

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 1999

PRICE. Rs. 15.00

**Revised Subscriptions
from January 1999, owing to considerable rise in costs, especially of paper**

INLAND

Annual Rs 120 00

Life Membership Rs 1400 00

Price per Single Copy Rs 15 00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail

Annual \$18 00 or £12 00

Life Membership \$252 00 or £168 00

Air Mail

Annual \$36 00 for American & Pacific countries

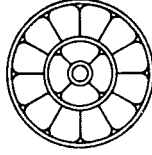
\$26 00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504 00 for American & Pacific countries

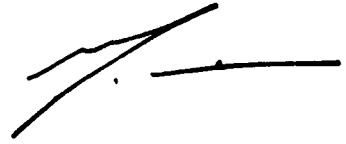
\$364 00 for all other countries

All payments to be made in favour of *Mother India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. For outstation cheques kindly add Rs 10/- to the total.

Subscribers are requested to mention their subscription number in case of any enquiry. The correspondents should give their full address in BLOCK letters, with pin code number.



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.



All Rights Reserved No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations
All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Editor's Phone 334782
Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA
Associate Editor R Y Deshpande
Published by HARIKANT C PATEL
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST
PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002
Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002
PRINTED IN INDIA
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LII

No. 7

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
SHE IS A MASTER-BUILDER (Poem)	711
A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI	713
WORLDLY WISDOM (Poem)	717
<i>Dyuman</i>	
CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER	718
<i>Dilip Kumar Roy</i>	
PANTHEIST (Poem)	721
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>	
“FREEWILL” IN SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION	722
<i>Arjava</i>	
AS A MOONBEAM FLIES (Poem)	726
<i>R Y Deshpande</i>	
NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME	727
WHAT PATH OF WISDOM ? (Poem)	729
<i>Jugal Kishore Mukherjee</i>	
THE MYSTERY OF SRI AUROBINDO’S ‘DEPARTURE’ VIS-A-VIS	
THE IDEAL OF PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION	730
<i>Vladimir Kirichenko</i>	
HOW TO SING ? (Poem)	735
<i>Dinkar D. Palande</i>	
HOW TO LIVE IN EVER-INCREASING “QUIET JOY”?	736
<i>Ashalata Dash</i>	
ON LOVE’S FIAT (Poem)	741
<i>Ravindra Khanna</i>	
ILION	742
<i>Akash Deshpande</i>	
O PARTNER DIVINE (Poem)	746
<i>Anonymous</i>	
POET NISHIKANTO	747

<i>Yugal Kishore Gupta</i>	REMEMBERING GOPAL DASS GUPTA (1912-1998)	751
<i>Sibylle Hablik-Sharma</i>	TALES AND LEGENDS	754
<i>Marta Guha</i>	JAPANESE THINGS (Poem)	755
<i>Georgette Coty</i>	ALL ABOUT HORSES AND CONSCIOUSNESS	756
<i>Sutapa M</i>	LOVE (Poem)	757
<i>Nilima Das</i>	SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	758
<i>Gajendra Kumar</i>	THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM AND SRI AUROBINDO	762
<i>T R Reid</i>	A ROYAL CATALOGUE UNVEILS GEMS OF HISTORY	767
<i>P Raja</i>	SACRIFICE	770
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Shraddhavan</i>	Review of EN ROUTE ON THE PATH	774
<i>M S Srinivasan</i>	Review of INDIA AND THE WORLD SCENE by K D SETHNA	777

STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Anuradha Chowdry</i>	THE HIDDEN CHAMBER OF THE VEDIC TRUTH	782
<i>Japa Ghosh</i>	ORIGIN AND FATE OF THE UNIVERSE	785
<i>Pavak K Mitra</i>	MOONLIT NIGHT (Poem)	788
<i>Ketaki Chowkhan</i>	THE TRANSFORMATION (Short Story)	789

SHE IS A MASTER-BUILDER

. .ASWAPATHY answered to the seer:
“Is then the spirit ruled by an outward world?
O seer, is there no remedy within?
But what is fate if not the spirit’s will
After long time fulfilled by cosmic Force?
I deemed a mighty Power had come with her;
Is not that Power the high compeer of Fate?”
But Narad answered covering truth with truth:
“O Aswapathy, random seem the ways
Along whose banks your footsteps stray or run
In casual hours and moments of the gods,
Yet your least stumblings are foreseen above
A greatness in thy daughter’s soul resides
That can transform herself and all around,
But must cross on stones of suffering to its goal
Although designed like a nectar cup of heaven,
Of heavenly ether made she sought this air,
She too must share the human need of grief
And all her cause of joy transmute to pain. .
It is decreed and Satyavan must die,
The hour is fixed, chosen the fatal stroke.
What else shall be is written in her soul.
But till the hour reveals the fateful script
The writing waits illegible and mute.
Fate is Truth working out in Ignorance
O King, thy fate is a transaction done
At every hour between Nature and thy soul
With God for its foreseeing arbiter.
Fate is a balance drawn in Destiny’s book.
Man can accept his fate, he can refuse
Even if the One maintains the unseen decree
He writes thy refusal in thy credit page:
For doom is not a close, a mystic seal
Arisen from the tragic crash of life,
Arisen from the body’s torture and death,
The spirit rises mightier by defeat,
Its godlike wings grow wider with each fall.
Its splendid failures sum to victory....
Even death can cut not short thy spirit’s walk.
Thy goal, the road thou choosest are thy fate.

On the altar throwing thy thoughts, thy heart, thy works,
 Thy fate is a long sacrifice to the gods
 Till they have opened to thee thy secret self
 And made thee one with the indwelling God.
 O soul, intruder in Nature's ignorance,
 Armed traveller to the unseen supernal heights,
 Thy spirit's fate is a battle and ceaseless march
 Against invisible opponent Powers,
 A passage from Matter into timeless Self...
 Across the dust and mire of the earthly plain,
 On many-guarded lines and dangerous fronts,
 In dire assaults, in wounded slow retreats,
 Or holding the ideal's battered fort
 Or fighting against odds in lonely posts,
 Or camped in night around the bivouac's fires
 Awaiting the tardy trumpets of the dawn,
 In hunger and in plenty and in pain,
 Through life's green lanes and over her desert sands,
 Up the bald moor, along the sunlit ridge
 In serried columns with a straggling rear
 Led by its nomad vanguard's signal fires,
 Marches the army of the waylost god. ..
 In vain thou mournst that Satyavan must die;
 His death is a beginning of greater life,
 Death is the spirit's opportunity.
 A vast intention has brought two souls close
 And love and death conspire towards one great end
 For out of danger and pain heaven-bliss shall come,
 Time's unforeseen event, God's secret plan.
 This world was not built with random bricks of chance,
 A blind god is not destiny's architect;
 A conscios power has drawn the plan of life,
 There is a meaning in each curve and line.
 It is an architecture high and grand
 By many named and nameless masons built
 In which unseeing hands obey the Unseen,
 And of its master-builders she is one.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 456-60)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

THE CIRCUMSTANCE

IN order to understand fully the motives and causes of the acts and words of a man, it is necessary to know under what circumstances the acts were done or the words spoken. When at the start of the great war of Kurukshetra the exchange of missiles had begun, *pravṛtte śāstra-sampāte*, it was at that moment that the Lord revealed the Gita. To many this has occasioned surprise and annoyance; they say it must have been due to the author's carelessness or faulty intelligence. But in actual fact, Sri Krishna revealed the knowledge contained in the Gita, at that particular moment and in that situation to a person in that frame of mind, with full knowledge of the time, place and circumstance.

The time was at the commencement of the war. Those who have not developed or put to a test their heroic qualities or strength in a mighty flood of action can never be fit to receive the knowledge given in the Gita. Moreover those who have embarked on a great and difficult endeavour, an endeavour which automatically gives rise to many obstacles and obstructions, many enmities, fears of many setbacks, when in the course of that great endeavour there is acquired a divine strength, to them at that moment in order to take the endeavour to its final conclusion, for the successful carrying out of the divine's work is this knowledge revealed. The Gita lays down in the Yoga of works the foundations of the path to God. It is through works done with faith and devotion that knowledge is born. Therefore the traveller on the path indicated by the Gita does not leave the path and have the vision of God in a remote and quiet hermitage or hill or in a secluded spot; that heavenly Light illumines the world for him, that sweet and powerful Word comes within his hearing, all of a sudden in midway, amidst the noise and bustle of works.

The place was a battlefield, between two armies, where missiles were flying. To those who travel on this path, take the lead in works of this nature, often the realisation, *yoga-siddhi*, comes and the supreme knowledge dawns, all of a sudden at a critical and momentous hour which determines the march of destiny in this direction or that, depending on the nature of their acts. That knowledge is no bar to action, it is intimately connected with action. It is no doubt true that knowledge also dawns in meditation, in loneliness, when one turns back on one's self, that is why the sages love to be alone. But the traveller on the path of the Gita's Yoga can so divide his instruments of mind, life and body that he experiences loneliness in the midst of a crowd, peace amidst noise, supreme repose while engaged in a whirl of activities. He does not regulate the inner being by outward circumstances, he controls the outer by the inner state. The ordinary Yogin is afraid of life, he escapes from it and takes to Yoga in the shelter and protection of an Ashram. Life itself is the Ashram for the

Karmayogin The ordinary Yogin desires an outward peace and silence, a disturbance of the peace impedes his inner askesis. The Karmayogin enjoys a vast peace and silence within; this state becomes deeper in the midst of external noise, any external disturbance does not harm that inner askesis, it remains undisturbed. People say, how was the Sri Krishna-Arjuna dialogue possible in the middle of armies going in for battle? The answer is, it was possible through the power of Yoga. Through that power of Yoga, amidst the din of battle, at one particular spot, with Sri Krishna and Arjuna peace reigned within and without; the noise of war could not affect these two. In this is implied another spiritual teaching applicable to works. Those who practise the Gita's yoga are the most capable workers and yet remain unattached to their work. Right in the midst of their work they may hear the inner call of the Self, desist from the work and plunge themselves in yoga and do the inner askesis. They know that the work is God's, the fruit is His, we are instruments, hence they have no anxiety about the fruit of their work. They also know that the inner call comes for facilitating the Yoga of works, for an improvement in the working, for the increase of knowledge and power. Therefore they do not fear to desist from their work; they know that in the spiritual effort there can never be an unnecessary waste of time.

The attitude of Arjuna comes from a rising of the last doubts of the Karmayogin. There are many who, perplexed by world-problems, the problem of suffering and pleasure, the problem of sin and virtue, declare an escape or flight as the only pathway to the good, and proclaim the virtues of an ascetic withdrawal from life, *vairāgya* and the renunciation of works. Lord Buddha has taught that the world is impermanent and full of suffering, and has shown the way to attaining Nirvana. Others like Jesus and Tolstoy have been staunchly opposed to war which has been the ancient law of the world and to the system of marriage which maintains the continuity of human-kind. The ascetics say, work itself is the product of ignorance, reject ignorance, reject all work, be quiet and actionless. The Advaitin says, the world is false, utterly false, merge yourself in *Brahman*. Then why this world? Why this life? If God exists, then why does He undertake this useless meaningless labour like that of an immature boy? Why did He start this arid joke? If the Self alone exists, if the world is nothing but an illusion, why again does this Self impose this ugly dream on its pure existence? The atheist says, there is neither God nor Self, there is only the blind action of a blind force. But what kind of view is that? Whose is this force, from where is it born, and why again is it blind and insane? No one has been able to give a satisfactory answer to these questions, neither the Christian nor the Buddhist, nor the Advaitin, the atheist or scientist. All are silent on these points and are at the same time eager to shirk the issue by evading the question. Only the Upanishads and the Gita following their line have been unwilling to shirk the issue in this way. That is why the Gita has been chanted during the war of Kurukshetra. Acts terribly worldly—the killing of one's teachers and brothers and kin—these were the objects of the war. At the commencement of that war which destroyed thousands of creatures, Arjuna throws away the divine bow from his hands knowing not what to do, and says in a pitiable tone:

tat kim karmaṇi ghore mām nyojayasi Keśava

‘‘Then why do you engage me in this terrible work?’’ In answer there arises, amidst the din of battle, in tones of thunder, the mighty song uttered by the mouth of God.

kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram krtam

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi sangam tyaktvā dhanañjaya

*buddhīyukto jahātīha ubhe sukrtaduskrite
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogah karmasu kauśalam*

asakta hyācaran karma param āpnoti pūrusah

*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi samnyasyādhyātmacetasā
nirāśīrnurmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ*

*gatasangasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasah
yajñāyācaratah karma samagram pravilyate*

ajñānenā vṛtam jñānam tena muhyamti jantavah

*bhaktāram yajñatapasām sarvalokamaheśvaram
suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñatvā mām śāntum ṛcchati*

*mayā harāmstvam jahī mā vyathisthā
yuddhyasva jetāsi rane sapatnān*

*yasya nāhamkṛto bhāvo buddhīryasya na lipyate
hatvāpi sa imānlakān na hanti na nibadhyate*

‘‘Therefore you go on doing works, the kind of work your ancestors have been doing, that work you too have to perform. .. Do works in a state of union with the Divine, by giving up attachment . He whose will and intelligence are fixed in yoga passes beyond virtue and sin in the field of work itself. Therefore strive for the yoga, yoga is the best means to work. If a man works in a spirit of detachment, he will certainly find God.... With a heart filled with knowledge, entrust to Me all your works, get rid of sorrow by giving up desire and by rejecting egoism; enter the fray . He who has no attachments left and is free, whose mind lives always in knowledge, he who does works for the sake of sacrifice, all the works of such a man instead of being a cause of bondage at once get completely dissolved in Me. . The knowledge that lies hidden within all creatures is covered up by ignorance That is why they fall into delusion by

creating the dualities like joy and sorrow, sin and virtue.... A supreme peace can be obtained by knowing Me as the Lord of all the worlds, the enjoyer of all kinds of works like sacrifice and askesis, and the friend and beloved of all beings.... It is I who have killed your enemies, you destroy them as a mere instrument, do not grieve; get into the fight, you will conquer the adversary in war... He who has an inner being free from egoism, whose will and intelligence remain unattached even if he destroys the whole world, still he does not kill, does not undergo any bondage of sin . ''

There is no sign here of an evasion of the question, of shirking the issue. The issue has been set forth in clear terms. What is God, what is the world, what is life, what is the way to right living? These questions have been answered by the Gita in brief. And yet the Gita's aim is not to teach asceticism but to teach the way of works. Herein lies the universal utility of the Gita.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Sanat K Banerji)

WORLDLY WISDOM

दाक्षिण्यं स्वजने दया परजने शाठ्यं सदा दुर्जने
प्रीतिः साधुजने नयो नृपजने विद्वज्जने चार्जवम् ।
शौर्यं शत्रुजने क्षमा गुरुजने कान्ताजने धृष्टता
ये चैवं पुरुषाः कलासु कुशलास्तेष्वेव लोकस्थितिः ॥

HAVE mercy for all men, for thy own race
Have kindness, for the cunning cunning have,
Affection for the good, and politic ways
For princes: for thy foes a spirit brave,
Patience for elders, candour for the wise:
Have skilful ways to steal out women's hearts.
Who shine here, masters in these social arts,
In them the human scheme deep-rooted lies.

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

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

My dear Mother,

This evening's meditation has resulted in a great renunciation of the past. My soul has gone to the future and given itself to You to be a perfect instrument in Your hands for the new creation that You are bringing down upon the earth

YES, it is the future realisation that counts.

My being gives itself to You in all devotion and faithfulness

And the gift is received with my heart's best affection.

Always with you, my dear child

7 November 1936

My dear Mother,

A weak point is opening in me. I am becoming over-sensitive to the slightest thing and my first reaction is "Send me away, relieve me from this work" My faithfulness to You does not in the least tolerate this weakness, and yet I cannot deny its presence. Some months back You told me: "You have not taken full refuge in me, there is something which is not yet worked out" This is true, and this is what brings up all the trouble from the subconscious

My very dear child,

It is a very great progress that you have become conscious of this weak point in you—for now it will be relatively easy to overcome it.

The first step is not to identify yourself with it—to consider it as some wrong influence from outside, something to be pushed away. And if in spite of that it touches you, call me, call me ceaselessly until you are cured. At the same time it will give strength to the weak point and you will see that little by little it will become strong

Always with you, certain of the victory

11 November 1936

My dear Mother,

My horoscope says that I shall be friendly towards nobody, even my friends will abuse me and give me up. But this prediction will prove wrong. there will be peace in my heart, sweetness in my speech, gentleness and harmony in every expression. My entire being will live in the Divine, for the Divine and by the Divine

Surely, by yoga the horoscope can be mastered—we are no more bound to it—and we can change our nature as well.

Surely, you are my child and will become so more and more perfectly
All love and blessings to you, my dear child

19 November 1936

My dear Mother,

A very humble confession I have always denied the sex-instinct in me, refused to accept it There was a very strong will in me which simply controlled it, crushed it, pushed it out from the surface consciousness. Yet for all the negation it was there, acting in some form or other

My dear Mother, my being now accepts its past silliness and in all humbleness it opens itself to You May this blot be removed and my entire being be Yours.

I am very glad that you have found it out This is a very great step towards the cure
Always with you, in the effort and the success.

2 December 1936

My dear Mother,

Truly I am a pretender and a hypocrite. I showed myself to be what I was not and brought a good many troubles to You by my behaviour, especially because I have to work mainly with ladies. Would the solution be to remove myself from the field of work?

No solution at all It is not you that you must remove but the difficulty The weakness must be overcome and my force will be with you and do what is necessary to remove altogether the obstacle, if you let it do so.

My entire being has become grateful today. I was put to a real and true test If I were not placed in such close contact with the ladies, I would not have found out my weakness But I must confess, I could not remain sincere to the core. I hope that it is not too late

Surely it is not too late and the victory is certain.

In spite of all this, I have always felt some unknown protection around me, even before I came here.

Yes, the protection has always been upon you.

All love and blessings to you, my dear child

3 December 1936

*My dear Mother,
May I remain given to You.*

There is surely no question about that—but surely also you could not believe that sadhana could be done without facing some difficulties. As your aspiration is sincere, whatever was in the subconscious standing in the way of the Divine Realisation, has come to the surface in order to be transformed. There is nothing there to make you sad or depressed—on the contrary, you ought to rejoice over these occasions to make progress and never forget to lean for support and help on my love, force and blessings.

15 December 1936

*My dear Mother,
The clouds passed away this morning and once more I find myself in the consciousness of zeal, courage and confidence.*

I am very glad about this good news, glad but not astonished for I expected as much.
Love and blessings to you, my dear child.

16 December 1936

*My dear Mother,
The year ends and a new year begins. May the new year bring to us God-realisation.*

Yes, the Light must illumine the consciousness and the shadows of Ignorance must be dissolved in all.

Love and blessings to my dear child.

30 December 1936

*Mother,
There are plenty of moods and fancies among the inmates, many unnecessary harassings. I undergo all possible pinchings, tortures and troubles, but our goal is something else—it is the Divine Life.*

You are quite right in not allowing the moods and fancies of the people to affect you. You must soar above all that in the constant feeling of the Divine's Presence, Love and Protection.

With you always.

Undated

Faith is the condition to be frank with the Divine.

A complete frankness with the Divine will allow your faith to be steady

Undated

(Concluded)

PANTHEIST

How can we worship Thee in an image
 When all the world's Thine image Divine?
 How build to thee a shrine, O Mother,
 For whom the unwall'd blue is a shrine?

All image Thee: sun, moon and star,
 Sea, forest, falls and mountain-heights,
 The woodland home, the vernal wind,
 Trees, creepers, fruits and flower-delights.

The wife's pure love—loyal and sweet,
 Laughter of children, mother's kiss,
 The saint's devotion, genius, power
 All are Thy sweetness, glory and bliss.

Wherever I turn and look in space,
 In a million forms I'm met by Thee:
 In spring and winter, day or night
 Thy beauty burns effulgently!

For Thee we grope, fools unsurmising—
 Thou giv'st thyself, a hostage of grace,
 Compassionate Love, Thou at our door
 Call'st still with open arms to bless.

“FREEWILL” IN SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION

SRI AUROBINDO’S views on the crucial choice that must be made of the way of living, if we are really to be fulfilled and the calls of existence truly to be answered, are clear to most of us. we sum them up as “the Integral Yoga” But we are not equally familiar with his outlook on the power to choose. Wherever there is the activity of the will, there is the phenomenon of choosing—and yet there is no warrant in this for believing that the choice is freely made and not occasioned by subtle or unknown factors other than our will itself. How exactly does Sri Aurobindo stand with regard to the problem whether the human will is free?

A couple of points which he puts before us may appear, in isolation and at face value, to deny man freewill altogether. First, genuine freedom of will as of consciousness and delight and being can only be in a divine state, for only the Divine is genuinely free; and so long as we are in the unregenerate condition, which is subject to ego and desire and the drive of Nature, Prakriti, untransformed by the Luminous and the Eternal, we can never speak of authentic freewill. Second, once we postulate a divine Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence, we must conclude it to have originated and decreed whatever arises and acts in the universe which is its emanation. Is there then any room left in us for freewill as usually understood? If no genuine freewill can be except in the freedom of the Divine, can we be thought free even to choose that freedom or stay away from it? Again, if all things are originally decreed by the Divine, is not our feeling of being real does a delusion given us for some purpose of the Divine’s world-play? This question is akin to the time-old one. if God, having all-knowledge, has foreseen everything, have we any power to deviate from His plan, and do we not have inevitably to carry out the details of it?

Many Christian theologians have attempted to solve the dilemma. some have said that God’s knowledge is in eternity and eternity is different from time and such knowledge does not clash with free action within a different order of being, others have said, “God cannot be a true creator if He cannot create creators.” No proposition of this type is in itself satisfactory, though each may have a faint inkling of some truth which is ill-caught and ill-expressed by it. To drive a wedge between God’s knowledge in eternity and man’s actions in time is to indulge in a quibble. if by eternity is meant a status in which past and present and future are not a sequence but an all-at-once, an endless total Now, then every “now” of our ordinary life as well as of all existence is not something fixed by God from the past, but would it cease to be actuated by Him in the very present? God’s hold from the past is avoided; yet unless eternity and His all-knowledge are rendered otiose and meaningless, His hold at every present moment remains complete. In the face of this complete hold, the proposition about God being no creator unless creators are created by Him is no more than a brilliant epigram if understood in a Christian context. Christianity conceives the human soul as a creature brought into existence by God at some point of time and existing with some resemblance to Him yet with no essential identity with Him. Such

a soul cannot be a creator in any Godlike sense and must be entirely subject to God’s endless total Now underlying and actuating all its “nows” or else to His foreknowledge in the past determining its career.

The primary *sine qua non* to be recognised for making any freewill valid is: God who originates and decrees everything must somehow be not different from our own souls. Without identity with God no freewill anywhere can be. This identity would be the truth behind the epigram about creators. only, that epigram does not openly put man’s soul on a par with the Divine, does not conceive it as an eternal aspect of the Divine—an eternal aspect possible because the Divine would Himself be conceived as being simultaneously single and multiple, unitary yet many-poised, essentially one but numerically not bound by oneness. Does Sri Aurobindo grant the identity?

It is a cardinal characteristic of his vision, bound up with God’s being One-in-Many. Unless God is at the same time multiple and single, the manifold world would have no basis in God. We should have to rest with a fundamental dualism or resort to an illusionist theory of the manifold world. Even an illusion, however, must have at least a subjective existence and it can exist, be it ever so subjectively, in nothing save God if He is the Sole Reality, and to understand such an existing is as much a hurdle as to understand God’s being One-in-Many. Besides, our evolution, difficult and shot with evil and suffering, out of the Inconscient, demands that God should be such. All other accounts would fail to explain fully the type of evolutionary process adopted. “To explain it,” says Sri Aurobindo, “there must be two missing elements, a conscious assent by the soul to this manifestation and a reason in the All-Wisdom that makes the play significant and intelligible.”¹ The reason in the All-Wisdom is not here our direct concern, though we may mention that it is the extreme attractiveness of the strenuous joy lying in self-concealing and self-finding, the joy which would be at the utmost when the self-concealing is the awful plunge into the sheer Inconscient and the self-finding is through the absolute opposite of the Divine. What is of pertinence to the issue at stake is the soul’s conscious assent. Can the assent be an explanatory feature and a meaningful fact under any circumstance other than that the soul is free to will? And can the soul be free unless it is not created at a certain point of time to be sent willy-nilly on a world-journey through imperfection but is a particular eternal aspect of the Divine, a mode of His manyness, so that the Divine’s fiat and the soul’s assent are automatically the same thing? Sri Aurobindo’s vision, therefore, is not inimical to the primary *sine qua non* for freewill, and his pronouncement on the universe’s utter dependence on God’s decree is not deterministic when taken in combination with his full outlook.

But a second indispensable condition has to be satisfied for freewill’s validity. It is obvious that we, as we are from day to day, cannot be described as souls that are eternal aspects of the Divine. We are too obscure and weak and perverted: we have a tremendously long way to go to realise ourselves as individualised divinities. Indi-

1 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18 p 409

vidualised divinities we may be in our secret recesses: our daily surface existence is pretty far from Godliness. Hence the important query: does our souls' assent from their God-poise to the strange cosmic play confer on what we do in even our ordinary moments a true freewill? All our actions are really of our souls carrying out the free decisions they have taken in their role of divine creators; but, on our surface, are we in any sense our own souls and do we share at least some of their freewill? No freewill can be in us if even as we are, if even in our state that is human and not ostensibly divine, we have no power, however small, to choose or not to choose. Freewill can have little relevance to us if our normal selves are wanting in some touch of identity with our souls that are essentially identical with God to exercise any freewill our ordinary moments must be identical in some degree or other with God Himself! Does Sri Aurobindo take them to be thus identical?

Let us glance at his scheme of our selfhood, our soulhood. Above all manifestation and evolution is the Jivatman, our highest self or soul, the individualised divinity, a supreme transcendental form in the play of the One as the Many. Presiding over manifestation and evolution, the Jivatman projects a representative into the cosmic process: this representative is the Antaratman, our inmost or deepest self or soul with all the potentialities of the Divine in it, and it passes from birth to birth, making for evolutionary purposes a bright nucleus round which the duller tones of mind-stuff, vitality-stuff and matter-stuff are gathered, infusing its own sweetness and light and strength into them stage by stage and developing them to serve as its transparent mediums. Through experience in birth after birth the nucleus too grows and will at last be able to offer to the Supreme, whence the Antaratman came, a full manifested personality—many-sided though single, individualised yet embracing all cosmos and partaking of all Transcendence beyond both individuality and cosmicity in time. But, while dealing with mind-stuff, vitality-stuff and matter-stuff, this true psyche here below makes a projection of itself into them, a projection which gets steeped in their tones. Now, all existence has a biune reality—Purusha and Prakriti, conscious being and Nature. Wherever consciousness plays, this biune reality is present in one form or another, openly concordant or apparently divided. We have thus in the realm of evolutionary existence a mental being facing mental Nature, a vital being fronting vital Nature, a physical being opposite physical Nature: these beings are experienced by us according as our consciousness assumes a mental or vital or physical poise. And all of them are representative of the true psychic Purusha. When the multi-possible Purusha of us with its centre in the psychic being stands fully back, uninvolved in Prakriti and lord of it, though not united altogether with the Jivatman above, we have a clear realisation of some measure of authentic freewill, because that uninvolved and masterful Purusha, centrally psychic, is in rapport with the totally free Jivatman. But even when the projection of the psyche into mind, vitality and matter acts as something involved in Prakriti and is the stumbling surface being of us, the self as ordinarily cognised, then also it carries a touch of freedom with it, for that involvement, that enslavement, is freely made and there remains with us the power to

withhold sanction to the current play of Nature in our members and to bring about a turn towards the Perfect, the Divine, the Un-enlaved. Precisely on that power is based Sri Aurobindo’s appeal to us to choose the life divine instead of the life human. He states: “The Divine can lead, he does not drive. There is an internal freedom permitted to every mental being called ‘man’ to assent or not to assent to the Divine leading: how else can any real spiritual evolution be done?”

If it is asked what becomes of Sri Aurobindo’s assertion that only in a divine state there can be genuine freedom of will, the answer is: he evidently means by genuine freedom of will a quality of the full experience of being not what we apparently are at present but a luminous superhuman entity that is cosmic while being individual, and transcendental while being cosmic. Such freedom we cannot experience when we are unregenerate. In our present state, obscure and weak and perverted, we are divorced from the wisdom and puissance and beauty that we are on our ultimate heights. We have not the absolute freedom of our own hidden Infinite, nor have we the potent prerogative of our own psychic depths; still, a dim vestige we do possess of what we have put behind and beyond us and part of the vestige is an ability to give to Prakriti’s fluctuations of inertia, vehemence and harmony a Yes or a No and gradually effect a passage from our human imperfection to a supernal splendour. No freewill other than this bare ability is ours, but it is freewill none the less. And at least a faint glimmer of freewill has indeed to be there in our surface existence if we are meant to be conscious co-operators in the work of rising from humanity to superhumanity and bringing into all our constituents what Sri Aurobindo terms the Supermind, the archetypal truth of all that we are in the evolutionary process. The free assenting highest soul of us, the Jivatman, that has been creative of the world-play from its eternal poise in the Divine, cannot but keep of its vast freewill a pin-point in conscious co-operators, in minds that discriminate and argue and weigh, in beings that have enough detachment from Nature to at least enable them to reflect on themselves and to study and judge Nature. On that pin-point the whole of mental human life is fulcrummed for activity, and the conceding of it is implied in the Aurobindonian outlook which holds our intelligent will to be a ray, deformed though it may be, of the Gnosis, the Supermind.

(To be concluded)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

(At the request of some of the readers of *Mother India*, the present article is being reproduced from the author’s *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, second edition, 1992 —R Y D)

AS A MOONBEAM FLIES

THE silken web of the moon
Is fallen on the sea
Silence bereaved set free
An old and a new tune.

*Swing slow, swing low,
Gently your pinions lifting.
Swing low, swing slow,
Starlight your pinions sifting.
Swing slow, swing low,
Silent and moonwardly drifting.*

From this moon so nearly full
Gaze upon crescent earth
Sad children of lunar dearth
Fain would pull

*Swing by, swing nigh,
You are an earthbeam here.
Swing nigh, swing by,
Scatter earthshine from your hair.
Swing by, swing nigh,
On deadness and shadowscape drear*

Starkly that silver tomb
Eschewed, receding—
Hail to new glories breeding
In earth's womb

*Swing fast, swing past,
Life's cry through the silence seeping.
Swing past, swing fast,
Songwards and earthwards leaping
Swing fast, swing past,
No more by death-tide neaping*

March 2, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: You have certainly got the 'flight of the moonbeam' into the rhythm and substance of this lyric

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

08:06:1994

I cannot imagine how much he has done. Indeed, how much he has done, how much work in me!

And there is a perfect logic in all the steps, in the whole sequence, one step following another step. The action directly in the vital-physical has speeded up the entire process.

They surely know what is to be done and when it is to be done.

It is good I had asked it to be worked out directly, directly at the vital-physical level. The Being of Ananda,—I never knew him earlier; but he preceded before this action was carried out. Had it not been so, I would not have been able to withstand the force, that force in my vital-physical.

I understand, I mean I recognise that there is a perfect logic in the whole operation I recognise it now; I perceive the logic of the entire sequence.

You see, my physical is very weak, and I had two heart-attacks and so things have to be done without going through the several stages, without coming from the head down to the vital-physical. That method would have been impossible in my case; it could not have been a practical way. But here the action is direct.

11:06:1994

The work in the vital-physical was difficult. It could be done only by the supramental Grace. The problem of the vital-physical was there with me for a long time.

I am now told that it, the vital-physical, is in rapport with Sri Aurobindo. It has direct connection with him.

What does that mean?

Sri Aurobindo will do whatever is to be done to tackle it for whatever purpose it be. It has opened to his action. I had asked that the Grace should work directly on it.

It worked in that way. Had it come down from centre to centre, descending to lower and lower levels, it would have perhaps taken a longer time. Or perhaps got weakened.

Then, while I was meditating, I saw a big well. This well deepened from my heart to the sex centre, even a little down below, down to the thighs; it was a very large well, but it was empty. There was nothing in it, a hollow well, but perhaps not dry.

It was held from below by my psychic being. The psychic being supported the well. I could see it. This time it was the psychic being; the spirit was not visible to me there.

I do not know what it is there for, the psychic being, nor do I know what is going to happen to it.

The meditation was long, very long. Physically I was feeling a little tired also, but not that much. But then I continued my meditation; I let it proceed.

I had experienced emptiness earlier, but the empty well was something different.

It is good that the psychic being is supporting the well from below. It is safer also.

There cannot be transformation unless sex is conquered. The well is deepening below that centre. It is an empty well.

13:06:1994

The Mother was working directly on the sex centre. Ananda had descended earlier and stopped at the vital. When the Mother was working, I could see from the psychic centre energy rising up and going above. It was released completely.

Is it Ojas?

I am not told about it, but it must be that. Energy rising above from this centre must be that.

In the evening when I went to the Samadhi, Sri Aurobindo told me to enter into him, into his consciousness. I entered into him.

The Mother started working in me.

She said that now Power is descending in Sri Aurobindo's consciousness. It is not Force, it is Power.

She said several times that it is Power descending in Sri Aurobindo's consciousness. I do not know why she repeatedly told this to me, several times.

I said, "Let it descend." It was descending in his consciousness. It went on for half an hour. It had come down to the vital level.

She said at this stage that it is enough for the present. It is Power. As it is descending for the first time, it is enough for the present.

Then it stopped. I was not conscious of anything until then. I knew only then of its coming down to the vital centre. I was neither conscious of the spirit nor of the psychic being.

15:06:1994

Now I can understand why the Mother repeated several times that the Power is descending in Sri Aurobindo's consciousness,—I had entered into him. Her telling it repeatedly to me acted like a Mantra. Otherwise what else could have been the necessity of repeating it so many times?

Earlier the Power had descended down to the higher vital level. But with the present experience it came further down, descending into the lower vital, and the physical. The work that was to be done had to be taken up and it could not have been stopped, that I should have first got ready for the descent.

They know what was the best. Up to the lower vital there was not much difficulty. But as far as the physical is concerned, I could hardly feel any descent; it appeared as if it was coming into it only drop by drop. It continued that way.

The Mother said that she was coming with the Power. There was considerable difficulty, there was pain which I did not feel in the earlier stages. I did not feel it when it was coming down in the vital. It was quite hard

Was it the supramentalised Overmind? Or the Supermind itself acting directly? I do not know. But then the supramental Grace had come with the Mother It only and nothing else must have cleared the way

In the physical there was that difficulty still present. That is why the Being of Ananda had come earlier, preceding the descent of the Power

The work is going on.

I do not know why Power and not Force.

They want to achieve something definite. It has come to the physical Then, you see, I was told that my physical Purusha was detached from Prakriti, the physical Nature He is now free, this physical Purusha.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

WHAT PATH OF WISDOM...?

A BLIND man sat there alone,
In the lengthening shadow of a temple wall,
People who came to pray
At the temple told me he was the wisest of all

I went and humbly asked him,
“O sage, what path of wisdom did you follow
Blind since birth as you are?
Sitting here the way to God you seem to know ”

“Blindness gave me this sight,”
He said, “showed me this path to see the song,
I see God O where you are,
Even as would a deaf hear the loud temple gong.”

And the deaf man told me,
“O hear what the moon says, the stars, the sun,
I can swear as they hurry
They raise a chant in praise of the silent One ”

R Y DESHPANDE

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

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

IN order to help the readers get an adequate grasp of the exact significance of the words of the Master and the Mother gathered in this essay we have felt it necessary to first state in clearest terms the very difficult problems involved in the task of effectuating a supramental physical transformation here upon earth.

One other point we should never lose sight of For, although Sri Aurobindo was the Yogeshwara, the Master of Yoga, and the Mother the Yogeshwari, the Queen of Yoga, and although they were always leading and helping other spiritual seekers both in the Ashram and in the world outside to attain to different sub-goals in Sadhana depending on the individual sadhakas' widely varying stages of development—these sub-goals (i) the acquisition of an inner yogic consciousness; (ii) replacing by this yogic consciousness the sadhaka's ordinary view of things, nature of movements and motives of life, (iii) the discovery of the veiled psychic entity and the turning of the mind-nature, life-nature and the body-nature into a conscious instrumentation of the soul, (iv) the spiritualisation of the being by the descent of a divine Light, Force, Purity, Knowledge, Freedom and Wideness, (v) the dissolution of the personal ego-consciousness and entry into the cosmic consciousness, (vi) the realisation of the Self or Atman, etc , etc —the principal goal of Sadhana for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother themselves has always been the divine transformation of the earthly life including, as its final Siddhi, the total transformation of the apparently inconscient physical existence, and all these through the quadruple process of an ascent to the supermind, the subsequent descent of the supermind, the emergence of the supermind already involved in Matter, and finally the transfiguration effected by the divinely decisive power of the supermind

The task is easier put than done. Matter and the physical body have offered to the spiritual seeker throughout the ages the most difficult nut to crack. This can only be done by the direct action of the supermind or divine Truth-Consciousness in the very bosom of Matter itself.

The readers may be wondering: What is this mysterious supermind which is making its appearance again and again in the last few pages of this essay? Let us try to elucidate the point which is central to the whole of the discussion to follow

The world we perceive through our physical senses aided or unaided by sophisticated instruments of observation and/or surmised by our intellectual reason is what is called the physical world. Modern Science admits the reality of this world alone which is inexorably bound by a chain of inviolable laws and entirely governed by the play of an inconscient Energy

To deny the existence of any other world is nothing but a short-sighted dogmatic assertion; for, the growth of our consciousness, its movement of progressive widening, deepening and heightening, and the bringing into play of other higher and deeper faculties of cognition make us indisputably aware of many more worlds of existence one above another, hierarchically arranged. These worlds possess their own objective reality independent of their embodiment in gross Matter and are governed by their own separate laws of functioning.

Thus, when we cross the border of our ordinary waking consciousness, we successively come across (i) the subtle physical world, (ii) the lower vital world; (iii) the higher vital world; (iv) the world of little mind, (v) the world of higher mind, etc.

When we cross the confines of the highest intellectual mind, we ascend into what may be called the spiritual-mind planes of which the successive levels in ascending order are (i) the 'Higher Mind' of Truth-Thought which is a world of automatic and spontaneous knowledge, (ii) the 'Illumined Mind' of Truth-Vision whose characteristic power of knowledge is not thought but sight, (iii) the 'Intuitive Mind' whose power is an intimate and clear Truth-Perception which is much more than sight and conception. Ascending still further we meet what Sri Aurobindo has called the 'Overmind', a Cosmic Mind of global knowledge. Overmind represents the highest possible status-dynamis of the Spirit in the spiritual-mind range.

From the ordinary human mind up to Overmind, all these planes of existence belong to the category of Mind. Thus, we have met so far three cosmic principles, e.g., Matter, Life and Mind; these principles constitute what the ancient mystics of India called the 'lower hemisphere' of existence, *aparārdha*. Ignorance, in however attenuated a form, spreads its tentacles everywhere in this lower hemisphere. And if this hemisphere had been the sole field of manifestation, any manifestation as such would have to be considered a futile adventure of the being, and a final escape from it would have been the only course of wisdom left to the aspiring consciousness of man if it would like to seek its spiritual rest or fulfilment.

But, as a matter of fact, beyond and above the 'lower hemisphere' of existence there is another, a 'higher or upper hemisphere', *parārdha*, where all is pure and undiluted Light and Truth and Power and Ananda.

When we cross the parting line of Overmind and pass into the higher hemisphere, we first meet Supermind which is the Truth-Consciousness, Rita-Chit, of the Divine himself through which the Supreme becomes aware not only of his own essence and being but of the essence of his world-manifestation too. This supermind, otherwise termed *vijñāna* or *mahas*, is all Truth and Freedom and Wideness, *satyam-ṛitam-bṛhat*. It has to be noted that the supermind does not transcend all possible manifestation but it is above the lower triplicity of Mind, Life and Matter which is our present experience of manifestation.

Beyond this supermind we come across in ascending order the Ananda plane, the Chit plane and the Sat plane. These are not really three distinctly different planes of manifestation; they rather constitute the triune dynamic reality of absolute Existence,

absolute Consciousness-Force and absolute Delight, pithily termed as Sachchidananda.

Thus, Sat, Chit-Shakti, Ananda and Mahas—absolute Existence, Consciousness-Force, Delight and Supermind—make up the ‘higher hemisphere’ of manifestation. Beyond and outside this hemisphere is the supracosmic Reality of static Sachchidananda who is thus above all manifestation but from whom all manifestation and all the universes proceed

Whenever this Sachchidananda wills to be dynamic, he uses the divine Mind or Supermind as his creative power of manifestation. Thus, in the final account, it is supermind which is the real and ultimate creator of the universe although the present world is in its frontal appearance a creation of Overmind

We have so far indicated a sevenfold chord of being made up, in a descending order, of the seven cosmic principles, *e g*, Existence, Consciousness-Force, Delight, Supermind, Mind, Life and Matter. Thus, Matter is the principle placed at the very bottom below all the others. But this is only in appearance. For, the other six principles including Supermind are not really cut off from Matter; all of them have, in reality, descended into Matter and remained there *involved* all the time, totally submerged and absolutely imperceptible behind the thick and obscure covering of the inconscience of Matter.

Now the task before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has been to make this divine supermind evolve out of the opaque casing of Matter and transform by its supremely potent and effective power the mind-nature, life-nature and even the body-nature of man

But this overt emergence of the involved supermind is not at all possible unless the supermind from its own station above in the higher hemisphere descends into Matter and sufficiently applies its pressure on the inconscience of the material principle.

Thus, in the total perspective of Sri Aurobindo’s Sadhana for the earth-nature, an ascent to the supermind has to be the first indispensable step; then, the bringing down of the supermind into Matter itself has to be the second, evoking the involved supermind out, the third; and finally transforming the body-consciousness and the material substance into their divine counterparts the fourth and last operation. And after the completion of this fourfold operation alone can the life-mission of Sri Aurobindo be deemed to have been fulfilled. And therein lies the great mystery of Sri Aurobindo’s passing, apparently in the middle of the operation of his divine enterprise.

The process, be it noted, is extremely difficult to execute in its fullness. For, Matter, the lowermost cosmic principle, upon which Life and Mind here stand as upon a pedestal, offers a stubborn resistance to any attempt to change its age-old habitual character. But as long as this inconscient principle of Matter along with its attendant powers of Ignorance, Inertia and Division is not divinely transformed, it is patently obvious that the mind and life and body of man which all stand upon and are largely conditioned by the functioning of this ground-principle of Matter cannot ex-

pect to have their total divine fulfilment here in a material body upon earth, and the dream of ushering in a perfectly divine manhood in earthly existence will ever remain a vain unfulfilled delusion. In that eventuality, the promise of Life upon earth has to be cancelled, its meaning annulled and the earthly being will have no other option for the realisation of Sachchidananda than to abolish its own existence, shed off from it the undivine mind and life and body and return to the eternal bliss or the eternal quietude of the pure Infinite elsewhere

Indeed, as Sri Aurobindo has so beautifully and trenchantly put it, the material body of man has been from the very beginning "the soul's great difficulty, its continual stumbling-block and rock of offence. Therefore the eager seeker of spiritual fulfilment has hurled his ban against the body and his world-disgust selects this world-principle above all other things as an especial object of loathing" (*The Life Divine*, p. 232)

It is a fact that Life evolving in Matter is at constant war with it and the battle seems always to end in the apparent defeat of Life and its extinction in death.

Mind, in its turn, evolving in a living body has its own quarrel with both Life and Matter and is totally disgusted with the situation of its constant subjection to the grossness and inertia of Matter and the passions and sufferings of Life.

When spirituality awakens in an individual human being, it finds itself shackled to the littleness and limitation of mind, life and body and condemns them as "the trinity of the world, the flesh and the devil."

War is thus declared between the emerging Spirit and its instruments of earthly manifestation and the victory of the Spirit is sought in a rejection of mind, life and body, and in an ultimate withdrawal into the Spirit's own domain of infinitudes.

Sri Aurobindo affirms that this type of escapist solution is no solution; it is only an evasion of the problem. For we should not forget that in real reality Matter and Spirit are one. "Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter, Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit." (*The Life Divine*, p. 241)

Therefore we can have the solution here itself in a real victory of Life over Matter, of Mind over Life and Matter, and of Spirit over the triplicity of Mind, Life and Matter. This can be achieved through an unfettered and perfect possession of mind, life and body by an absolutely free and conscious Spirit. In Sri Aurobindo's view this last conquest can alone make the other two victories really possible.

At the same time it cannot be gainsaid that, as the situation prevails at present, the crux of the problem undoubtedly lies in Matter itself. The material principle is the prime factor in the building up of the unsatisfactory life we have been forced to lead now. Because of its material embodiment life upon earth has been gross and limited and stricken with pain and death; and because of material embodiment again our "Mind is more than half blind, its wings clipped, its feet tied to a narrow perch and held back from the vastness and freedom above of which it is conscious." (*The Life Divine*, p. 242)

But Sri Aurobindo assures us, this is a difficulty peculiar to the transitional phase

of evolution and this need not be and is surely not the permanent and essential feature of all possible physical existence. A perceptive study of the evolution of consciousness upon earth convinces us that it is not merely a mental being like man who was hidden in the physical forms of Matter and has subsequently evolved, there is in fact involved in Matter the supreme Sachchidananda, the infinite and absolute Being-Knowledge-Will-Delight, which, in the course of terrestrial evolution, has first emerged as Life, then as Mind and is surely going to emerge in time as a supramental divine being who shall impress on his mental, vital and bodily functioning a perfectly divine Law.

Such a supramental being appearing in evolution would liberate the mind and life from all the ills arising out of their present divided existence, and would subsequently liberate even the bodily existence from the most undivine law of inertia, division and death.

And if man, the terrestrial being, is destined to become the vehicle of this supramental transformation, he will surely develop in good time not only a divine mind and divine life but also a divine body. Then, at last, "the descent of Spirit into form shall be at once humanly and divinely justified" (*The Life Divine*, p. 250).

But this glorious prospect is for the far-off future when the supramental transformation will be fully achieved. In the meantime the descending higher consciousness seeking to transmute the lower will be forced to meet and solve the almost insuperable difficulties involved in the process of transformation. For, the act of transformation, let us disabuse our mind of all illusion, is not a miracle all the way. We propose to deal with this very important issue now.

Our present nature has an inbuilt bedrock of dark previous formation which resists the descent of any higher consciousness into it, and even when the higher power has been able to break the barrier and force its entry into it and starts working there, the inveterate nature of the Ignorance resists and obstructs this working: it either strives to refuse transformation altogether or tries to modify the new power into some base conformity with its own workings.

There is therefore a long period of time in which the inner being of the seeker gets sufficiently transformed but the outer remains still involved in a mixed movement of imperfect change. Indeed, the inner being follows more readily, the outer limps after, being reluctant or even incompetent in spite of its aspiration.

But even when the outer and the inner nature of the individual sadhaka are unified in a harmonised spiritual consciousness, that still more external and occult part of him, his circumconscient and environmental being, in which his being mixes with the being of the outside world and through which the latter invades his consciousness, remains a field of serious imperfection. There is necessarily a constant commerce here between luminous and obscure disparate influences.

It is, of course, possible—if the seeker so wishes—to establish within himself a subjective spirituality which refuses or minimises commerce with the world outside. But if the inner spirituality is to be objectivised in a free world-action, this cannot be

dynamically done without receiving at the same time world-influences through one's circumconscient being.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

HOW TO SING...?

How to sing what's unsingable!
 How to bind what's unbound?
 How to think what's unthinkable?
 How to see what's profound?

How to leave what you can't forget?
 How to teach what is deaf?
 How to get what you never get?
 How to breathe a life into death?

How to have a warm near what's cold?
 How to spare one who has lost?
 How to separate what is firmly held?
 To persuade one who's convinced?

How to burn up things that have burnt by now?
 How to bear down what's unbearable!
 How to find one's soul and to know how
 Can it throw away what's admirable?

How to ask for help anyone who's sick
 To be silent of the unspeakable?
 How to find at once what so long you seek
 In a beauty that's terrible?

VLADIMIR KIRICHENKO

(Translation from the Russian by Gleb Nesterov)

HOW TO LIVE IN EVER-INCREASING “QUIET JOY”?

THE secret is given in the first chapter of *The Life Divine* which beautifully sums up what its heading indicates human aspiration. A few sentences in it (*SABCL*, Vol. 18, p. 2) sum up all the reasons for an individual's aspiration and his struggles, particularly for an individual with a twentieth century's developed mind Sri Aurobindo says:

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 disparate-ness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, 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.

Each individual's actions can be explained and future actions predicted on the basis of the above knowledge. That is how the present is built by an individual and the future planned, by a drive to establish harmony. The attempt is always towards attainment of a certain stability of the structure built by attaining an optimum of harmony. But that stability is an appearance, beautiful no doubt, but still an appearance. Constant change is the law of life in matter and of mind in life. This change is often so slow as to be hardly perceivable in a short time.

Recognition of the transitoriness of everything and everyone in life and of constant change as the most important feature, that nothing stands still, is the start of facing life squarely. Then one keeps on understanding the changes occurring in relationships because of the changes in our own self and others, of expectations, needs and desires. People change in their attitudes, in their temperament and so do circumstances, and accordingly the individual needs and desires come and go and return from time to time. Thus there is a kind of evolution, we may say, in our relationship with circumstances, with nature and above all with our own self. Relationship means expectations, actions, reactions, dialogues and all kinds of interactions.

If man's life were of the nature of a self-sufficient solitary existence, an independent unit in a society of single-person units, he would have to deal primarily with disorders and disharmonies, first within his own self and then with surrounding non-human nature. Secondly he would have to deal with the other surrounding single-person units which form a group within a group, a group of which he is a part, and

then with other groups of which his group is a part, but with a diminishing number of rules and regulations from centre to periphery to maintain an order. His maximum interchange in this case would be first within the parts of his own being, next with the surrounding nature and least with other "units". There is enough technology available today to make such a system possible and comfortable, the so-called electronic technology. All transactions of daily life, including work, are done with communication methods, telephone, modem, computer, and the like

Such a system could exist in some parts of the world but not on the whole earth. For man is a gregarious animal. The need and reason for his being gregarious could be satisfied indeed by such a single-unit society if, to start with, the sex instinct or the libido-force, the need of satisfaction from others and need to satisfy others, the need of human love which is an exchange, a barter and a commerce, if all these are successfully tackled, and restrained and channelled. Sounds true? Something rankles, however

One reason is that even though sexual force and force of ordinary human love appear to be egoistic and selfish means of satisfying oneself, there is something which is really beautiful in these emotions, for, their base or source is something very pure and beautiful. Even clear fountain waters gushing from the depths of earth get muddy while coming to surface because of all the dust and dirt on the way. The dissatisfaction is because of non-recognition of both the underlying beauty and the mixed-up impurities.

What is it that causes the ubiquitous sense of loneliness in the modern man? Why is there a need for human company and for companionship? Why are computers, televisions and telephones not enough? Why is this loneliness increasing with the increase of gadgets of material comfort, mechanical pets and robots and gadgets of self-satisfaction?

A possible answer, often overlooked because unproved by ordinary science and experience, is the deep connectedness, interconnectedness, of all existing units in the universe in general and of the human units, especially within a known group or social sub-structure, in particular. The closer we get to smaller and smaller groups the more obvious and intimate are the interconnectedness and dependence when even a minor disparity causes sufficient disharmony to result in conflict and disorder and the need of compromises. Often the compromises are inadequate and conflicts surface again and again, the basic conflict in between the needs of our different selves, desire self, emotional self, deeper divine-loving self, and the similar needs of others. In other words the basic conflict is between the need for privacy and the demands of interconnectedness.

A still deeper hidden fact, discovered in the long forgotten past and rediscovered and lost again and again, is the essential role of internal disharmony within the vast inner realm of a human being. As Sri Aurobindo says: "...internal disharmony is the cause of external disorder and disparateness."

How to achieve harmony and peace and joy?

There are three ways to process harmony within a human being

First is the *inward movement* of our external Nature-formed self including our ego, body, mind and vital, our ordinary being wherein our consciousness normally resides. The vital implies the life-force, the desire-emotional aspect of our self

Next is the increasing *influence and radiance of the inner growing Divine, the soul or psychic being*. Our true self or soul has the characteristic qualities of Trust in and Love for the Divine, a quiet Joy, Sweetness and Strength, qualities which increasingly influence our ordinary or external being

The third, the behavioral key to establish this internal harmony, is in those three words of the Isha Upanishad *tena tyaktena bhunjitha*, which we may put as "offer and then enjoy"

The working means for achieving harmony are, first, the conviction that this is what has to be done by aspiration, prayer, imagination and practice of "remembering and offering" and, then, by enjoying *everything* as a gift from the Divine.

Aspiration is a demand by our being for something higher. Aspiration can be, to begin with, in any part of our being and hence there can be and indeed is a psychic aspiration, an aspiration in the body, in the vital, and in the mind

Experience increases the aspiration. For example, once the lower vital comes to know, from the mind and later from its own experience, that the offering of little greeds, passions and angers gives something indescribably more than otherwise obtained, and when it is disciplined a little by the mental and higher vital will (of knowledge and experience) this aspiration becomes more and more intense. Aspiration of all parts of our being slowly results in integration of all the parts harmoniously around the central Divine.

Prayer similarly issues from one or the other part, for example the mind or the heart or from the central soul itself appearing to issue spontaneously from behind the heart or from the whole integral being. The being can often get integrated for a time in the case of some great need and a prayer goes from the whole being for succour, help, protection, and liberation from a particular event or set of circumstances

Imagination is another very potent instrument at man's disposal. Imagination can substitute for an actuality and lead to it, *e g*, a sense of smile and joy and calm can be imagined when it is difficult to feel it. After a time as the imagination becomes more intense it works on the whole being and brings what it has been "imagining", namely calm, joy and smile. It also seems to link an aspiration and a prayer or a call from the being to something higher for a silence or peace and joy to flow in.

In our behaviour the key is "to offer and then enjoy". The Isha Upanishad's first verse from which the three words are quoted earlier gives the reason that this master Mantra "Remember and Offer and Enjoy" is based on. In the words of Sri Aurobindo

each human being is in his essence one with all others, free, eternal, immutable, lord of Nature. Enjoyment of the universe and all it contains is the

object of world-existence, but renunciation [*tena tyaktena*] of all in desire is the condition of the free enjoyment of all.

The renunciation demanded is not a moral constraint of self-denial or a physical rejection, but an entire liberation of the spirit from any craving after the forms of things.

The terms of this liberation are freedom from egoism and, consequently, freedom from personal desire. Practically, this renunciation implies that one should not regard anything in the universe as a necessary object of possession, nor as possessed by another and not by oneself, nor as an object of greed in the heart or the senses.

This attitude is founded on the perception of unity. For all souls are one possessing Self, the Lord, and although the Lord inhabits each object as if separately, yet all objects exist in that Self and not outside it.

Thus being essentially one with all beings we already have everything and there is no reason whatever either to possess something we already possess or desire something as if it belonged to another. To quote Sri Aurobindo again

Being one with all beings, we possess, in their enjoyment, in ours and in the cosmic Being's, delight of universal self-expression. It is only by this Ananda at once transcendent and universal that man can be free in his soul and yet live in the world with the full active Life of the Lord in His universe of movement

This freedom for its completeness demands "full acceptance of the term of physical life" and "doing of works in this material world". (All quotations from *SABCL*, Vol. 12, pp. 74-76)

One starts the practice of this method according to one's temperament, first, of course, after achieving a conviction of its absolute necessity.

A person with an artistic sense of beauty starts with enjoying the *sight* of a known beautiful object, ranging from a flower and a lunch-spread to a painting and a beautiful face, refusing to entertain even a faintest suggestion to possess it and simultaneously regarding it as a wonderful gift from the Divine. The appreciation of beauty together with a deeply felt gratitude to the Divine for this gift of sight produces an extraordinarily quiet joy never experienced without this attitude. One gradually builds up such experiences into a way of living. A person with a delight in reading poetry or delight in an inflow of new knowledge about any object, experiences with such an attitude a similar quiet joy in a book or a poem or in a scientific exposition.

The same is true in the practice of work, the pursuit of our profession. The approach to and art of work is first to develop a sense of ever increasing perfection and beauty, to enjoy the sight and sweat and good results. We start then to realise that the not-so-good results are due to either our own mistakes, or the errors of others or as a result of a complex of different forces, *e g*, social, individual and universal

The second essential is to regard every happening and event and response to our actions as a gift from the Divine, a gift that gives us guidance and illumines our own deficiencies and delineates our progress

The third quality to develop is a sense of gratitude. Gratitude is the one force which by itself takes us ever nearer the Divine. Gratitude implies the recognition of the influence of others, direct or indirect on ourselves and the acceptance of their contributions towards the building of our individual personality

All these qualities lead to an increasing understanding of interconnectedness and interdependence. This in its turn creates in us interest in the well-being of others as much as in our own. All this experience of practising the above tells us that it is by living within and living more and more with the harmony of our different parts that we are able to give love and goodwill and help to others, unobtrusively and effectively and not by external altruistic actions alone. Internal harmony brings in harmony in the outer relations.

Gradually aloneness is replaced by an increasing feeling of oneness with others, by the sharing of pleasures and pains and compassion. We are able then to recognise that egoistic "missionary" zeal to improve others is not only an escapism from our own self in order to escape recognition of our own deficiencies but an ineffective means of help which may earn often an opposite result, obstruction to their progress.

The process is of a constant discovery of new light and knowledge and ever-increasing togetherness with the Divine within ourselves and in others and in the whole of Nature and the cosmos.

Aloneness slowly metamorphoses into an increasing feeling of vastness and oneness. It is a long process and needs not only patience, persistence and perseverance but, most essentially, faith, faith that this can be and is indeed going to be achieved.

DINKAR D PALANDE

ON LOVE'S FIAT

I wish to serve, Lord!
But dare not yet
neither do I know
whether my wearied limbs
would ever permit me
to be at Your service
in full gear .

In a staggered step
of forward and backward
my mind's debate
is fully exhausted
and I am lone
in my decision.
Love prompts me
to try at least
and fare forward.

On Love's fiat
I cherish a wish
to serve You
in my meek way
keeping the motto
of 'Better and better'
day after day

ASHALATA DASH

ILION

(Continued from the issue of February-March 1999)

POETRY gives us sights, insights and imaginative farsights. A perfect example of minute observation is Wordsworth's short poem, *She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways*. Lines like these are pure sights.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky

The same poet reveals the deep truth behind Duty who appears as the

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God

and becomes

Stern lawgiver, yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face,
Flowers laugh before thee in their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads,
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong

Insights often contradict what the senses give us and they often sound paradoxical
John Donne's sonnet

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine and seek to mend

concludes with this paradoxical insight

Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free
Nor even chaste except you ravish me

One of the profoundest insights is given to us by Virgil. The Sibyl addressing Aeneas spoke these words,

Easy is the descent to Avernus
 Night and day lie open the gates of death's dark kingdom,
 But to retrace your steps, to find the way back to daylight—
 That is the task, the hard thing

W B Yeats in a letter written as early as 1888 acknowledged the weakness of his early work "It is not the poetry of insight and knowledge, but of longing and complaint—the cry of the heart against necessity—I hope some day to alter that and write poetry of insight and knowledge "

Sri Aurobindo gives us deep insights so that we can say in the words of Virgil "Happy is the man who knows the causes of things " We feel grateful to the Master for illumining our upward path. *Ilion* opens with *Dawn Over Ilion*:

Forests looked up through their rifts, the ravines grew aware of their shadows

It is a common experience that when the psychic flame is lit in the heart, the aspirant on the one hand turns with joy towards the planes of eternal Bliss but also becomes aware of the pockets of darkness in his being of which he was not conscious till then. The flame burns upward and acts as a sure guide to Immortality This is how Sri Aurobindo describes it in *The Life Divine*, p. 907:

As the crust of the outer nature cracks, as the walls of inner separation break down, the inner light gets through, the inner fire burns in the heart, the substance of the nature and the stuff of consciousness refine to a greater subtlety and purity, and the deeper psychic experiences, those which are not solely of an inner mental or inner vital character, become possible in this subtler, purer, finer substance, the soul begins to unveil itself, the psychic personality reaches its full stature.... A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure. opposed to the divine realisation every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation. action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity, desire. even the most concealed, camouflaged, minute, recondite, is lighted up with the unerring psychic light, their confusions dissipated, their tangles disentangled, their obscurities, deceptions, self-deceptions precisely indicated and removed; all is purified, set right, the whole nature harmonised, modulated in the psychic key, put in spiritual order

Writing on the invaluable insights one meets on page after page in *Ilion* provides me with a golden opportunity to fulfil a long-cherished wish to give expression to the debt I, as a student of literature and philosophy, owe to Amal Kiran (K D. Sethna) My pupillage started more than fifty years ago when I was a post-graduate student I

happened to read some of his articles on Sri Aurobindo's poetry and then his book of poems, *The Secret Splendour*, rose like the sea and bathed me whole. Our correspondence started and though now I am past eighty I approach him still for advice as an unbroken colt and he with his untiring patience guides me. Amal Kiran is a virtuoso as a literary critic but when he picks out some great line it is always one that has a deep human touch. Once he cited Sri Aurobindo's phrase, "Napoleon's giant mind of war"—the phrase has no metaphor to embellish it and yet once shown it reveals its greatness as one of the few lines in the grand style. A critic has remarked that a poet always aims at transcending literariness and he cites the lines from W. B. Yeats's poem *Easter 1916*:

All changed, changed utterly,
A terrible beauty is born.

Amal Kiran is endowed with a rare catholicity in his tastes and dealings with those who seek his help in their literary and spiritual endeavours. I have benefited perhaps more than anyone else and have learnt to respond with full-blooded zeal to subtleties of form, to classical austerity in poetry, to lines such as Homer's "God took from them the joy of their home-coming" or Virgil's "Haunted by tears is the world and our hearts by the touch of things mortal", as translated by himself. The following lines, left to myself, would have escaped my notice if Amal Kiran had not recited them to me. But once pointed out by him they are like nuggets:

Always man's Fate hangs poised on the flitting breath of a moment;
Called by some word, by some gesture it leaps, then 'tis graven, 'tis granite.
(*Iliad*, p 23)

And Pope's lines bring home the truth of these lines:

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things...
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms, dwells such mighty Rage.

One has to look back not only at one's own past but at world-history and observe how such trivial events as the Boston tea-party could trigger the American War of Independence and its world-wide spin-off. Perhaps if we go through recent Indian history we may discover that some casual remark touched Mr. Jinnah to the quick and the little rift grew into a rent and that led to the partition of India.

Again it was Amal Kiran who recited this line from *Iliad* and I have in turn shared my appreciation with others. But the credit goes to Amal Kiran:

Hard is the breaking of fetters once worn, for the virtue has perished.

(*Ilion*, p. 46)

I will give one more instance as to how Amal Kiran can hone people who approach him to develop a taste for Sri Aurobindo's poetry. The lines are about Hephaestus the blacksmith of the gods, in Latin called Vulcan, and Milton, with his penchant for sonorous names, describes thus:

In Ausonian land
Men call him Mulcibur
(*Paradise Lost*, Bk. I, lines 738-39)

Sri Aurobindo thus describes him:

Down upon earth he came with his lame omnipotent motion. .
(*Ilion*, p. 114)

Only Amal Kiran could have picked out this paradoxical statement. Indeed the present civilization has been rightly dubbed as the creation of Vulcan. It is omnipotent but also lame and a slight push can send it tumbling down we know not where. Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo expresses the same prognosis in these words:

Europe prides herself on her practical and scientific organisation and efficiency.
I am waiting till her organisation is perfect; then a child shall destroy her
(*Thoughts and Aphorisms*, No 78)

Honed by Amal Kiran I could thrill ecstatic to the sharply chiselled phrase "human men". In Sri Aurobindo's poem *The Rishi*, Manu asks:

Voiceless and white the cold unchanging hill,
Has it then
A mightier presence, deeper mysteries
Than human men?

The Urdu poet Ghalib also is of the opinion that it is impossible for man to be entirely human. Humanistic ideals are very sweet and attractive but they cannot stand the pressure from the lower planes and the higher planes. Still we cherish the dream that one day man will become fully human.

Sri Aurobindo is one of the most self-critical of poets and we feel grateful to the editors of *Ilion* for enabling us to see the strokes of the chisel behind the finished statue

In sublimity of thought and majesty of expression both sustained at a very high

pitch sometimes even supernatural, Sri Aurobindo has no superior in English and perhaps in *Iliad* and *Savitri* he has found the ideal themes both for himself and his readers. Here is a master in perfect control of his medium. The apparent ease with which he surmounts every hurdle, the perfect balance struck and maintained between vivid and onward flowing narration and all the epic formalities, the rhythmic subtleties (one should bear in mind the Dactylic beat of the Hexameter), the freshness and vigour of language, the imagery both local and universal in its appeal—all these make *Iliad* an epic full of deep insights with the wide sweep and oceanic surge of the hexameter.

(To be continued)

RAVINDRA KHANNA

O PARTNER DIVINE

REALLY, how simple you have made my task:
 No cumbersome planning, no dubious design,
 Only for a sincere attitude you ask
 And ever towards you my life align.

You have shown my thought its imbecility
 In a hushed miracle of silver light,
 Bringing knowledge from infinity
 You have bestowed sight on vaster sight

Ardour I called mine you have cooled
 With a fulfilling joy of enormous peace,
 In the calm I feel with senses overruled
 The touch of a subtle thrill increase

Powerless yet untiring my limbs
 Possessed in a waltz, O Partner Divine,
 Overflow with the melody of your hymns:
 I am a pitcher brimmed by your wine

AKASH DESHPANDE

POET NISHIKANTO

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

2

RABINDRANATH Tagore was leisurely pacing up and down his green lawn yodelling lines from his ode to autumn, when the two appeared before him. With his tall and healthy figure and handsome looks, clad in a flowing muslin robe of golden lustre, he seemed to be a mogul out of the pages of oriental legend. Jovially he first addressed Nishikanto with tongue in cheek, "Good morning, Mr. Gaganbehari!" Nishikanto was obviously astonished. However, holding back his astonishment, he greeted him. Pure cussedness of the editor, he thought, to have given away his name. He then frankly explained, knowing Tagore's own weakness for them, that the savouries were to blame for it. Tagore laughed with good humour. Then Nishikanto enquired, with wonder in his voice, "But, sir, how on earth could you recognize it as mine, in spite of the pseudonym?"

"I think it's simple," the musical dramatist replied.

"And how so?" Nishikanto asked with amazement in his tone.

The 'mogul' took a breath. He took off his velvet cap lest it fly away with the breeze. While arranging the words in his mind, he seemed to look keenly at the artistic crochet designs wrought around the cap. He settled down on a nearby stone bench, his student beside him.

The homme-de-lettres explained: "You've heard of *vani*, the expressed word. Haven't you? Now what does it mean really?"

"It means the word, of course," Nishi glibly answered, feeling quite at ease now at the elbow of the tutor.

"Not quite," the scholar poet went on to explain, "it signifies a 'medium', it is the 'vehicle' of feeling or mood. And you've also heard of sound-value and rhythm. These mainly make up what we call a poem."

This much having been made clear he named as examples some Bengali poets who were masters in the handling of these elements. And then he concluded by saying, "As soon as I read your lines I also caught the fine combination of the words, sound and imagery. You are already developing a style which is recognizable." Then after a few moments of silence the versifier, to cut a deal, promised, "There, I'll offer you twice as much of the savouries as she did, and you must not give your poems to others before showing them to me."

The pupil listened in amazement, agreed, but not without some mixed feelings as will become clear later, when he would sort of reject the Tagore canon with the growth of his individuality. All I can say is that in spite of Rabindranath's strong poetic influence in Shantiniketan, Nishikanto held on to his own distinctness which was acquiring a meritorious quality. I believe this was in fulfilment of the dictum: a poet is born, not made.

Having passed through the prime years of restless and childish ignorance, he now stood on the threshold of youth. For his artistic talent and poetic zeal people around had nothing but praises. This is not to say that his current reputation satisfied him for long. Something more profound, more lasting was what he now aspired for, the seeds of which no doubt must have been growing within him for quite some time, for these things do not sprout suddenly in a flash. He was not quite at peace. Nor did his elder brother Sudhakanto feel too hesitant to choose the prospects in Shiuri, leaving behind Bolpur and Shantiniketan. The senior Roychowdhury, their father, died about then. Nishi was no more than fifteen years old. He was not keeping well either. In fact after his father's death he fell gravely ill. Homeopathic medicines prescribed by the spirit of his deceased father in a dream brought about his improvement.

He had not fully recovered, he was rather weak still, when he felt an urge to wander about a little to pilgrimage centres and meet saints. Thus came he to Katoa after having seen a few places. There he met a saintly person whose name was Sri Abhayananda Maharaj. After a bit of conversation the sage assuaged Nishikanto's mind with his illuminating advice based on his spiritual insight. Nishikanto's situation was good, the sage had assured. He then prophesied, "I see behind you Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath." While the aspirant lived there experiencing spiritual life, the yogi effectively cured his lingering disease. "I see behind you God and Goddess, too!" he stated one day to the delight of the pilgrim. After a few days he had also seen the blissful saint Sri Gouranga. At that time it proved to be only a vision.

As the reader must have observed it is not until Nishikanto had grown up that we hear anything about his seeing of visions, and getting some experiences which turned his mind towards more depth and less frivolity. He was also slowly maturing now as a poet.

As Nishikanto waived the idea of further wanderings at the behest of the Santa Maharaj, he at the same time learnt that Sudhakanto had received an invitation to resume his assistance at Shantiniketan. And when he went there, Nishikanto also joined him. This seemed to be quite in line with the sage's prediction.

In Shantiniketan he now dwelt on the ground-floor of the house where Dwijendranath, the elder brother of Rabindranath lived. Little did he know that here also he would soon hear about the greatness of Sri Aurobindo, and would be introduced by Dwijendranath to his philosophical and other writings. Among his activities, although the study of art was important for him, yet he had built deeper relations with Rabindranath than Abanindranath.

A phenomenon like Tagore with a range of activities comparable only with Goethe's, could nonetheless spare time now and then to talk with even juniors such as the moon-poet, this is, no doubt, one of the characteristics of Rabindranath the humanist.

A longstanding family friend of the Roychowdhury's, Tagore knew a little more

than the young chick about their family archives. For example, quite some time after senior Roychowdhury had died, and the grey beard which Nishikanto had marked on Tagore's face had grown white over the years, what Nishikanto (then aged about twenty) would hear from the bard's mouth about his father was news to him.

"Look here, my dear moon-poet," affectionately the apostle of peace began at luncheon, much in the same way as one speaks to one's grandchild, "I've heard stories of pundits gifted with an extraordinary memory. And could I believe in such talks? Not in the least. Gone are the days of oral epics and ballad singers, I used to tell myself. But when I got acquainted with your father then I realized that, yes, such formidably-remembered men did truly exist. Your father, all in the course of conversation, would often recite stanza after stanza with ease from the writings of Milton, Blake, Shakespeare, Shankara, Kalidasa, etc." After a pause the pastoral poet added, "As for his wit, I could never manage to keep up with him in polemics, a lawyer of quality as he was."

But this relationship with Tagore, friendly and jocose, would it last? Would Nishikanto always remain in Tagore's beloved institute, restless with energy as he was; or would he abandon the niche that had been built? As I have already said earlier, Tagore's suggestion of not publishing the poems without showing them to him was accepted half-heartedly by the youngster. And it seems he had also not liked that Abanindranath, the master artist, should correct his works. Furthermore a period came when his interest in both painting and writing wavered to some extent. To all appearance there came a sort of interval in inspiration. That was when Nishikanto attained the age of about twenty-two years; he was then neither composing any poems nor doing any paintings. He seemed to be in a different mood.

All that we can know from the scanty records of his associates about this period of his life is that he used to go to a spacious coconut garden and sketch there whatever he could see. Then while walking he would suddenly stop and look intently at something, or look blankly, like a small boy, as though he were 'reading the eternal deep / Haunted for ever by the eternal mind', and his countenance was marked by a serenity due to some inner joy.

Those who saw his sketches done about this time couldn't but admire his skill. They were products of his robust thinking and robust mind. One major painting however was produced, notable for its colours and compositions. It was the painting of 'Gandhari and Dhritarashtra' in their youth. The size was fairly big. Abanindranath appreciated it a lot, as did others who saw it. His comment (made to an interviewer) about the artist's talent in painting was that it was "unique and wonderful".

Up to this is what may be considered as the first part of Nishikanto Roychowdhury's life, after which a different time came when his mind took greater interest in mysticism. He was then an art student of Nandalal Bose. His work as an artist was much appreciated by the people around. However, about this time he again got some inspiration to go on a pilgrimage tour; so he suddenly sold all his art pieces. The news of this fact presumably reached Tagore's ears. Or else why should the laureate's face

look gloomy when soon after this he and Nishikanto sat together at the table for lunch?

It was a dark and dank day Through the door Nishikanto could see the movement of some thin white fluffy clouds sailing across the background of a dark tapestry. During that day's talk Tagore would speak as he probably did earlier, only to try and hold him back. Because as we know, showing much generosity towards the young and budding poet he wanted to bring up the boy in his own manner, keeping an eye on the development of the youth's poetic talent Nishida could perhaps understand that

After the lunch Tagore walked to the adjacent chamber with his hands resting on Nishi's shoulders And as his old and aged body toddled along the corridor, the youth could feel the weight on his shoulders Nishikanto left the aged poet with a person who had come to discuss the dance-drama to be held soon to mark the spring festival. But Nishikanto wouldn't be there to see the programme, for the magnet of spirituality had captured his imagination and turned his mind So he threw aside all his poetic creation as well as the spell cast by the culture hero With the fund raised from the sale of his art works he went, after some wanderings, to the great pilgrimage centre of Sarnath. The circle of pundits invited him to stay there But he refused. He is also said to have had the vision of a spirit at Gaya which was supposed to be that of the Buddha. Then he got acquainted there with a devotee of Sri Aurobindo from whom he heard about the Ashram at Pondicherry. And soon Nishikanto came to this town

Here we come to the conclusion that Nishikanto was somewhat individualistic, and not only did he not want to write poems on the model of others, Tagore or whoever, but he didn't even like his art or verse to be corrected by any tutor. This, by the way, is not conceding that he attached much importance to publicity or fame, etc. In this he was in fact justly a disciple of his teacher Tagore. It was probably his individualistic tendency and self-confidence, the aspiration to be a unique person which assumed the form of an impetuous urge to discover in himself this uniqueness, his true self and it is that which brought him to the south; whereas Sudhakanto remained occupied with Tagore in Shantiniketan

(Concluded)

ANONYMOUS

REMEMBERING GOPAL DASS GUPTA (1912-1998)

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

(2)

MY BROTHER Gopal Dass, the eldest child of our parents, was born on 17 September 1912, which coincided with *santaan saptami* (Bhadrapad Shukla Saptami), the day Hindu mothers fast and pray for the welfare of their progeny. While Bhaiya was at school, the financial position of the family suffered badly but somehow he managed to pass Intermediate and his Teachers' Training Course. Thereafter, he was forced to take up a job. After teaching in Mathura, Ballia and Agra, he finally shifted to the Government High School in our hometown, Kanpur, in 1941.

Bhaiya was married at the age of 16 and by 21 became practically the only bread-winner for a large family. He had a slight respite only when a younger brother started earning. Even while discharging all his family responsibilities fully, Bhaiya continued his scholastic pursuit privately and received the degrees of B.A. and M.A. from Agra University.

With such a big family and allopathic treatment being quite expensive, Bhaiya took up the study of homeopathy and gradually got deeply interested in it as an effective system. He also gave free treatment to the poor and needy who came to him. He would go to the root cause of any ailment and was able to cure even long-standing chronic disorders. My case had failed to respond to two years of allopathic treatment when Bhaiya, with just one high potency dose rendered me free of the ailment for one full year. But one of his own ailments defeated him. It was a type of persistent eczema which once became severe his whole body oozing with pus he was bed-ridden for about a month, amazingly though, he never complained or lost his good humour. Ultimately, he was persuaded to switch over to allopathy for the much-sought relief. He had meticulously maintained notes of the cases he treated and the medicines which proved effective. Unfortunately, they were destroyed in a small fire in his room.

He served his parents almost like the mythological Shrivankumar. Our father suffered a paralytic stroke and after four years of being confined to bed, breathed his last in 1953. Throughout, Bhaiya stuck to his duty with a smile on his face. Our mother had a great desire to visit the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, but fearing her orthodox habits would cause her much difficulties in the train and prevent her adjusting to the Ashram arrangements Bhaiya decided against it. Informed of her death he rushed from Pondicherry for the funeral as per his promise to her.

Due to their responsibilities and social restrictions, his wife had to sacrifice her personal comforts. In addition, she kept poor health. Her craving for children received rude shocks—five offspring were either still-born or died in infancy. Though her last child survived, Bhabhi herself passed away in 1946. Bhaiya resisted all pressures put on him to remarry. He kept a photograph of her among his personal papers and to the

very end remembered with feeling the difficult life that was her lot

He was truthful to the core. Once Father wanted him to make a false statement in his favour, if circumstances warranted it. Bhैया was greatly embarrassed: he could not tell a lie but it was difficult to disobey his father. When the critical moment arrived, he kept silent and yet he felt guilty about it, for he considered that silence a half-lie. No wonder in our community he was respectfully called "Dharmaraj".

Our grandfather, maternal grandfather and a maternal uncle had taken up the ascetic life; there was also the influence of our pious mother. Quite early in life Bhैया began to delve deeply and extensively into spiritual literature. Unknown to us, he used to spend the annual school vacations in some spiritual centre or other. Thus he stayed in the Shivanand Ashram, Rishikesh, in the Sri Aravind Ashram, Charthaval, in the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir, Jwalapur (Basti). These spells of seclusion were preparations for the final act. It came shortly after the marriage of his daughter in 1963. He took premature retirement from his job and, with permission and blessings of our mother, left home for good. Ultimately he reached his *tapobhumi* at the feet of the Mother in 1969.

His simplicity, humility, truthfulness, compassion and an inborn preference for an austere life—e.g. he would mix all the dishes together and eat—made him an ideal elder member in our large family. With the help of those divine qualities he brought about a fundamental attitudinal change in our father who was originally quite materialistic. Bhैया's immediate younger brother, Babu Bhैया, too was altogether different from him in nature and outlook. On one occasion, when expressing some misgivings about him, I requested Bhैया to speak to him. Bhैया patiently explained to me: "Sadhu, each one of us progresses in his own way. My telling him will not have the effect you expect. The best would be for him to learn from his own experience." And then, without ever lecturing Babu Bhैया, merely showing the way by his own life-example, Bhैया brought about such a dramatic change in his attitude towards life itself, that ultimately Babu Bhैया too took up monastic life.

There were a few oases in the apparently sandy desert of Bhैया's life. Some of the happiest days of his life, he once confided to me, came in the two years he was in Ballia. He, Bhabhi, myself and a younger sister formed his household then. I was 11 and Bhैया 23. He was held in great esteem by all as a fine and able teacher and a strict disciplinarian. During our stay in Ballia there was an earthquake which wrought much destruction in the region. I vividly remember how Bhैया actively participated in the relief activities, often returning home late in the evenings. Extremely fond of me he used to call me "Sadhu" because of my long hair. He took a very deep interest in my education and also gave me my first lessons in extra-curricular activities. It was with his help and encouragement that I persisted until I obtained a Doctorate in Chemistry, joined the faculty of the Rajasthan University, Jaipur, and rose to the level of Professor and Head of the Chemistry Department before my retirement. I owe my career and my personality-growth, in fact whatever I achieved in life, entirely to the example set by him. Verily he was a father unto me.

The difference in our ages and Bhैया's natural taciturnity were a great bar

against the free exchange of thoughts and experiences between us. As a child I was too young for it and as an adolescent too immature. And by the time we were past middle age, when even father and son tend to become friends, he had put himself beyond reach of his family. Very rarely did I have any opportunity to share details of his own life and experiences. The very few occasions that we discussed past events, whenever I expressed an opinion with which he did not agree, he never contradicted me, never showed the least irritation or anger, but kept silent. Once I happened to bring up the topic of his conjugal life which, according to me, he had sacrificed in the larger interest of the big family, he contended that he had done his best and always tried to strike a balance between the two.

Knowing I had little interest in philosophy or spirituality, he never brought up these subjects. Whatever interest I now evince in these matters is entirely due to the influence his life has had on me. His retiring to Pondicherry led to my being exposed to the serene atmosphere of the Ashram, for I visited him at least once a year, since 1971. Whether I stayed for a few days or a month or more, every day I would spend at least a couple of hours with him, for he kept himself busy almost the whole day. My last visit to Pondicherry was in November 1997. I had some difficulty in reaching Madras on account of my poor health and advanced age and the not unusual delays and problems associated with rail travel; even during my stay I suffered from a recurrent problem with my foot that forced me to remain indoors. One day he told me, "Sadhu, you should stop coming to visit me now. We have met so many times that perhaps now you could do without it." I did not then realise the implications of that advice; and certainly did not expect those twelve days to become our last days together.

On being informed of Bhaiya's serious condition and hospitalisation in the last week of July 1998, I planned to be in Pondicherry on 5 August, but Bhaiya did not wait for me this time and departed on 3 August. After getting news of the sad event, I could manage to reach Pondicherry by the noon of 4 August, only in time to collect the ashes of his bodily remains. Was I disappointed or sad? Not at all. For years, whenever the thought that one day he would be no more came to me I knew that I would not be able to witness the scene of his end or his lifeless body. I derive supreme satisfaction from the fact of having lived with him for many years, having been instructed and guided by him and later having met him many times in Pondicherry, receiving so much from him.

Bhaiya told me several times that the one person who helped him in his sadhana in the last years of his life was Sunjoy, who was constantly with him and that he could not have been better looked after by anybody else.

Bhaiya has left the physical world, but he lives with me in a subtle way in the picture of Lord Krishna which I claimed from his personal possessions in his abode in Pondicherry and the copy of the Oxford English Dictionary that he had given me before leaving Kanpur on his life-long spiritual retreat.

(To be continued)

TALES AND LEGENDS

NIYAT

This word means consciousness, awareness, and way of thinking. Sharmaji relates.

Once upon a time, perhaps in the days of King Vikramaditya, a good old woman lived all alone in the jungle, far away from other people. She owned an unusually beautiful cow.

One day the king was out hunting. As he was riding through the jungle with his big retinue past the place where the old woman lived, his eyes fell on this lovely cow. He stopped and asked what the woman was doing all alone in the forest, and enquired about the cow. He decided to take the beautiful animal away from her.

So in the evening he disguised himself and came to the old woman's door in the guise of a begging monk. She gave the holy man a warm welcome. He asked her to give him shelter for the night, as it was late and he had lost his way. He was invited into the hut, and the woman went to her cow with a bowl to take milk. As she did not return for a long time, the monk went to look for her. He found her sitting sadly beside her cow. The cow was not giving any milk! "This is the first time in ten years that my cow isn't giving milk," said the old woman. "I'm afraid our king's *niyat* has fallen very low today!"

The monk wanted to know what she meant. "Do you see that bush there?" she asked. "I watered it carefully as usual, but today its leaves are drooping sadly."

The monk could indeed see it. But then she looked at him and asked, "And you? Tell me who you are!" Her voice was full of doubt and mistrust. "I am the King," came the answer. Then he said, "Mother, you have opened my eyes! God forgive me, I have earned great blame." And he admitted the real aim of his visit. Full of deep shame he returned to his palace, never again to leave the path of truth.

THE TREASURE-HUNTER OUTWITTED

A FOLKTALE

A rich Indian merchant, a Seth, was looking for a way to keep his cash safely during a time of trouble. So one night he went to a plot of waste land and buried a considerable sum in coins. After some time had passed he found that he urgently needed the amount he had entrusted to the earth. What a shock he got when he found that it had all been stolen!

He went to a nearby house, the only one from which he might have been observed. There he asked the householder whether he had any idea where the sum he had buried might be now. The man replied, "Money? Buried somewhere around here? No, no, I don't know anything about that!"

“What a pity,” said the merchant, turning away with a look of deep disappointment. “I wanted to add some more coins to the store.”

A little later the Seth returned again on a moonless night, and again dug up the same spot where he had buried his treasure before. And lo! Everything that had been stolen was back! But he didn't bury any more money along with it. He carried everything safely home with him, happy that he had outwitted the treasure-hunter.

SIBYLLE HABLIK-SHARMA

JAPANESE THINGS*

THE KIMONO

GOLDEN trees, grey clouds
and black haikus flying.
How good to see poetry serve
a dress, and the kimono
displaying poems to all!

THE PLATTER

A subdued platter
with streaks of rich green
purple-red and yellow:
the creator's dream
of violent passions
contained

THE CUPS

Some simple brown cups
adorn a table
spread with luxuries.

MARTA GUHA

* Written after visiting the Great Japan Exhibition in London

ALL ABOUT HORSES AND CONSCIOUSNESS

My recollection was triggered on reading P. Raja's article in *Mother India's* Golden Jubilee issue, entitled "Straight from the Horse's Mouth" and Amal Kiran's ecstatic reaction to horses therein.

A lid sprung open on a unique experience, all forgotten, but stored away until such time, when it wanted the sunshine upon it.

What I relate here happened during an extremely intense emotional crisis of my life.

I saw a throng of people crowding round a horse, which was standing alone in the centre of a clearance

I went toward him, filled with compassion and lifted the saddle that appeared to burden him.

Taken aback at the sight of very deep dents that cut into his poor back, I said to him: "Oh, my poor horse," and caressed him lovingly.

He lifted his head neighing in evident gratitude,—his lovely eyes as if saying: "Thank you very much, thank you so very much, my friend."

The scene changed into a piazza. In its centre stood a magnificent horse, prancing up and down vigorously. No one could or dared to go near him, try as they might, from the crowd that gathered round him.

I went straight up to him and whispered into his ear, and mounted him forthwith.

We began to gallop towards a steep path, when we—I say *we*, the horse and I—heard the Mother's voice.

Faster now, ever upward—steeper and steeper up that narrow path, where a mountain llama* had joined us. He too heard the Mother's voice.

Onward we went, us three—the horse and I and the mountain llama.

Here, the mountain path was so narrow that there was room only for some maidens who lined it; we saw them all clad in white. They clapped their palms together which made a sound like that of a conch. Holy it was and it filled the air. We could go no further, the peak was theirs.

In fact, the Mother had made a drawing of just such a mountain path—it can be seen in the Art Gallery. I recognised it and said. "Yes, Mother, I was there!"

Not only that; I met someone in Australia many years ago, who had encountered a guru in North India, who had given her a conch. "It is my most precious possession," she said, and blew into it. "Oh, I know this sound," I said. She looked at me somewhat amazed.

Very dear Amal, great poet, whom I hold in high esteem. .lover of horses, expert on

* The mountain llama is a long-haired transport animal that lives at high altitudes

consciousness,—may I have your comments, will you give them please? I would be so grateful to receive them.

GEORGETTE COTY

“Interesting and well said. The experience sounds genuine, and has profound value.”—Amal Kiran

LOVE

I FLY unbidden through all the worlds,
 Like an ethereal bird I soar from Light to Light,
 And uphold and sustain their myriad moves
 Ever flowing, ever glowing—I am the Breath
 That spins the atoms and the spheres.

What is this breath that creates
 What magic enchantment that throbs
 And pulsates and joys in all that is,
 What Divine Presence that thrills?

I am the Love that sustains all,
 The Breath that spins the atoms and stars,
 I am the Love that is the Presence
 That breathes life in all that is

SUTAPA M

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

IN an appreciative series of articles in the *Arya* (August 1918) - November 1918) on Dr James Cousin's book, *Renaissance of India*, and in another series in answer to a loaded attack on Indian Civilisation and Culture, (November 1919 - January 1921) by William Archer, Sri Aurobindo examines the fundamentals of Indian Culture, both as a whole and component-wise. After giving a general survey from the early beginnings in the Vedic age up to the present times, he analyses the motifs of the Indian Spirit as reflected in her Religion, Literature, Art, Polity. He compares the long history of Indian civilisation with the comparatively brief careers of civilisations in Europe and elsewhere and analyses the factors that have given an unparalleled continuity to the life of Indian people

The volume that appeared as *The Foundations of Indian Culture* in 1953 comprises three distinct groups of essays, first three essays with the title "The Issue Is India Civilised?"; next the series "A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture", (this was the main "reply" to Archer); and finally the comprehensive "A Defence of Indian Culture" with sections on Religion and Spirituality, Indian Literature and Indian Polity. All these had originally appeared in the *Arya* from December 1919 to January 1921, but were later subjected to some revision before publication in book form. The four essays that make *The Renaissance in India* were published between August and November 1918. Together the *Foundations and the Renaissance* gave us a clue of India's living past and throbbing present that is refreshingly original as well as stimulating and enlightening. Coming after *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Psychology of Social Development* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* (only the *Synthesis* not yet concluded), these new series of essays that appeared during the last two and a half years of the *Arya* were directly concerned with India. Although not at first designed to be a treatise—and even now the garner of essays hasn't the configuration of a forbidding treatise—the *Foundation and the Renaissance* add up to a very reliable guide to India's cultural history. While the *Veda* and the *Gita* and two of the shorter Upanishads have been studied in depth separately (as reviewed in an earlier chapter, the complementary works, the *Foundations* and the *Renaissance*, recapture with a compellingly sure insight the essence of scripture, religion, literature, social, political and cultural history, as a result, there emerges a comprehensive image of the Tree of Indian Culture with its roots in the Vedic age several thousand years ago.

"Is India Civilised?"—a book under this rather startling title was published some years ago by Sir John Woodroffe, the well-known scholar and writer on Tantric philosophy, in answer to an extravagant *Jeu d'esprit* by Mr William Archer. That well-known dramatic critic leaving his safe natural sphere for fields in which his chief claim to speak was a sublime and confident ignorance, assailed the whole life and

culture of India and even lumped together all her greatest achievements, philosophy, religion, poetry, painting, sculpture, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Ramayana, in one wholesale condemnation as a repulsive mass of unspeakable barbarism. It was argued by many at the time that to reply to a critic of this kind was to break a butterfly, or it might be in this instance a bumblebee, upon the wheel. But Sir John Woodroffe insisted that even an attack of this ignorant kind ought not to be neglected, he took it as a particularly useful type in the general kind, first, because it raised the question from the rationalistic and not from the Christian and missionary standpoint and, again, because it betrayed the grosser underlying motives of all such attacks. But his book was important, not so much as an answer to a particular critic, but because it raised with great point and power the whole question of the survival of Indian civilisation and the inevitability of a war of cultures.’’¹

Many of the Westerners, who have with what looks like wilful purblindness and perversity seen Indian culture upside down broadcast their fantastic findings. There have been others too who have felt the call of India and denigrators of India's culture like Abbé Dubois, Macaulay and William Archer.

William Archer was on the whole a sound dramatic critic. When Archer ventured, with more valour than discretion, to indict the culture of a sub-continent like India, he was really asking for trouble. The provocation he gave was outrageous enough, otherwise a *sthitaprajna*, a supramental Yogi, like Sri Aurobindo would not have found it necessary to take notice of it. Archer was not only merely Archer, but a type of phenomenon, the type of the West's supercilious castigation of India. For that Sri Aurobindo felt impelled to string his bow and release a series of arrows to hit unerringly the offending target. Sri Aurobindo narrates: ‘‘Mr William Archer's well-known book on India, which on account of its very demerits I have taken as the type of the characteristic Western or anti-Indian regard on our culture, was certainly not of this character. It is not only that here we have a wholesale and unsparing condemnation, a picture all shade and no light: that is a recommendation, for Mr. Archer's professed object was to challenge the enthusiastic canonisation of Indian culture by its admirers in the character of a devil's advocate whose business is to find out and state in its strongest terms everything that can be said against the claim. And for us too it is useful to have before us an attack which covers the whole field so that we may see in one comprehensive view the entire enemy case against our culture. But there are three vitiating elements in his statement. First, it had an ulterior, a political object, it started with the underlying idea that India must be proved altogether barbarous in order to destroy or damage her case for self-government. That sort of extraneous motive at once puts his whole pleading out of court; for it means a constant deliberate distortion in order to serve a material interest, foreign altogether to the disinterested intellectual objects of cultural comparison and criticism.

In fact this book is not criticism, it is literary or rather journalistic pugilism. There too it is of a peculiar kind; it is a furious sparring at a lay-figure of India which is knocked down at pleasure through a long and exuberant dance of misstatement and

exaggeration in the hope of convincing an ignorant audience that the performer has prostrated a living adversary. Sanity, justice, measure are things altogether at a discount: a show-off of the appearance of staggering and irresistible blows is the object held in view, and for that anything comes in handy,—the facts are altogether mis-stated or clumsily caricatured, the most extraordinary and unfounded suggestions advanced with an air of obviousness, the most illogical inconsistencies permitted if an apparent point can be scored. All this is not the occasional freak of a well-informed critic suffering from a fit of mental biliousness and impelled to work it off by an extravagant intellectual exercise, an irresponsible fantasia or a hostile war-dance around a subject with which he is not in sympathy. That is a kind of extravagance, which is sometimes permissible and may be interesting and amusing. It is a sweet and pleasant thing, cries the Roman poet, to play the fool in place and right season, *dulce est desipere in loco*. But Mr Archer's constant departures into irrational extravagance are not by any means *in loco*''²

“The book is a journalistic fake, not an honest critical production.” How was it possible at all to pose the question “Is India civilised?” as if the obvious answer could only be an emphatic “No”. Better to define one's terms at the outset: what is “civilisation”? and what is “culture”? Here Sri Aurobindo at once touches the heart of the controversy. He writes:

“A true happiness in this world is the right terrestrial aim of man and true happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body. A culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key of this harmony and organised its expressive motives and movements. And a civilisation must be judged by the manner in which all its principles, ideas, forms, ways of living work to bring that harmony out, manage its rhythmic play and secure its continuance or the development of its motives. A civilisation in pursuit of this aim may be predominantly material like modern European culture, predominantly mental and intellectual like the old Graeco-Roman or predominantly spiritual like the still persistent culture of India. India's central conception is that of the Eternal, the Spirit here incased in matter, involved and immanent in it and evolving on the material plane by rebirth of the individual up the scale of being till in mental man it enters the world of ideas and realm of conscious morality, *dharma*. This achievement, this victory over unconscious matter develops its lines, enlarges its scope, elevates its levels until the increasing manifestation of the sattwic or spiritual portion of the vehicle of mind enables the individual mental being in man to identify himself with the pure spiritual consciousness beyond Mind. India's social system is built upon this conception; her philosophy formulates it; her religion is an aspiration to the spiritual consciousness and its fruits; her art and literature have the same upward look, her whole Dharma or law of being is founded upon it. Progress she admits, but this spiritual progress, not the externally self-unfolding process of an always more and more prosperous and efficient material civilisation. It is her founding of life upon this exalted conception and her urge towards the spiritual and the eternal that constitute the distinct value of

her civilisation. And it is her fidelity, with whatever human shortcomings, to this highest ideal that has made her people a nation apart in the human world.

But there are other cultures led by a different conception and even an opposite motive. And by the law of struggle which is the first law of existence in the material universe, varying cultures are bound to come into conflict. A deep-seated urge in Nature compels them to attempt to extend themselves and to destroy, assimilate and replace all disparates or opposites. Conflict is not indeed the last and ideal stage; for that comes when various cultures develop freely, without hatred, misunderstanding or aggregation and even with an underlying sense of unity, their separate special motives. But so long as the principle of struggle prevails, one must face the lesser law; it is fatal to disarm in the midmost of the battle. The culture which gives up its living separateness, the civilisation which neglects an active self-defence will be swallowed up and the nation which lived by it will lose its soul and perish. Each nation is a Shakti or power of the evolving spirit in humanity and lives by the principle which it embodies. India is the Bharata Shakti, the living energy of a great spiritual conception, and fidelity to it is the very principle of her existence. For by its virtue alone she has been one of the immortal nations; this alone has been the secret of her amazing persistence and perpetual force of survival and revival.”³

Sri Aurobindo thought that the time had come to ask the right questions about culture and to formulate answers in the spirit of “aggressive defence”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

1 *SABCL*, Vol 14, p 1

2 *Ibid* , pp 44-45

3 *Ibid* , pp 2-3

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM AND SRI AUROBINDO

THE problem of freedom has always occupied a dominant place for the cause of suffering humanity under the yoke of imperialism. In the course of time the dependent nations waged relentless struggle to free themselves and, in this respect, there is a long chain of thoughts and incidents. In history there is no trace of the philosophy of freedom either in Athens, Rome or in Alexandria, though the problem of freedom is intimately attached to man's existence, his life and thinking.

In history, before Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) there is no recorded evidence of such an idea. He was a materialist philosopher, influenced by Democritus and Leucippus. He is primarily known for his theory of free-will. He considers the soul as material which is composed of particles like breath and heat. According to Epicurus God has nothing to do with this world; rather men are free to lead a happy life. So, Epicurus insisted that freedom lies in ourselves and not beyond us.

Stoicism is another prominent school of philosophy in Greek learning, advocating the theory of freedom. Its theoretical perspective is to follow nature. As this school suggests, freedom is implied in one's intellectual judgements. Man is free as long as he possesses intellect and applies it in action. Thus, F. E. Oppenheim equates the philosopher with God. He remarks, "Philosopher is like God—Freedom is identical with rational self-determination."¹

On the edifice of comparative evaluation it seems that, where Epicurus based freedom on chance or casual indeterminism, Stoics based it on reason and natural law. To Epicurus, freedom is goal of life. Radhakrishnan explores it as follows. "Happiness is not a product of choice, rather a quality of existence. Freedom is not in the power to change the course of events, rather in behaving quite in conformity with it."²

On the map of historical retrospection Plato gave a realistic-cum-humanistic touch in the theory of freedom. According to him, "Freedom is the glory of State Republican, at least in the case of democracy which provides the freedom to dwell and design in his own nature."³ In addition to this Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) holds that a general choice depends upon reason, or on free action. Aristotle thinks that "freedom is implied in doing of what a man likes."⁴

During the Scholastic period (400-1400 A.D.) freedom was based on religious postulates and rituals. Famous Church philosopher St. Augustine holds that "God created man endowed with intellect and left him free with justice, grace and supernatural gifts. If one does not obey Him, one commits sin, not only for oneself but also for humanity. So man does not achieve freedom without the grace of God."⁵ St. Augustine does not agree with Plato that upgradation and freedom lies in knowledge and degradation in ignorance. To him "freedom lies in knowing the divine law and to follow it."⁶ Another important Scholastic philosopher, St. Aquinas, holds that free-

dom lies not in human action but in God's grace. E. Gilson further elaborates this point and states, "The human will does not achieve grace by an act of freedom, but rather achieves freedom by grace."⁷

Prior to the beginning of civilization men were struggling against natural evils like darkness, excessive rain, starvation, etc. Gradually with the development of civilization, state took the place of nature and in this way man became a victim in the hands of man and the nature of struggle was changed. Now man demands individual freedom. He has begun to feel that religion is a great bondage. Philosophers like Bruno sacrificed themselves for such a cause.

In the series of protests, the first systematic attempt was made by René Descartes (1596-1650) through logical argument. It is he who "revived the Aristotelian tradition of thinking in the history of philosophy."⁸ But the struggle in theoretical framework was engineered by John Locke (1632-1704). Hobbs added a new dimension in the philosophy of freedom. To him freedom lies in the will to do or the will not to do. If man wills to be absolutely free, then he will stop thinking. So, "man is free to act, but not free to will as he wills. He cannot will to will."⁹

Locke was the first thinker who defined freedom and free-will in a lucid and candid manner. Free-will is nothing while freedom is everything, by it men can be perfect. Another important philosopher is J. J. Rousseau (1712-78). His political theory is set forth in his *Social Contract*, published in 1762. On the title page of this book he calls himself a 'Citizen of Geneva' and in his introductory sentences he says: "I feel that, however feeble the influence of my voice may have been on public affairs, the right of voting on them makes it my duty to study them."¹⁰

Although the book as a whole is more rhetorical than most of Rousseau's writings, its opening is, "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains. One man thinks himself the master of others, but remains more a slave than they are."¹¹ In this chain of thought, the other important thinker is Hegel. In his book, *The Philosophy of Right*, he has discussed the problem of freedom. Politically, Hegel opposed the individualistic theory of freedom. While exploring his theory of freedom, W. T. Stace says: "Freedom is the act of spirit. He identifies spirits with the absolute and, therefore, freedom can be regarded as the act of the absolute."¹² To Hegel, the only way of achieving freedom is nationality. He finds it a perfect means for "the welfare of the individuals."¹³ He is a strong advocate of the spiritual theory of the nation.

J. S. Mill holds that freedom of thought, invention, discussion and self-moral decisions are necessary. Thinkers like Bertrand Russell are of the opinion that "Freedom lies in the acceptance of the law on duty."¹⁴ Some other thinkers hold that sometimes man is subjected to law. C. Bay rightly suggests, "Man is subject to law and therefore, he is not determined but free."¹⁵ The problem of freedom is discussed at various levels. First, there is the metaphysical approach. The metaphysical approach to freedom emphasises the release of the individual from the limitations of the ego and physical nature and the attainment of full, complete spiritual power. Secondly, the psychological approach to the problem of freedom analyses the question of

autonomy of the will and motivation. Thirdly, the sociological and political approach to the problem of freedom investigates the question of social and political liberty. Freedom is a cardinal concept in idealistic political thought.

The radical and revolutionary view of freedom was added by Karl Marx who gave the call: "The proletariat have nothing to lose but their chains, they have a world to win." The Russian revolution has changed the past idea of revolution and freedom. In recent times an important school of philosophy analyses freedom in a dynamic way. Existentialist thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre have emphasised that freedom lies in the actualisation of human existence. Sartre believes that man is condemned to be free. Man realises his freedom in anguish because in anguish man analyses his past, present and future. He has found that his past is nothing and likewise the present. But the future is in his hand and he can make himself what he desires.

In the pursuit of this philosophy many battles and revolutions occurred in the long annals of history. For Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of freedom we have his writings constituting the exclusive source material. Primarily he expressed himself through some early journals and magazines. The most significant of them were *Indu Prakash*, *Bande Mataram*, *Karmayogin* and *Arya*. His noted article "New Lamps for Old" is considered to be a landmark because in it he has given his critical commentary of the Congress's notion of freedom. His views were an enlightened commentary based on the prevailing temperament and moods of the Congress. We should remember, for example, what the then President of National Congress, Romesh Chandra Banerjee, had remarked: "The British have provided us with railways and moreover, in the form of western education a great achievement for India."¹⁶ In fact, at that time the role of the Congress was confined to the petitioner's, requesting for few privileges.

This was the situation prior to Sri Aurobindo's arrival from England. In the beginning his primary notion of freedom was confined to achieving political freedom. In the early phase of his career he emphatically felt the necessity of *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj*, *National Education* and a large public organisation for the achievement of freedom. But later on Sri Aurobindo considered the people as eternal, *sanātan*, having inner spirit unaffected by the effect of marching time. He expresses:

Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be overclouded but never, even for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint, are the natural fruits of our Indian soil, and there has been no age in which they have not been born.¹⁷

Sri Aurobindo did not regard only the land or the geographical map as the nation, but also those sentiments that live in the heart of that nation's people. Sri Aurobindo insisted on the view that the seed of patriotism lies in the Vedas. "The Earth is the mother. I am her son."¹⁸ This is the root of the formation of the concept

of country as motherland. To Sri Aurobindo, self-sacrifice is urgently required not only for the sake of national life but also for the sake of spiritual freedom. Thus, a man without having the deep-seated feeling of self-sacrifice and devotion cannot achieve freedom. Freedom is planted in man as a divine instinct and so it implies the deliverance from the animal elements and the progressive inward growth into spirituality. Very honestly, he holds that the concept of spiritual freedom is the gift of the East while the concept of social and political freedom is the achievement of the West. Socrates and Plato insisted on the ethical freedom and the freedom of choice while Aristotle insisted on political righteousness.

Sri Aurobindo sees merit in the views of both J. C. Mill and Spencer. European thinkers have emphasised the importance of external freedom while Sri Aurobindo emphasised the inward freedom of man. He says, "They have found out the way to external freedom. We have found out the way to internal freedom. We meet and give to each other what we have gained. We have learned from them to aspire after external freedom as they will learn from us to aspire for internal freedom."¹⁹ In this way, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is a bridge between the East and the West. He recognised the idea of democracy and political liberty of Mazzini, Mill, Spencer and Rousseau. Rousseau and Locke had raised their voices for individual freedom against the national ruler. Sri Aurobindo is quite aware of the theory of political freedom of the West. He argued "Indian civilization did not develop its earlier political and social liberties—that greatness of freedom belongs to the West but freedom of thought and spiritual liberty have always been among its constant tradition."²⁰

On the basis of this distinction, it can be argued that the difference between external and internal freedom is the difference between *Swaraj* and *Swadhinata*. According to Sri Aurobindo, *Swaraj* is an ancient Vedic concept and so it gives a metaphysical or spiritual touch while *Swadhinata* is merely a political or external freedom. *Swadhinata* is only a part of integral *Swaraj*. *Swadhinata* is merely a political concept while *Swaraj* is a political spiritual concept. He finds that inner freedom leads to the acquisition of divine power "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. The Kingdom of *Swaraj* is within you."

The pivotal point in Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy is the theory of freedom. His critical commentary on democracy and socialism is a pointer towards the neglect of freedom. He visualises the advent of a spiritualised society for the sake of attaining integral freedom. Freedom is not the only goal of human progression and evolutionary endeavour. Sri Aurobindo has pleaded for a spiritual synthesis of liberty, equality, unity, peace and fraternity. Sri Aurobindo pleads for the divinisation of man and society. He wants a spiritualisation of politics. His thought-structure is certainly one of the most massive and encyclopaedic products of the contemporary renaissance movement in India. He is the pioneer interpreter of the Indian philosophic idealism, freedom and cosmic culture. As a great synthesizer of the Eastern and Western moral, spiritual and aesthetic traditions Sri Aurobindo will be ranked among the towering personalities of the ages. A great thinker and poet like Tagore, addressing him, ob-

serves, "You have the word and we are waiting to accept it from you India will speak through your voice to the world"

GAJENDRA KUMAR

References

- 1 F E Oppenheim, *Dimension of Freedom* George Allen and Unwin London 1966 p 72
- 2 Dr S Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1947, p 297
- 3 N K Wright, *A History of Modern Philosophy*, Macmillan Co Ltd , New York, 1962, pp 13-26
- 4 A J M Milne, *Freedom and Right*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd , Sydney, 1968, p 164
- 5 St Augustine, *City of God*, XIX, 14
- 6 St Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, Doubleday and Co Inc , Garden City, New York, 1958, p 287
- 7 E Gilson, *The Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, Penguin Books Inc . Baltimore, 1971, p 266
- 8 B Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* George Allen and Unwin Ltd , Sydney, 1979, p 542
- 9 Thomas Hobbs, *Leviathan*, p 15
- 10 J J Rousseau *Social Contract*, Introduction, p I
- 11 *Ibid* , p 1
- 12 W T Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, London, 1924, p 249
- 13 Hegel *The Philosophy of History* (Trans F Sibra), New York, 1944 p 260
- 14 B Russell, *Roads to Freedom*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1977, p 186
- 15 C Bay, *The Structure of Freedoms*, p 169
- 16 Congress Presidential Address, The Indian National Congress, Madras, 1885, G A Natesh and Co , 1917, p 4
- 17 Sri Aurobindo, *Bankim-Tilak-Davananda* Pondicherry, 1970, p 2
- 18 *Atharvaveda*, XII, I, 12
- 19 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*
- 20 Sri Aurobindo, 'A Defence of Indian Culture' reproduced from the *Arya* in *The Advent*, 1949, p 49

A ROYAL CATALOGUE UNVEILS GEMS OF HISTORY

THE most valuable gemstone ever found, the 3,106-carat Cullinan diamond, was once put into a package and mailed parcel post from Johannesburg to London, where it arrived in perfect condition.

Queen Elizabeth II has a solid gold salt shaker that stands 18 inches (46 centimeters) tall, weighs 14 pounds (6.3 kilograms) and is known as “The Salt of State”

King William IV did not have much fun at his coronation in 1830. The foppish monarch insisted that every diamond, ruby, pearl and sapphire he could find be encrusted onto his crown. That made the crown so heavy it gave the ruler a royal pain in the neck and a toothache so severe he had to interrupt the coronation to have a molar removed.

These anecdotal gems, plus hundreds of other tales of natural guilt and human guilt, are set forth in a most unlikely new publication—the Official Inventory of the crown jewels of Britain’s royal family.

When a team of accountants and gemologists set out 15 years ago to catalogue the lavish collection of the House of Windsor, it was assumed that the chief product of their work would be, essentially, a spreadsheet: a listing of the location and condition of each of the 22,599 precious stones and the court regalia belonging to the royal family.

In fact, though, the inventory produced such a trove of anecdotes about royalty and riches that the catalogue has become a weighty two-volume work of history focusing more on human foibles than on diamonds and pearls.

“The project turned out bigger than we expected, because we had so much fascinating material,” said Shirley Bury, a metallurgist and historian who was signed on to help catalogue the royal spoons, spurs and swords. “Of course we had to publish our listings,” she said. “But we felt we needed to set out the history of the collection as well.”

The history of Britain’s crown jewels dates back about 1,000 years, but the collection has changed countless times over the centuries. Kings and their kin repeatedly have had to pawn the jewels to wage war, rebuild burned palaces and pay royal dowries. In the Middle Ages, kings routinely carried the crown jewels off to battle, partly because they did not trust their royal cousins back home at the palace, and partly because the sparkling diadems sometimes had to be hocked, piece by piece, to feed the soldiers in the field.

The royals made things tougher for the inventory team because of their inveterate habit of moving jewels from one item to another. A sapphire that was supposed to be in the ring of King Edward the Confessor when he was buried in the 11th century now sits atop the Imperial State Crown—the crown Queen Elizabeth II wore in November for the opening of Parliament. The same crown also has a pair of pearls that reportedly fell off the necklace of Mary, Queen of Scots, when she was beheaded in 1587.

For centuries the royal family was so broke that it had to rent gems from London jewellers to stick on the crown for coronations and other glittering moments. As Britain became an imperial power, however, the royal family was gradually able to accumulate its own hoard of crowns, pendants, broaches and ornaments of gold, silver and platinum.

Queen Victoria, the 19th-century monarch who revelled in the plunder brought back from her global empire, was a particularly avid collector. Among her prizes was the thumb-size Indian diamond known as the Kohinoor, or the Mountain of Light, the jewel that inspired Wilkie Collins's classic mystery story "The Moonstone".

The Kohinoor was a giant among gems, weighing 180 carats; by contrast, the most famous diamond in the United States, the Smithsonian's Hope Diamond, weighs 45.5 carats. Today the Kohinoor is one of 2,800 diamonds in the crown of Queen Elizabeth's 98-year-old mother, who is known as the Queen Mother.

Even the Mountain of Light would dim, though, beside the biggest diamond ever discovered, the Cullinan diamond. It was found in Pretoria in 1905. The new trans-Atlantic telegraph cables quickly made the Cullinan an object of global fascination. Since South Africa, too, was a British colony in those days, all agreed that the gem had to be shipped to London for presentation to King Edward VII. This great prize became the dream snatch of jewel thieves the world over, and months were spent contemplating how to transport it safely.

In the end, Scotland Yard decided that the best rule to follow would be "the simpler, the better". The diamond as big as an eggplant was sent in an unmarked package by parcel post, and arrived a month later in the royal mailbag at Buckingham Palace. The Cullinan eventually was cut into a set of huge gems, known as the Stars of Africa.

Today, the diamond known as Star of Africa I, an eggsize gem weighing 530.2 carats, is set in the royal scepter, a bejewelled staff each new British monarch carries in the coronation ceremony. Star of Africa II, at 317.4 carats, is in the Imperial State Crown, although members of the family occasionally wear it as a brooch.

The official inventory also lists all the items in the glittering warehouses where the queen's official dinnerware, or "Banqueting Plate", is kept. That 14-pound gold salt shaker is one of the most dramatic items on the queen's table, but even it has been eclipsed by the family's Grand Punch Bowl, an ornate golden utensil about the size of a bath tub that holds 29 gallons (110 liters) of champagne. Queen Victoria used to have her children baptized in it.

For all their years of counting and cataloguing, the state auditors never resolved the question most often asked about the crown jewels. "Everybody wants to know how much the jewels are worth," said Ms Bury, the historian who worked on the inventory. "There's only one answer we can offer, but it doesn't satisfy a soul. We just say the collection is 'priceless'."

The official catalogue of the collection is not priceless, but it could definitely be

called pricey Just published by the Stationery Office—once a government printing agency but now privatized—the compilation of this first-ever inventory may require that you sell some of the family jewels to buy it.

The two-volume set costs \$1,700

T R REID

(Courtesy *International Herald Tribune*, 5 January 1999)

SACRIFICE

THE other day I was in the vegetable market elbowing my way through a crowd of sellers and buyers, and thereby making way for my wife walking at my heels. In either hand, she carried a cloth bag loaded with vegetables

The market gate was just a few metres away and I was forced to stop, for one further step of mine would have toppled an old man balancing himself with a walking stick

The old man was about to hurl expletives at me, but then my familiar face dispelled his wrath and he smiled

“Hmm . It’s you? Why are you in such haste as if you were going to pluck the stars to braid your queen’s hair?” he asked and exploded into a laugh

“It’s already late, Sir Guests are at home .. And my queen at my back is prodding me to move,” I said in an apologetic tone

“Huh.. You are under your queen’s kitchen service?” he said and laughed like an automatic gun in action

I too laughed but could not continue for there came a threatening voice from somewhere in the crowd “Hey! You two there standing like trees! What breed are you! Lost your common sense, eh? Move aside and give way ”

The old man twitched a contemptuous shoulder and hobbled aside.

As I sailed past the old man, he said “Come home one day. I have something interesting to tell you.”

I nodded.

Once outside the gate, my wife heaved a sigh and said “What a milling crowd!”

“Yes! You are right,” I responded, shoving my glasses back up my nose

“Here too you managed to find a place to speak to an old man. That’s why you were told off by some fellow there,” she said and tried to muffle a laugh

“But it was he who dragged me into a conversation,” I said as we squeezed ourselves into the auto coach kept waiting for us

The auto coughed into life As it went bumping past rows of noisy shops and silent houses, my wife asked “Who is that old man, dear?”

“He is a good friend of mine,” I said and continued, “Pandit Thambi Raman was once a big name in our city college Now he is retired and leads the life of a recluse ”

“You mean he lives alone away from his wife and children?” my wife asked in a whisper, brushing a few stray hairs from her brow

“I remember to have asked him such a question once ”

“And what did he say?”

“He said that he was married to Tamil literature and somehow never thought of any woman, except his mother ”

“It must be a lie,” my wife scowled

“Why?” I asked innocently

“Tamil literature speaks very generously of the physical charms of women. Can you mention just one classic, be it old or modern, as an exception? Religious works too don't lack in them. And you want me to believe that the Pandit never dreamt of any woman in his life and considered even the harlots we encounter in literature as his mothers!”

“Don't be rude, dear! Perhaps what he meant was that he spent his life in the relentless pursuit of knowledge and had no time to think of marriage and family life.”

“If the second part of your statement is true, then he must have been a book-worm,” heckled my wife.

“True ..Quite true. One day you should come with me to his house. You will be amazed to see his vast collection of books. If my memory holds, I think he has a little more than twenty tall and fat shelves of books. Name any good book in world literature. He would declare jubilantly ‘Yes! I have read it,’ then proceed to talk about it at length and afterwards end his lecture by locating the book on the shelves. It is a pleasure to hear him speak. His memory is so perfect that he never fumbles around in locating any book in his collection for he himself does the dusting once a month and is very meticulous about the arrangement of his books. I have heard him say quite often, ‘The right book in the right place saves you time.’”

“Does he lend books?” interrupted my wife

“Hmm. I doubt. He used to tell me ‘Lend a book to lose a friend.’ I think that is the secret behind his unmutilated collection,” I said

“You mean he doesn't lend books even to his students?” probed my wife

“No question of lending books. But I am sure his students have access to his library. I have seen several of them reading in his house.”

“Who cooks his food?” my wife shot her next question

“Self-help. . Self-help in everything,” I said amidst a giggle and studied my wife from the corner of my eye.

She bit her lip to keep from laughing. “He has no relatives left. to care for him?” she asked, her face still betraying signs of shyness

“He has left all his relatives perhaps long ago,” I replied and after a pause added, “Who would live with a bookworm?”

My wife guffawed once, before she said: “Oh! Don't I?”

I laughed at that. She shared my laughter. Noticing my face drain of colour, she switched over to her next question. “That old man said that he had something interesting to tell you. What is your guess?”

I shook my head and pouted as a gesture of helplessness. The auto coach pulled up at our house and, as my wife and I stepped out, I said, “Should meet him sometime.”

I used to meet Pandit Thambi Raman quite often during my evening strolls on the promenade of the seashore. But a road accident after his retirement had driven

him to use a walking stick for support and hence he moved out of his house only when there was a great necessity.

Pandit Thambi Raman and I liked each other for various reasons. It was our love of books that brought us together. Over and above all this, he was a good counsellor and, whenever my nuts went loose, he had the kindness to tighten them.

A week or so later I told my wife "I may be late home today. I intend meeting Pandit Thambi Raman after office hours."

"I too would like to meet him. Poor old man! We shall give him company for an hour," said she brimming with sympathy.

"Wow! He will be delighted," I howled jubilantly.

"Then come home after office and pick me up," she suggested.

That evening we covered the distance on foot and from afar I nudged my wife and pointed to Pandit Thambi Raman relaxing in an easy chair on his balcony.

"What is he doing? Dozing?" she whispered.

As we neared his house, we found to our dismay that the main door was kept ajar and he was snoring.

"Let us go up without disturbing him. It will be a pleasant surprise to him," I said as I pushed the door further and gave way for my wife to enter. Her eyes went wide at the well-arranged collection of books. She looked at them without uttering a syllable. Perhaps she was struck dumb. She shook her head as if she couldn't believe her eyes. She sighed with pleasure as we climbed up the stairs.

Reaching the balcony, I called out, "Sir!" and thereby startled Pandit Thambi Raman. He gave us a toothy welcome.

"I am honoured. really honoured by your visit, young lady," he said in an elated tone.

My wife bowed in all humility and offered him an all-silver tiffin container.

"Oh! What have you brought?" the old man asked opening its lid. "Hmm. Sweetmeats! How do you know that I like such goodies? You bought them?"

"They are all home-made, Sir!" she said.

The old man took out a piece, pushed it into his mouth, and began to munch. "Good...good...Not tasted such a thing before," he complimented and looked gratefully at my wife.

We didn't fail to see his eyes brimming with tears.

"You have a fantastic collection of books, Sir. I am amazed to see your house walled with books. Your house is certainly a treasure trove of books."

The old man stopped eating awhile and wore a gloomy look. "Treasure trove! You say it is a treasure. But you know what happened last month?" he said keeping the container aside.

My wife and I became curious.

"Last month," began the old man, "I was visited by a robber. It was very late in the night and I didn't know how he managed his way into my study. I was rearranging the Tamil poets in alphabetical order, when the nasty fellow caught me by the

nape of my neck and threatened with a swish of a kitchen knife 'Your money or your life.' For a second I was taken aback. But I didn't lose my balance and so corrected him, 'Say... "Your books or your life."' '

"Ha! What the hell! I said, 'your money or your life,' the robber threatened again.

"Then I told the robber, 'I have converted all my money into books!' But he didn't believe me... He pulled out a nylon rope and tied me to my chair and gagged me with his foul-smelling hanky... Ugh!... I think I swooned and when I came back to my senses it was already dawn I was shocked to see my books lying pell-mell on the floor I saw the robber pulling out the drawers of my writing table one after another and upturning them on the floor and ferreting for valuables. When he finished ransacking the whole house, he came to me gnashing his teeth.

" 'Who the hell are you?' the robber howled at me 'A giant guarding a garbage of books, eh? Look! Look what I could take away from your house,' the robber opened his clenched fist in front of me.

" 'Five rupees and twenty paise...That's all I could collect from you. Your kitchen too is in no way better than mine. All old tin containers, pots and mugs.'

" 'What a useless fellow you are!' he yelled, pulling out the gag. 'I have wasted my time here,' he said and then gurgled noisily thrice and spat in my face. And before he left, he said gritting his teeth, 'Your books! My foot.' "

P RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

En route: On the Path (The Mother's correspondence with Shyam Sundar), Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1999, Rs 50.

THIS handsome pocket-sized volume presents an English translation of the correspondence between the Mother and Shyam Sundar from January 1967 to December 1970. The original French version was published in 1986, and this translation first came out in the following year. A joint English and Gujarati translation in a larger format was published in 1994. Now the English version has been reprinted by the Ashram Trust. This exchange of letters is particularly valuable, not only because at this relatively late date the Mother was corresponding regularly only with a very few privileged people, but even more for its intrinsic interest.

Shyam Sundar, who had been visiting the Ashram regularly since 1949, was still only in his thirties when he gave up his practice as a lawyer in Calcutta in 1963 and brought his family to Pondicherry to join the Ashram. In early 1971 the Mother made him her secretary for Auroville. Since from that time onwards he was seeing her every day their exchange took another form from the end of 1970 onwards. In these letters we can see how Shyam Sundar's highly developed and trained mind, coupled with his inner aspiration, evoked from the Mother numerous concisely formulated insights on a wide range of topics, with a far more than purely personal application. Most of these relate to different aspects of sadhana and work for the Divine, but some are of even more general interest. For example she has drawn a beautiful little diagram in order to explain the correct approach towards translating Sri Aurobindo's works into Hindi, that will be of great help to anyone translating to and from whatever language.

I think there is no better way to draw this valuable little book to the attention of potential readers than to give a few samples

In the human being, is the psychic being the entire soul or do both the psychic being and the soul (in its essence, as a divine spark in all creatures) exist together?

The soul is the eternal essence at the centre of the psychic being. The soul is in fact like a divine spark which puts on many states of being of increasing density, down to the most material, and is inside the body, in the interior, so to say, of the solar plexus. These states of being take form and develop, progress, become individualised and perfected in the course of a great number of earthly lives and form the psychic being. When the psychic being is fully formed it is aware of the consciousness of the soul and manifests it perfectly.

(1267)

I have begun to see that both the personal effort of the sadhak and its result depend on the Divine Grace.

About this one could say humorously. We are all divine but we are hardly aware of it, and that in us which is unaware that it is divine, is what we call ‘ourselves’.

(13.7.67)

There are some interesting exchanges about money. For instance from the 4th to the 8th of January 1968:

How is it that ordinarily, the richer a man is (materially), the more dishonest he is?

It is because material wealth is controlled by the adverse forces—and because they have not yet been converted to the Divine Influence, although the work has begun

That victory will form part of the triumph of Truth.

Wealth should not be a personal property and should be at the disposal of the Divine for the welfare of all

When Mother says that wealth should not be a personal property, I understand that what should come is more a change of psychological attitude on the part of those who own money than any change in the law of property.

Undoubtedly

Only the psychological change can be a solution.

The disciples of the Ashram have a sure and easy way to put their money at the disposal of the Divine. they offer it to the Mother. But how can others do it? Can one say that each one should get rid of the sense of property and spend his money according to the Divine command within, from time to time?

I am sure that if someone is advanced enough on the path to receive the knowledge that money is an impersonal power and should be used for the progress of the earth, this person will be developed enough inwardly to receive the knowledge of how to make the best possible use of the money

The Mother herself took up this theme again later, writing on 29.6.1969

One day, if it interests you, I will explain what should be the true role and true place of money.

Yes, Mother, I pray to You to explain the true role and place of money

In a truer world, towards the realisation of which the creation is moving, money has to be one of the terrestrial forces placed at the disposal of the Divine Consciousness for its work on earth

The first step towards this realisation is the abolition of the sense of ownership. Each one is the user and distributor of the money at his disposal—and this leads naturally to the next step. Those who have the truest and vastest vision and knowledge have to become these distributors and users

The processes to arrive at this result should be elaborated and put into execution in accordance with the need and possibilities.

Isn't the sense of ownership an attribute of the ego?

The sense of ownership is surely a manner of being natural to the ego, but in spite of his blindness man has not the sense of ownership for the air he breathes, the water of the river or the falling rain

There are also many questions and answers relating to transformation and the future realisations:

Can an individual achieve transformation even if the universe continues to be as it is?

In the evolution, the individual is far ahead of the earth, but as long as he lives on earth there is a certain interdependence. But the condition of the earth is sure to become such that a supramental being will soon be able to live on it.

(9 7.68)

Mother has said, "In the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the transformation of the body is indispensable so far as it can be done."

Are there limits to the transformation of the body?

For the present, yes. But in the time, no. I am convinced that in two hundred years for example the physical body could be infinitely superior to what it is now—luminous, plastic, enduring, harmonious. . And our effort of today would have made it possible

(2 1 69)

As well as many other fascinating sidelights:

Does Durga's lion represent the Divine Power over adverse forces?

It can be understood that way

But in the vital there is a lion very much alive who is very often near me and whom several persons have often seen. He is evidently not an animal though having an animal appearance symbolic of his royal strength

(4 8 69)

This last quotation prompts the remark that the translation does not always do full justice to the original (translations rarely do!) so that all who can understand French will find it worthwhile to read the correspondence in its original form

The book conforms to the usual high standard of Ashram publications and the All India Press and is very reasonably priced. The attractive cover is, I think, the exact shade of silvery blue which the Mother selected for the birthday cards of 1972, Sri Aurobindo's Centenary Year, remarking that it corresponded to the colour of His physical aura. One turns to these letters again and again with great profit and pleasure

SHRADDHAVAN

India and the World Scene, by *K. D. Sethna* Publishers. Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, 1997, pp 353, Rs 180.

One of the major inadequacies of the new and emerging streams of thought is a lack of inspired and insightful thinking in the field of political theory and political journalism. Politics, it was said, is the last resort of the scoundrel. When we look at the present condition of practical politics in the world, especially in India, we would be inclined to agree with this popular adage. But what is the cause of such a sorry state of affairs in this important field of human activity? Is it not because of lack of inspired and enlightened leadership in political thought and practice, especially in thought? For, in human life, mainly in the collective life of man, it is thought which shapes action or, in other words, "we become what we think." One of the reasons for this "brain-drain" in modern political life may be due to the fact that most of the best brains are drawn towards science, technology, business and industry, leaving the field of politics to the mediocre

But this was not always the condition of politics in modern India. The politics of the freedom struggle in India was inspired by enlightened minds like Sri Aurobindo and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and led by men of sterling character like Mahatma Gandhi and in earlier times by Lokamanya Tilak. Modern political thought and practice is in dire need of such enlightened thinking and inspired leadership. The book under review presents precisely such a refreshingly insightful panorama of political journalism inspired by the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo. The author of the book, K. D. Sethna, is a senior disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and a versatile

thinker, poet and writer with creative and original contributions in the field of English poetry and literature and Indian history

The book contains editorial articles written by Sethna for the fortnightly *Mother India* during 1949-51. The articles discuss and comment on a wide range of topics and issues pertaining to the political and cultural scenario of India and the world during those turbulent times when India had just become free and had to deal with two antagonist blocks. The articles are neatly arranged into four sections with useful and informative editorial comments by the publishers which will help the reader in understanding the historical context of the topics under discussion. The author, in his introductory note, gives many interesting details regarding the origin and history of the articles contained in the book. The periodical *Mother India* was conceived by him and his friend who wanted "political journalism to carry the touch of Aurobindonian light"; it started as a fortnightly magazine "participating in the public affairs of current life" with an outlook based on Sri Aurobindo and Mother's vision.

And regarding the involvement of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the magazine he writes. "When it was stipulated that the fortnightly was to include comments on the political themes of the day, I confessed to the Mother 'I have never associated myself with politics. I know nothing about it.' The Mother smiled and said 'Neither do I.' With natural concern I exclaimed: 'Then what shall we do?' The Mother calmly declared 'There is Sri Aurobindo. He will do everything'."

And indeed he did. "Not only were my editorials written under his inner inspiration, they were sent to him for approval. Only when his 'Yes' was wired to us did we plunge into publication." Once someone doubted whether the Master had been truly represented. When Sri Aurobindo came to know of it he exclaimed "Doesn't he know that *Mother India* is my paper?"

The first section of the book on "The Spirit and Genius of India" deals with Indian Culture and its values and ideals and other cultural issues with political overtones. In these articles the author argues for the revival of the essential and universal spiritual message of Hinduism which is, according to him, "To live in a constant sense, ultimately rising to a continual realisation, of the Divine, infinite and eternal, who has emanated this universe and dwells within it as well as beyond it as its single yet multifarious self and sovereign." (p. 39) The articles in this section have a living relevance for the present condition of Indian politics. Many of the currently debated topics like Secularism, Hindutva, Hindu revivalism are discussed in these articles with a depth of insight and broadness of vision rarely found in modern journalism. In "The National Anthem of India" the author advocates Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's "Bande Mataram" as the right song for India and defends it against objections raised by some secular thinkers on "religious" grounds. We must note here that the situation is somewhat similar to the recent controversy over the singing of Saraswati Vandana. I would like to quote here a passage from this article which, apart from its relevance to the present situation, summarises succinctly the author's standpoint on the issues discussed in this part of the book:

“Indian spiritual culture, true to the Divinity, at once single and multiple, of its vast intuition and experience and to the elan of its audacious, diversely creative life force, stands like a parliament of all faiths and philosophies, a federation of all ethical and social forms.... Hence Indian spiritual culture cannot be objected to as being sectarian. But, on the other hand, we should be de-nationalising it if we refused to admit whatever ideas or terms in it distinguished it from the Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Jain or even Buddhist culture. It has, for all its catholicity, characteristics of its own, and these characteristics it must retain in one manner or another if it is to be in any valid sense Indian. Take away these characteristics and it ceases being what the world knows it to be. Expunge them from a national anthem which claims to be Indian and you have a general nondescript religious terminology, lacking in all national savour and drained of all distinguishable and dynamic vitality. The Godhead hailed must bring the light and colour and configuration of what the descendants of the Rishis have felt and seen. The feeling and seeings are, because of their essential catholicity of motive, really acceptable by even a person who though in India does not think and pray with a consciousness in direct tune with the typical Indian spirituality, but if anyone takes objection to them because of their non-Islamic, non-Christian, non-Jewish, non-Zoroastrian, non-Sikh, non-Jain and even non-Buddhist suggestion, then he fails to understand what ultimate India is and he is trying to rob her of all genuine cultural value and to suppress a national genius that is, from the mystical and metaphysical viewpoint, the most wonderful in existence and, from the worldly and pragmatic viewpoint, no less wonderful by its wealth of varied creativeness and its capacity of almost unlimited organic assimilation. The concept of secularity prominent today in our Constitution must never encourage us to water down this genius: its function is discharged as soon as it ensures freedom of religious belief and ceremony, absence of bigotry, non-discrimination on communal grounds. Overtouchiness with regard to the minorities is a blunder no less serious than riding roughshod over them. As settled dwellers in this subcontinent they are to be granted equal civic and individual rights with the majority that is called Hindu; but for their sake the majority must never diminish the marvellous potentialities of cultural Indianness.” (pp. 23-24)

The second and third sections of the book “Independent India” and “International Issues” comment on the political situation in India and the world during 1949-50. The publisher’s note says of these two sections as follows: “It is interesting to note that most of the problems discussed in these two sections still remain as throbbing issues of the day. While the stand taken on some of these issues may need to be modified in places with the passing of time and the change of circumstances, subsequent events have shown the depth and validity of insight expressed by the author and many of them are still relevant for the future of India and the world.” These articles fully validate the publisher’s claim.

On the issue of the Indian Government’s recognition of Communist China, the author strongly argues against recognition on the basis of not only immediate conse-

quences of such an action for India but also on a broader humanistic-evolutionary perspective. This would mean giving moral sanction to a system of values which are opposed to what India stands for and the spiritual evolution of humanity. And regarding the immediate danger of an officially recognised Red China for India and the world, the following observations dated 29 October 1950 bring out the depth and broadness of the author's vision and foresight. "Neither morally nor legally can there be by any right thinking democratic nation an official recognition of Mao. What will tempt Britain and America to put moral and legal factors aside is business interest. They have large investments in China and they must be asking themselves whether by establishing diplomatic relations with Mao they can safeguard these investments in spite of his communist dye. But a colossal folly would be committed if business took prudence over wider considerations. And we may remark that the wider considerations are much more than simply a moral and legal punctilio. Although morally and legally the case for not recognising the new Government is sound enough, an even greater reason is the increase of strength such a recognition would bring to a cause violently antagonistic to civilised values. For one thing, it would open the gates to the flow of British and American industrial equipment into China, which while filling the pockets of businessmen will turn what is now a mere military success into a fast-developing all-round efficiency. A China growing technologically a second Russia would be a mighty menace to all countries, and most to India who is at present the best bulwark the spirit of democracy has in the South-Asian continent. . . More than any other country India has to be vigilant against Red China." (pp. 171-72)

This passage was indeed prophetic. It was the American and European business interests in China which made that country a military super-power, the same business interests are now making her an economic super-power. This means, giving strength and life to an outdated, almost dead, anti-democratic ideology which has outlived its utility for the evolutionary progress of the world. As for India, consequences of the "Himalayan Blunder" of recognising Red China were almost immediate, in the form of Chinese aggression, which occurred not too long after these articles were written.

The other important factor to be noted here is that establishment of Communism in China hampered the development of the earlier deeper moral and spiritual temperament of China. This was a great loss to the cultural and spiritual resources of the world. Had the political leaders of the world possessed the same insight and vision of the author there could have been the possibility of a freer and more democratic environment. This would have created a more benign and culturally rich China, more friendly to India because of the cultural affinity between the two nations, and also contributing greatly to the cultural, moral and spiritual progress of the world. A China altogether different from the menacing, materialistic and militaristic communist dinosaur she has become.

The fourth and last section of the book is on the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo is an exemplary manifestation of the spiritual genius of India. His vision, like that of the Vedic Rishis, is a positive world-embracing vision.

It saw, literally in the spiritual sense of the word 'seer', divinisation of the whole terrestrial life as the evolutionary destiny of humanity. But Sri Aurobindo's vision is not only a Seeing but also an Action, a silent spiritual action on world-events for the spiritual regeneration of the world. In this last section of the book, the author brings out the salient features of Sri Aurobindo's Vision and Action and the main principles of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga which as the author points out "is for the creation of a new race, it is the effectuation of the next collective step beyond man." (p 331)

Though written fifty years ago the book as a whole makes relevant reading, throwing helpful light on many of the current issues of the day.

M S SRINIVASAN

Students' Section

THE HIDDEN CHAMBER OF THE VEDIC TRUTH

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

Guru Shishya Parampara

ALTHOUGH greatly misunderstood by the modern rationalists, this system of teacher-disciple communication was apt for the transmission of any difficult knowledge. All human knowledge consists of three necessary elements—the thing that is known, the word or form that expresses it and, lastly, the sense that is given to the words forming a link between what has to be known and what its expression is. The thing that has to be known remains unchanged through time. The form given to it can be entirely preserved and, if correctly consulted, will reveal the knowledge hidden within it. But the most important factor needed to unveil the secret knowledge is the sense attached to the word. For getting the right interpretation of the words a capable intermediary is necessary. This competent knower is our Indian Guru.

The transferring of knowledge can be given in terms of a simple scientific analogy. It is an unalterable fact that at any given time and under right conditions two atoms of hydrogen will combine with one atom of oxygen to give one molecule of water. This chemical formula stands true for ever. Now, unless a person knows the formula and has performed the experiment himself and passed his knowledge to worthy successors, the meaning and efficacy of the formula might be lost from the world. Then the formula $2H_2+O_2=2H_2O$ might be labelled as a superstitious jargon or a senseless barbaric uttering. Concerning the Vedic mantras this is the attitude of the Europeans and some modernized Indians.

There was a period in our nation's history when the key to the Vedic symbols was forgotten. By the time Yaska and other scholars chose to interpret the Veda, the inner significance of the coded words was lost to the world. They retained only their outer and ritualistic meaning. Inferior mentality grasped this and branded the works as unspiritual.

Yet it is, as Sri Aurobindo says, a remarkable fact that "ancient India was created by the Veda and the Upanishad and that the vision of inspired seers made a people." Most of our religions and metaphysical schools have their roots in the Veda. Buddhism, although it overtly seems to oppose the Veda, can be traced to some Vedic revelations. The Veda is not only the seat of all Hindu philosophies but also the source of other world religions. My Parsi friend Dilnavaz says that Zoroaster was greatly influenced by the Veda and that the Zoroastrian hymns carry an echo of the Vedic mantras.

Sri Aurobindo ranks the Vedas very highly:

At the root of all that we Hindus have done, thought and said through these many thousands of years, behind all we are and seek to be, there lies concealed, the fount of our philosophies, the bedrock of our religions, the kernel of our thought, the explanation of our ethics and our society, the summary of our civilisation, the rivet of our nationality, a small body of speech, Veda. From this one seed developing into many forms and the multitudinous and magnificent birth called Hinduism draws its inexhaustible existence. Buddhism too with its offshoot, Christianity flows from the same original source. It has left its stamp on Persia, on Judaism, through Judaism, Christianity and Sufism on Islam, and through Buddha on Confucianism, and through Christ on medieval mysticism, Greek and German philosophy and Sanskrit learning on the thought and civilisation of Europe. There is no part of the world's spirituality, of the world's religion, of the world's thought which would be what it is today, if the Veda had not existed. Of no other body of speech can this be said.

Thought

But one wonders how the Vedic writings, in spite of being so obscure and imperfectly understood, have so vastly and pervasively influenced over the millenniums every positive Indian thought. Sri Aurobindo has a very interesting answer for this. Thought, he says, has other means of survival. Even when it ceases to be propagated through speech and writing and no longer forms part of the conscious mentality, it continues to persist in the mentality of the race and emerges when the time is ripe through receptive mediums. Physical heredity is one means of thought propagation. Although thought itself is not heredity, types of mentality are. How often we say "so and so has his father's temper or such a one has his mother's sense of humour." It is because of this race-memory that there are recurrences of certain thought patterns in the history of a nation.

The Vedic ideas have been fixed in the early Indian mentality and have never really undergone any major change through the ages. That is why if any slight external pressure is exercised or if a certain necessity arises, the Indian mind is capable of retrieving the Vedic ideas spontaneously. A simple example is that we Indians take the notion of rebirth for granted whereas the Europeans will look upon this idea as preposterous and find it very difficult to accept this truth which seems to us so obvious.

But Sri Aurobindo says that physical inheritance is not a sufficient means for thought propagation. He tells us that as man lives in a physical environment and is influenced by it, so too every man lives in a mental environment and is consciously or unconsciously always influenced by it. The mob psychology is a typical example of this theory.

This mind atmosphere has its needs and conditions. Over the ages, it assimilates what is new and foreign and moulds it into its own type and rejects that which is not

suited to its temperament. It was into this mental atmosphere in which we live and by which we draw our mental inspiration, that the old thoughts have entered and although obscured are not entirely lost.

In India there have been frequent returns to the past because of the widespread practice of Yoga. Yoga helps one to become more receptive to the subtler worlds of which man is not aware in his ordinary consciousness. It is because of this practice that the Vedas have survived in India. Moreover, every time the truth of the Veda was obscured by rigid formulisations, great souls like Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Ramdas, Ramakrishna were born who did not belong to any traditional school of Yoga but independently realized the truth of the Veda and proclaimed its authenticity. Just as any theory in science is accepted as plausible after being consistently proved by experiments, so too Yogis for ages have arrived at the Vedic truths by following their inner guidelines and confirmed the authority of the Veda.

(To be continued)

ANURADHA CHOWDRY

ORIGIN AND FATE OF THE UNIVERSE

(Continued from the issue of June 1999)

“DARK MATTER” can be divided into two groups. One group is known as WIMP, or Weakly Interacting Massive Particles, and the other group as MACHO, or Massive Compact Halo Objects.

Neutrinos make up the WIMP group. Neutrinos are elementary particles that were created in huge numbers in the very early universe. These particles interact very weakly with their anti-particles and also with other particles and so they should still be around today. Neutrinos are so inert that they may pass right through hundreds of lightyears and never interact with any other particle. As these particles do not interact, they are very difficult to detect. For a long time, in fact till the mid 1980s, it was thought that neutrinos were massless. But since then new theories seem to be suggesting that neutrinos might in fact have a small mass. An American-Japanese experiment early this year seems to have found the mass of the neutrino. But the result is still unconfirmed and until the experiment is repeated several times nothing can be asserted with certainty. These experiments are so costly that the next one will take place only at the end of 1999. But suppose the experiment is correct and neutrino has a small mass then, as the universe is filled by the neutrinos, the mass of the universe can be so large that it may become significant and slow down the expansion.

Now let us turn our attention to the other group: the MACHO. This group includes white dwarfs, neutron stars and the most mysterious and fascinating of all celestial objects, the black hole. To understand neutron stars and black holes we must first understand the life-cycle of a star. A star is formed when a large amount of gas, mostly hydrogen, starts to collapse on itself due to gravitational attraction. As the gas contracts, the atoms of the gas collide more and more with each other and with greater and greater velocities. As the velocity of particles is related to thermal energy, a higher velocity corresponds to a higher temperature. Therefore when a particle begins to gain speed it means that the gas is heating up. Eventually the gas will become so hot that when the hydrogen atoms collide they will no longer bounce off each other but get bound together to form helium. The heat released in this thermonuclear reaction, which is like the explosion of a hydrogen bomb, is what makes a star shine. In addition to the heat released, the pressure of the gas also increases and this is sufficient to balance the gravitational attraction of the star and stop it from collapsing any further.

Stars will remain stable in this manner for a long time—the heat released in the thermonuclear reaction balancing the gravitational collapse of the star. Eventually, however, the star will run out of its hydrogen and other higher grade nuclear fuel. Our sun has probably got enough fuel for another 5 billion years but more massive stars might use up all their fuel in as little as 100 million years. When a star runs out of its nuclear fuel it cools down and therefore its gas pressure decreases. There is nothing

then to counter the gravitational attraction and what happens to the star is that it becomes a neutron star or a black hole

In 1928 an Indian graduate student, Subramaniam Chandrashekhar, who was to get later a Nobel Prize for his work on stellar evolution, worked out how big a star can be and still support itself after it has run out of its nuclear fuel. When the star begins to contract and becomes small, the matter particles come very near to each other. Matter particles are particles such as the electron, the proton, the neutron. But then Pauli's Exclusion Principle also comes into operation. This Principle states that in a system no two particles can have the same set of quantum numbers. And so, as the matter particles come very close to each other, they experience a kind of repulsive force. This makes the particles move away from each other and makes the star expand. The star can therefore maintain itself at a constant radius by a balance between the gravitational attraction and the repulsion provided by the Exclusion Principle

There is a limit, however, to the amount of repulsive force the Exclusion Principle can provide. A star of about 1.4 solar masses begins to contract when it has run out of its nuclear fuel and stops contracting when its radius reaches a few thousand kilometres and settles down as a white dwarf. A cubic inch of white dwarf material weighs hundreds of tons.

Now if a star has about two times the mass of the sun then its final state is even smaller than that of a white dwarf. The repulsive force between electrons due to the Exclusion Principle is no longer sufficient to counter the gravitational attraction and all the electrons fall into the nucleus turning the protons into neutrons. Now it is the repulsion due to the Exclusion Principle between neutrons that stops further collapse. Such stars are called neutron stars and they have a radius of about ten miles and a density of hundreds of millions of tons per cubic inch.

But a star having more than two solar masses encounters another problem when it comes to the end of its fuel cycle. In it nothing can stop the collapse any more and the star shrinks to infinite density. The gravitational field around such a star becomes so strong that even light cannot escape from its surface. Once a light ray has crossed a limit, called the event horizon, it is trapped by the star's gravity. The Cosmic Censorship hypothesis states that any event inside the event horizon can have no effect on anything outside it. So, effectively speaking, the star gets completely cut off from our space-time or it is as if it has formed a hole in the very fabric of space-time by its weight and has disappeared from our universe. But black holes can still exert gravitational force on their surrounding objects and must therefore be included into calculations when the mass of the universe is being considered.

All these three objects are very difficult to detect and only very few of each kind have really been discovered. But we know that many of these objects must exist and that they will raise the mass of the universe sufficiently to stop the expansion.

Up till now we have examined all the possible ways in which our universe might end but we still haven't seen how it began. All of Friedmann's models have one common feature, that sometime in the past, 10 to 15 billion years ago, all the galaxies

were so close together that the distances between them were zero. At that time which we call the Big Bang moment the density of the universe and the curvature of space-time were both infinite. Because mathematics cannot really handle infinities the General Theory of Relativity itself predicts its own downfall by suggesting a point of infinite density and curvature. Mathematicians call such a point a singularity. Along with the General Theory of Relativity all other physical theories also break down at that singularity. This means that our capacity to predict events immediately before and after the Big Bang also breaks down. Therefore, as far as we are concerned, the way in which the events before the Big Bang will influence the present universe cannot be predicted from the existing physical theories; these cannot hence form part of a scientific model of the universe. We can therefore say that time had a beginning at the Big Bang!

In 1965 a lucky accident uncovered the fact that Friedmann's first assumption is in fact a remarkably accurate description of the universe. Two American physicists, Penzias and Wilson at Bell Telephone Laboratory, were testing a newly built high sensitive microwave detector when they discovered that their detector was picking up more noise than it ought to. They took every possible precaution to ensure that there were no malfunctions (In these was included the despatch of two very love-sick pigeons who had made the horn-shaped detector their home and had covered it with a white dielectric medium) In spite of these detailed precautions they still kept on picking up the extra noise which did not seem to come from any particular direction. The noise did not vary when they changed the direction of the detector nor with the rotation of the earth. This seemed to suggest to them that the radiation must have travelled most of the observable universe. And as it was the same in every direction the universe, they concluded, must be the same in every direction.

At roughly the same time another two American physicists, Peebles and Dicke, found that the early universe must have been very hot and dense, in fact glowing white hot. They predicted that we should still be able to see some of the radiation today whose temperature would now have dropped to approximately 3°K. They also predicted that the radiation would be in the microwave region and were preparing to look for it. When they heard about Penzias and Wilson's discovery they at once realised that their theory had already been proved right. The microwave radiation background is the best proof to date of the hot Big Bang model.

(To be continued)

JAPA GHOSH

MOONLIT NIGHT

SWEET birds dream when the moon's lights gleam,
Thinking of lands where fly only birds.
Their nest woven and their mate chosen
They dream of rain forests and of mossy ferns.
They bring me fantasies of thrilling beauties,
Which made me a blind lover,
Of a beloved I do not know. Why did they sow,
A love which gave me a lover's fever?
But though I regret this, my dreams of bliss
They keep me alive from sinking in madness,
A madness which would kill my love at its will,
O heaven, I plead O, Lord of Delightfulness,
Restore my fantasies to keep me happy,
Accompany me as I travel everywhere
O, my fantasies shall not depart, and I'm sure in my heart
That they shall come again when skywards I stare.

PAVAK K MITRA

THE TRANSFORMATION

A Short Story

RAJ was of medium height, plump with a round face where one could never find a spot uncovered by chubbiness and happiness. His small eyes were always shiny and twinkling with mischief and joy. They could 'see' the funny side of anything. His short curly hair and big mouth completed him as the sole entertainer of his class, for the rest of them were all studious girls and boys. You might wonder what a happy-go-lucky boy could learn in such a studious batch. But he drew all his fun from doing odd things and making everyone laugh (including the teachers). Now I shall tell you what he did which made people call him happy-go-lucky.

Once there was a craze in his school that everyone should carry great quantities of stationery in their pencil boxes. Well, Raj too took up that craze and whatever stationery you asked of him, he would produce effortlessly from his tiffin-sized box. He was a champion not only of producing the items but also at displaying them regularly to anyone he took a fancy to. Soon it had become a joke in his class that Raj used to display his 'Shop' in front of the teachers, right in the middle of a serious subject. It was a distraction for him and the others. But that is what Raj needed while something serious was in the air. He could never be serious. Apart from scores of stationery, he would also keep a constant supply of food items varying from toffees and 'churans' to 'pakoris' made of onions. He would keep all these either in his multi-purpose key-chain or in his many-pocketed school bag.

This was only the base of his nature. He would never worry about his classes, except for some which were his favourite. For instance, in the French class the teacher was very particular about being on time. She would repeat this a dozen times that students should make an extra effort to be on time in her class. But Raj would on purpose be late for her class. Once or twice she ignored it but later she stopped correcting his notebook. Still when he continued to be late, she got so fed up and angry with him that she said, "Raj, if you want to be in the class you can sit in that corner and read your lesson quietly. But if you don't want to you can go." Raj was delighted to hear this. Never had he liked her or her class. So why not go home and read more of *Dennis the Menace* comics to improve his standard of mischief? None of the students in his class would ever have dreamed of doing such a thing. But to Raj, it was just putting the basics of his favourite character Dennis Mitchell into practice. Wow! it was just unbelievable what Raj did. He was a real happy-go-lucky child, with his not having any interest for studies attitude. He also always carried a dirty green comb with him which he often left wherever he went. Raj was often told by his cousin Anil to study instead of wasting his time in all this mischief. But Raj didn't listen to him. Anil and Raj were poles apart. Raj was the entertainer who walked away with complaints and Anil the best student who walked away with the prizes. But he was only the best student in the eyes of the teachers. In the eyes of his

fellow students he was 'Flatterer No 1', as they called him. From kindergarten he worked hard. Being intelligent he gained praise from the teachers. The students considered him not a genius but simply shrewd and knowing well or rather too well the art of becoming the pet of the teachers and getting all the praise. He worked as hard as his classmates. But the image of a genius made the teachers praise him, thought the girls in his class. They detested him to the core. The teachers rarely ever scolded him, but when they did scold him he would turn red with shame, and try to hide his face amongst his books. The rest of the class would be roaring with laughter (including the teachers who had scolded him)

Another funny member of his class was a girl with big black laughing eyes, pink lips with a thick lower lip and dark curls which bounced over her shoulders as she ran. She too was studious and good at reading story books. Rupa, as she was called, could read a book in an hour's time. Rupa and Anil used to compete in reading, but Rupa was always faster than Anil. Raj's parents always encouraged him to study, but he never did. He was too engrossed in a new Dennis prank to even lend an ear to his parents' advice.

One day came a big day which brought a big change in Raj's life. On that day he was bored stiff with working hard at a problem of maths. The teacher with his head down was writing something. Suddenly something struck Raj. He fished out a catapult from his jeans pocket along with a small round rubber ball. Fixing his prank apparatus, he pointed the ball towards the teacher's head and aimed. Phatach! It hit the teacher's bald head and bounced back to Raj who caught it expertly and hid both catapult and ball immediately under his desk. The teacher knew straightaway that it was Raj and went red in the face. This was too much for him to tolerate. Getting up with a loud bang and a screech of his chair the teacher furiously shouted at the top of his voice, "You shameless boy, get out of this class at once. If you don't, I will." Never had Raj been threatened in this way. But being trained by the comics he promptly replied, "I won't get out of this class. If you want to, you can." Raj had crossed the limit. There was a pin-drop silence in the classroom. All the others waited for the bombshell to be dropped by the teacher. But, instead, he waited a few minutes to cool down, picked up his books and bag and with a faint smile and a nod marched out of the classroom. Never had this happened before in anyone's life in that room. For the first time Raj was shaken and absolutely couldn't utter a word. He just sat down slowly and stared straight in front of him, deep in thought. For the first time, Rajendra Das thought seriously about what he had done. It was his first shock in life, for which he would be grateful later on.

(Twenty years later)

A massive procession is passing through the streets of Calcutta and the cause is—a tall figure with a clean shaven face with sharp features. The frame of six feet is standing straight with a serious purpose about itself. Everyone is shouting "Long live

Rajendra Das.” It is the same Rajendra Das who twenty years before was the plump and chubby mischief-loving boy. Yes, it is the same person who has made a comeback as a new person. He had gone and studied law after finishing school. After becoming a lawyer with flying colours, he took up a very famous and important case which he, with his formerly unused brains now sharp and polished, won. His dedication to studying went to such a high degree that even his cousin Anil found it very difficult to compete. Yet, even now he still goes to the teacher whom he hit with the ball to thank him for what he had done to him. Even the French teacher whom he had hated, he started liking as he worked harder in her classes from that day. Raj is thankful to all who have helped him become what he now is. He never likes students if they make fun of their teachers. He now respects them. He is no more the Raj who used to think *Dennis the Menace* is the one to be followed.

KETAKI CHOWKHANI
(Age 13 years)