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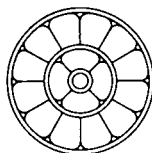
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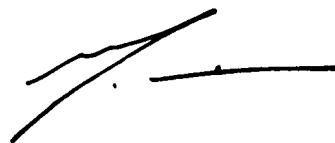
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIII

No. 10

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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INTO A FIRM AND SETTLED SPACE SHE CAME

INTO a firm and settled space she came
Where all was still and all things kept their place.
Each found what it had sought and knew its aim.
All had a final last stability
There one stood forth who bore authority
On an important brow and held a rod,
Command was incarnate in his gesture and tone,
Tradition's petrified wisdom carved his speech,
His sentences savoured the oracle.
"Traveller or pilgrim of the inner world,
Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air
Flaming with thought's supreme finality.
O aspirant to the perfect way of life,
Here find it, rest from search and live at peace.
Ours is the home of cosmic certainty
Here is the truth, God's harmony is here.
Register thy name in the book of the élite,
Admitted by the sanction of the few,
Adopt thy station of knowledge, thy post in mind,
Thy ticket of order draw in Life's bureau
And praise thy fate that made thee one of ours.
All here, docketed and tied, the mind can know,
All schemed by law that God permits to life.
This is the end and there is no beyond.
Here is the safety of the ultimate wall,
Here is the clarity of the sword of Light,
Here is the victory of a single Truth,
Here burns the diamond of flawless bliss.
A favourite of Heaven and Nature live."
But to the too satisfied and confident sage
Savitri replied casting into his world
Sight's deep release, the heart's questioning inner voice.
For here the heart spoke not, only clear daylight
Of intellect reigned here, limiting, cold, precise.
"Happy are they who in this chaos of things,
This coming and going of the feet of Time,
Can find the single Truth, the eternal Law
Untouched they live by hope and doubt and fear.
Happy are men anchored on fixed belief
In this uncertain and ambiguous world,

Or who have planted in the heart's rich soil
 One small grain of spiritual certitude.
 Happiest who stand on faith as on a rock
 But I must pass leaving the ended search,
 Truth's rounded outcome firm, immutable
 And this harmonic building of world-fact,
 This ordered knowledge of apparent things.
 Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul."

None answered in that bright contented world,
 Or only turned on their accustomed way
 Astonished to hear questioning in that air
 Or thoughts that could still turn to the Beyond
 But some murmured, passers-by from kindred spheres:
 Each by his credo judged the thought she spoke.
 "Who then is this who knows not that the soul
 Is a least gland or a secretion's fault
 Disquieting the sane government of the mind,
 Disordering the function of the brain,
 Or a yearning lodged in Nature's mortal house
 Or dream whispered in man's cave of hollow thought
 Who would prolong his brief unhappy term
 Or cling to living in a sea of death?"

But others, "Nay, it is her spirit she seeks.
 A splendid shadow of the name of God,
 A formless lustre from the ideal's realm,
 The Spirit is the Holy Ghost of Mind,
 But none has touched its limits or seen its face.
 Each soul is the great Father's crucified Son,
 Mind is that soul's one parent, its conscious cause,
 The ground on which trembles a brief passing light,
 Mind, sole creator of the apparent world.
 All that is here is part of our own self;
 Our minds have made the world in which we live."

Another with mystic and unsatisfied eyes
 Who loved his slain belief and mourned its death.
 "Is there one left who seeks for a Beyond?
 Can still the path be found, opened the gate?"

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp 498-500)

DIVERSITY IN ONENESS

It is essential to keep constantly in view the fundamental powers and realities of life if we are not to be betrayed by the arbitrary rule of the logical reason and its attachment to the rigorous and limiting idea into experiments which, however convenient in practice and however captivating to a unitarian and symmetrical thought, may well destroy the vigour and impoverish the roots of life. For that which is perfect and satisfying to the system of the logical reason may yet ignore the truth of life and the living needs of the race. Unity is an idea which is not at all arbitrary or unreal, for unity is the very basis of existence. The oneness that is secretly at the foundation of all things, the evolving spirit in Nature is moved to realise consciously at the top, the evolution moves through diversity, from a simple to a complex oneness. Unity the race moves towards and must one day realise.

But uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity, it insists that every group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique. The over-centralisation which is the condition of a working uniformity, is not the healthy method of life. Order is indeed the law of life, but not an artificial regulation. The sound order is that which comes from within, as the result of a nature that has discovered itself and found its own law and the law of its relations with others. Therefore the truest order is that which is founded on the greatest possible liberty, for liberty is at once the condition of vigorous variation and the condition of self-finding. Nature secures variation by division into groups and insists on liberty by the force of individuality in the members of the group. Therefore the unity of the human race to be entirely sound and in consonance with the deepest laws of life must be founded on free groupings, and the groupings again must be the natural association of free individuals. This is an ideal which it is certainly impossible to realise under present conditions or perhaps in any near future of the human race; but it is an ideal which ought to be kept in view, for the more we can approximate to it, the more we can be sure of being on the right road. The artificiality of much in human life is the cause of its most deep-seated maladies, it is not faithful to itself or sincere with Nature and therefore it stumbles and suffers...

Diversity of language serves two important ends of the human spirit, a use of unification and a use of variation. A language helps to bring those who speak it into a certain large unity of growing thought, formed temperament, ripening spirit. It is an intellectual, aesthetic and expressive bond which tempers division where division exists and strengthens unity where unity has been achieved. Especially it gives self-consciousness to national or racial unity and creates the bond of a common self-expression and a common record of achievement. On the other hand, it is a means of national differentiation and perhaps the most powerful of all, not a barren principle of division merely, but a fruitful and helpful differentiation. For each language is the sign and power of the soul of the people which naturally speaks it. Each develops

therefore its own peculiar spirit, thought-temperament, way of dealing with life and knowledge and experience. If it receives and welcomes the thought, the life-experience, the spiritual impact of other nations, still it transforms them into something new of its own and by that power of transmutation it enriches the life of humanity with its fruitful borrowings and does not merely repeat what had been gained elsewhere. Therefore it is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group-soul, to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language, cannot live its whole life or its real life. And this advantage to the national life is at the same time an advantage to the general life of the human race ..

Modern India is... [a] striking example. Nothing has stood more in the way of the rapid progress in India, nothing has more successfully prevented her self-finding and development under modern conditions than the long overshadowing of the Indian tongues as cultural instruments by the English language. It is significant that the one sub-nation in India which from the first refused to undergo this yoke, devoted itself to the development of its language, made that for long its principal preoccupation, gave to it its most original minds and most living energies, getting through everything else perfunctorily, neglecting commerce, doing politics as an intellectual and oratorical pastime,—that it is Bengal which first recovered its soul, re-spiritualised itself, forced the whole world to hear of its great spiritual personalities, gave it the first modern Indian poet and Indian scientist of world-wide fame and achievement, restored the moribund art of India to life and power, first made her count again in the culture of the world, first, as a reward in the outer life, arrived at a vital political consciousness and a living political movement not imitative and derivative in its spirit and its central ideal.¹ For so much does language count in the life of a nation; for so much does it count to the advantage of humanity at large that its group-souls should preserve and develop and use with a vigorous group-individuality their natural instrument of expression.

A common language makes for unity and therefore it might be said that the unity of the human race demands unity of language; the advantages of diversity must be foregone for this greater good, however serious the temporary sacrifice. But it makes for a real, fruitful, living unity, only when it is the natural expression of the race or has been made natural by a long adaptation and development from within. The history of universal tongues spoken by peoples to whom they were not natural, is not encouraging. Always they have tended to become dead tongues, sterilising so long as they kept their hold, fruitful only when they were decomposed and broken up into new derivative languages or departed leaving the old speech, where that still persisted, to revive with this new stamp and influence upon it. Latin, after its first century of general domination in the West, became a dead thing, impotent for

¹ Now, of course, everything has changed and these remarks are no longer applicable to the actual state of things in India

creation, and generated no new or living and evolving culture in the nations that spoke it, even so great a force as Christianity could not give it a new life. The times during which it was an instrument of European thought, were precisely those in which that thought was heaviest, most traditional and least fruitful. A rapid and vigorous new life only grew up when the languages which appeared out of the detritus of dying Latin or the old languages which had not been lost took its place as the complete instruments of national culture. For it is not enough that the natural language should be spoken by the people; it must be the expression of its higher life and thought. A language that survives only as a patois or a provincial tongue like Welsh after the English conquest or Breton or Provençal in France or as Czech survived once in Austria or Ruthenian and Lithuanian in imperial Russia, languishes, becomes sterile and does not serve all the true purpose of survival.

Language is the sign of the cultural life of a people, the index of its soul in thought and mind that stands behind and enriches its soul in action. Therefore it is here that the phenomena and utilities of diversity may be most readily seized, more than in mere outward things; but these truths are important because they apply equally to the thing which it expresses and symbolises and serves as an instrument. Diversity of language is worth keeping because diversity of cultures and differentiation of soul-groups are worth keeping and because without that diversity life cannot have full play, for in its absence there is a danger, almost an inevitability of decline and stagnation. The disappearance of national variation into a single uniform human unity, of which the systematic thinker dreams as an ideal and which we have seen to be a substantial possibility and even a likelihood, if a certain tendency becomes dominant, might lead to political peace, economic well-being, perfect administration, the solution of a hundred material problems, as did on a lesser scale the Roman unity in old times; but to what eventual good if it leads also to an uncreative sterilisation of the mind and the stagnation of the soul of the race? In laying this stress on culture, on the things of the mind and the spirit there need be no intention of undervaluing the outward material side of life; it is not at all my purpose to belittle that to which Nature always attaches so insistent an importance. On the contrary, the inner and the outer depend upon each other. For we see that in the life of a nation a great period of national culture and vigorous mental and soul life is always part of a general stirring and movement which has its counterpart in the outward political, economic and practical life of the nation. The cultural brings about or increases the material progress but also it needs it that it may itself flourish with an entirely full and healthy vigour. The peace, well-being and settled order of the human world is a thing eminently to be desired as a basis for a great world-culture in which all humanity must be united; but neither of these unities, the outward or inward, ought to be devoid of an element even more important than peace, order and well-being, freedom and vigour of life, which can only be assured by variation and by the freedom of the group and of the individual. Not then a uniform unity, not a logically simple, a scientifically rigid, a beautifully neat and mechanical sameness but a living oneness

full of healthy freedom and variation is the ideal which we should keep in view and strive to get realised in man's future.

But how is this difficult end to be secured? For if an excessive uniformity and centralisation tends to the disappearance of necessary variations and indispensable liberties, a vigorous diversity and strong group-individualism may lead to an incurable persistence or constant return of the old separatism which will prevent human unity from reaching completeness or even will not allow it to take firm root. For it will not be enough for the constituent groups or divisions to have a certain formal administrative and legislative separateness like the States of the American union if, as there, there is liberty only in mechanical variations and all vivid departures from the general norm proceeding from a profounder inner variation are discouraged or forbidden. Nor will it be sufficient to found a unity plus local independence of the German type; for there the real overriding force was a unifying and disciplined Prussianism and independence survived only in form. Nor will even the English colonial system give us any useful suggestion; for there is there local independence and a separate vigour of life, but the brain, heart and central spirit are in the metropolitan country and the rest are at the best only outlying posts of the Anglo-Saxon idea.¹ The Swiss cantonal life offers no fruitful similitude; for, apart from the exiguity of its proportions and frame, there is the phenomenon of a single Swiss life and practical spirit with a mental dependence on three foreign cultures sharply dividing the race; a common Swiss culture does not exist. The problem is rather, on a larger and more difficult scale and with greater complexities, that which offered itself for a moment to the British Empire, how if it is at all possible to unite Great Britain, Ireland, the Colonies, Egypt, India in a real oneness, throw their gains into a common stock, use their energies for a common end, help them to find the account of their national individuality in a supranational life, yet preserve that individuality,—Ireland keeping the Irish soul and life and cultural principle, India the Indian soul and life and cultural principle, the other units, developing theirs, not united by a common Anglicisation, which was the past empire-building ideal, but held together by a greater as yet unrealised principle of free union. Nothing was suggested at any time in the way of a solution except some sort of bunch or rather bouquet system, unifying its clusters not by the living stalk of a common origin or united past, for that does not exist, but by an artificial thread of administrative unity which might at any moment be snapped irretrievably by centrifugal forces.

But after all, it may be said, unity is the first need and should be achieved at any cost, just as national unity was achieved by crushing out the separate existence of the local units; afterwards a new principle of group-variation may be found other than the nation-unit. But the parallel here becomes illusory, because an important factor is lacking. For the history of the birth of the nation is a coalescence of small groups into a larger unit among many similar large units. The old richness of small units which

¹ This may be less so than before, but the improvement does not go very far

gave such splendid cultural, but such unsatisfactory political results in Greece, Italy and India was lost, but the principle of life made vivid by variative diversity was preserved with nations for the diverse units and the cultural life of a continent for the common background. Here nothing of the kind is possible. There will be a sole unity, the world-nation, all outer source of diversity will disappear. Therefore the inner source has to be modified indeed, subordinated in some way, but preserved and encouraged to survive. It may be that this will not happen, the unitarian idea may forcefully prevail and turn the existing nations into mere geographical provinces or administrative departments of a single well-mechanised State. But in that case the outraged need of life will have its revenge, either by a stagnation, a collapse and a detrition fruitful of new separations or by some principle of revolt from within. A gospel of Anarchism might enforce itself, for example, and break down the world-order for a new creation. The question is whether there is not somewhere a principle of unity in diversity by which this method of action and reaction, creation and destruction, realisation and relapse cannot be, if not altogether avoided, yet mitigated in its action and led to a more serene and harmonious working.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Social and Political Thought*, SABCL, Vol 15, pp 490-99)

SANCTUARY

GREEN gathering of summer-mantled trees
 Against a hush of turquoise-torpid sky,
 And underfoot pale cow-wheat,—yellow rattle,—
 A tall-stemmed toadflax, more yellow than the twain,
 Trim whorled with leaves of smoothly glaucous hue.
 A footway skirts the flanges of each bole
 And roughens with the jut and twist of root
 And darkly wanders through embodied shade
 As it might lead to unimagined core,
 Stripped self, essential Form of woodlandness.

October 27, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment. These lines are very fine—the poetic force and vividness of the description, at once precise and suggestive, are very remarkable—there is throughout the choice of the exact word needed. The last three lines are admirable in their depth and power.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

अगच्छदु विप्रतमः सखीयन्नसूदयत् सुकृते गर्भमद्रिः ।
ससान मर्यो युवभिर्मखस्यत्रथाभवदङ्गिराः सद्यो अर्चन् ॥

(Rigveda, 3.31.7)

Most illumined in knowledge (*vipratamaḥ*, answering to the *vepiṣṭho angirasām vipraḥ* of VI.11.3), becoming a friend (*sakhīyan*, the Angirasas are friends or comrades in the great battle) he went (*agacchat*, upon the path, cf *gātubhuḥ*, discovered by Sarama); the hill sped forth its pregnant contents (*garbham*) for the doer of the good work; strong in manhood with the young (*maryo yuvabhiḥ*, the youth also giving the idea of unaging, undecaying force) he sought fullness of riches and own possession (*śasāna makhasyan*), so at once, chanting the hymn (*arcan*), he became an Angrasa. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 162)

He went, the greatest seer of them all, doing them friendship; the pregnant hill sent forth its contents for the doer of perfect works; in the strength of manhood he with the young (Angirasas) seeking plenitude of riches attained possession, then singing the hymn of light he became at once the Angrasa. Becoming in our front the form and measure of each existing thing, he knows all the births, he slays Shushna. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 208)

आ युवानः कवयो यज्ञियासो मरुतो गन्त गृणतो वरस्याम् ।
अचित्रं चिद्धि जिन्वथा वृधन्त इत्था नक्षन्तो नरो अङ्गिरस्वत् ॥

(Rigveda, 6.49.11)

O young and seers and powers of the sacrifice, Maruts, come uttering the word to the high place (or desirable plane of earth or the hill, *adhi sānu praśneh*, VI.6.4, which is probably the sense of *varasyām*), powers increasing, rightly moving (on the path, *gātu*) like the Angrasa, give joy even to that which is not illumined (*acitram*, that which has not received the varied light of the dawn, the night of our ordinary darkness). (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 163)

व्यञ्जते दिवो अन्तेष्वक्तून् विशो न युक्ता उषसो यतन्ते ।
सं ते गावस्तम आ वर्तयन्ति ज्योतिर्यच्छन्ति सवितेव बाहू ॥
अभुदुषा इन्द्रतमा मघोन्यजीजन्त् सुविताय श्रवांसि ।
वि दिवो देवी दुहिता दधात्यङ्गिरस्तमा सुकृते वसूनि ॥

(Rigveda, 7.79.2-3)

The Dawns make their rays to shine out in the extremities of heaven, they labour like men who are set to a work. Thy rays set fleeing the darkness, they extend the Light as if the sun were extending its two arms. Usha has become (or, come into being) most full of Indra power (*indratamā*), opulent in riches and has given birth to the inspirations of knowledge for our happy going (or for good and bliss), the goddess, daughter of Heaven, most full of Angirasahood (*angirastamā*), orders her riches for the doer of good works (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, pp. 163-64)

व्युषा आवो दिविजा ऋतेनाविष्कृण्वाना महिमानमागात् ।
 अप द्रुहस्तम आवरजुष्टमङ्गिरस्तमा पथ्या अजीगः ॥
 महे नो अद्य सुविताय बोध्युषो महे सौभगाय प्र यन्धि ।
 चित्र रयिं यशसं धेह्वास्मे देवि मर्तेषु मानुषि श्रवस्युम् ॥
 एते त्वे भानवो दर्शतायाश्चित्रा उषसो अमृतास आगुः ।
 जनयन्तो दैव्यानि व्रतान्यापृणन्तो अन्तरिक्षा व्यस्थुः ॥

(Rigveda, 7.75.1-3)

Dawn, heaven-born, has opened up (the veil of darkness) by the Truth and she comes making manifest the vastness (*mahimānam*), she has drawn away the veil of harms and of darkness (*druhas tamah*) and all that is unloved; most full of Angirasahood she manifests the paths (of the great journey) Today, O Dawn, awake for us for the journey to the vast bliss (*mahe suvitāya*), extend (thy riches) for a vast state of enjoyment, confirm in us a wealth of varied brightness (*citram*) full of inspired knowledge (*śravasyum*), in us mortals, O human and divine. These are the lustres of the visible Dawn which have come varied-bright (*citrah*) and immortal; bringing to birth the divine workings they defuse themselves, filling those of the mid-region, *janayanto daivyāni vratāni āpṛṇanto antarikṣā vyasthuḥ*. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 164)

अनूदन्न हस्तयतो अद्विरार्चन् येन दश मासो नवग्वाः ।
 ऋतं यती सरमा गा अविन्दद् विश्वानि सत्याङ्गिराश्चकार ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45 7)

Here cried (or, moved) the stone impelled by the hand, whereby the Navagwas chanted for ten months the hymn; Sarama travelling to the Truth found the cows; all things the Angiras made true (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 168)

धियं वो अप्सु दधिषे स्वर्षा ययातरन् दश मासो नवग्वाः ।
 अया धिया स्याम देवगोपा अया धिया तुतुर्यामात्यंहः ॥

(Rigveda, 5.45.11)

I hold for you in the waters (i.e. the seven Rivers) the thought that wins possession of heaven (this is once more the seven-headed thought born from the Truth and found by Ayasya), by which the Navagwas passed through the ten months; by this thought may

we have the gods for protectors, by this thought may we pass through beyond the evil (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 168)

सना ता का चिद् भुवना भवीत्वा माद्भिः शरद्भिर्दुरो वरन्त वः ।
अयतन्ता चरतो अन्यदन्यदिद या चकार वयुना ब्रह्मणस्पतिः ॥

(Rigveda, 2.24 5)

Certain eternal worlds (states of existence) are these which have to come into being, their doors are shut to you (or, opened) by the months and the years, without effort one (world) moves in the other, and it is these that Brahmanaspati has made manifest to knowledge. (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 172)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

WE MUST HAVE MET

WE must have met in previous births
And tasted together this earth's
Joy and grief, we must have prayed
In the same temple, to different aims wed
Sung the same orison to God
Leaving our single bright abode
As strangers we came upon this land
We knew not but our hearts did understand.
The veil, suddenly drawn apart
Revealed a single Mother-heart
Whose beatings we have been sure are
The bright limbs of the Avatar.

NIRODBARAN

IT IS THE SEPARATION OF SAT, CHIT, ANANDA

Sweet Mother, it is the separation of Sat, Chit and Ananda which has brought about ignorance, suffering. Then...

WHY did they separate? (*Laughter*)

Probably they had no moral notions! (*Laughter*)

(*Long silence*)

It is probable that if they had not separated, there would have been no universe as we have it. It was perhaps a necessity. But what you are asking is how it was not foreseen that it would happen in this way. Perhaps it was foreseen. It could have turned out well, it turned out badly. There! There are accidents.

You know, so long as you want to apply your mental, moral notions to the creation of the universe, you will never understand anything about it, never. Because from all sides and in all ways it goes beyond these conceptions—conceptions of good and evil, and these things. All the mental, moral conceptions we have cannot explain the universe. And for this part of ourselves which indeed lives in a total ignorance, all that can be said is: “Things are like that because they are like that”, one can’t explain them, because the explanations one gives are those of ignorance and explain nothing at all.

The mind explains one thing by another, this other which needs to be explained is explained by another still, and that other which needs explanation is explained by another, and if you continue in this way you can go all round the universe and return to the starting-point without having explained anything at all. (*Laughter*) So you have to pierce a hole, rise in the air and see things in another way. Then like that one can begin to understand.

How to do it?

How to do it? (*Laughter*)

Aspiration is like an arrow, like this (*gesture*). So you aspire, want *very* earnestly to understand, know, enter into the truth. Yes? And then with that aspiration you do this (*gesture*). Your aspiration rises, rises, rises, rises straight up, very strong and then it strikes against a kind of...how to put it?...lid which is there, hard like iron and extremely thick, and it does not pass through. And then you say, “See, what’s the use of aspiring? It brings nothing at all. I meet with something hard and cannot pass!” But you know about the drop of water which falls on the rock, it ends up by making a chasm. It cuts the rock from top to bottom. Your aspiration is a drop of water which, instead of falling, rises. So, by dint of rising, it beats, beats, beats, and one day it makes a hole, by dint of rising, and when it makes the hole suddenly it springs out

from this lid and enters an immensity of light, and you say, "Ah, now I understand."

It's like that.

So one must be very persistent, very stubborn and have an aspiration which rises straight upwards, that is, which does not go roaming around here and there, seeking all kinds of things

Only this. to understand, understand, understand, to learn to know, to be.

When one reaches the very top, there is nothing more to understand, nothing more to learn, one *is*, and it's when one *is* that one understands and knows

Mother, when one understands, what is it in us that understands?

It's the like that knows the like. So it is only because you carry the thing in yourself that you discover it. Because you understand very well that my story is an image, don't you, that all this is an image, it corresponds quite well with something, but it's an image all the same, because one can find it as well within as above, you see. It's only because we have physical notions about the different material planes, material dimensions; because when we understand, it is in another order of dimensions, absolutely. Now this other dimensional order does not correspond to space.

But you cannot understand and be something unless it is in you in some way or other or you are in it—it's the same thing, isn't it? However, to make you understand more easily, I can say it's because it is in you, because it's a part of your consciousness, somewhere, otherwise you could never become aware of it. If one did not carry the Divine within oneself, in the essence of one's being, one could never become aware of the Divine; it would be an impossible venture. And then if you reverse the problem, the moment you conceive and feel in some way or other, or even, to begin with, admit that the Divine is in you, as well as you are in the Divine, then already this opens the door to realisation, just a little, not much—slightly ajar. Then if later the aspiration comes, the intense need to know and to be, then that intense need widens the opening until one can creep in. Then when one has crept in, one becomes aware of what he is. And that's exactly what Sri Aurobindo says, that one has forgotten, that due to this separation of Sat, Chit, Ananda, forgetfulness comes, forgetfulness of what one is, one thinks oneself to be somebody, you see, anyone at all, a boy, a girl, a man, a woman, a dog, a horse, anything at all, a stone, the sea, the sun; one believes oneself to be all this, instead of thinking oneself the One Divine—because, in fact, if one had continued thinking oneself the One Divine, there would have been no universe at all.

That was what I wanted to tell him (*indicating a child*), that this phenomenon of separation seems to be indispensable for a universe to be there, otherwise it would always have remained as it was. But if we re-establish the unity, after having made it pass through this curve, you see, if we re-establish the unity, having benefited from the multiplicity, the division, then we have a unity of a higher quality, a unity which knows itself instead of the unity which doesn't have to know itself, for there's

nothing which may know the other. When the Oneness is absolute, who can know the Oneness? We must at least be able to have an image, an appearance of something which is not it in order to understand what it is. I believe that this is the secret of the universe. Perhaps the Divine wanted really to know Himself, so He threw Himself out and then looked at Himself, and now He wants to enjoy this possibility of being Himself with the full knowledge of Himself. This becomes much more interesting.

So there we are. Another question?

Sweet Mother, last time you spoke about the imagination, didn't you?

Yes.

Then, is it through the imagination that one can realise desires or aspirations?

That means? What exactly do you want to say? Imagining that the desire is realised and in this way help its realisation?

Yes.

Certainly, quite certainly.

And ideals also?

Only usually, yes, almost totally what people don't have at their disposal is the time it takes. But for instance, if you have a very powerful imagination and build up the realisation of your desire, build it up well with all its details and everything, like an admirably made formation existing in itself, totally, you see... well, you may be sure that if you live long enough the thing will be realised. It can be realised the next day, it can be realised the next minute, it can take years, it can take centuries. But it is sure to be realised. And then, if to this imaginative power you add a kind of creative vital strength, you make a very living force of it; and as all living forces tend towards realisation, it will put a pressure upon terrestrial events in order to be able to realise itself sooner, and it is realised.

Only, as I said, there are two things. First, as regards desires, personal circumstances, one is not very... persistent or very steady, and after sometime what interested you very strongly doesn't interest you any longer. You think of something else, have another desire, and make another formation. But now the first thing one imagined is very well formed; after following its curve in space it is realised. But by then the person has started another construction because for some reason or other the thing doesn't interest him any more, and he is face to face with the realisation of his first desire, while having already embarked upon the second, the third or the fourth. So he is absolutely annoyed: "But why, I don't want this any longer, why does it come?"

without his being conscious that quite simply it is the result of a previous deed. If, however, instead of being desires they are aspirations for spiritual things and one continues his line with a regular progress, then one is absolutely sure to obtain one day what he has imagined. The day may be slightly far-off if there are many obstacles on the path, for example if the formation that you have made is still very alien to the state of the earth atmosphere; well, it takes some time to prepare the conditions for its advent. But if it is something which has already been realised several times on earth and does not imply too categorical a transformation, you may have it quite quickly, provided that you follow the same line persistently. And if you add to this the ardour of a faith and trust in the divine Grace and that kind of self-giving to the Grace which makes you expect everything from It, then it can become tremendous; you can see things being realised more and more, and the most surprising ones can be realised one after another. But for this there are conditions to be fulfilled.

One must have a great purity and a great intensity in one's self-giving, and that absolute trust in the supreme wisdom of the divine Grace, that It knows better than we do what is good for us, and all that. Then if one offers one's aspiration to It, truly gives it with enough intensity, the results are marvellous. But one must know how to see them, for when things are realised most people find it absolutely natural, they don't even see why and how it has happened, and they tell themselves, "Yes, naturally it had to be like that" So they lose the joy of... the joy of gratitude, because, in the last analysis, if one can be filled with gratitude and thanksgiving for the divine Grace, it puts the finishing touch, and at each step one comes to see that things are exactly what they had to be and the best that could be.

There.

And so Sat-Chit-Ananda begins to come together, to form its unity once more.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol. 7, pp. 238-43)

A LETTER

THE dream which you have recounted from your diary of 14.4.87 has hailed from a deep plane of your being, symbolised by your “room” to which Sri Aurobindo could come in a most natural way and where he could take a seat in front of you as if he could be with you in a leisurely unstrained manner without any thought of time. What is more, he was not just a grand presence: he was communicating with you—an open active relationship of enlightenment was going on. The two undesirable persons whom he did not like to be there and whom you kept at a distance must be something of the mechanical mind and a shadow of the subconscious—influences of the ignorant outer self which often persists in our dreams and of the obscure recesses of our lower nature which frequently open their gates during our sleep. It is meaningful that Sri Aurobindo was talking to you in English. Expression in English is characteristic of Sri Aurobindo, one of the signs to show that the one who appeared in your room was indeed the master-creator of *Savitri* and *The Life Divine* and *The Future Poetry*. You don’t remember what he was saying. That’s a pity, because it is his creative speech evidently that makes you feel in your spinal cord “a delightful vibration, a very fine sensation,—a circular touch”. Of course, as he explained to you, “a force, a will” of his caused that experience, but his mantric speech was the medium of his spiritual action, as is strongly suggested by your further exclamation. “He was talking and I felt that delightful sensation throughout my forehead—*ājñācakra*.”

The words—“a force, a will”—are very apt in the context of your experience. For, the Kundalini which moves up in the spine is an aspect of occult force. As you know, it is called the Serpent-Power. In answer to Sri Aurobindo’s powerful call to your being, the secret regenerative energy in you awoke. Similarly, responding to his stroke of “will”, the centre in the middle of the forehead which he has described as the seat of will in us opened up in you. It is also interestingly appropriate that the vibration in the spinal cord should have been felt as “a circular touch”. The Serpent-Power which is itself lying “coiled” in the *mulādhāra*—that is in a circle-state—has the function of rousing to activity the various chakras, “circles” of stored super-normal capacities by circling upward through them.

Everything fits together. There is a logic in the magic of your dream and the fact that even after you woke up the delight of the forehead-sensation continued and you could still have the sense of Sri Aurobindo being with you—this fact is the promise of the subtle tending to be the physical and ultimately the two achieving a permanent fusion.

You have not said anything about your health. A word on it will be good to hear. The words with which I should like to close are two lines from *Savitri* that seem to chime with Sri Aurobindo’s speaking to you of “a force, a will”:

A Will expressive of soul’s deity,
A Strength that does not stumble by its speed...

APROPOS OF AN ARTICLE BY AMAL KIRAN

My dear Amal,

I just completed your *The Descent of the Supermind** I read it very slowly, very very carefully, with all the keen concentration I am capable of. I also read through *The Supramental Manifestation*. I did not read the portions in *The Life Divine* relating to the three statuses of the Supermind and the Spiritual Mind gradations—I wanted to read them and perhaps it would have been useful; but it was not possible and not quite necessary since I have, I believe, a sufficiently thorough grasp of all that Sri Aurobindo has said about these things. (No boasting of course; I may not have as thorough a grasp as I believe, for every reading reveals something missed or vaguely understood; I should therefore say more appropriately that I have a sufficient acquaintance with Sri Aurobindo's views on these questions, having very carefully read *The Life Divine* several times. In any case, I say this, not to show my knowledge, but to assure you that while reading your article I did not lack the necessary background; so I was in a better position to fully appraise your line of thought than I would have been without it. I should also say that those who are not acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's writings on this issue would miss most of the points you make—especially as all the arguments in your whole thesis are very closely linked. Apart from all this, it needs a special calibre of mind to view with a clear sight always the high, vast and potent circlings of your thought. The normally “cabined and confined” mind would simply not be able to stand your stuff! For most outside readers your article would be impossible, for the Ashram sadhaks, most of them, extremely difficult. I wonder how many you found when you were here who had really made a successful attempt to get at what you have said!)

Anyway, this article is the greatest piece of your lifetime. I have no adequate words to express the boundless appreciation I felt on reading it. For me it has opened up several vistas of this subject of central importance not for you and me but for the whole human race, perhaps for the entire material creation of which the Homo Sapiens is only the staggering top. The importance is not only central, but crucial and imminent. (Heaven and Earth seem to be shaking with some uncontainable potency sheerly pressing to break forth.)

Each point you make is extremely valuable and seems very convincing to me. You have, as if, worked out the full implications of what Sri Aurobindo said in essence in his last articles. One feels, while reading these articles that he was trying to work out a mental expression of the new development in his inner work but somehow could not go beyond a fragmentary and tentative presentation of it. One feels a strong impression of incompleteness while reading these articles. Your exposition of the subject should really be considered as complementary to his articles. I repeat that it is

* This refers to Amal Kiran's article *The Supermind's Descent and the Mind of Light* now published in his book *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*

most valuable for understanding the full implications of Sri Aurobindo's articles which for some reason or other he could not himself work out. It is so original, so stimulating, so superb in its expression, so competent in its grappling of very tough issues. One feels a great impress of the Mind of Light in your writing.

For me it leaves still so many questions unexplained. I wish you were to make a further attempt to give your interpretations of these questions. I for one would read with utmost attention whatever further you might write on the subject. What, for example, is the role of the psychic in this new development? Actually, all that is said of the "Mind of Light" is true of the psychic, except that it is not any grade or strand of any kind or degree of Mind. All this while Sri Aurobindo has been saying that supramentalisation can come only after psychicisation and spiritualisation. Would the Mind of Light dispense with the need of psychicisation? Would it, again, effect any change in the process of "The triple transformation" considered an inevitable necessity so far? What is the position of "Mind of Light" vis-à-vis the Inconscient? Keeping all other positions of Sri Aurobindo intact (I put it rather queerly), the Mind of Light could not come unless the Inconscient was demolished. For unless it is finished there is no possibility of progressing from light to light, of wholly living in however modified a light. It is because Overmind cannot bring an adequate power to tackle this Inconscient that Supermind was necessary. Would Mind of Light suffice to do what Overmind could not do?

These and many other questions are forming in my mind as I write this letter, but they need careful formulation—and in the process of formulation they may perhaps get answered as it often happens with me. Anyway I must stop and go for "Sociology"!

With renewed appreciation for your "Great Marvel".

Affectionately yours
KISHOR GANDHI

THE MUSICIAN OF THE SPIRIT

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

3

THE creative spirit of three different ages is seen in the same Anushtubha because each poet has breathed into it his own soul. A metre becomes living in the hands of an artist when it is from the deeps of his heart that he allows the inspiration to spring forth.

Therefore, while talking about Sri Aurobindo's poetry, to say that "blank verse can be written by the yard" is not only in bad taste but also without foundation. But then why by the yard only? It can be even by the lightyear and as poetry can still be very beautiful and soul-satisfying as long as that light is there.

When the light is gone poetry becomes lifeless, insentient, inorganic. It can happen even in the same poem: it has happened in the case of Milton. "The opening books of *Paradise Lost* are upborne by the greatness of the soul that finds expression in its harmonies of speech and sound and the greatness of its sight. But in the later books... the supreme vitalising fire has sunk; the method and idea retain sublimity, the deeper spirit has departed."¹⁷ One has to be aware of these aspects

The question is whether Sri Aurobindo has brought that "greatness of the soul" to *Savitri's* blank verse. If so, it would immediately take care of Blake's "minute particulars", "minute discrimination on which is founded all sublimity of creation", at the same time embracing Kathleen Raine's "language of image and symbol" and disposing of Yeats's "Asiatic vague immensities" It would also take care of Hegel's "concrete universals" that are otherwise too abstract or philosophic. Spiritual experience, that is as vast as the universe and as detailed as creatively counting each star with its brightness in countless galaxies, always takes care of all such aesthetic stipulations which otherwise seem to be just mind-set.

K. D. Sethna's letter argues extensively and persuasively about the symbol and image as a poet's mark of expressive creativity, bringing also with it the fusion of poet with artist,—e.g. "Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven", wherein we have "concentrated audacious richness."¹⁸ There is nothing vague in the line which is occultly packed with vivid images rushing unto us in their supernatural speed.

However, in the aesthesis of poetry the symbol-and-image in the ultimate reckoning is just one aspect howsoever significant it be in the totality of a composition. No doubt in the over-all subjective and artistic experience it is the poet's personality that matters the most; it stamps his uniqueness, even his presence in the enjoyment of poetic delight that flows from it. But there is an aspect of impersonality too, impersonality not of aloofness but of universality, even of the transcendent. *Savitri* has all the three

Let us take at random some examples. When image and symbol crowd in a great succession of subjective feelings—and feelings are always poignantly subjective—we at once open ourselves to a vision that we never had earlier. Thus we see a new wonder in the beauty of romanticism, as in the following:

Mastered by the honey of a strange flower-mouth,
 Drawn to soul-spaces opening round a brow,
 He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon
 And suffered a dream of beauty and of change,
 Discovered the aureole round a mortal's head,
 Adored a new divinity in things.¹⁹

Such an abundance of honey-thick sweetness can flow only when spiritual felicity drunk in the delight of existence finds its true native expression which is the essence or *rasa* of poetic creation. In it one is sure that the poet has seen “a new divinity in things.” Or

In the symbol figures of the cosmic Force
 And in her living and inanimate signs
 And in her complex tracery of events
 He explores the ceaseless miracle of himself,
 Till the thousandfold enigma has been solved
 In the single light of an all-witnessing Soul.²⁰

There is a universality emerging from the very symbol and image. If the light that illumines everything is found then all that is living or inanimate opens out its secrecies and wonder after wonder begins to flood our awareness. What has been enigmatic all along ceases to be so and there is only the working of one miraculous cosmic Force.

Then, while the *neti-neti*—not this, not that—part of the Transcendent peeps out from Aswapati's experience of the silent self in the lines

Out of this world of signs suddenly he came
 Into a silent self where world was not
 And looked beyond into a nameless vast...²¹

we have also the *iti-iti*—yes this, yes that—proclaiming that

In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power²²

which on awaking

...can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force...²³

because

Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.²⁴

Even a simple line like

Savitri, Savitri, O Savitri²⁵

pierces with the power of that name all the three worlds of Ignorance existing in us and in its cry takes us to the Safe and the Beatific. This may sound rather hyperbolic, an excitedly exaggerated observation; but the line is remarkably direct in its statement and content and is charged with the occult power of the mantric name itself; it also combines in its art the charge of the supernatural. We do not have to know the meaning of its Sanskrit but only listen to the sound that can fill the inner skies with its outspreading sovereignty of force. In fact, lying in the lap of Savitri and uttering her name means that death cannot touch us; if it should, it is death who would then get destroyed,—and that is exactly what happened in the case of Satyavan.

Then, in life's commerce listen to the voice of silence the sailor receives:

But now he hears the sound of larger seas²⁶

in its surging on iambic waves to the ocean's shoreless expanses; the wonder is, in that surge we too reach those widening emerald-blue shores. Soon the secret knowledge is to dawn upon the seeker and his life change to things of bankless infinity

Now and then the poet comes out with the inspired artistry that is elaborate in design and at the same time sure in its effect. So is the Immortals' vision drawn closer to us:

Only the Immortals on their deathless heights
 Dwelling beyond the walls of Time and Space,
 Masters of living, free from the bonds of Thought,
 Who are overseers of Fate and Chance and Will
 And experts of the theorem of world-need,
 Can see the Idea, the Might that change Time's course,
 Come maned with light from undiscovered worlds,
 Hear, while the world toils on with its deep blind heart,
 The galloping hooves of the unforeseen event,
 Bearing the superhuman rider, near
 And, impassive to earth's din and startled cry,
 Return to the silence of the hills of God,

As lightning leaps, as thunder sweeps, they pass
And leave their mark on the trampled breast of Life.²⁷

Suggestion upon suggestion with the finest sweep of poetry is piled with great skill and artistry in a statement that can be simply paraphrased thus: the Immortals come maned with light and hear the nearing of the unforeseen event and return. Is the poet then simply luxuriating in sheer description? Not at all. The whole passage is exact, is to the point, and is most perfect in its mystico-spiritual details. Only one who is a master of language and a seer of visions can accomplish such a task. The subtlety and many-sidedness of thought running through this 14-line sentence is absolutely marvellous, in the sense that the more we ponder on it the more of the truth it brings out. That is the power of spiritual poetry. It is also a fine example of intuitive thought reaching an absolute of the Truth.

There is no doubt that Sri Aurobindo has given a new life to the pentametric blank verse; nay, he has newly created it as a vehicle for spiritual utterance. A new spirit whose Vedic home is in the expressive Word has invaded it and captured it to delight the goddess of truth and beauty. The wide-brimmed vessel baked in the fire of his tapasya can now hold that glowing immortality itself, a strange vessel that can multiply in countless numbers holding riches of life.

4

Does Sri Aurobindo's poetry amount to "vague abstract words abounding in superlatives"? And is "his vocabulary an abstract matter"? This may appear to be so when the reader lacks the spiritual experience which he tries to perceive with a mental make-up, with an understanding that is not quick and wide-ranging and supple. Abstractness in reflective or metaphysical poetry is not uncommon. But, though romantic and very lyrical in its mood, even Keats's famous Truth-Beauty business can be quite abstract as though in it poetry was driven to make a certain philosophical statement; though profound and very acceptable in every sense, yet it looks as if it was motivated. Romantic poetry in it has sort of become functional, in its lyricism utilitarian. But these are also precisely the elements that enrich creatively what is otherwise dull and routine, even as they give life to living in a measure that is truthfully beautiful as much as beautifully truthful. Take Shakespeare who speaks of "daggers in men's smile"; the metaphors are sharp and poetically as well as functionally most appropriate; but then he can also use abstract nouns and create out of them another grade of poetry:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

Perfect in sonnet movement and thought, the abstractness of “mortality”, “power”, “action” is—if we may overstress the point—fully metabolised in the imagery of “boundless sea”, “beauty’s plea”, “strength of a flower”; to it an expressive concreteness has come in this double play of expression. Images are turned to serve living intellect, or what one may call poetic logic, in as much as the perceptive intellect strengthens the images. There is no self or soul in Shakespeare but only the abundance of life in its varied mood. Indeed it is that which gives him the “easily-come word”. But there can also be the “inevitable” word yet retaining or exploiting all these qualities in the full measure of expression. So is *Savitri*; all these elements abound in it like the boundless sea that it is. But of what looks to be abstract let us take an example:

A quantum dance remained, a sprawl of chance
 In Energy’s stupendous tripping whirl:
 A ceaseless motion in the unbounded Void
 Invented forms without a thought or aim:
 Necessity and Cause were shapeless ghosts...²⁸

We have here science and philosophy in their latest moods. The description is no doubt exact in its spiritual details in the manner of a rationalist’s thesis; but everywhere it is the Yogi’s eye that sees the minutest particulars and a poet’s voice that gives to them a flowing music and an upbuoying lilt, that are at the same time full of sense and substance.

There are levels of inspiration in *Savitri*, and that is indisputable, but nowhere does the poet go below a certain mark set by him for the poem. The landscapes have many vistas and many variations, green grasses and tall trees and smiling valleys and tranquil mountains climbing in a prayer of offering to the skies; there are primroses and cottages as well as sandy deserts and caravans with their slow tinkling paces. There may even appear ‘arid’ tracts here and there; but they have their own beauty of bareness. *Savitri*’s aesthetic enjoyment or *rasa* has many flavours and hues and cadences and it is the enjoyer who has to develop the taste for its richnesses, for its varied sweetnesses of the joy that flows from the spirit of creativity.

Not only thoughts and images but many sounds go to make the body of the poem. We are reminded of Mallarmé’s *le Musicien de Silence* who is also *le Musicien de Son*. After having counted all the sounds in the World-Soul what we wonder at is that, paradoxically, they all become countless! What the poet has done, it appears, is simply to give a few suggestive examples of these innumerable notes and intonations, each one with its own timbre and pitch. Each matter has its own manner and each substance its sense and when poetry attempts to describe these no mental rule can then really be applied there. Style and technique are an integral part of the poet’s inspiration and one has to go entirely by its force, obviously any critical appreciation has to be fully cognisant of it.

We are dealing with Overhead Poetry which Sri Aurobindo explained in great detail in his letters on poetry. It is an utterance that comes from some higher plane carrying with it its rhythm and tonal resonances as much as its substance and flavour. It is a creative word that sets into motion new worlds of perception; also it initiates the surge of new ideas and their forces to shape our lives in their likeness. In terms of the *Savitri*-phrase it is a voice that "carries the sound of infinity."²⁹ To understand and enjoy it there is needed another kind of aesthetic sensibility, to hear it speak to us in its many nuances we have to keep aside our own preferences, we have to listen to it in the inner silence which is the real receiver of its imports and its significances. An intuitive association with things and images and sounds can alone put us in direct contact with it. A new spirit in poetry can be appreciated only with a new taste. Did not Wordsworth say that every poet creates the taste by which he is to be judged? In search of new values Eliot may throw away the Romantics, but that is as wrong, as hurting, as throwing away daffodils from our hands; in the process we are also depriving ourselves of another kind of sweetness that is needed in the totality of life's experience. We have to always enter into the spirit of the things and see if these represent and present something genuine. If so then no theory can be made sacrosanct and there cannot be any fetish in respect of a composition. The authenticity of feeling and thought and expression in its richness of sound and music and rhythm as much as the power of visual depiction coupled with artistic benefaction are the true criteria which should be applied in judging poetry. In that case we may say that while criticism is cultivable, poetry is a creative art and it is that which we must value the most.

(To be concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

Notes and References

- 17 *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, pp 85-86
- 18 *Indian Poets and English Poetry*, *op cit*, p 14
- 19 *Savitri*, p 396
- 20 *Ibid*, p 68
- 21 *Ibid*, p 31
- 22 *Ibid*, p 311
- 23 *Ibid*, p 312
- 24 *Ibid*
- 25 *Ibid*, p 765
- 26 *Ibid*, p 70
- 27 *Ibid*, pp 53-54
- 28 *Ibid*, p 254
- 29 *Ibid*, p 663.

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

The Dream Twilight of the Ideal

THE first round of Savitri's debate with Death has taken place in Book Nine, Canto Two, against the background of the everlasting Nothingness that appears to be the source and destiny of all things. In that dead realm, the soul of a living being was an intruder. Death's voice was "a fatal iron-hearted roar"¹ and his power seemed unchallengeable. He did not hesitate to resort to intimidation, threatening the mortal woman with a terrible retribution for her trespass on his forbidden domain:

Dread lest in skies where passion hoped to live,
The Unknown's lightnings start and, terrified,
Lone, sobbing, hunted by the hounds of heaven,
A wounded and forsaken soul thou flee
Through the long torture of the centuries....²

Yet Savitri has not turned back. She is rewarded with a first victory, insufficient in itself, but setting the scene for a more decisive confrontation. In the eternity of night, Death was in his natural element and the unconscious Void seemed the one all-swallowing reality. Now the darkness gives way to a twilight full of the dreams and ideals of the mind that has, after all, emerged out of the inertia of Matter. Among these intangible visions, Death is a formidable intruder whose alien figure enhances by contrast "this beauty as of mind made visible".

The sombre Shadow sullen, implacable
Made beauty and laughter more imperative....³

Death changes his tone and tactics, arguing philosophically in an attempt to expose the hollowness of all idealism. The thunder of his voice becomes subdued and seductive, so that Savitri can even compare it to a flute:

"A dangerous music now thou findest, O Death,
Melting thy speech into harmonious pain,
And flut'st alluringly to tired hopes
Thy falsehoods mingled with sad strains of truth...."⁴

Do human ideals and aspirations point beyond themselves to a realisation on earth of the dreams of the spirit, as Savitri maintains? Or are these ideals, as her opponent insists, the fantasies of a self-deceiving mind, inevitably falsified in practice because

they are contrary to the nature of things? This is the issue in the next round of the debate.

It was on 18-19 October 1916 that Sri Aurobindo wrote and revised the hundred-line section of his first draft of *Savitri* that ultimately expanded to twenty-five times that length and became Book Ten, "The Book of the Double Twilight". Already, he had a clear vision of what he would later call "the dream twilight of the ideal". He described it in much the same manner as in the final text, though more briefly:

And now into a misty twilit world
 They came; vague fields, vague hedges, rainy trees,
 White cattle vague roamed glimmering through the mist,
 Vague spirits wandered with a bodiless cry,
 Through vague ideal lands roamed happily
 Forms of half-luminous cloud. Yet in it all
 A strange consistency of shapes prevailed,
 A victory of initial light, a spirit
 Of faery beauty and ungrasped delight
 That sweeter seemed than any ecstasy
 That either earth or heaven can hope to seize,
 Strange sweet beginnings of perfection, first
 Happy desires of a heavenly world.
 Here through its magic lanes that fled the feet
 Past vanishing hedges, moved she silently
 Assailed by sweetness of its voices dim.

After two more lines, Death begins to speak. This passage had more than doubled in length by the time Sri Aurobindo wrote it out again three weeks later near the back of the same notebook, dating it "Nov 9". It underwent slight further expansion in what has been called his first fair copy of the earliest version of *Savitri*. This is undated, but was probably written soon after the previous version.

A page of this fair copy is reproduced in a facsimile in the present instalment. Here, six lines of the first draft (the eighth to thirteenth lines quoted above) have been replaced by twenty:

A victory of initial light was born,
 A spirit of purity and elusive presence
 Of faery beauty and ungrasped delight
 That sweeter seemed than any ecstasy
 Earth or all-conquering heaven can vibrant seize.
 Their bold formations are too absolute;
 Carved by an anguish of divine endeavour
 They stand up sculptured on the eternal hills

Or quarried from the living rocks of God
 Win immortality by perfect form.
 They are too clear, too great. This only touched
 The flying feet of exquisite desires,
 Strange sweet beginnings of perfection, first
 Happy imaginings of a heavenly world,
 Which rest in a dim passion of pursuit
 Thrilled with their first far joys that will not cease.
 All in this world was shadowed forth, not limned,
 Like shapes of colour in a tinted blur
 Or fugitive landscapes of suggested forms,
 A glimmering Eden full of faery gleams.⁵

Like a few other passages in the "first fair copy", this evocation of the enchantment of a world of unrealised dreams already anticipates with some fullness the final version in Book Ten, where the passage has grown to about twice this length. It may be noted in passing that the page number "57", in the upper right corner of the manuscript page, was written by Sri Aurobindo himself (unlike the page numbers seen in the other facsimile). He divided this version into two books "Book I" comprises forty pages in this manuscript, corresponding to the first eight books of the finished poem. Twenty-six pages of "Book II", in the same exercise-book, cover the subject matter of the present Books Nine and Ten. A passage related to Book Eleven is found in another notebook

When Sri Aurobindo divided *Savitri* into six cantos, and then into six or later seven books, he enlarged the description of this dream world gradually through ten or so manuscripts of the canto or book entitled "Twilight". But in all these versions, written between 1916 and 1920, the transition from night to twilight was made in a few lines at the most. Only in the 1940s did Sri Aurobindo write the opening section of the present Book Ten, Canto One, where the inner logic behind the movement out of darkness into light is developed with a strong sense of spiritual inevitability.

But even in the first few drafts, though they passed from night to twilight with almost no bridge, there was a phrase that indicated the precise significance of twilight in the scheme of the poem's symbolism. As we have seen, those versions referred to the twilight as a "victory of initial light". The phrase implies that twilight is a first stage in the victory of consciousness over the Inconscient which is the divine event depicted in *Savitri*. But since this is only an "initial light", the victory is partial, even if it carries in itself the promise of a total conquest. Death is put on the defensive, but is not defeated by the soul's survival of the ordeal of night and by the invasion of the darkness with the half-light of the dreaming mind. However beautiful these dreams, Satyavan is still in Death's grip and the debate must go on.

In the first of the series of manuscripts with the heading "Canto V: Twilight", we find that Sri Aurobindo has added some lines before the entry into the "misty

A victory of inhaled light was born,
 A spirit of purity and elusive presence,
 Of fancy, beauty and ungraspable delight
 That ever ~~exceeded~~ ^{transcended} them any earthly
 Earth or all-conquering ^{visions} of the ever-conquering, serene.
 Their both formations are too absolute,
 Carved by an anguish of divine endeavour
 They stand up separate - on the eternal hills
 Or quarried from the living rocks of God
 Then immortality by perfect forms
 They are too clear, too great. This only touched
 The flying feet of exquisite desires,
 Strange sweet beginnings of perfection, fresh
 Gladly imaginings of a heavenly world,
 Which rest in a deep passion of pursuit
 That led with their first far joys that will not cease
 (2) } Like shapes of colour in a tinted blue
 } Or fugitive landscapes of suggested forms,
 (3) } All in this world was shadowed forth, not lined,
 } A shimmering sea full of fairy gleams.

Sri Aurobindo's "first fair copy" of Savitri (c 1916)

twilit world''. The new lines include three that have remained intact in the final version, at the beginning of the second section of Book Ten, Canto One:

There is a morning twilight of the gods:
Miraculous from sleep their forms arise
And God's long nights are justified by dawn.⁶

But the reference to the "victory of initial light" has been omitted in this manuscript and the versions that follow. Only many years later would the idea reappear, in a still more vivid form, in the first section of Book Ten:

Light conquered now even by that feeble beam...⁷

The second facsimile in the present issue shows a draft of the passage to which this line belongs. Probably late in 1946, Sri Aurobindo took up the revision of his old manuscripts of "Twilight" and began to compose what was necessary to complete Book Ten of *Savitri*. He drafted new passages in small perforated note-pads like those he was using during the same period for the revision of Part One.

The facsimile shows the front and back sides of a sheet from one of these pads. Near the bottom of the first page, some words are in the handwriting of Sri Aurobindo's scribe, Nirodbaran. These words ("to world pain" and "a supernal"), as well as the more extensive markings on the next page, show that Sri Aurobindo asked his scribe to read the draft to him and dictated a few changes. He expanded the last line on the first page to two lines, the second of which was written by the scribe at the top of the next page. Including this dictated line and the other changes, the first page seen in the facsimile can be transcribed as follows:

For every darkness is a magic of Light,
A Truth occult has made this mighty world.
The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep
An unintelligible Intelligence there
Invented creation's paradox profound
And worked a miracle by a machine
Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we lay
Safe from a too swift awakening to world pain.
But we came to her from a supernal Light,
We live by Light and to the Light we grow.

This is an intermediate draft of a passage that first appears a few pages earlier in the same chit-pad. Sri Aurobindo wrote it out again after this, adding and altering lines and changing their order. He dictated further alterations after his last handwritten

For every determination of light
 of your vaulted dome the night will
 be the suspension of sleep
 in a stillly still intelligence the
 faintest color of your set form
 and work of your machinery
 might be in the
 there the dark letter in the secret
 life from a soft awakening
 to word pain
 We come later for light, to light
 a faint, a faint, a faint

we live against to the light we find
 in our light our path in that path
 is but a reflection of the light

And it changed into a shimmering light
 and how is a phantom of an ancient dream
 to shine just falling to the ground
 of golden rain a shadow of light
 He descent
 in a great dream body
 it dragged up coils the dust
 And fell, curving down a grey slope of
 time

version was copied by the scribe on the reverse sides of the loose pages of an early manuscript of "Twilight".

The continuation of this passage became the conclusion of the opening section of Book Ten. A more complicated mixture of Nirodbaran's handwriting with Sri Aurobindo's is seen on this page, requiring some explanation. The line

And housed a phantom of an aureate sun

was dictated by Sri Aurobindo and taken down by the scribe. But there are other markings in the scribe's handwriting that do not represent alterations at all. Especially near the bottom of the page, the scribe went over some of Sri Aurobindo's writing to make the lines readable. The last line was transferred from the next page.

If one looks closely at the facsimile, one sees that several words in the scribe's clear handwriting can also be glimpsed less distinctly written by Sri Aurobindo. But some of the original words are almost invisible. When Sri Aurobindo wrote them, apparently the ink did not flow from his pen. The scribe may have referred to a more legible draft for these words. Or else Sri Aurobindo, though he could no longer easily read his own writing and needed the scribe's assistance,⁸ remembered what he had written, perhaps not long before.

The scribe marked this manuscript in Sri Aurobindo's presence and according to his instructions. This accounts for some differences from the original wording of the draft. For example, "Opponent of a slow and struggling dawn" became "Adversary of a slow struggling dawn". But where the scribe has written "suddenly" over "sullenly" in the preceding line, it may be doubted whether he correctly understood Sri Aurobindo's intention. The "ll" of "sullenly" can be seen clearly enough in Sri Aurobindo's handwriting and is unmistakable in two other drafts. At a later stage, after Sri Aurobindo had changed "Then" to "Still", the scribe copied the line:

Still a great dragon body suddenly loomed;

but here, "suddenly" is evidently less appropriate than "sullenly". "Still" implies a continuation from before, while "suddenly" means that something new has happened, so these words are contradictory. When Sri Aurobindo revised the transcript by dictation, he corrected "suddenly" to "sullenly", as he had originally written.

The second page reproduced in the facsimile, beginning with the first line in Sri Aurobindo's handwriting, depicts the event to which the previous lines formed a philosophical prologue. Sri Aurobindo later added four lines to this passage and made a few other changes. In the following transcript, punctuation that is unclear or missing in this draft is supplied from other versions:

So now light conquered with that feeble beam;
Its faint infiltration altered the mute mass,

Almost it changed into a glimmering sight
 And housed a phantom of an aureate sun.
 It shone pupilling the eye of Nothingness.
 A golden fire came in and burned Night's heart;
 The Inconscient conscious grew, Night felt and thought.
 The intolerant darkness paled and drew apart
 Till only a few black remnants stained the Ray.
 Then a great dragon body suddenly loomed;
 Adversary of a slow struggling dawn,
 It dragged its coils through the dead martyred air
 And fled curving down a grey slope of Time.

Here a tentative victory is described, whose emblem is the rising of a phantom sun. But the struggling dawn of the mind's idealism is still insecure, mixed with stubborn vestiges of darkness and threatened by the unslain dragon of the Inconscient. In the rest of Book Ten, it will be seen whether the remaining darkness, and the ignorance and incapacity it symbolises, can be dissolved and life transformed by a more triumphant light of the Spirit.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

1. *Savitri* (1993), p 585
2. *Ibid*, p 591
3. *Ibid*, p 605
4. *Ibid*, p 612
5. Transcript published in *Mother India*, December 1981, pp. 697-98. In the fourth line, Sri Aurobindo wrote "vibrant" above "quivering", which he did not cancel, he chose "vibrant" in the next version. Cf. *Savitri* (1993), pp 603-4
6. Cf *Savitri*, p 601
7. *Ibid*
8. See Sri Aurobindo's statement, "I can write though I can't easily read what I have written and can't revise", in a letter written to Dilip Kumar Roy on 17 February 1945 (quoted in *Mother India*, April 2000, p 280)

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

Keats's La Belle Dame Sans Merci exists in two versions. The first was the original one penned by the poet on 21 April 1819. The second was altered (probably at the suggestion of Leigh Hunt, and mostly for the worse) for its publication in Hunt's Indicator on 20 May 1819.

Manuscript

I

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

VI

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

Published

I

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

VI

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

Manuscript	Published
VII She found me roots of relish sweet, And honey wild, and manna-dew, And sure in language strange she said— 'I love thee true'.	VII She found me roots of relish sweet, And honey wild, and manna dew; And sure in language strange she said— 'I love thee true.'
VIII She took me to her elfin grot, And there she wept and sighed full sore, And there I shut her wild wild eyes With kisses four.	VIII She took me to her elfin grot, And there she gazed, and sighed deep, And there I shut her wild wild eyes So kiss'd to sleep.
IX And there she lulled me asleep And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide! ¹ — The latest dream I ever dreamt On the cold hill side.	IX And there we slumber'd on the moss, And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide! The latest dream I ever dream'd On the cold hill side.
X I saw pale kings and princes too, Pale warriors, death-pale were they all; They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci Hath thee in thrall!'	X I saw pale kings, and princes too, Pale warriors, death-pale were they all; They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci Hath thee in thrall!'
XI I saw their starved lips in the gloam, With horrid warning gaped wide, And I awoke and found me here, On the cold hill's side.	XI I saw their starved lips in the gloam, With horrid warning gaped wide, And I awoke, and found me here On the cold hill side.
XII And this is why I sojourn here Alone and palely loitering, Though the sedge is withered from the lake, And no birds sing.	XII And this is why I sojourn here, Alone and palely loitering, Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake, And no birds sing.

(Presented by Ed Friedlander)

(Courtesy: <http://www.pathguy.com/watrhous.jpg>)

A STORY REWRITTEN

THIS is an old story, of a farmer who had a piece of land and a farmhouse on the bank of a river. Once there was a heavy rain and the river was flood-swollen. As the water started rising, a neighbour came in a jeep and urged him to leave the place immediately. But the farmer was a man of faith

“Oh, no,” said the farmer confidently, “God will save me”.

The water rose yet higher. A police boat soon came and he was asked to hurry and get into the boat.

“Oh, no, that won’t be necessary,” the man insisted. “God will save me”

Finally the whole place was flooded with water, and a Coast Guard helicopter swooped down to rescue the man, now perched on the roof of the farmhouse. Again he refused. Just then a huge wave of water swept over the house; the house collapsed and the man was drowned.

When he got to heaven he stormed at the Lord, wondering why he had let him die when his faith had been so strong.

“What do you mean?” asked the heavenly Father. “I sent a jeep, a boat, and a helicopter and you wouldn’t budge!”

*

The last two paragraphs could be rewritten thus:

When he got to heaven he prayed the Lord to explain the episode.

The heavenly Father said: “My child, I wanted to heighten your faith, not the faith which is judged by the material results but a simple, pure, unadulterated faith, a trust. You grew well in true faith and it was necessary for you to change your garments and take a new birth in a new body. If I wanted you to continue your life and experiences, I would have whispered in your heart to accept the offer of your neighbour who brought a jeep to transport you out of the place. My child, I always do what is best for the growth of each individual; be sure of that.”

*

It may be noted that in the manifestation there are two sides of the Truth and you cannot ignore either. However, one could say that the first version of the story is a judgement of the phenomenal mind; the second is an understanding from a spiritual plane.

In this context let us recall what Sri Aurobindo says: “Providence is not only that which saves me from the shipwreck in which everybody else has foundered. Providence is also that which, while all others are saved, snatches away my last plank of safety and drowns me in the solitary ocean.” (*Thoughts and Glances*, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 391)

When asked whether blind faith was wrong, Sri Ramakrishna even went so far as to say that blind faith is the only kind to have.

Faith is either blind or it is not faith but something else—reasoned inference, proved conviction or ascertained knowledge. This is what Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple. (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 573)

The Mother's new year message for 1947 was: "At the very moment when everything seems to go from bad to worse, it is then that we must make a supreme act of faith and know that the Grace will never fail us." (*CWM*, Vol. 15, p. 181)

The Grace will never fail us. This faith we must keep constantly in our heart. "In the last analysis everything really depends on the Divine Grace and we should look towards the future with confidence and serenity, at the same time progressing as fast as we can." (*CWM*, Vol. 10, p. 53)

K. C. ANAND

DAY AFTER DAY

DAY after day, with each stroke
The unwinding fate hurls;
I turn to thee, who hidest beyond.

When each hope is dashed to ground
A naughty child creeps in
To ruin the pictures of glory I paint;
I turn to thee, who hidest beyond.

I thank thee, for thy tempests
That hurl me headlong on rocks.
With my body's bruise, my soul sings.
Your hands that smite,
Are lovelier far than a lover's embrace.

K. N. VIJU

SULJA

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

ACT III

Scene 1

(Sulja's chamber. The pedestal on which the idol was kept is empty. Sulja is lying on a divan. The Sultan comes.)

Sultan:

Sulja, pyari, what happened?

Sulja *(Getting up)*:

My Lord has deserted me. I want to die.

Sultan *(Turning away his head)*:

Ya Khuda! Ya Allah! Even after the idol is gone my troubles have not come to an end. *(Turning to Sulja, in an endearing tone)* Darling, look here. What if your Lord is gone? I am there. Your companions are there. This whole kingdom, is it not for you? Your horse? Have you forgotten your dear horse? Have you forgotten that we are going to Kashmir? I have selected there a beautiful bridegroom for you.

Sulja *(In a voice choked with despair and sadness)*:

My Lord has deserted me. I want nothing, I want my Lord. *(Turns her face away.)*

Sultan:

Darling, are you angry with me?

Sulja:

No, No, Baba. *(With love tinged with sadness)* I love you. I am not angry with any one. I love all, but I am sad. I feel that I am in a void Lord! Lord! *(Sits down covering her face.)*

Sultan:

Allah! What shall I do now? I can put up with her anger, but this? How can I bear this state of loveless void which has enveloped her? How can I grapple with this state of unfeeling void and emerge victorious? *(Wiping his eyes)* Damn that idol! It came here to destroy my family How can I bear to see my dear daughter in this state? Ya Khuda! *(Paces restlessly up and down and turning to Sulja)* Look here, darling, hear me. There are so many idols in our Treasury Can I order one to be brought to you?

Sulja *(Without removing her hands covering her eyes)*:

No, never. I do not want any other idol. I want only my Lord.

Sultan:

Come on, darling. Your Lord is wicked and ungrateful. He is hard-hearted too.

Look at him, traitor. You had kept him with loving care and when his relatives came and called him he ran away with them. Forget him, good riddance.

Sulja (*Gesticulating, showing earnestness*):

No, Baba. He is not hard-hearted. His folks are sad, therefore he went. It is quite proper. I too should have gone with him. Baba, (*entreating him*) my dear Baba, please send me also. I shall go with them. (*Kneels down before the Sultan's feet*)

Sultan (*Wiping her tears and pacing up and down*):

Is this the retribution I suffer for the atrocities committed by Malikafoor's army? Is my sorrow the punishment I suffer?

Sulja (*Sings*):

My Lord is gone, my Lord is gone
 He killed me, I am undone.
 Oh! Ranganatha, my dear Lord.
 All light is gone, Darkness my lot
 A modicum of love, an iota of your grace
 Ranganatha, my Lord with a beautiful face.

Sultan (*Flying into a rage and grinding his teeth*):

Well, so be it. I will send the soldiers forthwith and command them to bring that idol back for you. Are you satisfied? Will you smile?

Sulja (*Jumping up*):

Really, Baba?

Sultan:

True, darling. I will make the soldiers beat them and drive them away. I will restore the idol to you.

Sulja:

No, No, Baba. That should not be done. You should not beat them. They are my Lord's relatives. Listen to me, Baba. I will also go with the soldiers. If I call him, my Lord will surely come away with me. Right, Baba? Is it right?

Sultan (*Sighing*):

Let us see! Drink this sherbet first.

Sulja (*Eagerly*):

Let it be, Baba. Please instruct the soldiers properly. Baba, make haste, quick! Please let my horse come. Baba, be quick, send me away.

Sultan:

First you drink and eat. If you don't eat I won't send you.

Sulja (*Laughing*):

I will eat. Look here, Baba. Nobody should be beaten up. My Lord will come on his own volition. I shall call him and he will come. (*Laughs*)

Scene 2

(A forest region One can see travellers sleeping here and there. Rangadasar is sitting holding close to him the idol of Sri Ranganatha swathed in a cloth, a picture of sorrow.)

Amudan *(to himself)*:

Why is he so sad? Has he fallen for the Sultan's daughter? Let me ask him. *(Gets up and sitting beside Rangadasar.)* Bhattar Swamy! You could bring the idol easily because the Sultan's daughter was sleeping. Was not her sleeping to our advantage?
Rangadasar:

She was not sleeping.

Amudan:

Wasn't she? Then? *(Rangadasar sighs.)* What happened?

Rangadasar:

Everything is the Lord's play, Lila. We just stood outside her room. It was obvious that she was in deep distress. Was it her conscience pricking her? Was it the Lord's play? She could understand how sad we were feeling because of the separation from our Lord since she was feeling the same sorrow at her separation from Him. I wanted to express our sorrow through a song. She felt that the Lord was making her understand the depth of our feelings and that He wanted to go.

Amudan:

Then?

Rangadasar:

What then? She wept. She was tormented by pangs of separation. She was devastated.

Amudan:

I have heard that she is very beautiful.

Rangadasar:

Beautiful or ugly, man or woman, what does it matter? I saw only a soul that wholeheartedly loved and was distraught with sorrow at the impending separation and how could I just look on without my heart melting at this pitiable sight? I, after bringing the idol of our Lord, feel sad like Arjuna in the Gita.

Amudan:

Was it not our duty to retrieve the idol and take it back with us?

Rangadasar:

Certainly.

Amudan:

What is wrong in doing our duty?

Rangadasar:

Nothing wrong. *(To himself)* I feel as if my heart has been burnt to ashes at what I did. *(He wipes away his tears with both his hands.)*

Amudan:

Psh! Are you so contrite just for a Tulukka girl?

Rangadasar:

May our Lord who gave shelter to the elephant and forgave the crow protect her.

(A person from Kalingadesa [Orissa] is approaching fast.)

Rangadasar:

What is the matter?

(The man says in broken Tamil that the princess Sulja is coming and also the soldiers are coming to kill him.)

Rangadasar *(remaining thoughtful for a while)*:

Amudanar, the princess and the army are coming. Wake up all. They started the very next day after we left. *(Amudanar wakes up all and all assemble.)*

Rangadasar:

The army is right on our heels. If we go as a crowd they will catch us easily. It is better we split up and go our different ways. The Sultan's minister gave Amudanar a money-bag. Each of you, please take whatever you need for your journey. Myself and my relatives, we will take our Lord and hide ourselves and afterwards reach the destination late. Parandaman, you and Kaveriyan go with Amudanar. He will take care of you. It is advisable to start before sunrise.

Scene 3

(Temple Mandap in the morning. Amudanar, Sthalathar, Mudaliyandan and the temple priest, all are seated. Parandaman and Kaveriyan are seen sitting in a corner wiping their eyes.)

Amudanar:

Parandaman, come here, why are you weeping?

Paradaman *(getting up and coming)*:

No. I am not weeping. Something fell into my eyes. I am not weeping *(shedding copious tears)*.

Amudanar *(sternly)*:

What is this?

Parandaman:

Sir, Bhattar Swami has not yet come, we have all reached here.

Kaveriyan:

Daily, from dawn to dusk I am waiting for his arrival. Parandaman sits glued to the banks of Kaveri *(weeping)*. But we are disappointed daily.

Amudanar:

What does it matter to you if he comes or does not come?

Parandaman *(after hesitating a bit)*:

We two have decided to become his disciples after he arrives here. We feel that

our lives will be fulfilled if we do something for him, however small, so that he may feel satisfied and happy. We are ready even to give up our lives.

Kaveriyan:

He took such care of us, right through our journey. He would seat us near him and would eat his meals along with us. He would retire to bed only after ensuring that we had a good place to sleep.

Parandaman.

O! What a great teacher he was. We could never forget the lessons he taught.
(A person comes running to announce that Bhattar Swamy is coming. All get up and run to receive him. The music of the Bhajan is heard. Rangadasar is coming accompanied by the group singing Bhajans.)

Victory to thee, we have come back to Srirangam
 Victory to thee, we crossed all the seven walls.
 Victory to thee, we have entered the Breeze Mandap,
 Victory to thee, we have Darshan of your Golden Dome,
 Victory to thee, we have enjoyed again the beauty of the sculptures,
 Victory to thee, you are surrounded by the Alwars singing your praise,
 Victory to thee, we have at last reached Srirangam.

(On a pedestal in the Mandap, the idol of the Lord is kept and Rangadasar is sitting down at His feet. He is wiping the sweat off his face. In the distance, Parandaman and Kaveriyan are dancing with joy)

Sthalathar:

How tired are we! It seems we were separated not for six months but for six years.

Amudanar.

Why so much delay?

Rangadasar:

We were hiding in Avanthi for ten days. Afterwards we had to cross many hurdles and so we were delayed. Anyway by the Grace of our Lord we have reached here. All of you, did you all come back safely and securely? Did the Tulukkars come?

Amudanar:

We trickled back safely, all of us. But we were told that the Tulukkars reached here much before we came here. Princess Sulja came eagerly ahead of all of them and saw the locked and deserted temple. She pined for the Lord and fell down in a swoon, not able to see the Lord. She never got up. Her soul left to join her Lord. The Tulukkar soldiers came and seeing her dead buried her and returned. The Sultan had ordered that no one should be harassed.

Rangadasar

What a pity! We should consider her a consort of our Lord, she who was so much devoted to our Lord.

Amudanar:

How is that possible? She was a mlechchha girl.

Temple Priest (*jumping up*):

Do you think we can equate this Tulukka girl with that divine Andal who was found in the Tulsi grove by our Periyalwar and brought up by him?

Mudali:

'I won't even think of a mortal man. I shall marry only the Lord. Otherwise I will die.' Thus spake Andal.

Rangadasar:

But what about this princess, she couldn't even live, unable to bear the separation from the Lord. Moreover, our Lord is above all Varnashramadharma Guhan, Sri Rama's friend, Shabari, Vibhishana, all these bear witness to the fact that the Lord doesn't care for caste or creed. The Lord accepts all out of Love and Grace.

Amudanar:

Even if the whole town says so I won't accept this. I am leaving the town forthwith.

Rangadasar:

Please sit down. Let us not act in haste. The Lord will command us properly. (*The watchman comes and reports that an official of His Highness the Chola King is coming. The official is wearing a big turban and dangling ear-rings and walks in, preceded by the usual royal paraphernalia. All get up and stand. Rangadasar offers the official a seat and enquires after the welfare of everybody.*)

Official:

All are well. I have come here as directed by His Highness, the great Rajamahendra Chola. He has asked me to tell you about the dream he had last night. The Lord came in his dream and commanded him. "My son, tomorrow I shall go to Srirangam. Install me again in the temple along with a picture of the daughter of the Sultan of Delhi, who loved me, pined for me and died for me. Do all that is necessary." The King has resolved to do as commanded by the Lord and His Highness has expressed his desire that henceforth in the morning wheat chappathi, dal and kichidi should be offered to the Lord and His consort as 'Naivedyam'.

Rangadasar:

We shall do as His Highness wishes.

Official:

Here is the official Patta authorising the gift of a village of Chola country for the purposes outlined to you and also put down here in writing. This will be known as the Sri Rajamahendra Chola's 'Kainkaryam'—service to the Lord. (*Places the offering in a plate and gives it to Rangadasar.*)

Rangadasar (*receiving it*):

Mudaliandan, haven't you made arrangements for the grand reception of Our Lord?

Mudaliandan:

Here, here (*commanding several people*). You, bring the band Hey you! hurry up with the Lord's umbrella, chamaram, and torch.

(The Lord, 'Alagia Manavalan' [the beautiful bridegroom, as he is called by the Vaishnavites] has at last arrived. The news has spread like wild fire and the crowd is swelling minute by minute. Every one hurries hither and thither like the busy people in a Marriage Hall. The chanting of the Vedas and Thiruppallandu [hymns composed by the Alwars] and the music of the band rend the air. Parandaman and Kaveriyan, each carrying a torch, stand smiling in service of the Lord.)

(Concluded)

K. BALASUBRAMANIAM

STRIPS

STRIPS of sky and moon-lit trees
 And the musing mystery of the eve,
 And a background wash of stars
 And the cricket's meaning inside.

There are these worlds we know,
 And those unknown, afar yet near,
 There where deep memories surge
 And the flutter of windless wings
 Are heard by a deeper listening's poise

A piece of life's windowed glory,
 Annexed as to these moments
 Where the brilliance of moonlight
 Welcomes the new millennium,
 And a wonderful calm bathes the land;
 Fresh is this evening's reminder
 Of the countryside of our secret-soul.

VIGYAN

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM—YOGISHRESHTHA

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

Why “Yogishreshtha”?

A QUARTER of a century has passed since I first read Sri Aurobindo’s intriguing comments on the Prophet of Islam.

I read again the reason he had advanced, noticing that in my curiosity over the Prophet being described as “Yogishreshtha”, I had lost sight of the depth of Sri Aurobindo’s accompanying words.*

“An absolute dependence, with fullest reverence, on the Supreme; asking nothing for himself, surrender to Him all personal problems of good, evil, sin, virtue, gain or loss; willing acceptance of work ordered by Him, discarding that which appeals personally; follow the profession He desires, not your own inclinations; discard your own praised abilities, but utilise for His work the abilities and inspiration He grants; such a one, an egoless devotee, becomes the dearest friend of the Divine, qualifies for His power to act through him and achieves His great Task.”

The Prophet of Islam had united the divided Arabs. He had freed Arabia from foreigners. Not only had the Prophet succeeded politically in a land with a very rich and ancient culture, but the “Yogi” in Sri Aurobindo must have visioned the Spiritual Power that had flowed through the Prophet, and the conditions that had made the accomplishment of the Prophet’s task possible.

Reading the Prophet’s Prayers, and the ninety-nine names of the Supreme, carefully studying his life and even some of his teachings, one can guess how his success had deeply impressed Sri Aurobindo. For the India of Sri Aurobindo was an ancient land under foreign rule, her spiritual and cultural heritage sunk under a morass of indolence and ignorance.

Spiritual Force, Sri Aurobindo had glimpsed, had been the Power that had flowed through the Prophet of Islam, and had succeeded as never before under any other Prophet. That Force was cultivated by what Sri Aurobindo called “Yoga” The Prophet never disclosed to anyone, not even to Abu Bekr, much of what he had known. Perhaps that was the Divine’s command.

Even Sri Aurobindo, in the 20th century too, while giving the method of Yoga for the ordinary aspirant, wrote that he “was not making public” the later and higher stages of the Yoga. It is not surprising that the Prophet kept his “mechanic” secret. But we can make certain deductions from reports by his close associates, and description of his experience. Sri Aurobindo’s definition of the “Yogin” given above is of great help.

He must have reached the stage of “egolessness” and acted as per the Divine’s directions. That explains, perhaps, his change of opinions, in which the intellectual

* See *Geetar Bhumika* in SABCL, Vol 4, p 79

may see “craft” or “pragmatism”. The Prophet had a great role to play. A higher power than intellect moved him and to that he had surrendered. We can see this in each major event

Even though Revelations came to him, he preserved secrecy. Possibly, his wife Khadija, her cousin who was possibly a monk who had translated the Gospel, and most probably Ali, his young cousin, had the earliest intimation. By the time he emerged in public, three years had passed. He had by then a band of followers, though his public announcements about his Divine authority as the Prophet whom all Arabs must obey, were treated with ridicule or indifferently by many, including at least two of his uncles.

His “flight” from Mecca, after the passing away of his wife and his childhood protector Abu Talib in AD 622, avoiding assassination, demonstrates his surrender to Divine protection through rigid secrecy. Only Abu Bekr, who went with him, and Ali, who impersonated him and lay in the bed of the Prophet as the murderers entered, had been in the know.

Himself very interested in Jesus, he may have felt that he could “modify” or add to some of Jesus’s teachings. For the Prophet had a “happy” religion to offer, a message of a kingdom of God on earth; life to be correctly enjoyed, as God had created the earth and its forms for the “benefit” of man.

The treaty that he had made in about 629 AD to be able to visit Mecca on a pilgrimage, with the Koreish delegates from the Ka’ba, is a unique example of his state of egolessness. He himself deleted the word “Rasul” to satisfy the Meccans. To effect the treaty, he seemed to renounce the claim of “Apostle of God” and to his followers this must have come as a bewildering experience. Legend says that the Prophet had asked Ali to delete that term “Rasul” under his name, since that was Mecca’s objection. He was merely Ahmed, son of Abdullah of Mecca. Ali refused, and the Prophet himself crossed out the term. Before this, apart from the assassination attempt, at least three wars had been fought between the Meccans and the Prophet. The refugees (Meccans who had come to Medina) and the Ansars, the helpers from the local Medinese, had helped him.

We may notice that no one defiled the Prophet when he seemed publicly to renounce his claim, his rightful claim too. We have to admire the discipline of his disciples by now. Earlier while dictating his experiences some, not trusting his sincerity, noted that his experiences had deserted him.

His state of egolessness and complete surrender to the Divine Will are clear from the manner in which the treaty was signed.

We may attempt a guess as to this Will from the results that followed.

The Prophet had to go to Mecca.

Only through a “physical” contact could spiritual force act (there were no photographs then). Thus, when it is said that he “charmed”, or won over most of the Mecca chieftains through personal visits to them, we may guess the probability of the use of his spiritual Force. For it left no doubts of possible enmities. His arch-enemy,

Abu Sofian, and his son Khalid and other responsible men felt drawn to him. They were to become his captains and generals, embracing Islam, when he “attacked” Mecca and “captured” it the next year. There was, in fact, little opposition.

And, after conquering Mecca, he resumed his title of “Rasul” without the slightest hesitation.

The fact that he altered some of his “revelations” can be interpreted as “opportunistic”. The Prophet certainly never bothered about such criticism. When he said that an earlier revelation can be reversed by a subsequent one from a “higher” plane, the Prophet was clearly attempting to communicate spiritual experiences.

He was above good, evil, sin, virtue in the ordinary sense.

If the Prophet remains a perfect example of an egoless soul, his love and devotion for the Divine leads to a most friendly relationship, the best, according to Sri Aurobindo, between a human disciple and his God. The Prophet sang about the Divine not only through his prayers, but the ninety-nine different ways in which he adored the Supreme.

No wonder that to him God had to be Formless. His Throne symbolised His power and reign of Law, the Book His Rules.

This “Vision” in the Seventh Heaven must have been in complete “samadhi” or trance. The first revelations came through writing, in about 615 AD. We do not know if these had come to the Prophet at the hill retreat.

Later, the Prophet seems to have received the “suras” in “conscious trance”, in the First Heaven, or what symbolically seems to be the Spiritual Consciousness that can be contacted by the spiritualised mind. One of the “mechanics” is interesting. The Prophet, it appears, used to cloak himself in a blanket and, profusely perspiring, he could enter the “higher planes” at will, as it were, and dictate the “suras”, communicated to him by the angel Gabriel to whom these had been passed on from the highest plane by the Will and Might of the Supreme.

It seems that with time the Prophet’s body without trance could sustain the spiritual forces that acted on him and through him. Possibly, as we can only guess, it so happened that on the full moon night of what came to be called “Sabe Barat”, the Prophet, it is said, did and could stand up praising the Supreme throughout the night. Such or similar devotion on that night “would be equivalent to many Haj pilgrimages”, he had declared. One can see that though he gave his sanction to the traditional pilgrimage, he valued more the sincerity of devotional praise to the Divine. Spiritual acts were hinted at as of greater value than religious drills.

His choice of leaders from the Medinese tribes and of commanders of expeditions was intuitive. The successes they were to win in battles seemed miraculous. It is a great pity that none of his colleagues knew about his use of a Force unknown to them. They knew of miracles, and called them so

(To be concluded)

NEW STARS AND COSMIC EXPLOSIONS EARLY IN THE LAST MILLENNIUM

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

6. Indian subcontinent and neighbourhood in the 11th and 12th centuries

INDIA had already become a seafaring nation some centuries before this, and had close cultural and political ties with Southeastasian nations. Navigation on open seas would have required good knowledge of the position of the stars. There were also a number of visitors to and from India, who may have noticed these supernovae during their travels or could have brought information about these

A notable South Indian king in this period who had influence in South East Asia was the Chola emperor, Rajendra I. His strategic sphere extended northwards along the eastern coastline of India up to the river Ganga in southern Bengal. He also had trade links with China. The Tiruvalanudu copper plates (c. 1025) proclaim the conquest of Kataha (modern Kedah in Malaysia) and the seizure of the capital city of Srivijaya (in Sumatra, Indonesia) during Rajendra's reign. Trade (and perhaps plunder) may have inspired the Chola expedition against the maritime power of Srivijaya which attempted to interrupt the trade link of the Cholas with China. The Chola presence in South East Asia lasted about half a century, but it led to the spread of Hinduism and Indian art which had a lasting and profound influence there.

Rajendra's father, King Rajaraja I (who reigned between AD 985 and 1014) had already acquired the northern part of Sri Lanka island. In peninsular India, his empire went as far north as the Tungabhadra river. The Maldive Islands and the Malabar coast, both highly prized for their spices, were conquered by Rajaraja and had increased the prosperity of the Cholas. Rajaraja's famous copper plate inscription records the construction of the Buddhist Vihara at Nagapattinam, a major Chola port. This Vihara, known as the Chudamani Vihara, was constructed in AD 1006, the same year as that of the bright supernova in the constellation of Lupus. The Sailendra king, Sri Maravijayottungavarman constructed the Vihara with the assent and co-operation of Rajaraja. The Brihadisvara temple in Thanjavur was also constructed early in the 11th century during Rajaraja's reign.

During the period between AD 800 and 1200, Cambodian kings constructed a number of prosperous cities near Siem Reap. The Angkor civilization in Cambodia reached its brilliant peak around the 1100s. Angkor Wat—a Vishnu temple—was constructed in the first half of the 12th century. It was also used as an astronomical observatory. In the year AD 1181, the Khmer king Jayavarman VII, ascended the throne at the age of sixty, after chasing out the Cham (south Vietnamese) destroyers of Angkor and a fierce battle on the Cambodian lakes. He ruled till AD 1220.

On the western coast of India, the Chalukyas (of Kalyani) ruled between AD

1025 to AD 1150. Two Parsi settlements, one in Sanjayanti and another in Sthanaka (near Mumbai island) were recorded in c. 936 and c. 1081 respectively. This ancient Zoroastrian community had first landed in Divi (Diu) on the coast of Gujarat in AD 917, having made their journey across the Arabian sea, fleeing the Islamic invasion of Persia. In central and western India, the temples in Khajuraho were in the middle of their two-century-long construction, while the Jain temples in Mount Abu were begun a few decades before AD 1054.

While South Indian kings were expanding their empire eastward, India's north-western flank was under attack from invasions from central Asia. A prominent visitor from central Asia, the Islamic scholar Al-Biruni (AD 973-1048), came to India after AD 1020. He may have been forced to accompany Mahmud of Ghazni (in Afghanistan, where he resided by this time), as the latter raided north India. Al-Biruni's works on astronomy were well known and widely utilised. He also wrote a highly regarded work on Indian geography, philosophy, religion and science (including Indian astronomy) called *Tarikh-i-Hind* around AD 1030. This was almost forgotten until around AD 1305, when a Persian scholar, Rashid al Din, used it as a source for a comprehensive world history. Al-Biruni studied Indian literature in the original, translated Sanskrit texts into Arabic and wrote several treatises on Indian astronomy and mathematics which were of interest to him. He was not a great innovator of original theories of mathematical nature, but was a careful observer and relied upon the experimental method. He treated observational facts which did not fit the favourite theory of the era and the analysis of errors of measurement with care. Between the years AD 1004 and 1016, Al-Biruni was back in his homeland (Khwarazm, a region adjoining the Aral sea in what is currently Uzbekistan) after being away during political upheavals and civil wars in his youth. He worked there with his former teacher Abu Nasr Mansur, a famous astronomer and mathematician himself. After 1016, both were forced to leave Khwarazm again due to political turmoil. Eventually they had to leave with Mahmud of Ghazni, perhaps as the latter's prisoners. He seemed to have become free to travel as he pleased only after the death of Mahmud (c.1030) who was succeeded by his son Masud. Al-Biruni finally settled in Ghazana (Ghazni in Afghanistan) and died in 1048, with an enormous scientific output right upto his death. Only about a fifth of his work seems to have survived.

Around AD 1054, the Palas (Bhaumas) were ruling in northeast India (Indrapala I). Earlier this region was ruled by Mahipala I (AD 973-1048). AD 1054 is the year in which Atish Dipankar, Buddhist monk and missionary, still a household name in Bengal after many centuries, died in Tibet. Dipankar lived in Tibet for many years and was singularly influential for the spread of Buddhism there.

Who were the scholars in the Indian heartland at that time that were astronomically or mathematically inclined and what were the texts or treatises they wrote? Names of several Indian astronomers from the 11th and 12th centuries around the relevant dates are known from their commentaries on the Sanskrit astronomical text *Surya-siddhanta* (believed to have originated earlier) or for their own independent

treatises. Many of them wrote their treatises several years before these events, with a few exceptions. Bhaskara II (born AD 1114 and alive during the SN (Supernova) of 1181) wrote *Siddhanta-siromani* (AD 1150), while Mallikarjuna Suri (AD 1178) wrote two commentaries, one in Sanskrit and another in Telugu. Other astronomers from this era were Chandesvara, a native of Mithila (Bihar) who wrote *Surya-siddhanta-bhasya* (also AD 1178) and Sripati who wrote *Siddhanta-sekhara* in AD 1039 and *Dhruvamanasa* (1056). Sripati was born (probably) around AD 1019 in Rohinikhanda in Maharashtra and the *Dhruvamanasa* calculated planetary transits and eclipses. His *Siddhanta-sekhara* was lost for centuries, but has since been recovered in South India. Dasabala, son of Varocana, who wrote the *Chintamanisaranika* flourished around AD 1055. Somesvara (author of *Aryabhatiya-vyakhya*) and Satananda (author of *Bhasvati*) worked towards the end of the 11th century.

As far as the likely SN of AD 1408 is concerned, Paramesvara (AD 1380-1460, a "Namputiri of Vatasseri"), author of many astronomical texts, lived in Kerala during the likely SN of AD 1408. Several central Asian astronomers were also contemporaries of this likely SN. Ulugh Beg (1193-1449), grandson of Timur "the lame", was put in charge of Samarkand in 1409 by his father Shah Rukh and built the astronomical observatory there later. He assembled a large number of scientists and astronomers in Samarkand, including Al-Kashi who wrote the "compendium of the science of astronomy" during 1410-11 and dedicated it to a descendant of the Timur dynasty.

Could it be that some evidence of the sightings of the supernovae of these centuries lies hidden at any of the mentioned historical sites, records and texts, in or near India? Investigations of past knowledge about astronomy has traditionally centred on matters of man's perception of the universe, primarily concerning the position of the earth (and the sun) in the scheme of the cosmos. But historical records on the previously unknown and suddenly brightened stars of the past can be of substantial importance to an active area of research in modern astrophysics—the study of the explosion of massive stars, which began to be understood only a few decades ago. They would make a rather good detective story in their own right.

7. An Advance Warning

Today, in contrast to the middle ages, Astronomer Royals are no longer at risk of being beheaded or kidnapped. Even by the early 17th century, certain astronomers seemed to seek a limited independence from the directives of their patrons. When excitement arose in AD 1604 over what is now known as Kepler's Supernova, Gallileo may have been criticised by the Padua city council, for not having discovered the Supernova. Gallileo apparently replied that he had more important things to do than to gaze out of the window, on the slim chance that he might catch something unusual. Apart from the sociological changes, today astronomers (or physicists) can however give an advance warning of an impending supernova. Currently there are

several underground laboratories, such as in the mines of Japan and Canada (Kamioka and Sudbury) which can detect these explosions in our galaxy or its close neighbours, although their primary experimental goals are different. These experiments detect neutrinos, which cannot be seen by the eye or conventional telescopes but they arrive directly from the core of the exploding star a few hours before the explosion can be recorded through light. Detectable light can be seen only from the surface of a star, and the stellar surface gets the message about its exploding core later due to the time taken by shock waves to travel across the star. The delay itself would tell the size of the star that underwent explosion. This was the case when a supernova exploded in 1987 in our neighbouring galaxy the Large Magellanic Cloud. Scientists are now co-ordinating a network of such neutrino detectors to immediately contact each other over the internet if multiple experiments happen to see a signal within ten seconds. If a rare event like this happens in or near our galaxy, the network will issue an advance alert to astronomers to turn their conventional telescopes to a small region of the sky to observe the impending explosion. The neutrinos detected in the meanwhile, will reveal the state of the stellar core that collapsed, if the explosion takes place within the limited distances of the historical supernovae. In this business the evidence comes in slowly. And closing of a case may take decades.

(Concluded)

ALAK KANTA RAY

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MYTH OF CREATION

FIRST there was what men called: a rough unordered mass of things.

But God or Nature.

Rent asunder land from sky, and sea from land, and separated the ethereal heavens from the dense atmosphere. Then he set them each in its own place and bound them fast in harmony.

Moulded the earth into the form of a mighty ball and bade the waters to spread abroad, to rise in waves, and fling themselves around the shores of the encircled earth.

Then did he bid plains to stretch out, valleys to sink down, woods to be clothed in leafage and mountains to arise.

Cut the earth in zones: the central is hot, deep snow covers two, and two he placed in between and gave them a temperate climate.

Air being lighter than fire and water lighter than earth, the creator bade the mists and clouds to take their place in the air like winds, lightning and thunderbolts. But he divided the winds in order.

Then the stars began to gleam throughout the sky. So the stars occupied the floor of heaven, the sea fell to the fishes for their home, earth received the beasts, and air the birds.

Then man was born of his own divine substance, or perhaps the earth still retained some elements of its kindred sky. And though all animals fix their gaze upon the earth, he gave to man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven.

(Translated by Carlos Parada)

[Internet. *Metamorphoses 1.1*. Ovid (43 BC - 17 AD)
Greek Mythology Link, 18 September 1997]

RUTH LEAVES—LEAVING FOR US *WINGED WORDS*

ON Saturday, 8th of July, Ruth left her body in the early morning, lying on her right side, near the window at the Nursing Home, looking eastward, towards her beloved sea, to which she had addressed her very first English poem not long ago, *Risings*, ending with this stanza:

Here we stand on the shore, our eyes wide open,
Thrilled with the joy of this blissful dawn of the future
While we let go of all that darkens our vision,
Ready to walk unblinded into the Truth-Light.

Friday morning she had told me, her companion on the Path for 38 years, that she did not want to see anybody any more, and that I too should go out later because she could not leave when I was there.

On Thursday evening the first copy of her book of poems *Winged Words*, printed red in her own silk-screened calligraphy (achieved with her last strength) was brought to her, and she pressed it blissfully to her heart.

A few weeks ago, after it grew clear that her battle against the illness was being lost, at least on the surface—for a brave, self-responsible, increasingly conscious fight is never really lost—she wrote her last poem:

One Day

We know—we know—
We cannot stay forever
Here in our guest-house earth.
One day we go—
With joy we will endeavour
To enter grown
Into our future birth.

We know—we know—
We surely live for ever
And will return to earth.
One day we come
Again and shall discover
Our earth reborn
Into a place of mirth.

(*Winged Words*, p 59)

How did it happen that she, a German sadhika, suddenly started receiving *pucca*

English verses? Well, she simply took the Master's poetic teachings to heart when we were translating into German *Sri Aurobindo's Correspondence with Nirodbaran* and many parts of *The Future Poetry*. Her mind silenced, she caught hold of a quoted great line's rhythm—that for the first time only, later she needed no quotations—and waited attentively till an intense experience she had just had, of a full moon's rising over the sea, started expressing itself in that very rhythm. Always this: an experience and a particular rhythm, expressive of its essence, then the images.

Truth, Love, Joy, Beauty meant everything to her from her childhood, despite all the crude contradictions to her ideals. She sometimes said: the Truth is living somewhere on earth—but where? And: I'm living on the wrong side of the globe. She carried a picture in her inner mind of living in a white house somewhere at the sea. This became a fact in 1964 when the car the Mother had sent to Madras to pick us up with her two young daughters,—after the 6-week-long and partly stormy ship-journey,—stopped. There was the full moon over the sea in front of Bethel-house (= the house of God) to welcome us. There we stayed ever since. She worked with me on our German translations, starting (according to the Mother's gracious "order") with *Savitri*, which she typed at least five times, *The Collected Poems*, *The Plays* and several other volumes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And for about 30 years she worked on a sculpture of Sri Aurobindo, part of her love-story with Him, her "dolls" of Radha and Krishna and the gopis were another part of it, her costumes for the great performances of Sri Aurobindo's plays yet another, and finally her painstaking calligraphic works, and her readings of *Savitri* in German on tape. And how grateful she always was for all the wonderful opportunities to serve Them! Like a child.

It fits into the picture that I was introduced to Ruth in 1962 by the widow of a German poet whom I admired. Ruth had painted a big oil-colour portrait of him. I was 24 then, a traveller and seeker, she 42; I knew immediately, this was destiny. She had been told by a wise astrologer (using the Indian system) that she would find great riches in this life—"but not material ones."

And so it came to be. On Friday she came out of her inner withdrawal and dictated the following lines, in German

O God, You are I,
 Without You I would not be,
 You are my substance,
 You are my breath,
 You are my sacred life,
 You and I are absolutely the same
 Immortal, eternal, never ending divine existence.

HANS PETER STEIGER

N.B. Ruth 17.11.1920 - 8.7.2000. Her book *Winged Words* has been reviewed in this issue of *Mother India*. See p. 821

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Winged Words, poems by *Ruth Steiger* who also did the calligraphy and layout of this pretty book; silk screening and binding by Newcon Global Services. First edition of 100 copies. Available at SABDA. Price Rs. 50.

RUTH Steiger—I saw her often at Amal Kiran's place. Tall and straight, her face asking if she were intruding, and then with a shy smile she would give one of her poems or an article for Amal Kiran to see

I admired her dolls. I admire her for her courage and fortitude and the steadfastness of her faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the painful last period of her life. And now as I read her poems in this book I admire her for her simplicity, her sense of humour and her devotion. Optimism and a smile are always a part of the personality of this poet as evinced in her work.

Winged Words is a very well produced book, its beauty enhanced by an abstract marbled cover and beautiful calligraphy.

There are forty-nine poems in this book of sixty pages; most of the poems, being short, one of them could be easily accommodated on one page. Brevity is of course one of the welcome qualities in a poem—brevity that does not compress too much but says all that the poet wants to convey.

As she says in her poems *Golden Days* and *Great Poets*, she loved soaring to other planes with the help of poetry written by great souls. After all everyone cannot write poems, beautiful poems, but supposedly everyone can read. Poetry is a marvelous instrument that can enable us to touch the sublime.

As Sri Aurobindo has said "The essential power of the poetic word is to make us see, not to make us think or feel; thought and feeling must arise out of or rather be included in the sight, but sight is the primary consequence and power of poetic speech." (*SABCL*, Vol. 9, p. 24) Very often when I read poems from an Aurobindonian, one who is doing or attempting Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, I try to see them. This quality is there in many of Ruth's poems, if not always in the whole poem then at least in some lines even when most of a poem is a mental construction.

Reading poems from this book I see the poet's inner spaces, full of love and adoration for the Mother; often in some poems I sense a great yearning to feel the Divine's presence.

Not all the poems do that. Some are descriptive, some nearly prosaic, but many of them appear to have been written from an inner station, full of yearning, aspiration and devotion; there is calm around them,—though it may be the calm of the inner seas while on the surface there is often turbulence: turbulence caused by physical discomfort and pain and, maybe, by more than an inkling of the rough weather to come before the final rest.

Sometimes there is a childlike simplicity that is quite effective, as in these six lines from the first poem *That's My Aim*:

Love Divine
 I have found—
 That's my ground.
 Life Divine
 I shall claim—
 That's my aim.

In the poem *Hunger* we see this beautiful image:

My soul a young bird
 Its beak opened wide.

Such is the hunger that the Mother in our depths creates in us, hunger for love, for wisdom, for freedom. This hunger becomes the force driving us towards the Divine.

Some readers would remember that Ruth made beautiful dolls, they were exhibited once in the Ashram. And in their expression one could see her devotion, especially in some dolls depicting Krishna and Radha. We see the same devotion, often intense, in many of her poems. The poet sees in Radha her own other self and adores Radha as "My god, my playmate, and forever free." We also see this yearning to be free and her optimism in these lines from her poem *And on it Goes*:

The longer the road is stretching
 The more of the sky we see
 Don't mind when the bones are aching,
 But bend a bit at the knee.

She was also a sculptor. She did sculpting as her sadhana. She expresses that well in her poem *An Adventure*; "I have tried the impossible," she says about her sculpting the bust of Sri Aurobindo over which she worked for a long time:

I have tried the impossible, felt the Mother's support
 In numberless hours through years before his bust
 Yearning to see an ever more perfect form
 I got in those moments of eternity lost,
 But now perhaps most of the veils have gone
 And I can see and greet my Lord at last

Reading her poems I find that I share with the poetess her pain and pleasure and the wonder of the Grace she received. I see Ruth expressing in her poems her growth, her growing ever nearer to the Mother and also the thorns and roses on this path. Yes, Ruth, it has been a great joy for me to soar with you in Her skies through your poems in the *Winged Words*.

DINKAR D PALANDE

Rainbow Lands by *Sunanda*. Published by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry. Price Rs. 40 00.

Rainbow Lands is a children's story book with a difference. Unlike so many stereotyped story books for children available these days, *Rainbow Lands* takes us to pastures new and fresh. A 'dream story' about the dream-child protagonist Mona, the book exudes an ethereal and refreshing atmosphere untainted by any coating of the physical mind. Here there is a free play of a child's right to imagine and dream which does not find favour either with the parents or with the teachers. In response to the parents' worries about Mona's imaginative and dreamy nature and behaviour, the teacher says: "Some imaginative children do build homes in those fantasy lands. But as they grow up, the mind develops and they forget all about it." With that attitude the power of imagination has to be suppressed by the intellect and not encouraged. Another characteristic feature of the book is that it brings out the power of faith, innocent and childlike, as revealed in *Magical Seven* and *Fairy Friends*. *Garden Home* displays a riot of colours and shows Nature at her bountiful best. There Nature grows in 'full freedom': "There was no fixed, rigid pattern. It was more like a free growing, free flowing forest." Will an imaginative child like the dream-child protagonist of the story be allowed to grow like this? This is the cardinal question before the parents and the teachers of today.

ASOKA K. GANGULI

MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

I CLIMBED mountains and mountains
 To enjoy the silence of the Infinite,
 The sound of Nature,
 To embrace the vastness of the altitudes.
 It was long ago.
 Climber now I am
 Within this body,
 Every step forward is a new conquest,
 Is a new discovery—
 Himalaya of Love.

SUSMITA (MADDELENE)