

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

DECEMBER 2000

PRICE Rs 15 00

Revised Subscriptions

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

INLAND

Annual Rs 120 00

Life Membership Rs 1400 00

Price per Single Copy Rs 15 00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail

Annual \$18 00 or £12 00

Life Membership \$252 00 or £168 00

Air Mail

Annual \$36 00 for American & Pacific countries

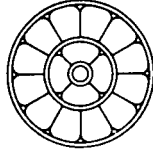
\$26 00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504 00 for American & Pacific countries

\$364 00 for all other countries

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

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



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



All Rights Reserved No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations

All correspondence to be addressed to

MOTHER INDIA Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry - 605 002 India

Editor's Phone 334782

Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA

Associate Editor R Y Deshpande

Published by HARIKANT C PATEL

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIII

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
THE ALL-WONDERFUL (Poem)	... 905
THE UPANISHADS	... 907
<i>The Mother</i>	
THE WORK AND TEACHING OF SRI AUROBINDO	... 908
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
GOD DEPARTS	... 910
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>	
THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO	
ITS INNER SIGNIFICANCE AND CONSEQUENCE	... 923
THE MIND OF LIGHT (Poem)	... 929
<i>Sampadananda Mishra</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE	
VEDIC RIKS (Compilation)	... 930
<i>Richard Hartz</i>	
THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	... 932
<i>Narad</i>	
THE ASHRAM—EARLY DAYS (Poem)	... 935
<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>	
ALL LIFE IS YOGA	... 936
<i>Vigyan</i>	
SHIVA TEMPLE (Poem)	... 942
<i>Nihma Das</i>	
5th DECEMBER—THE MIND OF LIGHT	... 943
<i>Kailas Javeri</i>	
THE DIVINE PLAN AND THE PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE	... 947
<i>David Frawley</i>	
VEDIC YOGA, THE OLDEST FORM OF YOGA	... 958

<i>Suresh Dey</i>		
THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL	.	962
<i>Rita Nath Keshari</i>		
HUMOUR IN SHAKESPEARE	.	966
<i>Ashalata Dash</i>		
FAITH (Poem)	..	969
<i>P. Raja</i>		
FIRST LOVE (Short Story)	...	970
<i>Tripti Gupta</i>		
I DON'T KNOW ¹⁹ (Poem)		975
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>K. B. Sitaramayya</i>		
Review of PERSPECTIVES OF SAVITRI, edited by R Y DESHPANDE	...	976

THE ALL-WONDERFUL

“A SECRET air of pure felicity
Deep like a sapphire heaven our spirits breathe;
Our hearts and bodies feel its obscure call,
Our senses grope for it and touch and lose.
If this withdrew, the world would sink in the Void,
If this were not, nothing could move or live
A hidden Bliss is at the root of things
A mute Delight regards Time’s countless works:
To house God’s joy in things Space gave wide room,
To house God’s joy in self our souls were born.
This universe an old enchantment guards;
Its objects are carved cups of World-Delight
Whose charmed wine is some deep soul’s rapture-drink:
The All-Wonderful has packed heaven with his dreams,
He has made blank ancient Space his marvel-house;
He spilled his spirit into Matter’s signs:
His fires of grandeur burn in the great sun,
He glides through heaven shimmering in the moon;
He is beauty carolling in the fields of sound;
He chants the stanzas of the odes of Wind;
He is silence watching in the stars at night;
He wakes at dawn and calls from every bough,
Lies stunned in the stone and dreams in flower and tree.
Even in this labour and dolour of Ignorance,
On the hard perilous ground of difficult earth,
In spite of death and evil circumstance
A will to live persists, a joy to be.
There is a joy in all that meets the sense,
A joy in all experience of the soul,
A joy in evil and a joy in good,
A joy in virtue and a joy in sin:
Indifferent to the threat of Karmic law,
Joy dares to grow upon forbidden soil,
Its sap runs through the plant and flowers of Pain:
It thrills with the drama of fate and tragic doom,
It tears its food from sorrow and ecstasy,
On danger and difficulty whets its strength;
It wallows with the reptile and the worm
And lifts its head, an equal of the stars;
It shares the faeries’ dance, dines with the gnome:

It basks in the light and heat of many suns,
 The sun of Beauty and the sun of Power
 Flatter and foster it with golden beams;
 It grows towards the Titan and the God
 On earth it lingers drinking its deep fill,
 Through the symbol of her pleasure and her pain,
 Of the grapes of Heaven and the flowers of the Abyss,
 Of the flame-stabs and the torment-craft of Hell
 And dim fragments of the glory of Paradise.
 In the small paltry pleasures of man's life,
 In his petty passions and joys it finds a taste,
 A taste in tears and torture of broken hearts,
 In the crown of gold and in the crown of thorns,
 In life's nectar of sweetness and its bitter wine.
 All being it explores for unknown bliss,
 Sounds all experience for things new and strange.
 Life brings into the earthly creature's days
 A tongue of glory from a brighter sphere:
 It deepens in his musings and his Art,
 It leaps at the splendour of some perfect word,
 It exults in his high resolves and noble deeds,
 Wanders in his errors, dares the abyss's brink,
 It climbs in his climbings, wallows in his fall.
 Angel and demon brides his chamber share,
 Possessors or competitors for life's heart.
 To the enjoyer of the cosmic scene
 His greatness and his littleness equal are,
 His magnanimity and meanness hues
 Cast on some neutral background of the gods:
 The Artist's skill he admires who planned it all
 But not for ever endures this danger game:
 Beyond the earth, but meant for delivered earth,
 Wisdom and joy prepare their perfect crown;
 Truth superhuman calls to thinking man.
 At last the soul turns to eternal things,
 In every shrine it cries for the clasp of God
 Then is there played the crowning Mystery,
 Then is achieved the longed-for miracle ''

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, Book X, Canto III, pp 629-631)

THE UPANISHADS

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥९॥

9. The knot of the heart strings is rent, cut away are all doubts, and a man's works are spent and perish, when is seen That which is at once the being below and the Supreme.

हिरण्यमे परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम् ।
तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तद् यदात्मविदो विदुः ॥१०॥

10. In a supreme golden sheath the Brahman lies, stainless, without parts. A Splendour is That, It is the Light of Lights, It is That which the self-knowers know.

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥११॥

11. There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind, there these lightnings flash not, how then shall burn this earthly fire? All that shines is but the shadow of his shining; all this universe is effulgent with his light.

ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म पश्चाद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण ।
अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम् ॥१२॥

12. All this is Brahman immortal, naught else; Brahman is in front of us, Brahman behind us, and to the south of us and to the north of us¹ and below us and above us; it stretches everywhere. All this is Brahman alone, all this magnificent universe.

SRI AUROBINDO

(SABCL, Vol 12, p. 280)

1 Or, to the right and the left of us

THE WORK AND TEACHING OF SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO'S work is a unique earth-transformation.

*

Sri Aurobindo incarnated in a human body the supramental consciousness and has not only revealed to us the nature of the path to follow and the method of following it so as to arrive at the goal, but has also by his own personal realisation given us the example; he has provided us with the proof that the thing can be done and the time is now to do it.

*

Never for an instant vacillate in the belief that the mighty work of change taken up by Sri Aurobindo is going to culminate in success. For that indeed is a fact: there is not a shadow of doubt as to the issue of the work we have in hand.... The transformation is going to be: nothing will ever stop it, nothing will frustrate the decree of the Omnipotent. Cast away all diffidence and weakness and resolve to endure bravely awhile before the great day arrives when the long battle turns into an everlasting victory.

*

We have faith in Sri Aurobindo.

He represents for us something we formulate to ourselves with words which seem to us the most exact for expressing our experience. These words are evidently the best according to us for formulating our experience.

But if, in our enthusiasm, we were convinced that they are the only appropriate words to express correctly what Sri Aurobindo is and the experience he has given us, we would become dogmatic and be on the point of founding a religion.

He who has a spiritual experience and a faith, formulates it in the most appropriate words for himself.

But if he is convinced that this expression is the only correct and true one for this experience and faith, he becomes dogmatic and tends to create a religion.

*

Each one has his own idea and finds out suitable sentences from Sri Aurobindo's writings to support his views. Those who oppose such views can also find suitable sentences from his writings. That is the way mutual opposition works. Nothing can be truly done until Sri Aurobindo's total view of things is taken.

10 October 1954

*

In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation.

And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done.

21 February 1957

*

The essential mistake was to have considered Sri Aurobindo's teaching as one among the spiritual teachings—and the work done here now as one among the many aspects of the Divine works.

This has falsified your basic position and has been the cause of all the difficulties and confusions.

If this mistake is corrected in your mind and in your attitude all other difficulties will disappear easily.

You must understand that what Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history, is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a *decisive action* direct from the Supreme.

And I am just trying to fulfil that action.

1961

THE MOTHER

(CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 21-23)

GOD DEPARTS

It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice,
Offered by God's martyred body for the world.

Savitri, Book VI, Canto II

In the chapter on Talks I have indicated that in the late forties we began to notice a change coming over Sri Aurobindo. He was becoming more and more silent, aloof, as if deeply preoccupied with some problem and the talks were less and less frequent till they ceased almost completely. Many were the days when we hardly exchanged a word. We were attending on a god who had suddenly become aware of his true identity and would now escape from his human bondage. The contrast between the past years of abundance and the present years of famine was so striking that our minds were rife with all sorts of speculations as to the reason of this ominous silence. Was it a terrestrial problem or a supraterrrestrial one? Could there have been any possible dereliction of duty on our part? Was it due to the increasing symptoms of the disease that had now lodged in his body? As regards terrestrial affairs, the War had come to a successful completion, India had gained her freedom, for both of which he had worked incessantly. The supraphysical was out of our ken; so we could lay our finger only on the physical world. But that would be a very tenuous ground indeed on which to build our conjecture, for Sri Aurobindo certainly was the last person to be perturbed by mere physical troubles, however serious they might be. Besides, he had cured this disease when it appeared the first time. Surely he could do it again, if that was the real issue! What ailed him then? Or was the disease more serious?

Let us go back to the origin of his illness and follow the sequence of events that ended with his leaving the physical sheath and were apparently its cause and try to discover the truth behind the appearance. One day we came to notice that Sri Aurobindo's urination had increased in frequency. He wanted to know the reason. The urine was examined and found to have an excessive amount of sugar with a trace of albumin. I reported the result to the Mother in Sri Aurobindo's presence and said, "It looks like diabetes." The Mother sharply retorted, "It is *not* diabetes." "What is it then?" I asked myself. The Mother, however, reduced considerably the amount of starchy food, particularly rice and sweets for which Sri Aurobindo seemed to have a liking. For his age and his sedentary life, so much carbohydrate was surely bad. Now he could hardly walk 6-7 hours a day as he used to. I was asked to examine the urine every week and apprise him of the result. In a few weeks' time it became sugar-free but the frequency did not altogether disappear. Sri Aurobindo too had noticed it. It made me suspect some mild prostatic enlargement. When Dr P. Sanyal, F.R.C.S., England, paid a visit to the Ashram, I consulted him and at my request Sri Aurobindo saw him. After an enquiry he confirmed my suspicion, but added that it was just at the initial stage. He told Sri Aurobindo of the nature, course and complications of the disease, ultimately surgery being the only radical cure. After a few months, on

Sanyal's second visit, Sri Aurobindo told him emphatically, "It is no more troubling me. I have cured it." Our faith in the action of the Force was fortified and we felt no anxiety.

We could not say then that this change of mood had any connection with the disease. Not only with us, but with the Mother too, he became very reticent. However, with regard to his work, there was no flagging. Even when a little time was at our disposal and I was reluctant to bring out the numerous files containing the *Savitri* manuscript, just for half an hour, he would say, "We shall work a little." This provoked my other colleagues, particularly Champaklal, to an impish mirth, for they loved work and I did not, at least I did not then. And almost till his withdrawal the miscellaneous literary work and the labour on *Savitri* were carried on in full swing in spite of the discomfort caused by the gradual increase of the symptoms. In addition to these, when at this stage an importunate call came from an outside sadhika in Northern India to save her life from a dreaded and strange illness, he took great pains to cure her, especially as she was an intimate friend of an old sadhak who had made a desperate appeal to Sri Aurobindo's compassion. The story is rather long but intriguing. The doctors, as usual, differed about the diagnosis. Cancer, ulcer, T B., none was found to be the case. One prominent symptom was profuse bleeding through the mouth but without any definite lesion of any organ. All kinds of tests and treatment failed. At last the patient gave up all treatment and said that she would depend entirely on Sri Aurobindo, even if she were to die. Sri Aurobindo then took up the responsibility at the supplication of the sadhak-bhakta, I believe, but on one condition that regular news must be supplied to him. The bhakta himself went from Pondicherry to the patient's place with a view to fulfil the condition. News began to stream in by letters, wires about her daily progress. Suddenly it stopped. Sri Aurobindo became anxious and enquired again and again if any news had come. I tried to plead on their behalf and give the usual excuses for the delay. At last he remarked, "How am I to save her if I have no news?" After two or three days, information began to flow in and very soon the patient recovered completely and came to settle in the Ashram. Her illness turned out to be a case of black magic. That is why the symptoms were erratic and there was no definite lesion in spite of their gravity. That was what probably made Sri Aurobindo so anxious about the case. We modern people may scoff at such unscientific superstition, but in this case, there was very solid ground in favour of such a belief. Though Sri Aurobindo took charge of the case, at each fresh arrival of news, he would ask me to keep the Mother informed. "Have you informed the Mother?" he would repeat. I did not understand why he was so insistent on the point; it was not his nature. Did he suspect that I might not, and I really felt no necessity, such was my human stupidity, trying to be wiser than the Guru! The reason for it became clear when he left the body. He had already taken the decision and wanted the Mother to know all about the case in anticipation of possible future developments.

The revision of *Savitri* was going on apace with regular unabated vigour. Book after Book was getting done and fascicules of them released for publication. Some

400-500 lines of The Book of Everlasting Day were dictated on successive days, since we could not spare more than an hour a day for the monumental work and that too had often to be cut short to meet other demands. We were, nevertheless, progressing quite steadily. I marvelled at the smooth spontaneous flow of verse after verse of remarkable beauty. Once I had complained to him in my correspondence why, having all the planes of inspiration at his command, should he still labour like us mortals at his *Savitri*. Why should not the inspiration burst out like a "champagne bottle"? Now I witnessed that miracle and imagined that it also must have been the way Valmiki composed his Ramayana. At this rate, I thought, *Savitri* would not take long to finish. On everyone's lips was the eager query, "How far are you with *Savitri*?"

But *Savitri*, as I have mentioned, was not his sole preoccupation. Many other adventitious tasks were thrust upon him and he did not say "No" to them out of the magnanimity of his divine nature.

During his last months the symptoms of prostatic enlargement reappeared and began to increase slowly. It was like a tiny dark cloud on the horizon and I fancied it would be blown away by the action of his Force, since he had been made aware of the serious consequence of the disease. Synchronous with this advance, we observed a noticeable change in his mood. Our talks, the only occasion when the Divine would become human and play with us, diminished. He was no longer expansive; humour, wit, sally, fun, all had shrivelled up and we were in front of a temple deity, impassive, aloof and indifferent—*udāsīna*. However much we tried to draw him out from his impregnable sanctum of silence we were answered by a monosyllabic "yes" or "no" or at most a faint smile. Naturally, such a radical change made us uneasy and set us speculating on its probable causes.

One day taking courage in both hands, Dr. Satyendra asked, "Why are you so serious, Sir?" Sri Aurobindo answered gravely, "The time is very serious." The answer left us more mystified; we could not probe further. This would mean that, as we will see later, he had taken the decision to leave his body and that was the first and last verbal indication of the gravity of the situation, not that he could be attached to his own personal existence in the body—no Yogi is—but there were vaster issues connected with the decision and demanded attention.

Meanwhile, urinary symptoms were worsening and now a trace of albumin was detected. He was informed, but made no comment. Then acetone appeared, a grave signal. He heard it in silence and said, "Tell the Mother." The Mother too heard it quietly. It all seemed so terribly mysterious. I was perplexed by their seeming indifference as compared with their former concern. Something must have gone amiss, surely. The mystery was too deep for my plummet to fathom, but I had faith that everything would turn out all right in the end.

The work on *Savitri* proceeded as usual, but slowed down in pace, especially when we came to a mighty confrontation with the two big Cantos of The Book of Fate. Revision after revision, addition of lines, even punctuations changed so many times! It seemed like a veritable "God's labour" against a rock of resistance. At this

time the Press sent up a demand for a new book from him. *The Future Poetry* was given preference and some passages which were meant to be dovetailed into the text of the chapters were written. But since he wanted to write something on modern poetry and for this works of modern poets were needed, orders were sent to Madras for them while whatever few books were available from our small library were requisitioned. As I read them out, he said, "Mark that passage," or "These lines have a striking image"—(once the lines referred to were, I think, from C. Day Lewis' *Magnetic Mountain*). He himself read out a poem of Eliot's to me—I don't remember exactly which, and remarked, "This is fine poetry." In this way we proceeded. Since we had to wait for the arrival of the books, he said, "Let us go back to *Savitri*." His whole attention seemed to be focussed on *Savitri*, but again, the work had to be suspended owing to the pressure of various extraneous demands. They swelled up to such an extent that he was obliged to remark, "I find no more time for my real work." When the path was fairly clear and I was wondering what his next choice would be, he said in a distant voice, "Take up *Savitri* I want to finish it soon." This must have been about two months before his departure. The last part of the utterance startled me, though it was said in a subdued tone. I wondered for a moment if I had heard rightly. I looked at him; my bewildered glance met an impassive face. In these twelve years this was the first time I had heard him reckoning with the time factor.

An Avatar of poise, patience and equanimity, this was the picture that shone before our eyes whenever we had thought or spoken about him. Hence my wonder. We took up the same two Cantos that had proved so intractable. The work progressed slowly; words, ideas, images seemed to be repeated, the verses themselves appeared to flow with reluctance. Once a punctuation-mark had to be changed four or five times. When the last revision was made and the Cantos were wound up, I said, "It is finished now." An impersonal smile of satisfaction greeted me, and he said, "Ah, it is finished?" How well I remember that flicker of a smile which all of us craved for so long! "What is left now?" was his next query. "The Book of Death and The Epilogue." "Oh, that? We shall see about that later on." That "later on" never came and was not meant to come. Having taken the decision to leave the body, he must have been waiting for the right moment to go, and for reasons known to himself he left the two last-mentioned Books almost as they were. Thus on *Savitri* was put the seal of incomplete completion about two weeks before the Darshan of November 24th. Other literary work too came to an end.

And significantly The Book of Fate was the last Book to be revised. What I deemed to be minor flaws or unnecessary repetitions, and thought that a further revision would remove them, appeared, after his passing, to be deliberate and prophetic.

A day may come when she must stand unhelped
 On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers..
 In that tremendous silence lone and lost ..

Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save .
She only can save herself and save the world.¹

We know how true these words have proved.

There were now ten days or so for the Darshan Owing to the onset of winter, the symptoms increased. At this time Dr. Satyabrata Sen, F.R.C.S., England, paid a visit to the Ashram

He was consulted He confirmed Dr Sanyal's previous diagnosis and said that the gland had enlarged Sri Aurobindo remarked that he too had the same feeling "But what is the remedy?" he asked. Surgical intervention was the only radical cure, but Dr. Sen knew that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo would not approve of it. Not to speak of an operation, the mere use of a catheter was not favoured. One night the urine flow stopped altogether. I ran in a panic to call Sen, as there were signs of some distress In my absence, the urine had started flowing. He seemed to have asked for me and on learning that I had gone to fetch the doctor, he remarked, "Why? Has he lost his head?" I was so happy to learn of the release of the obstruction that even my "loss of head" did not matter. Then he said to me, "Why have you unnecessarily troubled this poor fellow? You see, I had a dream in which I was freely passing water, but when I woke up, I found this obstruction Nothing more. Do you understand?" His tone was very sweet. Then I understood that it was his look of surprise and concern that had given me the impression of distress But obstruction was obstruction and one had to relieve it. Nevertheless all of us were happy. Next day when the Mother learnt the story, she too made a remark to the same effect She said, "Having passed so many years with Sri Aurobindo, you still get frightened?" "What to do, Mother?" I replied humbly. "We are dealing with no other person than Sri Aurobindo." "That is exactly why you should never be afraid. Don't you know that his mighty Force is always with you and helping you? No, fear has no place at all, especially among you who are serving him." I felt ashamed but uplifted as well

The Darshan was now upon us. A letter had arrived from an astrologer stating that Sri Aurobindo would be subject to a grave malady which might even threaten his life. We simply pooh-poohed the idea, but Sri Aurobindo did not pass it off so lightly He asked, "Will you enquire what exactly he has written? I feel that he has caught some truth." Sometime previously Dr. Manilal was also told by an astrologer that Sri Aurobindo was going to leave his body and if Dr. Manilal wanted to see his Guru, he had better rush to Pondicherry. When he reported this prediction to Sri Aurobindo, he simply smiled. There were quite a number of predictions about this time to the same effect. Surendra Mohan Ghose has narrated a similar one published in *Mother India* which I have already described at some length in the previous chapter. Still, I was not a little surprised to find Sri Aurobindo giving credence to such seemingly wild forecasts. For his view with regard to astrology was that its predictions were often

1 *Savitri*, The Book of Fate, Canto II

uncertain, more especially about the Yogis, since they can change their own and others' destiny. The predictions of Narayan Jyotishi, a famous astrologer of Calcutta, about him had all come true, except the one about a serious illness at the age of 63. But that too, it was said, would be overcome by his yogic force, and he would live up to a ripe old age. Sri Aurobindo writes in *Savitri*,

Nature and Fate compel his free-will's choice
But greater spirits this balance can reverse
And make the soul the artist of its fate.¹

The latest prediction was found, on enquiry, to have been misreported. It did not have such an appalling import, but that import proved to be true.

The Darshan was on. A vast crowd had gathered. Unaware that it would be the last Darshan, some people were drawn in by an unknown force and later thought themselves specially blessed. There were others who missed it and nourished a lifelong regret. It was mooted at one time whether the Darshan should not be postponed, since it might cause a considerable strain and exhaustion leading to further aggravation of the disease. But the proposal was brushed aside out of compassion for the devotees. Everybody, even persons quite ill, was given permission. Everything went off well, the atmosphere was charged with a solemn silence. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo were love and compassion incarnate; light, joy, peace, sweetness and strength emanated from them as from the sun and moon. After about two hours an uneasy stir, a nervous tension was felt in the crowd. A whisper had gone round that the Master would like the Darshan to finish as soon as possible. Then in quick steps the long queue passed and everyone received the last memorable blessings from him.

He came back to his room somewhat tired. It was about 5 p.m. He had eaten practically nothing the whole day. The first utterance he made was, "I am very hungry." We had never heard such a frank personal note from him before. The meal was quickly served by the Mother and taken in grave silence.

In the week following Darshan, one day when Sri Aurobindo was taking his bath, Purani read out an astrological forecast predicting that Sri Aurobindo would undo himself and that "his manifestation would come about in his 93rd year". Sri Aurobindo heard it quietly and remarked, "So late as that!" We, of course, took it as one of the Bickerstaff prophecies. But how true was the first part!

The symptoms grew more serious and a partial obstruction to the flow of urine made us think of mechanical intervention. When it became complete and was causing distress, Dr. Sen and we had no other alternative but to pass a catheter, much against Sri Aurobindo's will. It was followed by immediate relief. We felt light and cheerful. Then a wire was sent to Dr. Sanyal to come down at once. He had been forewarned to be ready for such an emergency call. Our joy was unfortunately short-lived, for in the

1. *Savitri*, Book VII, Canto I

wake of the intervention crept in the dark shadow of the fever, a not unusual complication, but all the same it brought a cold shiver. At this juncture, Sanyal's arrival acted like warm sunshine.¹

We apprised him of the whole clinical picture since his last visit. He approached Sri Aurobindo, did pranam but found him "seemingly unconcerned, with eyes closed, like a statue of massive peace" Then he opened his eyes, recognised him and gave him a serene smile. The doctor asked him regular professional questions to which he answered, "Trouble? Nothing troubles me, and suffering—one can be above it" I mentioned the urinary difficulties. "Well, yes; I had some difficulties, but they were relieved and now I don't feel anything," he replied reassuringly. Sanyal told the Mother that there was a mild kidney infection, but nothing serious. We were consoled. But he wondered how, after Sri Aurobindo had cured himself, there could be this recrudescence.

Then came the 1st and 2nd December programmes for the School Anniversary. The entire Ashram was busy and bustling. The Mother also had no rest. Nobody suspected that a profound tragedy was being enacted in the closed chambers of Sri Aurobindo. His ailment had been kept a guarded secret. On 1st December, some improvement was noticed, the temperature was normal. He was in a more cheerful mood and even joked with Sanyal. When the doctor suggested that a detailed blood examination would be advisable, Sri Aurobindo smiled and retorted, "You doctors can think only in terms of disease and medicine, but always there is much more effectual knowledge beyond and above it. I don't need anything." We were very happy with the answer, but missed its ambiguous import and thought that it carried a consoling assurance. Next evening the temperature shot up. It had been a heavy day for the Mother because of the Annual Physical Display in the Playground where more than two hundred people took part. The function went off well. When Sri Aurobindo was informed of it, he remarked with a contented smile, "Ah, it is finished!" As soon as the activities were over, the Mother came to Sri Aurobindo's room, placed the garland from her neck at his feet and stood there quietly. Her countenance was very grave. He was indrawn with his eyes closed. Later Sanyal expressed a desire to use some drugs in order to fight the infection. The Mother warned him against the use of any violent drugs or drastic methods not only because Sri Aurobindo would not like them, but they would be, on the contrary, positively harmful. "He will work out whatever is necessary. Give some simple medicines," was her instruction.

On 3rd December, the temperature again dropped to normal. Thinking that Sri Aurobindo was improving, Sanyal proposed to leave that evening. The Mother heard him gravely, but gave no reply. He took the hint and added quickly, "I would rather stay for a few more days, Mother" A smile lit up her face. In the afternoon the picture rapidly changed. The temperature shot up, respiratory distress showed itself for the first time. Sri Aurobindo refused to take any liquid. At the Mother's persua-

1 Much of the material that follows has been taken from Dr Sanyal's pamphlet, *A Call from Pondicherry*

sion he sipped some fruit juice and immediately lapsed into a trance. Almost the whole day he remained in that condition. The Mother, owing to this set-back, did not go to the Playground.

Then, for the first time, the Mother said, "He is losing interest in himself." To our request for some energetic measure, she now replied, "It all depends on him." The long night passed in distress alternating with an indrawn condition. He would wake up, however, only when we wanted to give him something to drink. Sometimes he even expressed a choice in the matter.

On the next day, he emerged from the depth and wanted to sit up. In spite of our objection, he strongly insisted. We noticed after a while that all the distressing breathing symptoms had magically vanished and he looked his normal self. We were so happy at this sudden change and thought that at last our prayer had been heard. Then he moved to the chair. We boldly asked him now, "Are you not using your force to cure yourself?" "No!" came the stunning reply. We could not believe our ears; to be quite sure, we repeated the question. No mistake! Then we asked, "Why not? How is the disease going to be cured otherwise?" "Can't explain; you won't understand," was the curt reply. We were dumbfounded.

At last the clue to a part of the enigma was found, the reason why the disease had come back and progressed. But the big mystery as to his strange attitude and non-intervention still remains. The increasing gravity of the disease was visible in three clear stages concomitant with the completion of *Savitri*, the Darshan and the School Anniversary, each progressive stage followed by a deeper and deeper trance. It was probably at the second stage that the Mother remarked, "Each time I enter his room, I see him pulling down the Supramental Light." Evidently, he had fixed the date of his departure and was pulling down the highest Light before the curtain fell. We misinterpreted the Mother's words to mean that the descending Light was meant to cure him. After an hour in the chair, he went back to bed, serene and majestic in poise. Sanyal even held a brief talk about Bengal's pitiable plight. But the Mother knew the truth behind the appearance.

Since midday the symptoms were on the increase, particularly the breathing difficulty; urine output definitely diminished. That was an alarming signal. We decided to make a thorough blood analysis. Sri Aurobindo consented after a great deal of reluctance. Our poor human vision! It was a Sunday; the General Hospital was closed. Dr. Nripendra and I hunted out the laboratory assistant; he took some blood from Sri Aurobindo's imperceptible vein. The punctures were painful to the sensitive body which was getting transformed. The result of the examination staggered us. All the signs of imminent kidney failure and nothing to be done! As a last resort we had to give some drugs. He was now always indrawn, and only woke up whenever he was asked to drink water. That confirmed the Mother's observation that he was fully conscious within and disproved the idea that he was in uraemic coma. Throughout the entire course of the illness he was never unconscious.

By 5 p.m. there was a respite and he called for the commode. In view of the

distress, we requested him not to move out of the bed, but he firmly insisted. He evidently knew what he was doing while we always looked through our medical glasses. There was a thorough purposive clearance of the bowels though he had taken very little food for many days. He then walked to the big cushion chair; again a self of calm repose. Alas, but for a brief instant. The respiratory distress returned with redoubled force. He went to his bed and plunged deep within himself. It was during this period that he often came out of the trance, and each time leaned forward, hugged and kissed Champaklal who was sitting by the side of his bed. Champaklal also hugged him in return. A wonderful sight it was, though so strangely unlike Sri Aurobindo who had rarely called us even by our names in these twelve years. We knew that Champaklal particularly longed for some tender outward expression. But Sri Aurobindo's impersonal nature kept at bay all personal touches except during our birthday or Darshan pranams when he would pat and caress our heads. Now Champaklal had his heart's yearning gratified to the full extent. But on what grounds? Was it the repayment of God's debt to his "servant" for his lifelong dedicated service without the expectation of any other meed than perhaps some occasional look or touch or word? For my part too, I can count a few glowing touches that shine like stars on a dark night. First of all, soon after the completion of *Savitri*, as I would enter his room in the morning, he would cast a moment's quiet glance at me leaving me in wonderment but happy. Then, when I did pranam on my birthday, 17th November, and the last Darshan day, he was unusually tender and caressed and pressed my head for a long time. But the climax of the wonder came when I was massaging his right leg. He was quietly lying down in bed; I was within the reach of his right hand. As I bent down, I suddenly felt a quick touch of his palm on my head. At once I looked up; all was as before. His gaze was elsewhere as if he knew nothing about it. I was utterly mystified. That these were indications of his imminent withdrawal became clear only after he had left the body. I am sure my other colleagues also received either vivid or veiled tokens.

Even a non-attendant, Amal Kiran, reported a last act of Grace that was his good fortune: "My turn to go up to the Darshan of November 24, 1950, came. As soon as my wife and I appeared at the door of the long Meditation Room upstairs, at the other end of which was the small room where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were sitting, the Mother leaned towards Sri Aurobindo and said something. At once he started smiling. All through the Darshan the smile was on his lips, and my wife tells me that until I disappeared into the next room on my way out, he was looking in my direction and smiling. Such a thing had never happened at any other Darshan I had attended. This was just eleven days before he passed away.

"When I had an interview with the Mother after December 5, I asked her what she had whispered to Sri Aurobindo. She replied, 'I told him, Amal is coming.' I inquired why she had to give the information. Her answer was, 'Sri Aurobindo's eyes had gone very bad. He could not see people clearly. Of course he could contact the consciousness of whoever was before him but could not recognise the outer being and

form. The moment he heard me, he began to smile.'

"From these words I realise that the Grace was as much the Mother's as Sri Aurobindo's. For it was through the one that the other had come."

To go back to our account, the Mother returned from the Playground after her usual attendance in the evening. I have said that she did not go there on the previous day. As a result the activities of the Playground were suspended. A deep gloom fell upon the hearts of the young group members. The Playground which used to bustle with energy and noise became ominously still. It was the first time an apprehension had loomed over the people that Sri Aurobindo's condition was serious. The Mother must have felt the poignant despondency of her children and the next day she had to appear in the Playground. As soon as she stepped in, everything changed: there was sunshine on every face and people were lulled into the belief that all was well. Some of them said, "We could never imagine that things were so bad. For the Mother had such self-composure and a look of detachment that it was only when on the 3rd of December she did not come to the Playground that we fell from the sky. But when on the next day she came into our midst, the nightmare passed and we forgot everything."

On returning to Sri Aurobindo she laid her garland at his feet and stood and watched him. She again remarked, "He is withdrawing himself." At 11 p.m. she helped him take a drink. At midnight she came again. This time he opened his eyes and the two looked at each other in a steady gaze. We were the silent spectators of that crucial scene. What passed between them was beyond our mortal ken, but Sri Aurobindo's look seemed to bear a touch of unusual softness. At 1 a.m. she came back, her face was calm, there was no trace of emotion. Sri Aurobindo was indrawn. The Mother asked Sanyal in a quiet tone, "What do you think? May I retire for an hour?... Call me when the time comes."

It may appear strange to our human mind that the Mother should leave Sri Aurobindo at this critical moment. We must remember that we are not dealing with human consciousness. The Mother's consciousness always being united with Sri Aurobindo's, the physical nearness is not indispensable at all times. Besides, we know that at this particular hour she had very important occult work to do. Personal motives do not exist, as the Mother has said, for those who are conscious with the Divine Consciousness.

Even after the Mother's broad hint before she left the room and despite clear signs of impending tragedy, I could not really believe that he was going to leave us. We hoped against hope and expected a miracle, knowing very well that such spectacular miracles were not in accordance with the process of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. If he had wanted to save himself, he would not have allowed the disease to run its course and then dramatically reversed the fatal decree. But one fondly clings to one's delusions. That is why we did not inform anyone of the imminent danger. About ten minutes before the grand end, he called me by my name from his indrawn state, inquired about the time and said, "Nirod, give me a drink." This was his deliberate

last gesture. The quantity he drank was very small and there was no apparent need of calling me by name. Those last words still ring in my ears and remain inscribed on my soul. Apparently they express nothing more than a physical need. But to us who look upon the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as the incarnations of the Divine, one word, one look, one touch are rare gifts added to the treasures of the soul. And to me, especially, these few words carried an assurance that he had not forgotten me even in his last moment. They were a reminder of the pledge he had given before that he would never forsake me.

After this utterance, followed the final plunge. At 1.26 a.m., leaving his physical sheath, "the Colonist from Immortality" departed from the earthly habitation, in the presence of the Mother who stood near his feet with an intense penetrating gaze, an incarnation of divine strength, poise and calm. Champaklal broke down completely and began to sob. He could not accept the hard fact. The Mother made him quiet with a stern look. After half an hour, she left us alone.

Immersed in silent, incommunicable grief we sat by his immobile body. From that stupor, Sanyal woke me up and said, "A lot of things to do; get up." Yes, the body had to be prepared for public view. News had already gone abroad. The Ashram photographers who had no chance to take photos of the Living would now take them of the Maha Samadhi. "In the morning twilight of the gods," the sadhaks came one by one and saw the Marvel and the Mystery, the body of the Golden Purusha in eternal sleep. And with tears of joy and grief they offered their prayer to the One who had sacrificed all for them.

I also saw, to my utter wonder and delight, that the entire body was suffused with a golden crimson hue, so fresh, so magnificent. It seemed to have lifted my pall of gloom and I felt light and happy without knowing why. When the Mother came, I asked naively, "Mother, won't he come back?" "No!" she replied, "If he had wanted to come back, he would not have left the body." Pointing to the Light she said, "If this Supramental Light remains we shall keep the body in a glass case." Alas, it did not remain and on the fifth day, on the 9th of December in the evening, the body was laid in a vault.

Before this, for four days, the disciples, the people of the town, Ashram employees had the unique Darshan and paid their homage. Bhaktas had come from different parts of India for the benediction of the last Darshan of the Guru. Many of them felt the room surcharged with peace, force, light or bliss. Some saw Sri Aurobindo sitting on the bed and saying, "I am here, I am here!" as if to falsify Nature's decree. Dilip happened to be away. On receiving the news, he arrived posthaste and utterly broke down. The Mother tenderly consoled and assured him, "How can I not love someone whom Sri Aurobindo loved? What do you think we are here for? Only to please Sri Aurobindo." He told me, "You don't know, Nirod, what I have lost." Amal Kiran too was not there. He had just left on the night of 3rd December for Bombay after meeting the Mother. He flew back as soon as he got the news. He was in the Ashram on the morning of the 6th. He has written about it in his

reminiscences entitled *The Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*:

“I who had depended so much on Sri Aurobindo in all my writing work—when he had woken to inspiration the labouring poet, stirred to literary insight the fumbling critic, shaped out of absolute nothing the political commentator—I who had almost every day despatched to him some piece of writing for consideration felt a void at the thought that he would not be in that room of his, listening so patiently to my poetry or prose and sending me by letter or telegram his precious guidance. A fellow-sadhak, Udar, spoke to the Mother about my plight. On December 12, the inmates of the Ashram met her again and each received from her hands a photograph of Sri Aurobindo taken after his passing. It was dusk, as far as I recollect. She must have seen a certain helplessness on my face. Smiling as she alone can do, she looked me in the eyes and said, ‘Nothing has changed. Call for inspiration and help as you have always done. You will get everything from Sri Aurobindo as before.’ ”

Champaklal remained sitting at the foot of the bed day and night. The Mother gave him a good quantity of milk to drink at night—that was all for physical sustenance.

The Mother paid her visits to the room twice or thrice a day, clad in a white robe and with a scarf tied over her hair. Her face calm and grave, yet softened with a maternal sweetness, she looked like Maheshwari of transcendent glory. She would stand silently before the body, look at it for some time and quietly retire. Sometimes she was accompanied by Nolini, Pavitra, Amrita and others. She did not want the body to be touched and wished that an utter silence should prevail in the room at all times.

On 9th December, the Light faded and signs of discoloration here and there were visible. Then, according to the Mother’s direction, the body was put into a specially prepared rosewood casket lined with silver sheet and satin and the bottom made comfortable with cushions. Sri Aurobindo’s body was wrapped in a gold-embroidered cloth. At 5 p.m. the body was carried by the sadhaks to the Ashram courtyard under the Service tree where a cement vault had been under construction from 5th December. Udar climbed down into the vault to receive the casket and put it in its proper position. As the box was lowered a friend of mine said that a prayer sprang spontaneously from his heart: “Now that you have gone physically, assure us that your work will be done.” Something made him look up at the Service tree and suddenly he saw against it Sri Aurobindo, his undraped upper body was of a golden colour. He said firmly with great energy and power in Bengali, “Habe, habe, habe”—“It will be done, it will be done, it will be done.” Then, as wished by the Mother, Champaklal came first to place a potful of earth upon the slate of the vault, followed by Moni, Nolini and other sadhaks. The ceremony was quiet and solemn. The Mother watched it from the terrace above Dyuman’s room. Hundreds of sadhaks stood in the courtyard in silent prayer and consecration. The most blessed Service tree amply fulfils its name by offering the Samadhi day and night a cool shade and sweet-scented flowers.

Thus came to a close the physical life of the One who, without the world

knowing it, worked unceasingly for the world and will continue doing so, careless of human reward of any kind and accepting the success of his mission as the only recompense. Of the latter he was absolutely sure, but were it to end in failure, he said that he would still go on unperturbed, because "I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do, and what is so done counts always in the economy of the universe." Was it the sacrifice that he called, "paying here God's debt to earth and man"? Never has there been recorded in earth-history a phenomenon where a person of Sri Aurobindo's supreme eminence has lived secluded from the world-gaze and quietly and unobtrusively passed away. Such a complete self-effacement can be thought of only of one who is a god or has become a god. It is certain that one day the world will wake up to realise who he was and what it owes to him as it becomes more and more enlightened in its consciousness. Already, some faint glimmerings of that recognition are visible in the Eastern sky, "a long lone line of hesitating hue". His Birth Centenary is knocking at our door. Rabindranath's salutation to him in his political days will turn into a salutation of the whole of humanity as its lover and saviour. The long lone hue will be transformed into a full blaze of the living Sun.

I need not add that the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo is not just a conventional place of pilgrimage. Every part of it is vibrant with the Consciousness-Force that the Master embodied during his unparalleled lifelong sadhana. From the oldest to the youngest, devotees see his glorious face, hear his ethereal voice, receive his answer to their prayers and become filled with something that cannot be mathematically proved, but subjectively apprehended. Yogis, saints and sadhus through the ages have done miracles; the Samadhi does the same in a different way; it is a Presence that radiates a constant stream of Peace, Light, Force, and responds to all our soul-needs when we approach it with faith and devotion

NIRODBARAN

(Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo, pp. 259-284)

THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO: ITS INNER SIGNIFICANCE AND CONSEQUENCE

THE core of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga is the dynamic Truth-consciousness that is the Supermind. By "Truth-consciousness" is meant that status and force of the Divine which brings out of the Divine's absolute Transcendence into a perfect manifestation of Self-being and Self-becoming the potentialities of the play of the One who is at the same time the Many. This manifestation is a complete harmony in which exist and function the creative truths, the flawless originals, the golden archetypes of all that is in our imperfect cosmos in which the Divine has posited a difficult evolution of matter, life-force and mind—with a soul supporting them—out of a vast Inconscience, a primal darkness set by Him as the nether pole to the transcendent Absolute. Between the two poles and above the evolving earth and below the archetypal Supermind are various occult planes—Subtle Matter, Vitality, Mind, Overmind and, at the back of the first trio, Psyche,—with their beings and movements and there is a complex interaction in the whole system of cosmos on cosmos. All this was known in general to the ancient seers and they saw in man who is the microcosm a threefold reality concretised into what they termed three sheaths or *shariras*—the gross outer, the subtle inner, the causal higher. The last is the substance of the Supermind, compacted of its creative light of total knowledge, infinite power, immortal bliss. But the ancients did not realise that the earthly evolution is not meant only to release the being into the Cosmic Self and into ever more deep, ever more high poises of consciousness and into some eternity beyond birth and death but also to bring into earth-terms the dynamic mode of the widths, the depths and the heights and ultimately the supreme perfection of the Truth-plane—the *kāraṇa sharira*, the causal body—so that earth-terms themselves may be fulfilled and not merely serve as bright points of departure into the wide and the deep and the high. In short, the ancients lacked a full and organised possession of the Supermind's purpose and power. The fusion of the supramental light with the inmost soul and the descent of it into mind and life-energy and even the physical body, transforming and divinising them in entirety, are Sri Aurobindo's special discovery and Yoga. With the supramental descent Sri Aurobindo aimed at creating a new humanity enjoying true self-consummation and living divinely in every field, and it is with this aim that he sought to form an initiating double centre for the new humanity by his own supramentalisation and the Mother's

Supramentalisation involves, among its final elements, freedom from disease, duration of life at will and a change in the functionings of the body—all, of course, as a material expression of the divine nature emerging in the human and not as an outer aggrandisement of an expanding inner egoism. But to compass these final elements which alone would found with utter security a supramental earth-existence the Yogi has to tackle at last the bed-rock of the Inconscience, the dark basis of the submerged

Divine from which evolution seems to issue Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, taking upon themselves as representative pioneers the agelong difficulties of all human nature, have been striking against this bed-rock for the last decade and a half. "No, it is not with the Emyrean that I am busy," wrote Sri Aurobindo in 1936 to a disciple and added: "I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things, it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it." In the course of this plunge, as layer after layer of the occult Inconscient is torn open and the supramental light sought to be called down into it, various dreadful possibilities rise up and great inner wounds as well as severe bodily tensions have to be endured. But throughout the fight the Master of the Supermind carries the talisman, as it were, that can ward off the fatal blow. Immense, in spite of the sublimest light within his very body, are his trials and yet he has also the capacity to emerge finally the victor and blaze a path of ultimate triumph for the men who follow him. Thus to emerge had been Sri Aurobindo's plan, so far as the plan can be read through his philosophical writings and his personal letters. Both the plan and the non-egoistic world-wide attitude of an Avatar find voice in a letter of 1935: "I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (*Moksha*) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others."

Yes, Sri Aurobindo, in his published pronouncements, appears to have envisaged the need and therefore the prospect of himself constituting together with the Mother the starting-point of a supramental humanity. But in the same pronouncements he leaves also a small margin for a different *dénouement*. A letter of 1934 speaks in general about the ways of a vessel of God: "The Divinity acts according to the consciousness of the Truth above and the *Lila* below and It acts according to the need of the *Lila*, not according to men's ideas of what It should do or should not do." A clearer hint of unexpected turns in the Divine's dealings is contained in a letter of 1935: "Why should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine!" This suggests that apparent defeat of the Divine's grandest goal could even be a concealed victory, a way precisely to reach that goal with greater swiftness by means of a paradoxical strategy. And, all conditions considered, it is truly such a strategy that seems to have been employed by Sri Aurobindo when to the superficial gaze he succumbed to a renal disorder.

The whole supramental Yoga was indeed like a great general's campaign against forces that had never been combated before by any spiritual figure. In the teeth of every common experience, every posture of human living down the ages, even every articulate spiritual tradition, this Yoga hoped to change the very foundations of Matter and proceeded into an embattled darkness: only a fearless fighter like Sri Aurobindo, only a genius like him of the Spirit militant could have intuited the mighty secret of the epiphany in evolution and planned the transformative onslaught on established

nature and moved ahead in the frame of mind that is disclosed in yet another letter of 1935: "It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense.... If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way to its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption—I go on till I conquer or perish. Thus is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others." A splendid heroism of selflessness is here, the vividest picture of a warrior Yogi who would take any risk, if thereby he could press closer to his objective—and though the formula is "I conquer or perish" the frame of mind is one that might easily avail itself of a yet more audacious formula: "I perish to conquer." To embrace this formula what would be required is simply the sense that, by sacrificing in a final grapple with the black powers of the Inconscient a wonderful body tinged with supramental light, those powers would be terribly exhausted and the golden godhead above tremendously pulled towards earth and into this body's partner in the Yoga of the Supermind. As soon as the momentous sense would dawn, Sri Aurobindo would be ready—supreme general that he was—to alter his entire scheme of battle, relinquish his whole line of previously prepared forts, abandon the old method of advance, change suddenly his well-plotted direction and, instead of attempting to supramentalise his physical existence in every detail, move imperturbably towards some titanic ambush, cast away the very guard given him by the Supermind and go down fighting to win all in secret, while losing all on the surface.

Nothing except a colossal strategic sacrifice of this kind in order that the physical transformation of the Mother may be immeasurably hastened and rendered absolutely secure and, through it, a divine life on earth for humanity may get rooted and be set aflower—nothing less can explain the passing of Sri Aurobindo. There would also be implied in the holocaust a world-saving action by the sweet power of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in a letter as far back as 1934: "It is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness to the Divine." We may say that some undreamt-of calamity would have afflicted the world if the vast poison had not been drawn away into the body of this one man whose spiritual consciousness, armed with divine Love, had made him a universalised individual incarnating the Transcendent's Will. And here we may refer again to the fact that the obstacles confronting Sri Aurobindo in his Yoga were not really personal. They were representative of the race and he gladly accepted their retarding perilous load in spite of or perhaps because of his own exceptional gifts and abilities. Apropos a query about some temporary complaint in the Mother's body many years ago, he wrote: "we have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general

change—creating a possibility of perfection for others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the realisation and the transformation and overcoming them for ourselves. It has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes—but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane. Till it is done, the fight there continues.. . The Mother’s difficulties are not her own; she bears the difficulties of others and those that are inherent in the general action and work for the transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter.’’ Obviously, then, whatever sacrifice is made by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother cannot be one imposed on them by personal defects. Theirs the unique *adhars* or vehicles of Yoga which could, if left to themselves, surmount every obstacle. This, in the present context of Sri Aurobindo’s departure, means that death is not anything he was obliged to undergo on account of some lack in himself. It is some stupendous crisis of the evolving earth-consciousness—some rebellious clouding upsurge of the divinely attacked Inconscient—that has been diverted to his own life, concentrated in the mortal risk of the uraemic coma and utilised by the master strategist for an occult advantage to the work he had assumed—the work which was always more important than direct personal consummation.

But it would be of the essence of the sacrifice and the strategy, as well as typically Aurobindonian, that a keenly struggling resistance should be there together with the large and tranquil acceptance. That is why we have said that Sri Aurobindo has gone down fighting. Never to acquiesce in any shortcoming of earth-nature was his motto, for he saw the very secret of evolution to be the manifestation in earth-nature of what superficially looks impossible—the quivering forth of vitality and sensation in seemingly lifeless Matter, the glimmering out of mind and reason in apparently instinctive animality, the all-perfecting revelation of Supermind in ostensibly groping intelligence, stumbling life-force and mortal body. So there never could be for Sri Aurobindo either a surrender to ordinary world-conditions or a flight into peace away from the world. An inviolable timeless peace he had always known ever since those three grand days in Baroda in 1908 when through a complete silencing of the mind the absolute experience of Nirvana, which has been the terminus of so many other Yogas, became his—not as a terminus but only as a base for further conquests. As for surrender, he could surrender to nothing except the Divine. Consequently, he battled for the Supermind’s descent till his last breath—calling the immortal Sun of the Spirit down, passionately packing his earthly envelope with the supramental light, so much so indeed that he could keep for several days that envelope free from the taint of discolouration and decay. To battle thus in the very moments of the sacrifice was in tune with his whole life-endeavour. Has he not himself expounded in a letter the technique of triumph in the midst of seeming downfall? ‘‘Even if I foresee an adverse result I must work for the one that I consider should be; for it keeps alive the force, the principle of Truth which I serve and gives it a possibility to triumph hereafter so that it becomes part of the working of the future favourable fate even if the fate of the hour is adverse.’’

With these far-seeing phrases of the Master we may close our attempt to eluci-

date a little the mystery of that look of magnificent meditation with which he lay from early morning of December 5 for more than 111 hours in his simple bed in the room where he had spent over two decades of intense world-work “Spiritually imperial”—thus is the only description fitting the appearance of his body: the heroic countenance with its white beard and its flowing white hair above the massive forehead, its closed quiet eyes and its wide-nostrilled aquiline nose and its firm lips whose corners were touched with beatitude, the broad and smooth shoulders, the arms flexed to place on the indomitable chest hand over gentle artistic yet capable hand, the strong manly waist covered by an ample cloth of gold-bordered silk, even the legs stretched out with an innate kingship reminiscent of their having trod through seventy-nine years with holy feet at once blessing and possessing earth. The atmosphere of the room was vibrant with a sacred power to cleanse and illumine, a power which appeared to emanate from the Master’s poise of conquering rest and to invade the bodies of all the watchers with almost a hammering intensity from over their heads as if, in redoubled force because of Sri Aurobindo’s selfless physical withdrawal, there came pouring down to humanity the life-transfiguring grace of the Supermind.

And we may add that somehow the personal presence itself of Sri Aurobindo grew intenser. He who had so long kept to a room for the sake of concentratedly hastening the Yogic process of transformation the wonderful bliss and dynamis of which the Mother had been canalising by her physical nearness to the disciples—he by setting aside his most exterior sheath broke out into a new intimacy with his followers and took them even more directly into his immense being. But it would hardly do justice to that being if we thought of it as merely a pervading greatness. Behind the material envelope are other organised vehicles—subtle and causal—and Sri Aurobindo had brought the remote causal effectively into the proximate subtle and was pressing it into the outer sheath at the time of his strategic sacrifice. To quote again his words, “The transformation has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes.” This means that he held the Supermind embodied in his subtle *sharira* and that he was under no occult necessity, no law of subtle Nature, to give up the latter for the purpose of returning to some plane of the soul’s rest before being reborn with a new subtle body as well as a new gross one. Sri Aurobindo, at the hour of his physical withdrawal, was in a position to do much more than be the cosmic and transcendent Purusha that his supramental Yoga had made his incarnate personality. He could actually be that Purusha active in an indissoluble subtle body at once divine and human, in a far more direct constant touch with the material world than could the forms which mystics have visioned of past Rishis and Prophets and Avatars. In a most special sense, therefore, Sri Aurobindo the marvellously gifted and gracious person who was our Guru and whom we loved is still at work and a concrete truth is expressed by the Mother when she says: “To grieve is an insult to Sri Aurobindo, who is here with us conscious and alive.” The same concrete truth is ingemmed in the beautiful message of December 7, which she delivered out of her depths where she and Sri Aurobindo are one: “Lord, this morning Thou hast given me the assurance that Thou wouldst stay with us until Thy work is achieved, not only as a

consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action. In unmistakable terms Thou hast promised that all of Thyself would remain here and not leave the earth-atmosphere until earth is transformed. Grant that we may be worthy of this marvellous Presence and that henceforth everything in us be concentrated on the one Will to be more and more perfectly consecrated to the fulfilment of Thy Sublime Work.’’

So the work goes on, the Mother fronting the future, with the Master by her side in subtle embodiment. And for those who have faith in the work’s fulfilment and who understand what that would be, there is a hope that sees the future pregnant with a particular most heart-soothing possibility. Sri Aurobindo has written in connection with the time when the Supermind’s descent into flesh and blood will be complete: ‘‘In the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of life and form in a divinised earth-nature.’’

These words hold out the prospect that Sri Aurobindo who has already a divinised subtle physical sheath may employ the supramental mode of manifestation for the purpose of presiding in the domain of Matter itself over the new humanity which the Mother will initiate. In that dawn of God’s gold the Mother will be the first being to achieve the divine body by a progression through a body born in the natural manner, while through the support of her achievement Sri Aurobindo may be the first being to put on the physical vesture of transformation by a projection of substance and shape from supernature. Nothing, of course, is certain about what Sri Aurobindo may will to do, but the possibility we have figured is not out of accord with all that we have glimpsed of a quenchless and victorious light beyond the human in the very event which strikes the surface eye of the aspiring world as a universal sunset—the passing of Sri Aurobindo.

K. D SETHNA (AMAL KIRAN)

(The Indian Spirit and the World’s Future, pp 186-209)

THE MIND OF LIGHT

(“The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—into the mind and even into the vital: it was working in the physical also but indirectly through those intermediaries. The question now was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light: the physical mind was the instrument for direct action upon the most material. The physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light.”—Note received from the Mother.)

THE core of a deathless sun is now the brain
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold.
Thought leaps—and an inmost light speaks out from things;
Will, a new miracled Matter’s dense white flame,
Swerves with one touch the sweep of the brute world.
Eyes focus now the Perfect everywhere.
In a body changing to chiselled translucency,
Through nerve on fire-cleansed nerve a wine of the Vast
Thrills from heaven-piercing head to earth-blessing feet.
The whole sky weighs down with love of the abyss
Deeper than death the all-penetrant rays take root
To make the Eternal’s sun a rose of the dust.*

AMAL KIRAN
4.4.54

* The Mother, after reading this poem, said that the first two lines were sheer revelation. That is, they catch exactly what happened when, on December 5, 1950, the Mind of Light was realised by her at the moment Sri Aurobindo left his body. The rest of the lines were, she said, an imaginative reconstruction of what the realisation had involved.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of November 2000)

यदा वीरस्य रेवतो दुरोणे स्योनशीरतिथिराचिकेतत् ।
सुप्रीतो अग्निः सुधितो दम आ स विशे दाति वार्यमियत्यै ॥

(Rigveda, 7.42.4)

When the Guest that lodges in the bliss has become conscious in knowledge in the gated house of the hero rich (in felicity), when Agni is perfectly satisfied and firmly lodged in the house, then he gives the desirable good to the creature that makes the journey. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 180)

When in the house of the strong and the joyous the guest resting at his ease awakens to knowledge, Agni well-pleased, rightly established in his home, gives so to the creature for his journey to the supreme bliss (or gives so the bliss that he may travel to it). (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 83, p. 108)

प्र ब्रह्माणो अङ्गिरसो नक्षन्त प्र क्रन्दनुर्नभन्यस्य वेतु ।
प्र धेनव उदप्रुतो नवन्त युज्यातामद्री अध्वरस्य पेशः ॥

(Rigveda, 7.42.1)

Forward let the Angirasas travel, priests of the Word, forward go the cry of heaven (or, of the heavenly thing, cloud or lightning), forward move the fostering Cows that diffuse their waters, and let the two pressing-stones be yoked (to their work)—the form of the pilgrim sacrifice. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 181)

May the brilliant (or mighty) lords of the soul move forward, forward may he come who cries aloud in the region of ether, may the Fosterers of being move forward pouring out its waters, may the Stones (mind and body) be yoked to their work, that are the form of the material of sacrifice. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 83, p. 108)

आदित्यासो अदितयः स्याम पूर्देवत्रा वसवो मर्त्यत्रा ।
सनेम मित्रावरुणा सनन्तो भवेम द्यावापृथिवी भवन्तः ॥

(Rigveda, 7.52 1)

O Sons of the infinite Mother (*ādityāsah*), may we become infinite beings (*ādityah syāma*), may the Vasus protect in the godhead and the mortality (*devatrā martyatrā*); possessing may we possess you, O Mitra and Varuna, becoming may we become you, O Heaven and Earth. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 181)

तुरण्यवोऽङ्गिरसो नक्षन्त रत्नं देवस्य सवितुरियानाः ।
पिता च तन्नो महान् यजत्रो विश्वे देवा समनसो जुषन्त ॥

(Rigveda, 7.52.3)

May the Angirasas who hasten through to the goal move in their travelling to the bliss of the divine Savitri, and that (bliss) may our great Father, he of the sacrifice, and all the gods becoming of one mind accept in heart (SABCL, Vol. 10, pp. 181-82)

तन्नः प्रत्नं सख्यमस्तु युष्मे इत्था वदद्भिर्वलमङ्गिरोभिः ।
हन्नच्युतच्युद् इस्मेषयन्तमृणोः पुरो वि दुरो अस्य विश्वाः ॥

(Rigveda, 6.18.3)

Let there be that ancient friendship between you gods and us as when with the Angirasas who spoke aright the word, thou didst make to fall that which was fixed and slewest Vala as he rushed against thee, O achiever of works, and thou didst make to swing open all the doors of his city. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 183)

इन्द्रं मतिर्हृद् आ वच्यमानाच्छा पतिं स्तोमतष्टा जिगाति ।
या जागृविर्विदधे शस्यमानेन्द्र यत् ते जायते विद्धि तस्य ॥

(Rigveda, 3.39.1)

The thought expressing itself from the heart, formed into the Stoma, goes towards Indra its lord. . It is the thought that when it is being expressed, remains wakeful in the knowledge that which is born of thee (or, for thee), O Indra, of that take knowledge. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 183)

दिवश्चिदा पूर्वा जायमाना वि जागृविर्विदधे शस्यमाना ।
भद्रा वस्त्राण्यर्जुना वसाना सेयमस्मे सनजा पित्र्या धीः ॥

(Rigveda, 3.39.2)

It is ancient (or eternal), it is born from heaven; when it is being expressed, it remains wakeful in the knowledge; wearing white and happy robes, this in us is the ancient thought of the fathers. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 184)

यमा चिदन्न यमसूरसूत जिह्वाया अग्रं पतदा ह्यस्थात् ।
वर्षी जाता मिथुना सचेते तमोहना तपुषो बुध्न एता ॥

(Rigveda, 3.39.3)

The mother of twins, who here gives birth to the twins; on the tip of the tongue it descends and stands; the twin bodies when they are born cleave to each other and are slayers of darkness and move in the foundation of burning force. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 184)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of November 2000)

Supermind and the Conquest of Death

OUTWARDLY, the principal events in the story of *Savitri* are the death of Satyavan at the end of Part Two and his resuscitation at the end of Part Three. These events are recounted in “The Book of Death” and the Epilogue, the shortest of the twelve books of the epic and the only books that did not receive the final revision Sri Aurobindo apparently intended to give them. His relative lack of attention to these two books suggests that neither the common fact of death nor the rare phenomenon of the return to life was what interested him most, but the forces behind these surface happenings.

Yet even the outer narrative is, according to Sri Aurobindo, “not a mere allegory”.¹ To the ordinary modern mind, this story handed down from ancient times is legendary or mythical in the sense of being a tale of things that could never happen. Sri Aurobindo himself, by subtitling his epic “A Legend and a Symbol”, has drawn attention to the inner significance of the poem and perhaps implied that the story should not be taken too literally. Nevertheless, it cannot be an accident that he took up this tale of victory over death as the subject of a major literary work at a time when he had come to envisage physical immortality as a possibility, even as an inevitable outcome of the evolution of consciousness. Leaving aside the symbolism he found in the legend, it may be doubted whether he would have selected this theme for his *magnum opus* if the story itself did not correspond to some truth in his vision of human potential.

With regard to the resuscitation of the dead, we may assume that the Mother voiced Sri Aurobindo’s views when she said that a person is not irrevocably dead “as long as the body remains intact”. Re-entry of the soul and revival of the body may be possible under certain conditions until “something even more material than the subtle physical” has gone out. Before that happens and “all ties are broken”,

someone who has the necessary knowledge, power and capacity may “raise” a person in such a state I believe this explains most of the cases of “miraculous” resurrection.²

Satyavan’s return from the dead is not brought about by occult processes, however. Sri Aurobindo depicts it as being the result of a spiritual victory over the principle of death. This imparts to it a much greater significance. But the word “spiritual” covers a large field. Ultimately, Sri Aurobindo realised that the unconditional power over death is inherent only in the supramental Force, not in the forces belonging to any intermediate plane from Higher Mind to Overmind.

The development of *Savitri* after 1926 reflects this realisation. Aswapati had to

ascend through the worlds and have the vision of the Divine Mother on the supramental heights, invoking from there her descent into earthly form. Only by the incarnation in Savitri of that "Life from beyond" which can become the "conqueror here of death"³ could there be an assured triumph over the laws of the Inconscient that hold Satyavan in their grip.

When he began to write *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo had already written philosophically about Supermind in the *Arya*. But he had not yet arrived at the distinction between Supermind and Overmind which he came to regard as crucial for physical transformation. This seemingly subtle distinction turns out to have momentous consequences, as we learn from a letter he wrote in 1933:

The distinction has not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind. The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (Overmind division of the Truth).

This perhaps explains why the "stumbling grey descent" from the twilight of the ideal to the twilight of the earthly real has to take place in Book Ten of *Savitri* before the supramental Truth can be decisively revealed. It may also be the reason why a materialistic age provided more favourable conditions for Sri Aurobindo's work than an age of spiritual idealism. He continues in the same letter with a still more emphatic critique of the limitations of the Overmind:

In its own plane Overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the Overmind lights feels itself living in a surprising revelation of Divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind—for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance.⁴

The gulf between Overmind and Supermind has nowhere been expressed so vividly as in lines dictated by Sri Aurobindo when he revised Book One, Canto Three of *Savitri* in the late 1940s:

Hardly for a moment glimpsed viewless to Mind,
As if a torch held by a power of God,
The radiant world of the everlasting Truth

Glimmered like a faint star bordering the night
Above the golden Overmind's shimmering ridge.⁵

It is of interest to note that the image of the golden ridge of the Overmind also occurs in Book Two, Canto Fifteen, where it came in at an earlier stage, the second and fourth of these lines in the final version are found in a manuscript dated 1942.

On the last step to the supernal birth
He trod along extinction's narrow edge
Near the high verges of eternity,
And mounted the gold ridge of the world-dream....⁶

In manuscripts of *Savitri* from the period of the *Arya*, the words "supermind" and "overmind" do not occur. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1936 that the supramental world did "not enter into the scheme"⁷ of the early versions. This seems to apply to all the versions from 1916 to 1920. For though Sri Aurobindo speaks of "the first version", he describes the poem as divided then into two parts of four books each. After the drafts dated 1916, which had no parts, books or cantos, this eight-book form is the most developed state it reached in the period extending to 1920, when the Mother's return to India was followed some months later by Sri Aurobindo's suspension for several years of virtually all writing.

This gap in the composition of *Savitri* was a time of intensive inner work culminating in the *siddhi* of November 1926, "the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind"⁸. This was from one point of view the most important period in the evolution of the poem. It could be said that, during these years, Sri Aurobindo's power of expression was steeped in

The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word,⁹

so that when he resumed writing, the "overhead" inspiration began to come more naturally and with a more spontaneous perfection. It can also be assumed that this silence was packed with many of the experiences ascribed to Aswapati that start to crowd the pages of *Savitri* from 1927 onwards, leading Sri Aurobindo to set aside the rest of the poem for almost twenty years until Part One had taken shape.

Before discussing the 1947 revision of the end of Book Ten, where *Savitri* discloses her knowledge of the Supermind before revealing herself as the Divine Mother and defeating Death, it may be instructive to return to Part One and glance at how this incarnation was made the result of Aswapati's ascent to the supramental plane, preparing the possibility of such a victory in the material world.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

- 1 *Savitri* (1993), "Author's Note"
- 2 *Questions and Answers 1950-51*, CWM, Vol 4, p 142
3. *Savitri*, p 314
- 4 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, pp 369-70
- 5 *Savitri*, p 41
- 6 *Ibid* , pp 299-300.
7. *Ibid* , p 729
- 8 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, p 136
9. *Savitri*, p 41

THE ASHRAM—EARLY DAYS

REMEMBERING the hallowed atmosphere
 Of silence and the charged and sacred ground
 We trod, upbuoyed by wings of Force no fear
 Could penetrate, and we her captives bound

By a smile that opened on eternity.
 We were children then, happy by her feet
 Content to be and all our destiny
 Assured and death a chimera or cheat

To be dissolved in the radiance of her light.
 Nothing we knew of the battlefield within
 Or scaling of a far forbidding height
 The soul from dark inconscient night to win.

Now mid the chaos and cacophony
 Awakened our being gathers round its sun
 And the world of ego-rule shall turn to flee
 Before the presence of the luminous One.

ALL LIFE IS YOGA

A Brief Biography of Sri Aurobindo

Nobody except myself can write my life—because it has not been on the surface for man to see.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Letters*)

YET we should be concerned with a few worldly facts to keep our file complete. And the strange thing is that, for a discerning eye, they also bring an intuitive vision which can provide a distant bio-spiritual peep into the secrecies of the person whom we so much adore. No wonder philosophers have described him as the greatest synthesis between the East and the West, critics have acclaimed him as a poet par excellence; social scientists regard him as the builder of a new society based on enduring values of the life of the spirit, devotees throng in mute veneration offering their hearts and their souls in a silent prayer that can secure for them the beatitude of the Supreme; Yogins long to live in the sunlight of his splendour to kindle in it their own suns; in the tranquil benignity of his spiritual presence is the fulfilment of all our hopes and all our keenest and noblest aspirations; gods of light and truth and joy and beauty and sweetness are busy in their tasks to carry out his will in the creation; in him the avataric incarnation becomes man to fulfil the divine in man. Such is the real birth of the Immortal in the Mortal. He comes here as Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo was the third son of Swarnalata and Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghose and was born on 15 August 1872 in the early hours of that Thursday in the aristocratic area of Calcutta. He was brought up in a highly Anglicised atmosphere at home to the extent that he did not know even his mother tongue Bengali. His father intended to bring up his children in the perfect style and manner of the English society adopting its ways of life and thinking. Hence five-year-old Auro was put in the Loreto Convent School in Darjeeling which was otherwise exclusively meant for English children. In 1879, at the age of seven he, along with his brothers, was taken to England where he stayed for the next fourteen years mostly with an English family. In September 1884 Auro was admitted to St. Paul's School in London and had his education there until July 1890. Later in the same year, in October, he joined King's College at Cambridge.

Never during this entire period did young Sri Aurobindo come in contact with the traditional Indian life or culture. At the same time in England he "never was taught English as a separate subject but picked it up like a native in daily conversation. Before long he was spending much of his time reading. Almost from the start, he devoted himself to serious literature. As a ten-year-old he read the King James Bible."¹ Soon the attentive and wakeful student mastered half a dozen European languages, including Greek and Latin in which he scored the highest marks ever obtained in a school examination. Not only languages, he knew intimately and incomparably well the literature and culture that dominated European life and history

for centuries. These classical themes later found great expression in his poetic writings, e.g., *Perseus the Deliverer* as a play and *Ilion* as an epic in Homeric quantitative hexameter based on the naturalness of temperament of the English language. Here it may be mentioned *en passant* that Sri Aurobindo wrote that drama, with a Grecian theme, during his most hectic political activities in Bengal. It was published in 1907 in the weekly *Bande Mataram*.

After his return to India in 1893 Sri Aurobindo straightaway joined the state services of Baroda accepting the invitation of Sayajirao Gaekwar. But, more importantly, he plunged into the mainstream of Indian life and literature even as he learnt several native languages including classical Sanskrit. Not only did he study the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the works of Kalidasa and other authors; he also mastered the Vedic, Upanishadic and other Scriptural writings to the extent that he wrote extensively on these subjects and the issues concerned with them. In fact we see on them the indelible mark of an intuitive thinker disclosing their deeper and truer sense. He offered very independent and penetrating interpretations in the spirit in which they were actually revealed. While we witness in them both the robust pragmatism and subtlety of the modern mind, perhaps we more pertinently recognise the seer who quite visibly stands behind them. Sri Aurobindo by now acquired the foundational basis to give expression to his own creative talents in the wide and luminous range of universality characteristic of an authentic Indian personality. Knowledge flowed in as if a crystalline stream suddenly had taken birth in some perennial mountain-source of the hoary Wisdom. This wide-ranging and at the same time intensive Abhyasa Yoga of Sri Aurobindo prepared a thorough and strong base for his missioned task which he would soon accomplish.

During this period Sri Aurobindo was drawn more and more into the current of the national life. Nay, he gave to it another direction, even as he gave to his own life by plunging into the thuck of active political life. Presently he left the secure life of the princely Baroda State and went to Calcutta accepting all the hardships entailed by it. The immediate provocation was the ill-conceived partition of Bengal in 1905. There he initiated a comprehensive programme of building the nation founded on its sounder values, on its ancient wisdom and culture. In it was born Indian nationalism, in the nourishing soil of its rich past, firmly established in its worthy tradition, with its own natural disposition and governing character, its innate *swabhāva* and *swadharma*. True nationalism for Sri Aurobindo was Sanatana Dharma itself, the eternal religion based on spiritual knowledge and experience.² He saw that in it alone grow the values that acquire merit in every respect, worldly and otherwise. To it he now committed himself completely. In a letter written to his wife Mrinalini, in 1905, he states the following:

I have three madnesses. The first is this. I firmly believe that the accomplishment, talent, education and means that God has given me, are all His. Whatever is essential and needed for the maintenance of the family has alone a claim upon

me; the rest must be returned to God.. The second madness which has recently seized hold of me is: I must somehow see God... If He exists there must be ways to perceive His presence, to meet Him. However arduous the way, I am determined to follow that path. In one month I have felt that the Hindu religion has not told lies—the signs and hints it has given have become a part of my experience... My third madness is that other people look upon the country as an inert piece of matter, a stretch of fields and meadows, forests and rivers. To me She is the Mother. I adore Her, worship Her. What will the son do when he sees a Rakshasa sitting on the breast of his mother and sucking her blood? Will he quietly have his meal or will he rush to deliver his mother from that grasp? I know I have the strength to redeem this fallen race. It is not physical strength, it is the strength of knowledge. This feeling is not new, I was born with it and it is in my marrow. God has sent me to this world to accomplish this great mission.³

In this dynamic pursuit, and accepting its dangers without a second thought, he attempted all and achieved all. In the words of Nagendrakumar Guharay, Sri Aurobindo was always fearless, *abhi*, and nothing deterred him from action.⁴ He spoke with God-given courage and acted unmindful of the consequences that followed in the sequel of the missioned task. Freedom as a birthright was proclaimed and war waged against the rulers of the time. He was charged for seditious activities and incarcerated for one year from May 1908. But during this period a new and glorious transformation came upon him. “That one year in Alipore jail was perhaps the most eventful for his future. The nationalist and political leader was now changed wholly into a mystic and a yogi.”⁵ Another world opened out in front of Sri Aurobindo. A mighty hand was all the while guiding him, perhaps even without his knowledge.

Barrister C. R. Das triumphantly defended Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case and in his concluding argument made an inspired appeal in the following words: “My appeal to you therefore is that a man like this who is being charged with the offences imputed to him stands not only before the bar in this Court but stands before the bar of the High Court of History. And my appeal to you is this: That long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands.”⁶ Prophetic words, indeed! We may say that this marks the completion of Sri Aurobindo’s Jivan Yoga.

After his acquittal on 6 May 1909 Sri Aurobindo addressed a large gathering at Uttarpara: “When I went to jail the whole country was alive with the cry of *Bande Mataram*, alive with the hope of a nation, the hope of millions of men who had newly risen out of degradation. When I came out of jail I listened for that cry, but there was

instead a silence’’ He felt a deep concern for the country no doubt, but there was no trace of worry in him; he knew someone else had definitely taken the reins in his hands to guide the career and speed of events. In the course of the speech he gave a hint of what he had experienced in the jail. He was given the central truth of the Hindu religion and he knew that in it alone is the destiny of the nation, as if marked out for the fulfilment of a higher purpose. Personally, he had the experience of being surrounded by Vasudeva from all sides. He looked around and ‘‘it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Council and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled’’⁸ All is Vasudeva, *vāsudeva sarvam iti*, became the basis for everything in life.

A new chapter had opened and soon Sri Aurobindo was to find his cave of tapasya in the South. There he was to carry out the task given to him as a Divine Command. With it Diksha Yoga stepped into the luminous Jnana Yoga of the Protagonist.

A great work awaited him and for it he spared no effort. In a letter dated 12 July 1911, a little after one year of his coming to Pondicherry, he tells us what he was busy with:

I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane... What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga have been so long withheld. I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.⁹

The One who had kept him busy in the severe and painful work also arranged in 1914 for a collaborator in the Mother. In that glorious joint venture first began the announcement of the divine agenda in the nature of a monthly, the *Arya*. It ran into some five-thousand pages for seventy-eight months and carried the knowledge and the power of realisation by which the lower could reach the higher, in as much as the higher manifest in the lower. The Life Divine, the Synthesis of Yoga, Essays on the Gita, Vedic and Upanishadic revelations, the nature of future Poetry, Social, Political and National themes—all these writings which he received in a silent mind brought a new vision and a possible new mode of collective life. Global in their outlook, they encompassed in their fold the worlds of men and gods and higher beings preparing themselves to participate in the terrestrial possibilities in the greatness of the triple Spirit itself. Obviously such an outcome is not conceivable in the analytical or linear method of our thinking. A new source of creativity was discovered, an infallible

creativity that has its own power of expression and effectuation. Indeed, what we have in the *Arya* “was composed in the organ mode of Sri Aurobindo’s English.”¹⁰ There is no doubt that while it endures, it also attains what it attempts.

Not long after his coming to Pondicherry in 1910 Mme Alexandra David-Néel, who had acquainted herself deeply with Tibetan occultism, met Sri Aurobindo in 1912. About her meeting with him she reports: “His perfect familiarity with the philosophies of India and the West wasn’t what drew my attention; what was of greater importance to me was the special magnetism that flew out of his presence, and the occult hold he had over those who surrounded him.”¹¹ A glimpse of that special magnetism, which grew more and more luminous as his Yoga progressed, we may get from his diary records of the period between 1912-1920. Meticulous as a scientist’s were his observations of the various spiritual siddhis or realisations achieved by him. These constitute a unique record in the entire annals of spirituality. About these documents, collectively called *Record of Yoga*, the compiler writes as follows. “This document is noteworthy in at least three respects... It provides a first-hand account of the day-to-day growth of the spiritual faculties of an advanced yogin... The language of *Record of Yoga* is bare, unliterary, often couched in arcane terminology... What it provides is a down-to-earth account of a multitude of events, great and small, inner and outer... It may be looked on as the laboratory notebook of an extended series of experiments in yoga.”¹²

In the Yogic parlance we may say that this was the period when Sri Aurobindo’s attempts were chiefly directed towards supramentalisation of the mental planes that presently govern our evolutionary consciousness. There was soon to follow the supramentalisation of the vital. The last stage of the great triple transformation was to be preceded in 1926 by what Sri Aurobindo called overmentalisation of the physical. But before this Siddhi Yoga we also have two remarkable poetic creations of the Master-Poet.

Sri Aurobindo had started writing his epic *Iliad* while in Alipore jail,¹³ he took it up again and worked upon it during the early period at Pondicherry. This was lightly revised by dictation in the late 40s. Then during 1916-1918, in the midst of his multidimensional *Arya*-writing, Sri Aurobindo also made a preliminary draft of his magnum opus *Savitri*. Eventually it “became a poetic chronicle of his yoga.”¹⁴ We have similarly the record of his later yogic realisations in his poetic compositions of the 30s. But what stands out as the double autobiography, his and the Mother’s spiritual realisations in the transformative Yoga of the earth-consciousness, is his supreme creation—in the Mother’s phrase, supreme revelation—*Savitri*. That indeed marks Divya Yoga of the Supreme himself.

Sri Aurobindo left his body on 5 December 1950, Tuesday at 1.26 a.m. In crimson-gold splendour it lay there for 111 hours before it was put in the Samadhi. The Mother’s prayer expresses the gratitude for all that he had done in triumphantly accomplishing the divine task. “To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so much for us,

who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.”¹⁵ About the significance of this event the Mother said later: “He was not compelled to leave his body, he chose to do so for reasons so sublime that they are beyond the reach of human mentality.”¹⁶

As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body the mind of Light as the leader of the intermediate race, prior to the arrival of the gnostic being, got realised in the Mother.¹⁷ It was only by “consciously experiencing and transforming death”¹⁸ that the divine pace could be hastened in the earth consciousness. It was an occult imperative, an aspect of yogic action itself. The result was the manifestation of Supermind in the earth’s subtle-physical on 29 February 1956. Thus in a bid to get things done in a most definitive way Sri Aurobindo left his body and completed the supreme or Param Yoga.

R Y DESHPANDE

References

- 1 Peter Heehs, *Sri Aurobindo*, p. 10
- 2 *Karmayogn*, SABCL, Vol. 2, p 10
- 3 Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, p 53
- 4 *Farewell to the god*, quoted by Nirodbaran in his *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, p 121
- 5 Sisir Kumar Ghose, *The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo*, p 11
- 6 *Mother India*, March 2000, p 189, for the complete defence argument see the previous issues
- 7 *Karmayogn*, SABCL, Vol 2, p 1
- 8 *Ibid*, p 5
- 9 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, pp 423-24
- 10 Georges Van Vrekhem, *Beyond Man*, p 45
- 11 K R Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo*, p 378
- 12 Peter Heehs, *op cit*, pp 99-100
- 13 *Ibid*, p 127
- 14 *Ibid*
- 15 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol 13, p 7
- 16 Quoted by Nirodbaran, *op cit*, p 238
- 17 *CWM*, Vol 13, p 64
- 18 Georges Van Vrekhem, *op cit*, p 278

SHIVA TEMPLE

On the edges of great waters,
Blue surges and refreshing winds,
Where sun-lit skies assume
The white pinions of diving gulls,
An internal summary awakes
Where sit Shiva and Parvati

Through tunnels of dream,
Affront the largeness that surrounds,
The tiny temple's closed-in space
Harbours ever a greater continuum;
And the measures unseen become lived.

All around, the ocean roar of waves
Like an ingress of Time's ceaseless flow,
On a vibrant, tumultuous note
Crash upon the banks of walled-up stone
Whither the temple's solid poise of calm
Upbears the symbol waters of the universe;
A world support and greatness.

The great Lord and the Mother of all,
Their presence onlooking since the beginning of all,
In an embrace of sweet and compact peace,
Is forever the great goal of the journeying years,
The wise power and magical bliss.

VIGYAN

5th DECEMBER—THE MIND OF LIGHT

THE passing of Sri Aurobindo's body is a process of a colonist from immortality. A heavy price had to be paid for it, and Sri Aurobindo seems to have decided to change his mode of action and force, the issue regarding the fixing of the Supermind in the earth consciousness which was proving to be most unreceptive and intractable. All the time he was trying to create sufficiently stable and receptive conditions upon the earth in order to establish the Supermind

A reference has been made earlier to Sri Aurobindo's speculations about 'The Perfection of the Body and The Divine Body'. These were only far-off speculations about what might become possible in the future evolution by means of a spiritual Force. The immediate object of Sri Aurobindo's endeavours was rather to realise the Divine and establish spiritual life on earth, but even for this the body could not be ignored. As he wrote in a letter dated 7th December 1949: "I put a value on the body first as an instrument, *dharmasādhana*, or, more fully, as a centre of manifested personality in action, a basis of spiritual life and activity as of all life and activity upon the earth, but also because for me the body as well as the mind and life is a part of the Divine Whole, a form of the Spirit and therefore not to be disregarded or despised as something incurably gross and incapable of spiritual realisation or of spiritual use".¹

In another letter, written the very next day, he referred to Narayan Jyotishi, a Calcutta astrologer, who had made the prediction that Sri Aurobindo would prolong his life "by Yogic power for a very long period and arrive at a full old age"², and added as if in corroboration: "In fact, I have got rid by Yogic pressure of a number of chronic maladies that had got settled in my body"³ In other words, it appeared as though the length of his "life" would depend entirely on his own deliberate choice. Once when the Mother had told Sri Aurobindo that She felt like leaving her body, he is reported to have remarked, "No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation, I might go: you will have to fulfil our yoga of supramental descent and transformation"⁴ In his letter of 7th December 1949, Sri Aurobindo explained why, unlike Sri Ramakrishna who wouldn't use spiritual force for preserving the body, he was not unwilling to maintain the body "In good health and the condition as an instrument of a physical basis"⁵ for yoga sadhana. In his reported conversation with the Mother, it is implied that it was open to the Mother as well as Sri Aurobindo to decide for themselves if, or when, they should leave the body, and if they wanted they could overcome the physical ailments by means of spiritual force. Then Sri Aurobindo had decided that if one of them should go, it would be Himself, not She. There were other strange and sinister indications too. "On 15th August 1950, an old sadhak with a capacity for vision saw Sri Aurobindo drawing into himself dark fumes that were rising from the subconscious parts of the people as they were coming to him for *darshan* in a procession. He was gathering up the lower elements of earth-nature within the area of representative humanity and then drawing them into himself"⁶.

Again, it was during 1950 that the composition of *Savitri* was done at a quickened pace. The whole of Book XI ('The book of Everlasting Day') was dictated, as it in one long spell. 'I want to finish *Savitri* soon'. Sri Aurobindo told Nirod-da one day. Having made his announcement, 'he increased immensely the general tempo of composition and revision'.⁷ But somehow, even when his attention was drawn to it, he seemed to defer to an indefinite 'afterwards' the revision of 'The Book of Death' and the Epilogue ('The Return to Earth').

Late in the night of 4th December, it was clear that Sri Aurobindo was withdrawing himself on purpose. And at 1.26 a.m. on 5th December,—with the Mother out of the room and the elect few watching—the Light seemed to flicker, the light seemed to fade out.

He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.⁸

The reader is referred to K. D. Sethna's article: 'The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence', Nirodbaran's 'Sri Aurobindo. I am Here, I am Here' and P. Sanyal's 'A Call from Pondicherry' for more detailed accounts of Sri Aurobindo's last illness.

Two hours after Sri Aurobindo's passing the Mother announced it to the Ashram inmates at 3.30 a.m. on 5th December. The word spread quickly and was flashed at once all over the world. Sri Aurobindo's body was to lie in state till noon, and the Ashram gates were to be thrown open to enable all to pay their homage to the Avatar, a Supramental Mahayogi. Leaders and savants who had known Sri Aurobindo and those who had only followed his career from a distance or had merely read his works, all were equally shaken by the news that came over the air in the morning. The President of India, Rajendra Prasad, said in the course of the statement that he issued. 'India will worship and enshrine his memory and place him in the pantheon of its greatest seers and prophets'. At that time Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, referred to Sri Aurobindo's 'astonishing brilliance of mind' and described him as 'one of the greatest minds of our generation'. The news took Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's mind to the 'very beginnings of our struggle for freedom'. Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar saw in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual life 'a reduplication of the quest and the askesis of the Buddha and other apostles of humanity'. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, then India's ambassador in Russia, described him as 'The greatest intellectual of our age and a major life force of the spirit'. Numberless were such tributes, and they had the ring of spontaneity, many were wrung from the heart, many emanated from a genuine appreciation of the poet, the patriot, the philosopher, or the great sage of Pondicherry. One of the inmates (Dara Aga Syed Ibrahim) had a wonderful experience that morning when he walked past Sri Aurobindo's body lying on the cot in its snow-white background. 'I found myself in Sri Aurobindo's own room by the side of his cot. He seemed so peaceful and happy, and the flesh shone with a new lustre

which I had failed to see at the *darshan* on the 24th November".⁹

On the 7th morning the Mother issued a statement that was both Prayer and Benediction

"Lord, this morning Thou hast given me the assurance that Thou wouldst stay with us until Thy work is achieved, not only as a consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action. In unmistakable terms Thou hast promised that all of Thyself would remain here and not leave the earth atmosphere until earth is transformed. Grant that we may be worthy of this marvellous Presence and that henceforth everything in us be concentrated on the one will to be more and more perfectly consecrated to the fulfilment of Thy sublime work.

"The lack of receptivity of the earth and men is mostly responsible for the decision Sri Aurobindo has taken regarding his body. But one thing is certain: what has happened on the physical plane affects in no way the truth of his teaching. All that he has said is perfectly true and remains so. Time and the course of events will prove it abundantly."¹⁰

The Mother has also said: "When I asked him to resuscitate he clearly answered: 'I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way.'¹¹

"Sri Aurobindo has given up his body in an act of supreme unselfishness, renouncing the realisation in his body to hasten the hour of the collective realisation. Surely if the earth were more responsive, this would not have been necessary."¹²

"As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he had called the Mind of Light got realised in me."¹³

Mr. K. D. Sethna writes:

"Face to face with such a clear-cut statement our sole task is to use as exegesis on its conjunction of physical mind, Supermind and Mind of Light Sri Aurobindo's own treatment of the last-named. His phrase, 'Mind of Light', except for an occurrence in Book IV, Canto 1, of *Savitri* in connection with *Savitri's* early development—

A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god—,

is used for the specific connotation for the first time in the concluding essays in the series originally published in the Mother's *Bulletin of Physical Education* and later collected in book-form under the title, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*. The connotation is indeed specific but packed with subtleties, all of which are not expounded in full in the essays before us, and it displays a sort of spectrum-band of more than one shade. Sri Aurobindo intended to write further on the theme and in the existing essays he discusses the Mind of Light with reference less to the initiation of this novel state in the course of his Integral Yoga than to the general life afterwards of a humanity, to which such a state might spread and even become, instead of our

present mentality, native. So we must examine the phrase carefully with an eye to both the implicit and the explicit and combine with the clues derived from these last writings those available from his major philosophical work. *The Life Divine*, to which *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, is, in many senses, a sequel. Then we shall be best able to correlate his declarations with the Mother's pronouncement and by their help fill out the significance it reveals of the supramental descent into the body which started on December 5, 1950."¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo in his essay on the mind of Light explained the function of the mind of Light in the following words:

"In this inevitable ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage. As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve a new type of human being; this development must carry in it an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life.

"In the birth of the mind of Light and its ascension into its own recognisable self and its true status and right province there must be, in the very nature of things as they are and very nature of the evolutionary process as it is at present, two stages. In the first, we can see the mind of Light gathering itself out of the ignorance, assembling its constituent elements, building up its shapes and types however imperfect at first and pushing them towards perfection till it can cross the border of the Ignorance and appear in the Light, in its own Light. In the second stage we can see it developing itself in that greater natural light taking its higher shapes and forms till it joins the supermind and lives as its subordinate portion or its delegate. In each of these stages it will define its own grades and manifest the order of its beings who will embody it and give to it a realised life. Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living; then there will be, by the illumination of this mind of Light in the greater realisation of what may be called a gnostic mentality, in a transformation of the human being, even before the supermind is reached, even in the earth-consciousness and in a humanity transformed, an illumined divine life."¹⁵

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *SABCL*, Vol 26, p 208
- 2 *Ibid*, p 209
- 3 *Ibid*
- 4 Reported by Dr P Sanyal, (*A Call from Pondicherry*) *Mother India*, December, 1953, p 187
- 5 *SABCL*, Vol 26, p 209.
- 6 *Mother India*, February 1954, pp 46-47
- 7 *Savitri*, published by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (1954) Editor's Note, p 817
- 8 *SABCL*, Vol 29, p 445
- 9 *Mother India*, February 1951, p 13
- 10 *Words of the Mother*, Vol 13, p 7
11. *Glances of the Mother's Life*, compiled by Nilima Das, Vol 2, p 209
- 12 *Ibid*
- 13 *Ibid*
- 14 *Mother India*, 1953, December, pp 12-13
- 15 *SABCL*, Vol 16, p 69

THE DIVINE PLAN AND THE PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE

FIRST of all, I would like to felicitate the Open Centre for the wonderful work they are doing by creating a Forum where people of different faiths and beliefs and experiences can come together and share their knowledge. It is a great chance to learn that there can be as many paths to the Supreme as there are people, each enlightening and enriching us. I am particularly thankful to the Open Centre for inviting me to share with you my greatest treasure and delight: what I have learned from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The subject selected for our study this evening is profound and requires rather serious attention; but the end result, I wish to assure you, is the Delight of Existence. And I pray with all humility for the living presence of my Master to guide me in this presentation and bless us all with this Delight.

At times we come to the crossroads in life and we wonder what life is all about. In India, we invoke the gods at almost every step, but this does not satisfy us. We want to meet this God and ask questions—perhaps when we come face to face with God there will be no more questions to ask. Religions abound all over the world but they seem either ritualistic, dogmatic or other-worldly, and cannot satisfy our thirst for true knowledge. There are many spiritual masters who claim God-realisation, but live in their own caves of retreat and cannot answer the needs of our complex life. To find someone who can accept the richness of life and fill it with spiritual splendour is a rare privilege. I was seeking one such guru, when I was studying for my B.A (hons.) in philosophy. Fortunately, my professor of philosophy, Dr. J. N. Chubb, told me “Read *The Life Divine* of Sri Aurobindo. He will not only help you to write a critical appreciation on the Greek philosophers from Thales to Plato and the modern philosophers from Descartes to Kant, but will help you find the answer to all your questions.”

Till then, I had not heard of Sri Aurobindo, but he must have known the seeking of my heart. For, the very first chapter of *The Life Divine* describes it so beautifully and so fully. “To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilit or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,—this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution.” (*SABCL*, Vol. 18, pp. 1-2)

Reading *The Life Divine*, I knew that I had found my guru who not only answered my questions, but filled in all the gaps of questions unasked and left unanswered by the Indian, Greek, and modern philosophers, the psychologists, the social and political scientists. He explained thoroughly what they were fumbling to ex-

press. This is very characteristic of Sri Aurobindo. For, his vision is global and comprehensive. All viewpoints, however contradictory or disparate they may seem to us, find their rightful place in Sri Aurobindo's unique conception of what he calls "the logic of the Infinite". For, the Supreme Reality is infinite and many-sided and we cannot attempt to understand it with the logic of the finite mind.

It is in this light that we shall study the Divine Plan and the Purpose of Existence as revealed by Sri Aurobindo on the basis of his own spiritual experiences. I am sure you will be delighted by his vision and the promise of realisation of all that we cherish in life. And as we study this Plan, the purpose of Existence will become clear.

We accept that our present existence with its trials and errors and ignorant gropings in the dark is not a perfect existence. It is too full of conflict, chaos and crisis, pain and suffering to be called a perfect existence. Shankara, the great Indian philosopher, who dominated the Indian mind for a long time, called this world an illusion, since according to him, there was no possibility of any spiritual fulfilment in the world. He preached the liberation of the individual from this world of illusion by dissolving any sense of separate existence into the unity of the Brahman or the indefinable Reality of the featureless Existence. Buddha felt that pain, suffering and death were inevitable in this world and was so disgusted with it that he declared the cessation of rebirth and an entry into the Nirvana, the absolute Void or Shunya, to be the only escape.

Sri Aurobindo, however, finds the key to the Divine Plan in the ageless, undying, persistent human aspiration for the constant Bliss of a perfect existence in spite of our normal experience of this present existence as imperfect. Rediscovering the hidden knowledge of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and further adding the revelation of the Supreme Reality on the basis of his own spiritual experience, Sri Aurobindo confirms the experience of the Vedic seers and says: "Delight is existence, Delight is the secret of creation, Delight is the root of birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases." (*SABCL*, Vol. 18, p. 101)

And yet our experience of pain and suffering is real. So the question is: if delight is the secret of creation, where is the origin of evil, falsehood, suffering and pain? We must therefore try to find out if there is any legitimate basis for these negative aspects to exist. Are they fundamental and therefore permanent factors native to existence? In other words, do they have any direct root in the Supreme Reality itself? Who created this world of evil? There may be many more such questions which are comprehensively dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*, the epic where he narrates the history of creation and its future, revealing the forces at work in the universe and in ourselves and guiding us on how to meet them in order to realise the Delight of Existence. *Savitri* is also a book of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

I believe it is only if we study the Divine Plan from its origin that we can begin to understand the dichotomy between the world of delight and the world of pain, and resolve it. Let us therefore assume with Sri Aurobindo that the Supreme Reality or

Brahman or the Absolute Godhead is infinite and eternal and nothing exists or can exist outside It. It is one without a second and present everywhere—*sarvam khalu idam brahma*—verily, all this is Brahman. It is the Absolute of Western philosophy.

It cannot be defined, because to define is to limit. In its original status, it is a formless and indeterminate reality—*nirguna*,—but potentially it contains an endless possibility of forms and qualities,—*saguna*. It is inconceivable by the mind and is often called the indescribable unmanifest Beyond—*avyakta parātpara*. It is *Asat* or the Non-Being of the Vedas. This may be *Shunya* or the Void or *Nirvana* of the Buddhists. In Indian philosophy, it is referred to as *Tat*, meaning That without describing it. Sri Aurobindo calls it an enigmatic zero of the Infinite which contains all.

Now, what emerges from *Tat* as its first self-determination is *Sat* or Existence, a Self-luminous Being, at once omnipotent and full of Bliss. For, *Sat* is the Consciousness-Force of the Supreme whose very substance is Bliss. It is called *Sat* (Existence), *Chit* (Consciousness-Force), *Ananda* (Bliss). *Sachchidananda* is beyond time and space, but can project Itself in time and space. It is beyond sex, but holds the dual principle of *Ying* and *Yang* or the attributes of the male and female in itself: Two-in-one—*Shiva-Shakti*.

Out of its indivisible Consciousness-Force and Bliss, *Sat* projects into eternal manifestation a living dynamis of the supreme Wisdom, Power, Love and Perfection in the form of the Divine Mother, *Aditi*, the *Adya Shakti* or the primordial Energy and becomes two though essentially remaining one and inseparable. She is also beyond Time and Space and is referred to as *Parashakti* or *Mahamaya*. This is the second self-determination of the Absolute.

She is the Mother of all gods and goddesses who uphold the universe. These gods and goddesses are the emanations of Her powers put forth for the purpose of the Divine manifestation in the world. Here is Sri Aurobindo's description of the Divine Mother:

The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.

(*SABCL*, Vol. 28, p. 313)

Aditi, the Supreme Mother, projects two self-determining personalities known as *Parameshwara* and *Parameshwari* as her eternal manifestations to create the worlds of Truth, Consciousness, Force and Bliss or Delight. These manifestations being projected from the Consciousness-Force and Delight of the Absolute have the power of infinite self-determination, including the power of involution or self-absorption and limitation. As Sri Aurobindo says: "A free power of self-variation is natural to a consciousness that is infinite." By this power of involution the Supreme can become the opposite of what it is. So, the infinite indeterminate becomes or assumes many finite forms. One becomes many—*ekoham bahūshyam*. The Supreme Brahman and the Infinite Consciousness become, by the process of self-absorption or involution,

the extreme opposite—the inconscient in the form of Matter—where its Force of Consciousness and Delight are completely at rest or asleep. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls the trance of the Infinite, the state of the inconscient, where the self-awareness of its original truth of existence is withdrawn and gathered in and its energy is at rest. Thus, Matter seems to us immobile, inert, inconscient and mechanical.

Parameshwari or the Divine Mother is involved or self-absorbed in Nature, by Her delight of self-will, and is known as Prakriti. She is driven now by what appears to us as mechanical blind energy. In other words, Brahman is self-concealed in Matter as a whole tree with its leaves, flowers and fruits is concealed in a seed and the Divine Shakti as conscious energy works from behind the veil of inconscience towards her final goal of manifestation of Brahman in Matter through a series of successive evolutions of higher and greater consciousness. This is the self-chosen involution of the Supreme Reality for the joy of Adventure in recovering its original state of Perfect Being with its full power of Consciousness and Bliss for manifestation on earth.

Supermind is the manifestation in eternal time projected from the worlds of Truth, Consciousness, Power, and Delight by the self-determining infinite consciousness-force of Parameshwara and Parameshwari who are beyond Time and Space. Supermind is the creative medium by which the Divine Being descends from the pure formless indivisible unity into the Cosmic Being and multiple terrestrial forms using the instrument of Mind whose very character is to divide into finite parts. Brahman, the supreme Reality is thus present everywhere in everything. God, Titan and Demon, man, beast and worm and all the elements of Nature—ether, air, fire, water and earth—in everything in space and time and also in everything we cannot even conceive of beyond space and time. The indivisible consciousness is thus expressed in independent forms of consciousness, each following its own line of truth which it has to realise. So too, the Delight of Existence takes innumerable aspects. Each form is still an aspect and power of one indivisible Reality, but is empowered to act as an independent entity in the whole without losing the consciousness of the underlying unity.

Thus Brahman, the Transcendent is present as the omniscient and omnipotent All-Ruler beyond space and time in the form of Parameshwara or God or the Divine Being and as Parameshwari or Mahashakti, the Power of Consciousness. They are eternal manifestations—where past, present and future are all one and simultaneously held. Brahman is present in the universe as Purusha, Conscious Being or Spirit, the Witness, and as Mahashakti in Nature or Prakriti, and even in inconscient Matter, which is the self-absorbed form of Mahashakti. Brahman is present in the individual as Atman or Self, working and expressing itself through the instruments of body, heart, mind and soul. Thus, Brahman, the Absolute, Cosmic Nature and ourselves and all that exists are all essentially united in one indivisible Existence with one force of Consciousness determining, governing and leading everything in progressively manifest harmony towards its intended goal of the Divine Manifestation.

Supermind, the creative medium of the Absolute, is the divine gnosis which creates, governs and upholds the worlds. It is perfectly conscious of the truth of the indivisible unity between the supreme Reality and the truth of the divided and multiple diversities. For, what it creates is itself and can be nothing other than itself. However, as we saw, while descending into the world of forms there is an involution of the conscious being into the density and infinite divisibility of substance for the purpose of variation and multiplicity, resulting in a sort of self-oblivion and the loss of consciousness of the truth of its original being and nature. But in the depths of each form, at its centre, it is self-aware and secretly works out its set purpose. We too, if we live within, can come into contact with the truth of our being. But we live in the surface consciousness unaware of it, and hence feel tossed about as if by the forces outside us.

This is the self-chosen play of the Supreme Being for the joy of adventure of Consciousness in its double movement of involution and evolution. The purpose of existence in this light seems to be the recovery of the original state of the perfect Being with its full power of Consciousness and Bliss, and its manifestation here on earth.

So the next step of the Divine Plan is an emergence of the self-absorbed force in its evolution of the consciousness i.e. the Supramental Consciousness and its progressive divine manifestation in its full Light. One may ask, "What was the necessity of this descent or involution?" Well, there being nothing outside the Brahman or the supreme Reality, there is nothing to compel it to limit Itself. Being perfect in existence, consciousness, power and bliss, there can be no necessity. Being infinite, containing everything, there is no lack of anything and it can have no desire for anything either. But the Supreme Reality is absolute freedom and is not compelled to remain still, motionless and unmanifest. It is free to indulge its power of movement and formation, not out of any necessity, but by its free choice and spontaneous delight. In Sri Aurobindo's view: "To loose forth and enjoy this infinite movement and variation of its self-delight is the object of its extensive or creative play of Force." (*SABCL*, Vol. 18, p. 92)

"World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing." (*SABCL*, Vol. 18, p. 78) Thus Brahman is infinite and finite, motionless and moving, formless One and many diverse forms, because Brahman is above both, holding all possibilities and everything emanates from that sole Reality.

We, being concentrated in our ego-self, ignorant of the underlying unity with the Supreme Reality and all that is, are not able to participate in this joy. The first essential condition of the divine life on earth and this delight of existence is the absence or the abolition of separatist egoism and the division of consciousness. We identify ourselves with the surface consciousness and personality created by the ego, but that is not the whole of us nor the true Self.

We seek knowledge without obscurity and error, plenitude of our being without defects or limitations, power and strength without weakness and incapacity, and bliss without pain and suffering. We seek this because we are that essentially. And we can become that only by the abolition of the ego and the evolution of our consciousness to its full—that is to say, one with the Divine Consciousness

Sri Aurobindo says:

...I become what I see in myself. All that thought suggests to me, I can do, all that thought reveals in me, I can become. This should be man's unshakeable faith in himself, because God dwells in him (SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 378)

This is possible because fundamentally we are That.

Man aspires for self-experience, self-expression, self-development, self-fulfilment and a fuller play of the consciousness-force of existence. Whatever hurts or prevents that self-fulfilment is for him evil and whatever helps its progression is good, because the consciousness-force of the Supreme hidden within the depths of his being secretly aims at self-revelation in the purity of a supreme delight of being. When he fails to realise this due to ignorance of his true self and the dominance of his self-regarding ego the result is pain.

Fundamentally, all pain and suffering are the result of an insufficient consciousness-force in the surface being because it is unable to assimilate, deal rightly with Self and Nature and harmonise itself with the contacts of the universal forces. Pain, suffering, evil and falsehood do not exist in the timeless being and the consciousness of the Supreme Reality, for they are incompatible with the unity and bliss that are its substance. In other words, they are not inevitable permanent factors native to existence. The only *raison d'être* of pain and suffering is to make us aware of the disease and disharmony in the being.

To put it in the words of Sri Aurobindo

Pain is the hammer of the gods to break
 A dead resistance in the mortal's heart,
 His slow inertia as of living stone.
 If the heart were not forced to want and weep,
 His soul would have lain down content, at ease,
 And never thought to exceed the human start
 And never learned to climb towards the Sun.

(SABCL, Vol. 29, p. 443)

Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing men
 To greatness. an inspired labour chisels
 With heavenly cruelty an unwilling mould

(SABCL, Vol. 29, p. 444)

The only way to overcome or to escape from pain, suffering, evil, falsehood and death is to discover the source and origin of our being in the Supreme and to realise the identity of our true Self as an aspect or a particular emanation of the Supreme Being with its inherent force of perfect Divine Consciousness and invariable Self-existent Bliss. We must therefore learn to live in oneness with That and carry out its intention in ourselves and in the world

The process of evolution of Man from inconscient matter through various forms of Life and Mind is a very long and arduous process. It has reached the present stage of a highly developed mind with enormous capacities. But Man still carries some elements of his previous stages of existence in his subconscious memory, which secretly influence and govern his life.

For example, he is still encased in a physical body arisen from Matter with its characteristic inertia, obscurity and unwillingness to change, which still drag or pull him down. The vital impulses, desires, cravings, passions, along with some animal propensities, seize him unawares. The mind which is divisive by its very principle and character creates egoistic biases, prejudices, preferences, one-sided narrow views and opinions in his thinking. All this resists the light of a many-sided knowledge based on the principle of essential unity.

The indivisible unity of the Supreme Reality and the oneness with all that exists is still lacking in human consciousness, the consequences of which we witness everywhere in all spheres of activity and relationship. The chaos and crisis created by the divisive consciousness of mind are all too apparent.

Sri Aurobindo warned us that the crisis of our present age is an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed the choice of the destiny of mankind. "Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it...for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being." (*SABCL*, Vol. 19, pp. 1053-54)

He pointed out to us repeatedly that a perfected world cannot be created by men who are themselves imperfect, however wonderful may seem to us the machinery of social, political and moral laws our mental ingenuity invents. Ignorant, we cannot construct a system of entirely true and truthful self-knowledge or world-knowledge.

Inhabiting the plane of Matter—this very earth—and housed in a material envelope, our body, we cannot afford to ignore science and technology which aim at the mastery of Matter and its full development. Science is of course important. But we know that however rational and logical our thinking is, it can only artificially help to govern our life. For man is too complex to be standardised, since he is constituted of many different parts—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual—each having

its own demands often conflicting with the others. Ignorant of the foundations of our being, and of world-being, it cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life.

Sri Aurobindo warns us time and again that even if all our actions are scrupulously regulated by education or law or social and political machinery, what will be achieved is a regulated pattern of lives, a cultivated pattern of conduct; but a conformity of this kind cannot change, cannot recreate man within; it cannot carve out a perfect soul. And yet it is only the full emergence of the soul and the descent of the highest consciousness that can successfully solve our problems.

The Mother, the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo who guided us, said it in no uncertain terms: "The conditions in which men live on earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera" (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 39)

Great men like Teilhard de Chardin have realised the necessity of a higher consciousness than what man possesses. We have seen the process of involution and evolution. There is no reason why this process must be arrested without reaching its ultimate possibility of perfection. The human aspiration for bliss in a perfect existence and the unconquerable and imperative impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom and Immortality seem to be natural, true and just. Nature is seeking to evolve beyond the ignorant, mental consciousness to a higher consciousness until it is transformed into its original status of spiritual power of Truth-Consciousness and the individual ego into a true Self. This is the right way to achieve harmony with all—Nature, Man and God.

Each individual then will be unique not in his egoistic personality, but in his true individuality, conscious of being a luminous centre of the Eternal and the Infinite, and capable of mutuality and harmony with other individuals. Thus, he can play his role freely, spontaneously and harmoniously. There can be no other just and true freedom without this Consciousness of mutuality, unity and harmony. To know our inner spiritual being is therefore the first step towards self-knowledge, and then to transform the entire being—physical, emotional, vital, mental—in the light of the Spirit is the next step. For a true harmonisation and integration of the whole being can be achieved only by the spiritual Self. Till then, Man remains a divided being at war with himself and with all around him.

Yet spiritual realisation is not enough, though it must be complete before the supramental change can take place. What is needed is the complete and radical change which establishes a secure and settled new principle, a new creation, a permanent new order of being, a Gnostic supramental being. The spiritual man has evolved but not the supramental being who must be the leader of terrestrial Nature and the world.

Let us see in brief what needs to be done for this realisation to be achieved. First, the Spirit must be liberated from the mind's limitations and from dependence on the mental instruments. For, mind is not a faculty of knowledge, it is a faculty for

organisation and for seeking knowledge. Besides, mind depends on the five senses which provide it information through the channel of the nerves. And memory, too, with its store-house of association (samskara) and impressions plays its part. This means that for the mind to work at its highest level and raise its working power to the finest point, there must be the purification and perfection of its instruments and faculties of thought, intelligence, understanding and judgement. It must be liberated from its biases and preferences and prejudices. Besides, there are lower and higher planes of consciousness other than the mental which influence our thought directly or indirectly and this along with the environmental influence can create a confusion.

For the mind to work properly, one needs to be conscious of all that happens within and without, know the plane of consciousness whence it arises, and be the master of the forces which influence its understanding and judgement. This is an assiduous task, requiring discipline. In India, this discipline is known as Rajayoga. But Sri Aurobindo goes much deeper and further than that.

Evolution is a continuous process. And all life is Yoga. The entire being must be refined, transformed and made more subtle in the light of the higher consciousness. For, we carry the impressions, associations and memory of the stage of lower evolution in the subconscious and the inconscient planes of our being and their subtle influence is inevitable unless the being is purified.

Not only the mind, but the vital consciousness which is the seat of desires, emotions, passions, ambition, selfishness, pride, lust, greed, jealousy and the stuff of our unregenerate lower nature too must be purified of these obstacles. So too, the physical consciousness must be rid of its inertia, laziness, rigidity and obscurity. This is the Integral Yoga of Transformation which is no easy arm-chair affair that can be learned in a day...not even in one lifetime. For, Yoga is not just physical exercises as many believe, but a methodised effort towards self-perfection of our entire being, finally uniting it with That, the Supreme Being, its origin, from which it has become separated in the play of the universe.

All this inner work is essential before the supramental change can take place. There is a wide gulf between Mind and Supermind and there are many planes of consciousness between them, such as, the Consciousness of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind and finally, what Sri Aurobindo calls the Mind of Light. In order to receive the light and force of consciousness from these higher planes, mind must first realise its insufficiency or incapacity for infallible knowledge, widen its narrow perceptions and beliefs, be completely silent, calm and still, and with humility open itself upward allowing the light of a higher consciousness to enter and guide its actions.

An ascent to the Higher Mind and beyond gradually brings a clarity of the Spirit and the ability to see the totality of the Truth. The Illumined Mind does not work by thought but by vision and brings an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the Spirit, a fiery ardour of realisation and a rapturous ecstasy of knowledge.

Intuition is a power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original

knowledge by identity. It has a fourfold power: revelation, inspiration, immediate seizing of significance and the power of true relation of truth to truth. Overmind is a power of cosmic consciousness and cannot be reached without learning to live in a large universality. The first impact of this consciousness is the abolition of the separate ego, and a limitless consciousness of all-pervading unity resulting in, "...the discovery of a true individual replacing the dead ego, a being who is in his essence one with the supreme Self, one with the universe in extension and yet a cosmic centre and circumference of the specialised action of the Infinite." (SABCL, Vol. 19, pp 951-52)

All these are still delegated powers of light and consciousness of the Supermind. The rock of Inconscience in our nature is too deep and solid to be altogether penetrated and turned into light and be transformed by these powers below the plane of the Supramental Consciousness. "The liberation from this pull of the Inconscience", Sri Aurobindo reminds us, "and a secured basis for a continuous divine or gnostic evolution would only be achieved by a descent of the Supermind into the terrestrial formula, bringing into it the supreme law and light and dynamis of the Spirit..." (SABCL, Vol 19, p. 954) which can penetrate and transform the Inconscience of the material basis. "A last transition from Overmind to Supermind and the descent of Supermind must therefore intervene at this stage of evolutionary Nature." (SABCL, Vol 19, p 954) This was the work of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for humanity.

The Supramental Consciousness is the Truth-Consciousness where the truth is self-luminous, and the supramental or the gnostic being possessing this consciousness has not only the spontaneous knowledge of what is to be willed but has also the power to effectuate its knowledge. So, an evolution of supramental consciousness brings with it the power of world-consciousness and enlightened world-action. Evidently the gnostic life will exist for everything that is noble and divine, and manifest the impeccable splendour of Knowledge, Power, Love, Beauty and Delight. In the gnostic life, freedom of self-expression will be spontaneously in harmony with the law of the supreme and universal Truth. For Supermind can view the totality of Time and Space and each potentiality with its proper force, necessity and right relation in the context of the whole. It is able to act without any error or groping according to the Truth. In other words, there is an action of the Supreme Self, the supreme Ishwara in the truth of the transformed supernature, Mahashakti. The law of the Supermind is unity fulfilled in infinite diversity and its movement is calm, self-possessed, spontaneous and plastic. A gnostic being is universal in consciousness but preserves a unique individuality as a luminous and powerful centre of the divine action, without any attachment or bondage.

This Divine plan is the great plan of self-concealing and self-finding, the play of extreme attraction, where the opposites—Matter and Spirit—meet and complement each other. There are beautiful lines in Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri*, which describe aptly the relationship between these two opposites:

Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect earth,
 Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect Heaven.

(SABCL, Vol. 29, p. 684)

Two are the Powers that hold the ends of Time;
 Spirit foresees, Matter unfolds its thought...

(SABCL, Vol. 29, p. 694)

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo explains the delight of this adventure as if it were for the taste of the Ignorance, its surprise one might say that the soul has descended into the Inconscience and has assumed the disguise of Matter...an adventure of the mind and life and the hazardous journey for the discovery and the conquest of the new and the unknown. For, what greater pleasure can there be for man than a victory over the difficulties and the impossibilities of creation...a victory in knowledge, a victory in power and a delight in the conquest over an anguished toil and a hard ordeal of suffering. "At the end of separation is the intense joy of union, the joy of a meeting with a self from which we were divided." (SABCL, Vol. 18, pp. 410-11) It is a gnostic Self whose very substance is force of Truth-Consciousness and Bliss...

This progressive revelation and manifestation of a luminous and blissful reality seems to be a divine plan and the aim of Nature with which man can consciously collaborate, for that seems to be the meaning and the purpose of creation and of human existence.

I feel convinced that this is the luminous Dawn in all its glory that the Aryan forefathers worshipped and invoked in their prayers so that its Light and Wisdom might illumine the path of the human journey in its ascent to the Divine Life. Now, a perfect path of the Truth is being revealed to us by Sri Aurobindo for our journey to the other shore beyond the darkness.

Here is the call that Walt Whitman gave in his inspiring poem, "Islands of Consciousness", which echoes the call of the Vedic Rishis:

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
 Reckless O Soul exploring,
 I with Thee, and Thou with me,
 For, we are bound where
 Mariner has not yet dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship,
 Ourselves and all.

 O, my brave soul!
 O farther, farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe,
 Are they all not seas of God?
 O, farther, farther, farther sail!

KAILAS JAVERI

VEDIC YOGA, THE OLDEST FORM OF YOGA

(Continued from the issue of November 2000)

Vedic Yoga and Classical Yoga

THE threefold Vedic Yoga is a little different from the classical eightfold or Raja Yoga taught by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras. In the Vedic Yoga the yamas and niyamas, the observances and restraints that constitute the first two limbs of Raja Yoga, are part of the Dharmic foundation of Vedic life. This means living according to our higher nature and keeping our lower nature in check through right values, right effort and right diet. Asana or yogic postures, which is primarily a comfortable sitting posture, is not a separate limb of the Vedic Yoga.

Vedic Mantra and Prana Yogas include Pranayama, control of Prana, and Pratyahara, control of the senses, of the Raja Yoga system. Pranayama consists of developing Pranic energy, while Pratyahara consists of withdrawing it from the senses and motor organs. Mantra allows us to direct both Prana and mind. Vedic Dhyana Yoga includes Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, concentration, meditation and realisation of Raja Yoga, which are the three aspects of merging the mind back into the Divine Self.

Mantra Yoga

The Vedic Yoga begins with mantra as its foundation, using mantras from the Vedas, particularly those of the Rig Veda. These mantras are also of three types.

1. Name mantras—Names of the Deities like Indra, Agni, Soma and Surya. These are mainly part of the Yoga of devotion or Bhakti Yoga. Deities like Shiva, Vishnu and the Goddess can be used in the same way, as in mantras like OM NAMA SHIVAYA.
2. Bija or Seed mantras—Root sounds of key Vedic terms like OM, AIM, HUM, HRIM, KRIM, SHRIM. These are to be chanted silently along with the breath and are also part of Prana Yoga. They unite the mind and Prana, transforming unconscious patterns and attachments into new powers of attention.
3. Suktas—Extended mantras and prayers like Gayatri mantra (Tat Savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat). These are to be meditated upon and are part of Dhyana Yoga. They engage our entire awareness in the higher light and in a comprehensive manner.

These mantras are generally given through special initiations or empowerments, which constitute the foundation of Vedic practice. Practice of Vedic Yoga begins with

Vedic mantras. This requires an awakened speech and contact with the Divine Word. This in turn requires that our soul, the immortal part of our individualized consciousness, which is a form of Agni, the inner flame, comes forth. The student repeats various Bija mantras, Nama mantras and Suktas as per his or her state of consciousness and approach to Divinity. The most common Bija mantra is OM. The most common Sukta is Gayatri mantra

Prana Yoga

Vedic Prana Yoga includes all types of Yogic techniques involving Prana, including different forms of Pranayama. It includes an observation of and gaining mastery over all the five main Pranas, the senses and the motor organs. It leads to the awakening of inner Prana and Kundalini Shakti, which is an internal form of electrical energy. For this to occur one must learn to offer the different aspects of one's being, particularly one's Prana, as a sacrifice to the indwelling Deity. Prana Yoga requires the development of Ojas (vital power) and the renunciation of sensory enjoyments to fuel it. Vedic Prana Yoga is of several types.

1. **Mantra-Prana Yoga:** In this Yoga mantras are repeated along with the breath, particularly special Bija mantras, but Name mantras and extended mantras (Suktas) can also be used. In the Vedic understanding Prana is unmanifest speech. So Mantra Yoga is itself already a form of Prana Yoga.
2. **Pure Prana Yoga—**One works directly with the force of prana, not just as the breath but as our basic will and motivation. One works to bring the Prana out of the lower chakras to the higher, developing the power of will through surrender to the descent of divine grace.
3. **Dhyana-Prana Yoga.** In this Yoga one meditates upon the Prana in the form of the Vedic deity Indra or the power of perception. Other deities of Prana can be used in this regard also including Shiva and Kali. In the Vedic view the mind is unmanifest or subtle Prana. Through Prana one can control the energy of the mind and awaken its lightning power of direct perception.

For Prana Yoga the power of Indra or Divine Prana must be awakened. This requires awakened vitality and energized insight. This occurs through the descent of divine grace and power into the soul. One must contact God or the Divine creator within. The student performs various types of Pranayama using the breath along with the mantras learned, connecting more deeply with the Deities as forms of cosmic energy. The Kriya Yoga taught by Paramahansa Yogananda is one such practice.

Dhyana Yoga

Vedic meditation includes meditation upon mantra, Prana and the Deities (Devatas).

Ultimately it leads to meditation upon the Self. This Yoga of meditation is also of several types:

1. Dhyana Devata Yoga—In this Yoga one meditates upon the various Devatas or Deities of the Vedas and their inner significance as powers of the light of consciousness, like Indra, Agni, Soma and Surya. This requires working with light and energy on a subtle level.
2. Atma Dhyana Yoga—In this Yoga one meditates upon the inner Self. It is of three types:
 - a) Self-inquiry
 - b) Self-observation
 - c) Atmic mantras

Self-inquiry (Atma vichara) involves tracing the source of the I-thought back to its origin in the spiritual heart (hridaya). In the Vedic view this is tracing back our inner flame, the soul or Jiva, Agni, back to its original home and highest birth in the heart. This is a practice of constant wakefulness through which we become conscious in all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep.

Self-observation involves contacting the solar light of consciousness and letting this effortlessly illumine all mental states, through the power of the illumined intelligence (Dhi or Buddhi). It consists in taking the attitude of a witness (sakshi-bhava) in all that we do.

Atmic mantras include great Vedic statements like “I am God,” Aham Brahmasmi, which are to be meditated upon in the expanse of the quiescent mind. They are useful only for a high level of discipline. Without preliminary self-purification they have little power. They must be done not with ordinary speech or mind but the highest level of speech, with speech on the level of the Divine Self.

For Dhyana Yoga, the expanse of the Sun or truth-consciousness must be created. One must contact the Divine Self or Paramatman within the heart. The student meditates upon the Prana-energized mantras and uses them to move into deeper states of consciousness.

The space of light and the light of space must be opened for this realization to proceed.

Samadhi Yoga: The Ultimate Yoga

All three Vedic Yogas lead to Samadhi or the state of absorption into the indwelling Divinity. This Samadhi Yoga is symbolized by Soma, which is the Ananda or Amrita, the bliss or nectar of immortality. Letting the Soma or bliss energy flow is the basis of this, perhaps the highest of the Vedic Yogas. This requires an opening of all the nadis or channels of the subtle body, through which the Amrita or Soma can flow. This in turn requires proper development of all three Vedic Yogas.

Vedic Integral Yoga

These four Vedic Yogas together form an integral Yoga. They culminate in a complete or Purna Yoga. Generally the Purna Yoga relates to Indra and to Prana but in the expanded sense as the energy of consciousness and insight on all levels. However there is also a Purna Yoga of Agni called Vaishvanara Vidya (knowledge of the Cosmic Person), which proceeds through Self-inquiry. There is similarly a Purna Yoga of the Sun, particularly in the form of Vishnu or Savitar.

In this Purna Yoga the second world or the Atmosphere becomes the all world or the Cosmic Ocean, the ocean of the heart as the fourth world. This ocean is space and its waves are the worlds. In the space within the heart is contained all the universe and the Supreme Self beyond all manifestation. This leads to a slightly different formulation of the threefold Vedic Yoga.

1. Mantra Yoga—Earth—Body—Mother
2. Dhyana Yoga—Heaven—Head (Mind)—Father
3. Samadhi Yoga—Waters—Heart (Soul)—Child

The main form of Purna Yoga is meditation in the heart, which involves tracing the origin of speech, Prana and mind back to the Self in the heart, which is the main practice of Self-inquiry. This search is called gaveshana, or anveshana in Vedic texts. It is not done simply by repeating “Who am I?” but requires mantric and meditative control of speech, Prana and mind and an examination of all their movements in all states of consciousness as powers of the Atman.

The Vedic Yoga is vast and many-sided. We have only outlined a few of its characteristic features. It has teachings which are appropriate for each individual and his or her level of development. It therefore has no mass teaching or standardized instruction. Each individual must be treated differently.

(Concluded)

DAVID FRAWLEY

(From the author's forthcoming book)

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL

MUSIC, which is regarded as the ‘Language of the Soul’ by the Divine Mother, is truly the Science of Blissful Living and the Art of Spiritual Harmony. In this context it is necessary to remember the famous message of Sri Aurobindo that all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. The highest level of human living, in the evolutionary ladder of our earthly existence, can be conceived of only when we contemplate the following words of Sri Aurobindo.

‘Harmony and beauty of the mind and soul, harmony and beauty of the thoughts and feelings, harmony and beauty in every outward act and movement, harmony and beauty of the life and surroundings, this is the demand of Mahalakshmi. Where there is affinity to the rhythms of the secret world-bliss and response to the call of the All-Beautiful and concord and unity and the glad flow of many lives turned towards the Divine, in that atmosphere she consents to abide’¹

Mahasaraswati (who is another aspect of the same Divine Mother) ‘knows what is to be chosen and what rejected and successfully determines the right instrument, the right time, the right conditions and the right process’ for achieving Perfection.² In this context one may try to appreciate what John Ruskin has said about music. ‘All one’s life is music, if one touches the notes right and in time.’ Thus through the right kind of consecrated music, based on perfect Harmony, one can always aspire to discover supreme happiness and by feeling the Divine Mother (The Goddess of Harmony and Perfection) within the heart, men can ‘make existence a rapture and a marvel’ and all life can be transformed into ‘a poem of sacred delight’.³

The holistic perceptions and the mystic teachings of the Sufi saints concerning Sound (Nāda) and Music—Sound as the basis of Creation and Music as an essential means towards spiritual fulfilment—may be recalled here. Having been a renowned musician (basically a ‘Veenā’-player) *Pir-O-Murshid* Hazrat Ināyat Khān gave up his performing art in order to dedicate himself entirely to the propagation of Sufi messages with which he was entrusted. He readily followed the holy practices of the ancient Sufis in expressing esoteric truths in terms of Sound and Music. He described his experience as follows.

‘I gave up my music because I had received from it all that I had to receive. To serve God one must sacrifice what is dearest to one; and so I sacrificed my music. I had composed songs; I sang and played the vīna; and practising this music I arrived at a stage where I touched the Music of the Spheres. Then every soul became for me a musical note, and all life became music. Inspired by this I spoke to the people, and those who were attracted by my words listened to them instead of listening to my songs. Now, if I do anything, it is to tune souls instead of instruments, to harmonize people instead of notes. If there is anything in my philosophy, it is the law of harmony. That one must put oneself in harmony with oneself and with others. I have found in every word a certain musical value, a melody in every thought, harmony in every feeling; and I have tried to interpret the same thing, with clear and simple

words, to those who used to listen to my music I played the vīna until my heart turned into this very instrument; then I offered this instrument to the Musician, the only Musician existing. Since then I have become His flute; and when He chooses, He plays His music. The people give me credit for this music, which in reality is not due to me but to the Musician who plays on His own Instrument.”⁴

Of course, it is a debatable matter (or a controversial paradigm) whether one has to “sacrifice” music or any other performing art (in the sense in which Hazrat Ināyat Khān “gave up” his music), in order to “serve God”. At least one can recall two instances of heaven and earth, to highlight the aesthetic delicacy, with full regard to Ināyat Khān’s personal viewpoint. Devarshī Nārād, the celestial singer and the ubiquitous Veenā-player, who is dearest to all Hindu Gods and Goddesses, never gave up his music, in spite of remaining busy with all ‘Devas’ (Gods), ‘Dānavas’ (demons) and ‘Mānavas’ (human beings) as well as other lesser creatures for manifesting the Divine Leelā of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Lord of the Universe. Ustād Allāuddīn Khān of Maihār (Madhya Pradesh), the legendary Sarod-maestro of India and a top-ranking musician of modern times, never gave up his performing art (both as a busy artiste and as the ‘Guru’ of so many illustrious musicians and also as the director-cum-producer of the famous Maihār-Band and Orchestra), although he continued to remain a devout Muslim as well as a great devotee of Mother Sarasvatī. What is particularly interesting in the life of Hazrat Ināyat Khān, as brought out through his own revelations given earlier, is that every soul became for him a musical note, and all life became music. Not only this, all one’s music is to be offered to the only Musician existing in the Universe!

The Life Absolute from which has emanated all that is seen, felt and perceived and into which everything merges in time, is a silent, motionless and eternal life. The mineral, vegetable, animal and human layers of existence are the gradual changes and effects of vibrations, and these primal and hidden vibrations of each plane differ from one another in their weight, length, breadth, colour, effect, rhythm and sound. Not only is man formed of these eternal vibrations but he lives and moves in them till his last breath. According to the Vedas, *Vāk* (*Vāk Devi*) or the Divine Mother sang the whole Creation into Being. God’s eternal life-force, *Parā Shakti*, entered or rather assumed the perennial Causal Sound (*Nāda*) through the most sacred monosyllable seed-sound, Om (*Pranava*), and thereby the phenomenal world with its multiple forms evolved. This process of physical, vital, mental and soul contact or holy communion with the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God who is the Ultimate Principle of Harmony and Beauty for ever, is a spiritual art and science of Integral Yoga. It aims at a complete union, perfect integration and absolute identification with God, in all His manifested as well as unmanifest *Leelā* (Divine Sport) at the individual, cosmic and supra-cosmic levels of existence.

Inspired words, mantric sounds, beautiful poetry and holy music are very powerful means or catalytic agents for total spiritual awakening and tuning the present level of human consciousness to the higher realms of celestial *Ānanda* (Delight) and

turning to the highest regions of Divine Consciousness. The Gods and Goddesses are particularly fond of pure and devotional music, which pervades all the layers and stages of creation and every moment of our existence. Hence of all the modes of spiritual *sādhanā* (askesis), such as *japam*, *dhyānam*, *layam*, etc., music is considered to be the highest and the best, by the enlightened seers and sages: *Gānāt parataram nahi*. The divine flute-player, Lord Sri Krishna announces in *Srimad Bhāgavatam* that He loves most to stay not in *Vaikuntha* or *Goloka* but among His singing and music-loving devotees: *Mad bhaktād yatra gāyanti tatra tishthāmi Nārada*

The musicologists, especially in India, who have identified the causal music (*Nāda*) with the presiding Deities of creation, preservation and destruction have emphasised that *Nāda*, being the source of all forms of *Vāk*, is called *Shabda Brahman* or *Nāda Brahman*. In this process *Shabda* or *Nāda-tattva* (principle) has been completely identified with *Brahman-tattva*, by the grammarian-philosophers and musicologists. Devoted musicians have regarded *Nāda* as *Param Vidyā* (Ultimate Knowledge) and they have offered their prayers to the Divine Mother through the famous song of Yada Bhatta: *Nāda Parama Vidyā dehi Bhavāni*. Indian philosophy has very beautifully synthesized all the doctrines of *Pātanjala-Mahābhāshya*, the Yoga-darshana, Tantra, Vedānta, post-Vedāntic thoughts and even Sufi-mysticism in the enunciation of the metaphysical foundations of music. Consequently, it regards *Nāda* as the highest knowledge and an inseparable ingredient of the *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram* and *Ānandam* aspects of *Param Brahman* or the Absolute Divinity.

With the advancement of human civilisation and the inevitable progress of history towards a higher creation, Nature's evolution of consciousness from a state of darkness to Light, ignorance to Knowledge, falsehood to Truth, disorder to Harmony and ultimately from the reign of disease and death to Blissful Immortality has not been retarded at all. Integral yoga, which is a grand synthesis of all important yoga-systems, such as *Hatha Yoga*, *Rāja Yoga*, *Tantra Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga*, *Nāda Yoga*, etc., seeks to hasten this process of golden Transformation in order to usher in a new era of Supramental Creation, based on the Supreme Divine Consciousness of *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ānanda* (*Sacchidānanda*). With the advent of the new age on earth in the impending 'Hour of God', seeking to manifest the greater glories within, new music of a loftier kind will come into being. It may be noted in this context that the proper *ādhāra* is absolutely necessary to receive and realise the New Consciousness which will lead mankind to a more unified and integrated Music where God loves to dwell for ever and manifest His *Nitya-Leelā* (eternal sport).

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* has attempted to define *Brahman* when it says that It is the all-pervading Principle, the Self of all beings, the Reality which is the only One without a second and besides whom there really exists nothing else. In the *Yajur Veda* it is said that everything in this whole round of the Universe is God-made, God-protected and God-pervaded (or enveloped by Him). The *Sāma Veda* sings for the adoration of the Supreme *Brahman* saying that It has no equal, while the *Rig-Veda* offers its hymn to the Almighty Lord as follows

To the thoughtful men who Truth discern
 And deeply things divine explore,
 God reveals His hidden lore,
 But fools His secrets may not learn

Therefore, the wise men ought to search for and discover the True Knowledge and understand the multi-faceted *Brahman*, as according to the Holy Bible, Knowledge is easy to that which understandeth Our understanding of Integral *Brahman* will not be fruitful unless and until the more familiar, aesthetic and lustrous aspects of *Brahman*, i.e. *Nāda Brahman* (or *Shabda Brahman*) are clearly analysed and appreciated. *Nāda Brahman* is in fact the highest manifestation of the Divine Will, the Supreme Knowledge (*Parama Vidyā*), Absolute Freedom and Supernal Delight on the plane of phenomenal existence.

The famous observation of Swāmi Abhedānanda that one must know “everything of something” and “something of everything” impels us to discover something more deep and fundamental about the sacred Art of Music, which is the finest, the noblest and the sublimest among all creative Fine Arts. The Divine Mother has said that music is one of the most powerful means of “inner opening” and psychic awakening, leading to the highest God-realisation. According to Prof. Macfarren, the indefiniteness or mystic nature of musical creativity and expression furnishes no argument that music is inexpressive, on the other hand it is actually one of the great qualities that places music “on the highest level of art-excellence, enabling it to suggest still more than it displays, and to stimulate the imagination of the writer as much as to exercise that of the artist.”⁵ Its uplifting faculty is the natural role of the Spirit in the world of multiplicity, apparently full of disharmony and chaos; music is the inherent law of the divine nature and it is also the spontaneous consequence of unity in diversity, of a phenomenal and variegated manifestation of the Supreme Oneness. Pythagoras, the ancient Greek philosopher, taught that the human soul was basically formed of Harmony and that music could restore this pre-existing and pre-ordained Harmony to a human mind tormented by contacts with the lower nature Confucius, the ancient sage of China, propounded that the dual role of music is to produce a harmonious life in the individual and at the same time to establish a harmonious order in society ⁶

(To be continued)

SURESH DEY

References

- 1 *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo, pp 45-46
- 2 *Ibid*, p 51 3 *Ibid*, p 48
- 4 *The Mysticism of Music, Sound and Word—The Sufi Message*, Vol II, by Hazrat Ināyat Khān, p 7
- 5 *The Music of the Nations* by Swāmi Prajñānānda, p 2
- 6 *The Quest for Music Divine* by Suresh Chandra Dey, p 2

HUMOUR IN SHAKESPEARE

THE world of Shakespeare draws much from the reality around us and in turn gives us a unique perspective on life. This is achieved through a judicious equilibrium of various elements, especially humour. For indeed, Shakespeare understood how indispensable humour is and intertwined it with his dramatic art. There is a broad spectrum of humour in his plays ranging from farce, pungent puns, satire, and comic relief to dark comedy—which reflects his intrinsic craftsmanship.

In the play *Love's Labour's Lost* the French Princess aptly describes humour in the following manner:

“A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it.”

Shakespeare stresses the role of the listener, which is crucial for providing the right response to the speaker's joviality. In other words, a joke can never be explained, it has to be grasped at once. In the play mentioned above we see Shakespeare developing a vivid satirical design in which Berowne is mocked at by the dramatist and becomes a target for the ladies. He admits humbly the comic effect of his predicament and exposes gradually the absurd position of the King and his followers. In this particular scene Berowne is seen first reading a sonnet and then close at his heels the King follows with some reading material. To escape the King, Berowne climbs up a tree and has full view of the courtiers who appear one by one and unwittingly reveal their predicament and then hide in turn from the next character.

From his vantage point Berowne can observe without being seen and enjoys the ignorance of the courtiers who denounce the others and flaunt their innocence. When Berowne confronts them and they realise their folly he offers them his practical conclusion:

“Then fools you were these women to forswear,
Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools
Let us once lose our oaths, to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths ”

However, this jolly sport does not come to an end merely with the King's dismissal of the ridiculous vows of celibacy. The ladies have to be won over. The hilarity of the situation is further enhanced when the King and his men discarding the way of simple courtship resort to a strange and absurd pastime. Masked as Russians they mouth an artificial speech for the fair ladies. The ladies parody the King's artifice with a scatter of jests and metaphors:

“The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen
 As is the razor’s edge invisible,
 Cutting a smaller hair than may be seen
 Above the sense of sense.”

The men finally save themselves by surrendering to their lady loves

Shakespeare often took recourse to the device of disguise. The aspects of disguise are more or less common to all the comedies in which it appears, its dramatic function is shaped by the particular context of each comedy. In *As You Like It* hilarity, no doubt, is caused by the confusion that arises because of Rosalind’s concealed identity. Phebe takes her as the epitome of masculine virtues, whereas Orlando’s lovestruck soul finds a meaning of life and a means for canalizing the outpouring of his feelings as he takes her as proxy for Rosalind.

In Act II, Scene IV the two views of love are quickly juxtaposed. Rosalind’s rhymed romantic contemplation.

“Jove, Jove, this shepherd’s passion
 Is much upon my fashion”

sparks off Touchstone’s reaction, a dry matter-of-fact dismissal:

“And mine, but it grows something stale.”

Orlando’s rhymes are stamped by his genuine love but some of them have more feet than the verses will bear and limp clumsily at times. Indeed, Rosalind gladly declares the tedium generated by his verse and Touchstone will not spare her:

Touchstone: I’ll rhyme you so eight years together, dinners, and suppers and sleeping-hours excepted: it is the right butter-women’s tank to market.

Rosalind: Out, fool!

Touchstone: For a taste...

If a hart do lack a hind,
 Let him seek out Rosalind:
 If the cat will after kind,
 So be it sure will Rosalind:
 Wintered garments must be lined,
 So must slender Rosalind ..

This is the very false gallop of verses. Why do you infect yourself with them?

Rosalind: Peace, you dull fool! I found them on a tree.

Touchstone: Truly, the tree yields bad fruit.

Orlando's poem provides comic relief in the forest and Touchstone's parody restores the balance in the play-acting between Rosalind and Orlando.

Shakespeare was a master of stagecraft and this is amply borne out by the rehearsals of Peter Quince's theatrical company in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here Shakespeare blends his theory of dramatic illusion with the rustic *naiveté* of Peter Quince and his company. This evokes a profound awe about the playwright's genius and also provokes merry laughter at the gauche attempts by Bottom.

Bottom gets obsessed with the most lamentable comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe and fears that his audience will take this mimic world for the real one. He has to unsheath a sword to kill himself at which the ladies would surely faint. He has given much thought to the matter and, being Bottom, has a simple stage technique to create all-round harmony.

“Bottom: Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say. .we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am no Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver; this will put them out of fear.”

The appearance of the lion on the stage worried him too much and he suggests that the ladies should be protected from this dreadful thing. Snout immediately retorts that another prologue should be written to put the ladies at ease.

Finally, there is the question of creating moonlight on stage. Carried away by his enthusiasm Bottom suggests many possibilities, especially staging the play on a moonlit night but Quince puts him in his place. However, the audience is moved by Bottom's sincere endeavours and cheer him on through their laughter.

It is not only the comedies but also the tragi-comedies which have their share of mirth and jollity. In *The Winter's Tale* a memorable character like Autolycus relieves the play of much of its gloom. Autolycus meets the Clown, and robs him of his money. The Clown in his blissful ignorance makes a magnanimous offer of his jingling coins to the swindler. Autolycus, the pickpocket, has no option but to make a swift exit. This scene is replete with witicism and sparkling fun. The innocent Clown poses as a Good Samaritan while the crooked Autolycus limps away to safety. The visual impact of this scene is a testimony to the narrative skill of Shakespeare.

Autolycus: ...I fear, sir, my shoulder blade is out

Clown. How now? Canst stand?

Autolycus: Softly, dear Sir; good Sir, softly,
You have done me a charitable office.

[Picks his pocket]

Clown: Dost lack any money? I have a little money for thee.

Autolycus: No, good sweet Sir; no, I beseech you Sir...Offer me no money. I pray you; that kills my heart.

The obvious punning on ‘charitable office’ and the irony of ‘offer me no money’ leave the audience holding their sides. We want Autolycus to escape to safety so that the Clown may gradually discover how he has been duped

Shakespeare intended that the humour in his plays should not merely provide entertainment but reflect the very essence of life. If his comic characters make us laugh then they also remind us gently of the shortcomings in our personality. We recognise in ourselves something of the pedantic humbug king of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, or the lovestruck Orlando, or the over-anxious Bottom who strives in vain to be a perfectionist or the Clown who gets easily duped despite his honest intentions. Somehow this initial recognition of our shortcomings is all that is necessary—for these highlight the positive traits in our character. Shakespeare’s judgement is never harsh nor didactic. He treats this diversity of characters as essential for making up his world of illusion and reality and invites the participation of his audience.

RITA NATH KESHARI

FAITH

LIKE a sea in ebb
The consciousness
Is immobile,
Knowing not
Whether the flow
Will be regained.

But faith,
The beacon light,
Twinkles in
Heart’s privacy
And mind’s somnolence.

Hark its voice
And resume

The uninterrupted flow,
With the flow make fertile
Every day, hour and moment.

Grieve not,
Leave not the path
Though tedious,
Dry and arduous
It seems at times

Hold on,
Hold out,
Till the flow
Becomes perennial
And the light permanent

ASHALATA DASH

FIRST LOVE

SHORT STORY

THE other day when I was window-shopping I tripped on a loose stone and lost my balance. But for a woman's timely help, I would have skinned my knee. Grinning from ear to ear, I thanked her silently but profusely. She laughed aloud and slapped her forehead twice as a gesture of mockery before she moved away with a man old enough to be her husband, and two kids young enough to be her grandchildren. Though my eyes met hers for the fraction of a second, I was sure that she was captured in my eyes. The woman's laughter and gesture rang a bell, perhaps I had met her sometime in my life.

"Who the deuce is she?" asking myself I slipped into a nearby ice cream parlour.

With a vanilla soft serve in hand, I flopped into a cane chair, crossed my legs, pressed my temples and knitted my eyebrows. My mind began to struggle but not in vain. Yes..Yes .I got her.

The woman who looked very much like a moving mountain of flesh and got drowned in the well of my eyes, now emerged slowly as my Rita, young, beautiful and slim.

The very thought of Rita spread a sense of joy in my heart, which was reflected in my face. Seized with silent rapture, I closed my eyes with concentration, smiling at myself.

Rita and I were then in our early teens and that was forty years ago. We were high school students then. Though our schools were diagonally opposite to each other, we were total strangers.

I opened my eyes and looked around. I saw an old man seated just in front of me staring at me all the time. I blinked awhile before I smiled at him.

"What? Praying? Never do it with an ice-cream cone in hand. By the time you finish your prayers, your cone will be all water," quipped the old man as he licked his cone and pulled in the trailings with his lips.

Chuckling at his joke, I began to dig trenches with my tongue and the memory of Rita began to haunt me again. I closed my eyes and smacked my lips.

Forty years ago, I stayed in the heart of the city in a flat with my parents. My neighbour was an affable police officer whose wife bartered her tastily prepared chicken sauce with my mother's *iddlies*, as soft and white as *Thumbai* flowers.

The police officer when free called me to his flat to play Chinese checkers with him, a game he loved next to catching criminals, or at times to listen to the gramophone records that played songs in French, a language I never understood but loved the music in its words. As the couple treated me as their young brother, I felt free to move about in their flat and after my school hours I babysat for their six-month-old daughter.

The child was quite attached to me, for I took a lion's share of the goodies offered to her. The goodies were mostly made in Europe. As they were of adult taste, the child turned away her face, and refused to open her wee mouth however hard I tried. And so I found delight in emptying the bowl to its last crumb. My very presence made the child happy and she loved to spend most of her time with me.

One evening back from school, after a wash and then my snacks and tea, I dashed into the police officer's flat. The child was in somebody else's arms. When I stretched my affectionate arms towards the child sitting snugly in the crook of a girl's arm and resting her torso against the girl's voluptuous bosom, she refused my offer with a shake of her head and a wave of her hand.

And when I tried to wrest the child from the stranger's arms, the stranger hissed and said: "Leave her alone. She will never go to anyone else's arms as long as she is with me."

The child's mother too supported her amidst a giggle. "Rita is all in all for her. When Rita is nearby, the child doesn't even look at me."

I murmured the stranger's name twice and heaved a sigh. Perhaps Rita had heard me murmur her name, and she smiled an enticing smile.

I felt as if I had developed wings and flown away from the flat, leaving the child to the stranger.

The next day I overheard my mother complaining to my father: "I don't know what has gone wrong with our boy! He is not the same as before. He sits in some unwanted spot and forgets himself. His look is quite vacant and he smiles at himself."

"How old is he?" asked my father.

"Completed fifteen and running sixteen."

"Say sweet sixteen... What else can you expect from a sixteen-year-old? All boys of that age see some lousy looking girls and then it is love at first sight... Infatuation, my dear, it is pure infatuation. It will last only for a very short period, until the boy sights another girl, better in every way than the first. In our boy's case, who is that lousy girl?" My father stopped only to heckle my mother.

The word 'lousy' irritated me a bit. I was about to hurl 'No' at my father, but something in me strangled the word in my throat.

Like me, Rita was dark complexioned of course. But she was neither lousy nor ugly looking. For me, she looked like a dark angel and her smile was heavenly. How could my father, as ignorant as a walking stick, ever know about her?

On the evening of the next day, I was delighted to hear the police officer call me to his flat. As I rushed in, I saw the baby lying in her cradle and making inarticulate sounds at the woolly dolls. And the moment she noticed me, she raised her voice a few decibels more perhaps to attract my attention and stretched out her hands towards me, perhaps motioning me to take her into my arms.

"No," I said, feigning anger. "How dare you behave like that with me that day? Go to your Rita and never come to me."

The police officer guffawed before he said: "But where is Rita? She comes once

in a week to spend her Sunday with us. She is so affectionate towards the child that the child likes to spend all her hours with her."

"Who is Rita?" I inquired

"She is my niece a schoolgirl," he said and after a pause added with a wink: "You like to know more about her?"

I was about to say "Yes", or at least nod my head. But a sense of fear gripped me and I shook my head.

The police officer clucked

I was eagerly waiting for the next Sunday. But Rita made her appearance on the Saturday evening itself. With the child in her arms, she smiled provocatively at me.

"Oh! You're back," I said. "And you will vanish tomorrow evening?"

She shook her head diligently and then disappeared into the kitchen. I too followed her on the pretext of taking the child away from her.

"I doubt if you'll be able to tear her away from Rita for another week. Rita will spend her quarterly holidays with the child," said the police officer's wife. My heart jumped for joy, for my quarterly holidays coincided with hers.

I began to move heaven and earth to throw open my heart to her. But for want of privacy, I was unable to do so. The wings of Time seemed to take no rest. Eight out of the ten days of holidays had seen their dusk, leaving my heart filled with anguish.

"Just two more days. By hook or by crook I must throw open my heart for her to see for herself her figure etched in it," I said to myself and racked my brain for an idea.

I spent a sleepless night and the day dawned with an idea bright in my head. I tore a page from my school composition notebook, foolscap in size, and wrote a big 'I LOVE YOU', folded the paper four times and finding it too big for my shirt pocket, folded twice further and then pushed it into my banian.

I heaved a sigh of relief, as if the world were at my feet. "It is up to her to say 'yes' or 'no'," I said to myself and by seven in the morning slipped into the police officer's flat.

The police officer's eyes were grazing the vast field of a newspaper. My presence did not disturb him and so I moved to the bedroom on the pretext of cuddling the baby.

The child was fast asleep in its cradle. Rita dressed in a new half-sari and a matching blouse stood by the side of the cradle combing her long cascade of hair. I looked at her groggily with a smile on my lips.

Rita smiled back. I moved closer and we were nearly touching. I pushed my hand hurriedly into my banian to pull out my single-lined love letter.

"So you have come to wish Rita a happy birthday?" The words came from behind and made me nervous. I looked over my shoulder with my hand still in my banian. It was the police officer's wife removing the soiled pillowcases, and slipping the pillows into the laundered ones.

"Huh! I didn't know about it. Many happy returns of the day, Rita," I said with a grin.

“Wait! I’ll get you a toffee,” said Rita and disappeared into the kitchen

The police officer’s wife said: “Rita is going home today. And by evening the child will search for you ”

I nodded with a smile and then moved to assist her in her work.

Rita took a few minutes to emerge from the kitchen. Standing at the entrance of the bedroom, she motioned to me with a sway of her head to come nearer. I moved towards her. She brought her left fist close to my face and opened it. There sat a toffee, unusually big. As I took the toffee, my eyes didn’t fail to notice “I LOVE YOU” written on her palm.

She kept looking at me, as if she wanted to read the language of my eyes

A bead of perspiration formed in the hollow of my throat and trickled down my chest.

“Thank you,” I said profusely, with a twinkle in my eye.

“Don’t unwrap the toffee here,” she whispered. I took her hint and flew to my flat.

In the privacy of the bathroom, I unwrapped the toffee. A tightly folded white piece of paper and the toffee were curled up snugly. I took off the paper, and carefully unfolded it. Wow! There were several impressions of her cute little lips on the paper and amidst them just a line: “Meet me at 4 p.m. day after tomorrow at my school entrance, only if you love me and decide to make me your wife ”

I decided to be her husband.

Day after tomorrow...4 p.m.... That means nearly three days...approximately sixty hours... My God! What a long wait! I grew impatient. By ten that morning I dashed into the police officer’s flat to see Rita once more. But my Rita was not there. I was sure that she had left, for the child threw up her arms above her head, smiled and beckoned to me.

I took her into my arms and kissed her all over the face. I should say I suffocated her with kisses, for the child tried to wriggle out of my hands. Poor child! She didn’t know I was kissing the spots that my Rita had graced with her sweet lips.

Sluggard Time! Was he wreaking vengeance on me for I had cursed him a few days back for moving very fast?

The school reopened. I prepared for school in a jubilant way whistling a tune undecipherable to my mother. Usually I went unwilling to school and this change in me should have surprised her.

Inside the school, even the best teachers became bores to me. English poetry, a subject I loved most, all of a sudden seemed like that most dreaded subject, mathematics. My lunch box containing prawn-fried-rice and pomfret fish deep-fried in gingely oil remained untouched. And many of my classmates seemed to me unwanted guys. I spent the school hours biting my fingernails and spitting them on the floor.

At last, my patience was rewarded. The final gong sounded. It was 4 p.m. Unusually on that day I was the first to leave school.

Pushing my bicycle I crossed the road and stood close to the entrance of the girls’ school.

Girls of different sizes and shapes were walking past me and my eyes frantically searched for my Rita.

Anxious minutes passed My eyes grew tired of looking at girls. I lost hope. But at last, joy surged in me. There he-ho! My Rita...came pushing her bicycle She was the last to get out of school.

“Shall we go?” said Rita with a smile lit large on her face.

“Where?” I asked innocently

“Home,” she answered sympathetically. “On the way home we can talk.”

We then jumped on to our bicycles and began to pedal We rode past a couple of crossroads in silence.

Who should break the silence? Perhaps that was the question.

As we entered the overcrowded Big Market Road, I told her: “We shall turn to our left after crossing the market. We shall talk for sometime at the dead end of the road. There will be nobody there ”

Rita didn't utter a word but continued pedalling in silence.

“Shall we meet everyday like this?” I asked.

Exhilarated by my question she answered: “We should.”

We were about to cross the market when Rita suddenly in a hurried but hushed tone said: “My brother... My brother is standing there ”

I turned pale as if Rita were showing me a ghost. Without uttering a word I pedalled fast and disappeared into a blind alley I foolishly waited for her at the dead end of the road There was no sign of her

I met her the next day after school. But she behaved as if I was a total stranger to her. I waited for the weekend. She didn't turn up at the police officer's flat.

Months passed. One Sunday morning when I was cleaning the drawers of my study table, I found the toffee that Rita had offered on her birthday, and which I had kept as a souvenir. I pulled it out only to find that the toffee was half-eaten away by the moths and cockroaches that shared my table. I tried to unfold the white paper that had invited me to her school, but it fell off in shreds

I rummaged for the white sheet I had torn from my composition notebook to throw open my heart to Rita. It had remained intact. I kept it for a long time. But after ascertaining that I would find no opportunity to pass it on to Rita I crumpled it into a ball and pushed it into a wood-burning oven.

Later, on enquiry I was given to understand that Rita's only brother was a primary school kid. I burst into peals of laughter.

“What happened, Sir?” asked someone in the ice-cream parlour, pulling me away from my memory lane.

I saw several eyes staring at me. I looked at the ice-cream cone It had wilted My trousers were stained with ice cream. I felt a chill in my leg.

“Are you okay? I heard you laughing to yourself. What happened? Sir?”

“Nothing! It's nothing ” I said and grinned sheepishly

I DON'T KNOW?!

EVERYTHING seems to be dead,
come to me again or in sea of expectations, I'll sink to the bed.
Were you angel or just an imagination?
You had the divine power to speak my being,
your words were magic, still echo around me,
Now I realize what I thought, is all a false picture of me.
I painted it black, now rainbow I can see.

You came like a storm and eroded my mind,
dumbstruck spellbound, I was left behind
I was dark all where, now all shines like brass,
I can see through myself, like a ray through glass.
I don't know what I am, but you have made me fly high.

I hope you were true,
at heart, soul and words,
Lord! you are the mirror
and I have my dreams laid, on my image shown by you.
I would be shattered if it's all blue.

You are my base,
I'm standing on a tower, may fall any time,
my heart may break,
if I come to know, this is all fake.

I know it's too early, for saying all this.
But I don't know why,
I'm feeling somehow cherished
and many more emotions are floating in my heart.
O Lord! A finishing touch is needed, still, to this piece of your art.

TRIPTI GUPTA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Perspectives of Savitri, Vol. I. Editor R Y. Deshpande Pp lix + 556 Publishers Aurobharati Trust, S.V.P. Salai, 5 Kumaran Street, Pondicherry 605 012. Price Rs 300.

INTEREST in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is steadily increasing not only among the "general" readers but also among the research scholars working towards doctorate degrees. Though there are a few books on the poem and articles published especially in the Ashram journals, everyone seems to feel the need for an authoritative work presenting the best that has been thought and said on the subject. It is such a need the Volume under review and the one that is to follow it seek to serve.

The publishers could not have chosen a better specialist to edit the Volumes than Deshpande who is as much a poet in his own right and a scholar and critic of repute as he is a staunch devotee of the Master. He has access to all the material available on *Savitri* and has an intimate contact with the wide world of *Savitri*-scholarship. With his taste and discrimination he is able to provide us with a rich intellectual banquet that brings before us the work not only of the Master and the Mother but that of their close disciples as well as that of the cream of scholarship of the academic world. He has not ignored creative work that could help us understand the masterpiece, shall we say in the Amalian language, the Master's (master) piece?

To one who has turned to *Savitri* from the early nineteen fifties most of the pieces included in the Volume are "familiar faces". Even the editor's own contribution to the Volume at the end has been published already. His contribution is one of the few from the present-day writers. It is hoped that the Second Volume mainly concerned with the present-day writers will also include some precious work of the yester-years not included in the first Volume.

The Editor's taste and discrimination spoken of is seen not only in the admirable selections, but in the splendid Introduction *Respecting Savitri*. The choice of the Epigram to the Book is a sheer stroke of genius. Deshpande is careful to work out its meaning and significance into the body of the Introduction. The uninitiated reader may easily misunderstand or not see clearly why the *Gayatri Mantra* of the modern Rishi who out-Visvamitras Visvamitra should appear at the start of the Volume. In Sri Aurobindo's English rendering of his own *Mantra* he spells *Savitri(u)* meaning the Supramental Sun *Savitri*: it could be taken for the name of the Avatar of the Mother, the protagonist of the great Epic. On pp. xii-xiii Deshpande says,

...*Savitri* is a textbook of the Yoga of Physical Transformation. The textbook has also a definite literary form. In its origin the form of *Savitri* is the *varam rupam*, the auspicious form of *savitru* himself, the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth. (See also p. xxxv)

The Introduction gives the general reader as well as the researcher all that one needs to know to approach *Savitri*.

Deshpande has done well to draw out “from the dusty immortality of the Library” Romesh Chandra Dutt’s classical creation of the Tale of Savitri based on Vyasa’s narrative. The Sanskritist in him could not ignore T. V. Kapali Sastry’s rendering of the opening Canto of Sri Aurobindo’s Epic. The Master himself is said to have seen the beautiful rendering. It is no denigration of Sastryji to point out that marvellous as it is, it fails to do justice to the Overhead poetry of the Master. To go no farther than the first line—it takes a whole quatrain in Sanskrit. Words like *asanne*, *sayanatalat* and *ushasi* dilute and weaken the lift and sublimity of the original.

It was the hour before the Gods awake.

The last line and many other significant lines like

All can be done if the God-touch is there

suffer the same fate. But Sastryji has a command not only over the language of the Gods but of the verse as well. The mastery makes the rendering delightful in itself.

Sri Aurobindo’s letters which open the selections throw light on the kind of verse he creates in the Epic and the Letters. To use the words of Wordsworth, “create the taste” (in the reader) by which the work is to be judged. The Mother in her talk brings out the multi-dimensional quality of the poem-scripture.

Among the work of the close disciples Nolini Kanta Gupta sees the poem from within and the “Scribe” Nirodbaran tells us with personal knowledge how the poem was composed.

There is one disciple who could be more academic than any academician in his research mind and intellectual analysis and that is the inimitable Amal Kiran. He has the inward look of a disciple and the objectivity of an academician. The two selections from him are in a class by themselves. Another disciple with an academic approach is Ravindra Khanna who knew his *Savitri* as few did or do. His essay on the similes reveals his powers at their best.

Here are Professors and Scholars of the stature of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and Sisir Kumar Ghose, models to any researcher. The reader must go through their work and benefit therefrom.

One cannot be too grateful to Deshpande for his admirable collection.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA