will follow. The manner in which she manipulates Bhima to destroy Kichaka is a fascinating lesson in the art and craft of motivation. No twentieth-century feminist can surpass her in being in charge of herself. Ultimately, the fact that she stands quite apart from her five husbands is brought tellingly home when not one of them—not even Sahadeva whom she took care of with maternal solicitude, nor her favourite Arjuna—tarrys by her side when she falls and lies dying on the Himalayan slopes, *nāthavati anāthavat* (husbanded, yet unprotected). That is when we realise that this remarkable “virgin” never asked anything for herself. She seems to have had a profound awareness of being an instrument in bringing about the extinction of a dying effete epoch so that a new age could take birth. And being so aware, Yajnaseni offered up her entire being as a flaming sacrifice in that holocaust of which Krishna was the presiding deity.

This feature of transcending the lower self, of becoming an instrument of a higher design is possibly what constitutes the common trait in these ever-to-be remembered maidens.

Tara, wife of Vali, is a woman of unusual intelligence and foresight. When Sugriva comes, for the second time, to challenge Vali, she pleads with him not to respond. In order to ensure that her son Angada is not deprived of his father's throne, Tara becomes Sugriva's consort. When Lakshmana storms into the inner apartments of Kishkindha, it is Tara who is sent by the terrified Sugriva to tackle this rage incarnate. Inebriated, with eyes half-closed and unsteady gait, lovely, slim, unashamed Tara effectively disarms Lakshmana, gently reprimanding him for being unaware of lust's overwhelming power which overthrows the most ascetic of sages, whereas Sugriva is a mere *vanara*. When he abuses Sugriva, Tara fearlessly intervenes, pointing out that this rebuke is unjustified and details all the efforts already made to gather an army. Thus, she acts as Sugriva's shield while ensuring that her son Angada is made the crown-prince.

It is with the last of the five maidens, Mandodari, that we face a problem. There is hardly anything special that Valmiki has written about her except that she had warned her husband to return Sita and that, like Tara, she accepted her husband's enemy and brother as spouse. The *Adbhut Ramayana*, however, provides some more insight. Here we find Mandodari violating Ravana's injunction not to drink from a pot in which he has stored the blood gathered from ascetics. By doing what she feels moved to, Mandodari shows she is not her husband's shadow. The consequence of this is that she becomes pregnant, and, like Kunti in the future, she discards the new-born female infant in a far-off place. That place happens to be the field which Janaka ploughs and comes upon the orphan Sita. No wonder Valmiki writes that Hanumana mistook Mandodari for Sita in Ravana's palace!

These maidens provide a parallel to the three forms of the ancient Arcadian goddess, Hera maiden, fulfilled woman, and woman of sorrows Hera, too, would emerge from her bath in the spring Kanathos as virgin anew As Hera is also her daughter Hebe, and Demeter is also Kore-Persephone, so is Satyavati Kunti, and Kunti also Draupadi. Like Demeter-Nemesis and the “awful” Persephone, queen of Hades, who arouse both admiration and fear, Draupadi is Krishna, the dark virgin goddess, whose South-Indian cult describes her as roaming the battlefield at night, foraging among corpses, the primal Prakriti in its uncontrolled, chaotic persona Draupadi, like the Kore Helen, appears with the skiey announcement that she will be the destruction of warriors. Draupadi, like Demeter and Helen, is always subjected to violence a fivefold marriage is imposed upon her, she is sought to be outraged in the royal court, Jayadratha and Kichaka attempt to have her. Like Demeter Erinys (vengeful) and like Helen, Draupadi seems to attract rape and wreaks vengeance thereafter

An invaluable insight into what is so very special in being a woman—virgin, wife and mother—is found in what an Abyssinian woman told Frobenius. In this speech we find the reason for our *kanyās* remaining such an enigma to men throughout the ages “How can a man know what a woman’s life is? . He is the same before he has sought out a woman for the first time and afterwards But the day when a woman enjoys her first love cuts her in two.. The man spends a night by a woman and goes away His life and body are always the same... He does not know the difference before love and after love, before motherhood and after motherhood .. Only a woman can know that and speak of that. That is why we won’t be told what to do by our husbands A woman can only do one thing She must always be as her nature is. She must always be maiden and always be mother. Before every love she is a maiden, after every love she is a mother”² We have only to recall the encounters of Surya, Dharma, Vayu and Indra with Pritha, Parashara with Matsyagandha, Arjuna with Ulupi, Indra with Ahalya, to realise the profundity of this utterance.

Carl Jung while discussing the phenomenon of the maiden describes her “as not altogether human in the usual sense; she is either of unknown or peculiar origin, or she looks strange or undergoes strange experiences”³ which definitely fits this group of *kanyās* The maiden represents the archetype of Anima in man in whose realm the categories of good and bad do not exist “Bodily life as well as psychic life have the impudence to get along much better without conventional morality, and they often remain the healthier for it” So long as a woman is content to be just a man’s woman, she is devoid of individuality, she acts as a willing vessel for masculine projections. On the other hand, the maiden uses the anima of man to gain her natural ends (Bernard Shaw called it the Life Force). Amply do we see in the cases of these maidens that the “anima lives beyond all categories, and can therefore dispense with blame as well as with praise”⁴ The anima is characterised not just by this zest for life, but also by “a secret knowledge, a hidden wisdom something like a hidden purpose, a superior knowledge of life’s laws”⁵ which we see in this group of epic women That is why Shantanu, Pandu, the Kaunteyas, Sugriva can never quite come to grips with Satyavati,

Kunti, Draupadi and Tara and are always in awe of them. Going to the root of the modern problem of insecure marriages, Jung pinpoints the cause as the desymbolized world we live in now in which man struggles to relate to his anima "outside" himself by projecting her on numerous women although, paradoxically, she is the psyche within that he must commune with. That is perhaps the message hidden behind the hint to remember the five maidens daily at dawn.

Perhaps one of the finest instances of the working of the anima is found in the Ganga-Shantanu relationship. Ganga is yet another *kanyā*, wedded to both Vishnu and Shiva in their realms and also to the human king of Hastinapura, but utterly independent in everything that she does. Behind her inexplicable heartless sport of drowning her own new-born sons lies a deeper meaning which, if understood, divests her of the chaotic capriciousness and gives rise to a new cosmos. So too with Amba. That is precisely what Veda Vyasa does, creating a new archetype of meaning, which the spouses of these wondrous maidens fail to achieve, while Bhishma understands and comes to terms with his destiny.

In this context Nolini Kanta Gupta's study of these maidens is of importance and tallies quite remarkably with the Jungian insight into the meaning of being a virgin. He points out: "In these five maidens we get a hint or a shade of the truth that woman is not merely *sati* but predominantly and fundamentally she is *shakti*."⁶ He notes how the epics had to labour at establishing their greatness in the teeth of the prejudice that woman must never be independent, but always be a *sati*, devoted single-mindedly to her husband and justifying her existence only in terms of being his spouse. This he describes as the subjugation of Prakriti to Purusha, characteristic of the Middle Ages. The most ancient relationship, he says, was the converse, Shiva under the feet of his goddess-consort. "We moderns also," he writes, "instead of looking upon the five maidens as maidens, have tried with some manipulation to remember them as *sati*. We cannot easily admit that there was or could be any other standard of woman's greatness beside chastity. Their souls did neither accept the human idea of that time or thereafter as unique, nor admit the dharma-adharma of human ethics as the absolute provision of life. Their beings were glorified with a greater and higher capacity. Matrimonial sincerity or adultery became irrelevant in that glory... Woman will take resort to man not for chastity but for the touch and manifestation of the gods, to have offspring born under divine influence.. a person used to follow the law of one's own being, one's own path of truth and establish a freer and wider relation with another."

In the closing years of the millennium are we too not moving cyclically towards a similar condition where the relationship between a man and a woman is not permanent and exclusive externally, where the sexes mingle freely, expansively as in the pre-Shwetaketu days? That is why the exhortation to recall the five virgin maidens is so relevant now. The past does, indeed, hold the future in its womb.

References

- 1 *Woman's Mysteries*, Rider, 1971, pp 125-6
- 2 Quoted in *Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, C G Jung & C Kerenyi, pp 141-2
- 3 C G Jung "The Psychological Aspects of the Kore" in *ibid* , p 222 Also see p 239
- 4 *The Archetype and the Collective Unconscious*, C G Jung, Routledge, pp 28-9
- 5 *Ibid* , p 31
- 6 *Mother India*, June 1995, pp 439-43

GAZING AT HIS ROOM ACROSS THE STREET

THE street desolate—

I feel deeply to sit silent
and keep gazing
at His room .
across the street

It drizzles
Like showering of grace.
There—
in that room
across the street
He lived .

Did He ever peep
through the windows
across the street?
Had He ever time
to look at the blue?

Time flows on my side,
head gets filled with
unending questions..

There—
across the street
in His room,
I find through
the half-opened windows
Time stand still

TIME'S OPUSCULE

Exists no more the house
That once held my pain and grief,
And I have left shadows behind,
Worldly joys that are brief

Instead I hear deeper sounds
Coming from intimate solitude,—
Burdened with tranquil thoughts
Half-visible half-understood

O the marvel! in my little garden
Gather flaming hues, grow flowers,
Their fragrance is gentle and true,
Smiles those of blossoming hours

Inner infinities awake,
And one by one the radiant gods,
Arrival of the immortal birth
My heart applauds and applauds

“What more be done, what more?”
Softly asks in its victory my soul,
To live a dream in embodied dream
Is wine-rapture of its dream-goal

Maybe long ago I was surrounded
By animal wants and jealous men,
Unkindnesses had been my friends,
And ingratitude, and the other ten

Torture and sorrow, failure, defeat,
A ship tossed by the violent storm,—
That had been my fate all through,
That the opprobrium, the norm

On thorny bushes of my days
Used to sit birds but without a song,
It was a helpless wistful sight,
Weary spectacle perhaps for too long

A ghost would go from place to place
With coconut shells around its neck,
A string of horoscopes fashioned
Memories its dead self to bedeck

I was alone,—in pain of sleep,
Hoodwinked by the dream-icons,
My thoughts bore black doubts,
My fondnesses a world of moans

Hence my dauntless martyr spirit
Had cried “For freedom I yearn,
Freedom from that deathful habit,
Yes! in me new fires must burn.

I cannot be fettered to passions,
Be bound to silly nothing's will,
My tale not an idiot tale of rounds,
Of a dull bullock tied to the mill

I know why I have chosen to be
In the world though full of gloom,
The cave in which once I lived
Needn't remain an old cave of doom

Presently I set afloat at dusk
Clay-lamps on the stream of time,
And the currents carry them
To ocean-hush in hastening chime

In my temple a thousand bells ring,
And a thousand eyes look at the One,
O the chants of many such worships,
All the rays turned towards the sun!

I see expectancy has to wake up
And surge like a flecked serpent,—
With a moon-jewel on its hood
That the appalling spell be spent

Now my heart is a buoyant rush
 To mystic seas which have no shore,
 It deepens into its own emerald
 As if its fervent depths to explore

Its rapids are rapidities of fulgence,
 And quietude welcome companion,
 Charms of night, miracles of day
 Through its many moods run and run

Calm inner strength holds me up,
 The way the gods the sky uphold,
 Days have become my march,
 Nights winsome, faithful and bold

I have kindled hopes everywhere
 And each star is a fiery promise,
 Wherever I look, whatever I touch
 All indeed a largesse of wonder is

O the silent metaphor of life,
 Glad traveller of eternity!
 The sound of your feet echoes
 Even before begins the journey

Bring forth the soul of joy,
 And bright flowers of the spring,
 The wind will be soft and scented,
 Sweet on trees the birds will sing

The rivers will swell allwhere,
 And happy flames to sky ascend,
 Whatever ought to be true will be,
 And the gods' long anguish end ''

But there was a nobler martyrdom,
 Luminous, godly, greater than mife,
 It threw itself into a splendid fire
 And blazed in that realness's sign

It gathered its many riches,
 Infinity piling gold upon infinity,
 Held all that back from its sight
 To discover some other divinity

Out of its unknowable self
 It made room for the vast night to be,
 Lighted surprises of the stars
 In creative dazzle of its ecstasy

On a speedy stream it set
 Amazement of a universe afloat,
 Gladly in that silver rush
 Sailed time's spirit,—like a little boat

Emerald-blue of the waters
 Made furrows of red and gold,
 Along its widening banks
 Flourished a mystery that is sevenfold

A godhead came upon earth
 Keeping aside the glory of his past,
 Left deathless life behind
 His crimson seeds in death to cast

Persuading his soul to woo
 Forbidding horror of dubious fate,
 Of falsehood in all things,
 He crashed into the dim cheerless gate

There is a wisdom pure and vast
 Of yore in white blaze of the sun,
 A world-heart beats in world-thrill
 And in every heart is its love won

In the silence of his spirit
 A defeatless force is ever at work,
 In the bright triumph of his joy
 No evil can lie, no suffering lurk

<p>A might holding many mights, And opulence of the triple name, Chose to walk in human steps For the Almighty hilltop-shrine to claim</p>	<p>To him thoughts came in serene Intuitions from the original fount, Calm words he spoke were words That had strength death to surmount</p>
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<p>In magnificence of his intent To build a house for the Unborn, Of his self made a sacrifice which Tall and tongueless flames adorn</p>	<p>Truth's abidingness he firmed In mortality's devious ways,— Made his breast a diamond cup To hold its bliss, its rain and rays</p>
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<p>Alone in wideness of God He lived God's august work to do, Immeasurable silence witnessed In Matter's womb birth of the true</p>	<p>Nightly aeons had elapsed For the days of all-love to dawn; Now in its great resplendence The wonder of wonders moves on.</p>
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<p>Even his body's cells shone As if countless suns were lit, The Transcendent's power he housed Where purple majesties sit</p>	<p>Mortal birth he lifted to the sun And the Will of the High in it willed, A presence leaned down and things Promised long ago are fulfilled</p>
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R Y DESHPANDE

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

(Continued from the issue of January 1999)

IN *Prayers and Meditations* the Mother ascribes to Divine Love the power to transform, 'The magic of our golden change' or 'the longed-for miracle' as Sri Aurobindo says. In many of the prayers the Mother expresses her ardent aspiration. In the prayer of December 16, 1913 she aspires to "inflame my heart with Thy pure love, so that it may burn like a fiery brazier, consuming all imperfections and transforming into a comforting warmth and radiating light the dead wood of egoism and the black coal of ignorance." On January 13, 1914 the Mother records that when that great love 'enveloped me', "there was an immense serenity vaster than the universe and a sweetness so intense and so full of an infinite compassion that a flow of tears came slowly from my eyes." This Sublime Love is the Marvel of marvels. If we open our hearts, tranquillise our force, as the Mother says in the prayer of January 9, 1914, "the omnipotence of Love" will come to us. It is "the omnipotence of Love" that alone can bring the long-awaited transformation. On June 2, 1914 the Mother records: "Then I identify myself with Thy love and I am nothing but Thy inexhaustible love, I penetrate everything, living in the heart of each atom I kindle in it the fire that purifies and transfigures, the fire that is never extinguished, the messenger flame of Thy beatitude, which realises all perfections." Note the similarity of this statement of the Mother with the following lines from *Savitri*:

Awakened to the meaning of my heart,
That to feel love and oneness is to live
And this the magic of our golden change
Is all the truth I know or seek, O sage¹

The Supreme Power, "the magic of our golden change", has come to touch Matter but it appears "only a promise, an assurance of what can be". It has not yet made Matter its stable abode. This is the theme of the prayer of July 11, 1914 and the Mother gives the reason of this unfortunate situation: "Alas, how great is the imperfection of this Matter that we cannot retain Thee! O Lord, use Thy omnipotence, accomplish the miracle of Thy permanent Presence. . ." Intense and ardent aspiration as that of the Mother does help in fixing the Power, for the average ignorant individuals, however, "so long as the lower nature is active the personal effort of the Sadhaka remains necessary".² Besides developing and perfecting our aspiration, faith and surrender, personal effort has to be undertaken in another direction, i.e., 'rejection of the movements of the lower nature' as Sri Aurobindo insists. The necessity of personal effort cannot be replaced "until the surrender and consecration are pure and complete from top to bottom"³ or, "calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a deception and

does not lead to freedom and perfection”⁴ Likewise the Mother too gives much importance to personal effort. In the prayer of January 8, 1914 she writes “Let us shun the paths which are too easy and without effort We must learn that whatever our efforts, whatever our struggles, whatever even our victories, compared with the path still to be traversed what we have already travelled is nothing ” In the prayer of December 11, 1912 the Mother explains the ways of personal effort She speaks of “the veil” that screens us from the Divine This veil “is formed of a whole mass of small imperfections, of attachments without number. How shall all these disappear?” According to the Mother, the veil of imperfections can disappear in either of the two ways (1) “Slowly, as the result of countless small efforts and a vigilance not faltering even for a moment,” (2) “or suddenly, through a great illumination of Thy All-Puissant Love ” Then the Mother points out how to do it. “Very modestly we must take advantage of all the minute opportunities offered to knead and purify some of the innumerable elements, to make them supple, to make them impersonal, to teach them forgetfulness of self and abnegation and devotion and kindness and gentleness, and when all these modes of being have become habitual to them, then are they ready to participate in the Contemplation, and to identify themselves with Thee in the supreme Concentration That is why it seems to me that the work must be long and slow even for the best and that striking conversions cannot be integral ” This is the technique the Mother gives of the personal effort in her prayer of November 28, 1912 Regarding the relation between the daily activity and the inner contemplation, the Mother speaks in the same prayer, “ the daily activity is the anvil on which all the elements must pass and re-pass in order to be purified, refined, made supple and ripe for the illumination which contemplation gives to them Then is this activity turned into the means to manifest Thee so as to awaken the other centres of consciousness to the same dual work of the forge and the illumination Therefore are pride and satisfaction with oneself the worst of all obstacles ” All personal efforts should move in this line as laid down in the prayers of November 28 and December 11 of 1912

Besides pride and satisfaction with oneself, personal effort has to reject or overpower our constant preoccupation with preservation of the body In the prayer of August 17, 1913 the Mother records, “Nothing can be more humiliating, nothing more depressing than these thoughts turned always towards the preservation of the body, this preoccupation with health, with our subsistence, with the framework of our life How trivial are these things, a thin smoke dissolved by a simple breath, vanishing like a mirage before a single thought turned towards Thee ” She further writes, “when we are disembarassed of all this anxious care for ourself, for our life, for our health, for our satisfactions and even for our progress”, then there is an “utter sense of relief, the delicious lightness” Not by turning our thoughts towards our physical indisposition can the latter be got rid of The Mother suggests a very practical and effective method in the prayer of March 17, 1914, “As soon as physical conditions are a little difficult and there results from them some unease, if we know how to surrender completely before Thy will, holding cheap life or death, health or illness, our integral being enters

immediately into harmony with Thy law of love and life, and all physical indisposition ceases, giving place to an ease, calm, deep and peaceful." In the prayer of May 27, 1914 she repeats the previous method, i.e., "to enable the most material parts of the being to put themselves as completely as possible in accord with Thy Will" But as soon as things are set right, we must not forget to express to the Lord a deep and intense gratitude. To repeat from the prayer of July 17, 1914 "O my sweet Master, sovereign Lord, Thou hast taken all my cares and hast left me only the Beatitude, the supreme ecstasy of Thy divine Communion"

Another very limiting condition that does not allow the soul 'to take its free flight' and which too has to be rejected is the constant thought about material things. Listen to the Mother's prayer of January 4, 1914. "The tide of material thoughts lies always in wait for the least weakness and if we relax our vigilance even for a moment, if we are negligent, to however small an extent, it rushes forward and invades us from all sides, submerging sometimes under its heavy flood the result of innumerable efforts. Then the being enters into a sort of torpor, its physical needs of food and sleep increase, its intelligence is obscured, its inner vision is veiled, and in spite of its feeling little interest in these superficial activities, they occupy it almost exclusively. This condition is very troublesome and fatiguing, for nothing is more fatiguing than thoughts about material things, and the wearied mind suffers like a caged bird unable to spread its wings yet aspiring for the power to take its free flight" Regarding the nature and the limiting effect of material things, Sri Aurobindo writes,

All is too little that the world can give
Its power and knowledge are the gifts of Time
And cannot fill the spirit's sacred thirst⁵

If we are to be "born into a new life", then "all the methods and habits of the past can no longer be of any use", writes the Mother on April 3, 1914. Again on December 4, 1914 she writes. "Thou hast broken all my habits, for Thou wouldst prepare me for a liberation from all mental form... Thy will is that they should be free in themselves from the slavery of any mental form, however high or pure it may be, so that they can express themselves in the new form..." For a person to be "born into a new life", other claims must hush in him their cry; to quote Sri Aurobindo

All that denies must be torn out and slain
And crushed the many longings for whose sake
We lose the One for whom our lives were made.⁶

"A last and mightiest transformation", "the touch immaculate" would come when

He tore desire up from its bleeding roots
And offered to the gods the vacant place.⁷

This is the radical method, almost surgical, which both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother suggest. In her prayer of December 12, 1914 the Mother recommends, "At every moment we must know how to lose everything in order to gain everything, to shed the past as a dead body and be reborn into a greater plenitude." When the being and its nature is thus prepared and ready, there grows within the Presence like a "waxing moon".

The "divine Centre" is thus prepared and it "awaits with ecstasy Thy New Manifestation" (June 2, 1914). The Mother is not only conscious of her mission in the work of Transformation but also absolutely confident of the completion of the great Work as is revealed in the prayer of January 11, 1914: "I know that a day will come when Thou wilt transform all those who approach us, Thou wilt transform them so radically that, totally liberated from the ties of the past, they will begin to live in Thee with a life quite new, a life solely made of Thee, of which Thou shalt be the sovereign Lord." This transformation is not man rising to a higher and purer height. The Mother in the prayer of June 14, 1914 says "It is a veritable work of creation we have to do: to create new activities and new modes of being, so that this Force, unknown to the earth till now, may manifest in its plenitude. It is to this work of a bringing to birth that I have consecrated myself, O Lord, because it is this that Thou demandest from me." The prayer reveals two very significant truths regarding Transformation. First, transformation is a work of creation, "to create new modes of being", it is not man rising to a greater height. Secondly, there is a transformative "Force", "unknown to the earth till now", which will "manifest in its plenitude" and bring about the miracle. Sri Aurobindo in all his writings on Transformation speaks of a being, a consciousness beyond the mind of man and this consciousness once manifested on earth shall achieve the great work. But so far

It has no home on earth, no centre in man,
Yet is the source of all things thought and done,
The fount of the creation and its works.

To collaborate with the great work, the Mother says on January 11, 1914. "If we had a truly living faith, if we had that absolute certitude of Thy almighty power and Thy sole reality. The whole universe would be transformed by it." In the prayer of June 15, 1914 the Mother records "If the hour has come, as Thou lettest me know, for the new forms of Thy realisation, those forms must needs be born. Something in the being has a presentiment but does not yet know; so it makes an effort to adapt itself, to rise to the height of what thou demandest of it." The statement contains a very meaningful phrase—"an effort to adapt itself." This phrase forms the central idea of the Theory of Evolution. For the evolution of a species into a higher one, the most important factor is adaptation of the species to its environment. This adaptation may be unconscious or a conscious one. So far evolution has moved in accordance with the unconscious ways of Nature. The Mother's phrase—"an effort to adapt itself"—indicates two things

(1) That the new creation would be evolutionary, a continuation of the process of evolution; and (2) That this part of the evolution would be a conscious process—note the Mother's phrase, "an effort to adapt itself". The Yoga of Transformation may in general be called a conscious process of evolution. To use a modified term from the science of Evolution, the Yoga of Transformation may be called a *Willed Mutation*. In her prayer of July 10, 1914 the Mother expresses the idea of the willed mutation "into me Thou hast put the will for a total transfiguration." Again, on July 11, 1914 "The whole physical being would wish to be dissolved and reconstituted in an adoration without limit" This is the Mother's wish for the willed mutation. In an outburst of supreme aspiration the Mother addresses the Lord in the prayer of January 23, 1916: "In the world, has not the hour struck for this phase of development to be replaced by another, dominated by the pure and vast consciousness of Thy Unity? Break, break the last resistances, consume the impurities, strike with Thy thunder this being, if need be, but let it be transfigured!" When read carefully, *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother will be found to contain all the salient principles of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Transformation.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga does not aim at individual transformation, for evolution is never individual. Yet it is a mistaken belief that all will be transformed *en masse*. This has never been the method of the evolutionary Nature. Sri Aurobindo makes it clear. "Some shall be made the glory's receptacles/And vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power" They shall be "The first-born of a new supernal race."¹⁰ The Mother also speaks of 'a new race' in her prayer of August 31, 1914 "In this formidable disorder and terrible destruction can be seen a great working, a necessary toil preparing the earth for a new sowing which will rise in marvellous spikes of grain and give to the world the shining harvest of a new race. . ."

The history of the great Adventure recorded in *Prayers and Meditations* was initially the Mother's, for she had not yet met Sri Aurobindo. After the Mother settled in Pondicherry, "The united Two began a greater age" The long spiritual association of the Mother with Sri Aurobindo and the momentous events of later times such as Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal in 1950 and the Supramental Manifestation in February 1956, go to establish what Sri Aurobindo had written much earlier in *Savitri*

The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,
Eternal supermind touch earthly Time "

To conclude, it may be said that whatever hope, aspiration, certitude of the future are revealed in the prayers, whatever she visions in the prayers she did achieve in 1956. Thus the era of *Prayers and Meditations* has come to join the era of Supramental Manifestation, of course after a long journey of inner and outer hardships, yet what an achievement, so far unparalleled in the spiritual history of the world. Let us end with the prayer of January 11, 1915.

Thy will is that from the heart of this heavy and obscure Matter I must let loose the volcano of Thy Love and Light. It is Thy will that, breaking all old conventions of language, there must arise the right Word to express Thee, the word that never was heard before, it is Thy will that the integral union should be made between the smallest things below and the sublimest and most vast above

Thus ‘‘The united Two began a greater age’’ and

A new light breaks upon the earth
A new world is born

(Concluded)

ASOKA K GANGULI

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- 1 *Savitri* SABCL, Vol 29, p 724
- 2, 3, 4 *The Mother*, SABCL Vol 25 pp 6 8
- 5, 6, 7 *Savitri* SABCL, Vol 28, pp 305, 316 318
- 8, 9, 10, 11 *Ibid*, SABCL, Vol 29, p 705

AN APPROACH TO ONE ASPECT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S LITERARY WORKS

ALL of us like to widen our field of knowledge and deepen it in order to reach as close as possible to our perception of the Truth. Each human mind reflects on the contents of its readings "according to its own bent and preference", and that is interpreted in the light of its own specialisation—artistic, philosophic or scientific. The charm of all that lies behind words is what draws littérateurs, critics and performing artists to Sri Aurobindo's writings and other works having a cultural value of their own. But very often, students, and even knowledgeable critics, tend to classify all the varied shades of human feelings, specially in Sri Aurobindo's works, into a set pattern, forgetful of the sense of humour which is so easily perceptible in most of his plays. It would seem that we want to regard every piece at the same level as the epic poem. But the sources of inspiration are very different, and the wisdom and vision conveyed through each creation quite distinct in their nature.

There is a great difference, for example, between *Ahana* and *Savitri*, on the one hand, and *Savitri* and the heroines of his plays, on the other. *Ahana*, a poem in quantitative meter where, in answer to the call of three types of human beings—seekers of knowledge, of power and of joy—the Universal Mother joins their endeavours to the height of their self-fulfilment. *Ahana* remains a goddess poised always on the summits of Being, uniting the individual to the Supreme Consciousness, whereas the unique character of *Savitri* in the epic poem is human as well as divine. The traits of her nature are quite different from those of any of the heroines of his plays. Her approach to life, love and knowledge is turned totally, constantly towards a truth above the reach of common humanity. The field of action of all these personalities is not the same. The epic poem reveals to us a *Savitri*, not only as the legendary figure we are familiar with, but as a spiritually conscious personality who carries within her the destiny of the world. Heroines like *Andromeda*, *Vasavadutta*, *Aslaug* or *Rodogune* are also drawn from legendary and historical backgrounds; they too serve a somewhat similar psychological purpose in the growth of the story of their life,—they discover their own self and fulfil their function in the whole. They all bring about a greater harmony in their world. But, however luminous they may be, they do not convey to us the feel of any special journey, occult or spiritual, towards their consummation.

The unique concept of *Savitri* in the epic poem is set on the great backdrop of the world as a whole, carrying with her the human evolution towards its fruition. As a princess and a person, her character is described only in the books where the story is told; and, even there, her extraordinary personality stands out in the forefront. Specially remarkable are her kinship with Nature around her, her soul's choice regarding her own future and her self-giving to all who come in touch with her. This last is already beyond the mere human—"they were moved by her towards great unknown things," for, "they lived in her" and "saw the world with her eyes". But far above the ordinary is

her journey through inner worlds beyond the physical and her own attitude towards what she represents. One with the suffering of humanity, she stands as a link between knowledge and ignorance, harmony and chaos and confusion; she is the saving Grace of the world, for all those who want to reach their fulfilment and do not know the way; "In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss," she says asserting herself, when in total communion with the Highest she prays for "the magnificent soul of man" peace and well-being, and oneness "in many approaching hearts". The vastness of her mind is like "a sea of white sincerity" without a single "turbid wave", here is not just the story of an uncommon heroine in a human play. It is the synthesis of a knowledge of the Occult and of Life, where the problem of death and evolutionary forces are dealt with in the visionary way of the poet as a Rishi.

We shall now throw a quick glance at the heroines of his plays who in the human perspective of a story shine out as quite extraordinary personalities, characters which anyone would have been too happy to emulate. But do they stand alone? Or, are they treated only as counterparts or complementary figures to the hero? They are always shown in relation to other human beings, standing out in opposition to or in harmony with them. The standard types of confidantes or mothers are also there, but presented with an unusual insight, bringing them to life and giving them also an important place in the whole action without them the plays would have had evident lacunae and not portrayed the variety of people as they are in life.

Speaking of the role of drama in the field of human culture, Kalidasa says that each temperament derives from a play a different type of pleasure that suits its special bent, for

Drama unites

In one fair view the conflicting world,
Pictures man's every action, his complex
Emotions infinite make harmony

Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, asks his actors to hold up a mirror to nature as best possible and through Prospero suggests that "our little life" is like that of the actors who have melted "into thin air" for "we are such stuff as dreams are made on" and shall dissolve "like the baseless fabric of this vision". Molière looks at the matter from the practical point of view: he deals with the enigma of acting and the creation of a character in order to convey to his world a broader social and religious point of view. Corneille, who wanted to communicate the greater human virtues of nobility and patriotism beyond the usual concepts of these, says that he sets his plays in ancient history or the legendary world, so as to help his readers, or audience, imagine that there could exist in men and women impulses and passions which rose above the ordinary: he wanted them to *believe* that human nature was capable of nobility, self-sacrifice and right discernment.

Sri Aurobindo's plays seem to reflect life as it is, or rather as it was, according to

the situation chosen. They not only convey the growth of the characters dealing with the different threads of the story which interweave in a pleasant way, but project at the same time the distinctive cultural background of the country where the action takes place. Thus they are limited in their approach to the human social set-up of the theme. The depth and uniqueness of the characters do not come to light through mere statements but by their own action in the play. The existence of each character as a human being has been given full value in the evolution of the story of the heroine—even through minor roles like Doonya, Praxilla, Ungarika, Harkoos or Cireas, without whom these heroines would not have been able to achieve the end they serve in the play.

Andromeda saves the victims with the help of Cireas—which is the physical act on which the drama is based, but, through her intention and soulful attitude towards others, she opens a new world so that her people might learn to adore noble deities and become more human. Aslaug stands out alone in a more limited human circle. But for the interaction between Eric and Hertha, her sister-in-law, Swegn's wife, the play would not have come to join the two opposing factions in their country, Vasavadutta, without the spirited Manjoolica, would never have fled with Vuthsa Udayan away from her parental home. The other women characters who are quite as prominent as Rodogune in the play are the ones who drive the sequence of events as they take place—in fact, among all Sri Aurobindo's plays this is the only one where misunderstanding and human shortcomings have over-ridden the Truth, which is left as if waiting for another time in the future to fulfil itself. Anice-Anjalice is like a perfect flower in God's creation, beautiful, happy and childlike and her own world, which is like the dream of a young woman, would have lost its charm if Ameena, Doonya, or Khartoom had not been there to show us the side of reality in their kingdom of sweetness, laughter and faith though besieged in Haroun-al-Rasheed's time by intrigues, magic and jealousy. But, even from the evolution of the story point of view, Savitri stands apart and alone in the strength of her thought and the power of her soul. As we have already said, her human nature right from the beginning had already laid the basis of this noble elevation, for in every field she is shown as someone who stands above the ordinary; "She joined the ardent-hued magnificent lives / Of animal and bird and flower and tree."

None of the other heroines, except Andromeda perhaps—and that too in a very individual, human way—approaches the problem of her life by appealing to a supernatural power to intervene. All of them show the faith in the supernatural, specially Aslaug and Comolkumari, but it is always limited to their own personal human life. They rely as most human beings do on the greater wisdom that guides the world and sees, like Odin, the truth of the whole set-up so as to bring things to their own fruition. The words of these beautiful women embody their thoughts and feelings without any immixture, so that the style remains perfectly tuned to the mind and temperament of the individual. Whereas, the words of Savitri reflect always a greater vision and carry in the very essence of their expression the feel of a Life beyond the material, a Truth beyond all mental formulations and a Love that is not limited to any

individual. They always suggest something that includes everything and everyone. Nature and humanity as a whole are contained in her consciousness,

as she moved across the changing earth
A deeper consciousness welled up in her
A citizen of many scenes and climes,
Each country and soil it has made its home;
It took all clans and peoples for her own,
Till the whole destiny of mankind was hers

Savitri (1970), p 377

This is what Savitri represents in Sri Aurobindo's epic which is like his own "occult diary". Quite contrary to this are the plays which were written as experiments in the literary style we all know as Elizabethan drama. In fact many actors, even in England, have found in these an expression which is clearer and easier to portray nowadays than the Shakespearean blank verse, because the language here is modern. There is also no scene in excess so to say, as in Shakespeare where, in order to suit the practical needs of his actors or his audiences, special scenes or roles were created. These plays by Sri Aurobindo are like gems in the firmament of literary expression of their kind, which shine by the simplicity and purity of their approach to the complexities of human nature, each a beautiful picture containing all the tonalities available on the palette of a master artist.

AMITA SEN

SHOOTING IN THE BAGH

(In memory of the dead at Jallianwalabagh)

DEATH connived with Dyer.
Cruel April joined hands
with ominous 13
to pay the rebels their due

Innocent triggers danced
to the tune of crazy Indian fingers.
Guns in agony cried with the rebels.
Sobbing earth turned red.

Death has a hundred tentacles and
eats in a thousand ways.
The panic-stricken multitude
sought shelter in the jaws of Death.

Death awaited them on the wall
Death welcomed them into the well.
Death trampled them to death.
Death kissed them with its bullet-lips

1650 rounds in just 15 minutes
Death had its heyday
Dining on 381 corpses is no joke.
Poor rebels! They had no way out

Death satisfied rewarded Dyer
with a jewelled sword,
a purse of £1,50,000 and
a title 'Saviour of India'.

August 15, 1998 (Midnight)

P RAJA

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of December 1998)

“THE Ideal of Human Unity”—how far does this truth of evolution of consciousness from the division of unity, the break of harmony, apply to the political development of humanity?

Sri Aurobindo studies this question in his series *The Ideal of Human Unity* in the *Arya* (September 1915-July 1918) He commences with the early beginnings of human aggregates in the form of families, clans, tribes and so on and traces the gradual formation of groups with identity of interests. He draws attention to the emergence of a group spirit which gives an individuality to the people who so associate themselves together. These groups, in turn, coalesce under the pressure of circumstances, no doubt under the design of Nature—into larger groups which become sub-nation units, each with its own provincial character. Each of these peoples develops its soul-formation and as these sub-nation units get united under compulsions of political, military or cultural needs, we have the nation soul. Each individualised nation has its own soul articulate in its distinct language, religion, tradition and ideal. Nature has been trying for larger aggregations than the nation unit. The concept of empires having failed, there is the emergence of the concept of Commonwealth and regional groupings for common benefit. Nature is bound to proceed further in the direction of world unity.

Taking a large view of the evolutionary march, Sri Aurobindo sees that uniformity is the law in Matter, while free variation and individual development are characteristic of Life and Mind. From this he concludes that man too, being evolved out of Matter and Life “begins with uniformity and subservience of the individual and proceeds towards variety and freedom of the individual.”¹ In *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo viewed social development as a movement from the symbolic to the subjective (or spiritual) age, from an age that was governed by the reflected light of an obscurely felt Reality to a future age that would actually live in that Reality, the wheel of the ‘human cycle’ thereby coming full circle. In the present treatise, Sri Aurobindo sees a like circular movement.

“.. there is also the ancient tradition . of a golden age in which he [man] was freely social without society. It is also possible that our progress has not been a development in a straight line, but in cycles. It is even possible that our original state was an instinctive animal spontaneity of free and fluid association. Our destiny may be the conversion of an original animal association into a community of the gods. Our progress may be a devious round leading from the easy and spontaneous uniformity and harmony which reflects Nature to the self-possessed unity which reflects the Divine.”²

In *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo saw the curve of the present ‘subjective’ age culminating in a spiritual age, human thought and action transfigured by the infusion of the consciousness of oneness and harmony. The grand argument of *The Ideal of Human Unity* leads to a similar conclusion. In a world-union or a world-state, it is not

‘administrative’ or ‘military’ support that will sustain the world community a ‘religion of humanity’ may, perhaps, produce better results, but what is basic to any religion is not a set of ethical rules but the ambience of the Spirit. Eighteenth-century Europe, by intuition as it were, sought to define the “religion of humanity” as the efflorescence of liberty, equality, and fraternity. But Sri Aurobindo would go further.

“Freedom, equality, brotherhood are the three godheads of the soul, they cannot be really achieved through the external machinery of society or by man so long as he lives only in the individual and the communal ego. . . Yet is brotherhood the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity. freedom, equality, unity are the eternal attributes of the Spirit. It is the practical recognition of this truth, it is the awakening of the soul in man and the attempt to get him to live from his soul and not from his ego which is the inner meaning of religion, and it is that to which the religion of humanity also must arrive before it can fulfil itself in the life of the race.”³

Many of the favourable factors towards world union—an appreciation of the closeness of common interests; the force of increasing cosmopolitanism, the move for an international framework for consultation, deliberation and arbitration, psychological impulsion provided by the desire for a religion of humanity—would nevertheless not be strong enough to ensure human unity so long as collective man refused the spiritual reality behind the brilliant and bewildering façades of material life.

The nation has grown out of the debris of empires. This explains the time taken in the past for it to form, thousand years or more in the majority of cases. The process of nation-building can be most conveniently studied with reference to the history of Europe and America.

National self-determination and the establishment of a decent system of international living is the second preoccupation of Sri Aurobindo’s thought. Any form of international organisation which does not allow the nations of the world the right to develop freely without fear of annexation or domination by more powerful bodies can neither be called ideal nor as having any chance of durability. A first preliminary is the independence of the vast masses of civilised people in the Asian continent from European domination. India must therefore be free and Asia must rise, for without them no Concert of World Powers can play in harmony. Hence the long tirade against British rule which marks his early writings. Freedom is not only desirable and necessary, the subject nations must also know how to achieve their end; a technique has to be given which can be applied by all subject peoples who aspire to be free. A blueprint of this technique is another feature of these early writings.

Sri Aurobindo observes. “The ultimate result must be the formation of a World-State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status. A confederacy would give the greatest freedom to the nations constituting the World-State, but this might give too much room for fissiparous or centrifugal tendencies to operate, a federal order would then be the most desirable

All else would be determined by the course of events and by general agreement or the shape given by the ideas and necessities that may grow up in the future. A world-union of this kind would have the greatest chances of long survival or permanent existence.”⁴

“The ideal of human unity would be no longer an unfulfilled ideal but an accomplished fact and its preservation given into the charge of the united human peoples. Its future destiny would lie on the knees of the gods and, if the gods have a use for the continued existence of the race, may be left to lie there safe”⁵

On April 1955 the Mother gave a message on the occasion of the inauguration of the French Institute in Pondicherry. This may be taken as the charter and sanction for all students and teachers of history. It also gives history a method, a meaning:

Dans chaque pays, la meilleure éducation à donner aux enfants, consiste à leur enseigner quelle est la vraie nature de leur pays, ses qualités propres et la mission que leur nation doit remplir dans le monde, sa place véritable dans le concert terrestre.

À cela doit s'ajouter une vaste compréhension du rôle des autres nations, mais sans esprit d'imitation et sans jamais perdre de vue le génie propre de leur pays .⁶

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

1 *SABCL*, Vol 15, p 273

2 *Ibid* , pp 273-274

3 *Ibid* , pp 546-547

4 *Ibid* , p 571

5 *Ibid*

6 ‘In any country the best education that can be given to children consists in teaching them what the true nature of their country is and its own qualities, the mission their nation has to fulfil in the world and its true place in the terrestrial concert. To that should be added a wide understanding of the role of other nations, but without the spirit of imitation and without ever losing sight of the genius of one’s own country’

UNIQUENESS OF KRISHNAVATAR

KRISHNA says in the Gita that the Jnani is awake when the whole world is asleep. In other words, he dwells awake in the light of a Supreme Knowledge of which the nescient world is totally unaware.

With welcome cheer we hail a beam of light in the encircling gloom. Sighting an oasis with water in a desert gives us indescribable joy. The flash of lightning between two dark clouds is blindingly bright.

The divine Child was born on the eighth day of the waning moon during the winter solstice in the month of August when the star Rohini was in the ascent. The time was midnight.

It is said that what we compute here as a year is measured as one day for the Devas. Our summer solstice is considered to be day-time for them. Our winter solstice to them is night-time. Similarly it is believed that what is a month for us, humans on the earth, is one day for our manes, the departed spirits. And the waxing fortnight of the moon is day-time for the spirits. The moon's waning fortnight is night for them.

Thus the time of Krishna's birth happened to be the dark midnight for the Devas, manes and human beings. Even the prison where he was born was dark and gloomy. It was an ambience of total darkness in all the worlds at the time of Krishna's birth.

In consonance with this aspect of gloom and darkness of his nativity is the fact of his being called Krishna. Krishna means dark and he was the dark-coloured divine child. Thus Krishna the dark-complexioned, born in the darkest hour of the night, was a beacon of illumination. By his very birth he dispelled the darkness of ignorance in the universe. The light of true knowledge began to shine at the advent of his descent on the earth. The Gita, the song celestial, even today continues to bring its light of wisdom to the world. His divine form steeps our inner and outer gaze in a wordless sweetness of joy. It was the same form that delighted the soul of the Mother when she was young.

Srimad Bhagavad Purana is replete with His *lila* or divine play. The book is a veritable storehouse of Vedantic wisdom. In His incarnation, Sri Krishna had performed several kinds of play. Child Krishna is a delightfully mischievous baby, *non pareil*. As a shepherd boy of Brindavan, his role has a unique bucolic memorability. As dancing artiste with his flute, his magical notes leave no one uninspired or unthrilled. He is a *rasika* of the strains flowing from his own flute. He is a wrestler who could triumph over the valiant Chanura and Mushtika, the two formidable ones belonging to the group of Kamsa. He weds Satyabhama, the daughter of the king Satrajit, after accepting the great challenge by the king to him to subdue seven bulls. He is king's minister *par excellence*, an emissary unique and an incomparable charioteer. He is a rescuer and protector of women like Draupadi from the perils into which they have fallen. His compassion for the indigent and helpless souls like Kuchela has no parallel in any annals. He is a bestower of Mukti or liberation on persons like Bhishma. Above all, he released from earthly bondage the hunter who shot him with his arrow.

It takes all sorts of people to make this world. Variations of the three gunas have

produced a complexity of *homo sapiens*—the timid, the heroic, the Asuric, the Sattwic, the selfish and the altruistic, the hard-hearted and the compassionate, the idiotic and the intelligent, the Yogi and the Bhogi, the generous and the miserly

I would like to quote the significant and oft-quoted lines from the Gita to elaborate on the uniqueness of Krishna as an Avatar

परित्राणाय साधूना विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of dharma I am born age after age.

It may not be possible for an Incarnation or a Mahatma to attract and change the evil among the collectivity of individuals. But Krishna the Avatar could achieve this stupendous task. He could descend to the evolutionary level of the lewd, the cheat, the liar and a host of other evil-minded persons. By His compassion He could touch their hearts and mellow them for the reception of His message qualifying them for Jnana to be imparted. This superb distinction is given only to Lord Krishna who played countless roles to revitalise society and individuals purging them of all impurities and evils.

The work of Lord Krishna cannot be abandoned if one believes in the advent of successive incarnations on the earth. The Overmental Krishnavatar, powerful enough during His *yuga* or age, must give rise to a more powerful one. This *yuga* is witness to all the monstrous evils menacingly surfacing. Fortunately, we have Sri Aurobindo and the Mother representing the higher level, the Supramental. Its manifestation has already taken place. It is the descent of the Supramental Light on the earth “for its complete perfection including the transformation of the body of man”

Thus it has as its aim an evolutionary goal much larger than that of the Overmental. Transformation through integral Yoga marks its unique feature. The present crisis in humanity is congenial for its operative force to work through love for the emergence of the new consciousness. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are behind this force of transformation. As the Mother says, “troubles will be transformed into serenity, all anguish into peace, all doubts into certitude, all ugliness into harmony, all egoisms into self-giving, all darkness into light and all sufferings into unchanging happiness”

G VISWANATHAN

HOMAGE TO BABAJI MAHARAJ

BABAJI Maharaj is a household name among the devotees of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Orissa and was also an endearing personality in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram itself. He passed away at 5-10 p.m. on 8 November 1998 at the Nursing Home of the Ashram. His help and kindness, action and example, have left an indelible impression on the minds and hearts of thousands of people connected with him. Remaining in the background he could soar into heights of spiritual consciousness. He was a first-rate sadhak and ideal in every respect, we miss him much.

If Arjuna turned the fiercest battle of Kurukshetra into yoga, we similarly see Ramakrishna Das turning the simplest and smallest of works, like washing dishes in the Ashram Dining Room, into an ideal form of yoga. His regularity and punctuality, love and devotion, sincerity and surrender in work were an example to be emulated.

Prof. Prapatti, his active collaborator and the erstwhile manager of Navajyoti Karyalaya, was seriously ill and bedridden in 1989. He was consulting Babaji in every respect through his attendants. One of his attendants was unwilling to consult Babaji regarding trivial matters. Thereon Prof. Prapatti shouted, "Do you know Babaji at all? He was a siddha before coming to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he became a mahatma here and now he is a divine being." Very few people recognised Babaji as such. He was ever wrapped in his simplicity and humility.

Babaji was a famous Vaishnava saint at Ayodhya. He was living in seclusion, keeping away from the crowd and even from the eminent people eager to meet him. He was inclined towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, going through their writings. He could know, and appreciate, theirs to be a higher path. He was in contact with the Ashram. As soon as he opened the reply letter and touched the blessing packet, a lightning power entered into his body and he was immersed in a state of delight for three days together, forgetting to take his food. He felt the mightiness of the Mother and the sure call to go to the Ashram. His long-sustained aspiration to meet the highest guru was fulfilled and he could recognise the present Avatar in Sri Aurobindo. "If the blessing flower can be so powerful, how great He himself must be!" This thought brought about a great change in him. He parted with his old order and yearned to join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1945, at the age of 37.

He was a servant of God and stood all along for the Divine. As soon as he had the realisation of the transforming force of the Mother and the inspiration from within, he knew that that was the way by which India could rise; there would be an end of falsehood, disease, suffering and death; there would be the reign of God and the reign of truth; even the meanest and deadliest would be transformed. He planned to make a Sri Aurobindo Centre at Ayodhya to work for the entire Northbelt of India, including U.P. and Bihar. He further felt the chain-link of earth-nature with the universe and the need of transformation of the subconscious roots of the surroundings of the past to facilitate and expedite the transformation. However, he restrained himself to check whether the inspiration was from the vital ego or from the Divine. He wrote this to the

Mother. The Mother replied in 1959: "Do not doubt, it is alright, my force and blessings are always with you and helping you." With the Mother's permission he started for Ayodhya. Orissa was then not in his mind nor was it his concern. A few friends from Orissa requested him to make a break in his journey and pay a courtesy visit on the way. His very arrival in Orissa opened all possibilities of the Mother's work in his home state. Being attracted by his spiritual personality of the Ayodhya days, the queen of Amama Tekkarī of Bihar wished to donate two acres of land to him adjacent to Rama Janmabhumi. Babaji proceeded to Bihar and signed a power of attorney to get it registered in the name of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Then he went to Ayodhya, located the land and came back to the Ashram. He later went to Ayodhya in 1960 to build a house there.

However, the wheel of destiny turned in a different direction. The people of Orissa turned spontaneously more and more to the light of the Mother and started corresponding with Babaji. His plans and programmes got realised in Orissa rather than at Ayodhya. Why was it so? Orissa, the land of Lord Jagannath, had a long line of Vaishnava saints and devotees spread all over. Prominent among them was the five-star constellation: Jagannath Das, Balaram Das, Achyutananda Das, Ananta Das, Yashovanta Das. Jagannath Das was named by Sri Chaitanya himself as Atibadi, the greatest of the greats. They were siddha purushas and spiritual writers of the thirteenth century A D. Especially the translation of the Bhagavatam into Oriya by Sri Jagannath Das had a profound impact on the masses and there were study circles opened in the nooks and corners of Orissa. It is here in Orissa that the saints and sages of all famous schools of philosophy, like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Nanak, Kabir, etc.—a long list of seers,—had visited Lord Jagannath and founded their Ashramas and propagated their philosophy. Orissa is therefore the homeland of spiritual integration. If Jagannath stands for the Vaishnavas, Lingaraj of the temple city Bhubaneswar is for the Saivites and Virajakshetra of Tappur for the Shaktas. Even the Buddhist era had not left Orissa untouched, Orissa was swayed by Buddhism when the great Chandashoka turned to Dharmashoka after the Kalinga war. It is the developed psychic of the masses which responded quietly to the truth of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the Avatars of the New Age. Orissa remained divided and long exploited by the neighbouring provinces even up to 1936, hence the economic and educational backwardness. However, the Mother once commented: "The subliminal of Orissa has opened to Sri Aurobindo's light." But who can deny that the divine camp-fire was lit in Orissa by the incessant effort, prayer and aspiration of Ramakrishna Das, reverently called Babaji Maharaj?

Babaji first translated Sri Aurobindo's *Uttarpara Speech*, being inspired by Charuchandra Dutta. He had no academic qualification and had half-forgotten his mother tongue during his 13-year stay at Ayodhya. But he had the intuition that a Professor would come from Orissa and would help him. It happened so and Prof. Prapatti came finally to the Ashram in 1954 and joined Babaji in the translation work. Babaji sat days together with his mind blank and the pen unmoved. An inspiration came down from above and he had a natural flow to write on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

in a question-answer style with references from the Indian spiritual heritage. He interpreted the yoga philosophy of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in a unique way through a series of articles in *Navajyoti*, the Oriya periodical. These were later on collected and printed in book form, covering a wide range of life problems; the topics covered were about the aim of life, the work of every individual, about students, women, study circles and organisations, on education, physical culture, yoga and philosophy. There are more than seventy books to his credit and they form a series of popular spiritual literature called Sri Aurobindo Lokasahitya.

And how was the Navajyoti Karyalaya formed? There was no money, no man, nor any land. It is the sadhana of Babaji that opened the way and things started out of nothing and got arranged by the Mother's grace in answer to his prayer and aspiration.

More and more souls opened to the light of the Mother. Correspondence with Navajyoti increased enormously. Offerings started flowing to the Ashram. The work spread from study circles to seminars, conferences, youth camps, integral schools, relic centres and sadhanalayas. Babaji was a rishi of a high order; he had the vision and command over forces. Whatever he initiated got through. According to his instruction Prof. Prapatti went to Orissa very often on organisational work. Half of the month was spent in Orissa and the other half in Pondicherry. While taking over the Dalijoda land of 200 acres for the establishment of Sri Aurobindo Srikshetra Ashram, there was an immediate need to clear 1.3 lakhs of bank loan against that mortgaged land. With Babaji's word of assurance that the loan would be cleared within a year, the matter got settled. Prof. Prapatti ventured to raise donations from all quarters and the loan was actually paid off within one year in 1975. Babaji was the centre of inspiration for all the Mother's work in Orissa.

His personality and his manners were so noble that people were drawn to him like bees towards the light and sweetness of his soul. In him we see a synthesis of an ideal karmayogin, a bhakta and a yogic genius of high spiritual illumination. In that sense he was a maharaja, a king-seer of the soul-world. All his writings and utterances were soul-sprung. M. P. Pandit comments on him: "As you know, Babaji combines in himself the best spirit of the older disciplines of God-realisation with the collective concern and emphasis on the integral spiritual perfection in the approach of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He is a major force for spiritual integration in Orissa, though he lives here in our Ashram like any other sadhak."

Yet he was so impersonal. He was nowhere a president, secretary, manager or trustee. Keeping away from the disturbing lures of power and position he worked unselfishly as an instrument of the Mother. He never imposed himself with authoritative sermons. He always put forth that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the only guru and guide. Intellectual analysts and critics looking at the crowd around him often commented that he was engaged in 'gurugiri'. It is all nonsense. He was so simple and impersonal that there are few to match him. He felt uncomfortable and irritated if anybody said anything in his praise and stopped him immediately from doing so. The Divine was all-important for him in all matters, not he himself.

He was so gentle and respectful to others! Even to very ordinary people he did namaste. Himself sitting on a small stool he would offer the only chair in his small cabin to visitors. He had no quarrels nor enmity with anybody in the Ashram. He was the well-wisher of all.

He was so disciplined! He never violated any rules of the Ashram. If somebody needed to correct his watch he had only to see when Babaji was at Navajyoti, when he was at the washing section, when at the Samadhi. He never absented himself from any meditation programmes of the Ashram. He woke up at 3 a.m. He had his fixed hours of meditation, asanas or physical exercises, his studies and all other work at fixed hours. He did all his work himself so long as he was able to walk and was living with a minimum of things.

He was most peaceful and harmonious! He radiated peace and purity. He might have had differences but there was no unpleasantness. Nobody had ever seen him get angry. He was so steadfast and always in a state of equanimity. Even while he had differences with Prof. Prapatti he kept silent and prayed inwardly to the Mother. He had a unique art of living in harmony.

He was most kind and compassionate! He was ready to help and advise anybody irrespective of his status. People found easy access to him. He listened patiently and spoke few words, pertinent to the person's needs. He answered hundreds of letters which he carried to the Samadhi before posting.

What a wonderful man he was! We cannot measure the length and breadth of the virtues he possessed. His secrets were Namajapa and surrender. He was so open to the Mother's Power that She released the godlike elements in him. He never asked for anything other than peace, purity, light, wideness, calm and ananda of the Mother's Consciousness, his insistence was to transform the mind, life and body. With his profound faith in the Mother he pierced through all obstructions and was always protected in the Mother's arms. His last words to those who went to him were: sincere work, constant Namajapa and self-surrender, to remain always open to the Mother's power of transformation. He was a great votary of Namajapa from his childhood. He excelled in every way and he was led to the highest realisation. Only the name Rama was changed to Ma after his coming to the Ashram.

Such a person who served the Mother for 54 years so humbly, impersonally, sincerely and unselfishly was an ideal instrument and child. His work will not go in vain. His tapasya will regenerate the nation. People of Orissa and all connected with him from different corners of the globe will ever draw inspiration from his example and will definitely respond to carry on the work he left behind. We pay our homage most humbly to this holy person.

DHARANIDHAR

WOULD YOU LIKE SAVITRI TO BE PRINTED IN EURO-ENGLISH?

HERE IS a piece of news!

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the EU rather than German, which was the other possibility. As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's govt conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that would be known as "Euro-English". In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favor of the "k". This should klear up konfursion and keyboards kan have 1 less letter. There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year, when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with the "f". This will make words like "fotograf" 20% shorter. In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be ekspekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters, which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horrible mes of the silent "e"'s in the language is disgracful, and they should go away. By the 4th year, people wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v". During ze fifz year, ze unesesary "o" kan be dropd from vords kontaining "ou" and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters. After zis fifz year, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozer.

AN E-MAIL MESSAGE

DAYS OUT IN AUROVILLE

THE weeks-long tropical downpours have carved deep many-branching canyons in the hard red earth of Auroville. My German friend Alix and I enjoy spending Sunday mornings in this riven landscape. We leave the three-wheeled autorickshaw waiting in the last colony for us until noon and aim for a young baobab that marks the spot where we can go steeply down over loose gravel into the ravine. But first we take a look at the landscape from above. The canyons lie before us like dry river valleys, with a new tree or bush here and there. Once down below, we make our way over deep soft sand to a particular side branch, which we follow. It becomes narrower and narrower, until we have to clamber and push our way through with our rucksacks into “our room.” There the cleft ends. There is just enough room for us to stretch out on the ground. The walls form a chimney, outlining a patch of sky and clouds. The sun’s rays spotlight quartz pebbles in the hard earth, making the walls look as if they have been inset with semi-precious stones.

It is an idyllic place to relax and dream. We are amidst a primal landscape, that was once a sea-bottom. No human sound reaches us here.

The red earth walls have round holes in them, and little tunnels, a finger’s breadth wide—how have they been formed? Alix, who has explored the deserts of southern Africa, explains the phenomenon this way: the constant wind loosens a pebble—it begins to vibrate, grains of sand around it fall away, and now the wind can rotate the little stone, forming a hole which rains then erode more and more. Wind and water have sculptured this earth. Deep furrows, spurs and hollows, ledges and sharp standing obelisks have been formed.

After a small snack from our rucksacks we allow the silence and seclusion to work on us. Time passes, our thoughts drift with the clouds. Refreshed and recharged by the powers that rule here, we trek back and let the three-wheeler carry us the long way home over field tracks and noisy streets into the noisy human world. For a long morning we stepped out of the daily routine.

Alix knows a lot about birds, both European and tropical ones, and no tiny shadow or movement in tree or bush escapes her sharp eyes.

One day the two of us set off with rucksacks and binoculars for an area in the northern Greenbelt of Auroville. The settlement is called Fertile, and there we meet Johnny, an Aurovilian oldtimer. He knows every inch of this area, and we take a five-hour walk with him.

Since the planting of many thousands of trees, many species of birds have returned to this area, that 20 years ago was wasteland. We walk over long stretches of sandy path, gazing into trees and bushes, occasionally exchanging a syllable or two.

Tiny birds like hummingbirds are seen: “sunbirds”, says Alix. We hear the melancholy fluting of the trogon, who eludes our sight. We see a kingfisher, and a black drongo with his long forked tail. Also the blue-neck—an acrobat who somersaults in the air, showing his turquoise feathers that can only be seen in flight.

Johnny asks for the binoculars and after looking long and carefully reports “There are a lot of big white birds!” We follow him down a side-path, wondering what we are going to see, until he points to Charlie’s chicken-run, full of clucking white Leghorns! There are jokes and laughter, and after a brief chat we move on.

We learn something about the vegetation, the special uses of some of the trees. A Banyan tree has embraced a palmyra with countless octopus-like arms. Johnny explains that banyans are sown by birds, who excrete the undigested seeds on other trees. A seed will sprout and anchor its root on a limb of the tree the bird has perched on. This is the only way a Banyan can grow—the seed has to be passed through a bird, it cannot grow roots in the ground.

We learned many other things in the course of that long walk, for example, about how eucalyptus trees, which give no shade and are avoided by birds, dehydrate the soil. This makes eucalyptus plantations a great danger to the environment. “But one here and there,” says Johnny, “that’s no danger, and the timber is very strong, good for construction and resistant to insects.”

Yet again Johnny spies something strange: “Come here, there is a great big pink bird behind that hedge!” Getting nearer we identify the naked pink back of Diego from Switzerland, energetically planing a plank. Another of Johnny’s jokes. After a friendly cup of tea we move on again.

Meanwhile the sun has risen high. In the midday heat the birds fall silent and seek the shade of thick leaves. We have learned and seen a lot—but what we wanted most to see has eluded us: a glimpse of the rare Paradise Flycatcher with its spectacular long silly tail.

As we trot silently along, something moves in the undergrowth. Unlike Alix, I have ears that are much sharper than my eyes, so it is I who make a sign. We stand still and listen. And there amongst the dry leaves under a bush a whole group of the spectacular Flycatchers are scraping around. We hold our breath and freeze to relish the rare sight we had given up hope of seeing. Everyone had told us that we definitely had no chance of sighting this bird. And now they were in flight, their long tails fluttering behind them like banners—that was the climax of our outing.

SIBYLLE SHARMA-HABLIK

SEVEN SUNS: A POEM BY AMAL

Seven suns are plunging down like diamonds
To deck the body of man with deathlessness.
Bursting the brain to an omnipresent truth,
Piercing the brows to a gaze unbound by time,
Thrilling the throat with a word which rhythms the worlds,
Gripping the heart with a oneness that is all,
Wakening the belly to a laugh of infinite space,
Unloosing within the loins a swirl of stars,
Coiling at the base of the spine an almighty calm,
They take their splendid stations in frail flesh—
And the flesh suddenly knows itself supreme
As though heaven's roses bore dust-intimate roots!
No gods are they from foreign farnesses
But the dust's own divinity beyond
Its brief and blind and broken beauty here
One viewless Marvel plays a twofold game,
The solar shine and the terrestrial shade,
Empyrean and abyss each measuring each
The seven suns descending to the earth
Are the seven earths awaiting in the sun

HERE IS a very fine poem by Amal (K D Sethna) depicting the descent of the Seven Suns of the Supermind from the Overhead centre the *Sahasradala* to the *Muladhara*, the centre at the base of the spinal column. Sri Aurobindo writes about it succinctly backed by a mighty realisation known to spiritual adepts of the Tantra Sadhana of ancient times. Amal turns the truth of this account into exquisite poetry. The seven suns plunge like diamonds to make the body of man deathless and immortal. They open the mind of man to the omniscient and omnipresent Truth. They pierce the centre between the eyebrows and awaken it to the timeless vision. They thrill the throat centre with a word fitting to the rhythms of the world. They grip the heart with a feeling of oneness that comprehends all. They move down to the middle of the belly and awaken the centre there to the realities of infinite space. Further down they descend to the base of the spine where pervades an almighty calm. Still further down they descend and touch the nethermost centres and brighten them up.

When this is achieved suddenly the flesh knows itself supreme and when it is closer to earth, the roses of heaven bear dust-intimate roots. One viewless Marvel links up the solar shine and the terrestrial shade. Then we see that the seven suns descending to the earth are the seven earths awaiting in the sun. At this point it is apropos to remember the passages from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* which put the seal of authority on this mighty experience.

Then slowly the column of light descended forming an oval of living light, awakening and setting in motion, each in a particular way, according to the special mode of vibration the centres which were above the head, at the place of the head, the throat, the heart, in the middle of the belly, at the base of the spine and still lower. At the height of the knees, the ascending and descending currents joined together and the circulation thus became in a way uninterrupted, enveloping the whole being in an immense oval of living light.

Then slowly the consciousness descended again from stage to stage, halting at every world, till the consciousness of the body came back. The resumption of the consciousness of the body was, if my memory is exact, the ninth stage. At this stage the body was quite stiff and immobile.

(Prayers and Meditations, The Mother, July 21, 1914)

One borne on the viewless wings of Poesy alone can turn this experience into a poem. Amal has done it with ease and grace.

C SUBBIAN

SRI AUROBINDO'S SEVEN SUNS OF THE SUPERMIND*

1 The Sun of Supramental Truth,—Knowledge-Power originating the supramental creation

Descent into the Sahasradala

2. The Sun of Supramental Light and Will-Power, transmitting the Knowledge-Power as dynamic vision and command to create, found and organise the supramental creation

Descent into the Ajna Chakra, the centre between the eyes

3 The Sun of Supramental Word, embodying the Knowledge-Power, empowered to express and arrange the supramental creation.

Descent into the Throat Centre.

4 The Sun of Supramental Love, Beauty, and Bliss, releasing the Soul of the Knowledge-Power to vivify and harmonise the supramental creation.

Descent into the Heart-Lotus

5 The Sun of Supramental Force dynamised as a power and source of life to support the supramental creation

Descent into the Navel Centre

* *The Hymn of God*, SABCL Vol 17 p 27

6 The Sun of Life-Radiances (Power-Rays) distributing the dynamis and pouring it into concrete formations

Descent into the Penultimate Centre

7 The Sun of Supramental Substance-Energy and Form-Energy empowered to embody the supramental life and stabilise the creation

Descent into the Muladhara.

Students' Section

ONCE I LIVED

ONCE I lived
Like a rain-soaked leaf
Near a small house
That knew not grief

Once I lived
Like a pretty flower,
And adoringly
Waited for the new hour

Once I lived
Like a singing bird,
Someone kept hearing me—
Every song I sang he heard

Once I lived
Like a lifeless stone,
Some unseen feet touched it,—
I had into a goddess grown

Once I lived
Like a tall shady tree,—
Oh, who sat under its joy
And held me lovingly?

SHRUTI