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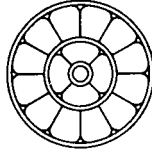
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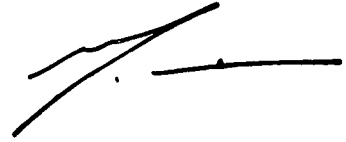


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 11

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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SAVITRI MEETS THE OCCULT GODS

So she fared on across her silent self.
To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd
Who sped brilliant, fire-footed, sunlight-eyed,
Pressing to reach the world's mysterious wall,
And pass through masked doorways into outer mind
Where the Light comes not nor the mystic voice,
Messengers from our subliminal greatnesses,
Guests from the cavern of the secret soul.
Into dim spiritual somnolence they break
Or shed wide wonder on our waking self,
Ideas that haunt us with their radiant tread,
Dreams that are hints of unborn Reality,
Strange goddesses with deep-pooled magical eyes,
Strong wind-haired gods carrying harps of hope,
Great moon-hued visions gliding through gold air,
Aspiration's sun-dream head and star-carved limbs,
Emotions making common hearts sublime.
And Savitri mingling in that glorious crowd,
Yearning to the spiritual light they bore,
Longed once to hasten like them to save God's world;
But she reined back the high passion in her heart:
She knew that first she must discover her soul.
Only who save themselves can others save.
In contrary sense she faced life's riddling truth;
They carrying the light to suffering men
Hurried with eager feet to the outer world;
Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source.
Outstretching her hands to stay the throng she cried:
"O happy company of luminous gods,
Reveal, who know, the road that I must tread,—
For surely that bright quarter is your home,—
To find the birthplace of the occult Fire
And the deep mansion of my secret soul."
One answered pointing to a silence dim
On a remote extremity of sleep
In some far background of the inner world.
"O Savitri, from thy hidden soul we come.
We are the messengers, the occult gods
Who help men's drab and heavy ignorant lives
To wake to beauty and the wonder of things

Touching them with glory and divinity;
In evil we light the deathless flame of good
And hold the torch of knowledge on ignorant roads;
We are thy will and all men's will towards Light.
O human copy and disguise of God
Who seekst the deity thou keepest hid
And livest by the Truth thou hast not known,
Follow the world's winding highway to its source.
There in the silence few have ever reached,
Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare stone
And the deep cavern of thy secret soul.''
Then Savitri following the great winding road
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path
Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim-feet.
A few bright forms emerged from unknown depths
And looked at her with calm immortal eyes.
There was no sound to break the brooding hush;
One felt the silent nearness of the soul.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 500-02)

THE HINDU SABHA

AN indication of the immense changes which are coming over our country, is the sudden leaping into being of new movements and organisations which are, by their very existence, evidence of revolutions in public feeling and omens of the future. The dead bones live indeed and the long sleep of the ages is broken. The Moslem League was indicative of much, the Hindu Sabha is indicative of yet more. The Nationalist Party, while in entire disagreement with the immediate objects and spirit of the league, welcomed its birth as a sign of renovated political life in the Mahomedan community. But the Mahomedan community was always coherent, united and separately self-conscious. The strength of Islam lay in its unity and cohesion, the fruit of a long discipline in equality and brotherhood, the strength of the Hindu in flexibility, progressiveness, elasticity, a divination of necessary changes, broad ideas, growing aspirations, the fruit of a long discipline in intellectual and moral sensitiveness. The Moslem League meant that the Mahomedan was awakening to the need of change, the growth of aspiration in the world around him,—not yet to the broad ideas modern life demanded. The Hindu Sabha means that the Hindu is awakening to the need of unity and cohesion.

Does it mean more? Does it indicate a larger statesmanship, quicker impulse to action, a greater capacity for the unity and cohesion it seeks? Is the Hindu Sabha a novel body, with the power in it to effect a great object never before accomplished, the effective union of all shades of Hindu opinion from the lax Anglicised Agnostic, Hindu in nothing but birth and blood, to the intense and narrow worshipper of the institutes of Raghunandan? Or is it merely an ineffectual aspiration, like the old Congress, capable of creating a general sympathy and oneness of aim, but not of practical purpose and effective organisation? There are only two things strong enough to unite Hinduism, a new spiritual impulse based on Vedanta, the essential oneness of man, the transience and utilitarian character of institutions, the lofty ideals of brotherhood, freedom, equality, and a recognition of the great mission and mighty future of the Hindu spiritual ideas and discipline and of the Indian race,—or else a political impulse strong enough to unite Hindus together for the preservation and advancement of their community. The Hindu Sabha could not have come into being but for the great national movement which awakened the national spirit, the sense of past greatness, the divination of a mighty future, transforming the whole spirit and character of the educated community. But we fear that in its immediate inception and work it leans for its hope of success on a lower and less powerful motive—rivalry with Mahomedan pretensions and a desire to put the mass and force of an united Hinduism against the intensity of a Mahomedan self-assertion supported by official patronage and Anglo-Indian favour. Alarm and resentment at the pro-Mahomedan policy underlying the Reform Scheme and dissatisfaction with the Bombay conventionists for their suicidal support of the Government policy entered largely into the universal support given by Punjab Hindus to the new body and its great initial success. Mortification at

the success of Mahomedans in securing Anglo-Indian sympathy and favour and the exclusion of Hindus from those blissful privileges figured largely in the speech of Sir Pratul Chandra Chatterji who was hailed as the natural leader of Punjab Hinduism. These are not good omens. It is not by rivalry for Anglo-Indian favour, it is not by quarrelling for the loaves and fishes of British administration that Hinduism can rise into an united and effective force. If the Hindu Sabha takes its anchor on these petty aspirations, or if it founds any part of its strength on political emulation with the Mahomedans, it will be impossible for the Nationalist party to join in a movement which would otherwise have their full sympathy and eager support.

Lala Lajpat Rai struck a higher note, that of Hindu nationalism as a necessary preliminary to a greater Indian Nationality. We distrust this ideal. Not that we are blind to facts,—not that we do not recognise Hindu-Mahomedan rivalry as a legacy of the past enhanced and not diminished by British ascendancy, a thing that has to be faced and worked out either by mutual concession or by a struggle between nationalism and separatism. But we do not understand Hindu nationalism as a possibility under modern conditions. Hindu nationalism had a meaning in the times of Shivaji and Ramdas, when the object of national revival was to overthrow a Mahomedan domination which, once tending to Indian unity and toleration, had become oppressive and disruptive. It was possible because India was then a world to itself and the existence of two geographical units entirely Hindu, Maharashtra and Rajputana, provided it with a basis. It was necessary because the misuse of their domination by the Mahomedan element was fatal to India's future and had to be punished and corrected by the resurgence and domination of the Hindu. And because it was possible and necessary, it came into being. But under modern conditions India can only exist as a whole. A nation depends for its existence on geographical separateness and geographical compactness, on having a distinct and separate country. The existence of this geographical separateness is sure in the end to bear down all differences of race, language, religion, history. It has done so in Great Britain, in Switzerland, in Germany. It will do so in India. But geographical compactness is also necessary. In other words, the *deśa* or country must be so compact that mutual communication and the organisation of a central government becomes easy or, at least, not prohibitively difficult. The absence of such compactness is the reason why great Empires are sure in the end to fall to pieces; they cannot get the support of that immortal and indestructible national self which can alone ensure permanence. This difficulty stands in the way of British Imperial Federation and is so great that any temporary success of that specious aspiration will surely result in the speedy disruption of the Empire. In addition, there must be an uniting force strong enough to take advantage of the geographical compactness and separateness,—either a wise and skilfully organised government with a persistent tradition of beneficence, impartiality and oneness with the nation or else a living national sense insisting on its separate inviolability and self-realisation. The secret of Roman success was in the organisation of such a government; even so, it failed, for want of geographical compactness, to create a world-wide

Roman nationality. The failure of the British rule to root itself lies in its inability to become one with the nation either by the effacement of our national individuality or by the renunciation of its own separate pride and self-interest. These things are therefore necessary to Indian nationality, geographical separateness, geographical compactness and a living national spirit. The first was always ours and made India a people apart from the earliest times. The second we have attained by British rule. The third has just sprung into existence.

But the country, the Swadesh, which must be the base and fundament of our nationality, is India, a country where Mahomedan and Hindu live intermingled and side by side. What geographical base can a Hindu nationality possess? Maharashtra and Rajasthan are no longer separate geographical units but merely provincial divisions of a single country. The very first requisite of a Hindu nationalism is wanting. The Mahomedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indians first and Mahomedans afterwards on the existence of great Mahomedan nations to which they feel themselves more akin, in spite of our common birth and blood, than to us. Hindus have no such resource. For good or evil, they are bound to the soil and to the soil alone. They cannot deny their Mother, neither can they mutilate her. Our ideal therefore is an Indian Nationalism, largely Hindu in its spirit and traditions, because the Hindu made the land and the people and persists, by the greatness of his past, his civilisation and his culture and his invincible virility, in holding it, but wide enough also to include the Moslem and his culture and traditions and absorb them into itself. It is possible that the Mahomedan may not recognise the inevitable future and may prefer to throw himself into the opposite scale. If so, the Hindu, with what little Mahomedan help he may get, must win Swaraj both for himself and the Mahomedan in spite of that resistance. There is a sufficient force and manhood in us to do a greater and more difficult task than that, but we lack unity, brotherhood, intensity of single action among ourselves. It is to the creation of that unity, brotherhood and intensity that the Hindu Sabha should direct its whole efforts. Otherwise we must reject it as a disruptive and not a creative agency.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol. 2, pp 259-62)

NEARING DUSK

HAVE you seen the Evening Primrose open
 In the Dusk,
When the surface din of day is newly broken
 And its husk
Is trolled across the sky by homing rook?

And silence-fall is mingled with the dewfall
 And many bats
Are summoning the shadows with their cue-call
 From the vats
Where the dawnghosts hang for hours on moon's-ort hook.

A hedgepig threads the path along the streamway
 At gambol-gait;
Gnats that hover in the aftersunset gleam-play
 Mate, remate
Where water-buttercups make white the brook.

One, launched ungainly on dorbeetlefare,
 Heavily flies;
And one, with pinions furled, tweet-tweets an air
 In dream-replies—
A bird wingweary, from her dozy nook.

Around the Evening Primrose by the wonstead
 The moths now flit;
For it summons with pale fragrance from its gloamstead:
 Dusk's candle lit
Spire silenceward... "The Primrose, look "

November 6, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: The technique is admirable—and the substance, choice of details and description admirable. One gets the atmosphere as well as the picture of the thing described—the hour of nearing dusk.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of October 2000)

तदु प्रयक्षतममस्य कर्म दस्मस्य चारुतममस्ति दंसः ।
उपह्वरे यदुपरा अपिन्वन् मध्वर्णसो नद्य श्वतस्त्रः ॥

(Rigveda, 1 62.6)

This, indeed is his mightiest work, the fairest achievement of the achiever, *dasmasya carutamam asti damsah*, that the four upper rivers streaming honey nourish the two worlds of the crookedness. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p 173)

This is the most adorable work, the loveliest deed of the Wonderful that the higher streams have fed us in the crookedness, even the four rivers of the Sea of sweetness. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April-84, p. 55)

This is the most worshipful and fairest work of the potent god that he increased in the crooked declivity the four rivers of the upper world whose streams are honey-wine. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December-80, p. 148)

द्विता बि वत्रे सनजा सनीळे अयास्यः स्तवमानेभिरकैः ।
भगो न मेने परमे व्योमन्नधारयद् रोदसी सुदंसाः ॥

(Rigveda, 1.62 7)

In their twofold (divine and human?) Ayasya uncovered by his hymns the two, eternal and in one nest; perfectly achieving he upheld earth and heaven in the highest ether (of the revealed superconscient, *parame vyoman*) as the Enjoyer his two wives (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p 173)

Ayasya by the words of light that hymned him uncovered and saw as to the eternal goddesses who lie in one lair, then Indra, a doer of mighty works, held earth and heaven in the highest ether as the Lord of Joy holds his two wives. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December-80, p 148)

अभिनक्षन्तो अभि ये तमानशुनिधिं पणीनां परमं गुहा हितम् ।
ते चिद्रांसः प्रतिचक्ष्यान्ता पुनर्यत उ आयन् तदुदीयुराविशम् ॥

(Rigveda, 2.24 6)

They who travel towards the goal and attain that treasure of the Panis, the supreme treasure hidden in the secret cave, they, having the knowledge and perceiving the falsehoods, rise up again thither whence they came and enter into that world.

Possessed of the truth, beholding the falsehoods they, seers, rise up again into the great path, *mahas pathah*. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 174)

येना दशग्वमधिगुं वेपयन्तं स्वर्णरम् ।
येना समुद्रमाविथा तमीमहे ॥
येन सिन्धुं महीरपो रथो इव प्रचोदयः ।
पन्थामृतस्य यातवे तमीमहे ॥

(Rigveda, 8.12.2-3)

That rapture of the Soma we desire by which thou, O Indra, didst make to thrive the Might of Swar (or the Swar-soul, *svarnaram*), that rapture ten-rayed and making a light of knowledge or shaking the whole being with its force (*dasagvam vepayantam*) by which thou didst foster the ocean; that Soma-intoxication by which thou didst drive forward the great waters (the seven rivers) like chariots to their sea,—that we desire that we may travel on the path of the truth (*pantham rtasya yatave tam imahē*) (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 176)

तमु नः पूर्वे पितरो नवग्वाः सप्त विप्रासो अभि वाजयन्तः ।
नक्षद्दामं ततुरिं पर्वतेष्ठा मद्रोघवाचं मतिभिः शविष्ठम् ॥

(Rigveda, 6.22.2)

In him our primal fathers, the seven seers, the Navagwas, increase their plenty, him victorious on his march and breaking through (to the goal), standing on the mountain, inviolate in speech, most luminous-forceful by his thinkings. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 177)

सुगस्ते अग्ने सनवित्तो अध्वा युङ्क्ष्व सुते हरितो रोहितश्च ।
ये वा सद्यन्नरुषा वीरवाहो हुवे देवानां जनिमानि सतः ॥

(Rigveda, 7.42.2)

Easy of travelling for thee is the path, O Agni, and known to thee from of old Yoke in the Soma-offering thy ruddy (or, actively-moving) mares which bear the hero. Seated, I call the births divine. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 180)

Easy of going and securely known to thee is the path, O Agni; yoke in the Soma-offering thy bright steeds and thy fierce red or those who in their seat are ruddy-active and bearers of energy. I sit and I invoke the births of the gods (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December-83, p. 108)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

‘DUNKIRK MIRACLE’ Baffles War Analysts

THE rescue of 340,000 British and Allied troops from Dunkirk in 1940 was hailed by Britain’s wartime premier, Winston Churchill, as “a miracle of deliverance.”

World War II broke out on September 3, 1939, and British forces were sent to France almost immediately, but it was not until May 1940 that Adolf Hitler sent his troops across the Maginot Line

Faced with superior equipment, transport and firepower, the Allied forces were pushed back relentlessly, and British commanders were quickly forced to take the decision to evacuate.

Altogether, between May 27 and June 4, 1940, more than 850 ships—mostly Royal Navy and Merchant Navy vessels—evacuated some 235,000 British troops and 110,000 others.

About 400 of the ships were a curious collection of fishing boats, yachts, pleasure cruisers and virtually anything else that could navigate the English Channel

They were invaluable in ferrying soldiers to the heavier ships which could not get close to the shore, but many also sailed to England laden with men.

Some 240,000 troops were evacuated from the harbour and the remainder from the beaches, but it was the image of soldiers wading single file into the sea which seized public attention. All the time there was a constant air barrage.

On May 29 alone, 400 German bombers protected by 180 Stukas bombed and strafed the area. Nearly 250 ships were sunk, partially blocking the harbour

Operation Dynamo ended when the boat *Shikari* left Dunkirk at 3:20 a.m. on June 4. Less than seven hours later, the Germans seized the town, capturing 35,000 soldiers, the vast majority of them French, who had fought rearguard actions.

“Wars are not won by evacuation,” Churchill told the British parliament a few days later, as euphoria over the rescue of so many soldiers threatened to overshadow what had been a huge military setback.

On June 6, 1944, four years and two days after Operation Dynamo ended, the Allies landed in Normandy to signal the beginning of the end of WWII.

(Courtesy: *Satyam Online News*)

Apropos of the “Miracle of Deliverance” we reproduce in the following two reports about Sri Aurobindo’s action during the World War II.

I

When, seeing Hitler sweeping like a meteor over Europe, a sadhak cried in despair to the Guru, “Where is the Divine? Where is your word of hope?” Sri Aurobindo replied calmly, “Hitler is not immortal!” Then the famous battle of

Dunkirk and the perilous retreat, the whole Allied army exposed to enemy attack from land and air and the bright summer sun shining above. All of a sudden a fog gathered from nowhere and gave unexpected protection to the retreating army. We said, "It seems the fog helped the evacuation." To which Sri Aurobindo remarked, "Yes, the fog is rather unusual at this time." We, of course, understood what he meant. It was after the fall of Dunkirk and the capitulation of France that Sri Aurobindo began to apply his Force more vigorously in favour of the Allies, 'and he had the satisfaction of seeing the rush of German victory almost immediately arrested and the tide of war begin to turn in the opposite direction'.

Thus, we see, Sri Aurobindo was not simply a passive witness, a mere verbal critic of the Allied war policy. When India was asked to participate in the War effort, and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, much to the surprised indignation of our countrymen, contributed to the War Fund, he, for the first time, made clear to the nation what issues were involved in the War. I remember the Mother darting into Sri Aurobindo's room quite early in the morning with a sheet of paper in her hand. I guessed that something private was going to be discussed and discreetly withdrew. Then Purani came most unexpectedly "Ah! here is something afoot," I said to myself. A couple of days later the secret was revealed in all the newspapers. Sri Aurobindo had made a donation to the War Fund! Of course, he explained why he had done so. He stated that the War was being waged 'in defence of civilisation and its highest attained social, cultural and spiritual values and the whole future of humanity'. Giving the lead, he acted as an example for others to follow. But, all over the country, protests, calumnies and insinuations were his lot. Even his disciples were nonplussed in spite of his explanation why he had made that singular gesture. A disciple wrote to the Mother, "The Congress is asking us not to contribute to the War Fund. What shall we do?" The answer given was: "Sri Aurobindo has contributed for a Divine cause. If you help, you will be helping yourselves." Some were wishing for the victory of the Nazis because of their hatred for the British. The Mother had to give a stern admonition. She wrote: "It has become necessary to state emphatically and clearly that all who by their thoughts and wishes are supporting and calling for the victory of the Nazis are by the very fact collaborating with the Asura against the Divine and helping to bring about the victory of the Asura"¹

II

SRI AUROBINDO. Why does Siddhartha want to argue about his faith? How can he prove his faith by arguments? He must know that it can't be done.

And nowadays it is well-known that one argues in favour of what one likes. It is not for arriving at the Truth. One can't arrive at the Truth by arguing.

He can find plenty of proof of people whose faith has succeeded where all outer reason was against them. There are many such things in history.

1. If England had only thought and depended on reason then she should have

made peace with Hitler. She had no chance against Germany. But in spite of that she had faith that she could win and she is beginning to win.

It was after Dunkirk that I openly came out with my declaration and gave the contribution openly. If I had believed in appearances I should not have. It is in spite of opposite appearances that you have to act on faith. I had fixed the 15th August and 15th September as the dates on which Germany would have defeat and both the days they got the defeat (August, I believe, over London, and September—the “invasion idea” and “preparation”.)

2. I wanted De Gaulle to become the chief of the Free French armies in North Africa. There were many obstacles and the Americans came in with their pro-Vichy attitude. But I went on pressing and ultimately it has succeeded.

3. Also about the Tunisian campaign. There was a lot of swaying to and fro. But I persisted. The first time the Allies attacked they were only 30 thousand against 3 lakh Italians. If Wavell had gone to Tripoli at that time he would have succeeded. But they went to help Greece and naturally they had to retreat. But I went on and at last they took Tunisia.

If you depend upon reason then you can't know what is Truth. Germany fought Russia on her reason and won and now Russia is fighting Germany on her reasoning and is winning. It is apparent it is not reason which is giving anyone the success. There is, or must be, something behind that decides these things ..

SRI AUROBINDO had sent a message to the Congress regarding the Cripps proposal.

DISCIPLE: There are some people who even try to maintain that you knew fully that your message to the Congress would fail and yet you sent it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I knew that there was very little chance of its success.

DISCIPLE: But suppose you had known that it would certainly fail, then in that case you might have spared the trouble of going and coming to Duraiswamy.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, even if I had known for a certainty that it would fail still it had to be done. It is a question of play of forces and the important thing is that the other force should not be there.

We cannot explain these things to people—this play of forces—who ask for rational explanation, because it is so irrational.²

References

- 1 Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, pp 134-35
- 2 A B Purani, *Evening Talks*, pp 746-47

O LORD OF TRUTH

February 15, 1915

O LORD of Truth, thrice have I implored Thy manifestation invoking Thee with deep fervour.

Then, as always, the whole being made its total submission. At that moment the consciousness perceived the individual being mental, vital and physical, covered all over with dust, and this being lay prostrate before Thee, its forehead touching the earth, dust in the dust, and it cried to Thee, "O Lord, this being made of dust prostrates itself before Thee praying to be consumed with the fire of the Truth that it may henceforth manifest only Thee." Then Thou saidst to it, "Arise, thou art pure of all that is dust" And suddenly, in a stroke, all the dust sank from it like a cloak that falls on the earth, and the being appeared erect, always as substantial but resplendent with a dazzling light.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 290)

AN OLD CHALDEAN LEGEND

LONG, long ago, in the dry land which is now Arabia, a divine being incarnated upon earth to awaken in it the supreme love As expected it was persecuted by men, misunderstood, suspected, pursued. Mortally wounded by its assailants, it wanted to die quietly in solitude in order to be able to accomplish its work, and being pursued, it ran away Suddenly, in the vast desert land there appeared a small pomegranate bush The saviour crept in under the low branches, to leave its body in peace; and immediately the bush spread out miraculously, it grew higher, larger, became deep and thick, so that when the pursuers passed by, they did not even suspect that the One whom they were chasing was hidden there, and they went their way.

While drop by drop the sacred blood fell, fertilising the soil, the bush was covered with marvellous flowers, scarlet, large, crowded with petals... innumerable drops of blood.

These are the flowers which express and contain for us the Divine's Love.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1955, CWM, Vol. 7, p. 378)

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

(Original form)

There is no other way but one.
Single-hearted like a desert-sun
The wide stretches of molten fire
through
Must be crossed *though* (the) limbs may tire

You *now,*
(For you) have no other way (, Oh) none·
The world like a smashed cup is done;
And its frail gossamer memories
quivering
Are broken, piece by (frozen) piece.

thy tortured
Wipe off the dews from (the ruffled) brow!
The blood-stained soul's lone God-ward vow
Must
(Shall) never flicker nor (must) become
shadow pale
A (glory) of (hollow) martyrdom(!)

10 2 38

Q Guru, complete?

A: Yes. Very fine.

(Revised form)

There is no other way but one:
 Single-hearted like a desert-sun
 The wide stretches of molten fire
 Must be crossed through though limbs may tire.

You have no other way now, none:
 The world like a smashed cup is done;
 And its frail gossamer memories
 Are broken, piece by quivering piece.

Wipe off the dews from thy tortured brow!
 The blood-stained soul's lone God-ward vow
 Must never flicker nor become
 A shadow of pale martyrdom.

YOU

I AM nothing, nothing,
 nothing without You

And can know nothing,
 Nothing without You.

But I am everything,
 Everything with You

And can know everything,
 Everything with You.

Is this not wonderful?
 Yes, so it truly is!

RUTH

(Ruth's very last writing, May 2000)

HOW TO RECITE SAVITRI

A LETTER

WHAT Huta told you about reading or reciting *Savitri* must be a directive from the Mother—or something mixed with it from what she may have said. “Slowly, clearly, precisely” is very fine advice but it can apply just as well to good prose. We must not forget that *Savitri* is poetry—generally of five metrical beats: that is, it is by and large iambic pentameter. One must have a sense of this fact and also of the variations played upon this base. Of course it goes without saying that one must be familiar with the usual stresses in English words. The voice must not fall into any sing-song. English poetry is to be read and not sung but, since it is metrical in a marked way, some sense of the metre must come through. Then there is the matter of end-stopped lines and of enjambment. Enjambment means that the sense of one line runs over into the next. The end-pause in enjambed lines is much less than in end-stopped lines. But since poetry is cut up into lines, the line-ending cannot be quite ignored. A very small pause must be there even in enjambed lines.

This is all I can say at the moment

*

“Slowly, clearly, precisely”—this is a good formula but not sufficient. Poetry is cut up into lines which are either end-stopped or made to flow over. But the very *raison d'être* of the division into lines is the need to show each line in its own weight in the metre chosen. So, whether end-stopped or made to flow over, there must be in different ways a “delay” between line and line. The length of the delay is to be decided by the reciter’s sense of his subject. Thus there cannot be the same pause between line and line when we recite

To be or not to be: that is the question
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them

and when we declaim

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

Apart from internal pauses, the run of the first quotation has to be a little quicker than that of the second. It may be noted that the third line of the second quotation

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

is so paced that our breath is almost drawn somewhat painfully on account of the closely stressed words—“*this hársh wórld dráw.*”

*

Read slowly with an awareness that there is a metre, *i.e.*, long syllables, short syllables and a combination of them. Metre means that there is a design, a pattern and the fact that the poetry is divided into lines means that each line has to be felt to be of a certain shape. So there must be a short pause after each line even if the sense of the line continues into the next.

Poetry means there is metre. Metre means a certain pattern of long syllables and short syllables. It also means that each line stands by itself with a certain pause whether long or brief.

Savitri is special in its meaning and message. It has a certain rhythm which is at the same time like all other poetry and with a subtle difference. And its special character makes it what Sri Aurobindo calls Overhead Poetry—that is, poetry which comes from planes of consciousness above the mind. Sometimes the sense is dependent in a delicate way and with a subtle point on the way the line is read in tune with its distinctive character. An example:

A cry to clasp in all the one God-hush.

Now mark the change which comes when the line is read as

A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all.

In the first example it is as if something is definitely said. But if one read the line as “A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all” it is as if in the first version we have to discover the one God-hush. In the other version, the one God-hush seems a self-evident truth and it is a truth which is not to be found but as if it were self-existent.

When we scan the two slightly differently arranged lines we feel that in the first case a definite fact is stated. In the other case we feel that there is a subtle revelation beyond what is actually stated.

April 2000

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

METHOD OF TEACHING PAINTING AT KALABHAVAN, SANTINIKETAN

TWO ACCOUNTS BY YOUNG STUDENTS

1

I. Original Paintings

- 1) Paint from memory. Do not take help even of sketches
- 2) Put down the line-drawing on the paper directly. Transfers or tracings lessen the directness of the painting
- 3) While executing a painting avoid sketching or making studies of the subject. Finish your studies before you embark on the painting. Making studies in between will spoil the picture by these studies showing up in the painting.
- 4) Once you embark on one painting, do not start another. You should avoid even small jobs like designs, etc. Your painting may take a day, a week or even a month to complete, but nothing else is to be taken up in the meantime as then your energy will be dissipated.
- 5) When you are executing an original painting, you should not avail yourself of any help or suggestion from the teacher. If the teacher does intervene to tell you something then your mind is bound to be disturbed. Your mistakes or shortcomings should be shown to you later.
- 6) Do not show your unfinished painting to any other student or friend and ask for their opinion. If any friend tries to point out your mistakes in between, then he should be considered your enemy. Because by this interference he is adding his own inadequate knowledge to your mistakes, besides killing your originality and disturbing you.
- 7) If you are an advanced student and are not making mistakes in your drawing any more, then avoid the use of pencil for doing the first drawing (Many students are forbidden the use of pencil.) If you cannot do without the pencil, you may wean yourself away from its use by training yourself to draw small original designs with the brush. This will help you change your method of working and you will gain a directness which will make you happy.

II. After Finishing the Painting

- 1) See that it gives you satisfaction. Can you spot your own mistakes?
- 2) What are the mistakes your teacher points out?
- 3) Compare your work with the paintings of ancient masters and find out your own mistakes.

After finding out your mistakes in these various ways, you have to correct them. For that, study as your teacher guides you

III. Study

Just making a few sketches does not mean you have made a study. Go out, observe your subject in all possible positions, from different distances and angles, in all details. Let it be a complete study—by studying for a day or two, you will gain nothing. The atmosphere and surroundings of a subject are of equal importance as they form a part and parcel of it. You are not a beginner any more, so study fully a single subject for a month or two. Only an outside observation is not enough, you have to understand its anatomy fully. Finally, when you are capable enough to create it in any position you have envisaged, you can be said to have made some sort of study.

Let me give an example—one of many. A student has been studying ducks for the last two months. He has filled up entire sketch-books with ducks. He has made large studies of ducks in pastels, he has made clay models of ducks. Every day from five in the morning, he is sitting near the duck-pond. He comes home for lunch and a short rest and he is back at his post till six in the evening.

Your teacher can judge your potential as an artist by your tenacity in this kind of study. Do not calculate the time you spend on it.

After this amount of study, go and look at the paintings of the Masters and study them. Copy paintings of your subject from paintings of India, China, Japan, Egypt, etc.

If you are poor in drawing, train your hand by drawing large-sized copies on the blackboard.

If your line needs developing, you may trace pictures of the Masters and later make copies of them.

IV. How to Sketch while Making Studies

Do not sketch a subject as if drawing a portrait—looking up constantly at the subject and trying to make a photographic picture. Look at the subject as a whole in one long look, then try and put it down on paper from memory as much as you can. If you are not successful at one go, then look at the subject again, try and understand what you have not been able to and make a mental note of it.

Make your drawings as large as possible. Not with pencil. Charcoal is the best. Do not miss making colour studies.

Too much pencil study, especially the copying of lifeless photographic pictures is dangerous. Beginners should work in colours as much as possible. Studies also should be done in colour pencil or pastel.

Even after doing so much, until you are able to understand the life of your subject and enter into its life, there will be no feelings in your painting. And until feelings come, it will not be a painting.

2

The Principles Underlying the Teaching at Santiniketan

I. Interest. Awaken the interest in the student. First, make him hungry and then only give him the knowledge. For, otherwise, just by giving the knowledge beforehand, the student will always be making an exhibition of it. Therefore his painting will be of an insipid academic interest. After awakening his interest through painting, the student will find the subject very easy and enjoyable and making studies will become a game for him.

II. Independence. Let the student progress independently as far as possible. Let him paint on his own, find out his own mistakes and study by himself. The teacher should be there to awaken his hunger, show him the way, stop him from being hasty (*i.e.*, not to paint without enough study), see that he does not imitate—especially the teacher, and stop the student from believing that he has become a complete artist.

III. Concentration. Try and increase his concentration; do not give the student any other work until he has completed the one in hand, nor should he be allowed to do anything else. The ability to finish studying what has once been taken in hand can be developed only by this.

KRISHNALAL

THE MUSICIAN OF THE SPIRIT

(Continued from the issue of October 2000)

5

'This litel spot of erthe' is typical of Kathleen Raine. *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* mentions her specifically in this regard and brings out very clearly the aspect of her insularity. There are, it says, "predominantly 'European' and predominantly 'English' sensibilities. John Heath-Stubbs might be taken as an example of the first, and Kathleen Raine of the second." A 'European' poet like Yeats, Eliot or Pound concerns himself with Rome, Greece, the Middle Ages, Confucius, at times the Buddha or Krishna. For the 'first order' of the 'English' poet it is not necessary to acquaint himself with anything 'European', even with 'English' literature itself. The 'English' qualities themselves are what he cherishes, the qualities which come to him with his 'English' birth.

If this is the psychological basis for writing poetry then the spirit gets cast in a mould once for all and there is no scope for variation, for further creativity. 'This litel spot of erthe' shall remain forever this spot of litel erthe. Kathleen Raine would not accept Yeats, Eliot, Pound as poets,—because they did not belong to that litel spot of erthe familiar to her; they would be, in her opinion, 'European' and their poetry would smack of only the acquired sense if not artificiality. What chance for Sri Aurobindo, then? He does not know English roses and cottages and hence can never appreciate them, he is not even 'European'. "You will never persuade any Western poet or critic" to recognise him as a poet,—tolls the bell. But is that the last verdict on those 3000-odd pages of poetry written by Sri Aurobindo? Or is it that time is the best judge and that generally the contemporary assessments do not live long? A certain temporal separation is perhaps desirable.

If the spirit cannot be creative, then it would imply that poets imitate each other. Would that not suggest something strange,—and hence not true? But this is just not acceptable, simply for the reason that it is strange if not quite outlandish. The immediate conclusion would be: Dante who imitated Virgil was in turn imitated by Milton! But this is contrary to experience and all time-honoured values; in other words, it is altogether untrue. As a matter of fact such cannot be a very happy way of looking at things and therefore it cannot be very compelling. Rather, if a poet has discovered his own source of genuine inspiration and offered to it a luminous body of expression, then the question of imitating does not at all enter into any reckoning.

While there is a certain truth in the son-of-the-soil theory,—but hardly in the truncated yet curiously assertive daughter-of-the-soil theory,—there is a greater truth that a true poet, and particularly so a Yogi-poet, can enter into any soil with which he may like to identify his consciousness. This is not just a question of empathy but a direct and at the same time intimate oneness, which is also the true method of

knowing the reality of an object. Couple that faculty of a mystic with that of a poet, and then what miracle is there that cannot happen? In the case of Sri Aurobindo this 'lifel spot of erthe' is the Vedic home of the Truth or Land of Infinity itself. Indeed, it would hardly matter if he is not an 'English' poet because the gain is the entire world's. Though in Time, rather accepting Time, he stands above Time. But happily there is so much of 'English' as well in *Savitri*. His identification with the spirit of the language itself has opened out for him riches that it can express more and more, riches which were until then impossible to seize in words. There are explicitnesses and simplicities as much as sharper or finer details or suggestive accounts. If we have Dryden, Pope or Lamb in the following:

Ascending slowly with unconscious steps,
A foundling of the gods she wanders here
Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell
Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise³⁰

Keats abounds fulfilling in several places:

A reflex reason, Nature-habit's glass
Illumined life to know and fix its field...³¹

Or, in a wide sweeping flight,

The Eternal's winging eagle puissances
Surprised in their untracked empyrean
Stooped from their gyres to obey the beck of Thought ..³²

—something which no Romanticism can reach. There is no sentimentalism of Keats's "sick eagle looking at the sky" (*Elgin Marbles*) in these winging puissances surprising our worlds; instead what we have is a certitude of something that they can achieve while answering the call of the godheads of the greater mind. And who else can give us

The magic hut of built-up certitudes
Made out of glittering dust and bright moonshine
In which it shrines its image of the Real...³³

but a Yogi-poet? Take another example of keen observation:

In a broad eve with one red eye of cloud,
Through a narrow opening, a green flowered cleft...³⁴

is simply super-Keatsian. In that atmosphere Savitri joins Satyavan in the forest hermitage; but behind the poetry there is an observation made with an altogether different eye. What we have here is a certain universality of perception, an 'English' island with its own charm and beauty set in some sunlit world of the Spirit. This is a description which does not come by imagination nor by thought nor by force of habit in life's play; it needs another intuitive feeling and association with nature and things and the world around. It is pertinent to note that such a transmutation is possible even in a Rutherfordian Age when nitrogen can be converted into oxygen. These minutiae are a novel enrichment to the tradition of poetry given to us by Sri Aurobindo in whom the past is not dissolved but assimilated and re-created for the revelation of the Future.

6

Then why this difficulty in appreciating or accepting Sri Aurobindo as a poet? A kind of recoil from what is not ours coupled with a strange deep sense of insecurity bordering on insularity, though true, cannot be the only factor for this adamant non-recognition. Perhaps it is a complex, and the only way to get out of it is to discard it by a conscious effort, by opening to wider and suppler sensibilities. The failure of the modern mind is characteristically due to its insensitivity to things supraphysical. It has not the least notion or idea of Overhead Poetry, to such an extent that it cannot identify it even in works that have come down to us. It does recognise that there is something in those works but fails to go to their genuine source. The Theory of Aesthesis based on parameters of the multifold Word in its joyous mellifluous demands a new outlook on things. Everybody is not open to it nor is expected to be open to it, but certainly a perceptive critic cannot neglect or bypass it. Even a well-versed Aurobindonian can miss it.

Syed Mehdi Imam recognises only four forms of English poetry: Classical, Elizabethan, Romantic, and Victorian. He does not accept Modern Poetry because, according to him, it is just a passing phase and will not endure too long. Perhaps; but it has brought a new richness of thought which was never there in the earlier traditions. For his Oxonian enthusiasm Sri Aurobindo also therefore becomes a Victorian, albeit highly refined and sublimated. No doubt, there are certain traits which could belong to this genre of poetry, the Victorian mood and manner. There are pre-Hugoesque modes too, such as "voices of the hue-robed choirs"³⁵ reminding us of the "feathery fliers of the sky" used for birds in the classical convention, or stars marching on their long sentinel routes with spears in their hand³⁶ suggestive of the mediaeval knights or perhaps, more appropriately here, Blake's heroic warriors in his *Tyger*, or, as we could say, it is a kind of futuristic reference to the star-war of our times. About Victorian predilections we have any number of passages dealing with them, for instance, seas and beaches and ports and coastal traffic and commerce and customs and embargo and visa and naval bustle and hubbub upborne by those busy

waters. As an illustrative expression the following line is typical of this manner of Victorianism. In the palace-hall Savitri's parents Aswapati and Malawi are in the company of the heavenly sage Narad who came to Madra all the way from his home in Paradise; there Savitri on returning from her quest makes the announcement about her choice of Satyavan as her life's partner. As soon as she discloses this choice,

Astonished, all sat silent for a space.³⁷

The phrase "for a space" is not very common in present-day usage, neither in poetry nor in creative prose; but in earlier times it was very acceptable, considered literary. We have it in Tennyson's

But Lancelot mused for a little space,

or more appropriately, we remember Keats's *Hyperion*:

...none answered for a space.

Similarly, descriptions like

Close is my father's creeped hermitage
Screened by the tall ranks of these silent kings,
Sung to by voices of the hue-robed choirs
Whose chants repeat transcribed in music's notes
The passionate coloured lettering of the boughs
And fill the hours with their melodious cry.³⁸

or the extent of Dyumatsena's past kingdom—

Through all the tract which from behind these tops
Passing its days of emerald delight
In trusting converse with the traveller winds
Turns, looking back towards the southern heavens,
And leans its flank upon the musing hills .

belong to another period. In fact, in one of his letters Sri Aurobindo speaks of "the habits of an old inspiration and technique"³⁹ to which he deferred at one time. But that kind of expression by itself cannot constitute a fault in the least. The question is: has the poet done a good job of it, creatively, refreshingly, with a definite purpose in the functioning of poetry? If so, that should also answer Kathleen Raine's remark about Sri Aurobindo's "nineteenth century verse". But *Savitri* is an epic crowded with several echoes, Indian and European, ancient and modern, and is full of several

rasas, essences of aesthetic enjoyment in their unadulterated purity, and nothing would be taboo just because it may belong to the forms of the past. This poetry can be ‘modern’ too. The glorious Victorian can be as much a city-dweller with a perfectly urban mind. Thus, for example, ‘nothingness’ becomes ‘the waste stuff’ from which all is made. The ultra-modernism comes out with full violence when

Their bodies born out of some Nihil’s womb
 Ensnare the spirit in the moment’s dreams,
 Then perish vomiting the immortal soul
 Out of Matter’s belly into the sink of Nought.⁴⁰

Or take the miasma-description, Euclidean in precision, epically elaborate, yet Keatsian in execution of art:

Grey forces like a thin miasma creep
 Stealing through chinks in his closed mansion’s doors,
 Discolouring the walls of upper mind
 In which he lives his fair and specious life,
 And leaves behind a stench of sin and death ..⁴¹

Does it not bring out the aesthetic tastes of the moderns fully? And has it not been appropriately used for the purpose with a certain kind of inevitability that is necessary to give exactness to the picture? There is a repulsive uncouthness too

A rally without key of common will,
 Thought stared at thought and pulled at the taut brain
 As if to pluck the reason from its seat
 And cast its corpse into life’s wayside drain;
 So might forgotten lie in Nature’s mud
 Abandoned the slain sentinel of the soul.⁴²

showing the character of Reason governed by the lower Life-force.

Savitri’s modernism does not rest at all in the sordid and the ugly although there is a certain necessity to represent their psychological character in the totality of functioning. The point is, Sri Aurobindo is not the Victorian that some people make of him. If these strains do come they only add to one poem’s assimilated richness. Sri Aurobindo exploits, so to say, everything that can serve tellingly if not revealingly his purpose. Kalidasian moods of seasons and the featurelessness of Nirvana, for example, are as important to it as Homeric similes or the correlative expressions of the Modernists. It is so because *Savitri* is an epic and the standards of short lyrical verses cannot be applied to it. Besides, it is another kind of epic. The Epic of the Universal is full of *rasas*—*madhura*, *karuna*, *vatsalya*, *adbhuta*, *veera*, *bibhatsa*,

shanta, etc. But, at the same time, it is the Epic of the Individual,—and also the Transcendental,—with the Rasa of Shantam pervading all through. It is in this great Silence that the Epic was born,—Silence the true home of Overhead Poetry. To really appreciate it one has to enter into it.

7

But the modern mind has no patience for that; that is its tragedy. It even declares that now the days of the epic are over. A Marathi critic goes a step farther and says that poetry, of whatever kind it be, is altogether inadequate to express all the facets of our life, particularly the facets of the complex modern life with its tensions and anxieties. In his opinion the best mode of expression is a novel which provides a wide canvas to represent our issues and our joys. Maybe he has said this in the context of the type of poetry that is presently written in Marathi. In the mood of a rightful reaction against Victorianism the modern mind has certainly brought mental profundity and penetration which were very desirable. It has won a new freedom also. When it touches Eliot-wise the Gita's core that "the time of death is every moment" and therefore one must remember Krishna always, we have here another possibility opened out for poetry, a possibility of the inner mental expression coming to the fore with its gifts even of the occult. But, unfortunately, in that search for newer moods and manners it leaned on Freudian psychology and got totally misled. It took the path of the unconscious Nirvana. The Overhead planes remained sealed; in fact, they started receding.

The rise of Modernism, though in its "final orientation" as yet undetermined, was necessary against the "Victorian type". "The Victorian period," writes Sri Aurobindo, "for all its activity and fruitfulness was by no means one of those great intellectual humanistic ages which the world will look back to with a satisfied sense of clarity and uplifting. The great flood of free thinking, free inquiry, scientific and artistic vivacity, the rapid breaking of fresh ground, the noble political enthusiasms which stirred France and Germany and Italy and created a new force of democratic humanism in Russia, swept in vain past the English shores defended by their chalk cliffs and downs of self-content or only broke across them in a few insignificant waves. It is the most unlovely and uninspiring period of the English spirit. Never was the aesthetic sense so drowned in pretentious ugliness, seldom the intelligence crusted in such an armoured imperviousness to fine and subtle thinking, the ebb of spirituality so far out and low.... Poetry flourishes best when it is the rhythmical expression of the soul of its age, of what is greatest and deepest in it, but still belongs to it, and the poetry of this period suffers by the dull smoke-laden atmosphere in which it flowered;... there is still something sickly in its luxuriance, a comparative depression and poverty in its thought, a lack in its gifts, in its very accomplishment a sense of something not done"⁴³ Something had to be done and Modern Poetry was that attempt. But modernism was a total reaction against all traditions. Even against future

possibilities. Therefore, when Sri Aurobindo essentially leaps from the traditions into the Overhead, he gets bypassed in the current aesthesis. Obviously, this is a passing phase and the aesthesis will have to change and gather itself into a future form. After all, Modern Poetry has not delivered the goods and man's deepest aspirations have remained unfulfilled "Empty and barren is the sea," but it must find new waters and new tides. Kathleen Raine's realisation that

Behind the tree, behind the house, behind the stars
Is the presence that I cannot see

is also her hope

8

There is a hope. The post-WWII world is a different place. Things are changing rapidly and the Westerner has not found himself in it as yet. Notwithstanding his technological advancements in the world of the atom, or in the world of outer space, or in the gigantism of supercomputers, he is still confused and bewildered. He has lost the values though he has acquired a lot of wealth, a lot of coins. In the loud noise of hurrying if not hasteful modernity, in the maddening chase of out-reaching great distances or lengths of time what we have lost is the music of the invisible spheres. With the telescope of the mind what we have seen are only the glimmerings of the distant fireflies, what we have probed are the surface details of the subconscious. But nowhere is there poetry and if at all it is there it is so thin. The Western critic is just an adult of the city and has lost his mother. It is good to remember the caveat of Jaime d'Angulo's novel *The Lariat*:

Beware, white man, of playing with magic of the primitive. It may be strong medicine. It may kill you. Ye, sons and daughters, foster children of cities, if you would go to the wilderness in search of your Mother, be careful and circumspect, lest she lures you into her secret place, whence ye may not come back.

The Friar goes to reform the primitives but is stunned by their remarkable beliefs and intuitions. There are other things than images and symbols. There are lands and lands beyond this 'littel spot of erthe'. Poetry is not only image and symbol, but also sound and silence; if there is sight's sound, there is also sound's sight. And when *le Musicien de Silence* becomes one with *le Musicien de Son* we have an unsurpassable marvel. Listen to Ezra Pound: "When we know more of overtones we shall see that the tempo of every masterpiece is absolute, and is exactly set by some further law of rhythmic accord. Whence it should be possible to show that any given rhythm implies about it a complete musical form, perfect, complete. Ergo, the rhythm set in a line of

poetry connects its symphony, which, had we a little more skill, we could score for orchestra.”

If one is deaf to these sounds, to these rhythmic accords, to the happinesses that intend to rush out from the creative possibilities not just of the easy-come but inevitable Word, then what can the poor symbol do? And in the Overhead Poetry as proposed and most convincingly demonstrated by Sri Aurobindo what we have are the perfect rhythm, thought-substance, and the soul-vision fused into one, the supreme Mantra itself

People want to tell us that Sri Aurobindo was a fine philosopher perhaps, but not a poet. But he himself said that even before he started writing philosophy and doing politics, or even doing Yoga, he wrote poetry from his childhood.

I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the Yoga and came to Pondicherry—I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher.⁴⁴

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

Notes and References

30 *Ibid*, p 135

31 *Ibid*, p 148

32 *Ibid*, p 270

33 *Ibid*, p 285

34 *Ibid*, p 466

35 *Ibid*, p 402

36 *Ibid*, p 401.

37 *Ibid*, p 424

38 *Ibid*, p 402

39 *Ibid*, p. 745.

40 *Ibid*, p 494

41 *Ibid*, p 480

42 *Ibid*, p 490

43. *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, pp 133-34

44 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, p 374

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of October 2000)

The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real

IN THE second and third cantos of Book Ten, Savitri defends the irrepressible idealism of the dreamer in man against Death's cynical realism. Her adversary supports himself alternately by arguments drawn from scientific materialism and ascetic spirituality, besides appealing to the discouraging facts of common experience. Savitri answers him with a deeper interpretation of the nature of man, the truth of love, the purpose of evolution and the relation between the world and the Divine.

Most of the longer speeches in these two cantos were written in 1946-47. In these pages, a major part of the history of life and thought is summed up in its essence and re-evaluated with reference to fundamental questions about the meaning of existence. The setting of this debate is "the dream twilight of the ideal", an elusive region which corresponds to the higher yearnings and formations of the heart and mind that are perpetually baffled when they seek concrete realisation.

But in the tenuous domain of mental ideals, there could be no decisive outcome. Death can show the element of illusion in these formations, but cannot disprove the truth to which they point. Savitri vindicates that truth, yet declares that she herself does not belong to this realm.

Advance, O Death,
Beyond the phantom beauty of this world,
For of its citizens I am not one.

In the facsimile in the present issue, the last lines of this speech can be seen at the top of the page. The manuscript is an early version of "Twilight", the fifth of six cantos that formed, along with an epilogue, the text of *Savitri* half-way through the initial period of its composition (1916-20). Sri Aurobindo dictated the final revision of this passage probably in late 1946 or early 1947. He left this particular speech almost as it was, only adding some lines and changing a few words here and there. But how much the final form of Book Ten differs, as a whole, from the early manuscripts of "Twilight" is suggested by the fact that the next lines seen in the facsimile eventually came to be separated from this speech by twenty-five pages.

Sri Aurobindo revised the concluding line of the speech by dictation. In the line he had written in the manuscript, Death was addressed as "god".

I cherish, god, the fire and not the dream

The revision consisted merely of changing the punctuation and the capitalisation and

Beyond the phantom beauty of this world;
 + For of its citizens I am not one;
 I cherish God, the fire, and not the dream"
 see O.P.

CANTO II

Section

(2) Onward they journeyed through the drifting ways

- Vaguely companioned by the glimmering mist.
 She ceased, and all impelled wind fled on:
 Still was the order of these worlds reversed,

(1)

She mortal led, the god and spirit obeyed,
 For she behind was leader of their march
 And they in front were followers of her will
 Around her the pale magic twilight moved,
 But faster now all fled as if perurbed,
 Escaping from the clearness of her soul
 Then rang again a calmer cry of death
 It bore no more its first tremendous sound,
 But seemed like life in its enormous field
 Striving for ever and achieving naught
 Because of birth and change, its mortal powers
 By which it tests: around old tempests fixed
 It turns in a wide circling race and seems
 As if its course for ever wheeled unchanged.

she
poured of the vanity of the gains we win,

Presided by ~~the~~ ^{her} ~~lack~~ of ignorance and doubt
 The earth's mind sinks and it despairs and looks

6/11
X X

Old, ~~wary~~ and discouraged on its work
 Yet was all nothing then or vainly achieved?
 Some great thing had been done, some light, some power
 Delivered from the huge Inconscient's ^{grasp} ~~clutch~~;
 It has emerged from night, it sees its dawn
 Crying for ever though no dawn can stay.
 This change was in the godhead's far-flung voice;

substituting “not God” for “and not”. But these small alterations had a dramatic effect. The line became:

I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream

K. D. Sethna has commented on the consequences of this revision:

The full potentiality of the penetrating revelatory idea is released, the expression acquires the utmost intensity, the rhythmic movement an absolute concentration. And in the closing phrase, with its capitalised “G” and the term “God” ringing out twice, the speaker’s soul at its profoundest is laid bare and startlingly suggests without the least veil that even in spirituality there can be a crucial choice between divine truths, on which may hinge the entire destiny of man the evolutionary aspirant.¹

In the early manuscript, Savitri’s insistence on the fiery authenticity of the spirit’s Truth, rejecting the illusory dream-aspect of human ideals, led directly to a phase of the dialogue that is now found in Book Ten, Canto Four, “The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real”. Choosing the fire rather than the dream as the symbol of her aspiration, she compelled Death to see her as a force to be reckoned with. Consequently, he shifts his ground. He no longer disputes the intrinsic validity of her aims, but questions the wisdom and practicality of seeking to impose them on this imperfect world, now or in the foreseeable future.

In Death’s speech on the next page of the manuscript, he dwells on the danger of disturbing the established order with ideas and forces for which the earth is not ready:

See how all shakes when the gods tread too near!¹

He advises patience and caution, warning against any premature attempt to change things

Be calm and tardy in the slow wise world.²

The very sound of Death’s voice is altered as he abandons his former aggressive posture. No longer the thunderous roar that had filled with dread the kingdom of eternal night, it loses also the sharp edge of irony that assailed the mind’s idealism. Death takes on now the voice of life itself in the endless cycles of its frustrated endeavour. But behind the new note of resignation that is heard, there is still a formidable resistance to the acceptance of a higher law.

The manuscript page reproduced here shows a stage in the composition of *Savitri* when no change of setting yet corresponded to the change in Death’s tone and the shift in the focus of the dialogue. Only a single twilight was described, not the double twilight found in the present Book Ten. But already there were some lines that later

developed into the transitional passage at the end of Canto Three. (They were cancelled during the dictated revision of the manuscript shown in the facsimile, since a subsequent expanded version was used for the final text.) The vague twilight of half-enlightened ideals is depicted here as slipping away from the clear vision of Savitri, who at this point is effectively in command:

She ceased and all compelled went gliding on.
 Still was the order of those worlds reversed,
 The mortal led, the god and spirit obeyed,
 For she behind was leader of their march
 And they in front were followers of her will.
 Onward they journeyed through the drifting ways
 Vaguely companioned by the glimmering mists.
 Around her the pale magic twilight moved,
 But faster now all fled as if perturbed,
 Escaping from the clearness of her soul.

The final turning-point approaches, when Death will be defeated or transformed and mind's twilight fade into the spiritual sunlight already radiating from Savitri's soul. But it would take Sri Aurobindo some thirty years from the time when he wrote these lines until he formulated the definitive account of this victory. His revision of Book Ten, Canto Four in the 1940s will be discussed in the next instalment. There it will be shown how the distinction between Overmind and Supermind, which had not yet been made when Sri Aurobindo began to write *Savitri*, was introduced in the middle and later phases of the composition of the epic. It figures most prominently in this canto where it is essential to the spiritual truth of the culminating event.

First, the origin and significance of "the dream twilight of the earthly real" itself must be explained. As has already been indicated and can be seen from the facsimile, there was no such second twilight in the version of "Canto V. Twilight" from which a page is reproduced here. After the lines quoted above, we find a passage introducing a speech of Death that in the final text occurs several pages into Book Ten, Canto Four. Here only a change in Death's voice is described, not a change of scene. But in the creative process of poetry—as in the process of cosmic creation according to the Sankhya theory—sound arises first, images and forms afterwards. What was heard first in the tone of Death's voice, as he identifies himself with the toiling spirit of life on earth, came to be visualised by the poet as a dreamlike panorama of fleeting forms in the twilight of the "earthly real". Most of the description of this twilight was written soon after the manuscript shown here.

The remainder of the page seen in the facsimile can be transcribed as follows:

Then rang again a calmer cry of Death.
 It bore no more its first tremendous sound,

But seemed like Life in its enormous field
 Toiling for ever and achieving nought
 Because of birth and change, its mortal powers
 By which it lasts around old termposts fixed
 It turns in a wide circling race and seems
 As if its course for ever wheeled unchanged
 Assured of the vanity of the gains she won,
 Pressed by the load of ignorance and doubt
 Which knowledge seems but to increase, growth to enlarge,
 The earth's mind sinks and it despairs and looks
 Old, weary and discouraged on its work.
 Yet was all nothing then or vainly achieved?
 Some great thing has been done, some light, some power
 Delivered from the huge Inconscient's grasp
 It has emerged from night, it sees its dawns
 Circling for ever though no dawn can stay
 This change was in the godhead's far-flung voice

The "foiled cinema of lit shadowy shapes" that unrolls in the opening paragraph of Book Ten, Canto Four, illustrates in the manner of a stupendous motion picture this aspect of life "Toiling for ever and achieving nought". The sense of futility it induces is mitigated by the perception that perhaps, after all, "Some great thing has been done ..." Yet in the end, Death's pessimism may seem overwhelmingly justified by the spectacle that is summed up in the concluding lines of the first section of "The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real":

The rolling cycles passed and came again,
 Brought the same toils and the same barren end,
 Forms ever new and ever old, the long
 Appalling revolutions of the world.

Against this awesome backdrop, the issue between Savitri and Death has finally to be decided.

Like "the dream twilight of the ideal", this too is a "dream twilight". Exactly what kind of reality should be ascribed to these twilight realms is difficult to say, in the absence of an explicit commentary by Sri Aurobindo. The description of them as "dream twilights" and "symbol worlds" and their close resemblance to aspects of earthly life suggest that these are not typical planes that exist in their own right in the hierarchy of the worlds, as do the subtle-physical, vital and mental planes that Aswapati passes through in Book Two. A clue to their status in the scheme of things may perhaps be found in Sri Aurobindo's recognition of the capacity of man's image-creating faculty to produce "environments of a half-unreal character which are rather

self-created envelopes of his conscious mind and life than true worlds”³

If the dreamlike nature of the “twilight of the earthly real” deprives it of a certain kind of objective reality, it makes it all the more symbolic and therefore significant for the purposes of poetry. Being a dream representation of what are usually considered concrete realities, it expressively figures the crux of the problem faced by those who, like Savitri, claim to bring a higher principle into play in the obscure rigidity of material existence

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

1 *Mother India*, August 1981, p 426

2 Cf *Savitri* (1993), p 651, where “calm” has been replaced by “still” in Sri Aurobindo’s final version of this line. On the same page, “See” has become “Lo,” in the previous line

3 This passage in *The Life Divine* (1970, p 790), was first published in the *Arya* in July 1918, around the time when Sri Aurobindo was working on the versions of *Savitri* discussed here

THE QUEST OF NIGHT

NIGHT weaves its gossamer of sound
in subtle scales and essences
of still intents that move
its being...

scorpion its dream
of union in the wood-pile, ant
its grain by grain reduction
of the earth to ant-hill, bird
its brooding call to rest, the death’s-
lamp pyre...

in quest of the Beloved
Light their prey, there rises silently
their cry for bliss, to seize and
swallow whole Her form
their adoration
leaving here a limb, and there
a wing of rapture, stilled

SEYRIL SCHOCHEN

VEDIC YOGA, THE OLDEST FORM OF YOGA

YOGA is a comprehensive set of spiritual practices designed to enable us to realize the greater universe of consciousness that is our true nature. The term Yoga means to unite, coordinate, harmonize, or transform. It refers to linking all aspects of our being, from the physical body to our highest intelligence, with the true or universal Self that dwells within the heart. This process occurs in different forms and stages relative to the condition of the individual and variations of time, place and culture. Vedic knowledge is that knowledge of the Divine or higher Self that the practice of Yoga is seeking to realize. Veda is spiritual wisdom and Yoga is its application.

Yoga has developed over many thousands of years and has evolved into many branches and types. For this reason the older basis of Yoga in the Vedas is not understood by many people today. Today Yoga has been reduced, particularly in the West, to its physical or asana side, and little of the greater tradition is understood. Even in India the Vedic basis of the tradition is seldom given proper attention.

Yet as we move into a new planetary age, such older spiritual traditions are beginning to resurface in the collective mind. As we move forward we must comprehend our origins and reclaim our ancient spiritual heritage. The Vedas contain keys to the perennial wisdom of humanity. The Vedas proclaim that we are all children of light, children of the seers, who have wandered far. In order for us to evolve in consciousness we must revitalize the seeds of our higher evolution that the ancient sages planted within us millennia ago. Hence the relevance of the Vedas must continue to grow and is crucial to the emergence of a new spiritual global culture.

The American Institute of Vedic Studies aims at researching the original Vedic Yoga. In this regard it follows the teachings of Ganapati Muni, the chief disciple of the great South Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, and Ganapati's disciple, Darvarata Vaishvamitra, whom Maharishi Mahesh Yogi once brought to the West and called a great modern Rishi. This Yoga is also connected with the work of the great modern seer-poet Sri Aurobindo, who based his integral Yoga on a Vedic model, and that of Kapali Shastri, an important disciple not only of Sri Aurobindo but also of Ganapati Muni.

The Vedic Yoga is part of an integral tradition that includes classical Yoga, spiritual (not sexual) Tantra and Vedanta, as well as Ayurveda and Vedic Astrology. The Vedic Yoga through Ganapati Muni connects to the Dasha Mahavidya or the Ten Great Forms of the Goddess. It has special affinities with Samkhya and Yoga cosmology and with non-dualistic forms of Vedanta, such as taught by Ramana Maharshi.

There are several other modern Vedic teachers who have contributed to this inner revival of Vedic knowledge including Swami Dayananda Sarasvati of the Arya Samaj, Swami Gangeshwarananda, Pandit Satvalekar, and Jagannatha Mishra, another important disciple of Sri Aurobindo. Their work also has relevance here.

Vedic Yoga

Vedic Yoga is the oldest form of Yoga dating back to the Rīg Veda, which is perhaps the oldest book in the world. It is the oldest Sanskrit text and the oldest work in any Indo-European language. According to the great Yogi Sri Yukteswar, guru of Paramahansa Yogananda, Vedic teachings date back to Satya Yuga or Golden Age over ten thousand years ago

According to the Vedic view, humanity was one in language and religion during the Golden Age. Human beings possessed an innate contact with the Divine Self within and also had telepathic powers and photographic memories. This made books and other media unnecessary. Religious institutions were also not required and no technology was needed either. Human life was spent in Sadhana or spiritual practice and human consciousness freely moved through the domains of cosmic consciousness, remaining in harmony with both nature and the Spirit

At the end of the Golden Age, human spiritual intelligence began to decline. Differences in language along with the growth of the ego brought about an increase of ignorance and division between people. At this time the Vedic teaching was first compiled in an oral tradition to preserve the spiritual knowledge developed in the Golden Age.

The Vedic Yoga was created by numerous Vedic seers of the Angiras and Bhrigu families, of which the most important are the seven great seers Vasishta, Vamadeva, Bharadvaja, Gritsamada, Vishwamitra, Kanwa, and Atri. Through the vision of the Rishis, the Vedas set forth all the main possible spiritual paths for humanity. The Vedas contain a comprehensive key to cosmic evolution as well as to human spiritual unfoldment, unlocking all the laws of the universe.

Vedic language employs powerful mantras to set forth this teaching. They have many different levels of meaning and application. In this regard the Vedic language has a depth and dimension that modern languages, products of the outer mind and ego, cannot approach. Vedic mantras reflect the pattern of cosmic law and the blueprint of cosmic intelligence, through which all that exists can be comprehended in one's inmost consciousness. Vedic mantras contain the prototypes of all knowledge and all powers of creation. Yet to understand and use them correctly requires a special insight. Vedic mantras cannot be grasped by the ordinary intellect, which is why academic renderings of the Vedas are almost useless and breed many distortions

Three Basic Types of Vedic Yoga

The basic Vedic Yoga is threefold and has several important correspondences.

1. Mantra Yoga—Speech—Rīg Veda—Earth
2. Prana Yoga—Prana—Yajur Veda—Atmosphere
3. Dhyana Yoga—Mind—Sama Veda—Heaven

1. Waking State—Agni or Fire—Brahma, Creator
2. Dream—Indra or Lightning—Shiva, Transformer
3. Deep Sleep—Surya or the Sun—Vishnu, Preserver

Mantra Yoga involves developing Mantra Shakti, the power of mantra, through which the mantra becomes alive as a tool of transformation in the mind. From this arises Mantra Sphota, mantric insight, through which the inner meaning of the mantra can be grasped, linking us up with Divine laws. This allows us to understand all forms in the universe as manifestations of the Divine Word, the creative vibration OM. This mantric force sets in motion all other inner energies, not only on an inner level but can also provide mastery over all the forces of nature.

Prana Yoga involves developing Prana or Vidyut Shakti (lightning or electrical force), and Pranic insight (lightning perception). This allows us to work with our vital energy as a manifestation of the energy of consciousness. Mantra becomes Prana as Prana (breath) itself is unmanifest sound. This Prana provides the impetus and vitality for inner transformations.

Dhyana Yoga, or the Yoga of meditation, involves developing Buddhi or awakened intelligence, called Dhi in the Vedas, and its power of truth perception. This allows us to understand the universe and the human being as integral unfoldments of Cosmic Intelligence. This higher intelligence arises through the energization of speech and Prana and brings an extraordinary transformative power into the deepest level of the mind. In Dhyana Yoga the light of truth floods the mind and we come to know the unitary nature of all reality.

The Three Yogas relate to our three basic faculties of speech, Prana and intelligence-dominated mind (Buddhi-predominant Manas). These are not just our ordinary faculties but our ability to develop the Divine Word, the Divine Life and the Divine Mind within us. They relate to the three bodies, the physical, astral (Pranic) and causal (soul or deeper mind).

The Three Vedas correspond to these three Yogas. The Rig Veda, the Veda of mantra, sets forth the basic mantras or seeds of cosmic knowledge. The Yajur Veda, the Veda of sacrifice, shows their application through ritual, which is both external and internal (yogic). The internal ritual is Pranayama. The Sama Veda, the Veda of unification, shows their realization through ecstasy and insight.

The three main Vedic Deities or Devatas correspond to the three types of light. Agni is fire, which is heat or thermogenic light that burns up all negativity and reformulates our nature on a higher level. Indra is lightning, which is light energy or electrical force through which we can ascend and move on a higher level of being. Surya is the Sun, which is pure light or magnetic force that draws us into the omnipresent infinite.

These three forces operate in our three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, and can transform them into states of Divine waking or perception, Divine dream or creation, and Divine rest or peace. These are the three worlds of Earth, Atmosphere

and Heaven, not as external but as internal realities, through which we can grasp all the worlds as formations of our own mind

(To be concluded)

DAVID FRAWLEY

THE AENEID OF VIRGIL, 19 B.C.

The Opening Passage

ARMS, and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,
 And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
 Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.
 Long labours, both by sea and land, he bore,
 And in the doubtful war, before he won
 The Latian realm, and built the destin'd town,
 His banish'd gods restor'd to rites divine,
 And settled sure succession in his line,
 From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
 And the long glories of majestic Rome.
 O Muse! the causes and the crimes relate,
 What goddess was provok'd, and whence her hate,
 For what offense the Queen of Heav'n began
 To persecute so brave, so just a man;
 Involv'd his anxious life in endless cares,
 Expos'd to wants, and hurried into wars!
 Can heav'nly minds such high resentment show,
 Or exercise their spite in human woe?

HEMCOMING

A soft breeze touched me
In a part I cannot find,
A touch of bubbling bliss
That once I must have known,
Damp with a spray from the spring of life
From there where I was no more,
From there where I began to be me
From there where I was love that simply flowed
To one and all,
To touch and heal and set aglow

I must have lost my way indeed
For it was a tauntingly faint memory
And in my innards I feel this something,
A faint tugging, a lost whisper, a fading dream
That cries out again and again
To be merged with its own substance
And pushes me against my will
Into the frothy foam of the ocean,
Into the flushing golds of the sky
And calls out to me.

But my mind is shrouded by my chaotic senses
And so the call gets garbled
Into an unbearable restlessness.
I want to escape it because
I am ignorant
And so I run and run and keep
Running till I am exhausted.
My feet give way, my mind shuts down
And in the miraculous silence of my senses
The restlessness takes on a form,
With tears in my eye and down on my knee
I hear Him say
“Come, my child, come home to me.”

ANAHITA WADIA

BLAKE AND INDIAN THOUGHT

THE voice of eternity for ever rings across the ages; and the ineffable vision of God floats down the endless stream of time. We have eyes; and we see not We have ears, we hear not. But only in a heaven-sent moment there flash across the mind of a lone bold adventurer and watcher of the soul the voice and vision of the beyond. The intuitive perception of a transcendental reality is the outcome of the ceaseless agonizing search of the mystic in quest of the unknown. He has had to pay a heavy price for the rich experience which he gathers from the solitary watch-tower of his being. In his *Four Zoas* Blake describes the priceless nature of one's own splendid spiritual experience.

What is the price of Experience? Do men buy
it for a song,
Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No! it
is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath—his house, his wife,
his children.
Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where
none come to buy,
And in the wither'd field where the farmer
plows for bread in vain. (*Four Zoas*, II, 605-9)

Our forest-dwelling sages of old warred in a heroic manner with the inner forces of darkness and waged many a never-ending battle with the mutinous giant passions that sweep across the mind of man. In the sheer triumph of the spirit, they cried at the top of their voice "Ye sons of the immortal spirit". In the slaying of the monstrous self that raises a huge barrier between us and our Maker, they have found the ultimate freedom of the soul. They have realized that the one stream of life that flows in their veins night and day is the self-same stream that runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

What we need is innocence, which we have lost. It is said that only as a child you can enter the Kingdom of God, but one must know that it does not refer to the instinctive nature of a child, but the innocence gained through a new birth in the soul. While commenting on Blake's *Songs of Innocence* Middleton Murry says that they contain no trace of mawkishness. "That which finds utterance in them is a real innocence, not what we imagine to be the innocence of a child, which cannot be uttered, but the achieved innocence of a reborn man." Meister Eckhart calls the rebirth of the soul into eternity "the eternal rebirth of the soul."

Our sages have regained the lost paradise of their innocence in the laboratory of their own souls. In the wind that blows, in the storm that rages, in the thunder that bellows, in the lightning that flashes, in the waves that dance, in the birds that sing,

and in the many-coloured flowers that bloom and shed their fragrance, they see the signs and symbols of eternity. Every fleeting moment of their existence on earth bears the stamp and signet of immortality.

Blake who is at once a great poet and a profound mystic is endowed with a god-like vision. To him the meanest flower breathes the whispers of immortality. "God is within and without; he is even in the depths of Hell" (*Jerusalem*) In his section, *There is no natural religion* (Second Series) we come across the following luminous statement "He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God He who sees the Ratio only, sees Himself only"

This statement is nothing but an echo of the Vedas and the Upanishads to which Blake must have had definite access. According to Blake, all religions are one As he observes, "as all men are alike (tho' infinitely various), so all religions and all similars, have one source The true Man is the source of the poetic Genius." Seeing the Infinite in all things, it is no wonder that Blake beholds

A world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower.

Blake is vastly indebted to the Hindu creation myths.

Pilco Nanavutty in an article, *William Blake and Hindu Creation Myths*, has made a searching analysis of Blake's indebtedness to our myths. The universal breaking out of the primeval egg and the spider weaving its own web are all ideas taken out of our myths and woven into the texture of Blake's own creations In the *First Book of Urizen*, Blake describes Zoa as wandering over the cities of his creation "in pain and woe".

And wherever he wander'd, in sorrows
Upon the aged heavens,
A cold shadow follow'd behind him
Like a spider's web, moist, cold & dim,
Drawing out from his sorrowing soul.

In *Vala* or *Four Zoas*, as Nanavutty puts it, Blake is even more explicit. The children of Urizen's creation accuse him, crying:

O Spider, spread thy web! Enlarge thy bones
& fill'd
With marrow, sinews and flesh, Exalt thyself,
attain a voice.
Call to thy dark arm'd hosts, for all the sons
of Men muster together
To desolate their cities: Man shall be no
more!

Man's path to freedom lies through utter self-annihilation. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* suggests a way out of a land of blind despair and wild desolation. Through self-restraint, through self-abnegation and through profound compassion, one has to reach the far-off City of God. Blake in his *Milton* sings of the supreme task of slaying the many-headed hydra of our self:

To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the
 Not Human,
 I come in Self-annihilation and the grandeur of
 Inspiration,
 To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith. .
 To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspi-
 ration,
 To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from
 Albion's covering,
 To take off his filthy garments and clothe him
 with Imagination

The great task of Blake is,

To open the eternal worlds: to open the im-
 mortal eyes
 Of man inwards into the worlds of thought
 into eternity
 Ever expanding in the bosom of God, the
 human imagination.

One cannot but share the opinion of De Selincourt when he breaks out in the following strain:

The fountain of Blake's life was his religion. The problem which most deeply engrossed him, both as seer and thinker, was the ultimate problem of all philosophy, the relation of the individual human soul to God

Blake portrays in a remarkable manner in his *Vala or Four Zoas* the Fall from the One. It is all due to a rift in the lute of the four powers. As Saurat in his book *Blake and Modern Thought* suggests, Blake in the human spirit attempts a synthesis of reason (Urizen), imagination (Los), passion (Luvah), and instinct (Tharnas). Such a marvellous synthesis the Sage of Dakshineswar has really achieved in his noble and heroic life which has been reduced to the utter, unalloyed simplicity of an immortal tune. In Blake's *Jerusalem* there is enshrined in all its loveliness and charm his vision of a world reared on love and forgiveness.

What are those golden builders doing? where
 was the burying place
 Of Soft Ethinthus? near Tyburn's fatal Tree?
 is that
 Mild Zion's hill's most ancient promontory,
 near mournful
 Ever weeping Paddington? is that Calvary
 and Golgotha
 Becoming a building of pity and compassion? Lo!
 The stones are pity, and the bricks, well
 wrought affections
 Enamel'd with love and kindness, and the tiles
 engraven gold,
 Labour of merciful hands: the beams and rafters
 are forgiveness:
 The mortar and cement of the work, tears of
 honesty the nails
 And the screws and iron braces are well wrought
 blandishments
 And well contrived words, firm fixing, never forgotten,
 Always comforting the remembrance: the floors,
 humility:
 The ceilings, devotion: the hearths,
 thanksgiving
 Prepare the furniture, O Lambeth, in thy
 pitying looms,
 The curtains, woven tears the sighs wrought
 into lovely forms
 For comfort, there the secret furniture of
 Jerusalem's chamber is wrought.

May the divine vision of Blake float for ever before the eyes of Man May his
 voice ring for ever in his ears.

Four Mighty Ones are in every man: a
 Perfect Unity
 Cannot Exist but from the Universal
 Brotherhood of Eden
 The Universal Man, To Whom be Glory
 Evermore, Amen

(*Four Zoas*, I, 4-6)

R S DESIKAN

(Courtesy. *Vedanta Kesari*, June 1962)

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM—YOGISHRESHTHA

(Continued from the issue of October 2000)

THE passing away of the Prophet on 7 June 632 was mysterious, as it happened only within two years of his success in taking Mecca. Medina remained the political capital, the religious capital was to be Mecca. Political advantage was taken as rumour spread that a clever Jewess, years ago, had poisoned him.

During this period of two years he personally led an expedition against the Greek empire in Syria. A personal example was necessary, since an earlier one led by a subordinate had not met with a decisive victory. The Prophet's own campaign was directed at the weakly held enemy areas. A vast territory, formally under the Greeks, was liberated. An excellent tactician, he did not go for enemy strongholds; a commander must ensure success. Then further success follows, men gain valuable experience and attain high morale. Under him, Moslem forces were extraordinarily up-to-date. The Prophet used artillery. His entrenched defensive position at Medina has earlier perplexed the larger invading confederation of armies. There he had discarded the "practice" of warfare in the open. Battles were not to display heroism, even if to lose.

It is no wonder that after his death, rebellion against Zakat in many parts of Arabia was speedily and ruthlessly suppressed by the Syria-returned Moslem veterans. Nor is it surprising that Moslems led by Khalid, chosen by the Prophet, defeated the Greek armies in two major battles in Syria. By this time, 634 AD, the problems of succession and of intrigues at Medina led to the emergence of the strong man, Omar I, and after him, in 644, Othman of the Omayyad house.

The Prophet had not nominated a successor. He left no son; two had died in infancy; the third, Ibrahim, born of Maria, died within a year, and the Prophet did not live long after this loss. Ali, his cousin, married to Fatmah, the Prophet's daughter, was his next of kin in the male line.

He had fulfilled his mission. He ruled as an absolute autocrat, under Divine guidance, over a free Arabia, with Islam as its religion.

Unlike the prevalent religions, Islam was a path of joy and happiness. The Prophet had lived dangerously but well. He had ordered joyful feasts and gaiety, and fasts were really designed to help his devotees to gain self-control so as to enjoy God's gifts fully and not wallow in them like surfeited pigs.

It may be said that the Prophet's call to his followers to fight,—since there would be gain of earth if victorious, and if not, certain paradise after death in a war,—was the same as that of Krishna in the Gita. Arjuna, in Ch. 2, verse 37, is also reminded of the "Kshatriya's" duty, and, in great detail, about the consequences of shirking battles.

The Gita, however, says that "this world is unreal (transitory) and joyless" (Gita, Ch. 9, verse 33). The Gita, while resolving Arjuna's conflict, offers lasting "peace", but no happiness in life.

Islam (615-632), on the other hand, is the only religion that indicates not only rightful duties but rightful joys in life on earth. There are many firsts: the most significant of them was the "right" for women when elsewhere then, and in centuries to come, women were treated and continued to be treated as "chattels". Old parents also inherited under Islam.

Thus, when the Prophet claimed that he "was the seal of all Prophets", signifying that after him no other "prophets" would be required, the Prophet of Islam not only either assumed or inspired the verses of the "Atharvaveda", where the name "Mohammad" is attributed to the highest "angel" and the term "Allah" to the "Supreme Deity", but also laid down in the Koran ("Collection from the Mother of all Books in Heaven"):

- (a) a detailed/comprehensive conduct of man and his ethical requirements detailed in the Koran, XVII, 23-40;
- (b) A religion of happiness;
- (c) A system of physical movements with prayers so that "openings" come from subtle contacts with the Reality without;
- (d) The doctrines of "sunnah" (manner of life) and "qiyas" (analogy) as applied to the Koran;
- (e) The doctrine of "Ijma", the universal consent.

A vast literature sprang up on what constitute the "sunnah", the "qiyas" and the "ijma", and will continue to do so. There are many features that are intriguing.

It is known that only at Medina did the Prophet convert, when the person loudly proclaimed the "Creed".

Exactly when the "sunnah" became the "manner of life" of others including the conquered is not known.

Similarly, the concepts of "ijma" and "qiyas" changed their universal application exclusively to the Moslem society. The Believer was taken as a professing "Moslem", all others even with "Books & Prophet" became "unbelievers". Thus the revelation in the Koran that unbelievers can acquire no merit, however moral their actions, instead of seeming to refer to pure "rationalists" and "philosophers" who rejected "faith", came to refer to all non-Moslems. Thus the world turned out to consist of two parts: the Moslems and the "unbelievers".

In other words, after the Prophet passed away (632), while Caliphs had no "right" for revelations from God, the religion of "surrender to God" became subordinated to the intellect and reason of Moslems.

Perhaps we did not understand the Prophet of Islam when he talked about his being the "final seal of Prophets." Perhaps we do not understand what Sri Aurobindo meant by the Prophet having been a "Yogishreshtha". Did he or did others "unseal" something for the entry to the pre-existing vast knowledge that is being "discovered" and "invented"? Surely, the knowledge and the technology, call it of space, of the

nuclear, the microbiological, the genetic, the oceanic—call whatever we like the vast explosion of modern science—these have somewhere been already awaiting to be contacted by the human genus.

All this happened in the short space of 2000 years or so of human existence out of about a million years.

That ever remains a great mystery

In solving that mystery, unknown to us, spiritual forces perhaps act Perhaps leading man to a godhead? That anyway can be a legitimate belief, justified by history and reports of invisible works of Yogis, as only Yogis know.

(Concluded)

GUNINDRA LAL BHATTACHARYA

A CORRECTION

Smt. Suprobhat Bhattacharya writes:

“There is a major mistake on page 542 of the July issue in the 1st paragraph. My husband was shot and dragged across the India-East Pakistan border on 4.4.1961, ten years before the Bangladesh liberation movement, while on intelligence gathering duty. No war was on, hence there is no question of his being a ‘prisoner of war’. The challenge to his morale was doubled because our Prime Minister blithely announced in Parliament that it was none of the government's responsibility because he was a retired officer, though he was very much on the active payroll and on official duty! He was even asked by our Deputy High Commissioner in Dacca to submit a mercy petition to the Pakistani President, which he flatly refused to do because it would bring dishonour to India. Instead, single-handed he drafted an application to the High Court and then to the Supreme Court of Pakistan which embarrassed their government so severely that the President reduced the 8 years rigorous imprisonment to 4 years and released him. As he was not allowed any books, our son Pradip, then 14, used to type out chapters from *The Life Divine* and mail them with our letters. Later we could send him the book when a lawyer was allowed to meet him.”

THE MANY-SPLENDURED ART OF SVETOSLAV ROERICH

WHAT a man does is a spontaneous outflow of what he essentially is. Svetoslav Roerich's was a radiant personality, as if his soul was shining on his face. He had a special aura around him. People who knew him personally will vouch for what a wonderful delight it was not only to converse with him or to hear him but even to be merely near him, to simply shake hands with him and to receive his genial happy smile.

The art that flowed out of him had the splendour of the splendid person that he was.

In the world of art it is not always that the quality of life of the artist is in consonance with the supreme quality of his art. We have the example of Vincent van Gaugh, Salvador Dali or even of one of our greatest Masters of Music: Ludwig Van Beethoven. Their life was far from normal, often intensely unhappy, sometimes schizophrenic—while their art reached great heights of technical and inspirational excellence.

In the case of Dr. Svetoslav Roerich there was a rare harmony between his life and his art. He was a deeply spiritual man in the true sense of the word. His art carried the stamp of his luminous inner being. It was like the pure sparkling Ganges flowing out of the Himalayas.

Svetoslav's life was beautiful, his art was even more beautiful.

While his father's paintings are like windows large and small opening on iridescent snow-covered peaks against varying colours of the sky with sometimes small human figures in the foreground as if tiny by contrast and in awe of the majesty of the mountains which are firmly seated like established Gods—in Svetoslav's paintings there is a greater element of humanism. His works may broadly be divided into four kinds:

1. Mountains, sea and sky and landscapes—all redolent with vibrant colours.
2. Living portraits of a vast range of people from the most famous to the simplest folk.
3. Imaginative paintings with a spiritual message, and
4. Scenes from Indian life.

To the first group belong: *The Messenger*—a large canvas of a fiery orange cloud. A rider on horseback is rushing past. Both seem to carry a message of progress. *Towards the Valley of Spiti* has light violet and pale yellow peaks with floating clouds and no sign of any vegetation. It has a touch of other-worldliness. *Kanchenjunga in the Morning* shines with the morning glow while its companion painting *Kanchenjunga in the Evening* holds within its green and purple shades the perfect moment after sunset. In *Evening in Rajputana* a tender figure of a girl is ensconced in a brilliant yellow and purple sky. *Sagorica* or *The Daughter of the Sea*, depicts the roaring waves of the ocean out of which emerges an ethereal figure,

blending with the waters around. *Spring in the Kulu Valley* has pale blossoming trees against a purple cliff while mountain girls carry hay on their backs

Of the portraits the most exquisite are those of his wife Mme. Devika Ranı, the First Lady of the Indian Silver Screen. Her beauty through his eyes becomes immortal. The portraits of Roshan Vajeevdar, a Bharatnatyam dancer of renown, throb with life. Begum Asgari Khadir sits pensively by the side of a green pool. Olive trees can be seen in the background. It is a picture of peace and serenity. The rippling gold border of Asgari's *lehenga* shows the deft hand of the artist. *Raya Bogdanova* the Russian lady is beautiful in utter simplicity. *My Country is Beautiful* is the portrait of Jaya—the garden maid. When seen intently her lips appear to move into a gentle smile. Several portraits of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr S Radhakrishnan, Dr Roerich's own father and mother, and finally Smt. Indira Gandhi add to a seemingly never ending list. There are several paintings of tribal people set in their natural surroundings.

One of the most important of the spiritual paintings is *Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself*—a depiction of Lord Jesus Christ. His magnificent deep blue eyes evoke spontaneous veneration. "When shown in Moscow," Dr. Roerich said, "visitors laid flowers before this painting and stood watching with tear-filled eyes." Another equally large painting is titled. *Angels will Sing Again*—the ever optimistic Dr. Roerich believed in better times for the world. *Whither Humanity?—Humanity Crucified—The Release* form a Triptych with religious innuendoes. *The Hermit* shows a Yogi in ecstasy. In *Sacred Words* we are shown a waterfall by the side of which a Rishi is teaching a young and eager disciple

India was very close to Dr. Roerich's heart. Scenes from the cities and villages of India fill a large number of his paintings. *Red Earth* is a scene from Kerala. This painting has a unique opalescent quality. In *The Sacred Flute* we see a beautiful buffalo listening to the flute of a shepherd. *Shadows of the Past* leads us to the interior of a haunted house. Shades of green, blue and purple are very effectively used. Shadowy figures of women are shown rushing away.

Many of the above-mentioned paintings can be seen at the Roerich Gallery at Chitra Kala Parishad in Bangalore.

Dr. Roerich's contribution to Art is prolific. Thousands of paintings, studies, sketches were made by him. They adorn Art Galleries all over the world. Suffice it to say that Dr. Roerich's world of art abounds in exquisite beauty, glowing colour and an infinite variety

Born in a highly aristocratic family in St. Petersburg on 23rd October 1904, 'Svetic' as he was known in childhood, enjoyed the rare privilege of having exceptionally enlightened parents. His mother Mme Helena Ivanovna Roerich was deeply spiritual. His father Prof. Nicholas Roerich, world renowned artist, scientist, thinker, philosopher, explorer, poet and educator, was above all a great humanist.

In 1918 the family moved to London where Svetoslav studied Art for two years and held Art Exhibitions along with his father. It is here that the Roerichs first met

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore with whom a life-long friendship was formed.

From England the Roerichs moved to New York where was founded the Nicholas Roerich Museum and The Banner of Peace—a movement in which many countries of the world participated. It sought to preserve monuments of history, art and beauty in times of war as world heritage. Svetoslav studied Architecture at Harvard University while his elder brother George's field of interest was Philosophy, Indology, Linguistics, History, Archaeology and oriental Studies.

In 1923 the Roerich family first visited India, the land of their spiritual dream. From Ceylon through Pondicherry they moved up North to Darjeeling and Kalimpong where eventually they settled in a beautiful house called 'Crookety'. From 1925 to 1928 they went on a long expedition travelling through Central Asia, Mongolia, China, Tibet, etc. This expedition sponsored by the American Government gave Prof Nicholas Roerich ample opportunity to paint hundreds of paintings of the mountains and monasteries of the region. Dr. George Roerich was a great scholar and authored many books besides a travelogue *Trails to Inmost Asia*. His mother studied Buddhism and wrote books on Buddhist legends. Such were the family surroundings of Svetoslav Roerich. The beauty of his soul flourished in such an encouraging and congenial family atmosphere.

It was in the early 40s that the Roerichs bought a house in Kulu, Himachal Pradesh. Stunning was the beauty of the glittering peaks seen from their verandah. In 1942 Pandit Nehru with young Indra visited and stayed with them in Manali. Svetoslav painted Nehru as a visionary—a dreamer of a new coming India. In 1945 Svetoslav married Devika Rani. It was a combination of Art and Beauty.

Soon after, this exceptional couple moved to Bangalore buying a small farm from the Anderson Brothers in the southern outskirts of Bangalore. The Anderson Brothers had tried in vain growing various crops on their land. Finally they got a hardy plant from Mexico: the linaloe tree. This plant flourished. Thus was started the linaloe plantation. Hundreds of saplings were imported and planted. A small factory was set up for the extraction of the precious essential oil obtained from the fragrant berries of these trees. Dr. Roerich and Devika Rani moved in here and with their graceful touch and hard work enlarged this Estate manifold bringing everything into a perfect rhythm and order.

A six hundred years old banyan tree stands near their house, one tall branch of which looks like a giraffe. The tree houses a small temple of Lord Munishwar. You can make a wish, ring the bell hanging above, and make an offering of a rupee or two. "Your wish will be granted"—Dr. Roerich, a most gracious host, would say to his guests and visitors.

Friends sat on green painted cane chairs, in the green surroundings, in a small clearing in front of their bungalow. To the left was a blossoming garden with unexpected turns and corners here and there; a bower with *Thunbergia Mysorensis* hanging like chandeliers; a cobbled path, at the end of which stood a magnificent rare *Billbergia* plant. Its flamingo-coloured flower became the subject of a beautiful

painting. Seasonal flowers swayed in the breeze wafting the lavender scent of the linaloe trees. To the north of the garden stood the studio surrounded by bright coloured crotons, shimmering silver oaks, flamboyant gulmohar trees and climbers laden with dark orange ixoras. The paths in front led to large placid lakes where descended hundreds of migratory birds. It was an ideal place for an artist couple. But the Roerichs were not satisfied to merely live a paradisaical life at the farm. They came to town regularly to their office at 9-A, Edward Road and actively participated in the cultural life of Bangalore.

One of the most important contributions of Dr. Roerich was the starting of Chitra Kala Parishad. Mr. M. S. Nanjunda Rao who was a regular visitor to the Roerichs was totally and absolutely committed to Art. Thus began this marvellous association and what emerged was the magnificent Chitra Kala Parishad. Mr. Nanjunda Rao was not only a storehouse of the Art, folk-lore and history of Karnataka but also amazingly active, agile, insistent and persistent in getting work done. Like a sincere disciple he took Dr. Roerich's advice on all matters related to the Art Complex which at the start was housed in a small but pretty thatched cottage having a handful of students.

The meteoric rise and growth of Chitra Kala Parishad was due to the sustained hard work of Nanjunda Rao with the unfailing inspiration, guidance and support of Svetoslav Roerich and the goodwill of numerous friends and members of the Government.

The one advice Dr. Roerich gave to his many admirers and visitors was: "Everyday do something better than you did yesterday. Always strive towards the Beautiful." He would add, "...there can be no better resolve than to follow the path of self-perfection and self-development. In this we serve Humanity best, and contribute best to the great Flow of Evolution, the Unfolding of our Consciousness."

He often quoted Plato:

From beautiful images we shall go to beautiful thoughts,
from beautiful thoughts to a beautiful life and
from a beautiful life to Absolute Beauty.

Svetoslav Roerich was a worshipper of Beauty. He loved nature. He saw the Spirit of Beauty that resides in all creation. However, he cautioned us: "Knowledge of Goodness alone, cognition of the Beautiful alone, will not by themselves give us true Happiness. One must learn how to apply both these in our everyday life, one must learn how to live Beautifully."

In his gentle and kind voice he would say, "Let us beautify our life, let us carry the message of Beauty into every heart and every home. Let us make the pursuit of the Beautiful our daily prayer."

A deeply spiritual person, Dr. Roerich believed in the tremendous power of prayer. He wrote

"Inner Joy, indescribable, immeasurable comes when our spirit rises to contact

the higher planes of existence. This feeling comes from within, kindled, so to say, in us by the tuning in to the higher vibrations of spiritual existence and experience. This joy spreads its own silvery light that envelopes our perceptions. Prayer, the strong impulse and effort of self, directed towards the Realms of Infinite Existence can awaken, can kindle in us a kind of energy like a flame, a fire, a certain radiance which will make itself felt, like waves of joy, of happiness, a fulfilment and an awareness. Inner prayer is but that silent awareness.”

A great admirer of the Buddha, when asked what emotion guided his life the most, he thoughtfully answered “Compassion.” He would tell us of the last words of the Buddha spoken to his disciple Ananda.

O Ananda, human parts and powers must dissolve,
But the Truth remains for ever.
Work out your salvation with diligence.

In the afternoon of 30th January 1993, Dr. Roerich breathed his last. A loving soul left leaving his vast works behind for all to enjoy.

In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life's cherished guests are left outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.¹

In such moments Dr. Roerich wrote three volumes of diary notes on Life and Art. His poetic compositions are delicate. They express the subtlety and nuances of his feelings. He writes.

To these hills,
To these beautiful endless hills,
I shall go—
In these hills beyond,
I shall find my Soul
Why is it that here I see God
And my Soul expands into the Worlds Beyond?

Colours naturally fascinated him. A fluttering butterfly evoked the following:

Fly, beautiful Creature of God,—
fly away,
I now restore thee to the fields
from which thou camest

1 *Savitri*, p 47

Let all the sparkle of thy wings
Enrich the glorious gift of life
The Beautiful, the Joyous—
Fly, take all thy gems into the waiting world,
Shed Joy and Beauty
And enrich the eye
To catch the gleam and flash
Of God's immeasured gifts.

Svetoslav Roerich shed the light of knowledge and love on all around him. An international figure, he loved India and Bangalore was dearly close to his heart. His cultural contribution to the artistic life of Bangalore is beyond measure. Here was a man who was truly rich in glory and yet so humble that he met the high and the low with the same respect as if it were the divine in each that he greeted. These lines from Sri Aurobindo aptly describe Dr. Roerich. In him

Each act was a perfection and a joy ..
The heart was a torch lit from infinity...
His gaze was the regard of eternity. ²

ADITI VASISHTHA

² *Ibid*, pp 128, 676, 682

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of September 2000)

EARLY in 1920, Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, who had been sentenced to transportation for life in the Andamans, was released. He visited a number of spiritual centres including the Prabartaka Sangha of Motilal Roy in Chandernagar and what he saw filled him with disappointment. He wrote to Sri Aurobindo voicing his mood and also asking to be initiated into his Yoga though he was far from being fit. Sri Aurobindo's reply was a classic: though the developments and trends that it surveyed were of long ago, there is a certain current relevance in many of the passages, meriting a reproduction of the letter in full (translated from the original in Bengali). Besides, the autobiographical element in the letter is specially valuable for the light it sheds on his inner state and outer plans as they stood at that point in time.

The two themes of the letter are yoga and politics in that order. there is so much intertwining that the two themes become one in the end. Sri Aurobindo had engaged in active politics from 1903 to 1910, and he had commenced Yoga in earnest in about 1904; there had been circling in many directions, there had been realisations; and at Pondicherry he had at last deciphered "the ten limbs of the body" of his Integral and Supramental Yoga and was trying to realise them. And it was only after the complete realisation that he could think of direct political action.

The fulness of yogic realisation, first; then, perhaps, political action in Bengal. And yet, although Bengal might be the destined theatre of the experimentation, all India—the great world itself—would share the beneficent results of Sri Aurobindo's action.

The following extracts from Sri Aurobindo's reply to his brother written from Pondicherry dated April 7, 1920 throw light on the aims and processes of the Supramental Yoga.

"First, about your yoga. You want to give me the charge of your yoga, and I am willing to accept it. But this means giving it to Him who, openly or secretly, is moving me and you by His divine power. And you should know that the inevitable result of this will be that you will have to follow the path of yoga which He has given me, the path I call the Integral Yoga. This is not exactly what we did in Alipur jail, or what you did during your imprisonment in the Andamans. What I started with, what Lele gave me, what I did in jail—all that was a searching for the path, a circling around looking here and there, touching, taking up, handling, testing this and that of all the old partial yogas, getting a more or less complete experience of one and then going off in pursuit of another. Afterwards, when I came to Pondicherry, this unsteady condition ceased. The indwelling Guru of the world indicated my path to me completely, its full theory, the ten limbs of the body of the yoga. These ten years he

has been making me develop it in experience; it is not yet finished. It may take another two years. And so long as it is not finished, I probably will not be able to return to Bengal. Pondicherry is the appointed place for the fulfilment of my yoga—except indeed for one part of it, that is, the work. The centre of my work is Bengal, but I hope its circumference will be the whole of India and the whole world.

“Later I will write to you what my path of yoga is. Or, if you come here, I will tell you. In these matters the spoken word is better than the written. For the present I can only say that its fundamental principle is to make a synthesis and unity of integral knowledge, integral works and integral devotion and raising this above the mental level to the supramental level of the Vijnana, to give it a complete perfection. The defect of the old yoga was that, knowing the mind and reason and knowing the Spirit, it remained satisfied with spiritual experience in the mind. But the mind can grasp only the fragmentary; it cannot completely seize the infinite, the undivided. The mind’s way to seize it is through the trance of samadhi, the liberation of moksha, the extinction of nirvana, and so forth. It has no other way. Someone here or there may indeed obtain this featureless liberation, but what is the gain? The Spirit, the Self, the Divine is always there. What the Divine wants is for man to embody Him here, in the individual and in the collectivity—to realise God in life. The old system of yoga could not synthesise or unify the Spirit and life, it dismissed the world as an illusion or a transient play of God. The result has been a diminution of the power of life and the decline of India. The Gita says: *utsideyur ime loka na kuryam ced aham*, “These peoples would crumble to pieces if I did not do actions.” Verily “these peoples” of India have gone down to ruin. What kind of spiritual perfection is it if a few ascetics, renunciates, holy men and realised beings attain liberation, if a few devotees dance in a frenzy of love, god-intoxication and bliss, and an entire race, devoid of life and intelligence, sinks to the depths of darkness and inertia? First one must have all sorts of partial experience on the mental level, flooding the mind with spiritual delight and illuminating it with spiritual light; afterwards one climbs upwards. Unless one makes this upward climb, this climb to the supramental level, it is not possible to know the ultimate secret of world-existence; the riddle of the world is not solved. There, the cosmic Ignorance which consists of the duality of Self and world, Spirit and life, is abolished. Then one need no longer look on the world as an illusion. The world is an eternal play of God, the perpetual manifestation of the Self. Then is it possible fully to know and realise God—*samagram mam jnatum pravistum*, “to know and enter into Me completely”, as the Gita says. The physical body, life, mind and reason, Supermind, the Bliss-existence—these are the Spirit’s five levels. The higher we climb, the nearer comes a state of highest perfection of man’s spiritual evolution. When we rise to the Supermind, it becomes easy to rise to the Bliss. The status of indivisible and infinite Bliss becomes firmly established—not only in the timeless Supreme Reality but in the body, in the world, in life. Integral existence, integral consciousness, integral bliss blossom out and take form in life. This endeavour is the central clue of my yogic path, its fundamental idea

“But it is not an easy thing. After fifteen years I am only now rising into the lowest of the three levels of the Supermind and trying to draw up into it all the lower activities. But when the process is complete, there is not the least doubt that God through me will give this supramental perfection to others with less difficulty. Then my real work will begin. I am not impatient for the fulfilment of my work. What is to happen will happen in God’s appointed time. I am not disposed to run like a madman and plunge into the field of action on the strength of my little ego. Even if my work were not fulfilled, I would not be disturbed. This work is not mine, it is God’s. I listen to no one else’s call. When I am moved by God, I will move.

“I know that Bengal is not ready. The spiritual flood which has come is for the most part a new form of the old. It is not a real change. But it too was needed. Bengal has been awakening within itself all the old yogas in order to exhaust their ingrained tendencies, extract their essence and with it fertilise the soil. First it was the turn of Vedanta: and doctrine of non-dualism, asceticism, the Illusionism of Shankara, and so forth. Now, according to your description, it is the turn of the Vaishnava religion: the divine Play, love, losing oneself in the delight of spiritual emotion. All this is very old and unsuitable for the new age. It cannot last, for such excitement has no lasting power. But the Vaishnava way has this merit, that it keeps a certain connection between God and the world and gives a meaning to life. But because it is a partial thing, the connection and the meaning are not complete. The sectarianism you have noticed was inevitable. This is the law of the mind, to take one part and call it the whole, excluding all the other parts. The realised man who comes with an idea keeps, even if he leans on the part, some awareness of the whole—although he may not be able to give it form. But his disciples are not able to do this, because the form is lacking. They are tying up their bundles—let them. When God descends completely on the country, the bundles will open of themselves. All these things are signs of incompleteness and immaturity, I am not disturbed by them. Let the force of spirituality have its play in the country in whatever way and through as many sects as there may be. Afterwards we shall see. This is the infancy, the embryonic state, even, of the new age, just a hint, not yet the beginning.

“Then about Motilal’s groups. What Motilal got from me is the first foundation, the base of my yoga—surrender, equality, etc. He has been working on these things; the work is not complete. One special feature of this yoga is that until the realisation has been raised to a somewhat elevated level, the base does not become solid. Motilal now wants to rise higher. In the beginning he had a number of old fixed notions. Some have dropped off, some still remain. At first it was the notion of asceticism—he wanted to create an Aurobindo order of monks. Now his mind has admitted that asceticism is not needed, but the old impression in his vital being has still not been thoroughly wiped out. This is why he advocates renunciation and asceticism while remaining a part of the life of the world. We have to awaken the true soul of India and to do everything in accordance with it. For the last ten years I have been silently pouring my influence into these foreign political vessels and there has been some

result. I can continue to do this wherever necessary. But if I took up that work openly again, associating with the political leaders and working with them, it would be supporting an alien law of being and a false political life. People now want to spiritualise politics—Gandhi, for instance. But he can't get hold of the right way. What is Gandhi doing? Making a hodge-podge called *satyagraha* out of “*Ahimsa paramo dharma*”, Jainism, *hartal*, passive resistance, etc., bringing a sort of Indianised Tolstoyism into the country. The result—if there is any lasting result—will be a sort of Indianised Bolshevism. I have no objection to his work, let each one act according to his own inspiration. But it is not the real thing. If the spiritual force is poured into these impure forms—the wine of the spirit into these unbaked vessels—the imperfect things will break apart and spill and waste the wine. Or else the spiritual force will evaporate and only the impure form remain. It is the same in every field of activity. I could use my spiritual influence, it would give strength to those who received it and they would work with great energy. But the force would be expended in shaping the image of a monkey and setting it up in the temple of Shiva. If the monkey is brought to life it may grow powerful, and in the guise of the devotee Hanuman do much work for Rama—so long as the life and strength remain. But in the temple of India we want not Hanuman but the Godhead, the Avatar, Rama himself.

“I can associate with everyone, but only in order to draw them all on to the true path, while keeping the spirit and form of our ideal intact. If that is not done we will lose our way and the true work will not be accomplished. If we are spread out everywhere as individuals, something no doubt will be done, if we are spread everywhere in the form of a *sangha*, a hundred times more will be accomplished. But the time has not yet come for this. If we try to give it form hastily, it will not be the exact thing I want. The *sangha* will at first be in a diffused form. Those who have accepted the ideal, although bound together, will work in different places. Afterwards, bound into a *sangha* with a form like a spiritual commune, they will shape all their activities according to the Self and according to the needs of the age. Not a fixed and rigid form like that of the old Aryan society, not a stagnant backwater, but a free form that can spread itself out like the sea with its multitudinous waves—engulfing this, inundating that, absorbing all—and as this continues, a spiritual community will be established. This is my present idea, it is not yet fully developed. What is being developed is what came to me in my meditations at Alipur. I shall see what shape it finally takes later. The result is in God's hands—let His Will be done. Motilal's little group is just one experiment. He is looking for the means to engage in trade, industry, agriculture, etc. through his *sangha*. I am giving force and watching. There may be some materials for the future and some useful suggestions to be found in it. Do not judge it by its current merits and demerits or its present limitations. It is now in a wholly initial and experimental stage.

“Next I will discuss some of the specific points raised in your letter. I do not want to say much here about what you write as regards your yoga. It will be more

convenient to do so when we meet. But there is one thing you write, that you admit no physical connection with men, that you look upon the body as a corpse. And yet your mind wants to live the worldly life. Does this condition still persist? To look upon the body as a corpse is a sign of asceticism, the path of nirvana. The worldly does not go along with this idea. There must be delight in everything, in the body as much as in the spirit. The body is made of consciousness, the body is a form of God. I see God in everything in the world. *Sarvam idam brahma, vasudevah sarvamiti* (“All this here is the Brahman”, “Vasudeva, the Divine, is all”)—this vision brings the universal delight. Concrete waves of this bliss flow even through the body. In this condition, filled with spiritual feeling one can live the worldly life, get married or do anything else. In every activity one finds a blissful self-expression of the Divine. I have for a long time been transforming on the mental level all the objects and experiences of the mind and senses into delight. Now they are all taking the form of supramental delight. In this condition there is the perfect vision and experience of Sachchidananda—the divine Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

“Next, in reference to the divine community, you write, “I am not a god, only some much-hammered and tempered steel.” I have already spoken about the real meaning of the divine community. No one is a god, but each man has a god within him. To manifest Him is the aim of the divine life. That everyone can do. I admit that certain individuals have greater or lesser capacities. I do not, however, accept as accurate your description of yourself. But whatever the capacity, if once God places his finger upon the man and his spirit awakes, greater or lesser and all the rest make little difference. The difficulties may be more, it may take more time, what is manifested may not be the same—but even this is not certain. The god within takes no account of all these difficulties and deficiencies; he forces his way out. Were there few defects in my mind and heart and life and body? Few difficulties? Did it not take time? Did God hammer at me sparingly—day after day, moment after moment? Whether I have become a god or something else I do not know. But I have become or am becoming something—whatever God desired. This is sufficient.

“...In this connection let me tell you briefly one or two things I have been observing for a long time. It is my belief that the main cause of India’s weakness is not subjection, nor poverty, nor a lack of spirituality or religion, but a diminution of the power of thought, the spread of ignorance in the birthplace of knowledge. Everywhere I see an inability or unwillingness to think—incapacity of thought or ‘thought-phobia’. This may have been all right in the mediaeval period, but now this attitude is the sign of a great decline. The mediaeval period was a night, the day of victory for the man of ignorance, in the modern world it is the time of victory for the man of knowledge. He who can delve into and learn the truth about the world by thinking more, searching more, labouring more, gains more power. Take a look at Europe. You will see two things: a wide limitless sea of thought and the play of a huge and rapid, yet disciplined force. The whole power of Europe is here. It is by virtue of this power that she has been able to swallow the world, like our *tapasvis* of

old, whose might held even the gods of the universe in terror, suspense, subjection. People say that Europe is rushing into the jaws of destruction. I do not think so. All these revolutions, all these upsettings are the first stages of a new creation. Now take a look at India. A few solitary giants aside, everywhere there is your simple man, that is, your average man, one who will not think, cannot think, has not an ounce of strength, just a momentary excitement. India wants the easy thought, the simple word, Europe wants the deep thought, the deep word. In Europe even ordinary labourers think, want to know everything. They are not satisfied to know things halfway, but want to delve deeply into them. The difference lies here. But there is a fatal limitation to the power and thought of Europe. When she enters the field of spirituality, her thought-power stops working. There Europe sees everything as a riddle, nebulous metaphysics, yogic hallucination—“It rubs its eyes as in smoke and can see nothing clearly.” But now in Europe not a little effort is being made to surmount even this limitation. Thanks to our forefathers, we have the spiritual sense, and whoever has this sense has within his reach such knowledge, such power, as with one breath could blow all the immense strength of Europe away like a blade of grass. But power is needed to get this power. We, however, are not worshippers of power; we are worshippers of the easy way. But one cannot obtain power by the easy way. Our forefathers swam in a vast sea of thought and gained a vast knowledge; they established a vast civilisation. But as they went forward on their path they were overcome by exhaustion and weariness. The force of their thought decreased and along with it decreased the force of their creative power. Our civilisation has become a stagnant backwater, our religion a bigotry of externals, our spirituality a faint glimmer of light or a momentary wave of intoxication. So long as this state of things lasts, any permanent resurgence of India is impossible....

“ The meaning of this extraordinarily long letter is that I too am tying up my bundle. But I believe this bundle is like the net of Saint Peter, teeming with the catch of the Infinite. I am not going to open the bundle just now. If it is opened too soon, the catch may escape. Nor am I going back to Bengal just now—not because Bengal is not ready, but because I am not ready. If the unripe goes amid the unripe, what can he accomplish?

Your Sejdada’

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

Reference

1 *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol IV, No 1, pp 11-14, 16-20, 22, 23

GAIA AND KALI

GAIA—the term calls up images of the earth as a living being, all of its innumerable animals, birds, plants, rocks, mountains functioning as a single organism, interwoven, interlinked, complex and conscious. For the romantic section of environmentalists, Gaia gets interpreted in somewhat more radical ways, to imply that human beings have little role to play other than living and depending on mother Gaia in ways that interfere with her processes as little as possible. When Ms. Medha Patkar declared, in an interview to the Marathi daily, *Sakal* (1 August 1999) that “the rivers and streams of the country are its veins and arteries, if these are obstructed then death is certain,” she was speaking out of these ideas of a nurturing, secure and providing nature in which human interference only causes destruction

When British chemist James Lovelock and American biologist Lynn Margulis formulated the “Gaia hypothesis,” they were concerned to emphasise the notion of complementary interaction between life and environment. As Lovelock put it, this is “a new insight into the interactions between the living and inorganic parts of the planet. From this has arisen the hypothesis, the model, in which the Earth’s living matter, air, oceans and land surface form a complex system which can be seen as a single organism and which has the capacity to keep our planet a fit place for life.” But the eco-romanticists have carried this further, using the idea of Gaia to argue for human non-interference with natural processes and to connect it with the eco-feminist dualities of female/nature and male/culture, in which woman is identified with nature, subsistence, production, survival and peace, while man is seen as predatory and warrior. In the most “modern” version of this propagated by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, the market economy, commercialism, industrial production and “Western science and technology” are all seen as patriarchal and anti-nature

The notion of nature and the Earth as a living organism might have taken on a different tone had Lovelock and Margulis used the Indian goddess Kali as a symbol instead of Gaia. Gaia, Greek goddess of the earth, seems primarily a gentle figure. As Demeter, she represented and protected grain harvest. The most commonly known story is that when her daughter Persephone was carried off by the god of the underworld, Hades, Demeter/Gaia managed to get her freed for six months of the year. This explains the European seasons, six months of sunshine and warmth and harvesting, six months of fall and winter. Gaia stands for life and light, gentleness and peace

But the Indian tradition sees goddesses in a much more complex form, as powerful and dangerous agents of both creation and destruction. Most of the village goddesses whose temples are seen everywhere are viewed as dangerous powers that have to be placated; they are linked to disease and death and to the protection against disease and death as much as to life. Durga’s slaughter of the demons, Kali’s dance of death—all of these symbolise the terrible and awe-inspiring forms that nature often appears to have

And, in fact, the simple eco-romanticist view of nature as pure benevolence is out of touch with reality. Nature may not be really “red in tooth and claw” as the English saying has it; but neither is it a simple paradigm of cooperation, nurturance and harmonious development. From the beginning, cosmic, physical and biological processes have all involved both life and death, destruction and creation. Stars come into being, sometimes explode into novae, sometimes die a slow death. Life rises—though we do not yet know how it rises on other planets—on this one, countless species have risen and fallen, just as billions of individuals have lived and died. To walk through a museum is to see records of past extinctions of species, for unless the old gives way, the new cannot come. Animals prey on one another as well as on human beings, forests contain wild and dangerous predators as well as food for gathering, rivers provide both water to nourish life and floods that destroy it. Earthquakes, floods, landslips, meteor attacks, all kinds of “natural” disasters have been rampant from the beginning; it is because human population has increased that these seem to have more and more impact.

Few dwellers on fields and in forests have viewed nature as simply benevolent. Nature may be sacred, but the sacred itself has always been full of danger for human beings. If the huge impersonal cities of today are unsafe, especially at night, the same was true of the forests that surrounded villages. Few went out at night. And above all, no agricultural society has ever followed a policy of non-interference with nature. Agriculture, especially settled plough agriculture, requires something of a battle with the forests, cutting of trees, clearing of land, it requires arrangements to bring water.

This was true, above all, in India, where agriculture has existed for millennia and attained high productivity. The earliest known dams were built, probably by Dravidian speakers, in the Indo-Iranian borderlands around the end of the fourth millennium BC—known as “gabarbands,” they functioned not simply as reservoirs but to terrace fields and create the rich alluvial soil for agriculture. Over the next 5,000 years, dams, bunds, anicuts and canals have been built, lands have been flooded for reservoirs, water has been channelled into lands chosen by human beings rather than letting it flow in its “natural” course. Lakes covering hundreds of kilometres and stone dams, hundreds of metres long, have served to channel water for agriculture. The rich Cauvery delta was created over centuries by anicuts, channels and other forms of “artificially” channelling water. The lands that have yielded foodgrains and vegetables and fruits have been humanly created, if the earth is the body of Gaia, its veins and arteries have been humanly constructed. Environmentalists like to speak of the Bishnois, who gave their lives to protect their sacred trees in the desert. True, these are a crucial part of Indian tradition. But why not also claim the heritage of the Harappans who built the first gabarbands in the mountainous areas to channel water through terraced fields, of the peasants who cleared the forests to farm the land of the kings and their engineers who built the Grand Anicut across the Cauvery and of the villagers who operated and maintained these systems? They used the engineering of their time to intervene in nature, to make the land productive for human occupation.

The builders of dams like Sardar Sarovar or the Koyna in Maharashtra or countless others are not simply imposing the standards of an industrial society. They are using the best of the engineering of their time, just as the engineers of the Cholas or the Mughals sought to increase the productivity of the land. If there is a problem with these dams, it is not that they are built but that they are not properly built, that they are not really using the best engineering of the time, that it is not taking advantage of the possibilities of environment-friendly construction, that it is needlessly condemning too many to the loss of their land and to displacement. The question to be asked of the “big dams” of today is not whether they are big—the earth is big, society has also gotten big and requires “big” networks, grand achievements—but whether they are appropriate and whether they function according to the requirements of social justice

The “Gaia hypothesis” will make a good deal of sense if we use it to keep an awareness of the interlinkages and complexity of life. But if “Gaia” is conscious, then it is humans and human society collectively that embody that consciousness. And, of course, consciousness and ability to intervene imply responsibility, and this responsibility grows with the increasingly awesome powers of modern technology. “Walk lightly upon the earth,” is another Greenish slogan that captures something of the necessary attitude: one cannot avoid walking, one cannot avoid the responsibility of intervention, but it should be done with caution. It is humans who can ensure whether the face of the earth goddess is that of Kali or of Laxmi.

GAIL OMVEDT

(Courtesy: *The Hindu*, 28 September 1999)

UNIQUE FIRST AND LAST DAYS OF PH.D. IN MODERN GURU-SHISHYA-PARAMPARA

GURU-SHISHYA-PARAMPARA (teacher-disciple-tradition) and study in an Ashram or Gurukul no more exist today and if there is anything of the like or near to it, it is working for the Ph.D degree in a University/College under the guidance of a supervisor. Ph.D. guidance is much in abuse today for which teachers have to blame themselves rather than the system and much less the students. Times have changed, values have changed, and so also the age-old traditions, yet there are teachers even today who treat their students in a somewhat similar spirit to that of old tradition. Such teachers do this of their own accord, in their own interest, for the values they hold. Here is given a description of an informal interview (or interaction or welcome of the student by a teacher) which a student underwent before his prospective supervisor for the Ph.D. research some forty years ago. He was already selected to do Ph.D. research through a formal interview. The names of the teacher, student and the University are not mentioned so that no guesses or comparisons are made. For the description 'I' has been used for the student.

That was my first day in the laboratory of my teacher where five students were already working. Before I had an opportunity to interact with any of them, he entered the laboratory, identified me and took me by the hand to his small sitting room with three chairs and a table. Another side-table, with an instrument on which a student was working, was also provided. The teacher politely asked the student to leave and come for work after sometime.

“Are you well settled in the hostel?” the teacher asked.

“Yes, Sir,” I replied.

“Has your father left?”

“Yes, Sir, this morning.”

“Your father seems to be quite attached to you.”

“I am the eldest amongst two brothers and a sister,” I said.

And then followed a series of questions and answers in which I was engrossed and the teacher appeared more like a family member than a supervisor making inquiries. I was not aware when such a talk changed over from the niceties to family-economics and welfare.

“Does your father find time to look after the studies of your brother and sister?” the teacher asked.

“My mother does that. She is M Sc in Physics,” I replied.

“Wonderful! Is she working somewhere?”

“Yes, Sir, teaching in a College,” I replied.

“Then it is all the more creditable for her that she is doubly helpful to your family—economically and educationally,” he said.

“Does your father find time to be with the family?” he asked.

“Regularly, Sir. I will now miss him,” I said.

Such intimate inquiries continued and I do not remember how time flew till we were interrupted by a student with cups of tea for both of us. The teacher thanked him for the much needed beverage. As soon as the student left, he looked at me suggestively to take tea and himself started sipping it. Then he suddenly changed the topic.

“Do you remember the previous Nobel Award in Chemistry?”

“Yes, Sir, to Heyrovsky,” I replied.

“For what?”

“For discovering the polarographic technique of analysis.”

“I am happy you know this,” the teacher said.

“I wonder whether you have heard of Hinshelwood and Semenov?” he further said.

“—Sorry, Sir.”

“You should have known this. The Nobel Award in Chemistry for 1956 was made to them in a field in which you are going to be initiated,” he said.

“.....” I kept silent.

“Mechanism of chemical reactions,” he said.

“Oh! Sir,” I exclaimed

“What tools do you propose to employ to know this?”

“Sir, I do not follow.”

“I mean, what method would you adopt to know the mechanism of chemical reactions?” he asked.

“.....” I kept silent.

“I am sure you know this. One starts learning this Chemistry at B.Sc.”

“...Yes, Sir, Kinetics and...” I hesitated.

“Spectroscopy, Sir,” I added.

Then followed a series of questions and some useful information about spectroscopy and structure.

“Do you know the role of coordination complexes in reaction mechanism?” he asked.

“.....”

“They are useful intermediates and their identification throws light on the mechanism,” he said.

“Apart from the knowledge of Kinetics, you should also have an in-depth study of this branch of Chemistry for the determination of reaction mechanism,” he continued.

“You will have to study and equip yourself with sufficient knowledge of Chemistry before you start investigation, otherwise you will make me work harder,” he said.

“I shall study and improve, Sir,” I replied

“You seem to know some Chemistry, but you have still a lot to learn. Do you

know how I feel about myself and my knowledge of Chemistry?" he asked.

"Sir, you know a lot," I replied.

"No, not even a drop in the ocean. All the same I always try to know more. One way for me to know more is to learn from you—my students. Believe me, you can teach me provided you make an effort. By studying and working hard you can gradually communicate your knowledge knowingly and unknowingly to all of us and that in turn will help you to know better and more," he said.

"....."

"Do you think what I am saying is superficial?"

"No, Sir. I do not know what to say," I replied.

"You have simply to take up the challenge posed by me to educate me. I mean this. You can be a teacher while being a student. Each one of us should be conscious of one's limitations and should have an open mind for being corrected and for receiving useful knowledge. No one of us is perfect."

"Sir, I am fortunate to be with you," I said.

"No, not exactly. It's too early to say this. Whether you are fortunate or not, now you will work with me. However, from my side, you are always free to leave. But it would be wise for you, if you once decide for a thing, to stick to it. As a matter of fact you should have tried to know about me and my research before joining my research group. Each student should have an opportunity to talk to the supervisor of the department, face to face, to enable the student to know whether the student will have a nice and useful time with the Supervisor during the research period. Unfortunately, this does not happen. Although informally the students know about the teachers, but it would be more useful if this happened in a formal way. It would enable them to make the right choice of their field of research," he said.

"Yes, Sir," I said.

"Another thing which I would like you to inculcate while you do research, is to do your best under the circumstances you are placed without holding any grudge about the funds, facilities, cooperation and help from your fellow workers, and attention from me. You should have the satisfaction that it is the best that you could do, that perhaps none else could have done better under the circumstances. It is only the work culture which I wish to prevail and grow in the laboratory."

He paused for a moment, looked at his watch and continued:

"Now there is something personal between us that I would like you to take care of. Feel free to come to my residence and family whenever you feel homesick. However, normally I do not expect any student to visit my residence unless I ask or feel its necessity. I do not expect any sweets or gifts from the students on any occasion or festival. I do not expect any student to do my household or personal work unless I request him to do so out of necessity. I wish you to preserve your self-respect and maintain individuality."

I listened to all this with rapt attention thinking all the time about my good luck and the opportunity I got to do research with a person like him who would be more a

co-worker than a supervisor. The teacher continued with his advice for sometime more. I was spellbound and just gazed at him, and all that he said further, went straight through my head without being received and retained. I was in a trance. All of a sudden I was awakened from it by a question-bomb.

“Do you know what spiritualism is?” he said.

“No, Sir,” I replied

“In simple words it’s knowing Truth and one’s union with the Truth. A yet simpler meaning for you is to know oneself ”

“I do not understand, Sir,” I said.

“Do you know what you are? Perhaps you have an urge to say, yes. But I am sure you do not know yourself or you know yourself only partially or you know yourself incompletely. Do not ask anybody, but try to know in your own way from the family members, friends, relatives and others about your nature, character, way of life, your reaction to a situation, and your attitude towards life, towards persons and situations. This is just a beginning to knowing yourself. This also is research and your self-assessment will enable you to do better chemical research.”

With this serious but lively and useful instruction the teacher looked at me with a smile, perhaps realising that it had been too much for me. Then he looked at his watch and said, “Oh! One hour has passed. Too much. Sorry. I must leave for the class now.”

All this happened on the very first day of my joining the research group of my teacher. I was more than charmed by my supervisor and the attention that he gave me. This rarely happened in those days. Perhaps this does not happen even today. No teacher believes in such methodology and none has time. I wonder whether any one of them ever thought of dealing with their students in such a manner. Then followed a time of about three years full of active research and events which had a great impact on my research and personality, but they were of a different nature. However, each of the events in this period reflected the talk that I had enjoyed with my teacher on the first day. Even after that day my supervisor talked to me several times at length but mostly about Chemistry, research and the problem in hand. He also talked casually about my welfare, family and personal matters, but never about the subject of spiritualism and my self-evaluation. I too had nothing in particular to report to him, but imperceptibly the change in me has come about.

The only other thing worth mentioning about my association with him during my stay, is the talk that we had on the day I went to him to bid good-bye after submitting the thesis. The advice that he gave left a lasting impression on my mind. After a brief ceremony of tea-party and get-together amongst the research scholars to celebrate my finishing the Ph D. research and submission of the thesis, I was once again in his small room.

“So you are through with your Ph D work. Must be feeling greatly relieved. I am happy you have a job in hand already on the basis of your published papers. Since it is a research job you will have many chances to make use of the experience and

training received here and you will do still better. Good luck!"

"It may take some four to six months for the reports of the thesis and then we may expect you here again for the viva voce examination," he continued.

"Sometimes it takes more, Sir," I said.

"Yes, you are right, but let us hope you are a bit lucky," he said.

"Anyway sooner or later you will be awarded a Ph.D., get married and enter a different but most important phase of life for which you need certain extra mental preparation."

"....." I kept silent.

"Try to maintain the same attitude in actual life which you had here towards your work," he said.

"I do not understand, Sir. I do not follow," I said

"You carry out an experiment with some expected results. When you fail, you think about it. You check the temperature, pressure, concentration, methodology, the whole procedure and what not. You do some relevant study too. You repeat the experiment with greater caution, taking care of the minutest details, but you again fail. You again start the critical analysis never blaming the apparatus and the instrument. Nevertheless you check the instrument too and find it in order. During this multi-pronged exercise you always try to find the fault with yourself. You never reject the apparatus and the instrument. You do the experiment the third time and this time you succeed. Life is a very big experimental laboratory and you have to have the right type of attitude—like that you had here in this small laboratory. In dealing with persons—say Mr. X, you had a very good opinion of him and he was your good friend. Then suddenly one day something happened and his attitude apparently changed overnight. Some harm was done to you. What should you do now? Reject him? If you do so, your assessment about him of ten years would prove you wrong. If he was good for ten years, how could he change? This is normally not expected of a man. Something has happened which you do not know. It is also possible that you are wrongly informed about his change and the harm done to you. Many things are possible and you start a critical analysis of the situation time-wise, fact-wise, effect-wise, making a survey of the persons and their actions and statements involved. Outright rejection of him would not be wise. Finally you give him a chance. You ignore. Whether he did the harm knowingly or unknowingly, your one overlooking of his wrong suspect action will undo the misunderstanding and the things will be in order. This is the attitude in life you have to adopt and you will be saved from many difficulties and further troubles," he seemed to stop, but suddenly started again

"Finally one more piece of advice for peaceful and happy living. You should have always a positive attitude in life. Feel happy and thank God for what you possess and not curse yourself or your luck or any situation or anybody else for what you do not possess. Be conscious of your shortcomings and try to remove them. If somebody gives you a glass of milk which is not full, think not that it is half empty. Be happy to feel that it is half or more than half full."

And then he held my shoulders with his hands for a while and wished me 'Good Luck' and walked out of the room to take the class, perhaps I just looked at him without a blink till he was out of sight.

YUGUL KISHORE GUPTA

**ON FIRST LOOKING INTO
THE SECRET SPLENDOUR BY AMAL KIRAN**

To write or not to write
Is a problem and a pleasure
With me, while you shower
On me your secret splendour

By the ocean
Of your poetry,
Mine is a ripple,
Or a whirlpool
At best, to lure you
To my sandy shore,
Chisel the pebbles
Of my scattered verse
And remould them
In your creative core.

ASHALATA DASH

SPIRITUAL JOURNALISM—THE THIRD PHASE

Karmayogin and *Arya* in the first two decades of the twentieth century and publication of *Mother India* with the emergence of Independence constitute two milestones of Spiritual Journalism. Now the third phase has been ushered with the advent of the New Millennium.

When young Aurobindo Ghose, just returned from his I.C.S. studies in England, lit 'New Lamps for Old' through the *Indu Prakash*, the very foundation of old moderate Congress leadership was terribly shaken; nevertheless it sparked a new flame of patriotism in youthful nationalist hearts. Though this preliminary journalistic exercise came to an abrupt end due to the stiff opposition from none other than the Guru of moderate politics Justice Ranade himself, Sri Aurobindo was already destined to become a full-fledged journalist in due course.

Bipin Pal was the mentor who persuaded him in 1906 to become the de facto editor of *Bande Mataram*. But eventually after his acquittal from Alipur Jail the enlightened master started on his own the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma*; these periodicals respectively in English and Bengali, transcended the political arena, covering new grounds of Sanatan Dharma.

To recapture the spiritual master-key to the solution of life's problems, to recover and integrate with our current life the essential inheritance from the past, to dare and fare forward,—that was to be the national programme of action. The *Karmayogin* would spell out these ideas in detail and help engineer the nation's movement towards a bright and purposive future. This was in 1909.

Five years later, in 1914, Sri Aurobindo was to make new strides in Spiritual Journalism and launch a philosophical magazine *Arya*. It gave to the world a grand synthesis of knowledge and Yogic experience, projecting with all the lineaments of logical exposition his vision of the future. The *Arya* gave him an opportunity to share with others, in the language of philosophy, the results of his deepest probings into the structure of existence and his farthest telescoping into a probable and possible future. It saw far-reaching horizons with a global and integral outlook.

After releasing major works such as *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine*, the curtain was drawn on the publication of the *Arya* in 1921.

Now the Mother's second and final arrival at Pondicherry in the previous year and her active and intense collaboration with Sri Aurobindo proved vital to the progress of his Yoga. It gave a decisive thrust to his efforts for bringing down "the World of the Gods" and, finally, on 24th November 1926 the descent of Krishna into the physical was an accomplished reality.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was formed, followed by the self-imposed seclusion of the master, making the Mother the de facto head. From then on Sri Aurobindo's rapport with his disciples was restricted to letters only. However, he, along with the Mother, regularly gave Darshan on three—later four—days a year.

The fifth decade of the last century left a few significant landmarks. The Second

World War was in full swing and Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were in fierce combat with Asuric forces playing havoc on the cosmic and occult levels. In the midst of this, soon India attained freedom on 15th August 1947 which happened to be the 75th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. He termed this coincidence as a sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guided his steps with which he had begun his life, the beginning of its full fruition. Completion of *Savitri* marked yet another milestone in that decade as the epic was the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's Yogic inspiration.

One should bear in mind that the role played by Sri Aurobindo during the Second World War was, and still is, much misunderstood. Many people, including a handful of Ashramites, could not digest his active support to the British war efforts. Evolution from a revolutionary to a Yogi was not easy to comprehend for the public at large, as it was no less than a metamorphosis.

In a sense a fertile ground was prepared for the second phase of Spiritual Journalism. K. D. Sethna alias Amal Kiran who had become the second lieutenant of the intellectual brigade of the Aurobindonian School of Thought by that time became the standard bearer. The need of the hour was to put forward the Master's point of view. In his now famous Independence Day message Sri Aurobindo sufficiently dealt with the challenges and opportunities that lay before the free nation. It was the sound foundation for the future course of action. Now it was the duty of his disciples to carry on the message to its logical conclusion.

Mother India was originally an idea of Keshav Dev Poddar alias Navajit. He wanted to bring out a journal commenting on current topics, both national and international, with the Aurobindonian view at the back of everything. But it was Sethna who had to shoulder the responsibility.

He had to consciously try to put himself in complete tune with Sri Aurobindo's approach. So his editorship served as an additional aspect of Yoga on his part.

In his very first editorial K. D. Sethna states in unambiguous terms what the paper stands for: "We are here to answer a grave need of the times. This country has gained independence, but it has not found its proper line of life... In every field of activity we shall criticise whatever militates against the instinct of divinity and blocks the work of the spiritual force that is Mother India. We shall give the utmost constructive help we can to whatever encourages this instinct and facilitates this work. The Godhead secret within man is the truth of man and most keenly the truth of the Indian nation, the truth that has to be lived out as much as possible. Not for any lesser ideal do we launch our paper and only this highest ideal we have in mind when we take as our motto the ancient cry—Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

Sri Aurobindo, a spiritual journalist of repute, identified himself with this new venture. According to one anecdote, when the first issue of *Mother India* came out in newspaper form on 19th February 1949, a sadhak said that certain views did not agree with our Yoga. When this was reported to Sri Aurobindo, he remarked: "Doesn't he know that *Mother India* is my paper?"

For almost half a century, K. D. Sethna served as a friend, philosopher and guide to his readers and enabled them to understand and appreciate contemporary events and personalities through the Aurobindonian telescope.

With the turn of the century and advent of the New Millennium a new agenda is set for the Aurobindonian think tank. As the Mother has stressed repeatedly, Sri Aurobindo belongs to the future, therefore his relevance in the twenty-first century should not meet with any shadow of doubt. He is definitely with us in the New Millennium to guide our destiny, to help us in arriving at a new synthesis. We have to carry forward the flame of the spirit piercing through the dark and confused surroundings.

In the fast changing world with 'globalisation' as its password one ought to think universally (spiritually) lest we underestimate the full import of the complex situation at hand. Our ability to discriminate between the apparent and the real is at stake.

The irony of fate is that we achieved the political freedom for India but we have lost our true Indian identity. The outer form is there for everyone to see, but the inner spirit is somehow missing. So we have to rediscover our Indianness and resurrect ourselves in the comity of nations. Without ascertaining true Indianness and blindly following the alien way of life in the illusive garb of globalisation there is nothing but the betrayal of our Swabhava and Swadharmā.

Interestingly the editor of *Karmayogin* had to warn on similar lines: "There is the sentiment of Indianism, there is not yet the knowledge. There is a vague idea, there is no definite conception or deep insight. We have yet to know ourselves, what we were, we are and may be; what we did in the past and what we are capable of doing in the future; our history and our mission."

And what a pity that this 'first and most important work' is still the first and the most important work before spiritual journalism after a span of a hundred years. No doubt that it is an acceleration at a snail's pace, but those who have faith in Sri Aurobindo's Mission and the Mother's Ministry know well that their goal is definite and they are heading in the right direction. So now is the time to thrust the spiritual agenda with more vigour and intensity. Let *Mother India—2000* be the apt channel for its fulfilment.

PRABHAKAR NULKAR

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

On the Threshold of A New Age with Medhananda, fragments of conversations recorded in French by *Yvonne Artaud* and translated in English by Shradhdhavan. Published by Sri Mira Trust, 2000. 199 pages. Price not mentioned.

THE saga of an Aurobindonian, Medhananda, is being told in a series of volumes by his listener and recorder Yvonne Artaud and translated from French into English by Shradhdhavan. This book is the second in this series. While the earlier “With Medhananda on the shores of infinity” is autobiographical, the present volume consists of “fragments of conversations”.

When I read a book by a Sadhak of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga I learn about the author, and not only the person and his/her Sadhana but I also learn about myself. Because everyone’s Sadhana is a part of the Sadhana of the collective and hence part of my Sadhana. Reading this book I gain a new insight into this Yoga, and into what Sri Aurobindo has brought into this world.

Obviously Medhananda had a highly developed mind, but, as is explained in these conversations, there was also the understanding that the mind is an instrument with a particular function and once you have climbed it like a ladder “you have to jump, jump into something which is not mind any more ” (p. 120) His explanations of many of the nuances in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga have great clarity but sometimes he is cryptic. In some passages I find that there is a leap, as if there were no continuity from one paragraph to the other but a little patience and I find the missing connection. The constant refrain in these conversations is of love for the Divine and Ananda in sheer existence. I have enjoyed and gained a lot reading this book.

I like the cover, and the unusual picture on the cover is very beautiful. From the centre of Sri Aurobindo’s symbol rises a lotus carved upon a mother-of-pearl shell from the South Seas. I turn the pages. At the beginning, soon after the contents, is a very attractive photograph of Medhananda. The eyes are slightly closed, while the face expresses a quiet joy and a delightful inliness. I did not know him when he was alive. But the photograph is so full of friendliness and a loving smile that I feel I know him well. I read the book over ten days in between busy schedules and then read it again more slowly as one would sip a rare wine.

The book is a collection of observations, explanations, experiences, imaginations, interviews, letters, and free verses by Medhananda—the main theme being trying to tell what is this new age that Sri Aurobindo brought into this world. There is the delightful piece on page 59 titled—“In the age of Sri Aurobindo” in answer to a medical student who asked: “Has humanity evolved since the time of the ancient Greeks?” He puts the whole concept of Sri Aurobindo’s action in a nutshell saying, “Just as Sri Krishna stood behind Arjuna, so here is Sri Aurobindo standing behind things ” And he adds at the end “All the new things—technological, scientific, psychological etc., since the beginning of the 20th century, have come from Sri Aurobindo ”

As Medhananda says rightly, “each time my analytical mind stops, I have illumination” So instead of an analytic approach for reviewing this book I shall try to illuminate by giving some excerpts from it.

How to read Sri Aurobindo? Not with the mind, for “each phrase is a mantra, which we should allow to penetrate every part of our being, like great bells. When that is done and everything is vibrating, then one can go on to the next sentence” (p 66) Wonderful advice. This applies, I feel, not only to the writings, both prose and poetry of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but also to some poems of his disciples and to many of the writings in this book.

I find an interesting reference to Sri Aurobindo’s “Notes on Yoga” Talking about Sri Aurobindo and his daily practices Medhananda says. “Sri Aurobindo had long ago acquired gnosis, the absolute knowledge. And it was always with him, it was himself, he did not need to renew it or remember it But as he has shown in his notes on his daily practices, bliss is a state that one can only attain for a moment, and so it has to be constantly renewed” A little later he explains as to why Sri Aurobindo needed constant practice saying, “once he had manifested in one particular birth Sri Aurobindo had to learn to transcend that limitation to rediscover bliss—hence the need for constant practice. He had to compel his mind, vital and physical, which lived in and by separation—and which would not have existed, but for the principle of separation—to live in bliss, and to do so without losing them as instruments of manifestation.” (p. 87) As Sri Aurobindo has said his life and Sadhana show the way to what a human being can achieve and how he can achieve it.

There are many poems in free verse in this book Chapter IV starts with a lovely poem called “The last desire of Sage Vishvamitra” It could have been more aptly titled “The return to Earth”. Chapters X and XI consist of poems. Many of these are from a very well-developed mind and quite a few reveal his own experiences and understanding of Sri Aurobindo, often in a few delightful lines. Writing about the quantum he writes:

The quantum of Buddha
Is the elephant.
The quantum of Sri Aurobindo
Is the Sapta Chatustaya.

And about a chair

The chair
Is not an object,
It is the ananda of sitting.

Talking about the Mother doing our sadhana he reveals a great truth in the last lines of the poem on page 176:

The great Mother
 Has to do it with us
 And we have to do it
 With the Mother.
 She does it in herself
 And in the disciple
 Without any separation.
 The only separation
 Is in the mind of the disciple.

From page 96 onwards in Chapter VIII, using different ways, allegories, anecdotes, and symbols Medhananda tries the impossible, to tell what is the Supramental. And he does succeed in giving us a faint idea, enough for us to yearn for it, to aspire to know more. Often I find an echo of the Mother's words, especially so in the interview he gave in the Sri Aurobindo Library, where he worked for many years. (p. 117) In this interview he talks about himself and his Sadhana. He talks from his own experience. He says that very early in his life he had a psychic experience and that "I think that anytime I lean back and want to be in my psychic being, I can do it." And what does that give him? "It gives a sense of independence, of freedom, of joy—and of several other things too, such as power. But the real hallmark of the psychic being is joy..." This interview I like to read, at leisure and in bits, again and again. It brings out not only his personality at those times but also his convictions, his humility and explanations about many things. About development of healing power during Sadhana, I found it very interesting when he says: "The power of healing is a beautiful power, but it is a vital power .you might develop it, you might get it if you have some urge ... But generally people who have a power of healing are people who are functioning preponderantly on the vital level " He adds that this power of healing is from the higher vital He also tells us that development of the mind acts as a break on the faculties of the vital and that is probably why you find many more healers in India or South America than in Europe or the U.S.A In the same vein he continues commenting about doctors: "It is almost as if you cannot study medical science without losing, to some degree at least, the faculties of healing you might have had as a child."

Let me resist the temptation to quote more from this book and say to the readers, this book is a very good companion from time to time and moreover you gain a new and a wonderful friend, Medhananda.

DINKAR D PALANDE