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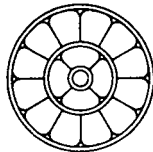
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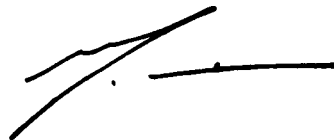


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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All correspondence to be addressed to

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

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Editor K D SEHNA

Associate Editor R Y Deshpande

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIII

No. 5

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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REMEMBER WHY THOU CAM'ST

THEN 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 pinpoint 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

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 476-78)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

The Unreality of Death

ON hearing Arjuna's words, Sri Krishna's face betrayed signs of a smile, an amused smile that was yet happy. The Knower of the hearts of men recognised in Arjuna's delusion the old delusion of mankind, so He smiled. That delusion is born of Sri Krishna's own Maya, He has made man subject to this Maya in order to end the evils, the sorrows and weaknesses in the world through their experience and control. The attachments of the heart, the fear of death, the subjection to happiness and sorrow, the feeling of likes and dislikes,—ignorant movements such as these have found expression in Arjuna's words. It is precisely these movements that have to be removed from the minds of men and the world made free of evil. To create favourable conditions for that auspicious work has Sri Krishna come and is going to reveal the Gita. But first the delusion that has been born in Arjuna's mind has to be destroyed through an experience of it. Arjuna is Sri Krishna's friend, the representative of humanity, to him will the Gita be revealed, he is the best recipient. But humanity has not yet become fit to grasp the meaning of the Gita, even Arjuna could not grasp the full meaning. The grief, sorrow and weakness that came to his mind have been experienced in full by men in the Kali age. Christianity has brought love, Buddhism has brought compassion, Islam has brought power; they have come in order to mitigate that experience of suffering. Now will begin the first phase of the Satya sub-period of Kali. The Lord is once again imparting the Gita to India, to the descendants of the Kuru race. If we prove ourselves capable of receiving it and holding to it, then the good of India, the good of the world will be its inevitable fruit.

Sri Krishna said, "Arjuna, you are counting virtue and sin like a pedant, you are talking about principles of life and death, trying to expound what will cause the nation good or harm; but your words do not bear evidence of any real knowledge, on the contrary, every word of yours is full of the deepest ignorance. Why not say frankly your heart is weak and overcome by grief, your mind turns away from what is to be done? There is no reason why you should argue like an ignoramus in the language of a man of knowledge in order to justify your weakness. Grief comes to the heart of every man, everyone regards death and separation as extremely frightful, life as of great value, grief as unbearable, duty as hard, achievement of self-interest as sweet, these make everyone feel happy or lament, laugh or weep, but no one can call these movements as sprung from knowledge. You are grieving for those for whom it is wrong to grieve. The wise man does not grieve for anyone, not for the dead nor for the living. He is aware of these facts: there is no death, no separation, no sorrow, we are immortal, eternally the same, we are the children of delight, children of immortality, we have come to this earth to play at hide and seek with life and death, with joy

and sorrow, we are enacting a drama of laughter and weeping in the huge play-house of Nature, are tasting the delight of war and peace, love and dispute in our guise of friend and foe. This short period for which we live, not knowing where we shall go tomorrow or the day after on leaving the body, is but a moment in our eternal play, a short game, the sentiment of a few moments. We have been, we are, we shall be, eternally, for ever indestructible. We are the lords of Nature, masters of life and death, portions of God, inheritors of the past, present and future. Just as the body has its childhood, youth and old age, so is the getting of a new body. Death is only a name, we get afraid on hearing the name, feel sorrow, did we know the thing in itself, we would neither be afraid nor feel sorrow. If we wept over a boy on his becoming a youth as if he were dead, and cried, 'Alas, where has he gone, that dear boy of ours, this young man is not that boy, where is my darling gone', our behaviour would be described by everybody as ludicrous and caused by rank ignorance, because this change of condition is a law of Nature, one and the same conscious being remains unmoved within the body of the boy and the youth beyond all outer change. The man of knowledge on seeing the common man's fear of death and sorrow at death considers his behaviour as equally ludicrous and caused by dark ignorance, because the change to another body is a law of Nature, in the gross and the subtle body one and the same conscious being remains unmoved beyond all external change. Children of immortality are we; who is to die, who can kill? Death cannot touch us, death is an empty report, death is a delusion, death is not."

The Objects of Sense Perception

The conscious being is immobile, Nature is in movement. The immovable conscious being is seated within the movements of Nature. What the conscious being seated within Nature sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches with the five organs of sense, he depends on Nature to take the delight of all that. We see forms, hear sounds, smell odours, taste, feel, touch. Sound, touch, form, taste, smell, these are the five objects of sense enjoyment. The particular field of the sixth sense, the mind, is the impression of things. The field of the intelligence is thought. The mutual delight and eternal play of conscious being and nature are for having the experience and enjoyment of the five objects of sense, the impressions of mind and the thoughts. This enjoyment is of two kinds, pure and impure. In pure enjoyment there is no pleasure or pain, there is simply the delight that is the eternal principle of conscious being, is natural to it. In impure enjoyment pain and pleasure are there, dualities like heat and cold, grief and joy move and harass the impure enjoyer. Desire is the cause of impurity. Whoever has desire is impure, he is pure who has no desires. Desire creates likes and dislikes, under the influence of likes and dislikes, conscious being gets attached to objects of sense, the fruit of attachment is to become bound. Due to the bad habit of attachment the conscious being, when moved and harassed, even when grieved or suffering pain, is unable to renounce the cause of his pain, grief or harassment.

The State of Equality

Srī Kṛiṣṇa first made reference to the eternity of the Spirit, then he showed the way to loosen the bonds of ignorance. The various touches of the objects of sense are the cause of dualities like pain and pleasure. These touches are impermanent, they have both a beginning and an end, their attachment has to be renounced because of the impermanence. If we become attached to impermanent things, we feel pleased at their coming, their absence or loss gives us pain and sorrow. This is called the state of ignorance. There is a clouding of the eternal poise and ever-present delight of the undying Spirit, we remain engrossed in transient states and objects, drown ourselves in a sea of grief while pining at their loss. He who instead of being thus overcome can bear the touches of the objects of sense, that is, he who, while experiencing the dualities does not feel joy or sorrow, that man is freed from likes and dislikes, by breaking the bonds of ignorance becomes capable of realising the eternal state and its delight, *amṛtatvāya kalpate*

The Value of Equality

This equality is the first teaching of the Gita. Equality is the very basis of the spiritual discipline of the Gita. The school of the Stoics in Greece received this teaching from India and propagated the doctrine of equality in Europe. The Greek philosopher Epicurus caught another side of Srī Kṛiṣṇa's teaching, propounded the doctrine of Epicureanism which teaches calm enjoyment. These two doctrines, of equality and enjoyment, were known as the highest moral doctrines of ancient Europe, and have given rise to the endless quarrel between Puritanism and Paganism in modern Europe. But in the Gita's discipline, the doctrines of equality and calm or pure enjoyment come to the same thing. Equality is the cause, pure enjoyment is the result. Equality destroys attachment, calms down likes and dislikes, with the destruction of attachment and the calming down of likes and dislikes, purity is born. The enjoyment of the pure conscious being is free of desires and attachment, is therefore pure. Herein lies the virtue of equality that attachments and likes and dislikes cannot remain in the same person along with equality. Equality is the seed of purity.

The Conquest of Sorrow

The Stoic school of Greece made this mistake that they were unable to grasp the true means of conquering sorrow. They tried to conquer sorrow by suppressing it, pressing it down, treading it under the feet. But in the Gita it has been said elsewhere, *prakṛtum yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kim karisyati*, all beings follow their natures, what will suppression do? By the suppression of sorrow, human heart becomes dry, hard and loveless. 'I shall not shed tears in sorrow, not acknowledge the feeling of pain, say, 'this is nothing' and bear it in silence, will look on the sorrows of wife, children,

friends, the sorrows of the nation with an unmoved heart'',—this is an attitude of asuric austereness proud of its strength. It has a greatness, also an utility in helping towards man's progress, but this is not the right means to conquer sorrow, not the last or supreme teaching. The true way to conquer sorrow is knowledge, peace, equality. To receive both joy and sorrow calmly is the right path, not to stop the coming of joy and sorrow into the heart but to keep unmoved the understanding. When there is equality in the understanding the mind and heart automatically have equality, at the same time natural movements like love do not get dried up, man does not become like a stone, dull and insensitive. *Prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni*—movements like love are the eternal movements of Nature, the only way to escape from them is to get merged in the Supreme Reality. To get rid of Nature while living within Nature is an impossibility. If we reject softness of heart, hardness will overcome it, if we forbid the vibrations of sorrow outside, sorrow will remain stored up within and will imperceptibly dry up the heart. There is no possibility of progress in an austerity of this kind. Austerity will no doubt bring power, but what is held down in this life will break all barriers and gush forth with redoubled force in the next.

(Concluded)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Sanat K. Banerji)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

विश्वानि देवी भुवनाभिचक्ष्या प्रतीची चक्षुरुर्विया वि भाति ।
विश्व जीव चरसे बोधयन्ती विश्वस्य वाचमविदन्मनायो ॥

(Rig Veda, 1 92.9)

The goddess fronts and looks upon all the worlds, the eye of vision shines with an utter wideness, awakening all life for movement she discovers speech for all that thinks. (SABCL Vol. 10, pp. 128-29)

Divine she beholds all the worlds, wide shines her vision and she gazes straight at things, she awakens every living soul for action and finds the Word for all that aspires to mind (Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research, Vol. 5, No. 2, p 184)

देवाना चक्षुः सुभगा वहन्ती श्वेत नयन्ती सदृशीकमश्वम् ।
उषा अदर्शि रश्मिभिव्यक्ता चित्रामघा विश्वमनु प्रभूता ॥

(Rig Veda, 7.77 3)

Happy, bringing the gods' eye of vision, leading the white Horse that has perfect sight, Dawn is seen expressed entirely by the rays, full of her varied riches, manifesting her birth in all things. (SABCL Vol. 10, p 130)

हिरण्यदन्तं शुचिवर्णमारात् क्षेत्रादपश्यमायुधा मिमानम् ।
ददानो अस्मा अमृतं विपृक्वत् किं मामनिन्द्राः कृणवन्ननुक्थाः ॥

(Rig Veda, 5.2.3)

I beheld afar in a field one shaping his weapons who was golden-tusked and pure-bright of hue; I give to him the Amrita (the immortal essence, Soma) in separate parts; what shall they do to me who have not Indra and have not the word? (SABCL Vol. 10, p. 135)

I saw far off in the field of being one tusked with golden light and pure bright of hue who was shaping the weapons of his war I give to him the immortality in me in all my separate parts and what shall they do to me who have not the Word and the God-Mind is not in them? (SABCL Vol 10, pp 367-68)

I saw him in a distant field, one golden-tusked and pure-bright of hue shaping his weapons. to him I am giving immortality in my several parts and what shall they do

to me who possess not Indra and have not the word ? (SABCL Vol 11, p 204)

क्षेत्रादपश्यं सनुतश्चरन्त सुमद् यूथ न पुरु शोभमानम् ।
न ता अगृभन्नजनिष्ट हि ष पलिकनीरिद् युवतयो भवन्ति ॥

(Rig Veda, 5.2 4)

I beheld in the field as it were a happy herd ranging continuously, many, shining ; they seized them not, for *he* was born, even those (cows) that were old, become young again. (SABCL Vol 10, pp 135-36)

I saw in the field as though a happy herd that ranged continuously in many forms of luminous beauty None could seize them, for he was born, even they that were old among them, grow young once more (SABCL Vol 10, p 368)

In that field I saw ranging apart what seemed a happy herd in its many forms of beauty ; none could seize on them, for he was born, even those of them who were grey with age became young again (SABCL Vol 11, p 204)

के मे मर्यक वि यवन्त गोभिर्न येषां गोपा अरणश्चिदास ।
य ई जग्भुरव ते सृजन्त्वाजाति पश्व उप निश्चिकित्वान् ॥

(Rig Veda, 5.2 5)

Who were they that divorced my strength (*maryakam*, my host of men, my heroes, *vira*) from the cows ? For they (my men) had no warrior and protector of the kine. Let those who took them from me, release them, he knows and comes driving to us the cattle (SABCL Vol. 10, p. 136)

Who were they that divorced my strength from the herds of Light ? Against them there was no protector nor any worker in this war. Let those that took them from me, release them to me again, for he with his conscious perceptions comes driving to us our lost herds of the radiance. (SABCL Vol 10, p 368)

Who were they that divorced my strength from the herds of light ? Against them there was no protector nor any fighter in this war Let those who seized them release them back to me, he has become aware and is driving back to me my herds of vision. (SABCL Vol 11, p. 204)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

IT IS ONLY IMMUTABLE PEACE

A TALK OF 22 FEBRUARY 1969

This talk begins with Mother's comments about her Darshan Message of February 21st

“It is only immutable peace that can make possible eternity of existence.”

I REMEMBER I wrote this after having had the experience that the immobility of the Inconscient, the beginning of creation, is, one cannot say a “projection”, but a kind of inanimate or inconscient symbol of the Eternity, of the Immobility—it is not “immobility”, words are worth nothing, it is between immobility and stability I have written here “peace”, but “peace” is a poor word, it is not that, it is infinitely more than peace, it is the “something” (even the word “eternal” gives a limited sense, all words are impossible), the “Something” which is the Origin of all things and the beginning of the evolution of the manifestation to rejoin the Origin (*Mother draws a curve joining the one to the other*)

I have the impression that it was at the Playground, and it was as though the inconscient immobility—the immobility of the Inconscient, the inert immobility of the Inconscient—were the starting-point of the evolution and it was like the *translation* of this.. how to say it? (this is also another kind of immobility! but an immobility containing all movements) of this immobility of the Origin, this stability, and that the whole evolution is so that this may find back That, with the whole passage (*same gesture of a great curve*). It was a very clear vision I remember having written this, and when I read it the experience came back. Well, we speak always of a “fall”—but it is not that! It is not at all that If there is a fall, it is at the moment when the vital turned into a will for independence. it is not at the beginning, it occurs altogether on the way . In the ancient tradition, they say it is the “Conscient” that became the Inconscient because it was “cut off from the Origin”—this gives me the impression of stories told to children

It is curious, in the silence and in the vision, it is very clear and very luminous, understandable, but as soon as you want to tell it, it becomes foolish

But then, in the creation even as it is now, it is true that the word “peace” is perhaps the nearest (although it is not that, it is quite small and restricted, it is not that). As soon as something goes wrong or out of order, it is that which comes as the remedy, within.

(Silence)

Oh! words are worth nothing, I do not know what to do, I do not know if it is because I have not enough of them or because truly. .all mental expression seems

artificial It gives the feeling of a lifeless film It is curious And all language belongs to that domain. When I want to relate this experience with some people I enter into a relation very, very well, very easily, in silence, and I tell them infinitely more things than I would be able to with words, it is more supple, more exact, more profound . Well! Words, phrases, things written leave me with the impression of a two-dimensional picture, the ordinary picture; and that, that contact which I have in a way with people when I do not talk, that adds the depth and something more true (it is not, it is far from being altogether true, but it is more true) and there is a depth.

(Silence)

That is why the experiences are difficult to recount They are no longer separate experiences which come one after another, it is like a single and global movement (*circular gesture*) of transformation, and it has a great intensity.

In the ordinary functioning of life, there is this feeling that “it goes well”, which is translated in people as a feeling of good health, and then there is a lack of balance, lack of order, and this opposition now seems *altogether* artificial: it is only a continuous movement which changes over from one kind of vibration to another kind whose origin is much more (how to say it? it is not “deeper”, it is not “higher”, and “truer” gives only one side, it is not that), well, “superior” in some way—words are foolish, altogether foolish.

It is like this, it is all the time like this And then one is drawn to one spot or to another; it is simply a play of our consciousness, but for the consciousness that sees the whole, it is a continuous movement, and a global one towards . yes, it is this, it is in order that this inert Inconscient becomes the absolute Conscient I do not know, I have a vague impression that it has been discovered (here, absolutely on the earth, upon the earth), it has been discovered that a certain intensity of movement (that is to say, what we call “rapidity”) is translated by an impression of immobility. I have a vague impression that I have been told so. But this corresponds to something. What I have called “peace” in the message, what is felt as peace, is an acme of movement, but general—harmonious and general

As soon as one speaks, it looks like a caricature.

(Long silence)

I shall end by falling silent!

I hope not!

(Mother laughs) But it is so poor, all this

Later on we may speak in colours.

Ah! that would be pretty. .

It goes to such an extent that when I am told something, when, for example, something which I have said is repeated to me, I no longer understand it . I try my best, but it is the whole intensity of the Consciousness that seeks to express itself, so when it is repeated, this intensity is not there any more and it has no sense any longer.

But precisely this message, when it was read out to me, brought back the experience, therefore I know how it was, and then the word “peace” contained so much!... Now it is no longer there

What is the word that I used?

Peace, yes.

Immutable?

Yes. “It is only immutable peace...”

Yes, and then the experience was that this same immutable peace (which was neither “peace” nor “immutable”! but it was “something”), this very Thing was there within the inconscient inertia And it was so concrete!. And the whole curve of creation was there so that this and That might be apparently one (but it *is* one—it is one). One might say (but it turns into phrases, these are words): to become conscious of one’s identity. But it is a phrase

(Long silence)

The experience is so intensely concrete that as soon as I begin to speak, it comes down. Up there (*gesture upward*), the consciousness is clear, and then...

(Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol 11, pp 161-64)

THE EROTIC SCULPTURES OF INDIA

A Short Note

THE artistic representations of erotic relationship on the walls of the outer chambers in some Indian temples, particularly at Khajuraho and Konarak, have posed quite a problem. What is their purpose in being a part of temple-sculpture? I believe one may look at them from three angles

1) In normal development the sexual experience in all its voluptuous diversity has to be gone through before one enters the profundity of the spiritual life. It has to be consummated and exhausted and then overpassed. Otherwise the erotic urge might interfere with the concentration of energy needed for the mystical quest.

2) This experience is not to be considered as opposed to the spiritual ideal but to be regarded under the atmosphere and light of it. It is meant to be a preparation, in secular terms, of the sacred union of the human soul with the Divine Beloved. The thought of the latter has always to be there in the former so that in course of time one is led towards the unification of the time-conscious with the Eternal in love and knowledge. We may recollect the suggestive fusion of the secular and the sacred in that verse of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4 3 21) "As a man when in the embrace of a well-loved woman knows nothing, neither outside nor inside, so does this man (*purusa*) when in the embrace of the intelligent Self (*prājñenātmanā*) know nothing within or without. That is his form in which his desire is fulfilled, in which the Self is his desire, in which he has no desire and has passed beyond sorrow."

The depicted sexual relationship figures also the spiritual creativity attributed to the coming together of the two aspects of the Godhead—Ishwara (or Shiva) and Shakti in order to bring into manifestation the cosmos. The deep inwardness and the passion that is one with a pure peace, that characterise the supreme creative act, are meant to be the presiding ideal and the haunting presence for every gesture and posture of human sexuality. We may remember that in the Māndukya Upanishad (6) the third and profoundest state of the Self, known as *prajñā*, connected with manifestation, is not only called "the Lord of Wisdom" but also the "Womb of the Universe."

3) The sculpture, with all its varied vividness, is intended to show that the unitive life of mysticism is not something dry and abstract: it is essentially as rich and concrete as sex-intercourse—or rather it is a richness and concreteness of which sex-intercourse is only an initial image and actually a pale reflection even at its most voluptuous as represented on the temple-walls. In Yoga one passes from lesser to greater beauty, from a lower to a higher intensity. All the dazzle and delight of the erotic experience merely foreshadows in the terms of the little ego the unutterable ecstasy and fulfilment awaiting those who commune and unite with the infinite spirit whose worship leaves the representation of that experience behind and takes place symbolically in the temple's inmost chamber, its holy of holies.

I personally hold that while the first two aspects may lend some hue to this sculpture and may not have been quite absent from the artist's mind, the third aspect is the true predominant vision of these challenging creations.

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

YOUR THOUGHTS

YOUR thoughts junk like fireflies at night
and vanish behind the throbbing bushes,
then come again teasing your senses
with desires, images and balderdashes.

You can never retrieve the flushing words
that sing uncaught in cages and traps,
but when breath rises whirling up
you can imagine hurricanes perhaps

You plough the pages of parables
to grow the wholesome hellebore
filled with the milk of earthly passion
that you have not seen before

Your thoughts that junk at night
make the letters sing in the fields
where the cornflowers catch the slanting rays
of your calorescent worlds.

RANAJIT SARKAR

SUN THE PERSON

(One of the poems written when the poet lay dying of incurable cancer)

SUN the Person is leaning down,
His rustle of Godhead's on my skin,
It takes my pain
To use, I suppose,
To colour a Rose,
To kill a man.
Within, within
The hands are working, the lips whistle
Into my mouth the pomp of his purple
Golden magnificent Breath .
As He does, I look down at my death

ARJAVA

A Comment “In this moving snatch of a poem which submits the ailing body to the Supreme Spirit's will as if to a master surgeon, every line speaks sensitive inner perception The poet-soul feels, intimately and concretely, the golden Presence that is at work from above, holding the processes of the evolving world together, turning each individual travail to significant purpose in the whole, making and breaking forms with a single movement that carries earthly life towards some life divine The last line is splendid in gesture There are three acts of awareness in it, culminating from the import of the four preceding verses. First, a simple yet sublime sense of the body being sacrificed, as it were, in the service of a luminous inner remoulding Then, a heroic spiritual contempt of the common destiny of frail flesh—somewhat as in the terrible words which a disciple of Vivekananda heard from the latter's lips in a dream after his passing ‘I have spat out my body’ Finally, a rising up of the human self towards Sun the Person, a radiant superiority achieved in a communion with the golden Presence overhead by the poet-soul's getting rapt into His sovereign and ever-creative afflatus which is the conquest of all mortality.’”

Amal Kiran

(Mother India, 21 February 1951)

Here is Savitri

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF SRI AUROBINDO
AND THE MOTHER AND OTHER SOURCES

The importance of
Savitri is immense

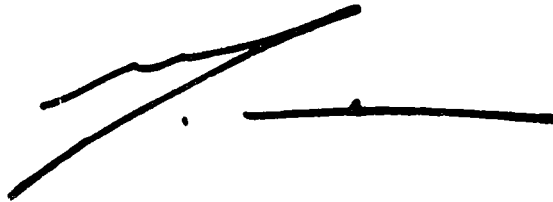
Its subject is universal

Its revelation is prophetic

The time spent in its
atmosphere is not wasted.

It will be a happy compensation
for the feverish haste men
put now in all they do.

10-2-67.



(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

THE KINGDOMS OF THE LITTLE LIFE

Adorer of a joy without a name,
 In her obscure cathedral of delight
 To dim dwarf gods she offers secret rites
 But vain unending is the sacrifice,
 The priest an ignorant mage who only makes
 Futile mutations in the altar's plan
 And casts blind hopes into a powerless flame.¹

ON 23rd August 1963, I sent some sketches to the Mother for her approval. She wrote:

The sketches are all right The bonnet of magician—priest—has only one point.

At first I made the bonnet of the mage as it is worn in big churches by Bishops. But the Mother said with a laugh that they would be annoyed, so it would be better to paint the bonnet with one point only

I marvelled at the Mother's observation and understanding

A Persian priest in ancient times was called a mage.

The quarrels of religious sects are like the disputing of pots, which shall be alone allowed to hold the immortalising nectar Let them dispute, but the thing for us is to get at the nectar in whatever pot and obtain immortality ²

Shun all lowness, narrowness and shallowness in religious thought and experience
 Be wider than the widest horizons, be loftier than the highest Kanchanjungas, pro-
 founder than the deepest oceans ³

Man lights his little torches of hope
 That lead to a failing edge,
 A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
 An inn his pilgrimage

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
 The Light of lights they refuse,
 To ignorant gods they lift their cry
 Or a demon altar choose ⁴

“In all religious monuments, in monuments considered the most .well, as belonging to the highest religion, whether in France or any other country or Japan—it was never

the same temples or churches nor the same gods, and yet my experience was everywhere almost the same, with very small differences—I saw that whatever concentrated force there was in the church depended exclusively upon the faithful, the faith of the devotees. And there was still a difference between the force as it really was and the force as they felt it. For instance, I saw in one of the most beautiful cathedrals of France, which, from the artistic point of view, is one of the most magnificent monuments imaginable—in the most sacred spot I saw an *enormous* black, vital spider which had made its web and spread it over the whole place, and was catching in it and then absorbing all the forces emanating from people's devotion, their prayers and all that. It was not a very cheering sight; and the people who were there and were praying, felt a divine touch, they received all kinds of boons from their prayers, and yet what was there was this, this was the thing. But they had their faith which would change that evil thing into something good in them, because they had faith. So, truly, if I had gone and told them, 'Do you think you are praying to God? It is an enormous vital spider that's feeding upon all your forces!' that would really not have been very charitable. And that's how it is most of the time, almost everywhere, it is a vital force which is there, for these vital entities feed upon the vibration of human emotions, and very few people, very few, an insignificant number, go to church or temple with a true religious feeling, that is, not to pray and beg for something from God but to offer themselves, give thanks, aspire, give themselves. There is hardly one in a million who does that. So they do not have the power of changing the atmosphere. Perhaps when they are there, they manage to get across, break through and go somewhere and touch something divine. But the large majority of people who go only because of superstition, egoism and self-interest, create an atmosphere of this kind, and that is what you breathe in when you go to a church or temple. Only, as you go there with a very good feeling, you tell yourself, 'Oh, what a quiet place for meditation!'

I am sorry, but that's how it is. I tell you I have deliberately tried this experiment a little everywhere. Maybe I found some very tiny places, like a tiny village church at times, where there was a very quiet little spot for meditation, very still, very silent, where there was some aspiration; but this was so rare! I have seen the beautiful churches of Italy, magnificent places; they were full of these vital beings and full of terror. I remember painting in basilica of Venice, and while I was working, in the confessional a priest was hearing the confession of a poor woman. But it was truly a frightful sight! I don't know what the priest was like, what his character was, he could not be seen—you know, don't you? that they are not seen, they are shut up in a box and receive the confession through a grille. There was such a dark and sucking power over him, and that poor woman was in such a state of fearful terror that it was truly painful to see it. And all these people believe this is something holy! But it is a web of the hostile vital forces which use all this to feed upon''

“The Vaishnava Bhajan is one that easily excites the vital being and if there are

people there of a low nature, all sorts of dark and low forces come in to feed upon the excitement. . The spiritual fulfilment will come in its time by a steady development of the being and the nature It does not depend on seizing upon this or that opportunity’’⁶

(*To be continued*)

HUTA

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References

- 1 *Savitri*, p 134
- 2 *The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol 17 p 84
- 3 *Ibid* , p 90
- 4 *Collected Poems*, SABCL Vol 5 p 100
- 5 *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1976 pp 29, 31, 33
- 6 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 23, p 910

MORNING ON KAILAS

Slow slumbering the dawn determines her form from night's black void.
 Ghosts, goblins, elves, imps, fly hurry in their course,
 Shiva the mighty yogin unstirred concentrates on his worldless summits.
 Silence, save the lone voices that roll in from humanity's toiling sea;
 Gauri, the spouse divine busies with simple domestic chores,
 Happy monotony of self-propelled days in eternal time!
 The sun, the chief nourisher of life's feast
 Here a humble pilgrim-soldier on motionless mountain scape
 The Lord half-tranced glances and Parvati smiles—
 And Brahman's wheel starts moving again!

HEMANT KAPOOR

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

09:02:1995

I read your article *The Imponderables* * It is a very good article. I have taken an off-print also Your arguments are very sharp and there is a wideness in your thoughts You must continue to write. You have written about the work of the Avatar and also emphasised the importance of the instrument in his work. Both are necessary. Avatar cannot do anything if there is no response from us. Arjuna is as much needed on the battlefield as Krishna. You must write another article bringing out specifically this role of the ready instrument.

You see, in *Savitri* Narad's visit is very important. He was instrumental in making Savitri begin her Yoga to gather force in her soul so that she could meet Death Who has ever brought man's soul back from Death? Not even the Avatars would do that. They are helpless here,—if there is no response from here.

The Mother's own work was to prepare, to a great extent, disciples to receive what is coming down Bringing the Supermind down only into Sri Aurobindo's body and hers would not have served much purpose. Nor do they need it for themselves.

For this to have happened, I mean bringing down of the Supermind, a collective aspiration, howsoever inadequate it might be, was essential. Their effort was also to prepare us for such a work We cannot say therefore that the scaffolding is needed no more. True, the Supermind has come down and things have become easy. But, surely, that does not mean that everything will happen automatically.

Otherwise they would have done it from above itself. Also, it does not mean that the whole of humanity will receive the Supermind and get supramentalised. Our part always remains there to be carried out. We cannot ignore the instrument's effort, his sadhana

Only a few days ago I could see that Sri Aurobindo is working from below and the Mother from above

They will do what is to be done up to a certain extent; whatever is needed to be done, that they will do But they expect me also to do sadhana. Without that I cannot progress

When people say that the Mother is doing all sadhana and that we have nothing to do, I say, it is to ignore our responsibility. Spiritual things don't happen that way.

Almost for twenty years I was not doing anything. But it started again after my second heart attack, four days after it. I was still in the intensive care unit.

But it was too great a thing and I must not speak about it Not at least presently, no, not as yet You know the present work that is going on. At times so much work is being done that it takes me a fairly long time to come out, to the outer consciousness

* *Mother India*, February 1995 pp 135-47

They are working but I have to do my work as well

The work of spiritualisation is going on and, of course, behind this work, the work of spiritualisation, the work of psychicalisation too I am sure of that.

What is a scaffolding? Aspiration, surrender, invoking the grace and allowing it to work in us Can we say that that is not needed any more? Because the Supermind has descended and that it will do everything itself, can we say that it is not needed? I say that this is not true. This scaffolding is always needed.

14:02:1995

I went up high, very high, and saw the supreme Mother I mean by this *I* my spirit. Otherwise how can I know who she is. This must have been beyond the Overmind

The spirit knew that her Grace was descending, the Mother's Grace

The Grace was descending for a long time, for more than half an hour It was continuously descending. I could see it It is not just a description; it is a fact.

It was descending all the way down to the physical, to the essence of the physical I was told that I should remain all the while in the delight of existence The being of Ananda has already descended and that I should remain in the delight of existence Not only during meditation, but even otherwise,—in my waking state also It is the being of Ananda who receives the delight of existence

I went to Sri Aurobindo's Room Looked at the photo, stood there for about five minutes and then came out When I came out Sri Aurobindo asked me "Did you see me? Or, were you simply looking at the photo?"

When you go to Sri Aurobindo's Room in your physical body, and not just mentally which you can do without walking into the Room, the physical should also receive something from him. Otherwise we can always go there in our consciousness.

Then Sri Aurobindo showed me his solid, luminous, powerful form; he held me firmly in it. Very powerful form, very luminous, solid

28:02:1995

Something happened on the Darshan day, 21 February. But I realised it afterwards and not when it was happening

I went to the Mother's Room and then to Sri Aurobindo's Room. While in the Mother's Room, she must have started working in me, which continued even when I came out. But I did not know what was happening

During the 10 o'clock Meditation around the Samadhi, the Darshan day Meditation, I realised that I was given something: Jivanmukti, liberation from life while still remaining in life I became a Jivanmukta There was such a difference before and afterwards

You see, that is why I sent some fruits to you yesterday through your mother. I am glad. Yes, I am glad

How do I know that I have become a Jivanmukta? Was I told so?

No, I was not told in such a way, not in so many words But I consider it to be so from the general results. It is my statement based upon the results.

(*To be continued*)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE POWER OF NAME

Neenyako Ranga

WHAT need of Thee, O Ranga Lord?
 Why need I beg of Thee?
 So long I have Thy mighty name
 There's naught that frightens me!

When the poor old Tusker, caught and held
 In the reptile's cruel jaws,
 Appealed to Thee, who saved him but
 Thy Name, The First Great Cause?

When the monstrous parent—sword in hand—
 Swooped down upon the lad,
 What, but Thy Name of Human Lion,
 Came forth to save Prahlad?

Ajamila, who sinned, was hied
 To Hell's infernal gate;
 Did not Thy Name, Narayan, then
 Release him from his fate?

To strip her naked was their game,
 Yudhisthir's noble dame,
 Did Krishna save her from her shame?
 No, but His blessed Name!

Purandar Vitthal, Lord who sleeps
 On the serpent couch of fame,
 There's not in all the spacious world
 An equal to Thy Name

PURANDARADASS

(Translated by the late B. T. Acharya. Courtesy *Kalyana-Kalpataru*, March 1961)

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

The Book of Birth and Quest

THE story of the composition of Books Four and Five is related to the history of Part One. The first five books grew out of the canto called “Love” with which early versions of *Savitri* began when it consisted of six cantos. The opening passage of that canto, a prologue to the birth of *Savitri*, was the seed of Part One. As we have seen, the development of this short passage into the first three books occupied Sri Aurobindo for many years. Meanwhile most of the later books lay dormant. But the rest of the original first canto, and especially the passages that turned into Book Four, shared in the process through which Part One took shape from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s.

The present Part One was designated as such only at an advanced stage, when *Savitri* was divided into three parts. Until the early 1940s there were two parts, *Earth* and *Beyond*, the first of which extended to *The Book of Death*. Book One eventually turned into Part One of a three part scheme. The rest of *Earth* became Part Two, while *Beyond* became Part Three. But for a long time, even Book One included portions of the present Part Two.

When Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1934 that he was “concentrating on the first book and working on it over and over again”, the “first book” was *The Book of Birth*. As this title suggests, it included much that is now in *The Book of Birth and Quest*. Only the description of Savitri’s “quest”, now the last canto of Book Four, was then part of *The Book of Love*.

Earlier, the first book had been called *Quest* and extended to the end of the present Book Four, or even beyond to Savitri’s arrival at the destined meeting-place. Several complete drafts of *Quest* and *The Book of Birth* are found among the *Savitri* manuscripts of the late 1920s and early 1930s. During most of this period, there is no sign of the other books, except *The Book of Love*.

By the late 1930s, the sections on Aswapati had grown out of proportion to the rest of *The Book of Birth*. A rearrangement was needed, and Book One became *The Book of Beginnings*. At this point, *The Book of Birth and Quest* came into existence as Book Two in the scheme of the poem. Sri Aurobindo referred to it by this name in 1937, but he does not appear to have worked on it at that time.

The last to be set aside, this was the first of the later books to be taken up again. In the notebook that contains the 1942 version of *The Book of Beginnings*, we find a complete version of *The Book of Birth and Quest*, with four sections corresponding to the present cantos. There is also a fragment of a third book, *The Book of Love and Fate*.

In 1943, *The Book of Beginnings* was divided into the three books that now form

Part One *The Book of Birth and Quest* thus became the fourth book. Sri Aurobindo wrote out a complete version of it, which he later revised by dictation. Typed copies of the revised manuscript received further dictated revision. The separate cantos of Book Four were first published in instalments in the quarterly *The Advent*, beginning in April 1950.

Some examples of Sri Aurobindo's revision of the first canto of Book Four will illustrate the stages of development of this book. On the fifth page of an early six-canto manuscript of *Savitri*, the third section of "Canto I Love" begins

The year through all its flowering cycle ran.
 Summer and rain and autumn filled the earth
 With hues of glory and led by their pomps,
 Last the cool happy winter ceased in Spring
 Rich with the instinct of God's sensuous joys
 Revealed in beauty

The last line and a half have passed almost unchanged into the final text, so have some phrases about the asoca tree and the mango blossom, the cuckoo and the bee in the next five lines, completing the description of Spring in this early version. But at present, these come after more than a hundred lines in Book Four, Canto One.

By the 1930s, the introductory passage which begins "A Maenad of the cycles of desire" was developing in place of the single original line about the year and its flowering cycle. Many more lines on Spring were added, such as these

All sights and voices wove a single charm
 The life of the enchanted globe became
 A storm of sweetness and of light and sound,
 A revel of colour and of ecstasy,
 A hymn of rays, a harmony of cries.

By 1942, the description of Spring had expanded almost to its present proportions. But the other seasons still passed by in a mere four lines. Sri Aurobindo increased this to eight lines when he revised the 1942 manuscript, then eleven in 1943, and thirteen when he dictated the revision of his last handwritten version, probably in 1945.

But it was when he revised the typed copy that the might and fury of the monsoon, passed over with the single word "rain" in the early version, burst in and inspired a long and vigorous passage. At Sri Aurobindo's dictation, the new lines were written by the scribe between the lines and in the margins of the first page of the typescript of Book Four, spilling over onto separate sheets.

The forty-four lines on the monsoon in the final version, slightly revised before this canto was published in *The Advent*, are perhaps the most vivid celebration of rain in the world's poetry. Some remarkable sound effects contribute to its power

A surge and hiss and onset of huge rain,
 The long straight sleet drift, clamours of winged storm charge,
 Throngs of wind faces, rushing of wind feet
 Hurrying swept through the prone afflicted plains
 Heaven's waters trailed and dribbled through the drowned land.
 Then all was a swift stride, a sibilant race,
 Or all was tempest's shout and water's fall

The tumult of this passage enhances the tranquillity of the eighteen lines Sri Aurobindo dictated next to introduce the "three thoughtful seasons" From a technical point of view, it may be observed that there are five to eight stressed syllables in each of the lines quoted above, these are evenly spaced only in the last line In the following lines, on the other hand, there is a quiet rhythmic movement with as few as two stresses in one line, though the metre is the same

A calmness neared as of the approach of God,
 A light of musing trance lit soil and sky
 And an identity and ecstasy
 Filled meditation's solitary heart

The exuberant depiction of Spring makes a further contrast It had been worked out through a long series of manuscript drafts, so the passage as typed required almost no alteration in the existing lines. But Sri Aurobindo inserted a dozen new lines that deepen the significance of the passage and heighten the meaning of Savitri's birth in this season.

His voice was a call to the Transcendent's sphere
 Whose secret touch upon our mortal lives
 Keeps ever new the thrill that made the world,
 Remoulds an ancient sweetness in new shapes
 And guards intact unchanged by death and Time
 The answer of our hearts to Nature's charm
 And keeps for ever new, yet still the same,
 The throb that ever wakes to the old delight
 And beauty and rapture and the joy to live
 His coming brought the magic and the spell,
 At his touch the ancient earth grew fair and young,
 He made joy a willing prisoner in her breast.

Before the canto was published, Sri Aurobindo changed "in" to "to" in the fourth line and revised the second line from the end, replacing "the ancient earth" by "life's tired heart" and substituting "glad" for "fair"

After extensively revising the opening section of the typescript of Book Four, Canto One, Sri Aurobindo hardly touched the rest of it. The sustained work that he had done on Book Four perhaps explains why, by the time a typed copy was made, he found that it needed relatively little modification. Though the typescripts of the second canto received substantial revision, the third canto was not revised after it was typed, and the fourth canto only lightly.

Book Four begins with the cycle of the seasons, not merely for the sake of a poetic description of Nature, but to set the stage for the birth of Savitri by evoking the moods of Time in the world in which she is incarnated. Her birth is of the epic. For on the one hand, it is the outcome of Aswapati's Yoga, on the other, it is the condition for all that follows. The divine power that enters the world when she is born makes possible her victory over Death, the symbol of the potentiality of earth transformation envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and cast into poetic form in *Savitri*.

A page of *The Book of Birth*, from the early 1930s, is shown in the first facsimile at the end of this instalment. Here the passage on the birth of Savitri in the present Book Four, Canto One, is seen at the mid-point of the process of its evolution. Disregarding alterations, additions and rearrangements made by Sri Aurobindo when he revised this page, it may be transcribed in the form in which he first wrote it as a fair copy of the previous manuscript. It began:

One had returned from the translucent planes,
Taking anew the load of mortal breath,
Who had striven of old with our darkness and our pain,
Survivor of death and the aeonic years,
Again with her fathomless heart she fronted Time.

This sentence is close to the final version; the third and fourth lines are identical. The most important differences are the later substitution of "transcendent" for "translucent" and the addition of a new line,

She took again her divine unfinished task:

whose insertion after the third line can be seen in the second facsimile. This facsimile shows the corresponding page of Sri Aurobindo's final manuscript from the mid 1940s, with dictated revision marked by the scribe.

The next seven lines of the early version read as follows

The missioned Power in the half wakened form
Nursed a transcendent birth's dumb glorious seed
For which this vivid tenement was built
Her greatness linked our transience to the Unknown;
The contact was renewed earth's tasks had veiled

Between the human portion toiling here
And an as yet unborn and limitless Force

The first four lines were eventually shifted so that the fourth line comes a little before the rest of this passage (with “Her greatness” changed to “Its brightness”), while the three lines about the “missioned Power” come more than sixty lines later, with minor alterations

Only the last three of these seven lines are also found on the page of the final manuscript reproduced in the second facsimile. The first of the three—written by Sri Aurobindo in the final manuscript with the word “sight” instead of “tasks”—was cancelled when he revised this passage by dictation. It was replaced by four lines found in the margin in the scribe’s handwriting. These four lines,

Again there was renewed and more revealed
The ancient closeness by earth vision veiled,
The secret contact broken off in Time,
A consanguinity of earth and heaven,

were inserted before two lines that had remained unchanged since the 1930s:

Between the human portion toiling here
And an as yet unborn and limitless Force.

The second of the dictated lines was altered to

Again there was renewed, again revealed

when Sri Aurobindo revised the typed copy. This was the only change he made when he revised the typescript of this passage. However, an error in the typed copy of the third line from the bottom of the page was corrected before the first edition came out. A line that had been added in the left margin of the early version,

Although our mortal stuff resists and fails,

was written by Sri Aurobindo in the final version with “human” replacing “mortal”. He revised it by dictation to

Although our human stuff resists or breaks,

but, because the “u” of “stuff” resembles an “a” in the final manuscript, the word was typed as “staff”. It went unnoticed when the typescript was revised. But by the time this canto was published in *The Advent*, after light revision of the proofs by

Sri Aurobindo, ‘‘staff’’ had been corrected to ‘‘stuff’’.

The rest of this page of the manuscript from the 1930s consisted originally of twelve lines, to which Sri Aurobindo added a few when he revised it. The final version, printed on pages 353-54 of the current edition of *Savitri*, is only partly seen in the second facsimile. It is about three times the length of what it was in the early version of ‘‘The Book of Birth’’. These are the twelve original lines.

Again the magic deep attempt was made,
 The daring wager of the cosmic game
 For since life entered the material sheath,
 A Mother Wisdom works in Nature’s depths
 To impose perfection on the obscure abyss
 And make dumb Matter conscious of its God,
 Sow heaven’s delight in the heart’s passionate mire
 And immortality in a husk of death.
 And now once more this Will took mortal shape
 Beneath the pressure of its new descent
 A lovelier body formed than earth had known,
 The glowing arc of a charmed unseen whole . .

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

N.B.: Two facsimiles are on the following pages

One had returned from the translucent planes,
 Taking another load of mortal death, F
 Who had strown of gold with our de, brass and our pain;

Survivor of death and the cosmic years,
 Again with her pathless heart she fronted Rome.
 The mentioned Power on the half-battered form

Mixed a transcendent birth's dumb, glorious seed
 The freshness linked our transience to the Unknowing

The contact was renewed earth's tasks had needed
 Between the human portion tending here
 And an as yet unborn and limitless Force.

Again the magic deep attempt was made,
 The daring sear of the cosmic game -
 Life antech the material death,

Mother, Her wisdom worked in Nature's depths
 To enjoin perfection on the obscure abyss
 And make dumb Matter conscious of its God,
 This bill that hoped to dominate clay,
 Now having delight in the heart's pay, wrote man
 And promulgated laws of right and wrong,
 And immortality in a heap of death.

And thus, more than a little back, mortal shape
 Remains the presence of a new descent

A lovelier body formed than earth had known
 The glowing arc of the charnel-house whole

7
 (1)
 (2)
 (3)
 (4)
 (5)
 (6)
 (7)
 (8)
 (9)

For some mind
 seemed to exist
 before
 (was) with
 every man
 equal
 no left to
 the brute class -
 he brought
 another
 (new) man
 from
 the
 invisible
 sent

A page of "The Book of Birth" (early 1930s)

Again her was renewed form revealed
 The ancient closeness by earth-in-air void
 The contact broken of godhead in time,
 The consanguinity of her with heaven,
 A

Descended into earth's imperfect world
 And swept not fallen to mortality,
 But looked on all with love and tranquillity.

I One had returned from the concordant places
 Who had borne away the load of mortal breath,
 Who had ^{again} taken up her ^{ancient} divine inheritance;
 Who had ^{again} ~~striven~~ ^{striven} of old with our darkness and our pain;
 The contact was renewed ^{in the night} had velvet ^{rest} ^{renewed}

Between the human friction tending here
 And an as yet unborn and limitless force;
 Again the mystic deep attempt began,
 The daring wager of the cosmic game.

Survivor of death and the aloe's years,
 Once more with her fatherless heart she floated free.
 For since upon this blind and whirling globe
 Earth's pleasure ^{had} ^{been} ^{quivered} with ^{the} ^{illumined} ^{mind}

And life wounded the material slight
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};
 To ^{power} ^{delight} ^{on} ^{the} ^{heart} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world};

Applying
 her
 will
 to
 feel

AT THE ENTRANCE OF HIS CAVE

At the entrance of his cave
There were no lions to guard it,
Because there was nothing outside him,
Not even the sound heard at times
In the insubstantial sky,
Nor the murmur of a mountain-rill;
He needed no windows occasionally
To look at the stars, or other worlds,
Or watch the orbits of imagination,—
For they existed not there

Sometimes inside the cave
Stood out erect the dark granite
Of thought which seemed to support
This enormous emptiness;
Sometimes moved a swift electric train
Crowding his spirit with a strange din,
Yet someone was there chanting Shankara's hymn,
Sometimes he even played the rope-trick
And vanished into the vacuous air,
As if nothing to win.

In that mood the rock appeared to be
Inside out another illusion
Borne by the etheric quiverings,
A fugitive quantum, a slippery grain
Climbing from crest to uncertain crest;
But his cave was not so ancient
And he began to wonder
If the figures thrown on the wall were true;
He had no way to ascertain
If nothing could cast shadows.

R Y DESHPANDE

(From the author's new book of poems *Paging the Unknown*, published on 21 February 2000)

INVOCATION TO THE YET-UNRISEN SUN

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

THERE IS a legend which appears not only in the Vedas but in several other ancient traditions, about the wonderful herds, the golden cattle belonging to the Sun-God, being stolen by the powers of darkness, dragged backwards and hidden in a dark cave. In the Vedic version it is very clear that these cattle, these cows are rays of light, of knowledge, of divine consciousness. The Sun is the full divine consciousness and the rays, his cows, are his wealth, his powers. If these get swallowed up in darkness, then darkness covers the whole earth—there is no light. Somehow we have to get back that light of the Sun, that divine knowledge. The ancient rishis had the concept of the ever-returning dawn: again and again the Dawn-goddess brings back some of that light, one dawn following another, each dawn not just the beginning of a new earthly day, but the advent of some new light of knowledge and power. And Savitri's name is a key to a Light, a power of the Sun, the Divine Consciousness, that is still hidden in the dark cave of existence, which has yet to emerge and be revealed.

In Sanskrit the Sun has many names: Surya, Ravi, Pushan, Dinakara, etc. And each of them is connected with a particular aspect or function of the Sun, and often with a particular time of the day. Savitar, from whom Savitri gains her name, is the Sun that has not yet risen above the horizon, and it derives from a root syllable that implies the function of setting things in motion, creating, producing anew, or impelling. Since Vedic times Savitar has been invoked each morning before sunrise by countless worshippers, with the Gayatri mantra, attributed to rishi Vishwamitra.

*Tat savitur varenyam
bhargo devasya dhīmahī
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*

*Let us meditate on that most excellent
light of the divine Sun,
that it may illumine our minds*

Sri Aurobindo has given his own Gayatri mantra

*Tat savitur varam rūpam
jyotiḥ parasya dhīmahī,
yannah satyena dīpayet*

*Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri,
on the Light of the Supreme
which shall illumine us with the Truth*

In a recent talk at Savitri Bhavan, R.Y. Deshpande pointed out.

Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri mantra invokes the Divine Light into all the parts and planes of our being. That is how Sri Aurobindo defines Gayatri—as the Word of the Supreme, coming and descending and establishing itself in us, in all the parts of our being

This Gayatri mantra is slightly different from the traditional one of Vishwamitra, where the invocation is for the illumination of our intuition, of our perception, of our understanding of things. In Sri Aurobindo's mantra, the emphasis is on the auspicious form—*varam rūpam*. The entire emphasis in Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to deal with form rather than with intuition, howsoever high it might be. In Sri Aurobindo's version it is not just our mind which is going to be illumined, it is our whole being

Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri mantra consists of 3 times 8 syllables—24 syllables in all, whereas the original Gayatri mantra of Viswamitra has only 23. I feel this is pretty significant, that this fulfilment of one more completing symbol is present in Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri. In this sense a new realm of light is opened out in Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri

Sri Aurobindo's relation to the wisdom of the Vedic seers can be likened to a sculptor who starts to work on a block of stone, chipping away until finally a beautiful figure stands there. When the figure is complete, admiring bystanders ask: "How did you know it was inside?" "I saw it there," he replies. Sri Aurobindo has re-enunciated, re-expressed an eternal wisdom, bringing to light concepts that could be said to have been latent in the ancient spiritual knowledge of India. I would like to draw attention to two of these in particular.

First, the new spiritual significance he has given to the concept of evolution.

The idea of the recurring dawns and the new light and the new knowledge and the ongoing play of the divine consciousness in the world, has always been there in India. It has been repeated over and over and over again that "All this is a habitation for the Lord." This is the great knowledge, the great light that India has to share with the world. But in the past there has perhaps been more emphasis on the idea that the Lord is playing here—the idea of *maya*, of *lila*. Sri Aurobindo has suggested that this play, this *Lila*, has a purpose, a direction; that our inner and outer evolution represents the unfolding in time of ever-new possibilities of consciousness, of action, of energy. And that is a very very positive message for us today. It allows us to look forward to the future with the feeling that the story is not yet finished, the unfolding is still going on; that all these new developments which are often rather frightening to us may in fact be the unfolding of new possibilities—of experience, of learning, and ultimately of expression. The succession of dawns told of by the Rishis is now seen to be leading towards the fulfilment of a divine purpose. The full emergence and self-rediscovery of the Divine out of what seems to be its very opposite: unconscious

Matter Evolution is not complete, and all the imperfections we see in the world all around us are there because the drama is not yet over, we are still in a transitional stage.

The second aspect I would like to emphasise is the importance Sri Aurobindo has given to the Divine Mother, in his retelling of this ancient legend. In the traditional tale, when Aswapati performed his tapasya, his prayer was directed to Brahma. Moreover, in most languages, the Sun is masculine, and the Vedic Savitar is the name of a Sun-god. But in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, the supreme being whom King Aswapati contacts at the culmination of all his long tapasya is the supreme Divine Mother. Sri Aurobindo's wonderful line "The sun from whom we kindle all our suns" refers to the Supreme Divine Mother: the Ishwari, who is an equal power with the Lord. She is his expressive force, his manifesting force, but she is not inferior, she is an equal power with the Lord, she is also the Supreme. And it is she who accepts to incarnate as Savitri, in answer to Aswapati's prayer voicing all the longings of the earth, to urge the earth-evolution forward towards its destined and intended fulfilment: the total manifestation of the Divine in what seems to be just the opposite of Him... all the darkness and unconsciousness which seems to be just the opposite of everything that we could imagine as Divine. He has chosen, for his own reasons, to incarnate in the form of unconscious matter, and then out of that, starting from that base, to evolve, to flower, maybe in forms that would not have been possible in any other way. And he does that, through the action of the Supreme Divine Mother. It is she, who in response to Aswapati's prayer, accepts to incarnate as a human woman upon earth, as Savitri

I would like to read you one of the many beautiful passages where Sri Aurobindo evokes the presence of the Supreme Mother:

At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,
 In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;
 Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base....
 She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
 The magnet of our difficult ascent,
 The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
 The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
 The joy that beckons from the impossible,
 The Might of all that never yet came down
 All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
 To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
 And break the seals on the dim soul of man
 And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.
 All here shall be one day her sweetness' home,
 All contraries prepare her harmony;
 Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes;

In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
 Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.
 Our self shall be one self with all through her
 In her confirmed because transformed in her,
 Our life shall find in its fulfilled response
 Above, the boundless hushed beatitudes,
 Below, the wonder of the embrace divine

(*Savitri*, pp 314-15)

As you all know, the tale of Savitri culminates in a debate with Yama, the Lord of Death, that regulator of the cosmos, the force that keeps everything in its place according to the natural Law, the inevitable forces of Karma and Dharma. Through her capacity of inspired speech—remember that Sri Aurobindo characterises Savitri as the goddess of inspired speech—she is able to win from him the return to life of her young husband Satyavan—who, Sri Aurobindo tells us, represents the Soul of Man, carrying the divine truth of being within itself, but descended into the grip of death and ignorance. This applies to all of us—each of us carries within us the divine truth of being, but here we all are in the grip of death and ignorance, and we need the power of Savitri, the incarnation of the Divine Mother, to help and save us, to bring us light.

In Sri Aurobindo's version, through Savitri's truth-knowledge and power of truth-speaking, this regulatory power of Death changes his aspect completely. At the beginning it is Yama who takes Satyavan's life away and draws his soul out of his body; but as the dialogue between them goes on, it is as if Savitri is revealing to Death himself ever higher levels of his being—so that finally this regulating power of Death is revealed as an aspect of the Supreme Lord. And in that supreme form he offers Savitri the eternal spiritual peace of total immersion and extinction in Brahman, for herself and for Satyavan.

Let us see what he says, and how she responds:

Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again;
 For now from my highest being looks at thee
 The nameless formless peace where all things rest.
 In a happy vast sublime cessation know,—
 An immense extinction in eternity,
 A point that disappears in the infinite,—
 Felicity of the extinguished flame,
 Last sinking of a wave in a boundless sea,
 End of the trouble of thy wandering thoughts,
 Close of the journeying of thy pilgrim soul

(*Ibid.*, p 696)

I think this sounds irresistible. If we were offered such peace, wouldn't we rush to accept it? But Savitri, who so far has not asked for anything, who has only aspired for the return to life of Satyavan, now asks for four boons. What are they? First of all she asks for that peace, that calm, "For the magnificent soul of man on earth":

Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
 Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
 For the magnificent soul of man on earth
 Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy.

(Ibid.)

Secondly she asks for

Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
 My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls.

(Ibid., p. 697)

We may know intellectually that we are connected with everyone else and to all the rest of the universe—but we don't usually experience things that way. If we could only experience that oneness, surely our whole life and attitude and behaviour would change completely.

The third boon she asks for is energy, dynamism:

Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
 To take all things and creatures in their grief
 And gather them into a mother's arms.

(Ibid.)

And last of all she asks:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
 Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
 Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
 Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.

(Ibid.)

And the response is:

O beautiful body of the incarnate Word,
 Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice.
 My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose.
 All thou hast asked I give to earth and men.

(Ibid , p. 698)

Those of us who are devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother believe that as a result of their efforts and tapasya, these boons have in fact been granted “*for earth and men*” The seed of these wonderful things has been planted “*in human time*” And now the future will toil to express it. He says in one place.

This was a seed cast into endless Time
A Word is spoken or a Light is shown,
A moment sees, the ages toil to express

(*Ibid.*, p. 315)

Things aren't done in a flash, but the change will surely come. Like the glory of the Symbol Dawn described in the first canto of *Savitri*, the seed of these wonderful boons has been planted in the hours of human time, and it is sure to grow into a marvellous blossom.

But how soon this new Light, this yet-unrisen Sun, can emerge fully, to fulfil our hopes for a brighter future—a future bright beyond even our rosiest imaginings, and bright for all mankind and the whole earth—does depend, partly at least, on us human individuals. If we really want to collaborate, to help it to come as soon as possible, one way of doing so is to invoke the new Light by calling the presence and power of Savitri.

Reading *Savitri*, immersing ourselves again and again in the atmosphere of this mantric poem, which is also the atmosphere of the calm delight that weds one soul to all, the dynamic energy and the supreme sweetness of Savitri, the human incarnation of the Supreme Divine Mother, is one very effective, very powerful way of calling into ourselves and into the world that Sun, that new and utterly convincing Truth, which is still just below the horizon, preparing to rise and illumine us all with its glorious Light, its Energy, its overwhelming Delight and Sweetness.

(*Concluded*)

SHRADDHAVAN

A VOICE FROM BEYOND

(Written after the demise of Nishikanto, the poet)

THE funeral pyre is ablaze,
Tissues, flesh and form turn to ashes...
Yet lament not my death,
I exist in spite of the loss of body!

Leaving the ill and wornout abode
I have escaped through the Brahmarandhra
Into the ethereal sphere,
Where a loving embrace awaited me!
I am happy now, absorbed in peace
Like a young bird asleep
Within the cosy warmth
Of the mother's protective bosom. .

My journey is towards the luminaries,
Celestial saints and rishis.
I also aspire to attain the Supreme Light
Which radiates rays brighter than a thousand suns!

I aspire but at the same time hear
The crimson call of the green earth,
The invocation of the once near and dear ones
By recital of poems and songs,
The melodies of my own creation and composition..

O my beloved earth, beautiful and felicitous
Are the modes of your manifestations...
They used to inspire and animate my heart-strings
With the resonance of sublime ideas!
The poet in me still bears the essence
Of those striking impressions
And feels ever grateful and indebted to you .

After completing my otherworldly course
I shall return to your loving lap again,
Having a body healthy and sound
By the grace of the alchemy of heaven!

Then I shall play gleefully
 In the playground of your sweet soil
 With the children full of life,
 Ever joyous, free and agile

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

I AM NOT BUDDHA

I AM not Buddha
 but as I left my threshold
 I thought
 that I was in quest of my own self
 I too would
 sit under the Banyan tree
 to be enlightened
 by a revelation some day
 but the fire I was carrying within my body
 remained alive
 rather it kept on flaring
 as the wind in the open
 was violent
 and one day
 it burnt down every tree
 Now I am roaming about
 in such a desert
 where there is none but me
 and my shadow too
 the shadow of my own shadow
 and there is open space
 around me

KHALIL UR REHMAN AZMI

(Translated from the Urdu by B M Courtesy *Skylark* 84/85)

SRI AUROBINDO: INSIDE, OUTSIDE, UPSIDE DOWN

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

Outside

OVER the years a curious thing has happened to me. I have started to find Sri Aurobindo in more and more people and events. It may sound strange and (God forbid!) religious, but there it is. An event will unfold with unexpected harmony, persons at a meeting will understand each other instantly, a divine beauty will manifest at a glance.

What does this have to do with Sri Aurobindo? Not much, on first consideration. But when you have spent years rising to meet his truth, an odd thing happens: all knowledge starts to become an approximation to that. You read a commentary on the Gita and say to yourself "Aha, this author is speaking from about 10% experience, and 90% book knowledge."

Sri Aurobindo gives you this benchmark of truth. Compared to him, all writers and teachers are guessing. Ram Das wrote of the desire which drove him for many years, perhaps his whole life, to meet someone who knows, who knows solidly, completely, someone he could ask any question and be assured of an answer. I too had that gnawing hunger until coming upon Sri Aurobindo.

When you finally meet Sri Aurobindo, if you can recognise him at all, the search is over. Not the path, but the search. The measuring stick of truth has been found. This doesn't mean that all other learning ceases. But you need never fall prey again to the fundamental uncertainty which plagues the modern mind. Learning becomes an exploration, not a groping.

If we look at spiritual life as learning a craft, coming to Sri Aurobindo begins the period of apprenticeship. First we learn the principles and the skills, then we go out into the world and practise them. Going out into the world is the difficult part, and constantly surprising.

A few years ago I went to Pondicherry for the first time. I expected to be overwhelmed by the heat, the dust, the noise. But what really unseated me was the frenetic pace of life. In the United States everyone feels pressured, no time, too many commitments, too much work. No time to breathe, let alone reflect. So what did I find in the small town of Pondicherry? Many people had the same sense of pressure, of life speeded up. And a feeling that essentials were being missed in the headlong rush of events.

Even in Pondicherry, where Sri Aurobindo's presence is physically palpable, the pace of life can disrupt one's peace. For yoga to be effective, we have to bring the peace we gain in quieter moments out, into action, into life.

This is the crucial movement for each of us. It is the most difficult because manifesting spiritual awareness means overcoming the most obstinate and protean

part of the being, the vital nature, as well as its visible part, the desire-soul Sri Aurobindo says

For truth of the Spirit has not to be merely thought but to be lived, and to live it demands a unified single-mindedness of the being, so great a change as is contemplated by the Yoga is not to be effected by a divided will or by a small portion of the energy or by a hesitating mind.⁶

Quieting the mind is small potatoes compared to taming and redirecting the vital, to do that, we must call in something more effective Big things do come in small packages, in this case the psychic, the glowing diamond in the heart

The psychic being is the secret of the Yoga, the secret to taming the vital, and enabling the highest and most integrated action

Remember that equanimity is the first word in the sadhana, the basis of the sadhana Then one develops *shakti*, the working power of the instruments In the chapter titled *The Elements of Perfection*, toward the end of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo gives a concise description of this second aspect, *shakti*, of the *sapta chatushtaya*:

The next necessity of perfection is to raise all the active parts of the human nature to that highest condition and working pitch of their power and capacity, *śakti*, at which they become capable of being divinised into true instruments of the free, perfect, spiritual and divine action. For practical purposes we may take the understanding, the heart, the Prana and the body as the four members of our nature which have thus to be prepared

To divinise the perfected nature we have to call in the divine Power or Shakti to replace our limited human energy so that this may be shaped into the image of and filled with the force of a greater infinite energy, *daivī prakṛti, bhāgavatī śakti* This perfection will grow in the measure in which we can surrender ourselves, first, to the guidance and then to the direct action of that Power and of the Master of our being and our works to whom it belongs, and for this purpose faith is the essential, faith is the great motor-power of our being in our aspirations to perfection,—here, a faith in God and the Shakti which shall begin in the heart and understanding, but shall take possession of all our nature, all its consciousness, all its dynamic motive-force.’’⁷

Shraddha (faith, or soul-force) emerges with the flowering of the psychic Soul-force is the key to this Yoga. In the average person, soul-force is only barely active, it supports the normal surface personality, but is not fully or directly active. As we open to the psychic, this force begins to strengthen, and our qualities become purer and closer to the divine source When it emerges, the psychic brings in the universal *shakti*.

One of the open secrets of the Yoga is the necessity of bringing the psychic being forward, in order for the Yoga to be effective in life. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo begins each section (the Yogas of Knowledge, Love, or Work) by stressing equanimity, but ends by stressing the necessity of the psychic for completing the job.

At a certain stage in the Yoga when the mind is sufficiently quieted and no longer supports itself at every step on the sufficiency of its mental certitudes, when the vital has been steadied and subdued and is no longer constantly insistent on its own rash will, demand and desire, when the physical has been sufficiently altered not to bury altogether the inner flame under the mass of its outwardness, obscurity or inertia, an inmost being hidden within and felt only in its rare influences is able to come forward and illumine the rest and take up the lead of the Sadhana... Its action is like a searchlight showing up all that has to be changed in the nature; it has in it a flame of will insistent on perfection, on an alchemic transmutation of all the inner and outer existence.⁸

You may wonder how to recognise this new will Sri Aurobindo gives specific indications:

. something of the supreme Will can manifest in us as an imperative impulsion, a God-driven action, we then act by a spontaneous self-determining Force but a fuller knowledge of meaning and aim arises only afterwards. Or the impulse to action may come as an inspiration or intuition, but rather in the heart and body than in the mind; here an effective sight enters in but the complete and exact knowledge is still deferred and comes, if at all, later. But the divine Will may descend too as a luminous single command or a total perception or a continuous current of perception of what is to be done into the will or into the thought or as a direction from above spontaneously fulfilled by the lower members⁹

Earlier we spoke of the sevenfold steps of the Yoga, beginning with equanimity. As the psychic comes forward, it develops four essential qualities of the being: a mind full of light; an effective will-force, practical arrangement of things; and the power of service to others. In the end, soul-power emerges with its true universality, as Sri Aurobindo describes here:

. an enlightened life of the mind grasps at all knowledge with a delight of finding and reception and holding, a spiritual enthusiasm, passion, or ecstasy. .a bottomless steadiness and illimitable calm upholds all the illumination...

An absolute calm fearlessness of the free spirit, an infinite dynamic courage . a high nobility of soul and will...a soul-power of mutuality, a free self-spending...a great taking into oneself from all beings and a free giving out of

oneself to all, a divine commerce, a large enjoyment of the mutual delight of life the soul-power of service, the universal love that lavishes itself without demand of return, the embrace that takes to itself the body of God in man and works for help and service the self-surrender of the whole being to the Master of our being and his work in the world.¹⁰

What better description of Sri Aurobindo? As you develop these qualities, you approach him

Upside Down

When the Yoga starts to flower, it turns everything upside down You step into the kitchen and the countertop giggles, go outside, and the trees laugh. Thoughts and feelings from last week seem antiquated, ancient and musty and lifeless. Goals that only yesterday filled your horizon shrink to dust motes in an infinite vista of possibility

Jacques Lusseyran, in the extraordinary autobiography titled *And There Was Light*, writes of his initial experience with the light of truth, after being physically blinded as a child.

I realized that I was looking in the wrong way It was as simple as that . I was looking too far off, and too much on the surface of things

This was more than a simple discovery, it was a revelation I can still see myself in the Champs de Mars, where my father had taken me for a walk a few days after the accident. Of course I knew the garden well, its ponds, its railings, its iron chairs. I even knew some of the trees in person, and naturally I wanted to see them again. But I couldn't I threw myself forward into the substance which was space, but which I did not recognise because it no longer held anything familiar to me

At this point some instinct—I was almost about to say a hand laid on me—made me change course. I began to look more closely, not at things but at a world closer to myself, looking from an inner place to one further within, instead of clinging to the movement of sight toward the world outside.

Immediately, the substance of the universe drew together, redefined and peopled itself anew I was aware of a radiance emanating from a place I knew nothing about, a place which might as well have been outside me as within. But radiance was there, or, to put it more precisely, light It was a fact, for light was there

I felt indescribable relief, and happiness so great it almost made me laugh Confidence and gratitude came as if a prayer had been answered I found light and joy at the same moment, and I can say without hesitation that from that time on light and joy have never been separated in my experience I have had them or lost them together.¹¹

Here Lusseyran describes an individual experience, whereas Sri Aurobindo gives the wider picture

The 'Shakti, the power of the Infinite and the Eternal descends within us, works, breaks up our present psychological formations, shatters every wall, widens, liberates, presents us with always newer and greater powers of vision, ideation, perception and newer and greater life-motives, enlarges and new-models increasingly the soul and its instruments, confronts us with every imperfection in order to convict and destroy it, opens to a greater perfection, does in a brief period the work of many lives or ages, so that new births and new vistas open constantly within us.¹²

At the end of Book Seven, Canto Five, *The Finding of the Soul*, after Savitri has had her psychic awakening, Sri Aurobindo gives these words:

In the slow process of the evolving spirit,
 In the brief stade between a death and birth
 A first perfection's stage is reached at last;
 Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff
 A temple is shaped where the high gods could live
 Even if the struggling world is left outside
 One man's perfection still can save the world.
 There is won a new proximity to the skies,
 A first betrothal of the Earth to Heaven,
 A deep concordat between Truth and Life
 A camp of God is pitched in human time¹³

To walk on Sri Aurobindo's path is a noble and joyful undertaking, all the more so because of he who travels with you. Sri Aurobindo calls us to a divine transformation, a refashioning of our very being. Just as he often said that the world is real, I say to you that Sri Aurobindo and his Yoga are real, as much so as the building we are in or the city around us. Find him, meet him, identify yourself with him, and your life will change in ways you cannot even imagine.

(Concluded)

DAVID HUTCHINSON

References

- 6 *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp 63-64
 7 *Ibid*, p 666
 8 *Ibid*, p 145
 9 *Ibid*, p 207

- 10 *Ibid*, pp 722-23
 11 Jacques Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*, pp 16-17
 12 *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p 172
 13 *Savitri*, p 531

THE VEDIC VISION

THE spiritual vision of the Vedic seers gave birth to Indian Culture and Civilisation. This vision of the ancient Rishis may probably contain in a seed-form all the guiding ideals and values needed for steering India and the world towards their spiritual regeneration. One of the greatest and the most original contributions of Sri Aurobindo to Indian Culture is the rediscovery of the integral vision of the Rishis. This article examines the fundamental tenets of the Vedic vision and its relevance for the spiritual destiny of India in the light of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas

Discoveries of the Vedic Seers

What are the basic spiritual intuitions of the Vedas? In fact the best way to describe the history of the Vedic age would be not as a progress of events but as a series of inspired intuitions or visions of the Vedic seers which spontaneously expressed itself in the social organisation without any intervention of the rational mind. There was no deliberate and systematic imposition of a social theory or intellectual idea on life. Society evolved organically, like life itself, under a basic framework and the guiding vision provided by the Vedic seers. The main spiritual intuitions which form the Vedic vision of life are as follows:

1. The intuition of supra-physical realities behind the physical universe. This gave birth to the idea that all terrestrial phenomena and events are symbols of some supra-terrestrial powers and the tendency to make everything in society a sacrament.

2. The vision of *ekam tat sat*, the Reality is One which the sages call variously, and the gods are the different cosmic powers or "aspects" of the one Reality.

3. Man and cosmos are equal powers of the one divine Reality; the individual and the collectivity are equal self-expressions of the one Divine. the human society is conceived as a direct expression of the cosmic Powers.

4. In the concept of mystic sacrifice of the Divine Being the entire universe itself is conceived as a result of sacrifice performed by the gods, the order of the universe is supposed to be maintained by sacrifices. For the Vedic mystics the whole process of the universe is in its very nature a sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary; it is the outer symbol of an inner interchange between the gods and men, man giving what he has, the gods giving in return strength, the horses of power, *aśva*, the herds of light, *go*, the heroes of might, *vīra*, winning for him victory in his battle with the host of darkness, *dasyus*. But for the layman this became the ritualistic religion of outer sacrifice. For the Vedic Rishis and the initiates the outer ritual is only a symbol of the inner sacrifice of the human being to the gods who are outwardly symbolised as forces of Nature and inwardly as subjective powers of consciousness.

5. The vision of *ṛta*, the cosmic Rhythm and Harmony which is conceived as the source of all Law and Order—spiritual, moral, social and physical—in the life of Man and the Universe. From this Vedic idea of *ṛta* is derived the latter ideas of Dharma

and the Law of Karma which are the basis of all moral and social values of the ancient Indian civilisation.

6. The ultimate aim or goal of the Vedic sacrifice is the ascent of the mortal earth-bound soul to the eternal worlds of Light and the descent and formation of the gods in the human being

The Fire of Sacrifice

But the key to the secret of Vedic Yoga lies in clear understanding of the significance of the Vedic vision of sacrifice and the system of symbols used by the Vedic sages to describe the process and the results of the sacrifice.

As already said, sacrifice is the central principle of the Vedic Yoga. Mutual sacrifice of men and gods culminating in ascent of the human consciousness towards the consciousness of the gods and the descent and formation of the gods in human nature is the essence of the Vedic Yoga. But what is the spiritual intuition behind this concept of sacrifice? It is the intuition into the mystery of the original creative act by which the supreme Reality becomes causal, subtle and then the gross universe, becomes the gods, earth and heaven, life and matter, the sun, the moon and the stars, animals and men. It is the process by which the indivisible Unity of the Spirit becomes and involves itself in its exact opposite, that is, the infinite fragmentation of Matter. It is this process of cosmic sacrifice which is described in the beautiful symbolic imagery of Purusha Sukta of the Vedas. (Rig Veda X 90.1-10)

But why is it called sacrifice? In every stage of this involutory descent there is gradual loss of the consciousness of unity in the outer form of the diversity through a process of voluntary self-limitation of the spirit, in the last stage of the descent, when it becomes Matter, the loss becomes almost total. But this loss of consciousness of Unity happens only to the outer form and not to the deeper essence of the spirit. At this deeper level the unity of the Being, Purusha, is secretly present in every level or stage of descent—in the causal state of the world as *prajñā*, in the subtle as *hiranya-garbha*, and in the gross as *virāt*—upholding and guiding the whole process. This is the sacrifice of involution by which the universe comes into being.

But creation is not merely a process of involution. There is also the evolution, the work of Agni, an upward striving will or aspiration or a nisus implanted in every animate and inanimate being. In the Vedic symbolism Agni represents this evolutionary force and will in man and in the universe. The Vedic sages conveyed this truth through a subtle and striking distinction made between Agni and other gods, while other gods wake up with the Dawn, Agni is the ever-wakeful god who burns even during the Night. It means that, while the other gods work only during periods of inner illumination, Agni's evolutionary work goes on even during periods of darkness and obscurity, acting behind the veil.

What is the process or method of this evolutionary sacrifice? Not only is the process of creation a sacrifice, but also the process of evolution. The sacrifice of creative involution proceeds by a gradual loss and veiling of the consciousness of

Unity in the individual forms of creation through the limiting mechanism of ego, the sacrifice of evolution proceeds by a gradual rediscovery of the conscious Unity of the spirit through the denial of ego and consequent increase or expansion of consciousness, it culminates in total recovery of the conscious oneness of the spirit in each individual form of creation. In the more figurative language of the ancients, the evolutionary process is the reconstruction of the body of God dismembered and fragmented in the diversity of the cosmos during the process of creation or involution. The Purusha Sukta hymn of the Rīg Veda describes this process of dismemberment of the body of God as follows

“When did they split up the Purusha? into how many parts? where is his face, what happened to his two arms? where are his two feet? where are his things?”

This Vedic concept of sacrifice can be better understood when it is viewed in the light of a somewhat similar imagery of the Egyptian mythology. According to this Egyptian legend, Osiris the Sun-god was treacherously slain by his wicked brother Set and his body cut into pieces. Then his wife Isis, who is also his sister, goes in search of the pieces, puts them together and miraculously restores his body to life. The symbolism behind the story is striking and unmistakable.

Thus the essential nature of the evolutionary sacrifice is the denial of ego through an act of self-giving to the egoless and universal divine Whole and its powers, the gods. It is a movement towards the recovery of conscious unity and a return towards our spiritual source and the self of our being in which we are one with the All. For in a cosmic system governed by the laws of unity and interdependence, the only right path towards evolutionary progress is through mutual self-giving or sacrifice. When this law and process of sacrifice becomes fully conscious in the individual and is done with a full understanding—not merely an intellectual understanding but an intuitive and experiential understanding—of the meaning, significance, process and aim of the great law which governs the world, then it becomes Yoga. As Sri Aurobindo explains the psychological significance of the Vedic sacrifice.

“The Vedic sacrifice is, psychologically, a symbol of cosmic and individual activity become self-conscious, enlightened and aware of its goal. The whole process of the universe is in its very nature a sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary. Self-fulfilment by self-immolation, to grow by giving is the universal law. That which refuses to give itself, is still the food of cosmic powers. “The eater eating is eaten” is the formula, pregnant and terrible in which the Upanishad sums up this aspect of the universe, and in another passage men are described as the cattle of the gods. It is only when the law is recognised and voluntarily accepted that this kingdom of death can be overpassed and by the works of sacrifice Immortality made possible and attained. All the powers and potentialities of the human life are offered up, in the symbol of a sacrifice, to the divine Life in the cosmos.”*

(To be concluded)

M S SRINIVASAN

* *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10, p 266

CHILD OF THE FUTURE

THE CONCEPT OF 'CHILD' IN SRI AUROBINDO'S LITERATURE

GENERALLY, writers use the popular, accepted or traditional ideology, images and words to express their thoughts. Popular images are backed by centuries of public acceptance and evoke the expected emotions in the readers with ease. At times, a writer may evoke beauty, depth and hitherto unforeseen dimensions of thought even through common images. When these images have subtle hues and a specific inner meaning, it becomes necessary for the reader to know the background or the philosophy which backs those particular terms as it enables him to appreciate the work to the full

As literature stems from life, the different stages of human life and its varied relationships form the subject for many literary pieces. The biological and emotional characteristics of each of these stages, such as infancy, youth, adulthood, old age, are at once distinct and universal. In human relationships, motherhood is associated with the utmost love, sacrifice and tolerance. Similarly childhood is identified with innocence, purity, dependence, elasticity, tenderness on one side and with mischief, attachment, cantankerousness, ignorance and invincibility on the other. It is understood that in the process of growth, man gradually leaves this childhood behind and enters a more assertive and conscious stage where his outlook will be controlled by his individual opinions and attitudes. So, this childhood, which is a biological phase, is outgrown by man. But in the field of religion, the term 'child' and the concept of childhood are not limited by age. Christians believe that only those who have the 'heart of the child' can enter the kingdom of God. So this child in man is the son of God, the pure being, something to be acquired, cultivated, nourished and cherished if one has to enter the Father's Eternal Kingdom. In the Hindu Bhakti Marga also, the relationship of mother and child is accepted and adored as an ideal relationship between the deity and the devotee. From this it is clear that the word 'child' has two different meanings—the general, biological or physical childhood and the exalted, spiritual childhood. Physical childhood is the beginning of life, a preliminary stage which must be outgrown. Spiritual childhood is the goal which must be attained.

The words 'child', 'childhood', 'infancy', etc., have different levels of meaning in Sri Aurobindo's works. The Aurobindonian concept of spiritual descent and ascent as the root cause of this creation confers a double parenthood on each being born in matter. Though originally the source of Infinitude, Bliss, Power, Freedom, Light and Consciousness, being born into ignorance, man becomes by nature a 'child of ignorance'. He regains his position as a child of spirit only by a wilful, conscious effort and surrender to the Supreme Mother or Creatrix. So the child of Spirit who becomes the child of Matter in the process of involution progresses to his original stature gradually through evolution.

The Divine Mother is always calm and willing to guide when sought. She is

never imposing. The individual must shed his ego and desire and make a complete and conscious surrender to her. She demands total plasticity from those who seek her as their mother. The freedom to choose her as the mother rests with the child. Obstructing man's spiritual progress and opposing the forces of Light, testing the sincerity of the Sadhaka and thereby offering indirect services to the Supreme is the Mother of Evil and the Queen of Darkness

A child is a natural inheritor and heir to the parents' qualities. Each being born in this world is given a dual heritage. As the descendant or offspring imbibing the qualities of these opposing forces in different proportions in his being, each individual acts, reacts and thinks differently. But sometimes a child may make a conscious or unconscious revolt for either good or bad and may disappoint one of his parents. If his legacy of ignorance is disowned, the act is appreciated by the Universal Mother of Light and is condemned by the equally potent Mother of Darkness. Similarly if a being forgets his original heritage of light and behaves as a confirmed child of Matter, he forgoes his opportunity to progress, delays the universal progress also to that degree and disappoints the Mother of Light. The transition from the child of Matter to the child of spirit on earth makes the journey complete. The perfected individual is always a child as he realises his eternal relationship with Nature and the Creator and realises his freedom in total surrender to the Supreme.

In many of Sri Aurobindo's works one finds an opposition between 'childhood' and 'old age' and Sri Aurobindo clearly sides with the former. In describing many of his characters, including the supernatural, he uses terms like 'child god', 'elder god', 'King child', 'Timeless child', 'Flame child', 'recovered child', etc., with special connotations. Some of his characters desire to remain without 'growing old'. Apart from the superficial or contextual meaning, each of such expressions has a deeper, subtler meaning and it befits the reader to attempt to know it in order to enjoy Sri Aurobindo better.

In 'Urvasie' which is one of Sri Aurobindo's early Romances, Puru is the child of the Supreme Mother. He is described as an 'Aryan', the son of the Divine Mother of the Aryans. The divine Mother dreams that self-conquest would be the first law of his nature. In him and through him she strives in vain towards insufferable spiritual heights. She laments,

O mine own son, Pururavus, I fall
By thy vast failure from my dazzling skies¹

Puru, the child of spirit and knowledge, prefers to remain a son of matter and ignorance. The Mother of Evil beguiles Puru through the touch of Urvasie which is a fascination and a death. In Book II Canto 8 of *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo describes how the Mother of Evil arrests the passion of the climbing soul 'and forces on life' a slow and faltering pace. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo states that desire and ego-sense are the two knots which ought to be loosened for proceeding on the path of

works in Yoga. But these obscure twin powers obsess Puru and this son of the great mother relinquishes his ideals and goals to be happy with Urvasie. So, here is a child of spirit who has chosen to be the child of matter and darkness.

In 'Love and Death', the hero Ruru and the heroine Priyamvada are called 'the children of mother Earth'. Mother Earth is glad of her children for their successful endeavour. Ruru, the picture of unstained youth, has 'unspoiled thoughts' and scope for 'boundless possibilities' coupled with 'unfathomable love'. He is a member of the 'early world', a heir to all the sweetness of the fresh, green, joyous earth 'full of bright Promises'. Immersed in his rapturous love with Priyamvada, Ruru exclaims boyishly:

O father Sun...how good it is to live, to love!
Surely our joy shall never end, nor we grow old...²

The desire to remain in constant joy against the natural laws of time and life is but a childish thought. But when his state of perpetual bliss receives a sudden and abrupt jolt through Priyamvada's death, Ruru remains adamant in his decision to retrieve her from Death's domain. Like an obstinate child, he refuses to concede to the natural laws and accept death as man's fate. At this single-hearted prayer, the 'child God' Cupid takes Ruru as His champion to carry the banner of love for the first time into the grim worlds of Death.

Though some scholars are of the opinion that the early Romances of Sri Aurobindo are mere exercises of youth which are far behind the 'inner Epic' of his maturity, one cannot miss an integral pattern, whether intentional or unintentional, in all the works of Sri Aurobindo. The 'boyish hero', as the author himself calls Ruru, has the same relationship with Savitri as infancy has with full-blown youth. Savitri in *Savitri* tells Death that His business would fail when a Lover 'Gathers the whole world into his single breast'. This boyish hero is the lover who takes the first step in that direction by bringing Priyamvada out of Death's hold by his love and sacrifice.

Ruru opposes the stifling age-old traditions and beliefs. His boyishness has scope for growth, 'infinite possibilities'. He is not confined, bound by conventions, iron chains of tradition and order, and the rigidity and conformity which curtail the being's natural responses. It is not merely by his physical age that Ruru is a child. He is a 'child soul' too. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo says:

Hatred and dislike and scorn and repulsion, clinging and attachment and preference are natural, necessary, inevitable at a certain stage they attend upon or they help to make and maintain Nature's choice in us. The child-soul needs them for its growth; but they drop from an adult in the divine culture.³

Ruru's sacrifice does stem from his desire and his work is done with attachment to the result. A sense of personal fulfilment crowns his achievement. So he is a 'child

soul' whose ego is not expelled but only widened to a limited degree. But by challenging Death and refusing the lures of egoistic existence Ruru has realised the first mark of the supra-rational. In *The Human Cycle* Sri Aurobindo says that the growth of absolute ideals is the first indication of the supra-rational. Ruru's pursuit of the ideal love of man and woman is of the supra-rational order.

(To be concluded)

B VARALAKSHMI

References

- 1 *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p 225
- 2 *Ibid*, p 233
- 3 *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 20, p 211

THE DIVINE MOTHER

(A Telecast by Doordarshan Kendra, Pondicherry, on 21 February 2000)

As I experienced the Mother and as I perceived Her from my first Darshan in 1960 and until 1973 she was Vast, Mysterious, all Bliss, Consciousness, Magnificent She has always appeared to challenge me to exceed my known capacities Details of this are truly indescribable But the emphasis was nearly always on work.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

The Divine Mother is the consciousness and Force of the Divine—which is the Mother of all things.

She whom we here adore, love, worship as the Mother, purely and wonderfully manifested, and still manifests, is the consciousness and force of the Divine. Indeed, and to essentially quote Sri Aurobindo.

There is nothing that is impossible to her who is the conscious Power and universal Goddess all-creative from eternity and armed with the Spirit's omnipotence. All knowledge, all strengths, all triumph and victory, all skill and works are in her hands she is Maheshwari, goddess of the supreme knowledge, and brings to us her vision for all kinds and widenesses of truth, her rectitude of the spiritual will, the calm and passion of her supramental largeness, her felicity of illumination; she is Mahakali, goddess of the supreme strength and with her are all mights and spiritual force and severest austerity of Tapas and swiftness to the battle and the victory and the laughter .she is Mahalakshmi, the goddess of the supreme love and delight, and her gifts are the spirit's grace and the charm and beauty of the Ananda and protection and every divine and human blessing: she is Mahasaraswati, the goddess of divine skill and of the works of the Spirit and hers is the Yoga that is skill in works ..and the utilities of divine knowledge and the self-application of the spirit to life and the happiness of its harmonies. And in all her powers and forms she carries with her the supreme sense of the masteries of the eternal Ishwari, a rapid and divine capacity for all kinds of action that may be demanded from the instrument .a fruitful harmony with all the Divine will in the universe.

Within and radiating from our Mother was an astonishing and oceanic light of all Her Powers as described by Sri Aurobindo. At different times and according to our need and capacity we felt or experienced all of them

The truly marvellous aspect of the Mother's work was in collaboration with Sri Aurobindo, our supreme Lord, to bring into the material earth-consciousness, into the gross physical nature, the manifesting radiance of all Her Divine Powers. This was a

continuous and most arduous work, for each cell of every aspect of Matter has to know and realise the supramental Light it contains. This is in fact the necessary basis for the New Race into which present humanity will develop. For our journey has no end and it is on the basis of an illumined and conscious earth that our children will exceed their capacities and grow surely into a magnificent human kind free from the darkneses we now suffer from.

The 29th February 1956 was the day on which the Mother clearly knew that the transforming work of the Divine Light awakening in Matter has been established and the work begun

As far back as 1916 the Mother wrote in a Prayer:

Nothing is in the Universe but Thy life, Thy right, Thy Love.

I invoke Her Love and Blessings for all of us

ANURAKTA

(NB Anurakta was interviewed by Pradip Kumar Sen for the T V programme — R Y D)

POETRY

A SPONTANEOUS flow from realms above,
A trickling down of words in rhythm,
Of some sweet song of the soul
Or of some melodious sacred hymn;

Of things seen put in guise
Of things dear to poet's heart
Of his imagery, vision or surmise
Poetry is his life's precious part.

It may be a call for help to the Supreme
Or a vehicle for reaching the Divine,
A promise or fulfilment of his dream,
In distress for him it is a wine.

When something within weeps and wails
As a wounded bird flutters its wings,
The anguish deepens, utter despair prevails,
In such agony often poetry springs.

Or when the mind is at rest for a time
There is stillness within and without,
Then begins the flow of rhythm and rhyme
And the divine bounty of muse comes out.

Poetry is an art to amuse and elevate,
It is a soothing balm for the wounded soul,
When life hangs heavy, it lessens its weight
And gives a new hope by inspiring to the goal.

It touches the innermost feelings of the heart,
It reaches the subliminal depths straightaway,
The poet weaves his dreams with words
As a potter moulds on his wheel pots out of clay.

M P JAIN

THE ODYSSEY — AN ADAPTATION

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

Scene 13

Demodocus And onward they did sail, until at last they came to the deep stream of Oceanus. (*Hermes leads them*) There they beached their ship and walked along the shore to the place Circe had described. They dug a trench and poured in sacrificial blood. This was only for Tiresias, but other shades approached first. To Hades still a stranger, Elpenor came. His precipitous descent had left him as confused as a child when he awakens and like a child he sought comfort in the warmth of Odysseus.

Elpenor Odysseus, you left me unburied.

Odysseus Forgive me, Elpenor. In my haste, I left you to the care of others.

Elpenor Not to their care, but their neglect. I will never find my way in Hades unmourned, without the rites of death's passage.

Odysseus. Mourned you will be until my own journey to Hades. Behind even my joy your memory will linger, calling up visions of the youth who preceded his elder to adventures in Hades even Odysseus has not dreamed of. Pardon, Elpenor, the rituals left undone. I will return to the island of Circe and do what is needed.

Elpenor: I will wait for your actions to put an end to my wandering. Farewell, great Odysseus. You will have stories to tell when we meet once again.

Odysseus: Farewell, my Elpenor. May your heart be at peace. (*Tiresias enters*) Respected Tiresias, please drink of this blood.

Tiresias. (*drinks*) You seek my counsel and this I will give, Odysseus whose journey seems never to end. Poseidon is angry and Ithaca distant and yet you may still reach your home. One danger I see greater than others, though the Earthshaker has many in store.

Odysseus: Please guide me Tiresias.

Tiresias: The cattle of the sun you must not defile. Helios's herds are not for the use of your men. Respect them, admire them, but leave them untouched or their flesh will burn more than your tongues. Bypass the isle of Thrinacia. The goal is not reached by thieves of the light.

Odysseus. I will do so.

Tiresias If you do and reach Ithaca your troubles will not be yet at an end. Your house is in turmoil, suitors are courting your wife, proud blustering men who impoverish your home. These you must kill, by craft or by fight. Then Poseidon must be appeased.

Odysseus Tiresias, I thank you and will do as you say.

Demodocus. Other ghosts came, some, like his mother, for the love of Odysseus, others Ajax and Achilles, to see a comrade not fallen. These Odysseus had looked for, but a sight pierced his heart with a pain no spearpoint had given when out of the mists Agamemnon took shape. His betrayal at home by his wife and her lover was more than Odysseus could bear. But at last the darkness was stifling and death's air was too chilling. The living should not mingle long with the dead, and he strode towards the sunlight, his ship and his purpose and raised his sails to be filled with life's winds. (*music*) They sailed back to the island of Circe, to complete Elpenor's rites. Then Circe had more counsel to give.

Scene 14

Circe. You are back from the dead, new-born to the day, you can face now the dangers to come.

Odysseus. Do you know what they are?

Circe. A few I can see. The first danger you'll meet is the song of a voice whose beauty will enrapture your soul. Each heart-stilling note will be tuned to your senses and awaken you to a light yet unknown. Your breath will forget to be needed; your mind will stream towards the source. Nothing else will matter, not home, not Penelope, not life. To dwell in that sound you would sacrifice all, cast aside your life as a man. If you thrill to the beauty and let it pass on the air, its richness can transform your life. But men look to seize on the source and their grasping mistakes the instrument for the beauty itself. The sirens whose voices sound sweet, are monsters who will tear you to shreds. I can see by your eyes you will hazard your life to hear the sound that I have described. You would fail, so heed me. Have your men plug their ears and tie you to the mast with knots that cannot be undone. No matter how you plead, or beg or implore them, they must ignore your sharpest commands. Once heard you will regret it, for life will seem petty and dull, but untied from the mast you will soon find your feet will regain their custom to roll with the waves. And the wind in the sails will force commands from the captain, and your face will be turned toward your course. Your memories of bliss will be left for the sunsets and moments of calm in the sea.

Odysseus: Forever only a memory?

Circe: Till your soul meets the soul of the world

Odysseus: Then . Ithaca?

Circe: Not yet. Next you will meet my special artwork, which I created, not knowing there would be sailors I'd care for. A six-headed monster, once a sea-nymph who had forgotten her place. If you go quickly enough you'll allow her only one pass and each head will swallow only one man.

Odysseus: I will sail out of her reach

Circe: If you do you will encounter Charybdis, another child of Poseidon.

Odysseus: What monster can be worse than one with six heads?

Circe: One that engulfs the whole ship, Captain and all. The greed of Charybdis consumed her whole being until nothing was left but her mouth. She's a whirlpool as large as your ship.

Odysseus: But there is no way around them?

Circe: No, they guard a strait that is narrow and one through which you must pass. There is, however, one possibility

Odysseus: Yes?

Circe: You can go in between them, but the margin is slim, to follow that path takes more than your skill.

Odysseus: I will try. Tiresias spoke of one danger more.

Circe: Yes, the cattle of the Helios. Do not touch them. They are as rays straight from the sun. Splendid to see, but death to the greedy. Few can absorb too much of the sun

Odysseus: Circe, my debt knows no bounds.

Circe: You have repaid it. Giving freedom to that which I love is a joy I would never have known

Scene 15

(Music which takes them through the sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the island of the sun in which he meets Hermes again while the men slaughter the cattle, and the tempest which follows in which all but Odysseus are lost. He then floats past Scylla and Charybdis, avoiding both, and lands up on the beach. Calypso enters and sees him. He goes to her, takes her hand; then turning away Demodocus gives him his tunic back.)

(To be continued)

NANCY WHITLOW

RAVINDRA KHANNA: A POET, A WARRIOR, AND A YOGI

TWO TRIBUTES

1

I MET him for the first time when I was with Amal (Amal Kiran—K. D. Sethna), oh, many years ago. Amal told me later that whenever he had difficulty in remembering a line of a poem or wondered who was the author of a stanza that hummed in his mind, or failed to find a particular reference in Sri Aurobindo's poems, he would ask Ravindra Khanna.

In that first meeting itself we had formed a common bond by our love of Sufi poetry in Urdu and Pharsi and also by some similarities in temperament. Ravindra Khanna was a romantic (which poet is not!), a scholar, a warrior and of course, a Yogi. We often started our meeting with a few romantic verses from words of well-sung Gazals, well known couplets from Urdu poems, and usually ended with lines from *Ilion* (his special love) or *Savitri*. Whenever we used to meet, in his house or on the road to the Ashram or later in the nursing home, it always was a feast of poems. Of Iqbal and Ghalib and the moderns like Firaq in Urdu poetry and Arjava and Amal and of course Sri Aurobindo were the poems he recited and sometimes his own. And that was what we talked about and enjoyed, creating and drinking and imbibing an atmosphere at once lyrical and earthly but fragrant with heaven's blossoms, often romantic and always full of love for our Masters, that evoked their presence. Yes, I miss him.

In the nursing home, as he told me, he had wanted to start classes on *The Life Divine*. "We should give back what we have learnt," he often told me and encouraged me thus in my own professional work. We always talked in Urdu or Hindustani and it was a delight to hear his diction, the way he recited a verse and the passion he put in it.

Often I would be the postman carrying messages to and from Amal. Both of them, Amal and Ravindra Khanna, were very fond of each other and at the same time very independent.

He was a warrior. As a doctor I have known what acute unimaginable feeling and experience it is to be hungry for breath, to suffer from an unquenchable thirst for oxygen and an intense incapacity to breathe out during an asthmatic episode. I am aware how difficult it is to know that another attack is inevitable and yet to refuse to dwell on it. And I have seen him during and before and after an attack. His optimism born of his intense love of and unshakable faith in the Mother was something I have hardly ever seen in anyone else.

During the freedom struggle, before going to prison, he had memorised Sri Aurobindo's poems and many others. Time for him in jail was a gift to enjoy these

poems He used to recite to himself loudly and wonder later how the time passed. Never have I heard him complain of anyone and if at all there was a possibility to feel bitter, it was turned into an occasion to remember some beautiful lines of a poem.

Ravindra Khanna, it was a grace that I knew you Yes, I will miss you What a joy it is to think of you and remember you, for it always evokes memories of our meetings, of your fighting spirit and I think that you are now like

He who from Time's dull limits escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless wordless into the eternal's breast

DINKAR D PALANDE

2

Ravindra said that it was the path of meditation that had led him to the greatest happiness. Before coming to the Ashram he had felt the descent of love into his being Everyone appeared to him to be lovable; he had a great outflowing of love for those he met—all of them, beggars, animals, plants and flowers This, he said, was not himself loving, but that loving was of the Divine acting through him. It became so intense that he only lived to open even more fully to the transformation. It became a marvel to him that there was so much love to be found in the world—for it was returned to him from every side He was imprisoned by the British for political reasons and put among habitual criminals of the most hardened type, but they, too, could recognise this love and return it. And then, he said, there had come to him that knowledge of the eternal nature of his soul, the central certainty that it was immortal, that he was immune from all accident or evil. He said that nothing in the world could alter this He had enjoyed and learned much from books, but he was not dependent on them. If he went blind tomorrow, his happiness would still be unaffected.

After his release from prison he had married Raj Kumari, a lecturer in Sanskrit, who had then supported him while he studied English literature at Lahore University. For two years after that he had taught at the University, but had increasingly felt the pull of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and the need to live in the Ashram. How could he leave his wife and their young child? The Mother wrote "Wait." And then, on a Darshan Day visit, his wife saw Sri Aurobindo and was overwhelmed by him. All three of them had come to the Ashram in 1949

Ravindra was to live in Pondicherry for fifty years For a long time he taught in the Ashram school, until age and increasing attacks of asthma kept him confined to his room. He continued to deepen his knowledge and love of English and Urdu poetry, many fine passages of which he knew by heart

His advice to those beginning to meditate would be. Just let all thoughts rise into consciousness and offer them to the Divine, saying "This is what I am like. You

can see what is best for me. Please change whatever is necessary ” And his testimony, when I first met him, was that “There is nothing in the world like the satisfactions of Yoga ”

DICK BATSTONE

(Based, in part, on notes of a conversation with Ravindra Khanna in 1959)

JAYANTILAL-DA: A LIFE FULFILLED IN THE DIVINE

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

JAYANTILAL-DA deeply loved his elder brother H T Parekh, the doyen of housing development finance in India. The latter was a source of great help and support for Jayantilal-da, even in matters connected with the Ashram. On the night of 18 November 1994, Jayantilal-da received a phone call from Bombay to say that his brother's condition was critical. It was quite a shock. At 4 a.m. next morning, Jayantilal-da packed a few things and took a bus to Madras. The only information he left about his departure was with Jhumur Bhattacharya whom he met on his way to the Samadhi before taking a rickshaw to the bus-stand. In the meanwhile, his brother had breathed his last in the night. Of that Jayantilal-da was unaware. Having failed to get a ticket by the first available flight to Bombay, he took the next one. On the plane what a terrible shock it must have been for him to see the obituary notice of his brother, published in the day's Bombay newspaper! He reached Bombay around 2 p.m., only to receive another shock. The mortal remains of his brother were not available for him to cast even a last glance on, having been consigned to the flames by then. H T Parekh being a popular figure in Bombay, a crowd assembled around his house. Consequently the family decided to cremate the body without delay. In any case, they had no inkling of Jayantilal-da's being on his way. What the loss of his brother meant to him he never revealed to anybody.

Eyesight and hearing were already impaired. With the passage of years Jayantilal-da's health steadily declined and by the end of 1997 increasing difficulty in breathing was experienced. There were also drops of blood appearing in his sputum, but for months this fact he did not divulge to anybody for fear of causing anxiety to those around him. In February 1998, he had a medical check-up at the Apollo Hospital in Madras. The doctors attributed the trouble to his heart and prescribed a series of drugs. But his condition, instead of showing improvement, steadily worsened. While earlier, it was mainly after climbing stairs that Jayantilal-da experienced severe breathing difficulty, slowly even a little walking on level ground started causing breathlessness. In walking a few hundred feet from the Archives to the Ashram, he was forced to rest for some time on the way. He went for a further check-up at Apollo Hospital in Madras early in July 1998. This time the doctor suspected that the goitrous growth around his thyroid gland, which had remained benign for over twenty years, had become cancerous and was causing increasing throttling of the wind-pipe, leading to severe breathing difficulty. Surgery for removal of the growth was recommended after necessary confirmatory investigations to be done in Pondicherry. Investigations, carried out subsequently in Pondicherry, like C T Scan and biopsy, confirmed the doctor's finding. Now the question was about the surgery to be undergone. Jayantilal-da preferred to go to Bombay. There, after admission into the Bombay Hospital, he had to go through a whole new series of investigations over a

period of ten days, at the end of which the specialist, Dr Prafulla Desai, advised surgery as the only way to get over the problem. The cardiologists who were consulted put the risk to life due to surgery at 20%. The decision was left to the patient. Jayantilal-da thought over and, deciding against the operation returned to Pondicherry. Again, towards the end of August 1998, at the instance of his nephew, Deepak Parekh, Jayantilal-da went through a check-up once more at the Apollo Hospital, the conclusion remaining the same. While in Madras on this occasion, a mutual friend introduced Jayantilal-da to a homeopathic consultant who offered to treat his ailment. The homeopathic treatment was accordingly started, but there was no perceptible amelioration. On the contrary, the situation steadily worsened, but the divine worker that Jayantilal-da was, braved the difficulties and undeterred continued with his normal routine.

Jayantilal-da knew that Michael Bonke belonged to a family of well-known doctors. Towards the end of November '98, he requested Michael to get an opinion on his condition from Michael's family. Initially the opinion was that the breathing problem could be relieved by the insertion of a windpipe-stent, a procedure considered rather simple and fairly common in Germany, but rarely done in India. Michael showed Jayantilal-da's medical reports to the German doctor. But his opinion was not so encouraging, because the tumour was situated rather high in the trachea and close to the larynx; there was a danger of complication during the surgery. In his e-mail of 5.1.99 Michael wrote the following: 'My proposal would be that you come here as fast as possible and check out the situation with the various specialists and do what they propose to do .. If you do not act immediately, then you will start dying a very slow and extremely painful death. You will just stifle to death. So something has to be done. Even if it is done with...a high risk. Anything will be better than to allow the tumour to close your windpipe completely. The doctor says you should come as soon as possible, we should not lose a single day. Because every day lost makes it more difficult to act.' There was a prophetic ring in these words. Jayantilal-da readily accepted the advice. His passport had to be renewed and a visa for Germany obtained.

Finally accompanied by Michael and his wife Manju, Jayantilal-da left Pondicherry on 20.1.99 in the afternoon. He was very cheerful and very confident of returning after successful surgery. He even planned to pay a short visit to London on his way back from Germany and wrote accordingly to two friends in London on the very day of his departure. The three reached Michael's place in Germany at about noon on 21.1.99. Dr Stephan Bonke, Michael's cousin, had a long interview with Jayantilal-da the same evening. Examination revealed that the tumour had grown hard, like wood, and covered the full throat. Since full removal of the tumour in this condition would have resulted in permanent loss of voice, only partial removal aimed at freeing the windpipe for insertion of a stent was considered. A final decision on the exact surgical procedure was to be arrived at after further specialist investigations scheduled for 26.1.99.

In the meanwhile, Jayantilal-da was very cheerful and kept himself busy sending e-messages to Pondicherry and these were regarding the work to be done; he was also working on an article for Michael's Russian journal. On 23 January 1999 in the afternoon when he was being taken by car to the nearby snow-covered hills, he fainted. He had suffered a stroke. Immediate medical care was provided. He slowly regained consciousness after several hours and by the evening of 24 January 1999 speech was also partially restored. A rapid progress in his condition was expected. Unfortunately this did not happen, later in the night he lost consciousness again. It was an emergency. During the morning of 25th his condition stabilised somewhat and a decision was taken to perform surgery for which necessary clearance from the Ashram was obtained through Dr Dilip Datta.

By the evening of 25th Jayantilal-da recovered a bit. Around 6 p.m. when Manju said "good night" to him, he opened his eyes and said: "I am coming, I am coming." These were to be the last words he spoke. In the night when preparations were being made for emergency surgery, his condition deteriorated to such an extent that all ideas of surgery had to be given up. Finally, at 11.45 p.m. (German time) he entered eternal sleep with a beatific smile on his face. Thus ended the saga of unbroken sadhana, spanning a period of over sixty years. Pure dedicated service untainted by the least selfish motive came to an end.

This is what Manju had to say about Jayantilal-da. "His love was pure like the snowflakes falling from the sky. In the hospital he looked like a sage. There was no sign of pain.... When I would pass by his room, I thought maybe he would ask me to bring a cup of tea, but . . . now I feel an emptiness in my heart...."

About his inner life he never talked and very little is known. But the purity, peace and steady quietude that he exuded were themselves evidence of his having scaled high peaks in his spiritual ascent, not easily accessible to most sadhaks. In addition, his writings on various topics like *TV Serial on Ramayana*, *The Idea of Dual Citizenship*, *Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda*, *Vision and Design*, *Escapism*, *Corruption*, etc., give ample glimpses of the strong spiritual angle with which he looked at things. In particular, the series captioned *Random Thoughts* that he wrote month after month for *Sri Aurobindo's Action* for over ten years contains nuggets of spiritual enlightenment, insight and wisdom which cannot be imagined to have come from a person who did not have profound spiritual realisations. The last of the series was handed over to the Editor on 20 January 1999, the day Jayantilal-da left for Germany, and it was published in March 1999. A single such gem of wisdom is quoted here as a sample:

In spiritual life there are no prizes to be won, no elevated positions of power to be secured, no achievements for history to record. Here you begin to sound the various depths of being, emerge into a self-expanding universe. Here you discover grades of light, experience an all-inclusive wideness and fullness. Here you step into a freedom with gratifying breezes blowing around you, above all

gravitational pulls Here there is an all-fulfilling power at your elbow with everything within easy reach

And above all, here there is an emptiness, void of wants with only transparent spaces of solid peace for intimate company

Perhaps I shall not be wrong if I say that the single thought reproduced above sums up his spiritual attainments Thus his was a life fully conforming to the ideal of the divine worker that Sri Aurobindo describes in his *Synthesis of Yoga*, one who is truly fulfilled in the Divine

When he uttered his last words "I am coming, I am coming," one knows not from what plane of consciousness and in response to what he was speaking It would not be too far-fetched to imagine that he was simply responding to the call of the Mother

(Concluded)

B G PATTEGAR

SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

TWO AFFIRMATIVE STYLES

(Continued from the issue of September 1999)

SETHNA uses two affirmative styles. The one that he takes from Sri Aurobindo is comparatively bare. The other, characteristically his own, starts with simplicity, slowly gains in momentum and becomes very rich and metaphorical in its inspired sweep. Let us cite some examples of that which he has learnt from his Master.

All art is intuition self-expressed—in stone, colour, sound or language. And just because Blake in some of his poems provides us with the language of intuition in a mode that is least mixed with logico-intellectual elements—elements having the smallest importance in poetry—Houseman's choice of him is so admirable he catches the nectar of poetry at its very fount. Unfortunately, however, he is led in general to a theory that is one-sided.

(The Thinking Corner, p 44)

The correct way of making use of poetry is to get from it an influence of perfect beauty that gives one's consciousness an intensity, subtlety, sublimity no matter what the contents and the style. All sorts of contents, all varieties of style can be poetically used and made fruitful for that growth of consciousness.

(Ibid, p 48)

All supreme artists have declared loveliness to be a reality and a reality distinct from the vulgar and the squashy. Homer did it when he made Helen come to the battlements of Troy and walk before the elders who had just been bitterly bewailing the loss of so much life for a mere woman.

(Ibid, p 88)

The absolute kind has no discord of central conception. It can be full of surprises, the most unfamiliar similes and metaphors may be at play, yet the vision is harmoniously integrated at the core.

(Ibid, p 104)

The attentive reader of Sri Aurobindo's prose will instantly recognise this epistolary style of the Master which Sethna has re-created in fresh contexts. This affirmative style becomes really forceful if there is real wisdom behind it. And who will doubt Sethna's wisdom behind these passages?

The second affirmative style is free from such Aurobindonian echoes. This style is very specially Sethna's own, a style which depends on fantastic images without the sacrifice of logic.

You must be considering my ‘mysticism’ a majestic mirage. What will you think if I fling at you the sublime perversenesses of my ‘spirituality’? You will deem me not just reverie-infested but also a grand Inquisitor putting the human heartbeat on the rack. For, I have a most difficult confession to force out of love’s delicate mouth

(Ibid , p 27)

A sentimentalist will feel like crying, or find his hair bristle, or experience a sudden spearing of the solar plexus, when the villain of a story overpowers the beautiful heroine or the heroine falls into the hero’s arms and is locked in the terrible suffocation of a never-ending kiss. On contacting great poetry a mind above tosh may have the physical disturbances Houseman speaks of, but it will know great poetry even without them

(Ibid , p 46)

Poetry at such moments is not a mere conspiracy by Dante and Shakespeare and Tagore to crown colourful invention king of our hearts. No doubt, we recognise that its primary work is to bring delight by vision and emotion and not offer demonstrable or verifiable truth, but the delight breathes a superhuman air and is no outcome of transfigured fantasy

(Ibid, p 52)

There are also epistolary styles, but there is a leisurely superfluity here. However, the superfluity has not affected the basic logic of the passages. If we look at the whole unit, the whole essay, the imaged sentences are seen to be in perfect harmony with the other units of the piece

GOUTAM GHOSAL

LOST SHOES

A Short Story

I WAS really surprised, and to a great extent shocked, when a khaki clad policeman pulled up his jeep quite close to me at a bus stop near my office and said in a stentorian voice “He! You there, Blackie! Get into the jeep.”

For a second I glanced sideways and around to know if there was any other dark complexioned being waiting for the bus. Finding that I was all alone I asked, “Who? Me?”

“Yes! You Get in,” came the voice from the driver’s seat.

As I thrust my head into the jeep to know why, a hand got hold of me by my shirt collar and dragged me inside. I looked at the driver’s face that was all smiles.

“Oh! Is that you, Old Tamarind?” I cried, as I put my head against his left arm and then held him in a tight embrace. When I released him I saw his eyes were damp with tears of joy.

Asif and I were intimate friends from our infancy. We exchanged our shirts, ate from the same plate, shared our pocket money to watch films at the theatres after escaping from the boredom of classroom lectures, and on several occasions shared the same bed after a long night’s study especially on the eve of examinations. Our parents too looked at us as if we were brothers and not friends, though we belonged to different religions.

Asif never called me by my name. To him, I was ‘Blackie’. As he was darker than me I called him ‘Old Tamarind’. We called each other thus without any malice, but never allowed any of our classmates or friends to call us so. It was really between Asif and me.

After graduation a friend of my father got me a clerk’s job at the Law Court. But Asif managed to pass the Sub-Inspector’s test and joined the Police Training College.

“He! After how many years?” I asked pinching his left thigh.

“Five years...must be. After my training I was posted at Mahe and am back to our place with a promotion. Joined duty only yesterday,” Asif said gleefully, slapping me affectionately on my shoulder.

“Where are we bound now? To your police station?” I asked.

Asif nodded his head and said: “I have not heard you speak, you know, for a long time. I shall do so now over a cup of tea in my station, till you are exhausted. But I was always in touch with you all these years. I am a regular reader of your irregular columns and features in newspapers.”

“Hm. . Very nice of you,” I said with a smile.

The jeep pulled up at the police station. Asif jumped out while I got down. The sentry sprang to attention and stood as if he were saluting the flag.

As we walked past the sentry, a lovely voice greeted us, “Good evening, Sirs.” It was an unexpected voice from an unexpected corner. We were really surprised to

see a child emerge from behind the sentry

As Asif's eyes probed the sentry, the latter stammered out "This This boy, Sir! It seems he wants to lodge a complaint, Sir. But but refused to speak out, Sir, even to the Head Constable, Sir And he is waiting for you, Sir "

"I see," said Asif, and motioned the child to follow him by wiggling his fingers

Once inside his chamber, Asif sat down in his cosy chair, offered me a seat and then pressed a buzzer

A constable answered the call by his salutary presence.

"Two cups of strong tea and some snacks to munch quick," commanded Asif

As the constable saluted him and left the chamber, Asif with one arm drew the child towards him, and asked, "What is your name, boy?"

"Indrajit I am studying 4th standard in Vallalar High School "

"Oh, good! Your sky blue half-sleeved shirt tucked into dark grey trousers proclaims so Well, my boy! Why did you refuse to lodge your complaint with the writer in our police station? That's what is usually done, you know "

The boy hesitated awhile and then said "Don't speak out your problems to anyone But if you decide to speak out, then do so to the right man It was my teacher who taught me so That's why I waited for you, Sir the right man "

I smiled quite impressed by the child's self-confidence and guts

Asif too took special interest in the boy and patted him on his puny shoulder "What can I do for you?" he asked in a voice loaded with affection

"Find my lost shoes," Indrajit replied

"Shoes! Lost shoes! And you have come all the way to the police station barefooted," Asif said in a sarcastic tone

"Where do you expect me to go, Sir, after discovering that my shoes were stolen?" Indrajit snapped back

Asif and I sat stunned No words were spoken for a minute

Indrajit disturbed the silence "Last month my father's moped was stolen You found it and returned it to my father Two weeks ago there was a burglary in my neighbour's house You found their stolen jewels and made him happy And so I am here, Sir, with the great hope that you will find for me my lost shoes "

Asif shrugged his shoulders, gurgled thrice to clear his throat and asked "Are your shoes as precious as your father's moped and your neighbour's jewels?"

"Of course, Sir! They are precious to me, at least They are my birthday gift from my father," came the reply

"You are still in your school uniform And why did you remove your shoes?"

"Who will allow me into the temple, Sir, with my shoes on?"

Sure of a short story that was in the offing, I remained a silent observer of their conversation and kept jiggling my legs

"So you left your shoes at the entrance of the temple and when you came back you found them missing Am I right?" asked Asif, in an authoritative tone

Indrajit nodded his head before he said, "Yes, Sir! You're right."

“Then what did you do?”

“Searched for them in every nook and corner. Then watched the feet of all girls and boys of my age near the temple. And when all attempts to trace the lost shoes failed, I decided to speak to the right man.”

“When did you go to the temple?”

“After school, Sir. After 4.30 p.m. on my way back home.”

“Which temple?” asked Asif smiling a fake smile.

Indrajit pointed his accusing finger in the opposite direction and said: “Murugan temple, just opposite this police station.”

“Well, my boy! Today is not Friday, and . . .”

“But I go to the temple every day,” interrupted Indrajit and added, “after school, every evening. But not on holidays.”

“No! What I meant is.. Temples are crowded only on Fridays when shoes can be filched easily.”

“Nobody pinched my slippers yesterday, but today my shoes are gone,” he said in a muffled tone.

Meanwhile tea and snacks arrived.

“Hm. Hot samosa! Help yourself, Blackie!” Asif said pushing the plate of samosas towards me. He took one and offered it to the boy.

“No, Sir! Thank you. I only want my shoes.”

“Don’t worry, my boy. We’ll make all efforts to find your lost shoes. But meanwhile munch a couple of samosas.”

“If you are going to munch samosas with your friend, Sir, when are you going to find my shoes?”

Asif looked at the little boy in exasperation.

“You mean I should find them immediately! You will not give me time?”

“I can’t go home without my shoes on, Sir,” he said and after a pause added “Either I go home with them on or I sleep here till you find them.”

“You are quite adamant, Indrajit. You should give me a few days’ time,” cried Asif.

“A few days, Sir! You took just two days to find my father’s stolen moped. You didn’t even take one full day to trap the burglar. And that gave me, Sir, a lot of faith in you. What are shoes compared to all the other things you found for their owners! I am sure you will be able to detect my shoes in a tick. I’ve a lot of faith in you. Don’t let me down.”

Asif’s tongue rushed to warble, “Oh! That wasn’t me. I joined duty only yesterday.” But he stifled the words in his throat. He ran his left palm all over his face, and then closed his eyes as if in meditation. He licked his black moustache and opened the eyes, as if enlightened. “How old were your shoes?”

“Not even one full day,” the boy replied.

Asif heaved a sigh of relief.

“What colour?”

“Brown ”

“Leather or canvas?”

“Canvas.”

“Colour of shoelace?”

“No shoelace, Sir. Mine were Loafer shoes ”

“Hm! Good How do you go to school from your home? By auto or by bus?”

“On foot, Sir ”

“What colour were your socks!”

“White Pure white.”

Asif thought awhile, then looked inquisitively at the boy’s feet. Nodding his head, he rose to his feet “Wait here, Blackie! I’ll be back in a few minutes,” he said to me Patting the boy on his shoulder and motioning him to sit down, he disappeared

As the boy was at my mercy, I offered him a samosa, which he refused. Munching one, I asked him “What is your father?”

The boy looked askance at me, and said “You are not the Inspector of Police I need not answer your questions.”

“True! I am not the Inspector of Police. But what are you going to lose in answering my questions?” I remarked and smiled wanly.

“I’ve lost my shoes. Moreover I’m tired of answering questions ” He said politely

I kept unnaturally quiet, munching my samosas

Asif returned with a little newspaper parcel tied with a string. While he occupied his chair, Indrajit and I stared at him in silent awe. As he undid the parcel, out emerged a pair of brown shoes.

Indrajit gave a winsome smile.

“Yours, aren’t they?” Asif asked

“Let me see, Sir,” so saying Indrajit took a shoe in his hand and examined its outsole. He saw dirty and sticky marks here and there on it, and a patch of cow dung on its heel. He then pushed his forefingers into the shoe and pulled out the sock It was rolled down into a small bundle

“Yes, Sir! These shoes are mine,” cried Indrajit gleefully.

“Then put them on and don’t ever lose them again,” Asif warned.

The boy kissed Asif affectionately on his right cheek and said with the gratitude of one who has been saved from drowning, “You are really great, Sir. I have heard my father praise you I’ve heard my neighbour praise you sky-high And now I am another eyewitness to give evidence to your talent ”

Indrajit bid adieu to Asif and left the chamber casting a quick glance at me.

“What? Blackie! You found some raw material for a story, eh?” Asif said pushing aside his cup of tea that had gone cold

“Of course! Anything is grist to a writer’s mill. But this story will be incomplete without your answers to my questions ”

“I know your questions,” Asif said casually and pulled out from his shirt pocket

a piece of paper folded four times. Pushing it towards me he said: “Here is the answer to all your questions ”

I unfolded it and found to my delectation a cash bill for Rs 140 from Hunter’s Shoes, a popular shop in the Big Market

“Oh, You clever Old Tamarind!” I said hurling the bill playfully at Asif

Asif gave a significant smile and winked

P RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A Soldier's Voyage of Self-Discovery, by Maj Gen K K Tewari (Auroville), Second Edition, pages 200 Price Rs 150

[Major General Tewari was Commander Signals 4 Inf. Div. in 1962 even as destiny took him to the most forward area. When the Chinese attacked he was taken War prisoner. In the 1971 Operations he was CSO (Chief Signals Officers) of the Eastern Command. In the present autobiography he describes his life and professional career spanning several years. There are also invaluable reflections on the Indian war-preparedness and general tendencies in the Army.

We reproduce here the review of *A Soldier's Voyage of Self-Discovery* made under the title *Spiritual Journey* by Mr. Pran Nath Luthra, author-journalist, for the *Indian Review of Books* 16 December 1995-15 January 1996 — R. Y. D.]

SOLDIERS 'who have seen actual battle and observed the senseless death and destruction in wars', learn genuinely to believe 'in higher powers which control our destinies'. They are the words with which Major General K. K. Tewari begins his book. The book is unique in that, unlike most military officers, General Tewari does not confine his writing to vivid accounts of battles fought and lessons learnt but instead dispassionately distills lessons from his field experiences to formulate a philosophy of life. The book shows how the sensitive mind of the author, under the impress of the rigours of army life, opened to new perceptions and realities which enlightened him. The author's capacity for logical introspection enabled him not only to understand himself but also to launch himself along a new path of discovery of the spirit.

Essentially an autobiography, the book has four broad segments. The first segment dwells upon his training as a military officer at the time of the Second World War, in the Officers' Training School at Bangalore. His participation and experiences in the Second World War form the second segment. The third dwells upon the Indo-Chinese War of 1962 and the fourth on the Indo-Pakistan War in 1971 which created the new, sovereign state of Bangladesh. The author's conscientious and rational mind, his relentless quest for understanding the reasons why events take a certain direction prepared him for coming face to face with the divine being that 'shapes our ends'.

He describes an incident that took place in 1943 when he was posted to a field unit in the 25 Infantry Division Signals. He knew that his section was short of motor transport tools and was surprised that there was no sign of any shortage when he formally inspected the section. When questioned by the then Captain Tewari, the Indian Other Rank in-charge confessed that he had pinched the tools from others' vehicles to make up his shortages! Captain Tewari sternly admonished the Indian Other Rank in-charge to desist from such dishonest and unscrupulous acts.

An interesting feature of the 25 Infantry Division was that it was the only formation wherein a brigade, under the command of Brigadier R. A. Hutton, was

composed of three Indian battalions, namely the 8/19 Hyderabad Regiment, 2/2 Punjab Regiment and the 16/10 Baluch Regiment. The battalions were commanded by three Indian officers—Lieutenant Colonels K S Thimmayya, S P P. Thorat and L P Sen. The brigade played a brilliant offensive role in various battles in the Maungdaw-Buthidaung sector in Akyab (Burma) in the war against the Japanese. Each of the Indian officers was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for high military calibre and for tactical performance in the field. This is the only instance of its kind where Indian officers and the Indian Army received such high recognition for their performance in the battlefield during the Second World War.

Major General Tewari was taken prisoner by the Chinese on 20th October 1962—when he was billeted with a Gurkha battalion facing the Chinese troops in trenches across the Namku Chu sector, a battle area in the northern slopes of the Himalayas of Kameng Frontier Division, a district of the then NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). He had gone there to ascertain the well-being of a Signal detachment of his unit which was attached to the Gurkha battalion to provide a wireless rear link to the brigade headquarters. Just before the day dawned on 20th October 1962, Lt Col Tewari found that the Gurkha battalion had abandoned its battle position leaving him to face the enemy alone. The author describes how he was captured by the Chinese and criticises the unsoldierly manner in which the Gurkha battalion vacated their battle position.

The author goes on to describe his days in captivity and sheds light on the reason why the Chinese were not able to make much headway with their brain-washing of the Indian Army prisoners. He attributes eight reasons for this which include the grave error the Chinese made in vituperatively attacking Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which the Indian soldier could not stomach, the callous indifference of the Chinese to the ill-health of the Indian prisoners, the hurling of abuse upon Indian officers in the presence of Indian jawans and their unholy destruction of Buddhist monasteries in Tibet.

The author describes the background to the Indo-Pakistan clash in December 1971 when the Indian government was constrained to wage a war on Pakistan for its cruel suppression of the Bangladeshi (then East Pakistan) citizenry and how India had to bear the burden of swarming refugees. General Tewari describes the lack of telecommunication support to the Indian Army force of three corps—the corps that defeated Pakistan in the Bangladesh theatre. It was at this time that the author decided to join Auroville and devote the rest of his days to the search of his spiritual self.

A simple, direct and lucid style characterises the writing of General Tewari and makes for easy reading. The narrative is conversational and is sprinkled liberally with anecdotes and humour. The book should be of interest to military historians, the Defence Services professionals and administrators as well as the common man.



About Woman, by *Nolini Kanta Gupta*. Translated by Satadal Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, 1999 98 pages Rs 75

The Aurobindonian Yoga gives pride of place to the Purusha-Prakriti concept which is part of 'the secret knowledge' gathered by King Aswapati in *Savitri*:

The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.
His soul, silent, supports the world and her,
His acts are her commandment's registers

(*Savitri*, p 63)

Woman's is "the sweet and dreadful force", but how far has societal man understood this to help him and help the evolutionary destiny? He has deified her but not understood her. Nolini does not care to deify woman but would rather understand her since the Aurobindonian Yoga rejects the ascetic's refusal as much as the materialist's denial. With his characteristic no-nonsense approach, Nolini opens his essay series.

We are not sannyasins—we want world and life and therefore worldly life and society. What constitutes worldly life and society? What is that upon which worldly life and society stand? Woman

As an Aurobindonian, and especially as a woman, I am indeed grateful to Satadal for having translated from Bengali this beautiful essay-series which would otherwise have eluded me. It is as if Nolini has strengthened our hands who have been asking for an 'Indian feminism'. Our problems are different, our heritage immensely rich, our aims are spiritual: hence Indian women cannot hope to achieve anything constructive by aping the feminists from the West. Indeed, there is no need to import any 'strength' from abroad for our movement. We can gather plenty from our past and interpreters of our past like Nolini. When he says "man and woman are like those twin birds referred to in the Upanishads, *dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā samānam vrkṣam*, he has said all

But the subject is fascinating and Nolini's analysis is tempting. Men get the women they deserve, he says and hence if man is able to see woman "with a simple and normal look" all will be well and creation will continue to move towards its divine destiny. He gives a telling example from *Raghuvamsham* by contrasting the first and last kings of the Sun Dynasty in Kalidasa's epic

During the rise of the Raghu Dynasty, Dilip the man among men had as his consort the gem of a woman like Sudarshana, during its decline, as he was red-hot as fire, he saw in women only youthful breasts."

The last king was, of course, Agni-varna, fire-complexioned. Incidentally, Dilip's consort was Sudakshina and not Sudarshana. As Kalidasa is considered peerless in presenting similes, Sudakshina affords him a chance to indulge in his speciality:

Dilip was married to the Magadhan princess Sudakshina, so-named because of her consideration for others. She was to the king what Dakshina was for Yoga.

After all there can be no Yoga without Dakshina, who is the consort of Yogapurusha. Man does need woman for fulfilment. Look upon woman as a human being, and do not be worried that there may be an occasional fall. "In reality this fear becomes the cause of a slip." Again, it is silly to think that Indian women are not deep scholars. Even if we concede this view, "what is the use of knowing too many words?" You have a point, Nolini-da. "What is expected of women are things about dharma, morality, ideals and indoor affairs." However, there is to be no caste-rigidity in such a division. Besides, woman has to be taught that her parameters should be wider than her own household.

Our ancients have indicated this by making marriages into a practice of *dharma*, not for oneself but for the progress of one's own community. This is not to be confused with the nationalisation of women attributed to the Bolsheviks. In India the conjugal bond is sacred and has been evolved to prevent the disastrous fall-out in ancient days when marriage ties did not exist. There is no question of a master-slave relationship in an "Equals One" togetherness. It so happens that human beings have been given knowledge and force. Man (brain) excels in enriching the former, woman (heart) in activating the latter.

It is a delight to follow Nolini-da's epigrammatic style ("woman is a lyric soul", for instance) teaching women about themselves and at the same time warning them against the evil possibilities within the depths of their heart by referring to lady Macbeth and the women spectators in ancient Rome who delighted at the gory bullfights. But women dare not open their fangs once they realise how great men do consecrate them to help mankind achieve its evolutionary destiny:

Man is austere power while woman is delightful power; woman is earth, man is heaven.

Nolini-da's historical sense is a great help in reconciling our myths and legends with contemporary reality (including the custom of a man having two wives advocated in ancient Greece and subsequently hailed by Nietzsche), to analyse the manner in which the life-force symbolised by woman turned demonic, and how tapasya can re-transform the Alakshmi into Mahalakshmi.

Half a century ago Nolini-da had generously welcomed the emergence of the modern woman but with certain reservations. In the name of freedom, she is trying to imitate man. Such imitation could prove to be a vain exercise, for she is trying to

copy his follies as well. Nolinida mentions but one of the many debasements this century has brought us. Well, if man can be a homo, can't she explore the lesbian relationship? *About Woman* concludes with a dire warning from the Rishi, and being a compassionate Rishi, Nolinida also points to the lightning streak in this encircling gloom. It is a message which is perfectly apt for our own times.

The Time-Spirit has started churning the ocean of human consciousness. Whatever mire and poison are there hidden in the depths of the human receptacle must first be purged out. Then alone will the human consciousness be sterilised and achieve a new realisation in the coming age, and become the dwelling and receptacle of Perfect Beauty, of Mahalakshmi—and between man and woman will be established a vaster, deeper and yet purified relation.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

Chandovallari A Handbook of Sanskrit Prosody by *Sampadananda Mishra*. First Edition 1999. Published by Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, a Unit of Sri Aurobindo Society. Pondicherry. 128 pages. Rs. 75.

In recognition of 'Sanskrit Year' (1999) as declared by the Government of India and, as part of its own ongoing efforts in fostering Sanskrit, the Sri Aurobindo Society has released this very useful handbook. As the title suggests, it is a burgeoning outgrowth of *chhandas* or metres, a guide to the metres most often found in Sanskrit literature. Some accompanying audio-cassettes have been released, which demonstrate various ways of singing and reciting the verses in different metres.

The main part of the book is divided into two sections. The first serves as an introduction and outlines the basic principles of scansion or metrical analysis. It introduces such terms as *pāda* or quarter, *aksara* or syllable, *vṛtta*, *jāti* and describes the use of the eight *ganās* or syllabic feet in scanning the various metres.

The second and largest section of the book gives examples of various metres from some of the well-known texts of Sanskrit literature. As each new metre is introduced, the defining verse from the *Chhandomanjarī* of Gangā Dāsa is given, followed by the examples together with their translation in English. For most of the metres covered here five or six examples are given. However, the section is not exhaustive, it covers metres only from *anustubh* (eight syllables) up to *sragdharā* (twenty-one syllables). It would be useful if examples of other less common metres were given, and also if the numbering system could be made to correspond with the numbering in Appendix IV. Alternatively, a running-head would at least help the reader to find his way about in this section.

The book concludes with four very useful appendices. These are perhaps the most important part of the book, since they give the essential information which one

would expect to find in a reference handbook of this type Appendix I is a list of the classes of metres arranged according to the number of syllables in each *pāda*. This is of some help to students of the Veda, since it gives the names of the most important metres found in the Veda, such as *tristubh*, *jagati*, *gāyatrī*, *brhatī*, etc For details of the less common Vedic metres, one should refer to a well-indexed copy of the Veda. Satawalekar's edition of the Rīg Veda has a detailed index giving for each metre the total number of syllables and the number of syllables in each division

Appendix II is a list of the *gaṇa* groupings in Sanskrit alphabetical order. The name of the metre is of course given, followed by the reference number which thankfully corresponds to the numbering system in Appendix IV. Appendix III is a list of the 124 metres covered in the work according to their names, also in Sanskrit alphabetical order. This list as well gives a number which refers to Appendix IV, in which all the relevant details are given

Appendix IV is a list of all the metres according to the number of syllables in each quarter, and seems to be the central part of the whole book It has a logical numbering system, gives the vital information for each metre and covers all the given metres from one syllable up to twenty-six syllables. It could well be expanded, so that it occupies the greater part of the book. Perhaps the examples from the texts might be given here together with the information on the *chhandas*, rather than in a separate section as at present

A notable omission in the book is that the method of scansion for the *jātu* type of metre is not given. This type of metre is regulated by *mātrās* or units of time, similar to the beats in music (One *mātrā* is given to short vowels and two *mātrās* to long vowels.) *Ārya* metre falls in this category and is encountered quite frequently, and it cannot be analysed by counting syllables or applying the *gaṇa* groupings, as with the *vr̥tta* type of metre.

This reviewer has heard the first of the two audio cassettes which accompany the book. The metres have been rendered musically rather than by chanting. The various examples are tuned to different *rāgas*, sometimes with *tāla* and sometimes without. As often happens when musical *tāla* comes in, there are certain compromises made in the purity of the Sanskrit metre. As an example, we find sometimes that a short vowel gets lengthened in order to make musical sense, even though it is not strictly correct in Sanskrit. The particular copy under review had a technical problem; it seemed to play back at high speed, and it was only when played on a machine with speed control, that the speed could be reduced, and the familiar voices brought back to normal I trust that this problem has come up only in the final copying stage.

To sum up, *Chandovallari* is a worthy project which should prove to be of great assistance to those interested in Sanskrit poetry.