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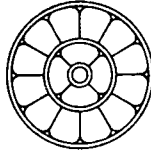
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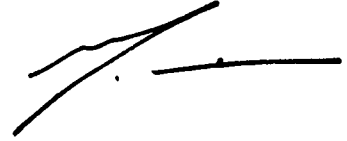


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LII

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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A STAR TRAVELLING INFINITY BY ITS OWN LIGHT

QUEEN, strive no more to change the secret will;
Time's accidents are steps in its vast scheme.
Bring not thy brief and helpless human tears
Across the fathomless moments of a heart
That knows its single will and God's as one:
It can embrace its hostile destiny;
It sits apart with grief and facing death,
Affronting adverse fate armed and alone
In this enormous world standing apart
In the mightiness of her silent spirit's will,
In the passion of her soul of sacrifice
Her lonely strength facing the universe,
Affronting fate, asks not man's help nor god's:
Sometimes one life is charged with earth's destiny,
It cries not for succour from the time-bound powers
Alone she is equal to her mighty task.
Intervene not in a strife too great for thee,
A struggle too deep for mortal thought to sound,
Its question to this Nature's rigid bounds
When the soul fronts nude of garbs the infinite,
Its too vast theme of a lonely mortal will
Pacing the silence of eternity.
As a star, unaccompanied, moves in heaven
Unastonished by the immensities of space,
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone
A God-given might of being is their force,
A ray from self's solitude of light the guide;
The soul that can live alone with itself meets God,
Its lonely universe is their rendezvous
A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.
Alone with death and close to extinction's edge.
Her single greatness in that last dire scene,
She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time

And reach an apex of world-destiny
 Where all is won or all is lost for man.
 In that tremendous silence lone and lost
 Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,
 In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time
 When she stands sole with Death or sole with God
 Apart upon a silent desperate brink,
 Alone with her self and death and destiny
 As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
 When being must end or life rebuild its base,
 Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.
 No human aid can reach her in that hour,
 No armoured God stand shining at her side.
 Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
 For this the silent Force came missioned down;
 In her the conscious Will took human shape.
 She only can save herself and save the world.
 O queen, stand back from that stupendous scene,
 Come not between her and her hour of Fate.
 Her hour must come and none can intervene.
 Think not to turn her from her heaven-sent task,
 Strive not to save her from her own high will.
 Thou hast no place in that tremendous strife;
 Thy love and longing are not arbiters there,
 Leave the world's fate and her to God's sole guard.
 Even if he seems to leave her to her lone strength,
 Even though all falters and falls and sees an end
 And the heart fails and only are death and night,
 God-given her strength can battle against doom
 Even on a brink where Death alone seems close
 And no human strength can hinder or can help.
 Think not to intercede with the hidden Will.
 Intrude not twixt her spirit and its force
 But leave her to her mighty self and Fate.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 460-62)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

THE GITA: AN INTRODUCTION (2)

TEXT—TRANSLATION

CHAPTER ONE

Dhṛtarāstra uvāca

*dharmakṣetre kuruksetre samavetāyuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kimakurvata Sañjaya* (1)

Dhritarashtra said,

O Sanjaya, gathered together for war on the holy field of Kurukshetra, what did my partisans and those of the Pandavas do?

Sañjaya uvāca

*dr̥ṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānīkaṁ vyūdhāṁ duryodhanastadā
ācāryamupasaṅgamyā rājā vacanamabravīt* (2)

Sanjaya said,

Thereupon, King Duryodhana on seeing the Pandava army arranged in battle order approached the preceptor and said these words.

*paśyatāṁ pāṇḍuputrānāmācārya mahatīm camūṁ
vyūdhāṁ drupadaputreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā* (3)

“Look, O Teacher, look at this huge Pandava army arranged in order of battle by your clever disciple Dhrishtadyumna, the son of Drupada.

*atra sūrā mahesvāsā bhīmārjunasamā yudhi
yuyudhāno vīrātaśca drupadaśca mahārathāḥ* (4)

*dhr̥ṣṭaketuścekītānah kaśīrājaśca vīryavān
puruḥit kuntivojaśca śaibyaśca narapungavaḥ* (5)

*yudhāmanyuśca vikrānta uttamaujāśca vīryavān
sauvadro draupadeyaśca sarva eva mahārathāḥ* (6)

In this enormous army there are courageous men and mighty wielders of bow

like unto Bhīma and Arjuna—Yuyudhana, Virata, and Drupada the great chariot-warrior There are Dhṛishtaketu, Chekitana and the man of great might, the king of Kashi; there are Purujit and Kuntibhoja and Shaibya the best of men The powerful Yudhamanyu is there and the mighty Uttamauya, Abhimanyu the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi, great warriors all

*asmākantū viśiṣṭā ye tānnibodha dvijottama
nāyākā mama sainyasya sañjñārtham tām bravīmi te* (7)

Those among us who are possessed of extraordinary strength, those who are the leaders of my troops, of them I recount the names that you may remember them, note

*bhavān bhīmaśca karnaśca samitñjayah
aśvatthāmā vikarnaśca saumadattirjayadrathah* (8)

*anye ca bahavah sūrāh madarthe tyaktajīvītāh
nānāśastrapraharanāh sarve yuddhaviśārādāh* (9)

Yourself and Bhīshma, Karna and Kṛpā the winner in battle, Aswatthama, Vikarna, Bhurisrava the son of Somadatta, and Jayadratha, and many other men of courage have given up their attachment to life for my sake All of them are skilled in warfare and are accoutred with many kinds of weapons.

*aparyāptam tadasmākambalam bhīsmābhīrakṣitam
paryāptam tvīdametesām balam bhīmābhīrakṣitam* (10)

The strength of this army of ours is unlimited, on top of that Bhīshma is our defender, the strength of that army of theirs is limited and Bhīma alone is their hope and protection.

*ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu yathābhāgāstavasthitāh
bhīṣmamevābhīrakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi* (11)

Therefore all of you should protect Bhīshma alone by remaining at your appointed stations among the troops at all the entries to the battlefield ”

*tasya sanjanayan harsam kuruvrddhah pitāmahaḥ
simhanādam vinadyoccaḥ śankham dadhmau pratāpavān* (12)

Giving rise to joy in Duryodhana’s heart, grandfather Bhīshma the oldest of the Kauravas uttered a loud battle-cry that resounded through the field and blew with great power into his conch.

tatah śankhāśca bheryaśca panavānakagomukhhāḥ
sahasavābhyahanyanta sa śabdastumulo'bhavat (13)

Then suddenly there arose the sounds of conchs and horns, and war drums of all kinds, the battlefield was filled with loud noises.

tatah śvetairhayair yuktemahati syandane sthūtau
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaścaiva divyau śankhau pradadhmatuh (14)

Thereupon, standing on their huge chariot drawn by white horses, Krishna and Pandu's son Arjuna blew their divine conchs.

pāñcājanyam hr̥ṣīkeśo devadattam dhananjayah
paundram dadhmau mahāśaṅkham bhīmakarmā vrkodaraḥ (15)

Hrīshīkesha blew his Pancajanya, Arjuna his conch named Devadatta, and Bhīma of terrifying deeds blew his mighty conch named Paundra.

anantavijayam rājā kuntīputro yudhishthirah
nakulah sahadevaśca sughosamanīpushpakau (16)

King Yudhishthira the son of Kunti blew his conch Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva blew theirs named Sughosha and Manīpushpaka.

kāśyaśca paramesvāsaḥ śikhandī ca mahārathah
dhr̥stadyumno virātaśca sātyakiścāparājitaḥ (17)

drupado draupadeyāśca sarvaśah prthivīpate
saubhadraśca mahābāhuh śaṅkhān dadhmuh prthak prthak (18)

Kaśi's king, the supreme archer, the great chariot-fighter Shikhandī, Dhṛishtheadyumna and the unbeaten warrior Satyaki, Drupada and Draupadī's sons, the long-armed son of Subhadra, all blew their respective conchs from every direction

sa ghoso dhārtarāṣṭrānām hṛdayāni vyadārayat
nabhaśca pṛthivīñcaiva tumulo'vyanunādayan (19)

That mighty report sent tumultuous echoes through earth and sky and rent asunder the hearts of Dhṛitarashtra's sons

sthītān dr̥stvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapīdhvajah
pravṛtte śastrasampāte dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavah
hr̥ṣīkeśam tadā vākyaṁudamāha mahīpate (20)

Then, after the missiles had begun to fly, Pandu's son Arjuna raised his bow and said these words to Hrishikesha

Arjuna uvāca

senayorubhayormadhye ratham sthāpaya me'acyuta (21)

yāvadetānnirīkṣe'ham yoddhukāmānavasthitān

kairmayā saha yoddhavyamasmin ranasamudyame (22)

yotsyamānānavekse'ham ya ete'tra samāgatāh

dhārtarāstrasya durbuddheryuddhe priyacikīrṣavah (23)

Arjuna said,

O sinless one, place my chariot at the mid-point between the two armies, that I may gaze for sometime at these adversaries seized with the desire for battle. Let me see who are they who want a fight, who have come together here with the object of performing in the battlefield acts dear to Duryodhana the misguided son of Dhritarashtra

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Sanat K Banerji)

THE DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

AN OMNIPRESENT Reality is the truth of all life and existence whether absolute or relative, whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether animate or inanimate, whether intelligent or unintelligent, and in all its infinitely varying and even constantly opposed self-expressions, from the contradictions nearest to our ordinary experience to those remotest antinomies which lose themselves on the verges of the Ineffable, the Reality is one and not a sum or concourse. From that all variations begin, in that all variations consist, to that all variations return. All affirmations are denied only to lead to a wider affirmation of the same Reality. All antinomies confront each other in order to recognise one Truth in their opposed aspects and embrace by the way of conflict their mutual Unity. Brahman is the Alpha and the Omega. Brahman is the One besides whom there is nothing else existent.

But this unity is in its nature indefinable. When we seek to envisage it by the mind we are compelled to proceed through an infinite series of conceptions and experiences. And yet in the end we are obliged to negate our largest conceptions, our most comprehensive experiences in order to affirm that the Reality exceeds all definitions. We arrive at the formula of the Indian sages, *neti neti*, "It is not this, It is not that", there is no experience by which we can limit It, there is no conception by which It can be defined.

An Unknowable which appears to us in many states and attributes of being, in many forms of consciousness, in many activities of energy, this is what Mind can ultimately say about the existence which we ourselves are and which we see in all that is presented to our thought and senses. It is in and through those states, those forms, those activities that we have to approach and know the Unknowable. But if in our haste to arrive at a Unity that our mind can seize and hold, if in our insistence to confine the Infinite in our embrace we identify the Reality with any one definable state of being however pure and eternal, with any particular attribute however general and comprehensive, with any fixed formulation of consciousness however vast in its scope, with any energy or activity however boundless its application, and if we exclude all the rest, then our thoughts sin against Its unknowableness and arrive not at a true unity but at a division of the Indivisible.

So strongly was this truth perceived in the ancient times that the Vedantic Seers, even after they had arrived at the crowning idea, the convincing experience of Sachchidananda as the highest positive expression of the Reality to our consciousness, erected in their speculations or went on in their perceptions to an Asat, a Non-Being beyond, which is not the ultimate existence, the pure consciousness, the infinite bliss of which all our experiences are the expression or the deformation. If at all an existence, a consciousness, a bliss, it is beyond the highest and purest positive form of these things that here we can possess and other therefore than what here we know by these names. Buddhism, somewhat arbitrarily declared by the theologians to be an un-Vedic doctrine because it rejected the authority of the Scriptures, yet goes back to this

essentially Vedantic conception. Only, the positive and synthetic teaching of the Upanishads beheld Sat and Asat not as opposites destructive of each other, but as the last antinomy through which we look up to the Unknowable. And in the transactions of our positive consciousness, even Unity has to make its account with Multiplicity; for the Many also are Brahman. It is by Vidya, the Knowledge of the Oneness, that we know God, without it Avidya, the relative and multiple consciousness, is a night of darkness and a disorder of Ignorance. Yet if we exclude the field of that Ignorance, if we get rid of Avidya as if it were a thing non-existent and unreal, then Knowledge itself becomes a sort of obscurity and a source of imperfection. We become as men blinded by a light so that we can no longer see the field which that light illumines.

Such is the teaching, calm, wise and clear, of our most ancient sages. They had the patience and the strength to find and to know, they had also the clarity and humility to admit the limitation of our knowledge. They perceived the borders where it has to pass into something beyond itself. It was a later impatience of heart and mind, vehement attraction to an ultimate bliss or high masterfulness of pure experience and trenchant intelligence which sought the One to deny the Many and because it had received the breath of the heights scorned or recoiled from the secret of the depths. But the steady eye of the ancient wisdom perceived that to know God really, it must know Him everywhere equally and without distinction, considering and valuing but not mastered by the oppositions through which He shines.

We will put aside then the trenchant distinctions of a partial logic which declares that because the One is the reality, the Many are an illusion, and because the Absolute is Sat, the one existence, the relative is Asat and non-existent. If in the Many we pursue insistently the One, it is to return with the benediction and the revelation of the One confirming itself in the Many.

We will guard ourselves also against the excessive importance that the mind attaches to particular points of view at which it arrives in its more powerful expansions and transitions. The perception of the spiritualised mind that the universe is an unreal dream can have no more absolute a value to us than the perception of the materialised mind that God and the Beyond are an illusory idea. In the one case the mind, habituated only to the evidence of the senses and associating reality with corporeal fact, is either unaccustomed to use other means of knowledge or unable to extend the notion of reality to a supra-physical experience. In the other case the same mind, passing beyond to the overwhelming experience of an incorporeal reality, simply transfers the same inability and the same consequent sense of dream or hallucination to the experience of the senses. But we perceive also the truth that these two conceptions disfigure. It is true that for this world of form in which we are set for our self-realisation, nothing is entirely valid until it has possessed itself of our physical consciousness and manifested on the lowest levels in harmony with its manifestation on the highest summits. It is equally true that form and matter asserting themselves as a self-existent reality are an illusion of Ignorance. Form and matter can be valid only as shape and substance of manifestation for the incorporeal and imma-

terial. They are in their nature an act of divine consciousness, in their aim the representation of a status of the Spirit

In other words, if Brahman has entered into form and represented Its being in material substance, it can only be to enjoy self-manifestation in the figures of relative and phenomenal consciousness. Brahman is in this world to represent Itself in the values of Life. Life exists in Brahman in order to discover Brahman in itself. Therefore man's importance in the world is that he gives to it that development of consciousness in which its transfiguration by a perfect self-discovery becomes possible. To fulfil God in life is man's manhood. He starts from the animal vitality and its activities, but a divine existence is his objective.

But as in Thought, so in Life, the true rule of self-realisation is a progressive comprehension. Brahman expresses Itself in many successive forms of consciousness, successive in their relation even if coexistent in being or coeval in Time, and Life in its self-unfolding must also rise to ever-new provinces of its own being. But if in passing from one domain to another we renounce what has already been given us from eagerness for our new attainment, if in reaching the mental life we cast away or belittle the physical life which is our basis, or if we reject the mental and physical in our attraction to the spiritual, we do not fulfil God integrally, nor satisfy the conditions of His self-manifestation. We do not become perfect, but only shift the field of our imperfection or at most attain a limited altitude. However high we may climb, even though it be to the Non-Being itself, we climb ill if we forget our base. Not to abandon the lower to itself, but to transfigure it in the light of the higher to which we have attained, is true divinity of nature. Brahman is integral and unifies many states of consciousness at a time; we also, manifesting the nature of Brahman, should become integral and all-embracing.

Besides the recoil from the physical life, there is another exaggeration of the ascetic impulse which this ideal of an integral manifestation corrects. The nodus of Life is the relation between three general forms of consciousness, the individual, the universal and the transcendent or supracosmic. In the ordinary distribution of life's activities the individual regards himself as a separate being included in the universe and both as dependent upon that which transcends alike the universe and the individual. It is to this Transcendence that we give currently the name of God, who thus becomes to our conceptions not so much supracosmic as extracosmic. The belittling and degradation of both the individual and the universe is a natural consequence of this division: the cessation of both cosmos and individual by the attainment of the Transcendence would be logically its supreme conclusion.

The integral view of the unity of Brahman avoids these consequences. Just as we need not give up the bodily life to attain to the mental and spiritual, so we can arrive at a point of view where the preservation of the individual activities is no longer inconsistent with our comprehension of the cosmic consciousness or our attainment to the transcendent and supracosmic. For the World-Transcendent embraces the universe, is one with it and does not exclude it, even as the universe embraces the

individual, is one with him and does not exclude him. The individual is a centre of the whole universal consciousness, the universe is a form and definition which is occupied by the entire immanence of the Formless and Indefinable.

This is always the true relation, veiled from us by our ignorance or our wrong consciousness of things. When we attain to knowledge or right consciousness, nothing essential in the eternal relation is changed, but only the inview and the outview from the individual centre is profoundly modified and consequently also the spirit and effect of its activity. The individual is still necessary to the action of the Transcendent in the universe and that action in him does not cease to be possible by his illumination. On the contrary, since the conscious manifestation of the Transcendent in the individual is the means by which the collective, the universal is also to become conscious of itself, the continuation of the illumined individual in the action of the world is an imperative need of the world-play. If his inexorable removal through the very act of illumination is the law, then the world is condemned to remain eternally the scene of unredeemed darkness, death and suffering. And such a world can only be a ruthless ordeal or a mechanical illusion.

It is so that ascetic philosophy tends to conceive it. But individual salvation can have no real sense if existence in the cosmos is itself an illusion. In the Monistic view the individual soul is one with the Supreme, its sense of separateness an ignorance, escape from the sense of separateness and identity with the Supreme its salvation. But who then profits by this escape? Not the supreme Self, for it is supposed to be always and inalienably free, still, silent, pure. Not the world, for that remains constantly in the bondage and is not freed by the escape of any individual soul from the universal Illusion. It is the individual soul itself which effects its supreme good by escaping from the sorrow and the division into the peace and the bliss. There would seem then to be some kind of reality of the individual soul as distinct from the world and from the Supreme even in the event of freedom and illumination. But for the Illusionist the individual soul is an illusion and non-existent except in the inexplicable mystery of Maya. Therefore we arrive at the escape of an illusory non-existent soul from an illusory non-existent bondage in an illusory non-existent world as the supreme good which that non-existent soul has to pursue! For this is the last word of the Knowledge, "There is none bound, none freed, none seeking to be free." *Vidya* turns out to be as much a part of the Phenomenal as *Avidya*, *Maya* meets us even in our escape and laughs at the triumphant logic which seemed to cut the knot of her mystery.

These things, it is said, cannot be explained, they are the initial and insoluble miracle. They are for us a practical fact and have to be accepted. We have to escape by a confusion out of a confusion. The individual soul can only cut the knot of ego by a supreme act of egoism, an exclusive attachment to its own individual salvation which amounts to an absolute assertion of its separate existence in *Maya*. We are led to regard other souls as if they were figments of our mind and their salvation unimportant, our soul alone as if it were entirely real and its salvation the one thing that matters. I come to regard my personal escape from bondage as real while other

souls who are equally myself remain behind in the bondage!

It is only when we put aside all irreconcilable antinomy between Self and the world that things fall into their place by a less paradoxical logic. We must accept the many-sidedness of the manifestation even while we assert the unity of the Manifested. And is not this after all the truth that pursues us wherever we cast our eyes, unless seeing we choose not to see? Is not this after all the perfectly natural and simple mystery of Conscious Being that It is bound neither by its unity nor by its multiplicity? It is "absolute" in the sense of being entirely free to include and arrange in Its own way all possible terms of Its self-expression. There is none bound, none freed, none seeking to be free,—for always That is a perfect freedom. It is so free that it is not even bound by its liberty. It can play at being bound without incurring a real bondage. Its chain is a self-imposed convention, its limitation in the ego a transitional device that it uses in order to repeat its transcendence and universality in the scheme of the individual Brahman.

The Transcendent, the Supracosmic is absolute and free in itself beyond Time and Space and beyond the conceptual opposites of finite and infinite. But in cosmos it uses its liberty of self-formation, its Maya, to make a scheme of itself in the complementary terms of unity and multiplicity, and this multiple unity it establishes in the three conditions of the subconscious, the conscient and the superconscient. For actually we see that the Many objectivised in form in our material universe start with a subconscious unity which expresses itself openly enough in cosmic action and cosmic substance, but of which they are not themselves superficially aware. In the conscient the ego becomes the superficial point at which the awareness of unity can emerge; but it applies its perception of unity to the form and surface action and, failing to take account of all that operates behind, fails also to realise that it is not only one in itself but one with others. This limitation of the universal "I" in the divided ego-sense constitutes our imperfect individualised personality. But when the ego transcends the personal consciousness, it begins to include and be overpowered by that which is to us superconscious, it becomes aware of the cosmic unity and enters into the Transcendent Self which here cosmos expresses by a multiple oneness.

The liberation of the individual soul is therefore the keynote of the definite divine action, it is the primary divine necessity and the pivot on which all else turns. It is the point of Light at which the intended complete self-manifestation in the Many begins to emerge. But the liberated soul extends its perception of unity horizontally as well as vertically. Its unity with the transcendent One is incomplete without its unity with the cosmic Many. And that lateral unity translates itself by a multiplication, a reproduction of its own liberated state at other points in the Multiplicity. The divine soul reproduces itself in similar liberated souls as the animal reproduces itself in similar bodies. Therefore, whenever even a single soul is liberated, there is a tendency to an extension and even to an outburst of the same divine self-consciousness in other individual souls of our terrestrial humanity and,—who knows?—perhaps even beyond the terrestrial consciousness. Where shall we fix the limit of that extension? Is it

altogether a legend which says of the Buddha that as he stood on the threshold of Nirvana, of the Non-Being, his soul turned back and took the vow never to make the irrevocable crossing so long as there was a single being upon earth undelivered from the knot of the suffering, from the bondage of the ego?

But we can attain to the highest without blotting ourselves out from the cosmic extension. Brahman preserves always Its two terms of liberty within and of formation without, of expression and of freedom from the expression. We also, being That, can attain to the same divine self-possession. The harmony of the two tendencies is the condition of all life that aims at being really divine. Liberty pursued by exclusion of the thing exceeded leads along the path of negation to the refusal of that which God has accepted. Activity pursued by absorption in the act and the energy leads to an inferior affirmation and the denial of the Highest. But what God combines and synthesises, wherefore should man insist on divorcing? To be perfect as He is perfect is the condition of His integral attainment.

Through Avidya, the Multiplicity, lies our path out of the transitional egoistic self-expression in which death and suffering predominate, through Vidya consenting with Avidya by the perfect sense of oneness even in that multiplicity, we enjoy integrally the immortality and the beatitude. By attaining to the Unborn beyond all becoming we are liberated from this lower birth and death; by accepting the Becoming freely as the Divine, we invade mortality with the immortal beatitude and become luminous centres of its conscious self-expression in humanity.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, pp 33-41)

ASPECTS OF SADHANA

Divine Mother,

I wish to get light on the following points

1. Have I the capacity and are there potentialities in me to follow this path?

THIS is not the question, the question is whether you have the necessary aspiration, determination and perseverance and whether you can by the intensity and persistence of your aspiration make all the parts of your being answer to the call and become one in the consecration.

2. How should I continue my practice (sadhana) after returning home?

Quiet yourself and in the quiet see and feel the Mother.

3. How can I meditate? What is meant by opening? Where should I open?

An inner purity and receptivity that freely lets in the Mother's influence. Begin with the heart.

4. I aspire for the higher life from above the head; but I always feel strained in the middle part of the forehead. What should I do?

Do not strain yourself.

5. How does the psychic being open? How to understand the psychic and vital being in the Adhara?

By the force of aspiration and the grace of the Mother.

Psychic: your true being, the being that is in the heart and that is the spark of the Mother's own consciousness.

Vital: the part from which proceed desires and hunger and dynamic activities, having its physical basis round about the navel.

6. My family consists of myself, wife, two sons and one girl. I desire to come here and stay permanently, but my wife does not approve of it. What should I do?

Detachment.

7. I desire heartily to come here again for a stay of at least three months. Kindly give me permission.

Inform when you are ready to come It is only then that the permission can be given

8 In my daily life, I become dejected and fall a prey in the hands of the lower forces (anger, lust, etc). I humbly request the Mother for help and protection

Detachment

9. My wife is devoted to Goddess Ambaji. Her heart opens to Her, but she cannot get rid of the worldly attachments Please help her May I send her photo?

If you like.

10 I request for permission to write letters to the Mother

You can write

11. What attitude should I keep while doing my works of daily routine? How should I act with family members, relatives and friends?

Detachment

12 What should I read at present?

Sri Aurobindo's books.

November 1928

*

How to open to the Mother? The following are the means:

(1) To remember You constantly or from time to time—

Good.

(2) By taking Your name through Japa—

Helpful.

(3) With the help of meditation—

More difficult if one has not the habit of meditation.

(4) *By conversation about You with those who love and respect You—*

Risky because, when talking, often some nonsense or at least some useless things can be said

(5) *By reading Your books—*

Good

(6) *By spending time in thoughts of You—*

Very good.

(7) *By sincere prayers—*

Good.

*

Three things indispensable to begin with

Absolute sincerity in the whole being and all its activities

Complete self-surrender without any reservation

Patient work on oneself and at the same time a steady conquering of perfect unshakable peace and equanimity

4 February 1932

*

Our human consciousness has windows that open on the Infinite but generally men keep these windows carefully shut. They have to be opened wide and allow the Infinite freely to enter into us and transform us.

Two conditions are necessary for opening the windows

1) ardent aspiration,

2) progressive dissolution of the ego

The Divine help is assured to those who set to work sincerely

*

What is the best method to find the Divine who is in each of us and in all things?

Aspiration

Silence

Concentration in the solar plexus region.

If need be, a prayer addressed to the Divine.

I belong to You and I want to know You so that all that I do is nothing but what You want me to do

*

Encourage only what leads quickly to the Lord and serves His divine purpose.

*

The Examiners

The integral yoga consists of an uninterrupted series of examinations that one has to undergo without any previous warning, thus obliging you to be constantly on the alert and attentive

Three groups of examiners set us these tests. They appear to have nothing to do with one another, and their methods are so different, sometimes even so apparently contradictory, that it seems as if they could not possibly be leading towards the same goal. Nevertheless, they complement one another, work towards the same end, and are all indispensable to the completeness of the result

The three types of examination are: those set by the forces of Nature, those set by spiritual and divine forces, and those set by hostile forces. These last are the most deceptive in their appearance and to avoid being caught unawares and unprepared requires a state of constant watchfulness, sincerity and humility

The most commonplace circumstances, the events of everyday life, the most apparently insignificant people and things all belong to one or other of these three kinds of examiners. In this vast and complex organisation of tests, those events that are generally considered the most important in life are the easiest examinations to undergo, because they find you ready and on your guard. It is easier to stumble over the little stones in your path, because they attract no attention.

Endurance and plasticity, cheerfulness and fearlessness are the qualities specially needed for the examinations of physical nature

Aspiration, trust, idealism, enthusiasm and generous self-giving, for spiritual examinations.

Vigilance, sincerity and humility for the examinations from hostile forces.

And do not imagine that there are on the one hand people who undergo the examinations and on the other people who set them. Depending on the circumstances and the moment we are all both examiners and examinees, and it may even happen that one is at the same time both examiner and examinee. And the benefit one derives from this depends, both in quality and in quantity, on the intensity of one's aspiration and the awakening of one's consciousness.

To conclude, a final piece of advice: never set yourself up as an examiner. For while it is good to remember constantly that one may be undergoing a very important

examination, it is extremely dangerous to imagine that one is responsible for setting examinations for others. That is the open door to the most ridiculous and harmful kinds of vanity. It is the Supreme Wisdom which decides these things, and not the ignorant human will.

12 November 1957

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Each time you have to make progress, you have to undergo an examination.

12 November 1957

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In ancient times the disciple had to undergo severe tests to prove his ability for initiation. Here we do not follow that method. Apparently there is no test and no trial. But if you see the truth, you will find that here it is much more difficult. There the disciple knew that he was undergoing a period of trial and after he had passed through some outward tests, he was taken in. But here you have to face life and you are watched at every moment. It is not only your outer actions that count. Each and every thought and inner movement is seen, every reaction is noticed. It is not what you do in the solitude of the forest, but what you do in the thick of the battle of life that is important.

Are you ready to submit yourself for such tests? Are you ready to change yourself completely? You will have to throw off your ideas, ideals, values, interests and opinions. Everything will have to be learnt anew. If you are ready for all this, then take a plunge; otherwise don't try to step in.

The whole life is a sadhana. It is a mistake to cut it into bits and say this is sadhana and that is not. Even your eating and sleeping should be a part of sadhana.

*

(To someone returning to the West)

Everything can be part of "sadhana"; it depends on the inner attitude.

Naturally, if one lets himself be invaded by the Western atmosphere, farewell to the sadhana.

But even in the most materialistic milieu, if one retains one's aspiration and one's faith in the Divine Life, the sadhana can and should continue.

1970

THE MOTHER

(Words of the Mother. CWM, Vol 14, pp 38-44)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

Compiler's Introduction

VEDA IS a Mantric expression of the spiritual experiences of the ancient Indian seers. These experiences are presented symbolically through words charged with spiritual and occult power. It is perhaps only through symbols and images that the suprasensuous and suprarational phenomena can be expressed more suggestively than the language manipulated by the mind. Since the Vedic Mantras are 'inspired from higher hidden planes of consciousness' they convey the great universal, eternal and impersonal Truth which the ancient seers received in their illumined minds. Therefore, the language of the Veda is not an intellectual composition but " . a rhythm heard, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge " (SABCL, Vol 10, p 8)

The Riks of the Veda in their import have a double significance, exoteric and esoteric. Sri Aurobindo says: "We are in the presence of a great scripture of the mystics with a double significance, one exoteric and the other esoteric, the symbols themselves have a meaning which makes them a part of the esoteric significance, an element in the secret teaching and knowledge." (SABCL, Vol 11, p. 8)

"The Vedic deities are names, powers, personalities of the universal Godhead" (SABCL, Vol 11, p 29) representing the psychological states of consciousness experienced by the Rishis. According to Sri Aurobindo these Gods are 'some essential puissance of the divine being', 'the children of light', 'sons of the infinite, who manifest the cosmos and are manifest in it'. These "Gods are not simply poetical personifications of abstract ideas or of psychological and physical functions of Nature. To the Vedic seers they are living realities. " (SABCL, Vol 11, p. 30)

All these must not be mistaken as mere imagery. They have to be understood in their proper esoteric import. This esoteric sense can only be discoverable by giving them 'a constant and straightforward meaning to the words and formulas employed by the Rishis'. Most of the key-words like Ritam, Dhi, etc., are, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, 'key-stones' to the esoteric structure of the Vedic doctrine.

If these words are not interpreted in their proper sense then the true knowledge of the Veda cannot be grasped. This kind of interpretation is possible only by the one who himself is a Rishi. All cannot enter into the secret chamber of the Veda and know the real Truth. According to Sri Aurobindo, "The words of the Veda could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic, from others the verses withheld their hidden knowledge." (SABCL, Vol. 11, p 5)

Sri Aurobindo was a Rishi of this stature who could see the real Truth of the Vedic Mantras. In the course of interpretation of the Veda he offered his own

luminous perception to dispel the obscurity in symbolism or clear the ambiguity in phrasing. He presented Vayu as 'the master of the life-energies', Brihaspati as 'the power of the soul within'. Thus, according to him Saraswati represents 'truth audition', Ila 'truth vision', and Mahi or Bharati 'the largeness of the Truth-Consciousness'.

These are the aspects which Sri Aurobindo explains fully in his book *The Secret of the Veda*. Here he has interpreted many of the Vedic Riks and rendered them into English in order to fix the import of the Vedic terms, the sense of the Vedic symbols and the psychological functions of the Vedic Gods. The Riks, in each chapter, have been chosen contextually to illustrate the thesis he is propounding. So there is no definite order of the Riks. Most of the time the original is not provided.

In the present compilation we have made an attempt to bring together some of the Riks translated by Sri Aurobindo in his *The Secret of the Veda*. We also include the Riks referred to by Sri Aurobindo at the beginning of each chapter of his *The Life Divine*. We present the Riks in their original Sanskrit in Devanagari script along with Sri Aurobindo's translations. Sri Aurobindo has also translated all the Rigvedic hymns pertaining to Agni in the book *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, but since the translations here follow a definite order and the original Sanskrit version of the Riks is also provided, we do not include them in our compilation.

The translations of the Riks by Sri Aurobindo are not always strictly literal but literary. In most of the places they are rather interpretations than translations. But everywhere he has preserved "a fidelity to the meaning, the sense of the words and the structure of the thought." (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 19) He has greatly brought out the poetic force of the hymns, their magnificent colouring and images, noble and beautiful rhythm and the perfect diction as far as possible in English, so foreign a language to express all these. In these translations one almost at once feels the spirit and the presence of the ancient Vedic seers.

The Riks

अग्निर्होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश्चित्रसवस्तमः ।
देवो देवेभिरागमत् ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.1.5)

May Agni, priest of the offering whose will towards action is that of the seer, who is true, most rich in varied inspiration, come, a god with the gods (SABCL, Vol 10, p 59)

यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वम् अग्ने भद्र करिष्यसि ।
तवेत्तत् सत्यमङ्गिरः ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.1.6)

The good that thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Angiras (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 59)

उप त्वाग्ने दिवेदिवे दोषावस्तर्यिया वयम्।
नमो भरन्त एमसि ॥ (Rig Veda, 1 1.7)

To thee day by day, O Agni, in the night and in the light, we by the thought come bearing our submission (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 59)

राजन्तमध्वराणां गोपां ऋतस्य दीदिवम्।
वर्द्धमानं स्वे दमे ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.1.8)

To thee who shinest out from the sacrifices (or, who governest the sacrifices), guardian of the Truth and its illumination, increasing in thy own home. (SABCL, Vol. 10, pp. 59-60)

यजा नो मित्रावरुणा यजा देवान् ऋतं बृहत्,
अग्ने यक्षि स्वं दमम् ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.75.5)

Sacrifice for us to Mitra and Varuna, sacrifice to the gods, to the Truth, the Vast, O Agni, sacrifice to thy own home. (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 64)

मित्रं हुवे पूतदक्षं वरुणं च रिशादसम्।
धियं घृताचीं साधन्ता ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.2.7)

I invoke Mitra of purified strength (or, purified discernment) and Varuna destroyer of our foes perfecting (or accomplishing) a bright understanding. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 65)

ऋतेन मित्रावरुणा ऋतावृधा ऋतस्पृशा।
ऋतुं बृहन्तमाशाथे ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.2.8)

By Truth Mitra and Varuna, truth-increasing, truth-touching, enjoy (or, attain) a mighty work or a vast (effective) power. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 66)

कवी नो मित्रावरुणा तुविजाता उरुक्षया।
दक्षं दधाते अपसम् ॥ (Rig Veda, 1.2.9)

For us Mitra and Varuna, seers, multiply-born, wide-housed, uphold the strength (or, discernment) that does the work. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 66)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

SOULSTEAD

In the core of this shadowy world
A shadowless place
Where Sorrow's dark wings are unfurled,
Banished Death's trace.

Pinions of sheer delight
Conquer pain;
Self-subsistent Light
Comes again.

Shifting and sunderhood
This cannot mar;
Quenchless, unriven stood
Love's single star.

How manifold disguises
Teemed from the One
Loaned iterance suffices—
Till the play is done.

February 22, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: I find this poem very successful. There is much beauty in it and at the same time the form and thought-sequence are well built—there is much skill of variation in the detail of the metre.

ALIPORE BOMB CASE TRIAL

C. R. DAS DEFENDS SRI AUROBINDO

[We reproduce in the following extracts of C R Das's Address to the Court on behalf of Sri Aurobindo during the Alipore Bomb Case Trial in 1908 —Editor]

MAY it please your honour, and gentlemen assessors,—It is a matter of congratulation for us all, that at last this trial has come to a close. It is especially a matter of congratulation for the prisoners at the bar because they have been in jail for the best part of a year and the time has now come, gentlemen, for you to consider the evidence which has been placed before you to find out whether the charges brought against them by the prosecution are true or not I shall have to deal with the evidence in this case at some length but before I do that I must draw your attention to certain features of this case which are very unusual I believe Mr Birley said in his evidence that he took special, or rather unusual interest in this case because it was an unusual case and you will find throughout the evidence in this case that it has been conducted on very unusual lines. I am not referring to what has taken place here so much as to what took place before the committing Magistrate before the case came here The seeds were sown there You will find that Mr Birley made up his mind to try this case on the 3rd May, the accused persons being arrested on suspicion The evidence is that the police connected some of the accused at any rate with bombs and with conspiracy, whether that evidence is true or false is another matter It is their version that on the 2nd May these accused persons were arrested on suspicion and taken to the thana and kept in the lock-up They were not produced before the Magistrate at all unless of course they say the Commissioner of Police is a Magistrate. We find on the 3rd May Mr. Birley made up his mind to try the case. They were produced before him on the 4th May. We find that Mr. Birley went to the house of a police officer—a very high official no doubt—and there he read some of the confessions alleged to have been made by the accused persons to the police I say this is an unusual feature, a feature we have not come across in any case in any Court before now. Having done that what does he do. On the 4th May some of the accused persons were produced before him He forthwith proceeded to examine them The case for the prosecution is that he recorded the confessions of these accused under a particular section of the Code With regard to that I shall deal later and you will find from those questions put by Mr. Birley that his object of enquiring was as to what other persons were implicated in certain things That is done on the 4th May. On the 3rd May he makes up his mind to try the case. On the 4th May the accused is brought before him and before a scrap of evidence is placed before him—he proceeded to take the statement of the accused persons by putting questions and recording their answers. After that you will find that he dealt with the applications for bail; a great many were put in—almost all the accused one by one made an application They were all rejected. Later on 18th

May evidence began before Mr. Birley with the examination of Mr. Frizoni. On that day you find objections were taken to his jurisdiction. You find the next day Mr Birley in the order sheet is referring to his order of the 3rd May to show how he came to take up the case himself. There is another unusual thing which I have to mention.

After Frizoni was examined in part on the 18th May, on the 19th he made an order I shall read it (reads). There is no record of that evidence here at all, but Mr Birley thought that some objections may be put forward before him to the effect that he had taken cognizance of the case without the proper sanction of the Court, so he proceeds to re-examine him to make the proceedings regular according to his opinion (reads) Is that the manner in which a Magistrate is to record evidence? My submission is that the object of that entry here in the evidence of Frizoni is to get over what he thought he could not get over, namely, the legal objection to his jurisdiction.

(Mr. Das reads the order sheet.) Therefore it is perfectly clear that before the 18th May there was no sanction put up before him on any authority and it is perfectly clear that even when he got sanction he did not examine the complainant as he was bound to do under the law I submit all these proceedings are of a very unusual character These proceedings are not warranted by anything in the Code of Criminal Procedure or under any law I can quite understand my friend's contempt for the Code, but I venture to submit that the Code be applied even to a State trial and more so in a trial where persons are accused of the most serious offences known to the law. I shall show you, when I survey the evidence and put it before you, that ninety per cent of that is inadmissible here and ninety per cent of it throws no light upon the charges which these persons are brought here to meet. Not only is public time and money wasted, but all that mass of evidence tends, and must necessarily tend to prejudice the accused

In a case like this, the first thing to do is to prove that a conspiracy did exist and the next thing is to connect the particular persons with the conspiracy What has been the method followed by my friend? Whether he discussed oral evidence or documentary evidence he started with the assumption that these persons are guilty He assumed their guilt and then tried to connect them with the evidence. He reads a letter and finds a reference to A. G. What is his argument? Does he refer to any proof to show that A. G. stands for Arabindo Ghose? No His argument is "I tell you that is Arabindo Ghose" In order to try the accused persons you must start with the assumption that they are guilty and after that to look into the evidence connecting them

Take the Chattra Bhandar Arabindo Ghose is a conspirator because he is connected with the Chattra Bhandar. I submit that is entirely a wrong procedure to adopt—a procedure which has never been adopted before in any Court of Justice He ought to have told you that you must proceed on the assumption that these persons are innocent of all the charges brought against them and if by perusing the evidence you come to the conclusion that the evidence is unmistakable proof of their guilt, then and then only can you convict them.

There is another point—that is with regard to Arabindo's domestic letters. Read those letters and you will find that they throw no light on the charges against these accused. The sanctity of his private correspondence has been wantonly and improperly violated. Was it for the purpose of proving to you that these men are guilty? I submit not. There is nothing in those letters from beginning to end which throws a light on the charges for which these men are being tried. There again my friend's argument was "don't read the letters as they stand but read between the lines" That is to say although the letters don't support the conspiracy and don't suggest any offence, yet you must not be deceived by them "Don't you know Arabindo is guilty? Don't you know he is connected with bombs? Don't you know he has waged war against the King? Take that for granted and you find him guilty." His movement in Baroda is stated to be in connection with bombs His articles in the *Bande Mataram* are referred to There is no evidence at all reliable which is put forward to show that he is responsible for every article in the *Bande Mataram*. The articles breathe the idea of freedom My friend began his speech by saying that those were ideals which no Englishman would quarrel with Those articles I repeat, if they show anything, show that Arabindo Ghose was preaching from beginning to end that ideal of freedom which, we were told over and over again, no Englishman would quarrel with. Does not that argument involve the same fallacy to which I referred, namely that you must assume that Arabindo Ghose was in the conspiracy and after starting with that to read the articles Here although he preaches those ideals, you must read into those articles bombs and conspiracy to warfare Throughout the whole course of his argument the same fallacy was repeated over and over again.

I have already told you that the correspondence of Arabindo has been placed before you, in fact, gentlemen, his whole life has been laid bare before you. My friend's contention is that on that evidence which deals with his inner life you will see signs of conspiracy and waging war. I shall confidently take my stand upon that very correspondence and material. I shall show you that during the whole life of Arabindo, beginning with his first work up to the day of his arrest, he was actuated by a noble ideal. I shall take you through the correspondence dealt with while he was at Baroda, his utterances whether in the press or on the platform, and I shall show you that there is not one single suggestion of any conspiracy to wage war against the Government. He has throughout been actuated by a nobler idea You will find from the middle of 1904, 1905, 1906, and almost up to a few days before his arrest that he was actuated by that noble idea. It will not be out of place here before I come to deal with the particular points in the case to give you a short sketch of those ideas. My friend throughout the whole course of his address did not hesitate to scoff at it, but that is a matter of no concern to me. So far as the nation was concerned he preached that lofty ideal of freedom. So far as the individual was concerned his idea always was to go there himself and look for the god-head within. It is a familiar ideal of our country. It is difficult for those not familiar with it to understand it. But to you, gentlemen, it is familiar.

The doctrine of Vedantism is that man is not dissociated from God: that is to say, if you want to realise yourself you must look for the God within you. It is within your heart and within your soul, that you will find that God dwells and as no man can attain to his own salvation without reaching to that God that is within you, so also in the case of nations: without any national question arising—no nation can attain this unless it realises the highest and noblest and the best of that nation. As in the case of individuals you cannot reach your God with extraneous aid, but you must make an effort—that supreme effort—yourself before you can realise the God within you; so also with a nation. It is by itself that a nation must grow; a nation must attain its salvation by its unaided effort. No foreigner can give you that salvation. It is within your own hands to revive that spirit of nationality. That is the doctrine of nationality which Arabindo has preached throughout and that was to be done not by methods which are against the traditions of the country. I ask your particular attention to that. It was not Arabindo's philosophy that salvation was to be attained by methods inconsistent with the whole history and traditions of the writer and therefore when you find Arabindo leaving Baroda and coming to Calcutta you find that the doctrines he preaches are not doctrines of violence but doctrines of passive resistance. It is not bombs, but suffering. He deprecates secret societies and violence and enjoins them to suffer. If there is a law which is unjust and offensive against the development of the nation, break that law by all means and take the consequences. He never asked you to apply force to a single utterance of his either in the press or on the platform. If the Government thought fit to bring in a law which hinders you from attaining that salvation, Arabindo's advice is to break that law if necessary in the sense of not obeying it. You owe it to your conscience; you owe it to your God. If the law says you must go to jail go to jail. That was the cardinal feature of the doctrine of passive resistance which Arabindo preached. Is not the doctrine of passive resistance preached throughout the world on the same footing? Is it peculiar to this country—this movement which has met with such abusive language from Mr. Norton? Have not the people of England done it over and over again? I say that this is the same doctrine that Arabindo was preaching almost up to the very day when those handcuffs were put on his hands. He was oppressed with a feeling of disappointment, because his country was losing everything, having lost their faith. Therefore you find whenever he preached freedom he brought out that feature clearly. He says, believe in yourself, no one attains salvation who does not believe in himself. Similarly, he says, in the case of the nation. If the nation does not feel that it has got something within it to be free to attain that salvation then there is no hope for that nation. Accordingly we find Arabindo preaching "you are not cowards, you are not a set of incapable men, because you have got divinity. Have faith in you and in that faith go on towards that goal and become a self-developed nation."

(To be continued)

“FREEWILL” IN SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

Two *sine qua nons* we have tabulated and both we have discovered to be granted by Sri Aurobindo. But there is a third which emerges from one special question concerning the dynamics of the world-play. Has the world-play been decreed from the past by God and is it going on inexorably since that old decree of the Eternal or does eternity connote an all-at-once, an endless total Now? If every “now” of ours were what our souls as portions of the Divine had foreseen and prefixed from the past and there were no endless total Now, there might be an experience of freewill by us since we would not be bound by any past other than that in which had acted our own divine selves with whom we would have a pin-point contact. But an endless total Now can alone explain in entirety the sense we have of freewill in the “nows” of our common life, the sense that nothing of the past, even if the past be of our highest selves, wholly binds us and that at every moment we are creative of our actions. Of course, creativity in full cannot be felt by us from our poor human standing-ground; nevertheless, a tiny bit of it we would intensely feel only when our own highest selves would be acting in an endless total now and not merely from a deific past. The truth behind the idea that eternity and time are different orders and God’s foreknowledge in the former need not clash with man’s freewill in the latter seems to be just this that for an entire explanation of the real creative feeling which we have, however pin-pointed, eternity should carry time in an all-at-once constituting an endless total Now. What the idea took no account of are the two other indispensables of freewill. Sri Aurobindo does take account of them: does he also envisage the last indispensable?

In *The Life Divine* he distinguishes three statuses in God’s eternity: a timeless immobile status, supremely self-absorbed, without developments of consciousness in movement or happening—a status of simultaneous integrality of time, which is a stable whole-consciousness of the successive relations of all things manifested—a status of processive movement of consciousness and its successive working out of what has been seen in the stable vision. Statuses second and third, combined, would give us an endless total Now underlying and actuating all the “nows” of the time-movement—Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence acting everywhere and in everything and at every moment but exceeding limitation by the moments and, while it spreads out a past, present and future, embracing them also in one whole. This one whole is the deific Ever-Present, with a pin-point of which our poor human “now” coincides, acquiring thereby the fullest reality possible for its speck of freewill.

People might lift their hands in shock or protest, crying “If all we do is, for Sri Aurobindo, traceable to the Divine’s eternal fiat, the choice in an endless total Now of our highest selves, a faint spark of whom abides in the Tom, Dick and Harry that

we are, what is there to make us choose good and reject evil? If we cannot have freewill of any kind unless the Divine be taken as somehow acting in us, would anything we freely do be bad or blamable?”

The first answer is, there is a sense in which nothing is wrong, for spiritual realisation actually testifies that in a certain state of experience everything is perfect, Brahman is all and all is Brahman—but that sense is truly attained by an experience of the All-Brahman, not by a mere idea of Him, and so long as the experience is lacking we cannot speak, with living conviction or direct right, of everything being equally good. What is more, to have that very experience we have at each moment to stand away from egoistic desire which is the arch-vice, the subtle root of iniquity. To realise that all is Brahman we have to reject something as not Brahman! This paradox has to be accepted and it provides a hint that the cry of shock or protest is irrational. The irrationality resides in that the fact of Brahman being all and all being Brahman is considered not only without spiritual experience but also without another side of the divine reality. Brahman has projected in His infinity a negation of the essentially divine and an emergence of divine values from the Inconscient. According to this arrangement by Brahman there is a constant and persistent and ubiquitous fight between the Divine and the undivine, between good and evil. Of course by “good” we must not mean always what puritanism or prudery or pacifism or any rigid rule or code sets up for our guidance: we must mean some profound urge towards surpassing our ignorance, meanness, cruelty, incapacity, ugliness and becoming like Zoroaster, like Christ, like Buddha, like Sri Krishna or, best of all, like Sri Aurobindo. There is an incumbence on us to follow this urge, since the entire evolutionary process of the hidden and negated God holds it as its secret law and it is precisely because the attainment of the All-Brahman is also an evolutionary step, a finding of a certain side of divine reality which too was concealed, that paradoxically we have in even this attainment to follow that urge and choose good and reject evil. In man the mental being, the conscious self-evolver, the urge is an unavoidable open ingredient of his constitution and cannot help being insistent and deeply desirable. We may tend to justify the non-following of it by arguing from one half of God’s truth, the vision of Pantheos. But when both halves are taken together and we do not overlook God from above calling to God from below to rise and evolve in the *milieu* of God that is all, then the urge to choose good and reject evil is found to be a decree the soul in us has passed from the supramental identity-in-difference it enjoys within the multiple yet single Divine.

Surely this decree is not the only one and even its overruling at times may be deemed after the event a valid soul-act subserving God’s purpose, since in God’s subtle play real good may come out of seeming evil, but before an act has happened and while alternatives are still felt as possible this decree is logically the most valid, the most to be regarded, in an evolutionary scheme of Upward no less than Onward. The overruling of it may, on a back-look, prove itself justified in God’s complex economy, but the overruling can never be justifiable in the moment of action. If it

can, the process of upward evolution by us would lose support altogether and could never be a plan of the supreme Creative Consciousness for our freewill to carry out.

(Concluded)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

TWO POEMS

GANGA

GANGA'S earthly waters
Have nourished and sustained
From age to age
The countless lives of Hindustan

Ganga's heavenly waters
Have inspired and enlightened
From age to age
The countless souls of Hindustan.

JAMUNA

Jamuna, daughter of the Sun,
Came surging down the mountains
Whilst her gurgling waters bore
The vibrant laughter of the skies
And in her secret depths she held
The living joy of Earth and Sun;

As she coursed through village, town and field
She told the toiling peoples of the land
"I go to Ganga on the eastern plains
To give her all my laughter and my joy
To merge my waters, my name, my all
Into her pious and ancient Indian Soul".

SURESH THADANI

AN OUTLINE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

It is interesting to notice that in his epic *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo has followed the classical unities of Time, Place and Action recommended by Aristotle for serious dramas. That is, the action of *Savitri* takes place within the space of a single day beginning with the dawn of the day of Fate on which Satyavan must die, and ending before the dawn of the following day; it takes place in the forest around the ashram where Satyavan's family live; and there is a single story-line, without subplots and subsidiary characters. These classical unities provide an organising structure for the immense range and complexity of Sri Aurobindo's epic, and it will be helpful for us to have this structure in mind as we start our study. We can trace it through the twelve Books which, corresponding to another epic tradition, make up the poem as a whole.

Sri Aurobindo also utilises another classical convention of European literature by beginning *in medias res*—in the middle of things, at a point just before the climax of his story, and then recapitulating all that has led up to this point in a kind of "flashback". The term is a new one, coined by film-makers in this century, but the literary technique is a very ancient one.

However, Sri Aurobindo ignores other common conventions of epic poets, who begin their poems by invoking their Muse, and/or by stating the theme of their song. (Virgil—*Arma virumque cano*. —I sing of arms and the man...; or Milton: Of man's first disobedience and the tree. etc.) Like Dante, Sri Aurobindo leads straight into his story, describing the dawn of the fateful day on which Satyavan must die.

BOOK ONE: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

Canto One: The Symbol Dawn

Sri Aurobindo's unique poetic technique—in which outer happenings, objects and persons are "real symbols of inner realities", so that this dawn is a "symbol dawn", just as his whole tale is "a legend and a symbol"—makes this first canto of the First Book, *The Book of Beginnings*, a concentrated evocation of many themes which will be dealt with in detail later in the poem. It can be compared to an overture in music, where the composer gives a first hint of the musical themes he will be developing later.

The first part of this first canto of *Savitri*, where Sri Aurobindo describes the coming of the symbol Dawn, is amongst the most complex poetry he ever wrote. True "future poetry" and more difficult to grasp mentally than perhaps any other part of the poem. We should not let this discourage us, but try to allow the vibration and music of these wonderful lines to sink deep into our consciousness without striving too hard to make mental sense of them, in time, like all mantra, they will do their work behind the veil, and some of the many-layered meaning will reveal itself even to our surface mentality.

In the second part of Canto One Sri Aurobindo describes Savitri awakening, to the remembrance of what this day of Fate will bring

Canto Two: The Issue

Canto Two, *The Issue*, starts with Savitri remembering—the introduction to the “flashback” The look into the past which begins here continues all through the subsequent cantos and books up to the beginning of Book Eight, where we return again to Savitri sitting beside sleeping Satyavan in the early morning of this fateful day

In the rest of Canto Two Sri Aurobindo gives his description of Savitri. In the original legend Savitri is presented as a “sati”, a virtuous woman who, because of her purity, is able to rescue her husband from death and restore the fortunes of his father, as well as gaining brave progeny for her own parents. Sri Aurobindo, however, presents Savitri as “an incarnation of the Divine Mother” (see his letter, on p 729); so I think it is legitimate for us to read this portion as his portrait of the Mother

Cantos Three, Four, Five: The Yoga of the King

In Canto Three Sri Aurobindo begins the long story of how Savitri came to be born, how the Divine Mother came to be incarnated “A world’s desire compelled her mortal birth” This incarnation has been called down by King Aswapati. And just as the description of Savitri in the preceding canto can be taken as Sri Aurobindo’s portrait of the Mother, his description in Canto Three of King Aswapati can be taken as his self-portrait, and the account of Aswapati’s yoga is obviously based on his own experiences It is also interesting to note that while in the Mahabharata version of the Savitri legend it is stated that King Aswapati undertook an 18-year tapasya for the purpose of gaining offspring (an unusually long period which must have some esoteric significance—cf. Drupada, Dasharatha and others who obtained sons by a much less strenuous sacrifice) Sri Aurobindo mentions no such motivation for the King in his version. King Aswapati is shown undertaking his great yoga in search of the Truth of Existence, this search culminates in an experience of the Supreme Mother, which brings the understanding that only the incarnation of this Presence on Earth can resolve the deep problems of human existence. This is the boon he asks for, in response to which the Mother consents to take birth as Savitri

BOOK TWO: THE BOOK OF THE TRAVELLER OF THE WORLDS and BOOK THREE: THE BOOK OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

So Cantos Three, Four and Five of Book One deal with *The Yoga of the King*, and lead into Book Two, *The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*, where the immense

“world-stair” of the inner worlds and all their planes are explored and described in detail. This great journey culminates with Book Three, *The Book of the Divine Mother*, telling of Aswapati’s encounter with the Supreme Mother and the granting of the boon that she will take birth in human time. Then comes a wonderful prophetic passage where Aswapati describes his vision of what this incarnation will mean for the earth. The book ends with the account of how, from this immense height and with the promise of the Supreme Mother, he returns to the world of men, to “the ambiguous earth”. This is the end of Part One, the first of the three parts into which Sri Aurobindo divided his poem.

PART TWO

Part Two, comprising Books Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight, deals with “human time”. It tells of the birth, childhood, and quest of Savitri, her meeting with Satyavan, her return to her father’s palace, Narad’s revelation that Satyavan is fated to die in one year’s time, Savitri’s resolve to marry him even so, her father’s taking her to Dyumatsena’s ashram, and her life there up to the morning of the day when Satyavan must die. In dealing with this human world, Sri Aurobindo’s poetry has a special warm, “earthly” quality. This is specially noticeable in the wonderful nature poetry at the beginning of Book Four, describing the six seasons of the Indian year, leading up to the birth of Savitri in Spring.

Book Four is *The Book of Birth and Quest*, comprising *The Birth and Childhood of the Flame*, *The Growth of the Flame*, *The Call to the Quest*, and *The Quest*, which tells of Savitri’s travels on her search for her destined partner.

Book Five, *The Book of Love*, with three cantos entitled *The Destined Meeting-Place*, *Satyavan* and *Satyavan and Savitri*, recounts the meeting of the lovers.

Book Six, *The Book of Fate*, tells of Savitri’s return to Madra, meeting her father, mother and Narad. It contains two cantos: *The Word of Fate*, in which Savitri tells of her choice and Narad reveals Satyavan’s fate, and *The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain*, in which Sri Aurobindo makes a protest from Savitri’s human mother the occasion for a wonderfully profound response to our human reactions to suffering and our sense of a hostile fate.

BOOK SEVEN: THE BOOK OF YOGA

The first Canto of Book Seven continues the story, with King Aswapati presenting his daughter to King Dyumatsena as a daughter-in-law, it tells of *The Joy of Union*, *the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death*, and *the Heart’s Grief*. Savitri here is depicted as undergoing human emotions in all their intensity, but with a high nobility and self-restraint beyond the reach of normal humanity. The grief and pain she feels at her foreknowledge of Satyavan’s death compel her to a path of inner discovery. In the following six cantos Savitri’s sadhana is described.

Again, I think we are entitled to read this as an account of the Mother's own early sadhana. She has said that, although she had not discussed all her early inner experiences with Sri Aurobindo, she had found them wonderfully described in *Savitri*. Savitri's yoga is not identical with Aswapati's journeyings through the inner worlds. It seems to correspond more to the path of psychic discovery which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have recommended us to attempt ourselves (I am reminded that the terms 'psychic' and 'psychic being' in the special sense in which they are used in Sri Aurobindo's yoga seem to have been contributed by the Mother, not appearing in the *Arya*, but used by Sri Aurobindo only at a later date.) This yoga, which Sri Aurobindo describes as taking place over many months in the year after Satyavan's and Savitri's marriage, replaces the tremendous "three-night vow" undertaken by Vyasa's Savitri in the Mahabharata legend.

The six cantos describing Savitri's sadhana are entitled, *The Parable of the Search for the Soul*, *The Entry into the Inner Countries*, *The Triple Soul-Forces*, *The Finding of the Soul*, *Nirvana and the All-Negating Absolute*, and *The Discovery of the Cosmic Spirit and the Cosmic Consciousness*. This last experience gives Savitri the realisation of the Divine Presence in Matter and the world.

BOOK EIGHT: THE BOOK OF DEATH

This brings us to Book Eight, *The Book of Death*, which consists of a single canto, *Death in the Forest*.

This canto is numbered "Canto Three"—an indication that it survives with little revision from a very early stage in Sri Aurobindo's work on his poem. The many stages in the development of *Savitri*, which Sri Aurobindo says he used as a method of ascension, rewriting it over and over again as he mastered ever higher levels of expression, have been discussed by Nirodbaran and Amal Kiran in their writings, and anyone who is interested in this aspect of *Savitri* can read about them there.

This single canto of Book Eight begins with the line, "Now it was here in this great golden dawn,"—referring back to the last line of Book One, Canto One; and the following lines are reminiscent of the early lines of Book One, Canto Two, where the "flashback" began—we are back to the same point in the story, after an immense journey in consciousness. In fact we are already more than two-thirds of the way through the entire poem, and this canto ends Part Two of the three parts. It describes how Savitri prays to the goddess Durga before requesting permission from her mother-in-law to accompany her husband to the forest for the first time. When this is granted Satyavan and Savitri go into the forest together. Again all her human pain and anguish is most movingly evoked, and contrasted with Satyavan's happy ignorance of his fate. At last the dreaded moment arrives:

She knew that visible Death was standing there
And Satyavan had passed from her embrace

PART THREE

Part Three then begins, the great "dialogue with Death". This colloquy has three major stages, corresponding to three books: Book Nine, *The Book of Eternal Night*, Book Ten, *The Book of the Double Twilight*, and Book Eleven, *The Book of Everlasting Day*.

In the Mahabharata story, it is Savitri's determination to accompany her husband, together with an understanding of dharma, enabled by her purity, which charms Yama, the god of death and dharma, into releasing Satyavan and granting him a life-span of four hundred years. The granting of this boon occurs already by the middle of Markandeya's narration, and is followed by two passages the modern reader might find readily expendable .. first, Satyavan's anxiety about his parents, left alone for such a long time; and second, the reassurances of the sages to Dyumatsena and his wife about the fate of their son. These two passages seem to be included to emphasise the "sati" aspect, the virtuousness of Savitri in terms of "dharma"

In Sri Aurobindo's version the inner significance of Savitri's incarnation and her embodiment of the power of illumination, as indicated by her name, determines the course of her colloquy with the force of Death which governs the mortal world. In the light shed by her words, this force changes its very nature, though resisting at every step, until its darkness vanishes altogether—but even then the process is not complete. Only after Savitri has rejected even the highest spiritual bliss for herself alone, and insisted on the last four boons "for earth and men", is the final Supreme accord granted. She asks for Peace, Oneness, Energy, and the Bliss of the divine Presence.

There follows a wonderful epiphany of the Supreme accord, lines which the Mother recorded some time in the fifties, a passage of surpassing power and beauty

And finally there is the re-descent to earth, a fall, which is yet described as a return to a special sweetness.

There remains the brief *Epilogue*, the twelfth and last book. Sri Aurobindo describes Satyavan and Savitri's joyful reunion in wonderfully human terms. Then there is the return to the forest ashram, the explanations. (A delightful touch of Sri Aurobindo's humour here, when Dyumatsena reproaches Satyavan for causing anxiety to him and his mother, and Satyavan replies "Lay all on her." teasingly, yet truly, making Savitri responsible for all that has happened.) Then the summons to Dyumatsena to return to rule his kingdom again, and the preparations to leave the forest retreat.

In a passage which reflects the very first lines of Book One, Canto One, bringing us full circle, and yet showing the profound transformation that has occurred in a single 'day of Fate', the poem concludes with Night preparing a new Dawn—no longer an utter darkness, foreboding and reluctant, for now she carries within her the seed of a new creation:

Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
 In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign
 She brooded through her stillness on a thought
 Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
 And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn

SHRADDHAVAN

(Courtesy—*Invocation*, Study Notes and Newsletter, No 1, November 1998,
 Savitri Bhavan, Auroville)

I WALK IN TRANCE

I WALK in trance and awake I lie in sleep,
 In the press and surge of people I move aloof, alone,
 On each, from my heart, an intimate bond of oneness leaps,
 Everything that I see is at once with myself one

In words from a thousand lips my voice is spoken and heard,
 My hands are possessed of strength of numberless hands;
 In the calm of sentient silence a silver light is ushered
 Through aeons of waiting for my offerings, amends.

Even a trickle sustains, a continuous flow
 Of a nameless power descending with joy and peace
 Perfects and purifies and purges all darkness below,
 A miracle of ageless beauty the Beautician achieves.

In the centre of a shoreless ocean of myself and a brilliant me
 I stand, and savour each drop, each measure of golden honey

AKASH DESHPANDE

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

18:06:1994

LAST time I told you about the descent of Power in the physical. But it was not quite that. I was told later that the descent was in the vital-physical. It had come down to the sex-centre. The physical is below that. So the work being done is in the vital-physical.

Then I went to the Samadhi. I saw a solid Square, a concrete Square coming down. It came down and was around my waist and the sex-centre.

Sri Aurobindo told me. "I am the Square." It was there for a long time. "I am the Square," he told me. Yes, he told me so.

Later, I moved away and walked out; but I could not walk much. I was feeling tired. I went home, ate my dinner, and took a sleeping pill. I was feeling nervous.

I am a heart-patient and I do not want something to happen in the process. Next day I went to Dr. Datta. I told him that the work is going on in the physical. I wanted him to examine me thoroughly. He examined me for more than half an hour and told me that medically I am in good health. He also said that my heart is better than what it was.

This nervousness,—ask for peace in the body.

The descent of Power in the sex-centre,—can it not be dangerous?

But the Mother had said that she was coming down with the Power. She was entering into Sri Aurobindo's consciousness. That should take care of it.

20:06:1994

I could see the Square being put. It was not as if assembled around the waist. It came down from the head to the waist. As it came down, a hole was made and all the while it fitted the body closely. It was fitted snugly.

Sri Aurobindo had said: "I am the Square."

He did not say that he was putting the Square; he had said that he is the Square.

I was meditating when the Square was coming down from the head. I was standing at the Samadhi at my usual place. I could see it all the while, for forty minutes, the Square being put; it was not a brief experience.

When Ananda had come earlier, I could not see it happening. Only when it departed I was told that it was the Being of Ananda who had come. Neither was that experience so long. But then it was an important experience.

Sri Aurobindo had told me very clearly not to imagine it, but that I should let it simply come down. He did not want me to imagine it and interfere in the work in any way. They know what is needed and what is to be done,—I was told.

The descent of Power was like the descent of some thick fluid. It was certainly something far different and much more than the descent of Force. I could see it.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother quite know that I speak about these things and about these experiences to you,—that you are my consultant. What you explained to me about the Square seems to be correct. Sri Aurobindo is the Square in its four aspects of Sat, Chit, Ananda, and Vijnan. This is perfectly correct. You have also told me why the Square is there around the waist, at the level of the sex-centre and Muladhara. Below that is the physical, in the legs. We have to find out what it is.

I feel nervous. That is why I am going to Kailash's place for a cup of tea. I had taken tea in the morning, but I must have one more cup now.

22:06:1994

I think the work is going to be in the physical. I feel tired, nervous; I have to take sleeping pills at night. After meditation in the evening I stand outside the Ashram for twenty minutes, at times even for longer durations. I feel tired; I just can't walk.

I must ask for supramental peace and strength in the body, both the peace and strength in the body, in the physical. Nothing less than the supramental will do.

25:06:1994

It is a difficult work. My psychic being was asked to rise. The Grace came and it rose, rose very high. I could follow it up to a certain stage; but then it went far above, very high. I could follow it, I suppose, up to the Overmind. Beyond that,—I do not know.

It went very high, that definitely I know.

Can the psychic being rise of its own?

I know, my mental being could rise. So too could the psychic being. If it is free from the bondage of nature, it should be possible. Yes, it can. But here, there was Grace and so it could rise. Yes, it was asked to rise, and it rose.

I could see Power descending. I could see it. But perhaps there was something obstructing and the work could not be done. That is why my psychic being was told to rise. When it came back, returned, it must have certainly brought something with it.

I must ask for peace and strength, supramental peace and strength, directly in the physical, coming down into the physical from above.

I must have strength. My head must be able to take the load of the Overmind. Peace and strength,—both are needed. I must ask for these.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

ALERT SEERESS

MONDAY morning just at 4 o'clock
I heard a sudden sound,
As though some impatient spirits
Were moving around.

“Give us our share,” was their shout
From across the street;
“Our viand and our wine in red pots,
Our choicest treat ”

No oil-lamp burned in the temple,
None slept in the yard,
The trusted watchman had gone home,
Leaving God himself to guard.

Alarmed, the seeress from her face
Tore the night's veil;
Compassionate eyes poured peace
Happy dawn to hail.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

THE essential difficulty of transformation comes from the fact that the substance of our normal being, as it is at present constituted, is moulded out of an original Inconscience which is at the starting-point of earthly evolution. It is this substance of Nescience that has to be transformed into a substance of divine superconscience. Till that is satisfactorily done, the Nescience will always try to invade or encompass or even swallow up and absorb into its oblivious darkness all that enters into it from above. There is a blind Ananke of the Inconscience which frustrates all attempt of transformation.

The Yogis in the past tried to tackle this problem by making the light and power of the illumined spiritual-mind planes act in our present nature. And in this process, as we have seen before, the overmental change is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation, for, it is the highest possible status-dynamis of the Spirit in the spiritual-mind sphere.

But it has always been found by experience that in the terrestrial evolution the overmind descent fails to transform wholly the Inconscience, a basis of Nescience always remains.

It would be as if, as Sri Aurobindo has so picturesquely put it, "a sun and its system were to shine out in an original darkness of Space and illumine everything as far as its rays could reach so that all that dwelt in the light would feel as if no darkness were there at all in their experience of existence. But outside that sphere or expanse of experience the original darkness would still be there and, could reinvade the island of light created within its empire" (*The Life Divine*, pp. 953-54).

Is there then no solution to this problem? Surely there is. When the 'lower hemisphere' of existence fails, the 'upper hemisphere' may intervene and successfully overcome the almost unconquerable difficulty of transformation. For, the opposition offered by the Inconscience is not accidental or without purpose. It has a sanction in the divine wisdom of the Supreme. There is an occult truth behind the negations of the Inconscience which only the Supermind with its omnipotent capacity of reconciling the contraries can successfully confront and tackle and thus discover the solution of the intractable problem. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

"Only the supramental Force can entirely overcome this difficulty of the fundamental Nescience, for with it enters an opposite and luminous imperative Necessity which underlies all things and is the original and final self-determining truth-force of the self-existent Infinite. This greater luminous spiritual Necessity and its sovereign imperative alone can displace or entirely penetrate, transform into itself and so

replace the blind Ananke of the Inconscience.” (*The Life Divine*, p. 962)

Now we can grasp the real scope of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana when he affirmed that he has come down upon earth in a human body to bring about the supramental transformation here. But how will this supramental change begin?

The individual must of course be the instrument and the first field of transformation; but an isolated individual transformation will not be enough nor will it be entirely feasible. And even when achieved, this individual gnostic change will have a permanent cosmic significance, only if the individual becomes “a centre and a sign for the establishment of the supramental Consciousness-Force as an overtly operative power in the terrestrial workings of Nature.” (*The Life Divine*, p. 962)

This would mean the appearance in the evolution of a gnostic being with a gnostic nature and the development of an organised supramental instrumentation of the Spirit in the life and body of the individual. And upon this basis the principle of a divine life in terrestrial Nature would be manifested and this has been the goal set before themselves by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from the very day they met on the physical plane first in 1914, and then definitively in 1920. We are now going to outline the principal course of their Sadhana during the period 1914-1950 when they were together both in their physical bodies and whole-heartedly engaged in the formidable spiritual enterprise of bringing about a supramental transformation of earth-life. At the end of our narration we may perhaps come to know what the stage of achievement was in 1950 when Sri Aurobindo decided to leave his body, also why he decided to do so with what deeper purpose in view.

We all know from Sri Aurobindo's writings that he and the Mother represented the same Divine Consciousness although in two bodies and that it was necessary for the purpose of the Work they had come to do. It will surely be of great interest to know what the Mother has said about their respective roles in the Work. It is, of course, well known that the Mother once declared “Without him I exist not, without me he is unmanifest.” But most people perhaps do not know much about what she said about the course of their Sadhana during the period 1920-1950 when they were both in their physical bodies.

According to the Mother's revelation, during all the thirty years she lived with Sri Aurobindo, it was he alone who used to do the Sadhana for the Mother's body which had only to remain constantly open to his action. The individual progress of the Mother's body was effected automatically all the progress Sri Aurobindo used to make was shared in by the Mother in a spontaneous way. She had affirmed that not even once during those thirty years, did she have to make any effort for transformation. Even in the case of any physical pain or trouble in her body, she had to turn to Sri Aurobindo and repeat “My Lord, my Lord, my Lord”, and the difficulty would vanish.

While referring to this period of Sadhana and Work, the Mother once smilingly remarked that although Sri Aurobindo always wrote in course of his letters addressed to their disciples that *they*, meaning the Mother and himself, were doing the Work, it

was in reality he alone who was doing all the inner work: Mother was attending to the outer activities only

Of course it is well known that during the first seven years after her return from Japan, that is to say, from 1920 to 1926, the year of the founding of the Ashram, it was Sri Aurobindo who was doing even the outer work. He used to see people and answer their questions in daily conversations. The Mother used to stay behind in relative seclusion and look after Sri Aurobindo's personal affairs and material needs such as his food, clothing, etc.

After these first seven years, when, in 1926, Sri Aurobindo retired into complete seclusion and put the Mother forward in charge of all the Ashram work and of the inner sadhana of the disciples, her activity and responsibility naturally increased in a manifold way but this was only in appearance, the Mother has emphasised. For though to all intents and purposes Sri Aurobindo transferred the entire responsibility to the Mother and decided to stay behind, the fact is that—and this most people would find difficult to believe—Sri Aurobindo continued to do everything from behind the veil. And the Mother? In her own words, she used to “move about without ever feeling any sense of responsibility, not even once, not even for a minute, for from behind Sri Aurobindo was doing everything and he had the total responsibility.”

This was a unique phenomenon in the entire spiritual history of mankind, how two consciousnesses in two physical bodies were completely identified and whatever applied to Sri Aurobindo applied to the Mother as well and vice versa. Did not Sri Aurobindo once make the point explicit?—

“Nothing can be done without her [the Mother's] knowledge and force, without her consciousness—if anybody really feels her consciousness, he should know that I am there behind it and if he feels me it is the same with hers.” (*On Himself*, p. 455)

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

THE FIRST PHOTO OF HITLER

WHO is this baby in his little jacket?
Ah, it's the son of Mrs. and Mr. Hitler!
Maybe he will grow up to be a Doctor of Law?
Or become a tenor at the Vienna Opera?
Whose are these tiny hands, ears, eyes, nose?
It's not clear yet to whom this tummy full of milk will belong—
to a printer, a doctor, a shopkeeper, a priest?
Where will these funny wee legs take him, where?
To the garden, to school, to the office, to a wedding
with the mayor's daughter, who knows. .

A baby, a cherub, a crumb, a tiny ray of light.
There was no dearth of favourable omens in heaven and on earth
when, a year ago, he came into the world—
the spring sunshine, geranium on the window-sills
the music of the barrel organ in the yard
an auspicious augury in pink tissue paper;
just before the birth, his mother had a prophetic dream—
to see a dove in dream means good news,
to catch one—the arrival of a long-awaited guest.
Tap, tap, tap—who is there?
It's the tapping of baby Adolph's heart.

Dummy. nappy, bib, rattle.
The boy, thank God (and touch wood) is healthy.
looks like his parents, like the cat in the basket
and like the children in all family albums.
Surely we are not going to cry now—
Mr. Photographer will "click" under the black cloth.

Studio Klinger, Grabenstrasse, Braunen.
Braunen is a small but respectable town.
Solid businesses, kind-hearted neighbours
the fragrance of yeast and the smell of grey soap.
No one hears the howling of dogs or the footsteps of destiny
The history teacher loosens his collar
and yawns above the pupils' copybooks.

W SZYMBORSKA

(Translated from the Polish by Marta Guha)

SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY AND ITS CARDINAL POINTS

AN active revolutionary and an under-trial prisoner for such activities, a poet, a seer and a philosopher, and all this of the very highest order, Sri Aurobindo envisioned a future of the world and mankind, not scaled or fathomed before

The voice of C. R. Das still vibrates in our ears as we remember this defence lawyer of the famous Alipore Bomb Case in 1908, declaring the accused Aurobindo as "the poet of patriotism, the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity" It may be recalled that earlier in 1907 Rabindranath had paid high tribute to Aurobindo through his famous long poem *Namaskar* (Salutation), again in 1928, on his way to Europe, Rabindranath alighted from his ship at Pondicherry to meet Sri Aurobindo He wrote that on seeing him he understood that Aurobindo who wanted to realise the soul as the greatest reality did realise it

In this article, we shall be mainly concerned with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy Sri Aurobindo himself was primarily preoccupied with philosophy of life and thrived with his conviction of transformation of the entire life into the spiritual But Sri Aurobindo did not make any compromise on any point Instead he grounded his whole philosophy on the solid rock of ontology It is the fulness of his perspective and his all-absorbing comprehensive view which took Spiegelberg by surprise when in 1947 he first read *The Life Divine*. He said: "I was completely knocked over. I have never known a philosopher so all-embracing in his metaphysical structure as Sri Aurobindo, none before him had the same vision."

Man's philosophical thinking through the ages has coursed through different streams But these can be divided into two main kinds idealism and materialism Both the systems are monistic, but are completely opposed to each other From the all-pervading rule of law visible everywhere or, technically speaking, the uniformity of Nature, any serious philosopher is likely to arrive at the conclusion that the cause behind the world, the ultimate reality, is one. But the idealist and the materialist systems differ in their views as regards the nature of the ultimate reality It is true there are differences of shade among various idealistic ways of thinking, but the main tenet of this school is that the ultimate reality is one consciousness, without a second, and matter has come out of that. Similarly, there are differences of shade among various materialistic ways of thinking but their main tenet is that the ultimate reality is matter, and consciousness has come out of that It goes without saying that the coming of matter out of consciousness or of consciousness out of matter did not appear to be feasible to the commoner The idealists of ancient India said that just as a living body can give rise to hairs (*keśa-lomāni*) which are lifeless, so also consciousness can give rise to matter. On the other hand, the materialists stated that just as the extract of certain trees which are without any power of intoxication can acquire intoxicating power, so also inconscient matter can acquire consciousness (*kinvādivyah*)

madaśaktivat caitanya upajāyate—Charvaka) The futilities of these analogies, coming from one side or the other, are clear enough. Both the examples are examples of one space-object coming out of another. This does not explain consciousness coming out of matter or the other way round, since matter is a space-object, but consciousness is not. It should be mentioned that in the analogy of the *keśa-lomāni* no claim was originally made as to matter coming out of consciousness in the *śloka*-line which runs as

*Yathā satah purusāt keśa-lomāni
tathā aksarāt sambhavaṭīha viśwam*

(Mundaka Upanishad, I 1 7)

Here the *aksara* has not been indicated to be one consciousness and consciousness alone. But that is precisely what was later concocted.

In recent times Hegel (1770-1831) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) engaged themselves with the same problem. Idealist Hegel said that the ultimate reality is spirit, but it is spirit with a dialectical power, by dint of which it produced matter out of itself. Marx said that matter is the ultimate reality, but it is matter with a dialectical power, by dint of which, it produced consciousness out of itself. We, on our part, fail to conceive of any power whatever, of spirit, in virtue of which it can produce matter out of itself, or of any power whatever of matter, by virtue of which it can produce consciousness out of itself. To us the reasonable conclusion appears to be that the ultimate is a conscious being possessing a non-consciousness part too, through the medium of which it can produce world-matter under the dictates of its own consciousness. It goes without saying that the consciousness part and the non-consciousness part are inseparable and together they form one single self. Sri Aurobindo's viewpoint is clear from the two early chapters, in fact, chapter II and chapter III of *The Life Divine*, which respectively bear the titles "The Two Negations. The Materialist Denial" and "The Two Negations. The Refusal of the Ascetic". We know how very completely Sri Aurobindo negated the two Negations.

The Idea that the ultimate reality is a conscious being possessing a non-consciousness part should not have been uncommon in India. We find its trace in the Nāsadiya Sukta of Rīg Veda, the third *śloka* of which runs as follows

*tucchyena āvu apihitam yadāsīt
tapasastanmahimā ajāyata ekam*

(Rīg Veda, X 129 3)

It means "The one that was there, covered by a paltry sheath, expanded itself by self-energizing." It is unfortunate that *tucchyena* was interpreted as 'non-existent' by Shankara who held that the ultimate reality is consciousness and consciousness alone. Asked by the pupils how the world could then be created, he said that there has been no creation: the world is an illusion (*brahma satya jagannmithyā*)

Sri Aurobindo could not accept this explanation. For him the world is a derivative of the ultimate eternal reality. For him a derivative of the real can only be real, though the derivative of the eternal may be finite in time, and be a play of God. Sri Aurobindo says that the ultimate reality is one without a second. But as a creative power he described it as "Conscious Force". In fact, the term is the heading of a chapter (chapter X) of *The Life Divine*. It is to be noted carefully that the Force implied is not just consciousness-force. No doubt consciousness is also a force by itself. Sri Aurobindo says, ".even in the view of the world as essentially an act of consciousness, an act is implied and in the act movement of Force, play of Energy." (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 82) Thus there can be no room for any doubt that Sri Aurobindo was aware of the non-consciousness part as well of the ultimate, which was more force-like to him than matter-like. Many relativist scientists will be at one with Sri Aurobindo in this regard. Philosophically the important point is that Sri Aurobindo did not accept either consciousness or matter as the sole ultimate reality.

The credit of having in a way realised this double aspect in the unicity of the ultimate must also be given to Spinoza (1632-77) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600); the latter was burned to death by the Roman Inquisition for holding views heretical to the Christian faith, and the former was excommunicated by the Synagogue who were dependent upon the Christian hospitality.

From our above discussion it is clear that Sri Aurobindo regarded the ultimate reality or the absolute one both as the efficient cause and the material cause of the world, that it has created the world and has created it out of its own self. The question that next arises is as regards the purposive cause of this creation. Why this world? According to the Vedanta, the reason behind is God's desire to be many (*tadaikṣata bahusyām*. Chhandogya Upanishad, 6.2.3). Vedanta has described this desire for becoming many and the process entered into by God for that purpose as the play or *līlā* of God (*loka vattu līlākaivalyam*. Vedanta-Darshanam, 2.1 33). Sri Aurobindo accepted this idea of *līlā* completely. He says

The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.

(*Savitri*, p. 711)

Mark the second line, God creates the many to enjoy their companionship. But it will not be a companionship only of the inconscience and the little lives, but, gradually, also of those who aspire and attempt for the divine life. Sri Aurobindo has described the act of God as, in a way of speaking, an experiment and has said that this experiment is God's *līlā*. The Absolute one knows that to become many out of its own one self, separations have to be effected, and to effect separations, ignorance, at least at the initial stage has to be permitted. Remember that Sri Aurobindo has said that ignorance is Nature's purposeful oblivion of the self and the All. Also to give

to separations the required durability, creation of gross matter is necessary to provide local habitations. So the self-imposed experiment of God divides into many stages, but the final stage is the evolution of consciousness towards realising the absolute and inherent unity. This experiment of God is the time-history of the universe. Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* is simply a testament of this creative aspect of God.

The creative aspect of God has been described in our scriptures as the Kshararupa (self-deploying aspect) of Brahman. This is the changing aspect of God. Behind this lies the unchanging aspect or the Akshararupa of Brahman. We have said that one has become many. There is, in fact, no other way to account for the uniformity of Nature. But the process of the one becoming many is also not explicable by ordinary logic. But then we have to remember that notions of the possible and the impossible of the finite world cannot, in the deepest sense of the term, be thrust upon the ultimate which is infinite and the only reality. Vedanta explained this capacity of God as the inscrutable creative power of God and described it as *māyā* (vide, Svetāsvatara Upanishad, 4.10). Sri Aurobindo completely accepted *māyā* in this original sense, but not in the later-imputed sense of illusion. Sri Aurobindo says that to deny the one Infinite the capacity to create the finite many out of its own self will be a denial of infinity of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo, in fact, proposes a new logic: 'The logic of the Infinite' "On this condition alone, by this way of seeing and thinking," he says, "it ceases to be paradoxical or futile to speak of the ineffable." (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, p 323)

That this world of our empirical perception is finite in time was not unknown to the ancient Indian seers and savants. This is clear from their notions of *śṛṣṭi*, *sthiti* and *pralaya* (creation, existence, dissolution). But did the eternal being enter into the act of creation only once in eternal time? It would be an oddity to think like that, for that would mean that the Absolute, after remaining actionless and still for an infinity of time, suddenly spurred into activity. This is unthinkable. Our ancient seers say that God's play of creation is endlessly with God. They say that the sun and the moon have been imagined by Providence as they were imagined by him in earlier times (*surya-candramasau dhātā yathāpūrvam akalpayat*, Rīg Veda, X.190.3). This shows that the Kshararupa of the Godhead is no incidental aspect of God. Thus the Akshara and the Kshara, both are permanent aspects of God. Sri Aurobindo has emphasised this point with special stress. He has often described God the Akshara as God the Being, and God the Kshara as God the Becoming. He says that evolution of consciousness in matter is possible only because matter is not totally inconscient, but in it consciousness is in an involved state. Sri Aurobindo says that evolution of consciousness on earth is perceptible to us and, in fact, an object of scientific investigation. But the process will not be comprehended if we do not admit that consciousness was involved in it already.

Sri Aurobindo has given equal importance to the two aspects of God, the changeless and the changing, and that is the way, he says in his inimitable language, "to accumulate the largest gain in our new commerce with the ever-changeless and

the ever-changing Infinite'' (*The Life Divine*, Vol 18, p. 66) A little after this Sri Aurobindo says that the highest truth of philosophy has been formulated in Vedanta under the three formulas *So'ham* (I am He), *tat tvam asi* (He thou art) and *sarvam khalvidam brahma* (indeed, all this is Brahman) This is pantheism, and is being recognised as such by the Occident

With a view to its all-pervasiveness, the Absolute is described as 'Brahman', and with a view to its efficaciousness, the Absolute is described as 'Purusha' Again, Brahman under the two aspects Kshara and Akshara is referred to as Kshara Brahman and the Akshara Brahman respectively Brahman as possessing both the aspects is referred to as Parabrahman Similarly, Purusha, under the two aspects separately, is referred to as Kshara Purusha and Akshara Purusha, while Purusha as possessing both the aspects is referred to as Uttama Purusha or Purushottama.

The Gita has laid special emphasis on Purushottama, because Purushottama is most intimately connected with man and his devotional life. Sri Aurobindo fully endorses this idea of the Gita and points out that a devotee cannot be satisfied with the pure Advaita of Vedanta or even with Sankhya's Purusha who is a mere witness; the highest Bhaktiyoga can only rest on *purushottamavāda*, the description of the Eternal as the Supreme Being

The Gita has developed its thesis of integral Yoga comprising *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* (Knowledge, Action and Devotion) with the help of a responding Purushottama as its basis Sri Aurobindo has also fully accepted this Sri Aurobindo has developed his own elaborate synthesis of all Yogas where we also find the notion of Transformation which is perhaps the fulcrum of his total philosophy We know that Shankara did not admit that any synthesis between *jñāna* and *karma* is possible. Indeed he said

jñāna karma samuccaya asam bhava
jñāna karma vibheda parvatāvat akampa

(Synthesis of knowledge and work is impossible The difference between knowledge and work is as unshakable as a mountain.)

Needless to say, Sri Aurobindo did not endorse this view.

We have already mentioned the basic importance of the notion of transformation in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy It rests on the notion of evolution of consciousness in creation. This is being achieved by Nature through the stages of matter, life and mind. The next step in evolution will be the Supermind

We now consider the following three problems of philosophical import

(1) The Problem of Evil: Sri Aurobindo has not at all denied the presence of evil In fact, he has devoted a whole chapter in *The Life Divine* to Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil The root cause of all this is surely the initial ignorance and separation with which creation started But since awareness of the fundamental oneness is

possible through evolution of consciousness, the evil can surely be won over. That is, in fact, a necessary step in the spiritualisation of life on earth.

(2) The question of Rebirth. Sri Aurobindo believes in rebirth. First of all, he thinks that the soul of the self is imperishable. He believes in rebirth of the departed soul for the reason that a single birth is not sufficient for granting the individual soul or self full benefit of evolution of consciousness.

(3) The Question of Free-will. Sri Aurobindo believes in free-will, i.e., free-will of the creature. He said that we are not predestined puppets or slaves and that there is the freedom of Spirit which is not determined by Karma, but which determines Karma.

There is a school of thought which strongly holds the view that free-will is a denial of monism. For them, only God is free. However, we want to state that the ultimate reality, God, is surely one without a second. But that one has created many out of its own self. In fact, one becoming many is the real mystery; but if that is accepted, there can hardly be any reason to deny free-will in the many. No doubt the freedom of an individual is a grant from the Supreme and is a limited freedom, being limited by the sphere of capabilities of the individual.

We conclude with the following words. A major part of Sri Aurobindo's writings on Nationalism (within the ideal of Internationalism) and on his integral Yoga and Spiritual Philosophy came out in the *Arya* (1914-21). Romain Rolland was very much in touch with this journal. He said: "Here comes Aurobindo Ghosh, the most complete synthesis achieved up to the present between the genius of the West and of the East. The last of the great Rishis holds in his outstretched hands the bow of creative impulse." Dwijendranath Tagore, the eldest brother of Rabindranath and a great thinker himself, was also a regular reader of the *Arya*. He used to say that what Aurobindo Ghosh is saying in this journal has not been said by anybody before. The same observation, we may add, can be made about Sri Aurobindo's entire work.

ASHOK KUMAR RAY

ODE TO THE AVATARS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

O FORMLESS, boundless, absolute One,
How dost Thou veil Thy million rays
And plunge into the darkness of earth's womb
To adopt a human frame of flesh and blood?

By what mystery of Maya comest Thou down,
Time and again, amongst us to disperse darkness
And show to crisis-torn bewildered men
The higher path of spirit and life divine?

In the Treta Age we see Thy resplendent figure in Rama
Who killed the Rakshasa King Ravana
And installed on earth the reign of righteousness
Along with the principle and power of pure mind!

As a child in Dwapara, Thou hast destroyed
The tyrant king Kamsa, the autocrat,
And disclosed to the nurse-mother, Yashoda, to her utmost awe,
The whole universe within Thy opened mouth!

Thou hast also proclaimed the essence of the Veda
To Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra
And then to convince Thy confused friend and devotee
Revealed Thy all-pervading awe-inspiring Form

Thou hast attained Nirvana, full liberation as Buddha,
Resulting from intense meditation under the Bodhi tree;
But forsaking the unprecedented attainment Thou hast
Preferred to embrace and uplift the fallen and downtrodden!

As Christ on the cross the words of eternal mercy
Dropped from Thy lips, "Father, forgive them
For they know not what they do"
Thus Thou hast taken on Thyself the sins of all!

In the barren land of burning sun
Thou hast made Mohammed, the prophet,
Preach the path of one God and no other!
The world wonders at the subsequent distortion of the ideal!

Thou wast Love incarnate in Sri Chaitanya
 Who personified Radha and Krishna in a single body,
 And underwent mystic conversion from an aloof scholar
 To an ocean of Love and Devotion for the Lord'

In Sri Ramakrishna Thou hast signalled
 The call of Rama and Krishna at the same time!
 At his ardent prayer even the image of Kali speaks!
 Thou hast brought about the synthesis of all religions in him.

Thy voice we hear in the thunderous call of Vivekananda,
 "Know, you mortals, each religion is true
 In its own way and each man is *Narayana*,
 A soul and seeker of God in essence "

On the day bright with rays, gold and blue,
 The fifteenth of August. . India stands anew
 Freed from the fetters of foreign rule
 And OM the mantra invokes the advent of a new era

We hear Thy footsteps on the shore of Bay of Bengal!
 The golden Light descends suffusing the cells
 And Thou sinkest deep into the abyss of death
 To fight the adversary in his own domain...

Thou sowest the seed of initiation from behind the veil
 And Life Divine sprouts in the soil of human heart
 Come down, O Shakti—come, Love and Peace in plenty
 With the illumined Knowledge of the Ishwara of India.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

SAINTLY SAVANT: PROF. SRINIVASA IYENGAR*

PROF K R. Srinivasa Iyengar was my esteemed teacher and research guide and, thinking of him now with thoughts that are too deep for tears, I recall with gratitude the fatherly interest he took in the welfare of his students and the sound moral values he inculcated in them along with zeal for academic pursuits.

It is an irony of fate that even as plans were being made to organise talks on Iyengar as a Living Legend, to mark the celebration of his 91st birthday, the news of his sad demise at Madras on 15 April was conveyed to us. The demise of Prof K R S Iyengar is a colossal loss to the cause of English studies in India. The staggering sweep of his scholarship, the amazing incisiveness of his perceptive analysis, the wonderful gift he had for effective expression, the pioneering role he played in according due literary status to Indian Writing in English have all rightly won for him a special place as a mighty academician. It is hard to believe that the devout Aurobindonian, the erudite scholar, the internationally acclaimed critic and creative writer K. R. S. is no more.

Born on 17 April 1908 in a small village in Tamilnadu, K. R. S. had his early education in Kodagnallur, Tirunelveli and Palakotta. He took his M.A. degree from the Madras University in 1932 and was awarded D. Litt. in 1939. Before he was invited by Dr C. R. Reddy to join the Andhra University, he taught at colleges in Sri Lanka, Belgaum, etc.

K. R. S. served the Andhra University for a number of years as a Professor and later as Vice-Chancellor. His commitment to the cause of English studies was more in the nature of 'tapasya', a dedication and a mindset far superior to mere meticulous attention to duty.

K. R. S. had won many laurels during his distinguished career spanning nearly four decades. Some of his achievements include Visiting Professorship at the University of Leeds, Vice-Presidentship of the Sahitya Akademi, the winning of the prestigious B. C. Roy Award for eminence in English Literature. Special mention must be made of the Modern Language Association's conferring on him honorary membership. K. R. S. is the first and only Indian to date to be so honoured. He was Adhishthata, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch (1969), Member, Executive Committee of Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry (1976), President, All India English Teachers' Conference, Jaipur (1963); Member, Governing Body, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad (1970-74), Member, Governing Body, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla (1970-78), and Chairman, World Conference of Religion for Peace, Madras Chapter. Under the editorship of Prof M. K. Naik, a festschrift to K. R. S. was published in 1979. I have yet to come across another scholar like K. R. S. in whom voracious reading is so perfectly matched with copious writing. He regularly contributed articles both to literary journals and to

* Talk broadcast on 22-04-1999

newspaper columns Readers used to eagerly look forward to the delightful pieces he published in *Shankar's Weekly* under the pen names Srinivasa and Rajaram. The number of books published by him is legion Whether his book was on literary giants like Lytton Strachey, François Mauriac, Shakespeare, Rabindranath Tagore or on spiritual persons like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, whether it was a voluminous compendium of critical evaluations like *The Indian Writing in English* or an innovative poetic perspective on a time-honoured myth like *Sitayana*, he showed the same laser-sharp clarity of vision and the same accuracy of expression

The scores of books and the hundreds of articles written by K R S show that he was ever responsive to the cross-currents of tradition and modernity in all their social, political and cultural ramifications He not only continued to be intellectually alert after retirement but surprised everyone by turning to poetry writing in his seventies

In the glorious 'Honours' days at Andhra University four decades ago, Prof K R S Iyengar was a stalwart among stalwarts The teaching community included Prof B Sarveswara Rao, Prof Meenakshisundaram, Prof Venkata Raman, Prof Mahadevan and a vast galaxy of eminent intellectuals K R S was beyond compare in his scholarship in British, Indian English, American and Commonwealth Literatures and in the new fillip he gave to the teaching and research programmes in the English Department ably headed by him from 1947 to 1966

K R S was very strict in his adherence to stringent academic standards. But, such was his kind concern regarding the performance of students in examinations that he used to take review classes not only for the texts he taught but for all the important texts in all the papers So lucid and insightful were his analytical comments that just by attending those review sessions students were able to score good marks All his students would bear me out when I say that his overview enabled us to see texts and authors both in the synchronic and the diachronic perspectives.

I recall with nostalgia the Sri Aurobindo prayer meetings that used to be conducted every Sunday in K. R. S's house in Krishna Nagar For us, who knew him only as an eminent academician, they provided insight into yet another facet of his character—steady faith in God.

Thinking of the manifold achievements of the English Department under the dynamic stewardship of K. R. S. I cannot help wondering, "Whither is fled the visionary gleam, where is it now, the glory and the dream?" It was a treat to listen to Prof. Iyengar's lectures on Shakespeare. He was never given to flamboyant dramatic gestures. He never even raised his voice All the other teachers in the Department used to ask us to mark important passages likely to be given as annotations But K. R. S. had no need to look into a text. He could quote offhand I still recall K. R. S explaining to us, in his characteristically soft voice, the famous soliloquies of Hamlet. "Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them" or, the unforgettable lines from *Macbeth* "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, / To the last syllable of recorded Time, / And

all our yesterdays have lighted fools/The way to dusty death '' His favourite passage from *King Lear* was "As flies to wanton boys, are we to gods, They kill us for their sport ''

While lecturing on tragedies he used to say that a tragedy is never about death but about deathless values, values worth dying for Talking about heroes, he used to say that heroes are not necessarily men of singular achievement, but men of singular courage who continued to fight in the game of life even when the dice were loaded against them, and that the source of their courage was always inner conviction, never public approbation When one of the students in our batch sought clarification on the tragic vision of life, K. R. S quoted a verse that left a deep imprint on my mind I do not remember the name of the author but the lines are

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan,
For, we are born in other's pain,
And perish in our own

In those days postponement of examinations was something unheard of. When we were appearing for the final exams, the question paper for the 10th paper was distributed by mistake instead of the question paper for the 9th paper which we were supposed to answer Our feeble attempt at protest were silenced by K R S 's cool comment "You should be prepared sufficiently early for all the ten papers Just write the exams. I am sure you will do well." And we did well too!

It has been my habit over the years to call on Smt and Prof Iyengar every time we visited Madras The deterioration in his health, the damage to his vision in particular, used to make me wonder about the inscrutable ways of God in inflicting such suffering on so noble a soul. But K R S never once complained or expressed rage or bitterness He used to inquire about everyone in the Department by name and proceed to discuss the literary project he happened to be working on at the moment His involvement in writing, heedless of loss of vision, makes one think of other great poets like Homer and Milton who also did not let physical blindness keep them away from creative work When I asked him how he was able to manage, he quipped. "Blindness has made me a dictator. I am dictating articles now, not writing them."

I feel privileged to have in my personal library autographed copies of Iyengar's *Epic Beautiful*, *Sitayana* and *The Saga of the Seven Mothers* An important dimension of his influence on Indian English Literature is the encouragement he gave to budding talents. Through a review, a foreword or an introduction he would highlight the strength of the new writers Many distinguished writers of today were once novices and most of them, including R. K. Narayan used to discuss their work in progress with Prof K R S. Iyengar Besides being firmly grounded in the classics, Eastern and Western, Prof Iyengar was deeply interested in contemporary writing Whenever a Booker or a Nobel Prize was announced, K R S used to come to the class next

day with a sketch of the author, his background and major works. As a critic, K. R. S was pre-eminently a *sahridaya*, a sympathetic reader and enjoyer of literary works. Students used to consider it a rare privilege to have him as their research guide. He successfully supervised the work of several research scholars and all of them attest to the personal care he took of their progress and the expert guidance he unstintedly provided at every stage in the completion of their doctoral assignment.

Though Prof K R S. Srinivasa Iyengar has departed from this world, he will always be alive in the hearts of his students, admirers and friends. Thinking of him now, my esteemed teacher and research guide, I am reminded of the famous words of Shelley

The one remains, the many change and pass,
Heaven's light forever shines, earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity

It may indeed be rightly said of Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely

T PADMA

(Courtesy All India Radio, Visakhapatnam)

RAIN-WASHED LEAF

THE rain came rushing from the south
The vanes turned ceaselessly
And you sat by the fire,
your eyes a lonely glint;
and your auburn hair
a mediaeval shadow
And
the
rain
came
and your face came to me like a rain-washed leaf.

RANAJIT SARKAR

AN AUTUMNAL VIEW OF HAMLET AND HIS CRITICS

LET us start with the remark of T. S. Eliot who wrote that the play *Hamlet* by Shakespeare "is most certainly an artistic failure. In several ways the play is puzzling and is disquieting as is none of the others." This view is born out of two facts, namely, Hamlet's delay and Hamlet's sanity. There are three schools of critics who try to explain the delay of Hamlet. The first school can be dismissed, for it says he delayed in acting and it is delay and only delay that is the cause of the tragedy. The second school thinks that Hamlet did not delay at all, but went into action. The third school admits that Hamlet procrastinates and they explain his procrastination by psychology.

The theory which considers the tragedy as the tragedy of moral idealism holds that Hamlet is touched by the question of chastity, because he is a man of fine moral sensibilities. He is disgusted with the thought of the impurity of his mother and his uncle. Also he thinks that killing, though killing of a villain, is an immoral deed. His noble soul recoils from the act of killing, which is a loathsome experience. Therefore he delayed. Secondly, there is the view that he delayed because of the growing sense of insufficiency of the evidence of the Ghost. Thirdly, he delayed because he was restrained by material difficulties—in convincing the people of Denmark of the justice of his actions. Fourthly, there is the view, the Freudian or the Pseudo-Freudian explanation that a Mother-Complex or Sex-Complex is the primary cause of the delay. The fifth view is that Hamlet's tragedy is the tragedy of the self-centred man, *i e*, he will not act on very selfish grounds. The sixth view is that he delays because he is melancholy. The seventh theory holds that the play studies the theme of death, not the physical fear of death but the fear of being dead. The eighth view is that Hamlet is the tragedy of reflection. He is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought, some craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event. He thinks too often and too much. Charlton, a good critic, says that Hamlet's philosophising climbs to the world of ideas of abstract Truth and forgets for the moment this most outstanding experience in his own life. The ninth view, the most insightful and authentic is put forward by Seetharaman: "Hamlet delays because he has failed and is eager to discover the right orientation in his mental life and in the world of values, so necessary and indispensable for reflecting men of his type for action." The rotten state of Denmark, the physical aspect and the two major shocks that he received in life, the psychological aspect, both combined cannot but bring about tragedy. This is what makes *Hamlet*, a Shakespearean tragedy, a tragedy of character and circumstance. Other critics we admire, but to Seetharaman we belong—the true Aurobindonian critic to his marrow-bone.

C SUBBIAN

REMEMBERING GOPAL DASS GUPTA (1912-1998)

(3)

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

GOPAL DASSJI joined us either at the end of 1969 or in the beginning of 1970. The work of publishing the Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo as part of the commemoration of his Birth Centenary in 1972 was then on hand in the Ashram Press. The presence of Gopal Dassji to help us in this important project was a godsend. We could not have found a better person.

Gopal Dassji was given the responsibility for maintaining the subscribers' list, keeping a record of and close watch on when and which volumes were dispatched. He had also to maintain the accounts and the stock list as well. This laborious task continued for years till the publication work was completed and the last subscriber was provided with his complete set. All this painstaking work he handled with singular patience and devotion all by himself, something that could not have been done without a fully trained and orderly mind capable of taking the fullest responsibility for the smallest detail. The ledgers and records that he kept in this connection were valued so much that we had preserved all of them till the other day.

Victory in any battle is usually attributed to the General and he is showered with all the laurels. But without the secret, dependable strength of the trained and vigilant soldier, would victory have been possible? Similarly, when a great work is undertaken or something lasting is to be built, it is the silent, steadfast men behind the scenes who keep up the tempo and progress and lend joy and satisfaction to a worthy task accomplished.

Whatever work was either entrusted to him or he voluntarily took upon himself, Gopal Dassji proved himself to be best suited to it, be it in the matter of the responsibility it entailed, meticulousness of detail or the care and completeness of execution. Behind his outward personality as a self-effacing and trustworthy worker was his perfect moral rectitude, backed by a deep religious faith nurtured through a life full of difficult circumstances. True humility was one of Gopal Dassji's divine virtues; he never overestimated his abilities. But when entrusted with a task, however challenging, he would accept it without the least hesitation in all sincerity.

All serious students of Aurobindonian literature are today greatly beholden to Gopal Dassji for the monumental work he did by compiling his *Glossary and Index of Proper Names in Sri Aurobindo's Works* and subsequently its *Supplement*. It is not known how he happened to take upon himself this stupendous task. While reading Sri Aurobindo, he might have wondered about the significance and background of some of the proper names that he came across. It may have prompted him to suggest to some colleague the need for preparing a glossary and the latter may have casually remarked, "Why don't you take it up?" Whatever the original cause, he worked on it

doggedly for fifteen long years Researching on the entries, making the index-cards, checking and rechecking them. Gopal Dassji went carefully through all the thirty volumes of Sri Aurobindo's Collected Works and also the eighteen volumes of *Sri Aurobindo. Archives and Research* journal He had to hunt for and refer to national biographies, encyclopaedias and reference books covering various subjects, philosophical, religious, literary and others In all this laborious and time-taking task, his academic training, discipline and teaching experience must have been greatly helpful. Finally he neatly typed the entire manuscript which was published in 1989

Undoubtedly here was a silent, dedicated, divine worker whom few can really emulate Indeed every time we remember him we should bow our heads in gratitude to him.

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

PERSONIFIED

DOES a tree bear labouring-pain
when it blooms in spring?
Is blood running through veins?
An axe does not realize all these,
nor the wood-cutter
Therefore we never shed tears
or even hire a mourner,
when a tree lies upon soil-bed just
like a human dead.

Where will the birds prepare nests?
Who will give cool shadows?
Who will drive away germs of pollution
with leafy hands?

When we stab a fellow man
do we stab a tree?

SUMIT TALUKDAR

TALES AND LEGENDS

PRAYER IN VAIN

ONCE upon a time there was a traveller who at evening time still had to pass through a dangerous jungle to reach his destination for the night. The area was notorious for robbers, and he soon noticed menacing figures amongst the bushes that filled him with fear and horror. The traveller was a pious man, a devotee of Lord Shiva. So at this moment he sent prayers winging for protection and help to the Lord.

Lord Shiva was seated with his consort, Goddess Parvati, high above the world on Mount Kailash, enjoying undisturbed togetherness with her. Suddenly his expression changed. When Parvati asked him what the matter was, he stood up with the word, ‘I must hurry to help a pious traveller—his prayers have just reached me. He is in danger of robbers in the jungle!’ And Lord Shiva disappeared.

But after only a very short time the mighty God returned and sat quietly down beside Parvati again. The Goddess enquired in surprise whether the traveller could have been saved so quickly. ‘Oh, when I reached the jungle he was throwing stones at the robbers,’ came the reply. ‘So I came straight back—he was managing without me.’

EXPORT BUSINESS

Sharmaji told this story

There were once two merchants who had their shops in the same street. This was in the days when money was not common, exchange was done by barter. But there were already connections with Misra (Egypt), and one of the merchants went there. The Egyptians used to pay for their purchases with gold.

The Indian merchant offered them a shipload of onions, which the Egyptians found very valuable. The onions were paid for in pure gold.

When the successful merchant returned home, the news of his wealth and clever dealing spread. His rival grew envious and decided to make an even better deal with the Egyptians. He set off with a cargo of garlic.

The Egyptians were enthusiastic. They found this completely unknown product extremely desirable and decided to pay for it with the best they had. But they had nothing more precious to offer than the newly-acquired onions. So they resigned themselves to parting with the onions in order to pay for the even-more desirable garlic. The merchant had to return home without the gold he had hoped for!

TWELVE O’CLOCK

There is a whole set of stories about Sikhs. Sikhs are considered decisive, courageous and successful, they are hardworking entrepreneurs, and many of them are excellent

drivers But they have one handicap. all their good sense deserts them at noon. That is a dangerous time for any Sikh—he must be careful then

Here are two examples

A Sikh called his gardener and asked for the watering can, because he was in the habit of watering his flowers himself. The gardener brought him the watering can, but pointed out, ‘‘Sardarji, it’s raining!’’ ‘‘Oh, never mind!’’ the Sikh answered, ‘‘Just bring me my umbrella.’’ It was just noon

The conductor of the North-South Express noticed a Sikh in the corridor of the compartment. He was repeatedly going into the lavatory, but each time came out again immediately. When this had happened a number of times, the Sikh approached the conductor and said, ‘‘I just looked into the lavatory for the fifth time, and there is still a Sikh inside. Tell him to hurry up and finish!’’ The conductor opened the lavatory door and realised that facing it was a mirror, in which anyone entering would see his own face. It was just noon

A CAP BARGAIN

A man brought some cloth to the tailor and ordered a cap (*topi* in Hindi, the white Congress cap)

The tailor and the customer examined the cloth and the customer asked whether it would be enough for two caps. ‘‘Of course,’’ said the tailor. ‘‘I can also make two caps out of this material.’’ ‘‘Even four?’’ ‘‘Yes, yes, even four!’’—‘‘Or—or perhaps even six caps?’’ In the end it was agreed that one dozen caps would be made out of the cloth that had been brought.

On the agreed day the tailor came to the customer and before his amazed eyes counted out twelve beautiful, neatly stitched, tiny caps!

From then onwards the term *topi ki bāt* (cap bargain) is used when anyone has similar expectations. It came up some time ago in our weaving workshop. ‘‘Make me ten thousand napkins, at Rs 1.50 each. Or rather, from the same amount of cloth, twelve thousand—no, no, fifteen thousand, then they will cost only one rupee each!’’ Sharmaji and I exchanged a meaningful glance and a discreet gesture, meaning: *topi ki bāt*.

SIBYLLE HABLIK-SHARMA

“HOW SHALL THE WILL-O’-THE WISP BECOME A STAR?”

WHAT made it bend down beyond its capacity? Gerald wondered. He jerked his head to the right that activated the alarm kept under his pillow and it straightened up. The red eyes turned green, then blue and they grew paler—a shade of pale grey—as if a tear had glassified there. The scene reminded him of the event that had taken place years back. Yes, nearly ten years ago. He was then only twelve. It took place on his twelfth birth anniversary.

That fateful day very late at night his father bent down, kissed him and whispered in his ear, “Happy Birthday, dear.” Gerald woke up. Saw his father, the ever-forgetful scientist—picking up a note stuck under his pillow, straightened up and read the letter. He looked towards his son with tears streaming from his eyes—the invalid son who could move only his head. Shoulders down Gerald was paralysed. Only that time the tears were real. The scientist showed the note to his son. Yes, Gerald could read and write with a pencil held by his lips. He read and understood. Silent tears poured from the eyes of both and they understood Emmy, the mother and wife, and forgave her with a nod. The small note said only three words “I am leaving” which sealed their fate.

He was a forgetful scientist immersed in his work. Nothing else mattered to him except his computer and of course his son—his only child. But that day the mad scientist forgot his child’s twelfth birth anniversary and the child waited for his father and finally, exhausted, went to sleep with tears in his eyes. Emmy could bear it no longer. She was thoroughly dissatisfied, disgusted, disheartened with her husband. He was married to his computer and not to her. Leaving that small note she left.

He understood her. How much she had to bear he only knew and that too partially. She knew of her husband’s passion for computer science and looked forward to her companionship with her child. But then Gerald was born by some freak of nature a paralysed being except for the movement of his head; shoulders down he was paralysed. When after years of investigation and medication it was revealed that he would be paralysed for life, something in her collapsed, the love, the emotion, the desire to stay alive. Still she pulled on as the child was as normal as any. His inner system worked. He was bright, beautiful, intelligent and understanding.

That day the scientist brought the computer into his son’s bedroom and worked all night. For days he was at it incessantly, taking a break only when he had to attend to the needs of his son and yes, he took his meals too, otherwise the son would not touch his. For months on end there was hammering, shaping something outside in the courtyard. The son enquired about it but the father only smiled. It would be a surprise.

Early one morning, Gerald half asleep felt a soft hand stroking his head. He was wondering who could that be when he heard his mother’s voice. “Good morning,

darling—good day!” Oh! with a thump in his heart he jumped Alas! his body lay inert but his heart beat on joyously He opened his eyes and saw the smiling face of his father but could not see his mother Instead an elegant tall machine with handlike projections padded with soft velvet was stroking his hair. Gerald turned his head looking for his mother The voice spoke, “Shall I bring your tea, dear?” Tears rolled down Gerald’s face The voice came from the loudspeakers on the Robot’s face He blew a kiss in the air and said, “Yes, thank you ” The Robot brought the tea and poured it slowly in his mouth till he gulped each sip and stood by and watched. Gerald was happy with his new companion He understood the Robot and perhaps the Robot too understood him It was nearly human. But that nearness was as wide and infinite as the universe His father was a genius Ordinary human beings are too limited to understand a real genius They consider him to be mad To build a Robot to be the companion of his son, to have put the recorded voice of his mother with each movement of the Robot, could only be the work of a genius Gerald did not know when he had recorded it. When did he notice the way his mother stroked his hair or put him to bed? Yet, he and his mother always thought him to be unmindful, rather negligent of them.

How the Robot understood! What a fantastic mechanism he had put inside The pale blue light in the Robot’s eyes was for soothing words. The green was the natural colour of its eyes—just like his mother’s And when the eyes turned red, it meant that the Robot was working too hard, beyond its capacity, a stress condition and Gerald would jerk his head to the right side, the alarm below the pillow would be activated and put the Robot back in position of peace—green light. If he had to call the Robot, Gerald would jerk his head on the left, thus activating the alarm kept underneath his pillow and the Robot would walk in with the instruction board and insert a pencil in his mouth He would tap the particular instruction like calling his father or giving him a story book and the Robot would execute it

Years passed and the friendship grew closer Gerald also matured and saw the pale blue eyes grow paler and felt the lifeless Robot become living and grow conscious of its mission to be a mother. Gerald too felt an urge to be able to move like the Robot.

A Robot becoming human?

An invalid walk?

How shall the will-o’-the-wisp become a star?

One night as his father kissed him good night and bent down to be kissed, Gerald saw the Robot standing and watching Its eyes became pale grey as if a tear had glassified there. The next morning the Robot stroked his hair and said good morning and bent down to touch his cheek (What mechanism made it do that Gerald did not know) Alas, it had no mouth but the loudspeakers in its place and by over-bending it reached a stressed condition, its eyes became red He jerked his head

to the right to bring it to peace-position. He looked at the Robot’s now green eyes and blew a kiss in the air. Oh! how happy the Robot was! The eyes turned blue and danced—sparkling blue waves of the sea. From then onwards Gerald often gave it a kiss in the air.

A few days later the incident occurred again. It bent down too much to kiss him but it had no lips—the soft loving lips of his mother which his father never thought would be necessary. It reached a stressed condition and Gerald jerked his head. What made it bend down beyond its capacity? He wondered.

As the passion to kiss grew, an urge to be able to move also grew in Gerald. If a Robot could move why could he not? If his father could make unconscious matter move why could he not make a conscious human being move? The riddle became more and more painful to bear as the days passed on.

One day Gerald was very upset. They both wanted to be something but did not know how. That night the Robot felt Gerald’s sadness and bent down to give him a soothing kiss, and thus over-strained. Gerald impatiently put him to peace position and in anger jerked his head to left asking for the instruction board. The Robot obeyed and Gerald with a pencil held in his mouth tapped the last instruction. Not to come in the morning till called for. That was the first time he used the instruction otherwise the Robot would automatically come in the morning to wake him up. He was too upset and wanted to be left alone.

That night he was restless and finally fell asleep. He dreamt of holding the Robot’s hand and walking in the garden below. They were both so happy. The Robot bent down to kiss him. He felt the soft soothing lips of his mother on his cheek and felt suffocated. The next instant he faded away.

Late next morning his father came to Gerald’s room, saw the Robot’s face on the face of his son suffocating him to a blue numbness. Like mad he pushed aside the Robot, felt for his son’s pulse and called for the doctor. A conscientious scientist, he read the last instruction given by Gerald to the Robot not to come to his room till called for. How then could the Robot come in? In a flash he remembered that in a hurry to finish the work he had forgotten to connect the last instruction to the Robot’s computer. The sceptic scientist, for whom no power which could not be verified existed, a pragmatist through and through, suddenly kneeled down near his son and prayed to that Almighty who was beyond all experiment and research. The shock, the sorrow, opened a new chamber in his heart and the long forgotten lines flashed across his mind.

The desire of the moth for the star
 The night for the morrow
 The devotion to something afar
 From the sphere of our sorrow.

“THE BEST WAY TO REMAIN YOUNG”

WHAT IS the best way to remain young?

The first question is—what is ‘young’? Only then can you answer the main question. To my way of thinking, remaining ‘young’ means young in spirit. In the way you take life and look at everything, in the manner in which your mind behaves. Does your mind react to every problem in a positive manner? So according to me remaining young is basically a question of the mind. What is old and what is young? Your Physical or Chronological Age in years from the time you were born only indicates the number of years you have spent on this Earth. It does not and must not make you as old as the number of years of your ‘Age’ Most unfortunately, whenever a person wants to know your Chronological Age, you are asked “How old are you?” My reply invariably is “I am 76 years young!”

It is how I feel about the Passage of Physical Time in years. I may have spent 76 years since my birth—on this earth, but it does not indicate whether your mind has grown old with the years. It is the attitude of mind that makes you young or old. Several people you come across in Life, feel old and worn out and decrepit in their 30s or 40s while several others feel full of life, with pep and zest and the desire to go on and on with all their activities even when they are 70 or 80 or even more!

Quite a few instances of this kind come to my mind, because with my attitude I normally look for and find people who are on the same wavelength!

My father-in-law was in his 80s and if anyone called him “that old man”, he would swivel round and swear—“old—your blooming father!” It doesn’t sound as powerful in English as in Gujarati—where you say “pelo buddho”—and he would retort “buddho taro bap”

There was a very well-known gentleman by the name of Mr Rustomji Talyarkhan and he lived at Warden Road and although his children would offer their car, he insisted on travelling by bus. Luckily in those days the buses were not so overcrowded and so he would wait till the bus started and only then jump on it. The poor bus conductors were frightened that one day he would fall and they would be blamed for starting the bus when he was getting on! He did this all his life, particularly in his middle or late 80s. If you asked him why he did this, he would reply, “There is no fun in getting onto a bus when it is stationary!”

The reason why I have been asked to speak on this subject is probably because people have come to know from my behaviour, both physical and mental, that I always feel young. There is a saying which I suppose most people know—“You are as young as you *feel!*” You are not as old as your Physical Years. There was a time when I was wearing a badge which someone had given me and on it was written—“I refuse to grow old” Well, I don’t have that badge anymore but my whole attitude to life shows that I have the spirit of the badge within me.

Those who know me personally—or have seen me—know that I ride a scooter. I have been riding a scooter since November-December 1951, when I purchased a

Vespa-125 in Genoa in Italy and toured the whole of Italy on that scooter with a friend on the pillion seat. and then that scooter was bodily lifted and put in the hold of the steamer . a smallish Lloyd Triestino Ship—on which my friend and I travelled to Bombay. Well, I suppose 46 years ago I was actually young in terms of age—or physical years—and touring Italy on a scooter was no great adventure! Hundreds, perhaps thousands, have done it, but the only reason I mentioned it was to show my ‘mad attachment’ to the scooter. People ask me. “why don’t you get a car?” I really don’t enjoy travelling in a car, somehow I feel rather claustrophobic—I don’t get the breeze in my face and the open sky and everything that makes a scooter ride so exhilarating—in spite of the dust and the smoke and the exhaust of bad cars and lorries...that may be making other scooter-riders wear a mask or a handkerchief tied round their noses This ‘pollution’ does not seem to affect me. I am more affected by the Pollution of the Mind—of many people who seem to have lost their sense of values and priorities and have become totally selfish, self-centred and corrupt. I am straying off the point, and my being a ‘Scooter fiend’ is I suppose part of my attitude of remaining young.

I hope I am not boring the listeners by talking about myself, but I am afraid I cannot help it, as it is *my* attitude and *my* way of looking at life that has inspired the people concerned to ask me the “best way to remain young” I can best quote from my own past and present way of life and those of you who do not feel as young as I do and wish to feel young and perhaps think of being active in their own lives not by imitating or copying any of my or other people’s examples but basically changing their own way or thinking so that it suits them and their own character, but always remembering that only the mind can do it, only your own mind can make you feel young or old!

My own uncle is 98 years of age—not 98 years old!—and last year he was knocked down by a bicyclist when crossing the road just in front of his house. It resulted in a fracture of the thigh bone and they thought operating at this age would be dangerous. But keeping the leg in traction did no good, so after quite a few weeks they decided to operate on him. Well, my wonderful uncle is now able to go down the staircase, as part of his physiotherapy exercise, at least five floors, every day, and insists that he can do all the six floors if allowed to. He is no doubt ‘accompanied’ always, when either going down the stairs with the help of a stick or walking at home

It is this spirit of my uncle that I would like the listeners to emulate He is also a poet and a painter, not perhaps of outstanding standard, but still something to think about as by profession he is an accountant!

Well, quite a few of his poems have been bound into different small volumes thanks to his son taking a very keen interest in his life

My uncle, I think, can still come out with a funny limerick, as he repeats many of his old ones and makes us laugh at his ‘naughtiness’ .

There once was a fellow called Homi,
 Who went to a dance of Salomé,
 He got quite excited,
 But his hopes were all blighted,
 For next to him was sitting Mrs Homi

But apart from his funny limericks and his jokes even now, and his recounting of old experiences, it is his spirit and his positive attitude to life that is so wonderful

He can still repeat a short poem he wrote years ago, but which still guides his life—

Take Life as it comes,
 It rolls and it jumps,
 It's tough and it's tame,
 It's never the same, ..
 One day of sorrow,
 Then a Glorious Tomorrow!
 Your troubles ignore them,
 Your Blessings you store them.

When a man of 98 can quote these lines with all the 'verve' that such a poem demands, after a fall and a resulting fracture and being bedridden for several months and now gradually walking, it shows his positive attitude to life, to be emulated by all those "Who wish to find the best way to remain young" and a slap in the face for all those pessimists and negative thinkers who think that nothing is going right in this world for them. Wake up, all men and women young and old and follow the path of optimism, positive thinking and you will always remain young

ANONYMOUS

THE LAPWING

He had been just a song
Circling over the lake,
Or a pair of sickle-wings
Harvesting the air.

How I had longed
For a closer view
Today he burst upon my sight
From a fallow field.

Black-necked, white-bellied,
He wore a red crest like a petal
His wings were a greenish grey
Lined with silver.

Revelling in his solitude
He held his head high
And chimed out his notes.

I watched from cover
Till he flew away.
One more richness
Was added to my day.

M L THANGAPPA

A DIARY FOR SALE

A Weird Short Story

A COUPLE of years ago I bought an old diary I am not quite sure how much I paid for it, but am certain that it reached me on its own. I distinctly remember the strange circumstances under which it managed its way into my room

It happened when I was preparing myself for a teaching diploma offered by a university through its distance education scheme. Assignment writing and album preparation formed a part of the curriculum

Albums are used as teaching aid in classrooms Various kinds of Indian dresses including the yogi's loincloth, old and forgotten games, and games still played in India, different types of jewellery, pottery, food, furniture and all that is not alien to Indian culture had to go into the making of these albums Since my diploma demanded ten such albums each touching on a subject, hundreds of pictures were needed for the albums and I began meditating upon the cheapest and best way of procuring them

Popular magazines, very colourfully produced, catering to every taste and age-group came to my mind. The only way to get lots of such magazines was to invade the godowns of waste paper merchants

Every time I entered a godown I carried home magazines galore bought for a throw-away price. I repeated my invasions of several such godowns as and when time permitted.

During one such venture, my eyes hit upon a huge pile of buxom, blithe and debonair magazines stacked up in the loft A large number of old diaries sat snugly beside the pile and perhaps gave the magazines good company The broad spines of the magazines told me that they were festival special numbers And since such numbers usually carried a large number of pictures and advertisements, I was certain that they would be of immense use in the making of the albums

I decided to take home the whole lot But since the pile was beyond my reach, I looked around for a footstool But all that I could find was another large bundle of old telephone directories next to a huge heap of newspaper waste.

I dragged the bundle and, balancing myself on it, I reached for the magazines. After repeated attempts, all the time conscious of the unsafe "footstool", I managed to lay my hands on the treasure But poor me! I lost my balance and found myself on the floor drowned by an avalanche of magazines and diaries. And when I wriggled my way out, I realised that I had created a scene, for many of the godown assistants, all little boys, had gathered around me and were curiously looking at me as if I were from another world

"You could have told me, Sir! I would have brought down all those magazines for you," said an elderly assistant rushing towards me.

Helping me to get up, he told the boys to separate the diaries from the maga-

zines. With mischievous smiles still lingering on their faces, the little boys finished their assignment in no time.

“You want all the festival numbers, Sir?” asked the elderly assistant

I nodded a yes

“Then bundle up all the festival numbers here and weigh the bundle,” he said to one of his boys

Back home I untied the bundle to browse through the magazines. No sooner did I untie the knot than the magazines, like a house of cards, started sliding and thereby exposing a red-jacketed diary, the size of a school notebook.

I pulled it out and riffled through it. The whole diary was written in deep red ink; and here and there I found smudges. I tried to read a few lines at random, found it a strain and then shut the diary with a bang and threw it up on my steel storewell. I conveniently forgot all about it.

The diary had been lying there, gathering dust all these years. It was only last evening when I was sipping tea from a cup affectionately offered by my wife, that I saw a thread of cobweb floating in the air and finally landing on my wife’s head. Smiling, I grabbed it, rolled it between my fingers and threw it away.

“Cobweb?” my wife asked.

I nodded and looked up. The ceiling was quite clean but for the fan. On the edges of its blades were pockets of dust enriched with cobweb.

“Huff! How easily these blades gather dust!” I said and motioned my wife to get a duster.

I brought in a stepladder. With the duster in hand, I climbed up and dusted every bit of dirt off the fan. It was only during this process that I saw an uncared-for something lying on the top of the storewell covered with dust and cobwebs.

At first I had no idea what the mysterious thing could be. But when I pulled it out and blew the dust off its face, I recognised it with no difficulty.

After supper, leaning back on the headboard of my bed, I opened the diary.

A pencil sketch of a human skull sitting comfortably on two crossed bones welcomed me with a toothless smile. I smiled a broad smile and turned the page.

Personal Information Page started with a warning—YOU ARE IN FOR TROUBLE. A cold chill came over me. It only got aggravated when I read further down. WHO AM I? GUESS

The windows all of a sudden opened with a screech and the curtains rustled and reminded me of wispy ghosts in floating clothes. A disturbed owl from somewhere in my garden hooted thrice and took rest.

I became nervous and turned to the last page of the diary. I ran my eyes on the last line. It read: YES. YOU HAVE GUESSED IT RIGHT... I AM 666

I shuddered as beads of sweat found their way down to my grizzled beard from my broad forehead.

The door yanked noisily and gave me a jolt. I flew out of my bed with deadly inconceivable terror clutching at my heart.

My wife entered the room at this unexpected moment and kept looking at me, as if she wanted to read the language of my eyes. "What? Another chiller? I told you not to read such books at night. You never listen to me. Now like a goody goody boy go back to bed, curl up and sleep till the sunlight gets into your eyes," she said and snatched the diary from my sweating hands and pushed it beneath my pillow on the bed.

I tried to fall asleep. But only weird figures kept floating before my mind's eye and disturbed me a lot. It is true that I read thrillers and chillers to pass time. But never before have I experienced such a bizarre situation.

In this dream-like state I saw a beautiful little village punctuated with huts. In one corner of the village stood a fairly large hut, lonely, in the midst of a coconut and palmyra grove. The moon was playing hide and seek with sooty clouds and the mischievous wind with its insane laughter was quite intimidating. The droning of crickets and the mating calls of cicadas only added to the weird atmosphere. Somewhere a hungry dog yelped.

A short-statured girl was limping towards the hut. Now and again she halted, leaned against a nearby tree, moaned and with great difficulty proceeded. But before she could reach the door, she flopped on to the ground and howled in pain. She didn't lose hope. The door was just a few yards ahead and she mustered all her strength and succeeded in dragging herself towards the door.

Knocking on it repeatedly, she mumbled for help.

"Coming.. I'm coming," came a sweet voice from inside the hut.

Seconds later the door opened. A lady of medium build made her appearance. She held a hurricane lamp in her hand and raised it a little above her head. She was quite young and had movie-star good looks.

"Who's it?" she called out.

"Here . On the floor," came a feeble voice.

The hurricane lamp went down as the lady of the hut stooped over.

The girl was in a half-sari. Tears were streaming down from her hollow eyes. Her lean and haggard-looking face spoke volumes about her past, and she moaned in pain.

The lady looked inquiringly at her. The girl slowly pulled her petticoat up above her knee and exposed her right leg. It was profoundly bleeding.

The lady made small noises of dissatisfaction. She clucked. Assisting the girl to get up, the lady took her supportively to her examination table and made her lie down on it.

As she began to scrutinise the affected leg, her face drained of colour, for there were too many cuts and thrusts.

"What happened?" the lady asked touching the girl's untidy hair with loving care.

The girl, who was moaning and weeping all along, clammed up.

The lady still holding her hurricane lamp moved into her storeroom leaving the

hall to drown in darkness. A few minutes later she emerged out of the room with the lamp in one hand and her medical kit in the other.

As she neared the table she had the shock of her life. With deadly inconceivable terror clutching at her heart she moved closer, for the girl had vanished and in her place was only her wounded leg. It was bleeding profusely from the cuts and thrusts and it shook. Her head spun with nausea and a terrible pain. She rushed out of the hut and vomited uncontrollably.

Her hands pressing tightly over the region of her heart, she flopped onto the ground. She looked into the dark and all that she could see was trees, trees and trees standing like giants. She looked up for help. The clouds that were holding the moon in ransom suddenly seemed to have changed their minds and the moon, like a bird freed from a cage, rushed out of the clouds.

Light spread but spread for the worse.

The moonlight betrayed a figure inexpressibly thin and pathetic standing under a palmyra tree. She turned her eyes and to her great horror saw the girl—the same girl—standing without any support. Her mouth agape, the panic-stricken lady looked at her with wide-open eyes.

The girl threw her head back, tilting her face skyward, started to laugh, with a chuckle at first, and then deeply, uproariously.

I woke up screaming with the voice of an animal in hideous pain. The bedside lamp flicked on. My wife touched my shoulder and with the loose end of her sari mopped my sweating brow. "Strange things are happening to you, dear," she said consolingly, and added. "Don't let your imagination run riot. I wish you were a writer."

I pulled out the obnoxious diary from beneath my pillow and threw it back onto the top of the storewell and conveniently went to sleep.

I have decided to sell the diary to any good writer who could weave spine-chilling stories out of its contents. I didn't even read it once except for a few words. And those few words were sufficient to tell me a spooky little story. The diary would be a real boon to anyone gifted with an auriferous pen.

You may ask me, "Why don't you write?" Of course, I could, though I have never tried my hand at it before. Everybody can write, provided they have patience and time. But believe me, I was not scouting around for any adventure. That was the furthest thing from my mind. And I can't afford to startle my wife every night with a cold sweat.

If you are highly imaginative and if anything is grist to your mill, then this diary is for you.

Any takers?

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Rig Veda Samhita. Edited by Dr. R. L. Kashyap and Dr. S. Sadagopan. Published by Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastry Institute of Vedic Culture, 109, 8th B Main Road, 4th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore 560011. First Edition 1998. Rs 500 in India. US \$50 abroad. 955 pages. Bound in calico

1

THIS new edition of the Rig Veda contains the complete text in Devanagari including the Khila Suktas. There is also an English translation and commentary on 108 selected verses, an introductory essay, and a short index.

At first glance we find an attractive presentation which gives the overall impression of clarity and readability. The clean typeface, the uncluttered spacing of the lines and the high quality paper make this edition a pleasure to use. The task of searching for hymns is made very easy, since the Sukta numbers are in bold and information pertaining to the Rishi, Chhanda Devata is enclosed in a box at the top of each Sukta. Each Rik or verse starts on a new line and the verse numbers are placed in a neat column on the right side, so that the eye immediately falls on the required verse.

For easy accessibility to students from any background all the Mandala, Sukta and Rik numbers in the Sanskrit text are in Arabic numerals. The clean legibility of the typeface makes this edition very suitable for chanting. The Swara markings are of course given.

The text is given in the Shakha or Branch called Shakala, and the text of the Khila Suktas (Part II) is from the critical edition of the Vaidic Samshodhan Mandala (VSM), Pune, prepared by Dr. C. G. Kashikar. The entire text has been set on the computer; the initial draft of the ten Mandalas of the Rig Veda was prepared by the Centre for Development for Advanced Computing (CDAC), Bangalore. The proof-reading seems to have been done well as no errors were found during the several months that we have been using this edition. According to the Preface, the text will be placed on the Internet, making it accessible to interested Net-users.

The text is divided according to both the normal methods, i.e., the ten Mandalas divided into Anuvakas and Suktas, and the eight Ashtakas further divided into eight Adhyayas. In the running head at the top of the page, only the Mandala, Anuvaka and Sukta information is given. The page numbers for the Adhyaya, Astaka arrangement are given in a Table of Contents at the beginning of the book.

Part III of this edition consists of a selection of one hundred and eight verses taken from the book *Gems from the Vedas* by the late Sri M. P. Pandit. A few additional verses have been inserted by the editors. For each verse there is a transliteration, followed by Sri Aurobindo's translation and the commentary by M. P. Pandit. The selection of the mantras is made from the spiritual angle, the aim being to show in what way the gods of the Veda participate in the life of man. A table of contents is

provided for this section and it has also been indexed, together with part IV. Some inconsistencies are noted in the transliteration of the original Sanskrit. However, the commentaries are illuminating and follow in the line of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastry.

Part IV is an introductory essay by the co-editor R. L. Kashyap. It covers various aspects of the Veda including the Mantra, the Veda in the Indian tradition, the symbolism of the Rīg Veda; it also deals specifically with some of the gods, such as Agni, Soma, Saraswati, Aditi and Indra. This part contains many errors in the English and in other details and seems to have been put together hastily. The "Contents" page covers only up to Section XV, while there are actually twenty sections, and a Bibliography or List of References making up Section XXI. It is puzzling to find that the reference numbers given in the essay often do not agree with the numbers in the Bibliography. These lapses apart, the essay covers some important aspects of Vedic lore and is a good source of ideas for further study. The ideas presented certainly whet the appetite and send us thumbing back to the text to read the appropriate verse in the original.

A subject-wise index in English has been provided for Mantras of the Rīg Veda. The entries include key-words such as Caves, Dawn, Peace (*sham*), Rivers, plus the names of gods, Rishis and important hymns in Sanskrit followed by the Rīg Veda reference number. The reference numbers given are not exhaustive. For example, under Agni, the most frequently hymned god of the Veda, we see only nine references, for Soma and Indra we find about the same number for each. The index is only six pages long, it would have been better had it been more complete. Even more useful would be a complete index of Mantras in Sanskrit. The editor suggests in the Preface that the automatic preparation of a word-index on the computer is easy but it is easier said than done. Perhaps we will see a complete Mantra-index in the next edition.

Even if one considers merely the antiquity and the accuracy of the Rīg Veda—two terms which would normally be inversely related—it is something of a marvel. Concerning its age, it may be in the order of three or four thousand years old. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo has speculated that "our actual Samhita represents the close of a period, not its commencement." "The Veda itself speaks constantly of 'ancient' and 'modern' Rishis, the former remote enough to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge." Concerning its accuracy, it has been noted by Pandit Satawalekar that there are numerous reliable manuscripts of the Rīg Veda and, among these, there are only two variants. These two differ from each other in only one syllable in a text of more than three hundred thousand syllables! This is all the more remarkable for the fact that for most of its history, it was transmitted by memory, using various modes of recitation and arrangements of words which could prevent the intrusion of errors. It is a wonder also that the outer form of the Rīg Veda was preserved by successive generations even when its inner meaning, its highest value was mostly lost, even to the memorisers themselves. In a country less faithful to

tradition the recitation might simply have gone out of vogue and been lost to posterity. But in India the inner memory of the race and the innate faith in the value of the Rīg Veda have preserved it in its pristine form, against all odds, as though invasions, wars and natural calamities were mere superficial circumstance. This unshakeable fidelity now stands justified in the light of Śrī Aurobindo's millennial revelation. The Truth of the Veda is again revealed to those who would care to find it

The editors have done a great service to lovers of Vedic culture by bringing out this edition of the Rīg Veda which is aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly

BRYCE G

2

Rīg Veda Samhita is the earliest scripture of Sanātana Dharma, popularly known as Hinduism. The archaeological and other evidence in the last twenty years indicate that the text of this book is prior to 4,000 B.C.E. Many, though not all, Hindus revere the Vedas. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that most literate Hindus have never seen the complete text of the *Rīg Veda Samhita*. Some persons have seen compilations of the Rīg Veda having popular *suktas* like the Puruṣa. Some have heard the chantings of the five popular *suktas* of the Krishna Yajur Veda or the Rudra hymns or Pavamana.

This book came as a pleasant surprise for me. It is a beautifully printed book which is also very easy to read. Most of the books of scriptures of the Hindus have poor aesthetics, being badly bound and printed on low quality paper. The preface states that this book is aimed at a wide circle including both specialists and ordinary persons interested in knowing something about the Veda. I myself belong to the latter category.

The book has a laudatory foreword by the well-known Gandhian and ex-vice-chancellor of the Bangalore University, Dr. H. Narasimhaih who has the reputation of being an agnostic.

It has four parts in addition to the indices. The first part is the complete text of the *samhita* in Devanagari script which is relatively large and hence easy to read. I never imagined the Rīg Veda to be so vast, having more than ten thousand verses or mantras. I particularly liked the use of the standard numerals instead of the usual Sanskrit numerals which can be understood only by the *cognoscenti*. The entire text of 1017 hymns is divided into ten *mandalas* or eight *ashtakas*. The book follows both these conventions. It is important because *suktas* which begin or end with an *ashtaka* or *mandala* are considered to be relatively important.

The second part has all the *suktas* belonging to the *Khila*. This collection of *suktas* belongs to those branches of the Rīg Veda. The famous *Shree Sukta* to the Goddess of prosperity is in the *Khila*. The introductory note to this part is very

informative Any one who has heard the recitation of *Shree Sukta* knows that it differs from reciter to reciter. Some parts of it are later interpolations. The editors have used the text prepared by the famous scholar Kashikar which clearly separates the common part of *Shree Sukta* found in all manuscripts from the parts found in some manuscripts

The third and fourth parts are very interesting and useful to most readers who may not know Sanskrit or cannot read Devanagari script.

The third part deals with 108 important mantras of the Rīg Veda out of the ten-thousand For each mantra, the book gives the text in Devanagari, its transliteration in Roman characters, its translation and commentary Some of the mantras there are well-known, such as the Ganapati mantra, Gayatri of Vishwamitra, Shiva Triyambaka, Vishnu, the Divine Waters, apah, used in Sandhya worship. There are also very interesting mantras as those in the marriage hymn (10 85), the Aditi mantra, Hamsa mantra and the peace mantras which are found in the Upanishads too The entire commentary is by the great teacher the late M. P Pandit Many of the translations are by Sri Aurobindo. All in all, it is an excellent collection which everyone should read.

The fourth or the last part is the most interesting and most useful. It is a descriptive essay of about forty pages on the contents of the Rīg Veda emphasising its spiritual and psychological wisdom. I have never seen anything like this essay on the Rīg Veda It gives concise answers to questions which occur to persons like me. For instance, all of us know the Bhagavad Gita summarises the essential teachings of Hinduism in 700 verses. Then why bother to read the Rīg Veda written in Vedic Sanskrit, having more than ten thousand verses? The author of this essay, Dr. R. L. Kashyap, answers this question effectively. Again, some of us who go to the lectures delivered by the Vedantins are brainwashed to think that the Rīg Veda is a book of rituals and only the Upanishads are the real books of knowledge. The author demonstrates the absurdity of this view by quoting the Rīg Vedic mantras which the Upanishads copied. For example, the famous quote of Swami Vivekananda “Children of immortality”, *amrtasya putrāh*, often assigned to *Shwetashwatara Upanishad* is originally from the Rīg Veda; the specific reference is given in the text.

Some of the section titles of this essay are very interesting and are reproduced here Rīg Vedic Mantra, Veda in Indian Tradition, Why Read the Rīg Veda, Some Verses having Deep Wisdom, Symbolism in the Veda, Deva, Yajna, Cosmology and Consciousness, Human Psychology, Sin, Evil, Hostile Forces and Purification, Veda and Upanishads, Vedic Way of life, Technology of the Veda, and Date of the Rīg Veda. The psychological wisdom in the Veda discovered by Sri Aurobindo is described here very well The section on Agni, who is not a mere God of fire but the deity of Divine Will-power, indicates how to develop this power in ourselves.

Both editors, Dr. R. L. Kashyap and Dr. S. Sadagopan, are engineer-scientists, one being Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Purdue University, U.S.A. and the other being Professor of Information Systems at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. The entire funds for this project came out of their personal

savings. The best way of helping this highly creative and aesthetic endeavour is to buy this book. The book is priced at Rs. 500.00, which must be below the cost price, considering the quality of paper and binding etc. I am told that generous discounts are given to students and other needy persons genuinely interested in reading it.

I look forward to similar editions of the *Krishna* and *Shukla Yajur Veda*, *Sama* and *Atharva Veda* along with multimedia CD Roms for chanting. The entire body of the text is on the internet,

<http://www.hindnet.org/vedas/rigveda/ss/rigveda>

<http://www.ernet.in/ss/rigveda>

The jacket of the book has a beautiful painting of the four powers of the Mother with the Divine Sun at the centre of it.

M R SRINIVASAN

Mother India (Golden Jubilee Special) February-March 1999 Pub Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Publication Department Pondicherry-605 002 Pp 370. Price. Rs. 30

If a journal survives long enough to celebrate its fiftieth birthday, it is an achievement in itself. And if the journal happens to be a literary and cultural one, this achievement is remarkable indeed. The Golden Jubilee Special of *Mother India* is a fitting tribute to this occasion. It has a kaleidoscopic variation of subject-matter: philosophy, literature, yoga and economics.

To begin with, the article by Nilima Das “*Mother India—50 Years: A Look Around and Ahead*” gives to the reader sound background information. It outlines the journal’s origin, its philosophical and ideological orientation. The journal rigorously pursues its ideal of culture which means “inner refinement and education”. On the spiritual plane, Sri Aurobindo’s teachings are the driving and guiding force. Quoting Sri Aurobindo on “Overhead Poetry”, the writer comments that the inspiration for this sort of poetry comes from “the spiritual plane above the mental intelligence”.

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna), the editor of *Mother India*, makes a number of illuminating remarks on issues related to the journal in an interview with Dr. P. Raja. It was meant to be a journal “commenting on current topics” with the “Aurobindonian view at the back of it.” It was a fortnightly for a couple of years but changed to a monthly later on. This journal essentially promoted Sri Aurobindo’s vision ‘Books in the Balance’ carried an illustration of weighing scales in which books were measured against such values as Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

Aniruddha Sirkar in his essay “On Teaching Poetry” enumerates the difficulties of his profession in a hardening materialistic world and proposes certain counter-measures to offset this antipoetic trend. This article rings true with the sincere experience of a devoted teacher and is highly persuasive. In the beginning children share a natural love for poetry and its verbal magic, but gradually lose it as they come

to be gripped by materialistic concerns. By drawing attention to the “felicitous use of words in poetry”, a teacher can succeed in arousing interest.

C. V. Devan Nair in “Economic Barbarism: Its Culmination and its Close” highlights the peril of globalisation and how it affected the economies of the Asian countries in 1997-98. He credits Sri Aurobindo for the foresight with which he could forecast this sad turn of events. He also blames globalisation for having brought in “unprecedented vulgarity in films”.

“The Red, Red Signature”, a lovely short story by the eminent writer Manoj Das gives us a glimpse of the travails of the Partition and how religious unity is achieved in the friendship between Karim and Bablu. The intermixture of their blood is a testimony to their lasting friendship, in the red, red signature.

D. Gnanasekaran pays glowing tributes to K. D. Sethna for having been a guardian angel to *Mother India* all these years. Prof. P. Marudanayagam, commenting on the concept of Incarnation, draws interesting parallels between the Hindu concept of Avatarhood as found in the essays of Sri Aurobindo and the poetry of T. S. Eliot. He calls Sri Aurobindo “daringly original” in showing us the similarity of approach among Buddha, Christ and the different Avatars of Lord Vishnu.

It is easy to see the progress that *Mother India*, which started out as a journal “commenting on current topics”, has made over the years. The Aurobindonian perspective is still there but the real achievement lies in applying it to explicate a wide gamut of areas ranging from psychology to economics.

M NAZIR ALI

Meditation and Mantras by Vishnu-Devananda. Publishers: Motilal Banarasidass, 1999

This is the most complete source on mantras, meditation, and other techniques of self-inquiry readily available. It is a psychological study, a guide for practice and a source of great learning.

Meditation and Mantras contains all techniques for understanding, and controlling the mind. Raja, Hatha, Karma, Kundalini, Jnana and Mantra Yoga—all are discussed in detail. The Raja Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, one of the greatest psychologists of all time, are given in their entirety with commentary. Several modern methods are scrutinised.

ANONYMOUS

Students' Section

THE HIDDEN CHAMBER OF THE VEDIC TRUTH

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

The 20th Century Yogi

IN OUR century the one who revealed the secret of the Veda to the world is none other than Sri Aurobindo himself. The Yogi was also very much a Rishi in the Vedic sense. He did not derive his philosophy from the Veda but arrived at those truths through his independent Quest. During his early Sadhana he saw visions with recurring symbols and figures of which he did not find any satisfactory explanation in the traditional schools of Yoga-practices that have been with us for the last 2000 years or more. It is only later when Sri Aurobindo read the Veda in Pondicherry that he found corroboration of his realizations in the Scriptures, but corroboration as interpreted by him and not as by the West or traditional India.

He said that only when a psycho-spiritual interpretation is given to the Veda a great portion of the Samhitas reveals wonderful vistas of man's spiritual adventure. To illustrate this point, I will tell you one of the important stories we have in the Vedas. It is a simple legend of the Cows and the Angirasa Rishis.

The Dasyus and the Panis, under the leadership of Vritra and Vala, have stolen the Cows from the Angirasa Rishis and have hidden them in their caves. To recover the Cows, the Angirasa Rishis have to perform a sacrifice and by chanting the true Word or Mantra invoke the help of Indra. Indra comes to their rescue, armed with the thunderbolt which contains the power of all the Gods. He then strengthens himself with the Soma Wine and, followed by the Angirasa Rishis and with the help of the Heavenly Hound Sarama, traces the missing Cows. With his celestial army Indra then forcefully enters the cave of the Panis, defeats the Dasyus, and drives the liberated Herds upward.

There are several variations of this legend in the Veda, but viewed in the proper perspective this story reveals to us the essence of the secret knowledge.

The important clue to the esoteric meaning of the story lies in the word *go*, literally translated as *cow*. But the word *go* has another and deeper sense—*light*. Thus the Legend of the lost Cows is really about the lost Light.

The Panis who have stolen the Cows are the sons of darkness. The word *pani* comes from the root verb *pan* meaning *to barter*. So the Panis represent the bargaining tendencies of man. Now these bartering and calculating lower forces have stolen the Light or the Divine Illumination and have hidden it in the darkest nooks of our being symbolized by the caves.

To retrieve the stolen Light the Angirasa Rishis, representing the 'seer-will', invoke Indra through sacrifices, that is, by kindling the inner aspiration with the help

of Agni, the purifier, Indra represents the Mind-Power. Armed with the powers of the Devas he tracks the caves of the Panis with the help of the Heavenly Hound, Sarama. She represents Intuition. Sarama does not possess the power to guide the Cows back, but can lead Indra to the place where they were kept hidden. Indra drunk with the Soma Wine,—Intoxication of Ananda,—forces his way into the caves, the dark and ignorant parts of our being, defeats the Panis and recovers the lost Light from their vicious clutches.

The main purpose of Indra's conquering the evil forces is not only the destruction of darkness but also the recovery of the concealed Light. The battle is not only an upward movement but also a downward one, in the sense that every conquest leads the vanquishers to a darker depth for the final recovery of the Truth that is lying hidden in the Inconscience. Having recovered the divine herds which represent the rays of the Sun of Truth, the conqueror ascends the hill of being. The Sun too then passes into the luminous upper ocean of divine existence, he is led over it by the thinkers, like a ship over the waters, till it reaches its furthest shores.

In short, the story tells that the omnipresent Light present behind the appearance of the gross inconscient Matter can be made manifest with the help of the Devas, the divine powers, comrades-in-arm for the recovery of Truth.

We thus see how a seemingly simple legend in reality shields a very profound spiritual Truth. To further this theory of the latent spiritual significance Sri Aurobindo translated several hymns from the Rig Veda, maintaining throughout a consistent interpretation. That is why when offering *ghrita* or *clarified butter* during sacrifices the Rishis chanted mantras and asked for cows and horses and sons. But they were actually asking the gods for light and life-energy, represented by the cows and horses. The sons mean new spiritual births within us and wealth represents spiritual knowledge. Similarly, *ghrita* implies *clarified butter* which is the yield of the cows of light and the symbol of the rich clarity that comes to the mind visited by light.

In several passages the horses of Indra are described as *ghrtanṣu* implying *dripping with light* and certainly not the alternative and literal interpretation—*ghee dripping from the running horses*! In keeping with the esoteric meaning of the scriptures the Veda, as I mentioned earlier, is the adventure of the soul's journey in the quest of Truth, often portrayed as the soaring of a bird to the upper oceans.

One of the recurring themes of the Vedas is as follows: Man lives in a physical world subject to death and much falsehood. To become immortal, he has to rise beyond his mortality and turn from falsehood to Truth. This can be achieved only with the help of the Gods, immortal powers and forces of the light. To invoke their help one has to perform an inner sacrifice, aspire and, with the help of Agni, Fire, the mediator between earth and heaven, conquer the forces of darkness to finally transcend himself and reach the Sun (*savitṛ*) or the Supreme Light. This is the home of the Gods (*sve dame*), the home of Truth, the Right, the Vast (*satyam, ṛtam, brhat*)

One must remember that the Vedic concept of the Gods is very different from the Puranic idea of the deities. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo defines them as

“The Gods, who in their highest secret entity are powers of this Supermind, born of it, seated in it as in their proper home, are in their knowledge ‘truth-conscious’ and in their action possessed of the ‘seer-will’ Their conscious-force turned towards works and creation is possessed and guided by a perfect and direct knowledge of the thing to be done and its essence and its law . . .” (SABCL, Vol 18, p. 124)

Some of the Gods who play a major role in assisting man in his inner adventure are

Agni—the seven-tongued power of Will, a pure priest and a divine worker, who carries man’s offering to the higher Powers and brings in return their Light and Force and Joy to humanity,

Indra—the power of Pure-Existence self-manifested as the Divine Mind, who rescues the lost illumination,

the four guardians of the Truth: Varuna—the God of pure vastness and limitlessness; Mitra—the Lord of harmony of all relations; Aryaman—the immortal puissance of clear discerning aspiration and endeavour, Bhaga—the power of right enjoyment of all things without any perversions;

the Maruts are the life and thought powers,

the Ashwins—the givers of the true delight of things.

With the help of these Gods, and many others, man arrived at the Sun or the Supreme Truth.

One must remember that for the Rishis the Gods were not imaginary creations, but living powerful entities

(To be concluded)

ANURADHA CHOUDRY

ORIGIN AND FATE OF THE UNIVERSE

(Continued from the issue of July 1999)

LET US NOW see how our universe must have looked just after its birth according to the hot Big Bang model. 10^{-36} seconds after the Big Bang the universe had a temperature of about 10^{32} K. In the hot Big Bang as the universe expanded the temperature of the radiation and matter in it dropped. If the universe doubled its size the temperature dropped by half. As the temperature is a measure of the energy of particles, the cooling of the universe had a major effect on the matter in it. When the temperature was about 10^{32} K the universe had no matter but was filled with electromagnetic radiation or light particles called photons. Such a universe was said to be radiation-dominated. At these very high energies the photons were so energetic that whenever they collided many different particle-antiparticle pairs were created.

Let us see what are antiparticles that make up antimatter. All the physical particles that we know, for example the electron, the proton, the neutron, the quarks, have a specific mass, a specific charge and some other specific quantum mechanical features. Now, their antiparticles too have the same mass but their charge and the other quantum mechanical numbers are exactly opposite. For example, the electron has a charge of -1 whereas its antiparticle which is called the positron has a charge of $+1$. Whenever a particle is created its antiparticle is also created because the net charge of the universe must be conserved. Conversely if a particle and its antiparticle collide they will disappear in a flash of radiation.

Now returning to the high energies of the early universe, particle and antiparticle pairs were created at a faster rate than they could annihilate each other. So the universe was slowly filled up with matter particles. But as the universe expanded and its temperature dropped, particle pairs began to be created much more slowly than they annihilated each other.

One second after the Big Bang the temperature of the universe had dropped to about 10^{12} K. This is about 10,000 times the temperature at the centre of the sun. At this temperature the universe contained mostly photons, electrons and neutrinos. About a hundred seconds after the Big Bang the temperature of the universe fell to about 10^9 K. At this temperature the universe underwent a phase transition. Up to this point the energy of the universe was contained in the form of radiation but now the universe became matter-dominated. This means that most of the energy of the universe was now contained in the form of matter. A little later protons and neutrons combined to form deuterium nuclei, these combined with more protons to form helium nuclei. The formation of helium continued for about three minutes. These three minutes have been the most crucial period in the evolution of the universe to determine its fate. After that, the temperature of the universe wasn't sufficient to sustain thermonuclear reactions any longer and production of heavier elements stopped. The incredible abundance of helium today is another proof of the hot Big Bang.

model's correctness. The amount of helium that we observe today could not have been cooked up in the stars alone.

Nothing more happened for a million years or so. By that point the temperature of the universe had dropped to a few thousand degrees. The nuclei and the electrons then no longer had sufficient energy to overcome the electromagnetic attraction between them and so they combined to form the first atoms. In another two hundred million years or so hydrogen gas filled the universe. The gas then began to collapse under the gravitational attraction and started to form the first stars and galaxies—the forefathers of the stars and galaxies we observe today.

Up to this point we have seen how our universe began and how it might end. But certain fundamental questions still remain unanswered. I shall answer now two important questions of theoretical astrophysics.

1. Why is there more matter in the universe now, when we have seen that in the early universe particle and antiparticle pairs were created in equal numbers?

2. How did the universe start out with such a critical rate of expansion that it is still expanding today? If the expansion rate had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million ($1/10^{17}$) the universe would have re-collapsed long back. From where did the universe get this impulse to expand?

All the processes in the universe are governed by four fundamental forces: the gravitational force, the electromagnetic force, the weak nuclear force and the strong nuclear force. I should like to emphasise here that this division into four classes is man-made to help in the construction of partial theories such as general relativity and quantum mechanics but might not correspond to anything deeper. In fact the prime goal of physics today is to find a theory that will unify the four forces as different aspects of one force.

The gravitational force forms the first category. It is a universal force and every particle with mass and energy feels it. It is the weakest of the four forces by several orders of magnitude. In fact it is so weak that we wouldn't have noticed it at all if it didn't have two very special properties: it is the only force that can act over long distances, and is always attractive. The last two forces are short range forces, the electromagnetic force is sometimes attractive and sometimes repulsive.

The next category is the electromagnetic force which makes charged particles interact with themselves but has no effect on neutral particles. It is much stronger than the gravitational force. In fact the gravitational force between two electrons is 10^{42} times weaker than the electromagnetic force between them. The electromagnetic force between two similarly charged particles is repulsive but between two oppositely charged particles is always attractive. Large bodies such as the earth and the sun have very little net charge, therefore the electromagnetic force has hardly any effect on them but in the domain of the molecules and the atoms this is the dominating force.

The third category is called the weak nuclear force. This force is responsible for radioactivity. The weak force was not well understood until Abdus Salam and Steven Weinberg in 1967 unified the weak with the electromagnetic forces, just as Maxwell

had unified electricity and magnetism a hundred years earlier. They predicted that when energies of more than 100 GeV (GeV means giga electron volts. Electron volt is the energy acquired by an electron when it passes through a tension rise of one volt) were concerned the weak and the electromagnetic forces, together called the electroweak force, had similar characteristics.

The fourth category is the strong nuclear force, which is the strongest of all the forces but acts only at a very close range. This force holds quarks together in the protons and neutrons and the protons and neutrons together in the nucleus. At normal energies the strong force is a trillion times stronger than the electroweak force but at higher and higher energies the strong force keeps getting weaker whereas the electroweak force keeps getting stronger. It is believed that there is a grand unification energy, which is about a thousand million million (10^{15}) GeV, at which the strong and the electroweak forces have the same strength and similar characteristics. This implies that they are fundamentally the manifestation of one single force. It is interesting to note that an accelerator which would be capable of accelerating particles to the grand unification energy would have to be as big as the solar system! The theory that will unite the three forces is called the GUT or the Grand Unified Theory. Although the complete theory is not known but some features that it will have are already known.

One of the first explanations that the GUT provides is why there is more matter than antimatter in the universe. At very high energies the GUT allows electrons and antielectrons to turn into antiquarks and quarks. In the early universe the temperature would be sufficiently high so that electrons and antielectrons could turn into antiquarks and quarks. But the question that immediately arises is, why should that lead to more quarks than antiquarks? The answer is because the laws of physics are not the same for the particle and the antiparticle. We shall see this shortly.

(To be concluded)

JAPA GHOSH