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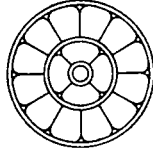
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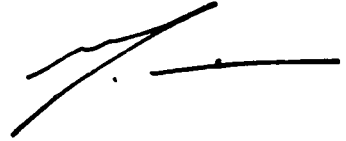
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MOTHER INDIA

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No. 2

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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A POWER WITHIN HER ANSWERED

SAVITRI'S heart fell mute, it spoke no word.
But holding back her troubled rebel heart,
Abrupt, erect and strong, calm like a hill,
Surmounting the seas of mortal ignorance,
Its peak immutable above mind's air,
A Power within her answered the still Voice.
"I am thy portion here charged with thy work,
As thou myself seated for ever above,
Speak to my depths, O great and deathless Voice,
Command, for I am here to do thy will"
The Voice replied "Remember why thou cam'st
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,
Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance
Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light.
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see
Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight
In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul
In the world's contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace
Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God.
Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,
Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death."
Then Savitri by her doomed husband sat,
Still rigid in her golden motionless pose,
A statue of the fire of the inner sun.
In the black night the wrath of storm swept by,
The thunder crashed above her, the rain hissed,
Its million footsteps pattered on the roof
Impassive mid the movement and the cry,
Witness of the thoughts of mind, the moods of life,
She looked into herself and sought for her soul

A dream disclosed to her the cosmic past,
The crypt-seed and the mystic origins,

The shadowy beginnings of world-fate
 A lamp of symbol lighting hidden truth
 Imaged to her the world's significance.
 In the indeterminate formlessness of Self
 Creation took its first mysterious steps,
 It made the body's shape a house of soul
 And Matter learned to think and person grew;
 She saw Space peopled with the seeds of life
 And saw the human creature born in Time
 At first appeared a dim half-neutral tide
 Of being emerging out of infinite Nought:
 A consciousness looked at the inconscient Vast
 And pleasure and pain stirred in the insensible Void
 All was the deed of a blind World-Energy
 Unconscious of her own exploits she worked,
 Shaping a universe out of the Inane.
 In fragmentary beings she grew aware
 A chaos of little sensibilities
 Gathered round a small ego's pin-point head,
 In it a sentient creature found its poise,
 It moved and lived a breathing, thinking whole.
 On a dim ocean of subconscious life
 A formless surface consciousness awoke:
 A stream of thoughts and feelings came and went,
 A foam of memories hardened and became
 A bright crust of habitual sense and thought,
 A seat of living personality
 And recurrent habits mimicked permanence.
 Mind nascent laboured out a mutable form,
 It built a mobile house on shifting sands,
 A floating isle upon a bottomless sea.
 A conscious being was by this labour made;
 It looked around it on its difficult field
 In the green wonderful and perilous earth;
 It hoped in a brief body to survive,
 Relying on Matter's false eternity.
 It felt a godhead in its fragile house;
 It saw blue heavens, dreamed immortality.

SRI AUROBINDO

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

Sri Krishna's Political Objectives

THE clan and the nation become differentiated in course of the gradual development of human society. That differentiation did not become so well-marked in ancient times in India or in other countries. A nation would grow out of the conglomeration of a few large clans. Each of these different clans either claimed descent from a common ancestor, or even though growing out of different families was accepted as born of a single ancestry through the establishment of friendly relations. The whole of India did not become a single big nation, but among the large nations that spread themselves all over the land there prevailed a common civilisation, a common religion, a single language, Sanskrit, and relationships like those of marriage. From ancient times however there had been attempts at unification. Now it was the Kurus, now the Panchalas, sometimes the Koshalan, sometimes the Magadhan nation who held empire over the land as its chief or overlord. But the ancient tradition of the clans and their love of independence would create such powerful obstacles to unity that these attempts could never last for long. In India, this attempt towards unity, the effort at undisputed empire was counted among the acts of piety and the duties of a king. This movement towards unity had become so strong that even a powerful and turbulent Kshatriya like Sishupala the king of the Chedis agreed to take part in the founding of Yudhishtira's empire.

To establish such a unity, empire or rule of law was Sri Krishna's political objective. The Magadhan king Jarasandha had already made this attempt, but his power, which was founded on tyranny and unrighteousness, would therefore be short-lived. Hence Sri Krishna baffled that attempt by getting him killed at the hands of Bhima. The main obstacle to Sri Krishna's work was the proud and powerful family of the Kurus. The Kuru people had for a long time been among the leading peoples of India. To what is called "hegemony", that is, a position of pre-eminence and leadership among a number of independent peoples of equal status—to that the Kurus had an ancestral right. As long as the pride and power of this people remained intact, unity would never be established in India. Sri Krishna came to realise this. Therefore he was determined to destroy the Kuru people. But the Kuru people had a hereditary right to the empire of India; Sri Krishna did not forget this fact. To deprive one of his rightful due would be an act of unrighteousness, so he chose for appointment to the future position of emperor Yudhishtira who was legally the king and chief of the Kuru people. Sri Krishna was supremely righteous, he did not out of affection attempt to set up his beloved clan of the Yadavas in place of the Kuru people even though capable of doing it, he did not nominate for that position his dearest friend Arjuna by ignoring the eldest born of the Pandavas, Yudhishtira. But there is possibility of

harm in considering only the age or previous title. If Yudhishtira had been unrighteous, tyrannical or incapable, Sri Krishna would have been obliged to look for another candidate. Yudhishtira was well fitted to be emperor by birth, rightful title, and the old established tradition of the land, as he was the proper claimant to that title by virtue of his qualities. There were many great and heroic kings more powerful and talented than he, but strength and talent alone do not give one a title to kingship. The king was to safeguard the rule of law, keep the subjects contented, protect the land. In the first two of these qualities, Yudhishtira had no peer, he was the son of the Lord of Righteousness, he was kind and just, he spoke the truth, he kept his truth, his acts were based on the truth, he was extremely dear to his subjects. The deficiency he had in the last of the requisite qualities mentioned, his heroic brothers Bhima and Arjuna were capable of making good. Contemporary India did not possess kings as powerful or men as heroic as the five Pandavas. Therefore, once the obstacle was removed by the killing of Jarasandha, King Yudhishtira on the advice of Sri Krishna performed the Rajasuya sacrifice in accordance with the ancient tradition of the land, and became its emperor.

Sri Krishna was a follower of the right law and a master of the science of politics. If there was a possibility of carrying to fruition his great objective by working within the framework of the law of the land, its tradition, the rules of its society, then why should he deviate from that law, go against that tradition, break those rules? To bring about such revolutions in politics and society is harmful to the country. For this reason, he at first directed his attempts to gain his objective by maintaining the ancient tradition. But there was this defect in the ancient tradition of the land that even if the attempts made in accordance with it were successful, there was very little chance of the success being permanent. One who had the advantage in military strength could no doubt become emperor by performing the Rajasuya sacrifice, but as soon as his descendant became weak the imperial crown slipped automatically from his head. Why should the powerful and heroic peoples who had come under the control of his father or grandfather accept the vassalage of the conqueror's son or grandson? Not hereditary right but the Rajasuya sacrifice itself, that is, an extraordinary military strength was at the root of that empire, he alone who had the greatest strength would be emperor by performing the sacrifice. Hence there was no hope for the permanence of the empire, there could only be a temporary hegemony. Another defect of this system was that the sudden augmentation of strength and the hegemony of the new emperor kindled the fire of jealousy in the hearts of the intolerant powerful Kshatriyas of the land so proud of their strength. "Why should he become the chief? why not ourselves?"—such thoughts could easily rise in their minds. This kind of jealousy on the part of Kshatriyas belonging to Yudhishtira's own clan made them oppose him. The sons of his uncle taking advantage of this jealousy deprived him of his position and sent him to exile. The defect in the tradition of the land became manifest within a short while.

Sri Krishna was as much a master of political science as he was righteous. He

would never draw back from altering a traditional method or rule if it was defective, harmful or unsuitable to the needs of the time. He was the principal revolutionist of the age. King Bhurisravas gave voice to the angry feeling of many contemporary Indians of the old school when he said while taking Sri Krishna to task, "Krishna or the Yadava clan which acts under his guidance never shrinks from acting against the right law or distorting it. Whoever acts on Krishna's advice will surely fall into sin before long." For, in the view of a conservative with his attachment to the old ways a novel venture is in itself a sin. Sri Krishna realised after Yudhishtira's downfall—not realised but knew from the beginning, for he was God—that a custom suited to the Dwapara epoch should never be preserved in the Kali age. Therefore, he made no further attempts on those lines, he followed the line of statecraft proper to Kali, with its emphasis on war and strife and directed his efforts towards making the future of empire free of obstacles by destroying the power of the insolent and proud Kshatriya race. He incited the Panchala people, ancient and equally powerful rivals of the Kurus, to destroy the latter, all the other peoples who could be attracted out of hatred towards the Kurus, for the love of Yudhishtira or out of desire for unity and the rule of law were attracted to that side, and he got the preliminaries of war made ready. In the attempts that were made towards peace Sri Krishna had no faith. He knew that peace was not possible, even if it were made it could not last. Still, out of regard for the right law and from considerations of policy, he devoted himself to attempts at peace. There is no doubt that the Kurukshetra war was the result of Sri Krishna's policy, and that to destroy the Kurus, to destroy the power of the Kshatriyas, to establish an undisputed imperial authority and the unity of India were his objectives. The war that was fought in order to establish the rule of law was a righteous war. The God-appointed victor in that righteous war was the mighty warrior Arjuna driven by a divine Power. If Arjuna were to give up his arms, Sri Krishna's labours would have come to nought, the unity of India could not have been achieved, a great evil would soon have overtaken the future of the land.

Fratricide and the Ruin of Clans

All the arguments of Arjuna were set forth with a view to the interests of the clan, thoughts about the good of the nation had been effaced from his mind by the force of personal affection. He had forgotten about the good of India in considering the good of the Kuru family, he was preparing to throw away the right law for fear of unrighteousness. We all know that to kill one's brothers out of self-interest is a heinous sin. But it is a greater sin to be a party to bringing about a national calamity, to desist from doing good to one's nation out of love for one's brothers. If Arjuna gave up his arms, it would be a victory for unrighteousness. Duryodhana would become the paramount king of India and the leading man in the whole country, he would by his bad example put a stain on the national character and the code of behaviour of Kshatriya families, the strong and mighty Indian clans would turn to

each other's destruction under the impulse of jealousy, self-interest and love of antagonism, there would be no undisputed state power guided by the rule of law to unify, govern and keep the country well defended by a concentration of power. Under such conditions, the foreign invasion, which even at that time was preparing like a sea held by the dykes to come upon India and inundate it, would arrive before its time have destroyed the Aryan civilisation and rooted out all hopes of the future good of the world. The political upheaval that began in India two thousand years later on the fall of the empire set up by Sri Krishna and Arjuna would have commenced right then.

They say that the ills, for fear of which Arjuna had raised those objections did actually come as a result of the Kurukshetra war. Fratricide, the ruin of clans, even the ruin of the peoples were the fruits of the Kurukshetra war. This war was the occasion for the onset of Kali. It is true, this war led to a terrible fratricide. The question arises by what other means could the great objectives of Sri Krishna be met? Precisely for this reason did Sri Krishna, knowing well the futility of seeking the peace, make considerable attempts to find a way to peace. Yudhishtira would have desisted from war had he got back even the five villages, if he could secure even that much space as a foothold, Sri Krishna could have established the rule of law. But Duryodhana was firmly determined not to give an iota of land without war. Where the future of the whole country depended on the results of war, it would have been unrighteous to desist from the war because it would lead to fratricide. The good of the family had to be submerged in the good of the nation, the good of the world. Brotherly affection and attachment to family ties could not justify the ruin of millions of people, a sacrifice of the future happiness or the amelioration of suffering of millions of people, that too would lead to perdition of the individual and the clan.

That there was a ruin of the clans in the Kurukshetra war is also a fact. As a result of this war, the family of the Kurus of great might practically disappeared. But, if by the disappearance of the Kuru people the whole of India came to be saved, then the destruction of the Kurus meant not a loss but a gain. Just as there is the blind attachment to family ties, so is there a blind attachment to the clan. Not to say anything to our fellow-countrymen, not to oppose them, even though they may cause harm or be intent on killing, even though they cause the country's ruin, they are brothers, objects of affection, they should be borne in silence. This kind of unrighteousness born of the Divine Maya that posing as the right law makes us fall from a true understanding is produced by the delusion of attachment to the clan. It is unrighteous to oppose or quarrel with a fellow-countryman without cause, from self-interest or in the absence of dire need or utility. But to bear in silence the mischief of a fellow-countryman who is determined to take the life of the common mother or to do her harm,—to tolerate this matricide or that harmful act would be a still greater sin. When Sivaji set out to murder his countrymen who were partisans of the Mughals, if someone had said, 'Lo! what is this you are doing?' They are your own countrymen, bear up with them in silence. If the Mughals occupy the Maharashtra

country, let them do it. If Maratha loves Maratha, that will be enough"—would not these words appear entirely ridiculous? When the Americans in order to abolish slavery created dissensions in the land and by starting a civil war took the lives of thousands of fellow-citizens, were they doing wrong? It may so happen that civil strife and the slaughter of fellow-citizens in battle are the only way to the good of the country and the good of the world. If it involves the danger of the ruination of clans, even then we cannot desist from effecting the good of the nation and the good of the world. Of course the problem becomes complicated if the good of the nation demands the preservation of the clan. In the age of the Mahabharata, the nation-unit had not been established in India, everybody regarded the clan itself as the pivot of the human race. It was precisely because of this that men like Bhishma and Drona who were steeped in the old tradition fought against the Pandavas. They were aware that right was on the side of the Pandavas, they realised that to bind the whole of India round a single centre through the establishment of an empire was a necessity. But they also knew that the clan alone was the pivotal point of the nation and in it lay the foundation of the right law; to maintain the law and found a nation by destroying the clan was an impossibility. Arjuna too fell into that error. In this age, the nation is the foundation of the law, the pivot of human society. To preserve the nation is the primary duty of this age, to cause the ruin of the nation the great unforgivable sin. But there can possibly be the advent of an age when a great society of the nations can be established. At that time perhaps the world's eminent men of knowledge and action would take up arms in defence of the nation, and on the other side Sri Krishna as a maker of revolutions would start a new Kurukshetra war and effect the good of the world.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Sanat K. Banerji)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

प्राञ्च यज्ञं चक्रुम वर्धता गी समिद्धिरग्नि नमसा दुवस्यन् ।
दिवः शशासुर्विदथा कवीना गृत्साय चित् तवसे गातुमिषु ॥

(Rigveda, 3 1 2)

We have made the sacrifice to ascend towards the supreme, let the Word increase. With kindlings of his fire, with obeisance of submission they set Agni to his workings, they have given expression in the heaven to the knowings of the seers and they desire a passage for him in his strength, in his desire of the word (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 110)

We have made the sacrifice with its forward movement, may the word increase in us; with the fuel, with the obeisance they have set the Fire to its work. The heavens have declared the discoveries of knowledge of the seers and they have willed a path for the strong and wise (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p. 105)

मयो दधे मेधिरः पूतदक्षो दिवः सुबन्धुर्जनुषा पृथिव्या ।
अविन्दन्तु दर्शतमप्स्वन्तर्देवासो अग्निमपसि स्वसृणाम् ॥

(Rigveda, 3 1 3)

Full of intellect, purified in discernment, the perfect friend (or, perfect builder) from his birth of Heaven and of Earth, he establishes the Bliss, the gods discovered Agni visible in the Waters, in the working of the sisters. (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 110)

Full of understanding, pure in discernment, close kin from his birth to earth and heaven he has founded the Bliss The gods discovered the seeing Fire within in the waters, in the work of the sisters. (*SABCL*, Vol. 11, p 105)

अवर्धयन्त सुभग सप्त यह्नी श्वेतं जज्ञानमरुषं महित्वा ।
शिशुं न जातमभ्यारुरश्वा देवासो अग्नि जनिमन् वपुष्यन् ॥

(Rigveda, 3 1.4)

The seven Mighty Ones increased him who utterly enjoys felicity, white in his birth, ruddy when he has grown They moved and laboured about him, the Mares around the new-born child; the gods gave body to Agni in his birth (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 110)

The seven mighty rivers increased the blissful flame, white in his birth, ruddy glowing in his mightiness. the Mares went up to him as to a new-born child, the gods gave body to Agni in his birth (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 105)

शुक्रेभिरङ्गै रज आततन्वान् ऋतु पुनान क्विभि पवित्रै ।
शोचिर्वसान पर्यायुरपा श्रियो मिमीते बृहतीरनूना ॥

(Rigveda, 3 1 5)

With his pure bright limbs he extended and formed the middle world purifying the will-to-action by the help of the pure lords of wisdom, wearing light as a robe about all the life of the Waters he formed in himself glories vast and without any deficiency (SABCL, Vol 10, p 110)

With his bright limbs he has built wide the mid-world purifying the will by his pure seer-powers, wearing light like a robe around the life of the waters he forms his glories vast and ample (SABCL, Vol 11, p. 106)

वव्राजा सीमनदतीरदब्धा दिवो यद्द्वीरवसाना अनग्ना ।
सना अत्र युवतयः सयोनीरेकं गर्भं दधिरे सप्त वाणी ॥

(Rigveda, 3 1.6)

He moved everywhere about the Mighty Ones of Heaven, and they devoured not, neither were overcome,—they were not clothed, neither were they naked. Here the eternal and ever young goddesses from one womb held the one Child, they the Seven Words (SABCL, Vol 10, pp. 110-11)

He moved all round the seven mighty Ones of heaven. undevouring, inviolate, neither were they clothed nor were they naked. here young and eternal in one native home the seven Voices held in their womb the one Child (SABCL, Vol 11, p 106)

स्तीर्णा अस्य सहतो विश्वरूपा घृतस्य योनौ स्रवथे मधूनाम् ।
अस्थुरत्र धेनवः पिन्वमाना मही दस्मस्य मातरा समीची ॥

(Rigveda, 3.1.7)

Spread out were the masses of him in universal forms in the womb of the clarity, in the flowings of the sweetnesses, here the fostering Rivers stood nourishing themselves, the two Mothers of the accomplishing god became vast and harmonised. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 111)

Wide-strewn, compact, taking universal forms are his energies in the womb of the light, in the streaming of the sweetnesses here the milch-cows stand nourished and growing, two great and equal companions are the mothers of the Doer of works (SABCL, Vol 11, p 106)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

PASSAGE

A WHITE and alabaster colonnade,
Lit by cressets deftly laid
Column-high and in each nook
Which the bats by night forsook
Ranged and ranked in double rows
Plinth by plinth the long file goes
From forgotten aeons dead
To the unpublished days ahead
—All the thought-filled moods of man
Down those flickering mindways ran

May 15, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: It is exceedingly fine, a noble image worked out with much perfection of poetic expression.

Medicines have quite a different action on the Mother's body than they would have on yours or X's or anybody else's and the reaction is not usually favourable Her physical consciousness is not the same as that of ordinary people

1-2-1937

SABCL, Vol. 25, p 376

The Mother has had a very severe attack and she must absolutely husband her forces in view of the strain the 24th November will mean for her It is quite out of the question for her to begin seeing everybody and receiving them meanwhile—a single morning of that kind of thing would exhaust her altogether You must remember that for her a physical contact of this kind with others is not a mere social or domestic meeting with a few superficial movements which make no great difference one way or the other It means for her an interchange, a pouring out of her forces and a receiving of things good, bad and mixed from them which often involves a great labour of adjustment and elimination and in many cases, though not in all, a severe strain on the body

12-11-1931

SABCL, Vol 25, p 315

ALL IS MOVING TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

27 December 1969

There is almost a feeling of being immersed in Matter. In spite of this kind of apparent absorption in problems and practical work, is any yoga or anything being done even when we are externally so much absorbed that we have no perception that we are doing anything?

OH! But now the whole being (the body has understood it quite well), the whole being knows that *everything* comes to make you go forward as quickly as possible, everything: obstacles, contradictions, lack of understanding, useless preoccupations, everything, everything, everything to make you go forward, it is for touching one point, then another, then yet another, and make you advance as fast as possible. If you are not concerned with this Matter, how can it change?

And it is very clear, it is quite evident that all objections, all contradictions come merely from a superficial mind which sees only the appearance of things. It is precisely to put your consciousness on guard against that, so that it might not be duped by such things and might see clearly that it is altogether external, superficial, and that behind this, all that is being done is moving as fast as possible towards transformation.

(Long silence)

Intelligence at its higher level understands very easily that it knows nothing and it falls quite easily into the attitude required for progress, but even they who have this intelligence, when it is a question of material things, have the instinctive feeling that all that is known, understood and founded on established experiences, and there you become vulnerable. And that is exactly what the body is being made to learn, the uselessness of the present way of seeing and understanding things, based on the good, the bad, the fair, the foul, the luminous, the obscure. . all these contradictories, and the whole judgment, the whole conception of life is based upon that (the material life), and it is to teach you the *inanity* of this perception. And I see it. The work has become very acute, very persistent, as though you were called upon to go quickly.

Even the practical part, which thought that it had learnt how to live and know what is to be done and how it is to be done, must also understand that it was not the true knowledge nor the true way of using external things.

(Silence)

There are even amusing things. This Consciousness which is at work, it is as though "teasing" the body all the time, all the time it says to it "You see, you have

this sensation, well, what is its basis? You think you know it, do you really know what is there behind it?" and for all the small things of life, things of every minute. And then the body is like that (*Mother opens big astonished eyes*) and tells itself "It is true, I know nothing" But its answer is always the same, it says "I do not claim that I know, let the Lord do whatever He wills", it is like that And then, there is this thing (if that could be caught permanently, it would be good) Non-intervention in the work of the Lord (to say the thing in the simplest way).

(*Silence*)

It is demonstrated by the *fact*, by the experience of every minute that when a thing is done with this kind of feeling of acquired wisdom or of acquired understanding, of an experience lived through, etc , to what degree it is... one may say "false" (misleading, in any case) and that there is some *other* thing behind which makes use of that (as it does of everything) but is not tied to this knowledge nor dependent upon it nor upon what we call the experience of life nor upon anything of that sort It has a much more direct, much more profound, much more "distant" vision, that is to say, it sees much farther, much wider and much in advance, something no external experience can give ... And it is a modest growth, without any outburst, not making a show of anything it is a very little thing of every minute—every minute, every second, every thing. As though all the while there was something that was showing you the ordinary way of living, of seeing and doing, and then .. the true way Both, like that For all things

It is so to such a degree that the attitude towards certain vibrations brings you complete ease or it can make you completely sick! And it is the same vibration Things like that, things bewildering. And every minute, it is like that—every minute, for everything

Well, the consciousness here takes a certain attitude and then it is all delight and harmony, and the thing remains the same, but then (*gesture of just a tilt to the left*), a slight change in the attitude of the consciousness, and the thing becomes almost unbearable! Experiences of this kind, all the time, all the time . just to show that there is only *one thing* that has importance, the attitude of the consciousness the old attitude of the individual being (*gesture of contraction*) or that (*gesture of expansion*) It must be (to put it into words that we understand) the presence of the ego and the abolition of the ego It is that

And then, as I have said, for all the actions of life, even the most ordinary, it is demonstrated that if the presence of the ego is suffered (surely to make you understand what it is), it can really lead to an imbalance of health, and that the only remedy is the disappearance of the ego—and at the same time the disappearance of all illness. For things that we consider quite unimportant, quite And it is for everything, for everything, all the while, all the while, night and day

And then it is complicated by all the misunderstandings and discontentments that

come out (*Mother makes a gesture as though a cart-load is being poured upon her*), as though they were unfastened and they came out, and all that falls at the same time in order in order that the experience might be total and in all domains.

It is as though a practical demonstration was being given at every minute of the presence of death and of the presence of immortality, like this (*Mother slightly tilts her hand to the right and to the left*), in the *smallest* things—in all things, the smallest and the biggest, and constantly; and constantly, you see... whether you are here or you are there (*same gesture of tilting to one side or the other*). At every second, as if you were called upon to choose between death and immortality

And for that, I see the body must go through a serious and very thorough preparation in order to be able to bear the impact of the experience without... without any vibration of anxiety or recoil or. it must be able to maintain its peace and its constant smile

(*Long silence*)

There are things... extraordinary things

As though in everything we were required to live the presence of the opposites to find .. to find what *is* there when the opposites join together—instead of running away when they join. That produces a result And that in the practical life.

THE MOTHER

(*CWM*, Vol 11, pp 217-20)

It is much easier for the Sadhak by faith in the Mother to get free from illness than for the Mother to keep free—because the Mother by the very nature of her work had to identify herself with the Sadhaks, to support all their difficulties, to receive into herself all the poison in their nature, to take up besides all the difficulties of the universal earth-Nature, including the possibility of death and disease in order to fight them out If she had not done that, not a single Sadhak would have been able to practise this Yoga The Divine has to put on humanity in order that the human being may rise to the Divine It is a simple truth, but nobody in the Ashram seems able to understand that the Divine can do that and yet remain different from them—can still remain the Divine

8-5-1933

SABCL, Vol 25, p 317

ALIPORE BOMB CASE TRIAL

C. R. DAS DEFENDS SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

MR DAS then went on to discuss some unpublished writings of Arabinda Ghose My learned friend, observed Counsel, argues that the writing No. 2998 furnishes an index of the man's thoughts This writing is in Bengali My friend does not show that it is in the handwriting of Arabinda Ghose

Mr Norton—I suggest that it is the handwriting of Sarajini

Mr Das—It certainly looks like a lady's handwriting I fail to understand how it furnished an index of Sarajini's thoughts Sarajini is not before Your Honour as a conspirator

Referring to the article "Morality of Boycott", Mr Das said "since the man did not publish this, I venture to submit that he did not publish as he thought the article might be misunderstood How can you convict a man for unpublished writings? It is for Your Honour to say whether these writings can furnish an index of the man's thoughts. I submit they cannot Because the words and phrases employed do not clearly and completely bring out his ideals Arabinda thought the writings might be misunderstood so he did not publish them Unless you can show that they were secret documents, intended to be circulated amongst the people secretly, you cannot draw the inference that the writings supply an index of the man's thought I ask Your Honour to interpret the point charitably These writings were not published anywhere Arabinda could publish them easily They are open to this charitable construction that since Arabinda feared they might be misunderstood, he did not publish them I ask Your Honour to accept the charitable construction The writings do not bear the meaning which my learned friend sought to put into it"

Mr Das read a long unpublished article by Arabinda Ghose entitled "What is Extremism?" Referring to a sentence "the law was made for man and not man for the law", the Judge asked if each person was entitled to pass his own judgment on the law

Mr Das emphatically replied. "Yes " After all, he continued, the principles of a man's life must be guided by his own conscience

Mr Norton, interrupting, asked how the societies were to exist

Mr Das, continuing with his argument put the question "Is it not the same view which obtains in other countries with regard to passive resistance? Have not the people often disobeyed the provisions of the law and taken the penalty?"

Mr Norton—Not on the ground that the law is wrong

Mr Das—That is Arabinda's view Proceeding Mr Das said that Arabinda put it on the ground of organic unity between the Government and the people They were not judging the man on account of his ideals So far as the infringement of the law

was concerned it was the same in other countries. The Government does a certain thing and the people say it is wrong and unjust. If they are fined, they are prepared to pay the fine.

In the language of Arabinda you have got here an authority which has not sprung from the nation as a part of its organism. The Government has not sprung here from within the people as the Government of other countries. No one can gainsay the truth of that. Arabinda never hesitated to put that forward over and over again. I object to the Government of this country not because it is an autocratic Government, not because it is not a democratic Government or of its particular actions which are criticised by others. My objection is based on philosophy, that this Government has not sprung from the people as a part of an organism.

Arabinda's argument was based on the ground of 'utility'. And after all, Counsel declared, the basis of all legislation in England was utility, something which helped the growth and development of the nation. That was the claim of the Government. We pass this law because it is in the interest of the people, and the interests of the people, Counsel said, could not be considered apart from the development of the nation.

Counsel read some further passages from the article where Arabinda discussed the methods by which they were to attain the ideal of freedom. Commenting on this Counsel said if a bomb were brought to Arabinda and he were asked "Shall I throw this at the first Englishman I come across?" Arabinda would say "Will this accomplish the great ideal?" The answer, Counsel said, would necessarily be "no" because it would not produce the desired effect.

His Honour—If effective, use it?

Mr Das—If the oppression increases to such an extent and people are so united together, and have got such resources at their back that they think they can fight the Government in battle as it were they may do it, but not now.

His Honour—He goes back to the Utilitarian method if you are strong enough to fight.

Mr Das—Yes, that is the whole trend of his argument.

Proceeding Mr Das repeated his former argument regarding the methods advocated by Arabinda, insisting on the point that according to Arabinda violent methods were bad and peaceful methods were good. In the paragraph discussing the methods, which Counsel read, Arabinda was taking each particular ideal and probing it in order to test its truth or otherwise. He was discussing the best ideal. Counsel read a sentence regarding one of the means discussed by Arabinda which ran "whether it is worthy of a great people who is struggling to be", Counsel called His Honour's attention to this question put by Arabinda.

Counsel continued. If there was a section in the Penal Code—which fortunately there was not—that the preaching of national freedom meant sedition, Arabinda's answer would be, "nevertheless I must do it. I cannot help it. It is within me and that is what I owe to myself and my God."

Referring to another passage where after discussing certain questions Arabinda said "the result will be anarchy" Counsel said he was surprised as Mr Norton who was an English scholar saying that he meant anarchists' outrages. He challenged Mr Norton to point out from the writings of any English writer that the term "anarchy" has been used to mean "anarchists' outrages" "Anarchy", Counsel said, meant "disorder" and Arabinda was referring to a sort of social chaos

Counsel read some further passages with the object of showing that the metaphors used by Arabinda were taken by Mr Norton literally. When he spoke of sacrificing their lives for the country Arabinda meant that they should suffer Referring to the expression "Manuring the soil with their blood" Counsel asked if such a thing was possible, it was a mere metaphor He exhorted the people to suffer to the last extremity What would happen, Counsel asked, if passive resistance could be so well organised that all the people refused to pay taxes It was not a very pleasurable subject to deal with, but Counsel said one could well imagine that there would be firing of guns and the result of that would be that the people would be weltering in blood

Proceeding Mr Das said he was outlining a passive resistance which it would be impossible to reach, but the man who was writing was pushing a wrong point to its logical conclusion The point he had fixed his attention on was the method and the ideal The point he was pursuing was whether it was effective and consistent with the traditions of the country No nation could grow out of subjection unless it was prepared to suffer The reference to blood and darkness and death, Counsel averred, was figurative If it led to disorder even then it was welcome because it helped to attain the development they were seeking It did not help Mr Norton in thinking that it referred to bombs, ammunition or any other thing

Referring to the word Revolution which appeared in a passage in the article, Counsel said that this did not have the same meaning as the French Revolution. The word was used in the sense of peaceful revolution

Proceeding with his argument Counsel said: "If Your Honour looks at the dominant notes in the unpublished writings it is perfectly in accord with the real nature of Arabinda's writings If you take hold of a word here and a paragraph there you will not get the real intention Your Honour must read that article with all the other articles" Counsel referred to another article from which Mr. Norton quoted the lines of Wordsworth incorporated in the article "who would free themselves must themselves strike the blow"

Commenting on this Mr Das said "My friend seems to think that it is indicative of bombs. If Your Honour reads the whole article you will find that it is written in appreciation of Rash Behary Ghose's speech delivered at the Congress The author quotes this particular line of poetry to support the contention that Mr Ghose put forward that nations by themselves are made"

(To be continued)

A LIBRARY OF ONE'S OWN

THE getting together of a private library must not be an act prompted by the motives of mere possession of something supposed to be valuable. It must be the passionate expression of our own sense of the immense value of books. That is the first desideratum.

The second is a true literary taste. For otherwise we shall collect books blindly and fill our shelves not with literature but with popular time-killers and mind-distractors.

Literature brings a deep delight which must be distinguished from what is no more than amusing and exciting. The latter touches only the surface of our mind and leads to no feeling of the wonder of life. It makes life merely tolerable and enables us to forget for a while the emptiness and tragedy of it. The former renders life precious in spite of its tediums and its tears. With its help we become aware of an intense beauty pervading everything and we grow conscious that from the firefly to the star a single enchantment exists. This enchantment's omnipresence is often shown in the power of images (similes and metaphors) that through one object brings out the quality of another.

Literature brings a keen magic into our moments and by its spell unifies the whole world—a spell which may be described as a marvellous thrill of comprehension. That comprehension is not necessarily philosophic though one who has a philosophic turn will be sent sweeping into fine intellectual systematisations. The comprehension is as if by a direct contact of the mind with an inner reality of which the world we know is a glorious appearance. We become alive first to the sheer loveliness of the world we know and secondly to a mighty truth behind or within it, which brings all things near to us by a sudden surprise, a strange unformulable understanding.

Once we realise what literature has to give us we see that it is a mode of living and not an accomplishment added to life. Life itself grows finer, life itself awakes to its own rare possibilities, by our developing literary taste. We do not add literary taste to our usual common existence and give it some sort of polish or finish. Many people take up literature as an accessory to producing a favourable impression in society or as a skill they can show off. These people generally read reviews of books rather than the books themselves. They want to have a shallow proficiency in discussing literature. They also dip into books rather than drown in them: all they need is a working knowledge. They collect a library according to what others possess; they do not grow a library from within themselves, from a spirit of adventure and discovery in the golden country of the mind.

But to grow a library from within oneself is not to eschew all help from others. It is just to take help with open eyes and not with eyes shut. After all we cannot depend on an inner instinct to tell us that such and such a book is worth having. Of course after reading it we can feel, if we have acquired literary taste, whether it should be on

our shelves. But there is ample room for guidance as to what books to read. One cannot be expected to get acquainted with everything written under the sun. One cannot have the extraordinary energy of a Saintsbury which simply eats up books of all times and all nations. One stands in need of instruction from those who have specialised in choice of books.

There are two rules to observe in collecting a library. Let your taste be catholic: look far and wide for your treasures. This is the primary rule. The next rule is: In the midst of your catholicity have a pet liking, so that the library does not become quite impersonal but reflects the colour of your personality without becoming too narrowly monochromatic. Let all the hues of the rainbow of the human mind be at play, but let there also be one more abundant hue which is the hue of your own individual nature.

The seven colours of the rainbow are Mysticism, Philosophy, Science, History (including Biography), Poetry, Life-criticism and Fiction. Each member of the spectrum must be understood broadly. Thus Life-criticism must cover (among other things) not merely literary criticism but also all art-expression, not only Shakespeare and Balzac must be laid under the microscope but also Beethoven and Rodin. It must include all writing that concerns itself with day-to-day problems—even those of politics. Philosophy must not be confined to Bertrand Russell or Bradley and their likes. It must have a more popular significance. The paradoxical insights of Bernard Shaw should come under it and the sociological constructs of H. G. Wells.

The point in having a partiality for one of the seven tints is not just the giving of an alive personality-touch to your library. It is also to have somewhere to start from when collecting books. Take up your own special liking and look out for the best that can satisfy it. Then, be open to suggestions radiating in other directions from books that provide this satisfaction.

Most of us are fond in a special way of novels. Well, with what novels shall we start forming the nucleus of our library? No better guide can be adopted than the famous novelist Somerset Maugham who has undertaken to select the best novels of all times and to free them from whatever padding their authors have put in when their inspiration was not at full creative-blast. Mr. Maugham has written an introduction to the series he has made. Let us turn to it for enlightenment.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

An incomplete piece copied from a number of sheets with rough scribbling some 40 years ago and meant for some popular guidebook perhaps projected by Keshavdev R. Poddar

K D S
22.7.1985

SRI AUROBINDO, THE FIRST SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

THIS descent of the Truth-Consciousness or Supermind is the central thing in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy and Yoga. He has accepted the modern theory of Evolution of life from Matter and of mind from life, the final result of which has been the advent of man on the earth. And he has explained with his spiritual vision the links which have been missing in the scientific theory. Science, though accepting the fact, has not yet been able to explain how life evolved out of brute matter and how mental consciousness evolved out of living matter. The latest trend in science is to revise its conception of Matter and to regard mind and consciousness as something inherent in Matter, which has been coming to the front through aeons of a slow evolutionary process. Sri Aurobindo accepts the Vedantic view that Spirit or Consciousness is the ultimate Reality and that for the sake of creating a material universe, that Conscious Reality has itself taken the form of Matter by self-involution, *Anna Brahman*. This descent of Spirit into Matter is not abrupt but has intermediate stages. Thus according to the spiritual philosophy of India, there are seven *lokas*, seven planes of existence, Sat, Chit, Ananda, Vijnana (Supermind), Mind, Life, Matter. The world in which we are living is the bottom, the material plane. These planes are not isolated, but act and interact on each other—they form one hierarchy of universal existence in and through which the Supreme Reality is manifesting the infinite potentialities inherent in His being. He is there in all the planes, He is All, *sarvam khalu idam Brahman*. The meaning of the terrestrial existence is that on the lowest plane of matter the higher planes are manifesting their powers. All the potentialities of the higher planes are inherent in Matter, but they can manifest only by a pressure from the appropriate higher plane. Thus Life has manifested on earth through a pressure from the Life plane, Mind has appeared on earth through a pressure from the mental plane and now is the time for the manifestation of the Supermind on earth and it is the contribution of Sri Aurobindo that he has created a passage, so to say, for the descent of the Supermind on the earth.

The difference between the Mind and the Supermind can be compared with the difference between the Moon and the Sun. The latter shines by its own light whereas the former, the moon, has no light but shines with the rays of the sun that are reflected on it. "The difference," says Sri Aurobindo, "is that mind is not a power of whole knowledge and only when it begins to pass beyond itself, a power of direct knowledge, it receives rays of the truth but does not live in the sun, it sees as through coloured glasses and its knowledge is coloured by its instruments, it cannot see with the naked eye or look straight at the sun." These are the two essential points of difference. The mind cannot see things as a whole, it only observes a partial aspect of the truth and attaches itself to it ignoring all other aspects. That is why we find so many "isms" and philosophies in the world conflicting with one another. The second

point of difference is that the mind cannot see truth directly but sees it indirectly through the senses and by making inferences from them and is thus liable to many errors. The Supermind has not to hunt for truth in this way, it is in possession of it and sees it directly and as a whole. In exceptional cases mind also exhibits great powers of direct knowledge, which we call intuition. Thus the greatest discoveries of science came not from reasoning but from intuition. It is directly by intuition that Newton found the law of gravitation and Einstein obtained the equation between mass and energy, $E=mc^2$. Einstein could never dream at that time that his formula would one day be used for destroying Hiroshima or would even threaten the destruction of all humanity. But such intuitions come when in exceptional cases the mind goes beyond itself showing the possibilities that are inherent in the mind. These possibilities of the human mind will be developed and established only when it is touched and transformed by the Supermind, only then men will be turned into supermen.

Our ancient Rishis had this power of intuition, by which they saw the truths of the Vedas and the Upanishads, but that was the work of spiritualised mind reflecting the truths of the Supermind. Even now if one can silence the mind by the practice of Yoga he can develop such powers of intuition. But this power of direct knowledge is inherent in the Supermind. Mind also has its origin in the Supermind, but in the process of creation it has been separated from its source. Until very recently it was supposed that the earth and with it the moon were once a part of the substance of the sun, effulgent like the sun, by some accident they were thrown out, and gradually cooling down lost their radiance. Something like that happened to the mind, on account of its separation from Supermind, it has lost its original light and cannot know the truth directly like the Supermind, which on that account is called the Truth-Consciousness, *rita-chit* of the Vedas, "Were this separation once abrogated by the expanding energy of the Divine in humanity, their [that is, mind's, life's, body's] present functioning might well be converted, would indeed naturally be converted by a supreme evolution and progression into that purer working which they have in the Truth-Consciousness. In that case not only would it be possible to manifest and maintain the divine consciousness in the human mind and body but, even, that divine consciousness might in the end, increasing its conquests, remould mind, life and body themselves into a more perfect image of its eternal Truth and realise not only in soul but in substance its kingdom of heaven upon earth. The first of these victories, the internal, has certainly been achieved in a greater or less degree by some, perhaps by many, upon earth, the other, the external, even if never more or less realised in past aeons as a first type for future cycles and still held in the subconscious memory of the earth-nature, may yet be intended as a coming victorious achievement of God in humanity. This earthly life need not be necessarily and for ever a wheel of half-joyous, half-anguished effort; attainment may also be intended and the glory and joy of God made manifest upon earth" (*The Life Divine*, Vol I, pp. 245-46)

This was published in the *Arya* during the First World War and the second victory referred to above was achieved in his own person before Sri Aurobindo left

his body in December 1950. In a letter written in September 1935 Sri Aurobindo himself said: "I don't know that I have called myself a Superman. But certainly I have risen above the ordinary human mind, otherwise I would not think of trying to bring down the Supermind into the physical." The implication is that it will not be incorrect if he is called a Superman. That he succeeded in bringing down the Supermind into the physical, the final test of a superman, is proved by the fact that, though originally he was of a dark complexion, towards the end of his life his complexion became golden and even after death the body did not show any sign of decay or disintegration for several days and continued to emit a golden light. When the complete transformation of the body by the Supermind will be achieved there will be no disease, old age or death and only such a body can be the proper vehicle for a true divine life on the earth; but it may take a long time for that transformation to come on the earth, as it took a long time for the modern man to have developed from the cave man. But there can be no doubt that he realised the beginning of supermanhood on the earth.

It may be asked, even if a solitary Sri Aurobindo became a superman, how does the rest of humanity or the world benefit by that? As Sri Aurobindo made it clear, he did not want supermanhood for himself but to open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible for all men—he was born for this and he has accomplished his mission. Bhagirath brought down the Ganges from Heaven immediately for the salvation of his ancestors, but the Ganges has flown over since distributing purity and salvation to all. Sri Aurobindo is the Bhagirath of the Supermind, he has brought it down for the transformation of all mankind. The Mother, who has completely identified herself with Sri Aurobindo, writes thus about him. "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 provided us, so to say, the proof that the thing can be done and the time is now to do it."

(Concluded)

ANILBARAN ROY

Here is Savitri

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

THE KINGDOM OF SUBTLE MATTER

He came into a magic crystal air
And found a life that lived not by the flesh,
A light that made visible immaterial things
A fine degree in wonder's hierarchy,
The kingdom of subtle Matter's faery craft
Outlined against a sky of vivid hues,
Leaping out of a splendour-trance and haze.
The wizard revelation of its front ¹

This brilliant roof of our descending plane,
Intercepting the free boon of heaven's air,
Admits small inrushes of a mighty breath
Or fragrant circuits through gold lattices
And bright dews drip from the Immortal's sky ²

This subtle physical (or true physical) is a world where things are and happen somewhat as in the physical here but with a harmony, a beauty and a truth that do not exist upon earth ³

In rooms of the young divinity of power
And early play of the eternal Child
The embodiments of his outwinging thoughts
Laved in a bright everlasting wonder's tints
And lulled by whispers of that lucid air
Take dream-hued rest like birds on timeless trees
Before they dive to float on earth-time's sea ⁴

A bird is a very frequent symbol of the soul, and the tree is the standing image of the universe—The Tree of Life ⁵

The bird is a symbol of the individual soul ⁶

The soul is the Divine made individual without ceasing to be divine.

In the soul the individual and the Divine are eternally one

The role of the soul is to make of man a true being

The soul is that which comes out of the Divine without ever ceasing from manifestation

To find the soul, you must draw back from the surface, withdraw into the depths and enter, go down and down and down into a pit deep, silent, immobile; there is something warm, quiet, rich with content and very immobile, and very full, something like a sweetness—that is the soul ⁷

The condition of the souls that retire into the psychic world is entirely static; each withdraws into himself and is not interacting with the others. When they come out of their trance, they are ready to go down into a new life, but meanwhile they do not act upon the earth life. There are other beings, guardians of the psychic world, but they are concerned only with the psychic world itself and the return of the souls to reincarnation, not with the earth ⁸

These [the Guardians of the psychic world] are not human souls nor is this an office to which they are appointed nor are they functionaries—these are beings of the psychic plane pursuing their own natural activity in that plane. My word “guardian” was simply a phrase meant to indicate by an image or metaphor the nature of their action.⁹

This wonder-world with all its radiant boon
Of vision and inviolate happiness,
Only for expression cares and perfect form .
It lends beauty to the terror of the gulfs
And fascinating eyes to perilous Gods,
Invests with grace the demon and the snake ¹⁰

The Mother said seriously:

Knowing so well what they are doing, still deliberately, purposely, human beings fall into the pit of falsehood.

A heaven of creative truths above,
A cosmos of harmonious dreams between,

A chaos of dissolving forms below,
It plunges lost in our unconscious base
Out of its fall our denser Matter came.¹¹

This mire must harbour the orchid and the rose,
From her blind unwilling substance must emerge
A beauty that belongs to happier spheres¹²

When I sent some sketches to the Mother along with the sketch of this painting,
She wrote:

The rose *in front* is seen all alone, no leaves, no stem, the rose bush is far beyond, behind a mist, a *small* bush with small leaves and *small* flowers *at a distance*.

The same for the orchid, *one* flower is in front and big, all the rest is far behind and *small* and veiled by a mist

The mud ground in front is visible clearly So three things prominent:

1. rose
- 2 orchid
3. the mud ground

All the rest seen indistinctly behind a mist

My dear little child Huta,

I send back the sketches with my explanations and a picture of the orchid and a little rose.

ROSE: "Love for the Divine—

The vegetal kingdom gathers together its most beautiful possibilities to offer them to the Divine."

ORCHID: "Attachment for the Divine—

Wraps itself around the Divine and finds all its support in Him, so as to be sure never to leave Him."

—The Mother

In us too the intuitive Fire can burn,
An agent Light, it is coiled in our folded hearts,
On the celestial levels is its home
Descending, it can bring those heavens here¹³

There is, indeed, a higher form of the *buddhi* that can be called the intuitive mind or intuitive reason, and this by its intuitions, its inspirations, its swift revelatory vision, its luminous insight and discrimination can do the work of the reason with a higher power, a swifter action, a greater and spontaneous certitude. It acts in a self-light of the truth which does not depend upon the torch-flares of the sense-mind and its limited uncertain percepts; it proceeds not by intelligent but by visional concepts: it is a kind of truth-vision, truth-hearing, truth-memory, direct truth-discernment¹⁴

Admired for the bright finality of its lines
A blue horizon limited the soul..¹⁵

Life in its boundaries lingered satisfied...
The beautiful body of a soul at ease,
Like one who laughs in sweet and sunlit groves,
Childlike she swung in her gold cradle of joy.¹⁶

While explaining to me this picture, the Mother said with a smile:

Paint a gold colour hammock and show Life in it, holding a rose in her hand.

When the Mother saw this painting, She laughed softly and said:
“Ah! she is lazy!”

(To be continued)

HUTA

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APROPOS OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM*

ACCORDING to a Christian legend pansies were at one time more sweet-smelling than violets. But then this also became a cause of concern for them. Flower-gatherers in search of them would trample over large tracts of cornfields and occasion considerable damage. Pansies prayed to the Trinity to take away their fragrance. At present violets are more fragrant than pansies.

We can now imagine why Eliza Doolittle sold violets at a theatre. The flower-maid could not pronounce her 'h's properly, nevertheless, in her innocence there was something very sweet and aromatically charming. But these days we, in our sophistication, do not understand that nature has a different purpose for us and that she expects us to participate in it. We are moving away from the pristine freedom and naturalness of the heart.

We love our civilisation, however, in our ineptitude we do not respect values. That kind of noble and refined insightful sensibility is absent in us. We do not know the Path of the Soon-to-Come. We are not aware of our own possibilities, we do not recognise that we are born to realise the highest ideal. We disregard the voice that tells us "Come to the beautiful, the good, the true, don't get lost in weakness, don't fall asleep in the present, come towards the future." We are busy in building the City of Man and do not hear the footsteps of the coming Millennium. If somewhere deep within us we do see the enduring spirit of magnificence of our past, we are also well pleased by the riches that have come to us today in their material abundance. Yet it is essential that we exercise caution while accepting the time's untrustworthy gift horse.

In the specific context of India it is obligatory that we should awake to the spirit of India and live in it. Akbar had a blackbuck as his pet. When Mansram died the Emperor honoured it with a cenotaph. But today the species is in danger. The simple Bishnou community of Rajasthan takes it as the avatar of Krishna and reveres it so. But urbanisation and poaching pose a threat, film stars and celebrities are its great killers.

The Dharma of India is the Dharma of Truth, Satya Dharma, and the manner of upholding it is the life of dedication to it, of Satya Yajna. It is in that tapasya that we shall fulfil ourselves and fulfil the world,—and also humanity and God. When we shall awake to it and perform the Yajna, only then shall we conceivably participate in the august vision and work of Sri Aurobindo. In it "we shall hear more and more the song of the growing godhead of human unity, of spiritual freedom, of the coming supermanhood of man, of the divine ideal seeking to actualise itself in the life of the earth, of the call of the individual to rise to his godlike possibility and to the race to live in the greatness of that which humanity feels within itself as a power of the spirit." That is the prospectus put for us, the Prospectus of the Eternal.

Tapasvins of the ancient days spoke of the Truth and in their being they ever

* From the author's book *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium* released by Nirodbaran on 1 January 2000.

grew towards its increasing manifestation. With the offering of bright oblations and chanting of prayers both the Gods and the Rishis climbed the steep slopes of heaven *rebhanto vai devascha rishavascha swargam lokamāyan*. Thus they attained immortality. Ever in this land, and even in the declining of ages, Knowledge approached Brahma and invoked his benedictions. "Protect me, I am thy treasure. Do not expound me to the scornful, not to the unstraightforward, nor to one who has no self-control, thus I shall grow powerful." It is that Word which illumines all, gives to everything the truth of expression. The guardians of light are never asleep here and their awakening is uninterrupted. The touch with the Infinite is never lost.

But now the Path has to go beyond the City of Man. In the Babylonian epic we have Gilgamesh standing in front of the proud gates of his Uruk. He is inviting us to look around and view the greatness of the city, its high walls and its masonwork. On a stone of lapis lazuli is carved the account of his exploits. "He saw all, knew all, the great Mystery, the Hidden. He recovered the knowledge that was there before the Flood. But when his friend Enkidu died he got obsessed by the fear of death. He yearned for eternal life. Gilgamesh was told that death is a necessary fact because of the will of the gods and that all human effort is only temporary. He was told about the secret Plant of Everlasting Life. He went to the bottom of the ocean surrounding the Far-Away and plucked it. But, when he happened to be resting, the magic plant remained unguarded and a snake slithered in and ate it up. Gilgamesh was distraught. He lamented that his labour and his journey and his suffering proved of no avail."

The sad tale of human effort and human affliction has not been too different down the ages. In order to forget his own time Petrarch dwelt upon antiquity, for he was always repelled by the age in which he lived. "I have constantly striven to place myself in a spirit of other ages, and consequently, I delight in history." He turned from Aristotle to Plato.

When we come to the Renaissance we perhaps begin to see the future, the unfolding of a new dimension of the spirit. The noteworthy mark of it is that it admitted in the scope of its creative urge the work of real men, living and breathing men, although unknown might have been that future, in it glimmered another happy outlook, another hope,—that of aesthetic, rational and sagacious progress. The new adventurer had set out to mould his own destiny, to make his own history.

Our souls whose faculties can comprehend the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite
And always moving as the restless spheres,—

this is possibly what Marlowe's Faustus yearned to know, to do, to feel. "Not science, not wisdom, not the revelation of an understanding mind, not a Platonic Form—instead, yearning for an enhancement of personality that comes with understanding and power."

But what power? Power that ensues from knowledge, knowledge of the phenomenal world? "Knowledge is a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate," wrote Francis Bacon in 1605. Therefore in human hands power destroys, craves, manipulates, it often becomes a negative force in the service of retrograde agents. There is no matching growth, no sufficient widening in the perspective of life. But for Marlowe it was inner striving in the Upanishadic sense. It was at once a bid for the infinitesimal and for the transcendental.

Therefore the Path must run on, run even past the City of God. It must reach the City of Delight where Man and God will live together, in each other's completeness, in each other's fulfilment. We may hear the prophecies of doom,—that there shall be no tomorrow. We may be told that the four imperious horsemen have already finished their breakfast, that War, Death, Famine, and Plague are now on the ride. Perhaps their arrival may be perfectly welcome too,—welcome if the world in which we live is to be considered only a mighty illusion lacking the substantiality of its creator in it. It will not be a regret if such a creation should get dissolved. But the strangest if not a very paradoxical thing is that, a certain intensity of experience even that of God can itself lead to the phantasmagoric character of this world. In Omar Khayyam's words:

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a magic shadow-show
Play'd in a box whose candle is the sun,
Round which we phantom figures come and go.

But is that the final word? Or is it that that final word itself is made of some great illusion? The insistence of material existence should make us think in other terms. But it is, they say, impossible to sneeze with one's eyes open. Indeed, if the sun is real then it is necessary that we grasp the meaning of our shadow-reality playing in a shadow-box.

To take care of the Shankarite proposition, that Brahman alone is real and the world is all falsehood, the dynamic aspect of Reality should also be experienced in its vast and luminous manifestive role. Indeed if it were just an illusion, then why should have Avatar after Avatar taken birth in it and done work to lift it up? Actually, we see in it an ever-growing and resplendent Aurobindonian assertion that not only is Brahman real but Jagat too is real, further, "Jagat is fully pervaded by Brahman who is one without a second and the Jiva himself is Brahman." We have also a corroboration of it in our time-honoured scriptures: "If utterance is by speech and life by the breath, vision by the eye, hearing by the ear, thought by the mind, then what am I?"—asked the Spirit. But then he beheld this conscious being which is Brahman utterly extended and he said to himself, "Now have I really seen."

Brahman in the universe in the sense of this universe's basal reality is a great discovery which is the authentic motivating force in all our becoming. The problem is therefore essentially the problem of pragmatics and hence the entire evolutionary

effort should be directed towards solving this problem. It is an existential and not a fundamental issue. To be able to pick up that universe's primary reality as the basis for activity is indeed its new merit. In the language of the system of ancient Sankhya it would imply the simultaneous appearance of Purusha and Prakriti in their full gnostic character here in this earthly world. "There must be," says Sri Aurobindo, "an emergent supramental Consciousness-Force liberated and active within the terrestrial whole and an organised supramental instrumentation of the Spirit in the life and the body,—for the body-consciousness also must become sufficiently awake to be a fit instrument of the workings in the new supramental Force and its new order. On this basis the principle of a divine life in the terrestrial Nature would be manifested, even the world of ignorance and inconscience might discover its own submerged secret and begin to realise in each lower degree its divine significance."

Never in the spiritual history the awakening of the physical body to its divine truth was seen as a definite possibility inherent in the nature of this creation itself. But it was not simply a question of envisioning or intuiting a kind of extension of what had already been accomplished in the long travail of time. Unparalleled occult-yogic effort was also involved in it. The uniqueness of the avataric task of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lies precisely in working out the dynamics of the process that it may succeed in the here-and-now of the terrestrial scheme.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

HIMALAYA

I QUESTIONED
 The silence
 Of Himalaya
 It answered me
 With the immensity
 Of its massive presence

SURESH THADANI

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

17:12:1994

Long ago, more than a year back, I was meditating in the evening, as usual. There was a strong and continuous descent. But then I was told that the descent was not steady but all going away, leaving me, as if getting drained out. This is all strange.

I did not know what the cause was. A little later I found a young girl who could have been easily my grand-daughter, she was receiving it all. I did not know her, I had no connection with her whatsoever. There was neither at any time any thought about any girl. Now she was drawing the force I was receiving. I knew it and at once snapped the connection. The descent stayed in me afterwards.

Presently the entire difficulty seems to be a difficult one.

But then they know how to handle it. My physical Purusha must be separated from the physical Prakriti.

23:12:1994

The day before yesterday, not in the Ashram but in my room, when I was in a meditative state, the Supermind touched me.

Yes, I know it. It comes with that knowledge, and the immanent Divine is there to recognise it.

Yesterday I went to Sri Aurobindo's Room to offer my 'Thanks' for this, to express my sincere gratitude for what had happened.

In the evening the work was going on at the sex-centre,—physically, at the kidney. Very powerful,—I felt it so.

Sometime back, about a week ago, I was told that Purity is descending. So, action is taking place.

24:12:1994

Yesterday morning during my meditation there was a command. I was told that work will be now in the subtle-physical and that I should be conscious in the subtle-physical.

“Be conscious in the subtle-physical.” Yes, that is what I was told.

In the evening, at the Samadhi, the work was going on for a long time, almost for twenty minutes. The work was being done, ceaselessly, at the sex-centre. Time was approaching for the general meditation around the Samadhi and I had to leave the Ashram by 7.20. But the work was still going on.

But then they know everything. Although they are in the timeless, they know about time also. They do everything in full awareness of it.

I was told that I had opened well for the action. They could do whatever they wanted to do. About this time I was leaving the Ashram courtyard.

As I was leaving, I was told that it was the Transcendental Grace that had descended. It was that action which was going on.

27:12:1994

Day before yesterday, during the evening meditation, around the Samadhi, there was the Universal Consciousness. It was the Universal Consciousness that acted in me. It was the Overmind action.

Yesterday, for a long time, for more than an hour, the work was going on. I saw the Mother returning, after the work was completed. Whatever had to be done was done and completed. This is over.

When and what next step will be taken, about that I had no indication. But I was told that I should be ready. That is their way of working. They won't tell you in advance.

29:12:1994

Yesterday evening, after my meditation, I was doing Pranam at the Samadhi. As soon as I raised my head Sri Aurobindo said: "Nagin, I am lifting you up."

This was for the first time that I had heard Sri Aurobindo calling me by my name. I was surprised. He called me by my name.

He lifted me up, up, up, very high, very high. As he was lifting me up this way, he told me two or three times, "Nagin, I am lifting you up."

There he put me at the feet of the Mother and then he left.

Sri Aurobindo calling me by my name,—so wonderful! To hear him say "Nagin"! He lifted me up and put me at the feet of the Mother.

It was not ascent, my going up; but he did it himself. It was like the "baby-cat".

Earlier, during the meditation, they were doing work for a long time. I don't have any idea about it, what they do. But I always feel them doing work. That is certain.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

SRI AUROBINDO'S RELICS ENSHRINED IN DELHI ASHRAM

To enshrine Sri Aurobindo's relics, a simple monument has been built. It is a small structure with a square low base and a dome supported by four pillars—an Indo-Islamic piece of architecture so common in and around Delhi. In the centre of the base is a simple cube with a lotus in red marble to enshrine the relics. On the sides of the cube is engraved Sri Aurobindo's symbol in low relief.

Symbols of mystics, yogis and of great religions are not mind-conceived, arbitrary, geometrical diagrams. They are the revealed and living figures of truths and their inherent powers. They are known as *yantras* in India and are commonly used in worship as the bodies of the worshipped deities. Their potency is an accepted fact.

For Sri Aurobindo's disciples, the red lotus symbolises His Consciousness and the cube the Supramental Truth that He came to realise. The four petals of the lotus signify the four principal powers of His creative energy and the twelve outer petals are the subordinate powers of perfection. The symbol engraved on the sides of the cube consists of two equilateral triangles superposed on each other with their apexes pointing in opposite directions. The two triangles stand for the upper and the lower hemispheres of creation—Sat, Chit, Ananda of the upper hemisphere and mind, life and body of the lower. The two triangles merge in a square at the centre which is a symbol of the Supermind, the Truth that bridges the gulf between the two hemispheres. In this square are the waters of the new life and the lotus of perfect truth-creation.

(undated)

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

RISHI

SEER of Truth, hearer of Truth,
The higher height and the deeper deep,—
Your soul's plummet has measured them all,
The conscious waters there never sleep!

HEMANT KAPOOR

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

The Early 1940s

NIRODBARAN tells us that Sri Aurobindo's work on *Savitri*, brought to a halt by the accident in November 1938, could not be taken up again "before the middle of 1940"

For though he recovered from the accident sufficiently to take up intellectual work, his first preoccupation was with *The Life Divine*. After its publication in 1940, he resumed his work on *Savitri* ¹

Nirod now had the extraordinary privilege of being one of Sri Aurobindo's attendants. He mentions that for a long time he had to curb his impulse to peep at the manuscripts of *Savitri*, which must have been there somewhere in the room.

The chance came in 1940, first only to place the requisite manuscripts before him, then gradually to work as a scribe. I still distinctly remember the day when, sitting on the bed with the table in front of him, he remarked "You will find in the drawers long exercise books with coloured covers. Bring them." I think I went wrong in the first attempt, the second one met with his smiling approval. What he actually did with them, I cannot say, for he was working all alone, and we were sitting behind ²

The manuscripts show that in the early 1940s Sri Aurobindo continued to concentrate on the part of the poem depicting the experiences of Aswapati: his Yoga, his ascent through the worlds, his vision of the Divine Mother. In the 1916 version of *Savitri*, this material had formed only a short passage. It had grown to become the longest section of "Quest". During the 1930s it had expanded through draft after draft of the first book until it formed the major portion of *The Book of Birth*, then almost the whole of *The Book of Beginnings*. A study of the manuscripts of this period, often baffling in the complexity of their revision, illustrates a remark made by Sri Aurobindo in 1936:

In fact *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative ³

We have seen that in 1938, according to Sri Aurobindo's own account, the "state of manuscript chaos" of the huge section on the "Worlds" was such that the

emergence of any “cosmic beauty” from it seemed a remote prospect. But in 1942 a milestone was reached. In that year, Sri Aurobindo wrote out the whole of what was then *The Book of Beginnings*, corresponding to the present Part One. At the end he put: “Last draft of the first Book (Completed, September 6 1942)”

This version occupies 110 pages of a notebook in which Sri Aurobindo was writing an average of 45 lines on a page. Thus its length is about 5,000 lines. The part of it corresponding to what was sent to Amal a few years earlier is three times the length of the 1936-37 version. Yet the total length of the 1942 version—twenty-six years after Sri Aurobindo started *Savitri* and only eight years from the end—is less than half the nearly 12,000 lines of the eventual Part One.

Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo’s designation of this version as the “last draft” is significant. It may be taken to mark a transition from the period in which he regarded *Savitri* “as a field of experimentation” with yogic poetry to the definitive process that would lead to the completion of the epic.

The Book of Beginnings as written out by Sri Aurobindo in 1942 had eight numbered sections with the following titles.

- 1 The Symbol Dawn
- 2 The Issue
- 3 The Yoga of the King
- 4 The Ascent through the Worlds
- 5 The Pursuit of the Unknowable
- 6 The Adoration of the Divine Mother
- 7 The House of the Spirit and the New Creation
- 8 The Vision and the Boon

The titles of the first two sections are familiar as the titles of the opening cantos of the present Book One. The last four sections correspond to the cantos of what is now Book Three. The third section, “The Yoga of the King”, was destined to become three cantos and expand to four times the length it had in 1942.

Section 4, “The Ascent through the Worlds”, accounted for 60% of the 1942 version. It was divided into twelve unnumbered subsections:

- The World-Tier
- The Kingdom of Subtle Matter
- The Glory and Fall of Life
- The Kingdoms and the Godheads of the Little Life
- The Kingdoms and the Godheads of the Greater Life
- The Descent into Night
- The Worlds of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil and the Powers of Darkness
- The Paradise of the Life-Gods
- The Worlds of Mind and the Heavens of the Ideal

In the Self of Mind
 The World-Soul
 The Kingdom of the Greater Knowledge

Later, ‘‘The Kingdoms and the Godheads of the Little Life’’ would become ‘‘The Kingdoms of the Little Life’’ and ‘‘The Godheads of the Little Life’’, while ‘‘The Worlds of Mind and the Heavens of the Ideal’’ would be divided into three cantos. Otherwise the titles of the subsections of ‘‘The Ascent through the Worlds’’ would remain, with minor changes, as the titles of the cantos of the final Book Two.

The division of *The Book of Beginnings* into three books was the next stage in the development of *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo now took up a thick notebook and started again to write out the entire first book. Reaching the fourth section, ‘‘The Ascent through the Worlds’’, he wrote its number and title as before. But then he crossed this out and substituted ‘‘Book II’’, giving it a new title, *The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds*. The subsections of ‘‘The Ascent through the Worlds’’ now became the twelve sections of the second book. The first book was reduced to three sections, but retained the title *The Book of Beginnings*. The last four sections of the former massive Book of Beginnings were grouped into ‘‘Book III’’, which Sri Aurobindo entitled *The Book of the Divine Mother*.

The 150 pages of this version of the first three books, probably written in 1943, show the growth of the poem since the 110-paged *The Book of Beginnings* of the previous year. There are fewer lines on a page, however, so the increase may be less than a thousand lines.

Later in the same notebook, Sri Aurobindo wrote out the whole of *The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds* again with the same twelve sections, revising and adding to it considerably. An example from this version of Book Two will give an idea of how far the poem had come in 1943 and how much remained to be done. I will discuss Sri Aurobindo’s revision of a passage in the seventh section (now Canto Eight), then called ‘‘The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil and the Powers of Darkness’’.

The introduction of the ‘‘Worlds’’ into the scheme of *Savitri* in the early 1930s, and the vast expansion of this section until it became almost a third of the finished poem, gave Sri Aurobindo a way to include in the framework of his epic every aspect of the life of this and other worlds. The message of *Savitri* is not one of an otherworldly spirituality, but of the transformation of life on earth. Accordingly, the supraphysical worlds through which Aswapati travels are described, not for the sake of a purely mystical exploration of the Beyond, but in order to unravel the mystery of this world by tracking to their origins the disparate forces that move it.

In the early 1940s, the earth was passing through a crisis. Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1942 of ‘‘a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future’’. There was a ‘‘terrible danger’’ of the triumph of the forces behind Hitler and Nazism, which could bring about ‘‘a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race’’ and subject the work that has to be done ‘‘to

conditions which would make it humanly impossible''⁴ These forces had already succeeded to an alarming extent in creating hellish conditions in much of the world

An instalment of *Savitri* sent to Amal in January 1937 had included these lines:

A warrior in the dateless duel's strife
 Challenging the Shadow with his luminous soul,
 He traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake
 And faced the enchantments of the demon Sign .

By 1943 this passage had doubled in length, but kept its occult and symbolic character. Before Sri Aurobindo began to revise this page of the manuscript, it read as follows:

Here too the Traveller of the Worlds must come
 A warrior in the dateless duel's strife,
 He entered into dumb despairing Night
 Challenging the darkness with his luminous soul
 In vague tremendous passages of Doom
 He heard the goblin Voice that guides to slay
 And faced the enchantments of the demon Sign,
 And traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake

These lines themselves were to remain unchanged, except for the first, in this manuscript and through all subsequent revision. But after the fourth line, Sri Aurobindo made an insertion that would grow to 107 lines before *Savitri* was published. The final version of this passage includes graphic images of the war and totalitarian regimes, such as

Uprooted cities, blasted human homes,
 Burned writhen bodies, the bombshell's massacre

These lines would be introduced later, but Sri Aurobindo filled the margin of the 1943 manuscript itself with drafts for a new passage. At the top he wrote five lines of which not much would eventually be kept as it was first worded:

In a harsh world of cruel joylessness,
 A world of terror and of mystery
 Where every step was dogged by hideous powers,
 To know its law and win that law's release
 He dared the horror of its monstrous reign

But most of the margin of this page of the notebook is filled with a longer series of lines—some of them hardly legible due to lack of space—beginning

It was a realm of fierce and dolorous Force.
 A dire administration ruled the soul
 And thought and life were a long punishment,
 Pain schooled rebellion into torpid peace
 There was a mould of strange perverted mind
 Glad in its own and others' calamities
 To which worst ill was now its highest good
 And evil and agony seemed a natural state

Seven more lines were written below these in the margin. Thus began the development of a passage that was to grow into Sri Aurobindo's most vivid description of the world of falsehood that was threatening to take possession of the earth at the time when this was written.

The war Sri Aurobindo called from an inner point of view "the Mother's war" was won and the worst danger to the future evolution of humanity was averted for the time being. But the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga was to find a radical cure for the malady of life and lift it permanently to a higher level, making a reversion to the reign of falsehood impossible.

The secret of this transformation is indicated on the page following the passage discussed above. In the 1937 version, Sri Aurobindo had already written cryptically of finding a key in the subconscious and Inconscient that sustain the ignorance and evil of the world.

Till, hurried to the last subconscious floor,
 He found the secret key of Nature's change
 A Light went with him, an invisible Hand

By 1943 these three lines had been amplified into a passage of twenty-five lines. With some changes, it would become twenty-seven in the final version. In 1943, the passage began as it does now.

His being ventured into mindless Void,
 Intolerant gulfs that knew not thought nor sense .

After thirteen lines leading to "the last locked subconscious's floor", Sri Aurobindo went on to describe the beginning of a transfiguration of darkness into light, the central theme of *Savitri*.

There Being sleeps unconscious of its thoughts
 And builds the worlds not knowing what it builds,
 There waiting its hour the future lies unknown,
 There is the record of the vanished stars,

And there in the slumber of the cosmic Will
 He found the secret key of Nature's change
 A light was with him, an invisible Hand
 Was laid upon the terror and the pain
 That now became a quivering ecstasy,
 The close shock of sweetness of an Arm's embrace

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

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- 1 *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* (1988), p 177
- 2 *Ibid*, p 178
- 3 *Savitri* (1993), p 728
- 4 *On Himself* (1972), p 394

It is quite wrong to say that the Mother loves most those who are nearest to her in the physical I have often said this but people do not wish to believe it, because they imagine that the Mother is a slave of the vital feelings like ordinary people and governed by vital likes and dislikes "Those she likes she keeps near her, those she likes less she keeps less near, those she dislikes or does not care for she keeps at a distance," that is their childish reasoning Many of those who feel the Mother's presence and love always with them hardly see her except once in six months or once in a year,—apart from the Pranam and meditation On the other hand one near her physically or seeing her often may not feel such a thing at all, he may complain of the absence of the Mother's help and love altogether or as compared to what she gives to others If the childishly simple rule of three given above were true, such outbursts would not be possible

Whether one feels the Mother's love or not depends on whether one is open to it or not It does not depend on physical nearness Openness means the removal of all that makes one unconscious of the inner relation—nothing can make one more unconscious than the idea that it must be measured only by some outward manifestation instead of being felt within the being, it makes one blind or insensitive to the outer manifestations that are there Whether one is physically far or near makes no difference One can feel it, being physically far or seeing her little One can fail to feel it when it is there even if one is physically near or often in her physical presence

11-6-1935

SABCL, Vol 25, pp 168-69

LOCKED UP POET

PEOPLE tell me I am crazy	is a phantasmagoria of hope expressed in stone
I know strawberries talk	I know short strangers tall friends with long sticks men in blue robes praying to frightened gods
I speak myself to mushrooms and bananas	
I feast with apes starlings turtles and humpback whales	Yet people tell me I am crazy
I am content to be so	I've always been crazy
I rejoice in all that was and is	They smile They lock me up They throw away the key
Yet I'd be a flower a sun blue water	Before I can deny my craziness they are gone leaving me to converse with walls
I am out of my mind with love for the surfaces of being	And the sky I see through the narrow slits of a window sings back to me the song of my life which I hear
I have enough energy to soar in moonlight capturing shadows	
The whole history of earth	

DEVASHI BANERJI

UNDERSTANDING NATURAL CALAMITY

WE are prone to interpreting what appears to us as tragedies in terms of Karma and consequence as we understand them mentally or emotionally. We have been so deeply conditioned by this habit for generations past that it is not easy to rise above its grip. When a young man dies we wonder why he was so unlucky, ignoring the fact that a Shankara or a Vivekananda, both of whom died young, could not be considered unlucky any more than those Nazi executioners of Auschwitz who in their nineties are still evading arrest can be considered lucky.

The same attitude leads us to imagine that if there is a natural catastrophe like an earthquake or a super-cyclone which recently devastated Orissa, it is because the people had committed some sins, had grown selfish or greedy. Greedy and sinful people are there everywhere on earth and an earthquake or a cyclone has no reason to choose a specific geographical area to smite a terrible and crushing blow. Nor can that be a Providential reaction to a spiritually aspiring people having become victims of defects and shortcomings. If the natural force must work according to this logic, then it should also be logical enough to spare the good and the honest and strike only the bad. But that does not happen. Saints too perish with the sinners.

Our earth is still a theatre of many complex forces. Great natural calamities, clashes among incalculable mighty forces causing terrible upheavals once marked the surface of our planet, before life emerged on it. There are forces which belong to a plane totally different from the plane where our logic, ethics and morality work. It will be too simplistic to attribute to the Divine the role of a taskmaster ordering about catastrophes. Each individual caught up in a crisis or a state of suffering (be it nature-caused or human), can find its meaning for himself in terms of his personal inner growth. Awful experiences visit almost everybody and even when one goes through such an experience along with a million others, it has the same (personal) significance for him, if he is conscious enough to realise it. But that is a different issue. The question is, is a natural calamity a consequence of human shortcomings?

Here is an answer from Sri Aurobindo.

Why should earthquakes occur by some wrong movement of man? When man was not there, did not earthquakes occur? If he were blotted out by poison gas or otherwise, would they cease? Earthquakes are a perturbation in Nature due to some pressure of forces, frequency of earthquakes may coincide with a violence of upheavals in human life but the upheavals of earth and human lives are both results of a general clash or pressure of forces, one is not the cause of the other¹

On 5th of March 1951 the Mother asked her class ‘‘Why do disasters occur?’’ A disciple replied ‘‘Because a higher consciousness wants to manifest itself in the world, and man and Nature resist it.’’

The Mother answered ‘‘This is partly true. But I don’t think Nature has this

feeling. When there is an earthquake, for instance, or a volcano erupts, if there are men staying nearby and these events cause their death, obviously it is for these men a catastrophe, but we could very well imagine that for Nature it is good fun! We say, 'What a terrible wind!' Naturally, for men it is 'terrible', but not for Nature. It is a question of proportion, isn't it? I don't know if it is necessary to bring into the picture a higher force wanting to manifest and a resistance from Nature, it is possible, but not indispensable. It can be understood quite easily that it is the play of Nature with tremendous forces and that for her it is only a diversion; in any case, nothing catastrophic. For the consciousness of Nature or the material consciousness, physical forms and humanity upon earth are like ants. You yourself, when you walk, you do not find it necessary to move out of the way to avoid crushing the ants! unless you are a stubborn 'non-violent' fellow. You walk, and if you crush a few hundred ants, it can't be helped! Well, it is the same with Nature. She goes on, and if in the course of her march she destroys a few thousand men, it is not of much importance for her, she makes again a few millions! It is not difficult''²

The Mother then narrates an incident that took place in Paris when She was young. A festive gathering was suddenly engulfed by a blazing fire killing many. A Dominican, a well-known orator, asked to speak at the funeral of the unfortunate, said something to this effect: "It serves you right. You did not live according to the law of God and He has punished you by burning you."

Many people commented: "Here's a God whom we won't have!"

In conclusion the Mother says: "'Sinning' humanity falsifies our idea of the Divine—a Divine who punishes poor people because it is their misfortune to be born 'sinners' would not be very generous!"

MANOJ DAS

References

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NISHTHA

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

ANOTHER day Nishtha asked “Is the overhead experience essential to the realisation of the inner silent self?” I said in reply: “No, if it is the inner silent self that is sought to be realised, an overhead experience is not indispensable, by taking a deep dive within, one can discover and even live in it. It is behind our surface being, but veiled by the turbid movements of our active nature. An overhead realisation is a different thing, it reveals the infinite heights and ranges of our being. It completes and perfects what the inner plunge initiates and prepares.”

“Come in, please, take your seat,” she said one day as she greeted me with her usual beaming smile. “I have something important on my mind. The words of one of the sadhaks have somewhat upset me. He told me a few days back that Sri Aurobindo was identified with the immutable, impersonal inactive Brahman, that he had nothing to do with our sadhana, and that it was the Mother alone who would guide us and lead us to liberation and transformation. You know, I have always believed that Sri Aurobindo is identified with the Purushottama, the supreme Purusha, who, as the Gita says, combines in His ineffable Being both the mutable and the immutable, the Kshara and the Akshara, and is yet beyond both. To say that Sri Aurobindo is identified in consciousness with the Akshara is to my mind to take away from his transcendental and comprehensive greatness, and rob him of his supreme dynamic place in our sadhana—for the impersonal Brahman is but a passive witness. This would afflict our Integral Yoga with a paralysing dichotomy. If Sri Aurobindo is the uncreative immobile Brahman and the Mother is the creative mobile Shakti, there can then be nothing common between the two; we are obliged in the last resort to choose between them and pass from the ceaseless flux of the one into the eternal repose of the other. There can then be no luminous reconciliation and harmony in a supreme transcendental consciousness between silence and activity, oneness and multiplicity, the eternal and the temporal, which is the very heart of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching as I understand it, and the very foundation of the Life Divine. Don’t you think so?”

“You are perfectly right,” I returned. “It was an unfortunate misconception of the sadhak, and I think it was due to the traditional idea of the Divine being an impersonal, inactive, immobile Brahman, the eternal silent. It is traditionally enjoined upon disciples to regard the Guru as Brahman and Brahman as *sakshu* (witness), *gaganasadrisha* (wide and calm like the sky) and *nishkritya* (inactive). But this is certainly not our conception of the Divine or of the Guru whom we adore and follow as the Divine. It is true that the Mother guides us in our sadhana and leads us to liberation, but the one whom we call the Mother is Sri Aurobindo himself as his own eternal Consciousness-Force, his own transcendental and universal Shakti. There is no difference between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, as there is no difference between fire and its burning light. The Mother’s guidance is Sri Aurobindo’s guidance. The

impersonal immutable Brahman is only a status of the supreme Brahman, of the Purushottama that upholds the infinite mobility in Time and Space, the manifold play of phenomenal personalities; but He Himself is the Supreme Person harmonising in Himself both the truth of His infinite phenomenal self-defusion [diffusion?] and the truth of His immanent, immobile self-possession ”

“Are we not to will the descent of the supermind and by it the transformation of our whole life here on earth?” she bombarded me one day in front of the reception hall of the Ashram I was on my usual rounds, somewhat in a hurry, but I felt the firm friendly grip of her question upon me and stopped dead.

“Of course,” I answered “We are to will it by all means and with the quiet constant intensity of our whole being, because we know it is the Will of the Divine Himself. Sri Aurobindo himself has spoken of it at several places. We unite our will with the Divine Will and aspire to become conscious channels of the descending supramental Light and Love and Force upon this travelling earth. In our parlance it is called active as distinguished from passive surrender.”

“But why,” she put in, a trifle flurried, “did a gentleman, an earnest sadhak, tell me the other day that all that we had to do was to surrender ourselves entirely to the Divine and that the Divine would then decide what use he would make of us, what kind of play he would institute and develop in the world through us ”

“It is one part of the truth, not the whole of it,” I opined “Surrender, of course, and an entire and ungrudging surrender at that; but to will what the Divine wills is also surrender; it is the surrender of the will, a most potent and effective surrender that brings about a dynamic realisation Realisation of the Divine is our goal, but of the Divine who is integral, that is to say, at once transcendent and immanent, one and multiple, static and dynamic and yet beyond all these conceptions of the human mind And we want that realisation not in trance, not by a flight from life, not by self-annulment, but here in life, on this earth, in this waking consciousness. The descent of the supermind and its possession of our whole being and consciousness therefore imposes itself as the *sine qua non* of our Yoga, without which our goal cannot be realised, for it is only in the supermind that we can fuse and hold together the truth of timeless transcendence and that of temporal manifestation. It is only in the supermind that Light and Life dwell in an indissoluble ecstatic union. We have then to will the descent and victory of the supermind here in Matter, for we know it is the Will of the Transcendent Himself.”

And I sent to her the next day the following quotation from *The Mother* “Ask for nothing but the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth, its realisation on earth and in you and in all who are called and chosen and the conditions needed for its creation and its victory over all opposing forces ”

On another occasion Nishtha asked me “Rishabhchand, have you read Sri Aurobindo’s most recent poems—I mean those in the Appendix to the second volume of the *Collected Poems*?”

“Yes, some of them,” I replied

“Don’t you think they are wonderful? The other day I was reading *Ascent* How simple the words are and yet throbbing with a mysterious power! How they touch the soul and raise it into a higher atmosphere! I read the extracts from *Ilion* also, they, too, are magnificent, but there you seem to move among the splendours of the gods whereas in *Ascent* you bathe in the very glory of the infinite Spirit We shall read the poems together some day ” That day, alas, will never come

One morning when on my rounds I met her near her house, she said “Rishabhchand, I sent a copy of *The Life Divine* to a lady friend of mine in America whom I regarded in my youth as an incarnation of Saraswati She is very learned, extraordinarily intelligent and clear-sighted Do you know what she has written to me? She thanked me for the book but regretted that she could make practically nothing of its contents She read portions of it and gave it up as hopeless That’s the way of the human intellect It can know material things by its methods of analysis and synthesis, it can subtilise itself and strain after the abstract and the intangible, but it feels utterly floored when faced with supraphysical realities It can understand the spirit as an abstraction, but when it is presented as a tangible seizable reality it finds itself out of its depth ”

I marvelled at her candid and clear-eyed criticism.

Nishtha’s outlook was large and her tastes wide and catholic though tuned to a certain austerity of temperament She was an excellent musician and a lover of literature and painting She had been to France with her father, President Wilson, during the last world-war and entertained the soldiers there with her music Her admiration of Whitman’s poetry was unbounded and I remember how her eyes sparkled with joy and pride when I told her of Sri Aurobindo’s superlative praise of Whitman She liked Conrad’s novels, his facile knack of fluent and forceful storytelling, and we differed in our estimate of Meredith as a novelist whom she thought rather conventional But my admiration of Meredith did not appear to be without an effect upon her mind, for later I saw her twice with a novel of his in her hand Ashram artists can speak better than I about her artistic tastes and sensibilities, but the way she kept her house, especially the unwearied scrubbing and mopping of the floors of her rooms to which she subjected her domestic, day in and day out, bore ample testimony to her sense of cleanliness and order She loved gardening—this was a legacy from her mother—and took the management of the garden of her house into her own hands, but her failing health soon obliged her to give it up She was a good horse-rider in her youth and took a lively interest in sports Once she told me “I was something of a tomboy, you know ” But looking at her one never suspected that she had such varied interests in her life Reserved in her manners, yet she was confidently frank with some, a constant consciousness of the lofty aim she was following created an air of austere dignity about her, precluding any tendency to light-hearted toying with the fleeting interests of life Sadhana was her chief preoccupation and had her health not stood in her way, she would have made considerable progress in Yoga and been able to kiss the hem of the glittering garment of the Lord of her life lodged

in the silence of her psychic heart

Only a few months before her death she spoke to me of one of her recent spiritual experiences “I am having a new experience these days,” she said “During meditation when I enter into the inner silence I find myself face to face with what looks like a dynamo of power—a most mighty, vibrating dynamo—which appeals to my outer being, but it quivers at once in a paroxysm of fear.” So far as I remember, I advised her to steady her nervous being and quietly progress towards the fount of force that was being unsealed within her. If she had advanced and contacted that dynamo, who knows, her life might have been saved, the Mother’s force might have effected a miracle of resuscitation. But that was not to be.

So lived Nishtha in her spacious apartments, fanned by the fresh breeze from the sea and caressed by the balmy breath of her garden blossoms. So she thought and felt and dreamed, so she loved God and her fellow-men. She had an unflagging faith in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and a will to realise the Divine here and now. But the Divine willed otherwise. He wanted her to change her wrecked earthly tabernacle for a better one for the working out of His purpose in the world. And so she had to depart.

Her last meeting with the Mother was a sight for the Gods, solemn in its secret spiritual significance and yet moving in its poignant human appeal. I was on the meditation verandah at the Ashram that evening waiting for pronam to the Mother when she alighted from her rickshaw and said to Nolini “Nolini, would you mind helping an ailing old lady?” Nolini took hold of her arm and conducted her through the hall. That was the last time I saw her. She looked very weak and pale, but otherwise there was nothing alarming about her. She always bore her sufferings lightly. Sometime before she had expressed to a press representative her perfect sense of happiness with the Ashram life and said that she had never felt so much at home as in the Ashram atmosphere. One never suspected that the oil was suddenly to give out and the lamp of her life soon to be extinct.

After the meditation I went as usual to the Mother for pronam and returned home. Nishtha went to the Mother later. Her pronam over, so an eye-witness of the heavenly scene narrated to me, she was blessed by the Mother and given a big bunch of flowers. The bunch was handed to her escort and the Mother asked her to twine her arms round her neck and let her carry her down the stairs. She did so. The Mother carried her down a whole flight of steps as if she was a little child nestling in her arms. And then they parted—in silence, in unutterable peace, the Mother smiling at Nishtha and their eyes locked in a rapturous embrace, showering love and light and blessings upon her intent yearning soul. That was her last homage and obeisance to the Guide of her earthly sojourn and the Source of her deathless existence.

She lived only a few days more, confined to bed, too weak to speak, but conscious all through and repeating the names of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Once she muttered to her attending physician “Doctor, please don’t send me to New York.” And the doctor assured her that he would not. She wanted to be near the

Mother, always concentrated on her, feeling her soul encircled by her Love and Light
 Thus she lay for a few days, hovering between life and death, and then suddenly like
 a flower she drooped and languished and faded away But the unfading bloom and
 fragrance of her soul still hover over the atmosphere in which she aspired and prayed
 and adored her beloved Lord.

(To be concluded)

RISHABHCHAND

WHO SET FORTH THE STARS?

TELL me, eastern sky,
 How anxiously you wait the golden glow,
 Messenger of light, tell
 With what hopes you burst forth
 Heralding the coming morn

Each day, I see these skies redden
 Promising better hopes and hours
 Then the golden glow grows dim

Twilight too brings promise of deep things
 Darkness is an interlude short-lived.
 The night sky lights a thousand lamps

Lost in marvelling who set forth the stars,
 My mortal thoughts travel infinity

K N VIJU

SAVITRI—THE DIVINE PROMISE AND FULFILMENT*

SAVITRI gives us powerful hints of the Last Act of The Divine Comedy Only a very small minority of mankind know of it or care to read it

To speak of *Savitri* in human language is a near impossibility Try to recite it, say, to the Editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and you will be unceremoniously thrown out of both office and building But receptive readers of the epic will readily admit that the total impact is at once powerful, invisible and inexpressible Probably the wisest thing to do with the inexpressible is to leave it unexpressed Verbal expression only diminishes and distorts The light in the eyes of the reader and the glow on his or her face is evidence sufficient unto itself of an unutterable inner experience

Only Sri Aurobindo, in whose vast and silent mind mantric words from super-human heights took inspired shape and form could have composed *Savitri* I find it beyond me to give rational utterance to the inexpressible vibrations *Savitri* evokes in the deeper levels of my being. But in a sublime aphorism, Sri Aurobindo manages the incredible feat of an extraordinarily powerful suggestion I quote

Science talks and behaves as if it had conquered all knowledge Wisdom, as she walks, hears her solitary tread echoing on the margin of immeasurable oceans¹

The wisdom he means here is clearly not what passes for human wisdom, but a supernal awareness that is as far above the human intellect as Man is above the lizard As one reads *Savitri* something deep, quite intangible and often entirely unsuspected surges up from mysterious depths in oneself, and one is all a-tremble. Often a sudden inner recognition catapults one, as it were, out of the humdrum workaday world into awesome superconscious regions And one is so forcefully shaken out of oneself that one abruptly shuts the book and goes for a brisk walk instead, longing for a swift return from a paranormal condition into the comfortable familiarity of one's old physical cage of skin and bones That is a grievous error Instead of rushing back into the old carcass, doomed in any case to disintegrate one day, one should always attempt to contain the tremendous upsurge and to somehow absorb the divine afflatus Indeed, it is vital that seekers retain immediate recall of Sri Aurobindo's forewarning in the very first Canto of *Savitri*

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change,
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire²

Try and put the experience of reading *Savitri* in words and you find yourself

¹ Talk at AUM in Crestone, Colorado, U S A , on 9 August 1999

talking nonsense, or might even conclude that it was Sri Aurobindo who was indulging in gibberish. If you do, you may count yourself among those described in the Rig Veda as. "In them there is not the Wonder and the Might" Not surprising, as our brazen city lights blot out even the perennial miracle of velvet star-studded night skies Not for us also, most of the time, the breathtaking grandeur of vast landscapes or seascapes, and of majestic mountain vistas And we become sticks-in-the-mud with our noses in the trough of daily takings and leavings.

Here one needs to enter a very important caveat. Spiritual poetry cannot claim to be the one and only route to Divinity There were disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who were impervious to rhythmic sound values or had no knowledge of the English language And yet they achieved what for many of us would be enviable levels of spiritual development. I think it important to emphasise this point, so that lovers of *Savitri* may not be rebuked for the not uncommon snobbery displayed among arty-crafty types.

We may usefully recall here one highly significant example, that of some of the finest flowers of India's educated youth in the 19th Century reverentially seated at the feet of the great but totally illiterate Sri Ramakrishna.

Those of us fortunate enough to read, or better still, listen to *Savitri* will find in it an invaluable help in our sadhana, and often—blinding revelation. The Mother said of *Savitri* "This *Savitri* is wonderful, he foresaw everything, saw everything, everything, absolutely everything, there isn't one point he left unexplained!"

It is not possible to touch on the multiple aspects of *Savitri* in this talk. I am unqualified to do so, anyway But I will dwell on what Sri Aurobindo clearly experienced as a divine promise to humanity, and as a tremendous certitude of a more than human future for our species on this planet This is the constantly recurring theme in all his major works, in both prose and poetry—A Life Divine on earth It was not a post-mortem salvation that he sought for earth and men. In her categorical manner the Mother declared "Salvation is physical." Equally categorical was her assertion: "I saw that the Supreme only becomes perfect in terrestrial matter, on earth

"'Becomes' is just a way of speaking, of course, for everything already is, and the Supreme is what He is But we live in time, in a successive unfoldment, and it would be absurd to say that at present Matter is the expression of a perfect Divine. "

Before we embark upon quotes from *Savitri* it would be useful to understand the true significance of *Savitri* and Satyavan The Mother does this best and I quote Her:

And this is the confusion made by all those people who believed that their what they called their 'personal salvation' was the salvation of the world—it's not true at all! It isn't true—it's a *personal* salvation

(silence)

But all of that is wonderfully, accurately expressed and *explained* in *Savitri*. Only you must know how to read it! The entire last part, from the moment she goes to seek Satyavan in the realm of Death (which affords an occasion to explain this), the whole description of what happens there, right up to the end, where every possible offer is made to tempt her, everything she must refuse to continue her terrestrial labour. It is my experience *exactly*.

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the universal Mother—the eternal universal Mother, Mother of all universes from all eternity—in an earthly personality for the Earth's salvation. And Satyavan is the soul of the Earth, the Earth's *jiva*. So when the Lord says, 'he whom you love and whom you have chosen', it means the earth. All the details are there! When she comes back down, when Death has yielded at last, when all has been settled and the Supreme tells her, 'Go, with him, the one you have chosen,' how does Sri Aurobindo describe it? He says that she very carefully takes the *soul* of Satyavan into her arms, like a little child, to pass through all the realms and come back down to earth. Everything is there! He hasn't forgotten a single detail to make it easy to understand—for someone who knows how to understand. And it is when Savitri reaches the earth that Satyavan regains his full human stature.⁵

The Mother's explanation obviates our getting muddled when we read *Savitri*. She made the symbolism crystal clear. I may now proceed to recite a selection of quotes relating to the promise and fulfilment of human life on our planet. In truth, it is not so much a fulfilment as an exceeding of the human condition—what Sri Aurobindo called a *saltus*, a sudden transition to a more than human, a divinely conscious being. The emergence of this divine being will, among other things, render totally obsolete all our technological gadgetry, including the "thinking computer" that we are told will shortly make its appearance. This prospect makes our mental human elite of today delirious with spurious hopes. Some profound lines in *Savitri* might help to awaken them to an infinitely deeper Truth. I quote.

Our outward happenings have their seed within,
And even this random Fate that imitates Chance,
This mass of unintelligible results,
Are the dumb graph of truths that work unseen.
The laws of the Unknown create the known.⁶

We might usefully recall here that Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's effective guidance of developments during World War II was undertaken without the aid of telephones, wireless, electronic gadgets and computers. A "thinking computer" would merely have been a nuisance for them, for it would have jumped to absolutely wrong conclusions on the basis only of known data programmed into it. Can anyone include *the laws of the unknown* in computer programming? Let us hear again the

voice of Sri Aurobindo "Machinery is necessary to modern humanity because of our incurable barbarism"⁷

Nonetheless, we gather from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that the Transformation they foresaw would cancel nothing, including the human mind and vital. On the contrary everything in the manifestation will find its right use and fulfilment as an untrammelled channel and instrument of the Divine Will. Meanwhile, however, we might profitably hang on to our computers.

A most dramatic promise, rising in a crescendo of imperishable verse, and ending in a powerful prediction occurs in *Savitri*. Listen carefully, in silence:

Above the world the world-creators stand,
 In the phenomenon see its mystic source..
 Above the illusion of the hopes that pass,
 Behind the appearance and the overt act,
 Behind the clock-work chance and vague surmise,
 Amid the wrestle of force, the trampling feet,
 Across the cries of anguish and of joy,
 Across the triumph, fighting and despair,
 They watch the Bliss for which earth's heart has cried
 A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
 A Power into Mind's inner chamber steal,
 A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
 And beauty conquer the resisting world.
 The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,
 A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
 And earth grow unexpectedly divine
 A few shall see what none yet understands,
 God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep,
 For man shall not know the coming till its hour
 And belief shall be not till the work is done.⁸

A few, a very few, have seen what most still do not understand. And God is growing up while our wise men talk, argue, cheat and sleep. We recall the words of the most senior of Sri Aurobindo's disciples, the great yogi Nolini Kanta Gupta: "Although we may not know it, the New Man, the divine race of humanity, is already among us. It waits for an occasion to throw off the veil and place itself in the forefront."⁹ But 'belief shall be not till' that veil is thrown off.

This ties up with the Supreme's voice Savitri heard after her conquest of Death:

All then shall change, a magic order come
 Overtopping this mechanical universe
 A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world

On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
 The superman shall reign as king of life,
 Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,
 And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
 And lift towards godhead his mortality¹⁰

But this will only be the prelude to the full supramental manifestation on earth
 We may now return to the earlier parts of *Savitri* for further insights

Describing Aswapati's first attainment of a firm spiritual poise, Sri Aurobindo
 tells us:

As a sculptor chisels a deity out of stone
 He slowly chipped off the dark envelope,
 Line of defence of Nature's ignorance,
 The illusion and mystery of the Inconscient
 In whose black pall the Eternal wraps his head
 That he may act unknown in cosmic Time
 A splendour of self-creation from the peaks,
 A transfiguration in the mystic depths,
 A happier cosmic working could begin
 And fashion the world-shape in him anew,
 God found in Nature, Nature fulfilled in God.¹¹

Some five pages later we come across these further lines pregnant with profound
 significance.

Life now became a sure approach to God,
 Existence a divine experiment
 And cosmos the soul's opportunity
 The world was a conception and a birth
 Of Spirit in Matter into living forms,
 And Nature bore the Immortal in her womb,
 That she might climb through him to eternal life¹²

For us who often fall prey to all too human despair come these lines of profound
 assurance

Alive in a dead rotating universe
 We whirl not here upon a casual globe
 Abandoned to a task beyond our force
 Immovably ready for their destined task.
 The ever-wise compassionate Brilliances

Await the sound of the Incarnate's voice
 To leap and bridge the chasms of Ignorance
 And heal the hollow yearning gulfs of Life
 And fill the abyss that is the universe¹³

In the same Canto Sri Aurobindo makes very clear the mutual debt that binds man to the Supreme

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
 One who is in us as our secret self,
 Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
 He has made this tenement of flesh his own,
 His image in the human measure cast
 That to his divine measure we might rise. .
 This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
 A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
 His nature we must put on as he put ours,
 We are sons of God and must be even as he
 His human portion, we must grow divine.¹⁴

Human destiny is not charted by vainglorious politicians and their armies of technocrats, scientists and ever increasing brood of technological whiz-kids. There is a Divine within us that is the real master of our fate, which is in truth the Divine's own self-chosen destiny. Of the adventure of the Divine in us Sri Aurobindo speaks thus:

A sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea,
 He voyages through a starry world of thought
 On Matter's deck to a spiritual sun.
 Across the noise and multitudinous cry,
 Across the rapt unknowable silences,
 Through a strange mid-world under supernal skies,
 Beyond earth's longitudes and latitudes,
 His goal is fixed outside all present maps.¹⁵

After his experience of the House of the Spirit and the new Creation, Aswapati knew what would certainly manifest on earth one day after long ages of further toil, anguish and trouble. He prays to the Divine Mother for a speedier end to earth's travail in gestation of the Golden Child. For he had seen what was to be, but was still in the dark about the when. The boon he pleaded for was granted. Both his plea and the boon received are put down in magnificent verse as, for instance, in the following passages

How shall I rest content with mortal days
 And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
 I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
 The glory and the beauty of thy face?
 Hard is the doom to which thou bindst thy sons!
 How long shall our spirits battle with the Night
 And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,
 We who are vessels of a deathless Force
 And builders of the godhead of the race?
 I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth,
 Forerunners of a divine multitude,
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came
 Into the little room of mortal life
 I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
 The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn ¹⁶

Aswapati receives the boon and the assurance that what was promised shall be fulfilled

Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword
 And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze
 A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
 A branch of heaven transplant to human soil,
 Nature shall overleap her mortal step,
 Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will ¹⁷

With that answer from the heights we might ask some obvious questions: "What seed was sown in the tremendous hour of the Mother's so-called passing on November 17, 1973?" "What branch of heaven was transplanted to human soil?" It also has a bearing, among other things, on the success of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Yoga as represented by the first manifestation of the supramental power in the subtle physical atmosphere of the earth on 29 February 1956; the Mother's experience of the Superman consciousness which began on 1 January 1969 and continued thereafter, on the incredible Yoga of the body the Mother had pursued; the creation of the new sexless body within her that she had seen, the casting off of the Mother's untransformed residual cells, and of her psychic being stepping into her new body

Next, Sri Aurobindo writes about King Aswapati just before he sends Savitri off on her quest to choose a mate.

A morn that seemed a new creation's front
 A word that leaped from some far sky of thought,

Admitted by the cowed receiving scribe
 Traversed the echoing passages of his brain
 And left its stamp on the recording cells ¹⁸

And these words are, as it were, addressed to our present predominantly mental human civilization

O Force-compelled, Fate-driven earth-born race,
 O petty adventurers in an infinite world
 And prisoners of a dwarf humanity,
 How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind
 Around your little self and petty things?
 But not for a changeless littleness were you meant,
 Not for vain repetition were you built,
 Out of the Immortal's substance you were made;
 Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
 Your life a changeful mould for growing gods
 A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
 The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
 Almighty powers are shut in Nature's cells
 A greater destiny waits you in your front. ¹⁹

The divine Transformation of life is earth's due to heaven. The Vedic Rishis had seen this profound truth some seven to ten thousand years ago. But they also knew that the time for the Transformation had yet to come. Sri Aurobindo came among us and recovered not only the secret of the Veda which confirmed his own experiences, but went on, with the Mother, to achieve the Transformation in their own bodies first, and then by contagion to the rest of terrestrial matter—for, in truth, all bodies on earth are One Body, not a multitude of separate bodies as we in our ignorance imagine. A line in *Savitri* tells it all

A million lotuses swaying on one stem ²⁰

The infallible sign of the Victory of their Yoga came with the Mother's declaration that the first manifestation of the Supramental Light and Power in the earth atmosphere took place on 29 February 1956. Unknown to us, an entirely new and invincible Power is at work churning up all nations and peoples and thereby preparing the world, as the Mother put it, for A Big Change. The eye of vision sees what the real Force is behind the suffering, evil, violence, confusion and turbulence of our times. Great new constructions are invariably preceded by a great dissolution of the old. "Three quarters of humanity is obsolete,"—the Mother had once calmly observed

Book XI of *Savitri*, *The Book of Everlasting Day*, replete with the highest flights of poetic revelation ever achieved in all history, is what reveals this monumental work as the veritable Veda of the modern world. No doubt about it, but we *are* being propelled by the veiled Supramental Power Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought down to earth towards that Everlasting Day. It may be tomorrow, a few centuries hence or even a few thousand years later—a mere drop in the ocean of Time. In fact, as Nolini Kanta Gupta indicated, the New Being is already among us. The footsteps of Destiny have already become audible for a few amongst us. And that's all that matters.

Let us continually invoke the Supreme Mother. She alone can expedite the entire dismal human progression. Only She can help and save.

C V DEVAN NAIR

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

THEN we come to the age when the Shastras were formulated or codified but more important were the two great epics, the *Mahabharata* (containing the Gita as well) and the *Ramayana* which are not primitive ‘edda, or saga’, not just heroic epics, but *itihasa*, chief instruments of popular education and culture that have been moulding people’s thought for ages. These are the national epics, odysseys of the soul, reports of the Battle of Dharma, and the chief characters are not just human beings but apocalyptic projections of spiritual visions and psychic ecstasies. Great substance is wedded to equally great style.

“The pure literature of the period is represented by the two great epics, the Mahabharata, which gathered into its vast structure the greater part of the poetic activity of the Indian mind during several centuries, and the Ramayana. These two poems are epical in their motive and spirit, but they are not like any other two epics in the world, but are entirely of their own kind and subtly different from others in their principle. It is not only that although they contain an early heroic story and a transmutation of many primitive elements, their form belongs to a period of highly developed intellectual, ethical and social culture, is enriched with a body of mature thought and uplifted by a ripe nobility and refined gravity of ethical tone and therefore these poems are quite different from primitive edda and saga and greater in breadth of view and substance and height of motive—I do not speak now of aesthetic quality and poetic perfection—than the Homeric poems, while at the same time there is still an early breath, a direct and straightforward vigour, a freshness and greatness and pulse of life, a simplicity of strength and beauty that makes of them quite another kind than the elaborately constructed literary epics of Virgil or Milton, Firdausi or Kalidasa. This peculiar blending of the natural breath of an early, heroic, swift and vigorous force of life with a strong development and activity of the ethical, the intellectual, even the philosophic mind is indeed a remarkable feature, these poems are the voice of the youth of a people, but a youth not only fresh and fine and buoyant, but also great and accomplished, wise and noble. This however is only a temperamental distinction there is another that is more far-reaching, a difference in the whole conception, function and structure.

“One of the elements of the old Vedic education was a knowledge of significant tradition, *itihāsa*, and it is this word that was used by the ancient critics to distinguish the Mahabharata and the Ramayana from the later literary epics. The Itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythos or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana are Itihāsas of this kind on a large scale and with a massive purpose. The poets who wrote and those who added to these great bodies of poetic writing did not intend merely to tell an

ancient tale in a beautiful or noble manner or even to fashion a poem pregnant with much richness of interest and meaning, though they did both these things with a high success, they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation. The Mahabharata has been spoken of as a fifth Veda, it has been said of both these poems that they are not only great poems but Dharmashastras, the body of a large religious and ethical and social and political teaching, and their effect and hold on the mind and life of the people have been so great that they have been described as the bible of the Indian people. That is not quite an accurate analogy, for the bible of the Indian people contains also the Veda and Upanishads, the Purana and Tantras and the Dharmashastras, not to speak of a large bulk of the religious poetry in the regional languages. The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical idea and cultural practice, it was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect in a frame of great poetry and on a background of poetic story and around significant personalities that became to the people abiding national memories and representative figures all that was best in the soul and thought or true to the life or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind or characteristic and illuminative of the social, ethical, political and religious culture of India. All these things were brought together and disposed with artistic power and a telling effect in a poetic body given to traditions half legendary, half historic but cherished henceforth as deepest and most living truth and as a part of their religion by the people. Thus framed the Mahabharata and Ramayana, whether in the original Sanskrit or rewritten in the regional tongues, brought to the masses by Kathakas,—rhapsodists, reciters and exegetes,—became and remained one of the chief instruments of popular education and culture, moulded the thought, character, aesthetic and religious mind of the people and gave even to the illiterate some sufficient tincture of philosophy, ethics, social and political ideas, aesthetic emotion, poetry, fiction and romance. That which was for the cultured classes contained in Veda and Upanishad, shut into profound philosophical aphorism and treatise or inculcated in Dharmashastra and Arthashastra, was put here into creative and living figures, associated with familiar story and legend, fused into a vivid representation of life and thus made a near and living power that all could readily assimilate through the poetic word appealing at once to the soul and the imagination and the intelligence.

“The Mahabharata especially is not only the story of the Bharatas, the epic of an early event which had become a national tradition but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India.”¹

Sri Aurobindo finds in Kalidasa a poet who ranks with Milton and Virgil, but with “a more subtle and delicate spirit and touch in his art than the English, a greater

breath of native power informing and vivifying his execution than the Latin poet'' and *Abhijnana Shakuntala* is "the most perfect and captivating romantic drama in all literature" 2

"The great representative poet of this age is Kalidasa. He establishes a type which was preparing before and endured after him with more or less of additional decoration, but substantially unchanged through the centuries. His poems are the perfect and harmoniously designed model of a kind and substance that others cast always into similar forms but with a genius inferior in power or less rhythmically balanced, faultless and whole. The art of poetic speech in Kalidasa's period reaches an extraordinary perfection. Poetry itself had become a high craft, conscious of its means, meticulously conscientious in the use of its instruments, as alert and exact in its technique as architecture, painting and sculpture, vigilant to equate beauty and power of the form with nobility and richness of the conception, aim and spirit and the scrupulous completeness of its execution with fullness of aesthetic vision or of the emotional or sensuous appeal. There was established here as in the other arts and indeed during all this era in all human activities a Shastra, a well recognised and carefully practised science and art of poetics, critical and formulative of all that makes perfection of method and prescriptive of things to be avoided, curious of essentials and possibilities but under a regime of standards and limits conceived with the aim of excluding all fault of excess or of defect and therefore in practice as unfavourable to any creative lawlessness, even though the poet's native right of fantasy and freedom is theoretically admitted, as to any least tendency towards bad or careless, hasty or irregular workmanship. The poet is expected to be thoroughly conscious of his art, as minutely acquainted with its conditions and its fixed and certain standard and method as the painter and sculptor and to govern by his critical sense and knowledge the flight of his genius. This careful art of poetry became in the end too much of a rigid tradition, too appreciative of rhetorical device and artifice and even permitted and admired the most extraordinary contortions of the learned intelligence, as in the Alexandrian decline of Greek poetry, but the earlier work is usually free from these shortcomings or they are only occasional and rare" 3

The last of the five chapters in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* unavoidably hurries through the later centuries and takes a sweeping glance at the many regional literatures. The cardinal notes everywhere are spiritual, intuitive and psychic. If the Puranas are essentially a true religious poetry, the Tantras outline "a complete psycho-spiritual and psycho-physical science of Yoga". Sri Aurobindo has said

"It is to be observed that the Puranas and Tantras contain in themselves the highest spiritual and philosophical truths, not broken up and expressed in opposition to each other as in the debates of the thinkers, but synthesised by a fusion, relation or grouping in the way most congenial to the catholicity of the Indian mind and spirit. This is done sometimes expressly, but most often in a form which might carry something of it to the popular imagination and feeling by legend, tale, symbol, apologue, miracle and parable. An immense and complex body of psycho-spiritual

experience is embodied in the Tantras, supported by visual images and systematised in forms of Yogic practice. This element is also found in the Puranas, but more loosely and cast out in a less strenuous sequence. This method is after all simply a prolongation, in another form and with a temperamental change, of the method of the Vedas. The Puranas construct a system of physical images and observances each with its psychical significance. Thus the sacredness of the confluence of the three rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, is a figure of an inner confluence and points to a crucial experience in a psycho-physical process of Yoga and it has too other significances, as is common in the economy of this kind of symbolism. The so-called fantastic geography of the Puranas, as we are expressly told in the Puranas themselves, is a rich poetic figure, a symbolic geography of the inner psychical universe. The cosmogony expressed sometimes in terms proper to the physical universe has, as in the Veda, a spiritual and psychological meaning and basis. It is easy to see how in the increasing ignorance of later times the more technical parts of the Puranic symbolism inevitably lent themselves to much superstition and to crude physical ideas about spiritual and psychic things. But that danger attends all attempts to bring them to the comprehension of the mass of men and this disadvantage should not blind us to the enormous effect produced in training the mass mind to respond to a psycho-religious and psycho-spiritual appeal that prepares a capacity for higher things. That effect endures even though the Puranic system may have to be superseded by a finer appeal and the awakening to more directly subtle significances, and if such a supersession becomes possible, it will itself be due very largely to the work done by the Puranas.

“The Puranas are essentially a true religious poetry, an art of aesthetic presentation of religious truth. All the bulk of the eighteen Puranas does not indeed take a high rank in this kind: there is much waste substance and not a little of dull and dreary matter, but on the whole the poetic method employed is justified by the richness and power of the creation. The earliest work is the best—with one exception at the end in a new style which stands by itself and is unique. The Vishnu Purana for instance in spite of one or two desert spaces is a remarkable literary creation of a very considerable quality maintaining much of the direct force and height of the old epic style. There is in it a varied movement, much vigorous and some sublime epic writing, an occasional lyrical element of a lucid sweetness and beauty, a number of narratives of the finest verve and skilful simplicity of poetic workmanship. The Bhagavat coming at the end and departing to a great extent from the more popular style and manner, for it is strongly affected by the learned and more ornately literary form of speech, is a still more remarkable production full of subtlety, rich and deep thought and beauty. It is here that we get the culmination of the movement which had the most important effects on the future, the evolution of the emotional and ecstatic religions of Bhakti. The tendency that underlay this development was contained in the earlier forms of the religious mind of India and was slowly gaining ground, but it had hitherto been overshadowed and kept from its perfect formation by the dominant

tendency towards the austerities of knowledge and action and the seeking of the spiritual ecstasy only on the highest planes of being. The turn of the classical age outward to the exterior life and the satisfaction of the senses brought in a new inward turn of which the later ecstatic forms of the Vaishnava religion were the most complete manifestation. Confined to the secular and outward this fathoming of vital and sensuous experience might have led only to a relaxation of nerve and vigour, and ethical degeneracy or licence, but the Indian mind is always compelled by its master impulse to reduce all its experience of life to the corresponding spiritual term and factor and the result was a transfiguring of even these most external things into a basis for new spiritual experience. The emotional, the sensuous, even the sensual motions of the being, before they could draw the soul farther outward, were taken and transmuted into a psychical form and, so changed, they became the elements of a mystic capture of the Divine through the heart and the senses and a religion of the joy of God's love, delight and beauty''⁴

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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ON THE DISCOVERY OF CHEMICAL ELEMENTS

If Chemistry is a language, the various symbols of elements are its alphabets and the innumerable compounds are the words of different combinations of alphabet-elements. More than six million compounds are known so far and this word-building in Chemistry is a continuous process

Element is a general term of wide application meaning 'an ingredient' but in context with Chemistry, it is better known as 'chemical element' All substances can be broken down into their constituents which have different physical and chemical properties and which cannot be further decomposed into new constituents Such constituents or ingredients of matter are known as chemical elements One must not confuse these elements with the four elements of Greek philosophers, water, air, fire and earth, or with the five elements of Indian philosophers, *jal*, *vayu*, *agni*, *prithvi* and *akash* which were used in a philosophical and wider sense We know that water in the literal sense is a compound which can be decomposed into two basic constituents or elements, *viz.*, hydrogen and oxygen.

There are 112 chemical elements so far known.¹ Out of these nine (carbon, sulphur, iron, copper, tin, silver, gold, mercury and lead) are known from antiquity; four (zinc, arsenic, antimony and bismuth) were discovered in the middle ages, but who discovered them is not known. The rest of them (99) were discovered either in the free state (40) or in the form of compounds (36) or synthesised (24)² All these elements with their atomic number, year of discovery, symbol, name, country of discovery, name of the discoverer, and the method of analysis by which they were discovered, are given in the latest format of a periodic table Most of the stable elements were discovered by one or two scientists, but nine scientists discovered natural radioelements, though twenty-five scientists took part in the discovery Similarly, more than thirty scientists were involved in the synthesis of trans-uranic elements though the actual credit was given to eleven scientists. It may be informative and interesting to discuss the details of the method, discoverer, country, on the basis of other characteristics.

It is quite natural that chemical analysis has been the main source of discovery of elements from ancient times since it was the only method of analysis known at that time Electrochemical analysis could be employed by Davy in the early nineteenth century when electrochemistry made significant advances in Britain and this resulted in the discovery of sodium, potassium, magnesium and calcium. Spectrometry could be used from 1859-60 when the spectral method was developed by Bunsen and Kirchhoff in Germany and that enabled the chemists to discover lanthanides, inert gases and many other elements Radiometry became a tool to synthesise new ele-

1 There are unconfirmed reports about the discovery of element-113 Element-114 was synthesised by Mikhail Itkis in Dubna (Russia) in January, 1999

2 Synthesised elements are unstable and spontaneously disintegrate (undergo nuclear reaction) yielding different elements, fundamental particles and/or energy

ments only after the discovery of radioactivity by the French chemists Henri Becquerel, M Curie and P. Curie towards the end of the nineteenth century This technique enabled the scientists to discover technetium, promethium, astatine and francium for the vacant slots of 43, 61, 85 and 87 of Mendeleev's Periodic Table, it also became possible to synthesise a series of trans-uranic elements.

The Swedish chemist C Scheele has the distinction of discovering seven elements (F, Cl, Mn, Ba, W, Mo and O) W Ramsay discovered five elements (A, He, Kr, Ne and Xe), while J Berzelius, H Davy and P Lecoq de Boisbandran are credited with four elements each (Ce, Se, Si and Th), (K, Ca, Na and Mg) and (Ga, Sm, Gd and Dy), respectively Three elements were discovered by Klaproth (Ti, Zr and U) and by C Mosander (La, Tb and Er) while several chemists discovered two elements each. All this sounds so strange in an era when the discovery of just one element would make a scientist known internationally This could possibly happen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because the field of chemical sciences was largely unexplored and there were few scientists engaged in the research in chemical sciences

It may be more informative to look at the discoveries country-wise. Sweden tops the list with the discovery of twenty-three elements Many of them are rare and rare-earth elements which could be discovered on account of the well-developed science of metallurgy in Sweden in the eighteenth century Britain has the second place in discovering twenty elements Pneumatic chemistry and electrochemistry and, later, developed spectroscopic analysis and liquefaction of gases led to these discoveries. France stands at No. 3 with fifteen discoveries, radiometry and spectral analysis enabled these discoveries Germany has the fourth place in discovering ten elements. If we include the synthesised elements also in the category of discovered elements, America, Russia and Germany have the credit of synthesising ten, five and three elements respectively Although Russia discovered only one conventional element, ruthenium, it has the distinction of giving the first periodic classification of elements by D Mendeleev Thus one finds that most of the elements were discovered by only four countries: Sweden, Britain, France and Germany where chemical sciences were highly developed.

Another interesting fact apparent from a perusal of the periodic table for the years of discovery and their characterisation into periods reveals that there are two twenty-five year periods (1801 to 1825) and (1875 to 1900) which are particularly rich in the discovery of elements *ie*, eighteen elements in the first period and nineteen elements in the second period in the entire period from 1750 to 1925 1925 is the year when the last stable element rhenium was discovered and 1750 is the time when chemical analysis started to develop The first peak period is marked by the greater development of chemical analysis and the introduction of electrochemical analysis which resulted in greater activity for the discovery of elements The second peak period is marked by the advances made in spectrometric and radiometric analysis and these two new tools enabled the scientists to discover the rare earths and

rare gases After 1925 there is a staggering period of the synthesised elements

The years of discovery represent in fact the occurrence of different events in the entire period of the discovery of an element and thus different events have been regarded as the discovery This is very well illustrated by the example of halogens The date of discovery of fluorine is considered to be 1771 when Scheele prepared a compound recognised later as hydrofluoric acid in 1810 by Davy and Ampere It is only in 1886 that fluorine was obtained in the free state. Thus each of these three dates can be regarded as the date of discovery of fluorine, but the chosen date is 1771 when Scheele himself did not know what he had discovered Scheele again discovered a gas in 1774 which he did not regard as chlorine, until in 1810 Davy proved its elemental nature, but the date of discovery has been regarded as 1774 and again Davy was not considered to be its discoverer In any case, the date 1774 for chlorine is better substantiated than 1771 for fluorine. Iodine was discovered in 1811 directly as a simple substance studied within a short period of time and recognised as a member of the halogen family In this case there was no controversy Thus we see that three dates (1771, 1774 and 1811) of discoveries of related elements (fluorine, chlorine, and iodine) have quite different meanings

Another example is given by discoveries of three totally different elements, bromine, yttrium and helium The date for bromine (1826) corresponds to the extraction of the element in the free state The date for yttrium (1794) corresponds to the preparation of its oxide, though thirty years later the oxide was shown to be a mixture of related elements and not pure yttrium or its oxide Pure oxide was prepared in 1823, but the date of discovery is regarded to be 1794 The accepted date for helium is 1868 based on the observation of a new line in the solar spectrum and not 1895 when helium was found on earth, as the line of the solar spectrum corresponds to the helium spectrum Thus we find that there is distinct difference in the meanings of the years of discovery Isolation of an element in the form of a simple substance is an important event in history, but to obtain sufficient knowledge of the properties of an element, the latter must be available in the free state Therefore extraction of an element in the free state should be regarded as a higher stage of discovery and its preparation in the form of a compound as a lower stage

Almost a hundred elements were erroneously discovered, their names and the years of discovery and the names of the discoverers are known The causes of mistake leading to the false discoveries have also been analysed. More than half of them were made in the studies of rare earth elements Many false discoveries are connected with the search for missing elements 43, 61, 85 and 87 within the old boundaries of the periodic system A large number of false discoveries were made in the studies of ores and minerals with complex compositions, particularly of crude platinum. The studies of columbites and minerals of cobalt, zirconium and nickel also led to the false discoveries Apart from these four large groups many single erroneous discoveries of chance character are also known Some of the false discoveries were repeated (austrium and vestium) and the names of some of the discoveries coincide with the names

of real elements (actinium and ruthenium) These are chance coincidences Some of the false discoveries did contain the unknown elements which could not be identified It would be more correct to regard these as unrecognised discoveries rather than false ones. Amarillium and davyum can be regarded as possible precursors of rhenium, and nipponium as a precursor of hafnium All these erroneously discovered elements were found in experiments that were performed more or less correctly but the results were misinterpreted.

Finally the most important question after the synthesis of element 112 is What after that? After the synthesis of the first transuranic element, neptunium, the scientists did not know how many steps further they would go In the sixty-year history of transuranic elements, there were times when the end seemed to be near With the synthesis of nuclei with increasing atomic number, there was found a regular decrease in the half-lives from billions of years to a fraction of a second according to a theory or calculation A simple calculation showed that the nuclei with $Z = 108$ to 110 would have so small a half-life that it would decay at the moment of formation However, experiments for elements beyond $Z = 100$ showed that the theoretical predictions were not that correct For instance the isotope with a mass number of 261 of element-107 undergoes spontaneous fission with a half-life of two-thousandth of a second, which is no doubt short, but it is tens of billion times longer than the predicted value on the basis of theoretical calculations An attempt was made to explain this in 1925 by the German scientist R. Swinne whose ideas can be described as follows Among highly radioactive elements with large atomic numbers, there can exist unexpected islands of stability The respective elements will be more stable than the neighbouring elements Swinne even reported an X-ray spectrum which according to him corresponded to element-108 but his theory could not be verified for sixty long years In the mid-sixties theoretical calculation predicted the regions of relatively much stability near $Z = 114, 126, 164$ and even 184 and thus making the synthesis of these elements cease to be a fantasy In line with this, repeated attempts were made from 1967, all of which failed, but the scientists have an open mind and have not lost all hope. It is only as a result of this effort that element-114 with mass number 289 was found to be much more stable than its predecessor-elements 110-113, as predicted

It may be appropriate here to pay tribute to Ernest Rutherford whose original research work on nuclear transmutation paved the way for artificial production of new elements which was once a dream of ancient alchemists to produce gold from baser elements After the discovery of radioactivity by Henri Becquerel and the Curie couple, Rutherford and F. Soddy (1903) proposed the revolutionary theory of radioactive disintegrations Atoms of radioelements undergo spontaneous disintegration with the emission of α - or β -particles and the formation of atoms of a new element which is quite different physically and chemically from its parent This new element in turn will also be unstable and emit a particle with the production of still another element, and there may be in fact a succession of transmutations each accompanied by its characteristic rays and production of new elements A radium atom of mass 226

units gives off an α -particle of mass 4 units and the residual atom of mass 222 units, known as radon, is formed. This is on the disintegrating line of radioactivity

In another set of experiments Rutherford in collaboration with Chadwick (1921) was able to show that when the elements boron, nitrogen, fluorine, sodium, aluminium and phosphorus are bombarded with α -particles, new elements are formed. This in fact led to artificial transmutation of elements. A nitrogen atom of mass 14 units and charge 7 on being bombarded with α -particle of mass 4 units and charge 2, produces an isotope of oxygen of mass 17 units and charge 8, and a proton of unit mass and unit charge (1918). It is these earlier researches of Rutherford which enable the present-day scientists to boast of producing elements of atomic numbers beyond 114

Y K GUPTA

(This article is based on the book *Chemical Elements* by D N Trifonov and V D Trifonov, MIR Publications, Moscow, but the detailing in the periodic table (not printed here) was programmed by the author)

THE MARRIAGE OF EARTH AND HEAVEN

A TREMENDOUS tremor
shook the seven-centred body
from the base of the coiled
fire to the hooded flower

A panegyric intoned
by new-born voices
designed the patterns
of the pollinating words

Illumination priested
the eager mind
to bless the marriage
of the fire and the flower

RANAJIT SARKAR

THE FULL MOONLIT GAIETY

THE symmetrical texture elegantly made
By the gently flowing cool air
Over this vast expanse of sand,
And the full moonlit gaiety as I share

The bliss of solitude in absolute calm.
The peace that's beyond intellect's reach,
Eternity turned in a few moments as I pause—
A silent sea of grace and I'm on its beach

The joy of being and creative poise—
A feeling in the vastness as of sage's heart,
Far away from the world's din and noise—
In calm environs, conducive to creative art

In wonder I pause, ponder and peep within
To me this boon, this evening, at this place!
Being here for the while indeed is like sitting
In front of some sage and enjoying his grace

M P JAIN

THE ODYSSEY—AN ADAPTATION

(Continued from the issue of January 2000)

Scene 3

[*Odysseus enters He is serious and looks off into the distance Telemachus enters. Odysseus, without seeing him reacts He stoops down and lifts up sand which he sifts through his fingers slowly Penelope appears on her balcony, winding her yarn They both stare off into space Calypso enters, goes to Odysseus, tries to comfort him, but Telemachus starts up impatiently, gathering his gear for the journey, and Odysseus rises and moves away from Calypso. Telemachus, Penelope exit Calypso starts again to comfort Odysseus, but he doesn't notice her and leaves She looks on knowing she has lost him Hermes enters Calypso sees him and at first shields her eyes from him*]

Calypso Bright Hermes! Our messenger from heaven! So the gods remember Calypso cast on her faraway island. No corner can long remain veiled from the far-seeing eyes of our Zeus

Hermes. [*playfully*] You have reason to hide from us?

Calypso. I fear my innocent dalliance will not be met with approval Of all gods, great Zeus best knows the joy of union with mortals. He thrills to the richness of life and seeks to implant the seeds of his glory Each maiden of promise is embraced and feels the surge of his bliss His children abound and emblazon the earth with their beauty and daring, bringing heaven to earth and earth closer to heaven. Yet our own simple pastimes are curbed What harm have they in them? Eternity is long Why grudge us our brief times of pleasure?

Hermes. He enriches those he encounters. You dally, keeping this man from his fullness, not giving life to the greatness within him [*Calypso is silent, struggling with this idea.*]

Calypso [*bemused*] Is it kind to unveil my weakness so frankly? I would embroider a bit, give grace to the coarse stuff of truth

Hermes. My habit is swiftness. These wings cannot hover.

Calypso I would protest a bit more, but I know that I have already lost him My delicate mists he burns with the glare of his longing Odysseus's thoughts are in Ithaca, his body may as well follow

Hermes [*mischievously*] Then you'll speed him along? His wife will soon see her husband?

Calypso. Ships .I have none There are trees He can cut them A raft is sufficient for him I'm surprised his will does not enable him to walk on the water

Hermes [*sincere, now*] You'll be alone You must be sorry

Calypso: I am immortal What more could I wish for? Yet also immortal seems my nature. I enchanted Odysseus at first He was enthralled with my beauty, and it changed him His wonder refined some coarseness within him. Yet it was all that I had to offer He grew I didn't Once grasped, I held no more allure His thoughts turned to the next step I will live always on my plateau [*pause*] Perhaps the gods can also turn human—seek the joy of the growth of the soul?

Hermes: [*again playful*] Penelope has wrinkles just here [*Points to the corner of the eye*] I think I saw some silver shine in her hair

Calypso. Perhaps I'll think of mortality later Why rush when there is forever to decide [*pause*] She has wrinkles and silver. [*Odysseus enters*] and him [*Hermes gives a sign of affection and leaves Odysseus comes over She holds his hands, then lets go. He goes down on one knee, then rises*]

Scene 4

[*He starts chopping trees, lashing them together. He pushes the raft out and rides. Poseidon sees him, gathers the clouds and makes a storm Then Leucothea the white sea goddess appears and gives him a large white cloth. He is thrown off his raft and rolls on to the white cloth. Poseidon exits Odysseus lands up in a rocky place. He steadies himself, and with a gesture of gratitude and respect gives the cloth back to Leucothea. She exits. He looks at himself wearily and lies down in an out of the way place The lights go down to dimness*]

Scene 5

[*All is quiet, then dawn comes and the sound of girls' laughter They come on, some carrying laundry, some tossing a ball Some wash clothes including Nausicā, then finally they all play ball. Odysseus wakes up, sees what's going on and gets up. He's dressed in a loincloth and tries to cover himself with branches. He comes forward and the girls are horrified He's partly embarrassed, but partly amused Nausicā comes forward.*]

Nausicā. Who are you?

Odysseus. I am a man. [*drops the branches*] And this is the state I'm in. [*The girls draw back, more embarrassed, but Nausicā steps forward.*]

Nausicā It is clear you are noble What has brought you to this?

Odysseus The gods, my fate, myself. Ah girl, if I told you the tale of my woes now, you would never believe me. You would think I was mad and run straight to your home. But such is my state that I who have defeated the strongest am supplicant to a child [*she doesn't like this*], a young woman, fresh as the dew, yet bold as a lion, for I am grizzled and bare and must seem a danger. Yet your concern is for me and not your own safety

Nausicā. I know you somehow. A dream brought the sense of your greatness Your appearance is not what I expected, yet it cannot conceal what I know to be true

Odysseus. Then the gods must be with me! Perhaps Poseidon is sleeping [*He looks startled at what he has said and puts his finger to his lips.*] Shhh. I must be careful not to awake him

Nausicā. Sir, come to my palace. Let my parents give you welcome. [*She looks him up and down*] I hope they see what I do, or can at least trust in my judgement [*She looks at him again. He shrugs as if to say "What can I do?"*] Perhaps we'd better manage this differently. [*She takes a tunic from the laundry*] Come to my parents' house, Alcinoos and Arêtê. Anyone can tell you the way. There noble guests will always be welcome. Go first to my mother, Arêtê She can sway the will of my father. Perhaps you will be able to stay. [*She gives him a ring she is wearing*]

Scene 6

[*Music as Odysseus puts on the tunic. He's at the side. In the background Nausicā is directing the table to be set. Odysseus starts off—encounters Athena Without recognizing her, he is directed to the palace. She leaves. Alcinoos and Arêtê enter. Word is brought to them by a servant. Alcinoos makes a motion that Odysseus should be brought and Odysseus enters, bows deeply to Arêtê. The music stops.*]

Arêtê. Come, stranger Arise. You are welcome. Let me give you a seat at our table

Odysseus. Though I am but a man, you are as gracious as gods. The world has treated me roughly and I have been battered and bruised by the storm. Now the grace and beauty of your welcome is soothing to the wounds of my soul

Alcinoos Please eat and be rested I give you a place by my son

Arêtê Our shores are not often visited [*She sees the ring, looks at Nausicā who blushes and turns away*] You must tell me how you came to our home.

Alcinoos There's time for that later Let our guest be refreshed, quench his thirst Call for the minstrel My son, Laodamas, my daughter is Nausicā [*Again, a blush which Arêtê sees*] Drink our honey-hearted wine [*Demodocus enters He sings briefly, but they are interrupted by loud shouts of young men The minstrel stops The company gathers to see what is happening, as if looking out of windows*]

Alcinoos Our youth are afire with their own greatness They account themselves the mightiest of men Would you care to see their endeavours? There are some whose skill almost equals their pride [*Odysseus bows consent Move to a part of the stage where youths are throwing spears, wrestling, etc Loud shouts as they show off*]

Youth Ah! The elders have come out to see us and remember their youth when their limbs were still strong Good father [*talking to Odysseus*], I'm sure you once had some power and could [*He reaches out as if to feel Odysseus's arm for strength and Odysseus flips him easily almost without thinking*] Yes, it's true I'd forgotten There are tricks in the old ways of war, where the weaker can conquer the stronger [*Odysseus looks daggers at him*] Perhaps there are things I can learn from you yet

Alcinoos Excuse my pride in my own son's particular skill With a spear he amazes me yet His throw outdistances a hawk's flight when it swoops to capture his prey [*Laodamas, with modesty, throws his spear All are amazed at his throw*]

Odysseus Yes, it's true his throw is tremendous I hope my son can do something like that When I reach home, though, I'll teach him to aim with a difference [*He makes a throw which stuns them to silence*] A comet can outdistance a hawk

Arêtê Your skill is a marvel And your strength [*She pantomimes lifting and throwing a boulder*]

Nausicā With a bow you must be unbeatable

Odysseus [*modestly to Nausicā*] My friend, Philoctetes, was greater, [*sardonically to youth*] but he is dead [*They go back in, all sit—Demodocus comes*]

Nausicā [*looks first at Odysseus, then turns to Demodocus*] Demodocus, could you sing to us of Troya? [*She looks to see how Odysseus takes this as if suspicious He chokes*] Many were the deeds of the mighty Many were the heroes who were slain

Others returned to their homelands, but few found peace even then Only one is still not accounted for, war-wise Odysseus, the craftiest of all He who devised Troya's downfall, with his horse of wood that concealed all the greatest Greek men Sing of these heroes, those who triumphed and those who have fallen [*Minstrel sings Odysseus is overcome*]

Alcinoos Demodocus, stop Not all are enjoying your music

Odysseus Great King, forgive me Your minstrel sings like a god Perhaps such was the music of Apollo when the walls of sweet Troya were raised.

Arêtê But your sorrow resounds more powerfully than the strings of the lyre Our harper sings the tale as he's heard it, but your eyes speak with the force of experience

Odysseus [*rises*] My hosts, I thought not to speak my name on your shores, lest the sound of it bring my ill luck to your home I embarked on my troubles by saying I was no man, then in boasting voice declared myself loudly, bringing down the wrath of the God whose mercy I most needed If I speak quietly and humbly, perhaps I will bring you no harm I am that man your minstrel honours with his music The honour should go to Athena The greatness is hers, only the mistakes are my own. It is her force that on occasion empowers me, Odysseus, son of Laertes.

Alcinoos I would never have dreamed my halls would harbour such a man as you are But, great warrior, the world waits for word that you are living Where have you lingered? Your wife weeps, your friends grieve, your kingdom is left to the hordes

Odysseus The tale of my travels would try sorely your patience I would never believe one who spun such a tale But if you wish and have time I will tell you Your minstrel will have songs to sing—enough for a lifetime

Demodocus [*talking to the audience while Odysseus appears to be telling his tale to the others*] And it is true, for years I have sung them, the stories that Odysseus told us that night Some have believed me and some have labelled me liar, but never yet has one slept through my tales He told us first of the land of the Circonians where they destroyed the city and killed all the men They divided the goods and Odysseus would have then

Odysseus set out to sea But my men lingered, slaughtered the sheep and drank deep of the wine.

Demodocus Then the neighbouring villages descended upon them, as many as flowers and leaves in the spring of the year

Odysseus: We struggled and fought and our lines were then broken when the sun was up high

Demodocus. about ox-loosing time [*Odysseus hands Demodocus the cloak he was wearing over his tunic*]

Odysseus. We fled to our ships

Demodocus and took to the ocean for refuge, bemoaning the loss of so many men

Scene 7

[Odysseus goes to the ship and his men also, from another entrance But Zeus Cloudgatherer's anger came down in his thunderbolts and stirred up a tempest in his brother's domain At last they had peace and the hope of reaching their homeland, but a northwest wind blew them out of their way]

(To be continued)

NANCY WHITLOW

BLIND WAS I

BLIND was I, a mute observer now become;
 Two hands had I, but these too are bound and numb;
 Two feet walk on dull clay quite set,
 In the hands of my heart now I am a marionette
 A swarm of strange footprints in the clay I see
 All going round and round the ancient tree,
 And a few that strayed on plains of barren sand,
 And a few on the crest of shifting dunes did stand,
 And a few but walked the edge of a precipitous hill
 Now looming in my front in an adumbrated will
 An answering hue arose in my heart with the morning sun,
 My feet, my path, the hill, my self, collapsed into one
 A celestial power possessed my hands that free now moved
 To feel the face in the rock and the hill of my lover and god.

AKASH DESHPANDE

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Third Millennium Equipoise: some impressions from an evolutionary point of view by Maj Gen Vinod Saighal Lancer Publishers. Price: Rs. 395 00; pages 238.

Third Millennium Equipoise (TME) by Major General Vinod Saighal addresses a very weighty issue—that of assuring the sustainability of the human race, primarily through an immediate and comprehensive process of nuclear disarmament. TME is an important book for several reasons. First, it portrays some of the fundamental barriers to disarmament. Second, it meticulously lays out a framework by which disarmament may be achieved. Third, the framework is generalised to address other threatening problems of a global magnitude. Fourth, the underlying sense of urgency with which human beings have to step beyond their petty, selfish aims, to begin to act as one human race, urgently comes through.

Probably the most formidable barrier in allowing disarmament to take place is the dynamics of control displayed by the military-industrial complex. The military-industrial complex comprises military and industry from around the world that has gained tremendous power through the sale of arms and is, of course, reluctant to give it up. They employ masses of people. They push newer technologies, they sell the older ones to special interest groups, such as terrorist groups, around the world. Through the money they have accumulated they 'buy' people in influential positions to ensure that no legislation or lobbying can effectively rise against them or against their agendas. They thereby perpetuate their own control. One gets the sense that the power of the military-industrial complex is awesome—the type that can topple governments, if a too idealistic leader happens to come to the forefront, for instance.

What the author describes here is the control of the self-seeking self-aggrandising 'vital' man, unconcerned about true progress or the greater good of the world. He proposes that power should shift from this bottomlessly aggressive man, where not rationality but greed is at the forefront, to a more 'mental' man rationally in control of the situation. Intelligence should come to the forefront and be the guiding force for man to conduct his affairs. Saighal proposes that this be achieved through a process of active debates on the issues of disarmament. Recognised thought leaders, universities, and NGOs should take part—to raise public awareness—and thereby, through a process of transparency, wrest control from the hands of those who would seek to perpetuate their hold for their own selfish aims. The dynamics of control as exercised by the vital man, and so effectively pointed out and elaborated on by Saighal, is in fact pervasive and ubiquitous. On reading *Third Millennium Equipoise* one becomes aware of the seriousness of the grip exercised by the vital man and that one is able to apply the insight to other areas of life. Regardless of the arena or the geography, in today's world this man can be found everywhere. It is he who has put a clamp on progress, and dashed inspiration and the high seeking aspirations of the few. It is this man who has compromised the good of the race to fill his own coffers. He is

in the business executive who would perpetuate an old model in spite of a newer one's improved economy, utility, or ease of use. He is there in the politician and bureaucrat who would sacrifice the larger good of the race in continuance of his exercise of self-seeking power. He is there in the academician who would stunt true inquiry to promote his own view of the world.

Saighal emphasizes that nuclear disarmament must begin in earnest. Already there is a huge surplus of weapons that can destroy Earth many times over. The author suggests a series of reforms, beginning from the reconstruction of the Security Council, aimed at creating a true democratic balance amongst all States regardless of size, to the creation of a World Nuclear Council (WNC), which will have complete control over all nuclear movement around the world, and disarmament. He suggests three phases in which disarmament can take place, under the overriding monitoring and control of the WNC and its subsidiary organisations. In the important aspects of the selection of key people to the WNC and other monitoring organisations, the author suggests that rationality and objectivity, powers of the mind, rather than the powers of the vital, be employed in assuring that true jurisprudence abide. He suggests a barrage of punitive measures, to ensure that each State toes the line and abides by the set of rules that have been created. The world may begin the process of disarmament, but the author suggests that the WNC may have to itself create an Armed Force or co-opt existing forces so that it can quell any other threats that may arise in the world. Further, the author has suggested the importance of a ubiquitous information technology infrastructure to allow information to be available in real-time, globally, which will facilitate the sense of oneness.

The author has created a complex mosaic in which councils, rules and counter-rules, and external mechanisms bound together by the faultless and instantaneous flow of information, and propelled by the power of intellect, assures the balance and progress of the human race. His faith that these methodologies will be sufficient in assuring the sustainability of the human race is apparent. The author may have assumed that intelligence is the highest power available to man, and therefore its methods are the ones he proposes in bringing about disarmament and sustainability. If indeed intelligence is the highest power available to man, then his suggestions are beyond a doubt noteworthy. If, on the other hand, mind as we experience it now is not the highest power available to man, his suggestions are still noteworthy, but must be put into a different context. When we view the evolutionary history, and even the emergence of beings, especially in recent times, with large action of love, knowledge, organisational skill, and even a contact with an inner and pervasive divinity, the supposition as to whether we have reached the summit of our possibility, with mind as its culminating instrument, becomes questionable. Indeed, if what is emerging in a few individuals is an indication of what the race will go through on a larger scale, as has been the case in prior evolutionary developments, then we must open ourselves to the possibility that capabilities other than intelligence will rise to the surface, may in fact already be at the surface, and could be tapped to address some of the problems,

such as disarmament, which we are currently facing

In that the mass of humankind and certainly a large percentage of its rulers appear to be operating at the vital level, or at best some mental level, the author's insistence that the operation be pushed to the higher echelons of mind, instinct with power of intelligence, is well founded. Yet, the nature of mind, as any sincere observation will disclose, is to divide, and it can never wholly know, nor can it know it all. The mechanisms and outward forms he proposes as a means to overcome the incredibly fragile position we find ourselves in are governed by Man with the Mind. And since mind can never know all aspects, it can be misled, even when man has the best of intentions, into becoming an instrument of some perverse or destructive force that also seeks its own aggrandisement, albeit through even more subtle means than may currently be employed by the military-industrial complex. Thus, there is a risk in, for example, the suggestion that the WNC erect an Armed Force. For the leader or leaders of the WNC and the Armed Force are liable to fall prey to some subtly or even outrightly perverse suggestions, which could render the whole mosaic ineffective against what it is trying to solve. The only true guide to infallibility would be the assured settling into or operation of an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful 'mind' or instrument, which would instantaneously know the source of all suggestions, know immediately what is to be done, have the infinite love to want to do it, and the infinite power to be able to do it.

The solution therefore, the absolutely infallible solution, would be to bring such an instrument into operation, or if such an instrument were already in operation, then to develop the receptivity to open to it, to know it, to be led by it, to become like it.

In the meantime, and this is why the noteworthiness of the author's mosaic stands, one could follow the author's suggestions regarding disarmament, which are in essence constructed around acting as one mind. There is an implicit assumption of trust in the mosaic. Things work as they are supposed to work. Just mind, and just the human instrument as we now experience it, though, will not allow that. The mosaic therefore, even in the interim, needs to be accompanied, rather upheld, on a foundation of aspiration for the truth, and a greater opening to the power that guides.

PRAVIR MALIK

Students' Section

VALIANT WARRIORS

VALIANT Warriors' blood flows in your veins
An urge to be free in you isn't rare;
This Nation of ours bound in rusted chains—
Warriors, destroy the wicked and the unfair.

Emerald India is not only our Motherland,
She is a Goddess, beautiful and strong.
Her skin so smooth is our fertile land,
Her earthly womb is where our hearts belong

With fervent zeal Thy worship we offered,
Fought bravely when you lay in intolerable pain,
And Victory was ours as we marched on forward
But, O loving Mother, Thou dost in darkness yet remain.

PAVAK K MITRA

VALMIKI, THE PRIMORDIAL POET

A LOT has been written, throughout the ages, about the evolution of language, literature, poetry and art. Yet a great deal remains to be written on the subject as it is beyond any exclusive definition or description.

Particularly in modern times, art and poetry have taken such a trend that the ordinary mind is at a loss to understand and appreciate them in their true sense and perspective. Perhaps one has to be an adept or specialist to penetrate their outer coating or disguise of style and technique to enjoy the kernel.

However, the purpose of the present writing is not to evaluate the norm and nature of modern art and poetry but to focus attention on ancient times and the episode relating to Maharshi Valmiki which led him to write the immortal Epic, the Ramayana, as envisaged by Rabindranath in one of his significant poems.

The calm, quiet and solemn hermitage of Valmiki assumed a picturesque view with the green overgrowth of trees, plants, creepers and multicoloured flowers around. Moreover, the musical murmur of the sharply flowing Tamasa by the side gave it an additional beauty and attraction. Valmiki sat there in a meditative mood absorbed as usual in contemplation of the Absolute. Suddenly his sublime brooding got brutally shattered by the heart-rending lamentation of one of two birds at the sudden killing of the other by a hunter. The impact shocked him to the core with deep sorrow and compassion. He burst into a spontaneous expression of the following words:

मा निषादं प्रतिष्ठा त्वमगम शश्वतीं समा ।
यत् क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधी. काममोहितम् ॥*

Valmiki was inspired and awe-stricken at the unprecedented words he uttered. He went on reciting the same over and over again without his knowing it, while moving up and down beside the river Tamasa excited and agitated. On the one hand his heart was full of delight at becoming the instrument of the exceptional gift of the goddess Muse. On the other he felt an inner anguish and urge to give expression to his new-born inspiration. But he was in a dilemma to select the subject through which he would channelise his poetic potentiality.

In the meantime the sun dropped behind the horizon and darkness devoured the area. The birds, after the day's pursuit for food, returned to their nests. Their chirping and flapping of wings resounded from tree to tree. But soon they grew quiet under the spell of sound sleep. But after some time they woke up startled by the delusion of daybreak. Because golden rays penetrated through the foliage and fell on their eyes. They began fidgeting and chirping again. Maharshi Valmiki was no less astonished. But then he saw that the rays were shooting from the matted hair of the heavenly herald Narada who was descending earthwards across the sky. Soon he alighted

* O Nishada (Hunter), you have been merciless in your action by killing one of these two birds when they were making love. Your act is unforgivable. You will therefore be denied the long span of life granted to man.

in front of the hermitage and Valmiki greeted him with obeisance and humbly arranged a seat

He then asked him politely, "O Devarshi (both God and Rishi), to what divine end am I honoured by your gracious presence? Pray, what can I do for you?"

Narada replied with a gentle smile, "O great sage, your repeated recitation of the metrical words, spontaneously uttered out of deep pity for the couple of birds, went high up to the abode of Brahma. On hearing them, Brahma was overwhelmed with appreciation, called me and said, 'Narada, please go forthwith to the shore of the Tamasa and ask the muse-inspired Valmiki to whom he would offer the heavenly gift, in praise of which fortunate god would he weave the garland of words and make him ever famous in the world of mortals?'"

Valmiki, absorbed in his creative mood, replied thoughtfully "The whole creation prays to gods through signs and symbols. The fire raising its fingers of flames appears to offer skyward prayers. The sea lifting its arms of waves utters roaring hymns to whom only the gods know. The forest with its innumerable outstretched branches murmurs incantations to the Almighty. The storm unfurling its wide wings cracks prayers of thunders. Thus starting from the twinkling stars of the far sky down to the flies and insects of the earth all mingle with the same stream leading towards the vast ocean of peace of Vaikuntha, the abode of Vishnu

"But the language of man, bound to exclusive meanings, moves always around his practical daily life. It keeps itself busy day and night to serve man's needs and requirements. In this way it closes the entry within it of the sublime feelings and ideas, such as music gives

"The spirit and boon of poetry bestowed on me will add a new dimension and dynamism to the lame language of man, lift and liberate it from the bond of factual meaning into the domain of lofty ideas. My heart heaves with joy and divine delight at the prospect and expectation of that future fulfilment of language

'Just as the vast ocean encircling the solid and mute earth gives it dynamism with dance and music so also my rhyme embracing the gross language will ever sing with simple and sincere intonation the hymns on man and give the transient human birth an infinite glory and significance

"O messenger of the gods, please convey on my behalf, to Brahma, the grandfather of all, that the unprecedented gift which has come down from the supreme poet on earth should not be sent back to heaven. The prayers in praise of gods bring them down to the hearts of man, but I, with my rhyme, will raise man up to the status of gods.

"O all-seeing Devarshi, you are capable of perceiving everything in the three worlds, please tell me the name which resounds eternally from the immortal lute. Tell me whose prowess does not exceed the spirit of his forgiveness, whose character is adorned with the laws and codes of religion like jewelled ornaments. Inform me who, while living amidst plentiful riches, is yet extremely polite, but never bows down his head before dire poverty, who remains in fear while having abundant wealth but is

absolutely fearless in front of great danger. Apprise me of him who has received the maximum ease and comfort the world can give but renounced more than what he had received. Also let me know of him who has worn on his head as crown, most humbly but nobly, the worst possible sorrow and suffering the earth can inflict. O omniscient Devarshi, please tell me his sacred name ”

Narada looked at the great sage with deep appreciation and revealed happily. “He is Raghupati Rama of Ayodhya ”

“Yes, I know of him, I have heard his name,” affirmed Valmiki. “But I don’t know all the events of his life. How can I write his life-story? I am afraid lest I should deviate from the truth ”

Narada assured him lovingly, “O great Rishi, whatever you will narrate will be the truth. All that happens is not always true. O primordial poet, take it from me that your mental vision is greater than Ayodhya, the birth-place of Rama ”

So saying the heavenly messenger disappeared into thin air, like a divine dream, and returned to Saptarshiloka (the dwelling of the Seven Rishis). Valmiki sat in a lotus pose for meditation, the Tamasa grew quiet and a spiritual silence descended over the hermitage and the surrounding area.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY