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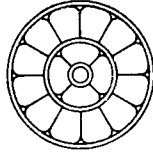
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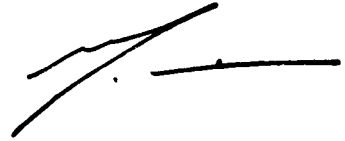
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†
Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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Associate Editor R Y Deshpande
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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIII

No. 6

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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OBEDIENT TO A HIGH COMMAND SHE SAT

ALL the world's possibilities in man
Are waiting as the tree waits in its seed·
His past lives in him, it drives his future's pace;
His present's acts fashion his coming fate
The unborn gods hide in his house of Life
The daemons of the unknown overshadow his mind
Casting their dreams into live moulds of thought,
The moulds in which his mind builds out its world.
His mind creates around him its universe
All that has been renews in him its birth,
All that can be is figured in his soul. ..
Above us dwells a superconscient god
Hidden in the mystery of his own light.
Around us is a vast of ignorance
Lit by the uncertain ray of human mind,
Below us sleeps the Inconscient dark and mute.
But this is only Matter's first self-view,
A scale and series in the Ignorance.
This is not all we are or all our world....
Our larger being sits behind cryptic walls.
There are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts
That wait their hour to step into life's front:
We feel an aid from deep indwelling Gods
One speaks within, Light comes to us from above
Our soul from its mysterious chamber acts,
Its influence pressing on our heart and mind
Pushes them to exceed their mortal selves
It seeks for Good and Beauty and for God;
We see beyond self's walls our limitless self,
We gaze through our world's glass at half-seen vasts,
We hunt for the Truth behind apparent things.
Our inner Mind dwells in a larger light,
Its brightness looks at us through hidden doors;
Our members luminous grow and Wisdom's face
Appears in the doorway of the mystic ward
When she enters into our house of outward sense,
Then we look up and see, above, her sun
A mighty life-self with its inner powers
Supports the dwarfish modicum we call life,
It can graft upon our crawl two puissant wings

Our body's subtle self is throned within
 In its viewless palace of veridical dreams
 That are bright shadows of the thoughts of God
 In the prone obscure beginnings of the race
 The human grew in the bowed apelike man.
 He stood erect, a godlike form and force...
 Aspiring he transcends his earthly self,
 He stands in the largeness of his soul new-born
 Redeemed from encirclement by mortal things
 And moves in a pure free spiritual realm
 As in the rare breath of a stratosphere
 A lost end of far lines of divinity,
 He mounts by a frail thread to his high source;
 He reaches his fount of immortality,
 He calls the Godhead into his mortal life
 All this the spirit concealed had done in her
 A portion of the mighty Mother came
 Into her as into its own human part
 Amid the cosmic workings of the Gods
 It marked her the centre of a wide-drawn scheme.
 Dreamed in the passion of her far-seeing spirit
 To mould humanity into God's own shape
 And lead this great blind struggling world to light
 Or a new world discover or create.
 Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven
 Or Heaven descend into earth's mortal state
 But for such vast spiritual change to be,
 Out of the mystic cavern in man's heart
 The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil
 And step into common nature's crowded rooms
 And stand uncovered in that nature's front
 And rule its thoughts and fill the body and life.
 Obedient to a high command she sat
 Time, life and death were passing incidents
 Obstructing with their transient view her sight,
 Her sight that must break through and liberate the god
 Imprisoned in the visionless mortal man
 The inferior nature born into ignorance
 Still took too large a place, it veiled her self
 And must be pushed aside to find her soul

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 482-87)

MAN'S URGE TOWARDS SPIRITUALITY

IT MUST be observed that the appearance of human mind and body on the earth marks a crucial step, a decisive change in the course and process of the evolution; it is not merely a continuation of the old lines. Up till this advent of a developed thinking mind in Matter evolution had been effected, not by the self-aware aspiration, intention, will or seeking of the living being, but subconsciously or subliminally by the automatic operation of Nature. This was so because the evolution began from the Inconscience and the secret Consciousness had not emerged sufficiently from it to operate through the self-aware participating individual will of its living creature. But in man the necessary change has been made,—the being has become awake and aware of himself, there has been made manifest in Mind its will to develop, to grow in knowledge, to deepen the inner and widen the outer existence, to increase the capacities of the nature. Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own; the evolutionary oestrus is there in his parts of mind and life, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him: he has become conscious of a soul, discovered the Self and Spirit. In him, then, the substitution of a conscious for a subconscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour in him is a sure sign of Nature's will for a higher way to fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status.

In the previous stages of the evolution Nature's first care and effort had to be directed towards a change in the physical organisation, for only so could there be a change of consciousness; this was a necessity imposed by the insufficiency of the force of consciousness already in formation to effect a change in the body. But in man a reversal is possible, indeed inevitable; for it is through his consciousness, through its transmutation and no longer through a new bodily organism as a first instrumentation that the evolution can and must be effected. In the inner reality of things a change of consciousness was always the major fact, the evolution has always had a spiritual significance and the physical change was only instrumental; but this relation was concealed by the first abnormal balance of the two factors, the body of the external Inconscience outweighing and obscuring in importance the spiritual element, the conscious being. But once the balance has been righted, it is no longer the change of body that must precede the change of consciousness, the consciousness itself by its mutation will necessitate and operate whatever mutation is needed for the body. It has to be noted that the human mind has already shown a capacity to aid Nature in the evolution of new types of plant and animal; it has created new forms of its environment, developed by knowledge and discipline considerable changes in its own mentality. It is not an impossibility that man should aid Nature consciously also in his own spiritual and physical evolution and transformation. The urge to it is already there and partly effective, though still incompletely understood and accepted by the surface mentality, but one day it may understand, go deeper within itself and

discover the means, the secret energy, the intended operation of the Consciousness-Force within which is the hidden reality of what we call Nature.

All these are conclusions that can be arrived at even from the observation of the outward phenomena of Nature's progression, her surface evolution of being and of consciousness in the physical birth and the body. But there is the other, the invisible factor, there is rebirth, the progress of the soul by ascent from grade to grade of the evolving existence, and in the grades to higher and higher types of bodily and mental instrumentation. In this progression the psychic entity is still veiled, even in man the conscious mental being, by its instruments, by mind and life and body; it is unable to manifest fully, held back from coming to the front where it can stand out as the master of its nature, obliged to submit to a certain determination by the instruments, to a domination of Purusha by Prakriti. But in man the psychic part of the personality is able to develop with a much greater rapidity than in the inferior creation, and a time can arrive when the soul-entity is close to the point at which it will emerge from behind the veil into the open and become the master of its instrumentation in Nature. But this will mean that the secret indwelling spirit, the Daemon, the Godhead within is on the point of emergence, and, when it emerges, it can hardly be doubted that its demand will be, as indeed it already is in the Mind itself when it undergoes the inner psychic influence, for a diviner, a more spiritual existence. In the nature of the earth-life where the Mind is an instrument of the Ignorance, this can only be effected by a change of consciousness, a transition from a foundation in Ignorance to a foundation in Knowledge, from the mental to a supramental consciousness, a supramental instrumentation of Nature.

. In universal Mind itself there are ranges above our mentality which are instruments of the cosmic truth-cognition, and into these the mental being can surely rise, for already it rises towards them in supernormal conditions or receives from them without yet knowing or possessing them intuitions, spiritual intimations, large influxes of illumination or spiritual capacity. All these ranges are conscious of what is beyond them, and the highest of them is directly open to the Supermind, aware of the Truth-Consciousness which exceeds it. Moreover, in the evolving being itself, those greater powers of consciousness are here, supporting Mind-truth, underlying its action which screens them; this Supermind and those Truth-powers uphold Nature by their secret presence: even, truth of Mind is their result, a diminished operation, a representation in partial figures. It is, therefore, not only natural but seems inevitable that these higher powers of Existence should manifest here in Mind as Mind itself has manifested in Life and Matter.

Man's urge towards spirituality is the inner driving of the spirit within him towards emergence, the insistence of the Consciousness-Force of the being towards the next step of its manifestation. It is true that the spiritual urge has been largely other-worldly or turned at its extreme towards a spiritual negation and self-annihilation of the mental individual, but this is only one side of its tendency maintained and made dominant by the necessity of passing out of the kingdom of the funda-

mental Inconscience, overcoming the obstacle of the body, casting away the obscure vital, getting rid of the ignorant mentality, the necessity to attain first and foremost, by a rejection of all these impediments to spiritual being, to a spiritual status. The other, the dynamic side of the spiritual urge has not been absent,—the aspiration to a spiritual mastery and mutation of Nature, to a spiritual perfection of the being, a divinisation of the mind, the heart and the very body: there has even been the dream or a psychic prevision of a fulfilment exceeding the individual transformation, a new earth and heaven, a city of God, a divine descent upon earth, a reign of the spiritually perfect, a kingdom of God not only within us but outside, in a collective human life. However obscure may have been some of the forms taken by this aspiration, the indication they contain of the urge of the occult spiritual being within to emergence in earth-nature is unmistakable.

If a spiritual unfolding on earth is the hidden truth of our birth into Matter, if it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has been taking place in Nature, then man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution. He is too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, Mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation, Mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being. If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and Supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at Supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol 19, pp 843-47)

THE SOLAR RACE-TO-BE

O THOSE unburied dead
By whom the first word is said,
And the last, and all between
Comes now a spectral power,
In their most arrogant hour,
Dreaming to life the thing that might have been?

So may they, girt with pride,
As a doomed iceberg ride
On this great sea of lewth
In their own falsehood penned
Utterly meet their end,
Probed mockingly by Spring-warm-waves of truth

They hated comely things,
Misprized the love that brings
Beauty and Strength and Calm .
Love gave the New Race light
Singly they dight
His breast with myrtle and his brow with palm

February 18, 1930

ARIJVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: A fine poem.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

बृहस्पति. प्रथम जायमानो महो ज्योतिषः परमे व्योमन् ।
सप्तास्यस्तुविजातो रवेण वि सप्तरश्मिरधमत् तर्मांसि ॥

(Rigveda, 4.50.4)

Brihaspati, coming first into birth from the great Light in the supreme ether, seven-mouthed, multiply-born, seven-rayed, dispelled the darknesses... (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 137)

Brihaspati coming first to birth out of the great Light in the highest heaven, born in many forms, seven-mouthed, seven-rayed (*saptāsyah saptaraśmih*), by his cry dispelled the darkness (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 161)

The Master of Wisdom in his first coming to birth in the supreme ether of the great Light,—many his births, seven his mouths of the Word, seven his Rays,—scatters the darknesses with his cry (SABCL, Vol 19, p. 726)

स सुष्टुभा स ऋक्वता गणेन वलं रुरोज फलिगं रवेण ।
बृहस्पतिरुन्न्रिया हव्यसूदः कनिक्रदद् वावशतीरुदाजत् ॥

(Rigveda, 4 50.5)

. he with his host that possess the *stubbh* and the Rik broke Vala into pieces by his cry. Shouting Brihaspati drove upwards the bright herds that speed the offering and they lowed in reply. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 137)

त्वं वलस्य गोमतोऽपावरद्विवो बिलम् ।
त्वां देवा अबिभ्युषस् तुज्यमानास आविषुः ॥

(Rigveda, 1.11.5)

O Lord of the thunderbolt, thou didst uncover the hole of Vala of the cows ; the gods, unfeared, entered speeding (or putting forth their force) into thee. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 137)

यो अद्रिमित् प्रथमजा ऋतावा बृहस्पतिराङ्गिरसो हविष्मान् ।
द्विबर्हज्मा प्राद्यर्मसत् पिता न आ रोदसी वृषभो रोरवीति ॥

(Rigveda, 6.73.1)

He who is the hill-breaker, first-born, possessed of the truth, Brihaspati, the Angirasa, the giver of the oblation, pervader of the two worlds, dweller in the heat and light (of the sun), our father, roars aloud as the Bull to the two firmaments. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, pp. 138-39)

जनाय चिद् य ईवत उ लोक बृहस्पतिर्देवहूतौ चकार ।
घनं वृत्राणि वि पुरो दर्दरीति जयञ्छत्रूरमित्रान् पृत्सु साहन् ॥

(Rigveda, 6 73 2)

Brihaspati who for man the voyager has fashioned that other world in the calling of the gods, slaying the Vritra-forces breaks open the cities, conquering foes and overpowering unfriends in his battles. (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 139)

बृहस्पति समजयद् वसूनि महो व्रजान् गोमतो देव एष ।
अप सिषासन्तस्वरप्रतीतो बृहस्पतिर्हन्त्यमित्रमर्कैः ॥

(Rigveda, 6 73.3)

Brihaspati conquers for him the treasures, great pens this god wins full of the kine, seeking the conquest of the world of Swar, unassailable, Brihaspati slays the Foe by the hymns of illumination (*arkaiḥ*) (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 139)

(*To be continued*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

A HYMN OF GLADNESS

EACH time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the Earth, the air is embalmed with a sweet perfume, all becomes more friendly

How great is Thy power, O Lord of all existences, that an atom of Thy joy is sufficient to efface so much darkness, so many sorrows and a single ray of Thy glory can light up thus the dullest pebble, illumine the blackest consciousness!

Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and un hoped for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath

At these blessed hours all earth sings a hymn of gladness, the grasses shudder with pleasure, the air is vibrant with light, the trees lift towards heaven their most ardent prayer, the chant of the birds becomes a canticle, the waves of the sea billow with love, the smile of children tells of the infinite and the souls of men appear in their eyes.

Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial powers can equal this wonderful gift!

O Lord, never have I implored Thee in vain, for that which speaks to Thee is Thyself in me

Drop by drop Thou allowest to fall in a fertilising rain the living and redeeming flame of Thy almighty love. When these drops of eternal light descend softly on our world of obscure ignorance, one would say a rain upon earth of golden stars one by one from a sombre firmament.

All kneels in mute devotion before this ever-renewed miracle.

31 3 1917

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol 1, pp 356-57)

SOME PROSE ABOUT A POEM

A LETTER

HERE IS some prose about the poem you have sent me—someone's English rendering of Fedor Tyutchev's Russian. In view of what you have written, perhaps my prose will prove helpful to make the poetry go home better. Let us have the verses before us.

SILENTIUM

Be no word spoken. Hide away
Thought and feeling day by day
Let them rise and pour their light
And set like planets in the night,
Unheralded, unpraised, unheard,

Heart knows not to speak with heart,
Song and speech can ne'er impart
Faith by which we live and die,
A thought once spoken is a lie—
Unbroken, undefiled, unstirred
Thy fountain; drink, and say no word

Live within thyself, and be
In a world of faerie,
Of magic thoughts that hide away
From the noise and glare of day
Delicate airs on earth unheard,
Mark them, love them, say no word

Here is a fine piece of work,—not quite equal throughout as regards suggestive effect but held together by sufficient inspiration in every place to make its high-lights not suffer. The aura of suggestion remains unobscured and is even helped here and there by lines that are more mentally explicit, lines holding in the tendency of the aura to spread out infinitely beyond thought. From one point of view this is a defect and the poem is not the masterpiece it might have been if there had been subtle intensity pervading every part. From another point of view the more mental lines, since they do not fall below the quality needed in mental poetic expression, can't be called a defect and for most readers are a distinct prop.

I believe that you have failed to avail yourself of this prop because you have not clearly felt the difference between subtle suggestion and delicate statement. As the subtlety is not always very profound it does not stand out in marked contrast to the

delicacy, but perhaps a little brooding on your part would have shown you the line of demarcation or rather the zone of transition. I observe, however, that you have vaguely discerned this zone, since you pick out certain couplets as especially effective. I say "vaguely" because it is not just the last lines of each stanza that are touched with intuition. The first and second stanzas, except for a line or two, have the suggestive subtlety spread beyond the concluding couplets and are very fine. The last stanza is in this characteristic the weakest and its couplet-conclusion cannot compare with the depth or the largeness of intuitive mystery in the previous ones

So much for general criticism. Let me now take the poem piecemeal. I'd like to compliment the author on giving it a Latin name. It is clear enough for providing a clue to the theme but brings by its Latinity an unfamiliar air which is in tune with the atmosphere of the poem. The peculiar quality of the word "Silentium" in an English context is that it suggests almost a realm of silence, a mysterious domain and not just a condition of quietude, much less an abstraction. One thinks of Byzantium or, in another way, Elysium—that is, a place, and not only a place but one that is remote, either with antiquity or with the mythological imagination.

The basic idea that is hinted at in the whole poem is fourfold. First, the truest and finest and most rapturous thoughts and feelings are those that lie deep within us, not those that move with constant noise on the surface. Second, to find them we must shut ourselves in a complete silence, keeping off the disturbing touches of commonplace things that drop like stones into our being and create the splash which prevents the quiet depths from getting visioned or felt. Third, each movement of the consciousness can be transmuted into its own truest and finest and most rapturous term by surrounding it with the in-drawn breath of hush. Fourth, the best way to "express" to others the deeps in ourselves is to realise them and make them vivid in the language that is life. None of these four aspects of the basic idea is isolated in the poem—all of them intermingle and by their intermingling give rise to a greater "mystery" about the poem's drift.

In the first stanza the injunction to hide away thought and feeling leads naturally to a sense of secrecy, an inner night in which as in the outer a "diamond dimness" (an Indian poet's phrase) is experienced—a planetary procession, a far-away wealth of light that has no urge to advertise its own abundance but quietly spreads itself in a high and heavenly way, disposing its splendour in a spirit of reticent amplitude. Our conscious movements become thus exalted when we do not always drag them outside to meet and image the dust and clamour of superficial life. They change into glorious denizens of a vast and lofty kingdom, they discover their own deep and divine reality to the Witness Self that watches them, loves them, says no word.

The next verse, while re-suggesting the same necessary silence, dwells a little more on the futility of trying to express the deep and divine reality of things to others, the wrong done by speech to the soul's substance, the fragmentation and falsification of what is in the inner being à perfect whole in which as in a crystal core all truth is held. This crystal core is the central source of our true life, the fountain and origin

that is the Spirit. It cannot be found or experienced by churning the mind with words. It is a stillness unbroken by the intellect's process of definition. Definition, as the root of the word implies, is to limit, turn into a precise and separate mass the elusive largeness and interfusion of the subliminal and the supraliminal. The intellect's language has no place in the spiritual profundities. If they are to be tasted and their nectar imbibed, we must forget the habit of speech-excitement. We cannot let our mouth fill with air and our tongue quiver with articulation, and at the same time drink the fountain of truth that is beauty and beauty that is peace. And there is, unexplained yet not unimportant, the idea in this stanza that by thus silently drinking of the Ineffable we can make a heart automatically convey its essence and "faith" to another heart better than by the medium of speech, however tuneful and vivid.

The opening phrase of the last stanza takes up the notions both of living deeply and living without an attempt to express the depths—"live within thyself" (that is, not on the outside but in the inner self and not trying to go outside that self to communicate its secrets to others by speech). What follows gives a general turn and summing-up to all that has preceded. The world within is called a world of faerie in which secrets are caught that are never heard on earth. The mention of "earth" clinches the point about going beyond the dense and dusty contacts of the surface of existence, the loud colour and cry, the voluble self-confidence of the measuring brain. Not earth, but "faerie" is the true kingdom—a kingdom where the being finds its fundamental harmony, its poise in an inexhaustible loveliness, its power that is immense yet most subtle, a magnitude of magic.

C'est tout! By the way, don't forget the trema over the third letter—"e"—of the word "faerie". The word is composed of three syllables—fa/e/rie. It must be pronounced like that—otherwise the rhythm halts. And if this happens, the spell will be broken at a touch of unmetrical prose.

1941

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

Here is
Savitri

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

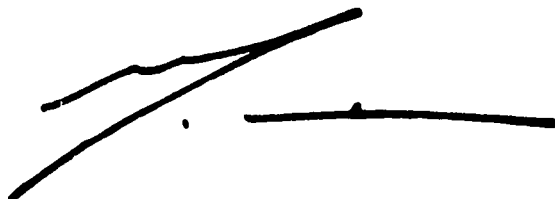
The importance of
Savitri is immense

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 May 2000)

THE KINGDOMS OF THE LITTLE LIFE

Ascending slowly with unconscious steps,
 A foundling of the gods she wanders here
 Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell
 Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise ¹

THEY live and move in the Ignorance and go round and round, battered and stumbling, like blind men led by one who is blind.²

If ignorance is in its nature a self-limiting knowledge oblivious of the integral self-awareness and confined to an exclusive concentration in a single field or upon a concealing surface of cosmic movement, what, in this view, are we to make of the problem which most poignantly preoccupies the mind of man when it is turned on the mystery of his own existence and of cosmic existence, the problem of evil? A limited knowledge supported by a secret All-Wisdom as an instrument for working out within the necessary limitations a restricted world-order may be admitted as an intelligible process of the universal Consciousness and Energy, but the necessity of falsehood and error, the necessity of wrong and evil or their utility in the workings of the omnipresent Divine Reality is less easily admissible. And yet if that Reality is what we have supposed it to be, there must be some necessity for the appearance of these contrary phenomena, some significance, some function that they had to serve in the economy of the universe ³

As shines a solitary witness star
 That burns apart, Light's lonely sentinel,
 In the drift and teeming of a mindless Night,
 A single thinker in an aimless world
 Awaiting some tremendous dawn of God,
 He saw the purpose in the works of Time ⁴

The Mother wrote

“The *star* has *no* lines inside”

The star signifies a creation or formation or the promise or power of a creation or formation

*

The star is always a promise of the Light to come, the star changes into a sun when there is the descent of the Light

~

Stars indicate points of light in the ignorant mental consciousness⁵

The phantom of a dark and evil start
 Ghostlike pursues all that we dream and do
 This was the first cry of the awaking world
 It clings around us still and clamps the god⁶

The crude beginnings of the lifeless earth
 And mindless stirrings of the plant and tree
 Prepared our thought, thought for a godlike birth
 Broadens the mould of our mortality.⁷

An evolution from the Inconscient* need not be a painful one if there is no resistance, it can be a deliberately slow and beautiful efflorescence of the Divine. One ought to be able to see how beautiful outward Nature can be and usually is, although it is itself apparently “inconscient”—why should the growth of consciousness in inward Nature be attended by so much ugliness and evil spoiling the beauty of the outward creation? Because of a *perversity* born from the Ignorance, which came in with Life and increased in Mind—that is the Falsehood, the Evil that was born because of the starkness of the Inconscient’s sleep separating its action from the secret luminous Conscience that is all the time within it. But it need not have been so except for the overriding Will of the Supreme which meant that the possibilities of Perversion by inconscience and ignorance should be manifested in order to be eliminated through being given their chance, since all possibility has to manifest somewhere: once it is eliminated the Divine Manifestation in Matter will be greater than it otherwise could be because it will combine all the possibilities involved in this difficult creation and not some of them as in an easier and less strenuous creation might naturally happen.

PISHACHA: Demon, beings of the lower planes, who are in opposition to the Gods.⁸

“From beauty to greater beauty, from joy to intenser joy, by a special adjustment of the senses”—yes, that would be the normal course of a divine manifestation, however gradual, in Matter. “Discordant sound and offensive odour” are creations of a disharmony between consciousness and Nature and do not exist in themselves, they would not be present in a liberated and harmonised consciousness for they would be foreign to its being, nor would they afflict a rightly developing harmonised soul and

* The question was in reference to a passage in the 1936 version which in the present one is much enlarged and runs from “It was the gate of a false infinite” to “None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell” (pp 221-227). “The passage suggests that there was an harmonious original plan of the Overmind Gods for earth’s evolution but that it was spoiled by the intrusion of the Rakshasic worlds. I should however, have thought that an evolution arising from the stark inconscient’s sleep and the mute void would hardly be an harmonious plan. The Rakshasas only shield themselves with the covering Ignorance they don’t create it. Do you mean that if they had not interfered there wouldn’t have been resistance and conflict and suffering? How can they be called the artificers of Nature’s fall and pain?”

Nature. Even the “belching volcano, crashing thunderstorm and whirling typhoon” are in themselves grandiose and beautiful things and only harmful or terrible to a consciousness unable to meet or deal with them or make a pact with the spirits of Wind and Fire. You are assuming that the manifestation from the Inconscient must be what it is now and here and that no other kind of world of Matter was possible, but the harmony of material Nature in itself shows that it need not necessarily be a discordant, evil, furiously perturbed and painful creation—the psychic being if allowed to manifest from the first in Life and Mind and lead the evolution instead of being relegated behind the veil would have been the principle of a harmony out-flowing; everyone who has felt the psychic at work within him, free from the vital intervention, can at once see that this would be its effect because of its unerring perception, true choice, harmonic action. If it has not been so, it is because the dark Powers have made life a claimant instead of an instrument. The reality of the Hostiles and the nature of their role and trend of their endeavour cannot be doubted by any one who has had his inner vision unsealed and made their unpleasant acquaintance.¹⁰

RAKSHASA: The Giant, the Ogre or Devourer of the world; a being of vital hunger; the violent kinetic Ego; the fierce giant Powers of darkness, the Veilers in night; beings of the middle vital plane who are in opposition to the gods.

The Rakshasa is the supreme and thorough-going individualist, who believes life to be meant for his own untrammelled self-fulfilment and self-assertion. A necessary element in humanity, he is particularly useful in revolutions. The Rakshasa is not an altruist. If by satisfying himself he can satisfy others, he is pleased; but he does not make that his motive. If he has to trample on others to satisfy himself, he does so without compunction.¹¹

EVOLUTION

A fire-mist and plant,
 A crystal and a cell,
 A jelly fish and saurian,
 And caves where cave men dwell;
 Then a sense of law and beauty,
 And a face turned from the clod—
 Some call it Evolution
 And others call it God.

—W. H. Carruth (*Each in His Own Tongue*)

(*To be continued*)

HUTA

References

- 1 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 28, p 135
- 2 *Mundaka Upanishad* 1 2 8 Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads* (1981 ed), p 429
- 3 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, pp 596-97
- 4 *Savitri*, p 137
- 5 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 23, p 958
- 6 *Savitri*, p 140
- 7 *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p 164
- 8 *Savitri*, pp 777-78
- 9 *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p 186
- 10 *Savitri*, p 778
- 11 *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, p 212

PURUSHA-PRAKRITI

(Aphorisms)

THE Path of indulgence leads to aversion and away from the world.
Purusha is a slave of Prakriti.

The Path of suppression leads to mortification and away from the world.
Purusha is an enemy of Prakriti.

The Path of possession leads to satiety and away from the world.
Purusha is a master of Prakriti.

The Path of separation leads to enjoyment and to staying in the world.
Purusha is one with Prakriti.

G NESTEROV

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

11:04:1995

This depression is killing I feel strongly that I must go out of this existence Very painful, and I don't know how long it will continue, how long it will be there Of course, they are working, but I don't see anything happening Very painful

On the 4th, during the meditation in the evening this is what happened You see, this is the day of arrival of Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry

The Mother said that it was the day the supreme Grace had descended upon the soil of Pondicherry She showed me the whole thing,—the descent of the Grace on the soil of Pondicherry, as if she enacted the whole thing again

I could see it very clearly

10:09:1995

My birthday was very beautiful this time It was exceptional It had never happened like that to me in the whole of my life

I came out from Sri Aurobindo's Room Then I sat for a while near the Samadhi at my usual place. When I was going away, Reality was with me

It is now there always with me

On one earlier occasion Sri Aurobindo had taken me up very high, very high I could not see where, but very high Sky after sky had opened out

Then, I could not see anything I could not see anything, not even my spirit.

But there was a constant downpour of Grace, constant downpour as was there on an earlier occasion,—Transcendental Grace coming down directly

09:12:1995

I saw the psychic being for the first time. But it was only for a brief while It was quite big, as big as myself The features were like mine, very similar to my face That is why I could recognise it.

Immediately following it was the experience of the global consciousness. It, the global consciousness, was surrounding me, rather surrounding my whole being.

How do you know it was your psychic being? What was its colour? How can you say that it was the psychic being?

What else could it have been? It resembled me exactly; its features were like mine It was not bright, but neither was it dull There was a global consciousness around it I will not say it was universal consciousness, but there was global consciousness around it There is a difference between the two

Could it not have been your spirit?

Yes, yes, that is very likely. I never thought that it could have been the spirit
But does the spirit have a form?

Why not? It can be with a form also

Yes, yes, I am more inclined to say that it was the spirit. The global consciousness would also suggest that

(To be concluded)

R Y DESHPANDE

ABOUT THE GREAT BEYOND

As the night deepens silence
Listen to unheard conversations in the cosmos,
Usual din of the day is down,
Mirth of disturbing sunlight
Has disappeared, as would a revolving stage,
Now is the hour to hear the world beyond.

How many worlds the universe holds
In its infinity ever incomprehensible?
How many deaths a being has to cross
To reach deathlessness, endlessness, beginninglessness?
I wish I could understand wordless conversations
Being held continually
By these numerous worlds of the cosmos.

No voice, no soul, of this mortal world is lost;
Notes of crying of the new-born will reverberate
Forever though the child will grow to gray and
The soul will transmigrate, leaving the used-up body

I look up at the blinking stars, lamp-posts of the firmament.
Awestruck watch their strange signalling,
I know nothing about immeasurable worlds Beyond,
A vast wonder

PRONAB KUMAR MAJUMDER

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

The Book of Love

Love conquering death is the theme of the legend of Savitri and Satyavan. But what kind of love has the power to overcome death? In the Mahabharata, Savitri armed with intelligence, virtue and strength of character wins boons from Yama, but does not defeat the principle of death. Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the myth starts from a deeper Vedic symbolism which points to a more radical conquest. But the characters of his epic are living beings, not figures in an allegory. Moreover, his treatment of the story goes beyond even the Vedic symbolism on the basis of his own realisations.

To make the victory of Love artistically convincing and spiritually inevitable was perhaps the greatest challenge Sri Aurobindo faced in writing *Savitri*; for almost the whole of human experience points to the opposite conclusion, that Death is more powerful. Therefore Book Five, "The Book of Love", though it is one of the shortest of the twelve books, is of central importance. Passages in it received Sri Aurobindo's attention in every phase of his work on the poem, even during the period when he had set aside most of the later books to concentrate on what is now Part One.

We have seen how "Love", the title of the first canto or book in early versions of *Savitri*, became the title of the second book when the opening sections had expanded into a new first book called "Quest". "Quest" included at first the description of the Shalwa country where Savitri arrives at the end of her travels. But soon this was transferred to the beginning of "Love", to set the scene for the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan.

In the early 1930s, when the first book became "The Book of Birth", Sri Aurobindo changed the title of the second book from simply "Love" to "The Book of Love" and included in it the last section of the former "Quest". But this section, which is now Book Four, Canto Four, did not remain long in "The Book of Love". It was shifted back to the previous book in the rearrangement that created "The Book of Beginnings" and the "The Book of Birth and Quest".

At this stage, the third book became "The Book of Love and Fate"; but only fragmentary versions of a book with this title are found in Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts. He soon dropped the idea of combining Love and Fate in one book. Finally, when "The Book of Beginnings" was divided into three books, "The Book of Love" became Book Five, as it is now.

Unlike Book Four, which Sri Aurobindo brought to its present form by revising a single final manuscript and typed copies of it, the published text of Book Five is based on manuscripts from different periods. Sri Aurobindo began to write out a fair copy of this book around 1943 in the notebook he had already used for Book Four.

But this version breaks off after the first hundred lines of the second canto. When he dictated the revision of the fifth book around 1945, Sri Aurobindo reverted to his last version of "The Book of Love" from the 1930s. But this also was incomplete. He had to go back to a manuscript from before 1920 for most of Canto Three. This canto still needed substantial work and he drafted new passages for it in the chitpads he was using in the mid-1940s. Book Five was first published, after further light revision of typescripts and proofs, in the 1950 issue of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*.

Sri Aurobindo's account of the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan contained inspired lines even in its earliest form. But it took years for his description of what happened at that moment to attain its full amplitude and inevitability of expression. The immortality of love, in the sense of its survival of death, was briefly but memorably evoked from the beginning. But the transformative power of love was brought out only gradually.

The first fair copy of the 1916 version included this passage:

He came, they met, wide wondering eyes gazed close
 Into bright eyes and deep, their comrade orbs
 Touched by the warning finger of sweet love
 The soul can recognise its answering soul
 Across dividing Time Upon life's ways
 Absorbed wrapped traveller, turning, it recovers
 Familiar splendours in an unknown face
 And thrills again to the old immortal love
 Wearing a new sweet body for delight.

Most of these lines are similar to lines in the final version; two or three are identical. This is one of the first places in the poem where so many lines from the earliest drafts have stayed intact. But this was only a starting-point. Sri Aurobindo enlarged this passage to several times its original length by the end of the first phase of his work on *Savitri* (1916-20).

A neatly written page from the later part of this period is shown in the first facsimile. In this version, the following lines are found on a page before the one that has been reproduced:

Marvelling he came across the faery sward,
 And while they looked into each other's eyes,
 Love's hidden unity shaped its rapturous form.

The first two lines of this are related to the first two lines of the passage in the 1916 version. But before and after these three lines are many lines that were added in a number of intermediate versions. Some of these new lines can be seen in the facsimile. The lines at the top of the page read as follows, including three lines at the bottom of the previous page.

All in unconscious ecstasy long wrapped,
 All that imagination's coloured lids
 Had held in the large mirror air of dream,
 Broke forth in flame to recreate the world,
 And in that flame to new things she was born
 A mystic tumult rose up from her depths[,]
 Her life was taken into another's life
 That forehead wore the crown of all her past,
 These eyes were her constant and eternal stars,
 Lids known through many lives and frames of love

All of these lines resemble lines in the final version, the fourth and fifth lines are the same as those printed on page 395 of the current edition of *Savitri*. But the last four lines are now widely separated from the others. This is due partly to later expansion of the passage and partly to rearrangement of the sequence of lines. Many lines, written in the same manuscript on pages preceding the one reproduced here, were later shifted so that they come between these lines. In the seventh line, "Her" has been changed to "His" and the line appears in a passage describing what Satyavan felt at that moment, beginning

And Satyavan looked out from his soul's doors .

A similar description was already present in the early version, but is found two pages before the page shown in the facsimile

The manuscript continues with lines that were eventually shifted to a later position, so that they come in a somewhat different form near the end of the present Book Five, Canto Two.

These knew each other though in forms thus strange
 The spirit to the spirit was still the same
 And their bodies summed the sense of numberless births
 Amazed they had come distant journeyings
 Mid self closed countries and through separate ways
 To a small meeting-place in limitless fields
 And the unexpected glory of these orbs

The rest of the manuscript page may be transcribed along with a line at the top of the next page

Love leaps 'on us out of forgotten morns
 Touched by the warning finger of swift Love,
 The soul can recognise its answering soul
 Across dividing Time, and on life's road

Absorbed wrapped traveller turning it recovers
 Familiar splendours in an unknown face,
 And thrills again to the old immortal joy
 Wearing a new sweet body for delight

The first line is a new one whose subsequent development will be discussed below. The others are close to what Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1916. The main differences from that version are due to “swift” replacing “sweet” in the second line, “road” replacing “ways” in the fourth, and “joy” replacing “love” in the seventh.

The last manuscript of this passage is shown in the second facsimile. This is part of a page of an incomplete manuscript of “The Book of Love” belonging to the early 1930s, with revision dictated by Sri Aurobindo around 1945. Six lines at the bottom of the page do not appear in the facsimile. The pages of the ledger in which this version was written are long, and a reproduction of the entire page would have had to be reduced too much to be easily readable.

Lines related to the earlier version can be seen at the top and a little below the middle of the page. Because of extensive expansion and rearrangement through several intermediate stages, most of the other lines in the first facsimile are found, sometimes in an altered form, on the pages of the final manuscript that precede and follow the one shown here. Together with the last line on the preceding page, the lines at the top of the page can be transcribed

Marvelling he came across the golden sward
 Gaze met close gaze and clung in sight’s embrace
 A visage she saw, noble and great and calm,
 A forehead that wore the crown of all her past,
 Two eyes her constant and eternal stars,
 Comrade and sovereign eyes that claimed her soul,
 Lids known through many lives, large frames of love

In the third line, Sri Aurobindo changed “she saw” to “was there” when he revised the fair copy. After this line, he inserted four new lines when he revised the fair copy, the typescript and the proofs of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, bringing the passage to its present form in 1950.

The lines that can be traced back to the 1916 version appear further down on the page in the second facsimile. The shifting of the first line is the most conspicuous change and is indicated by an arrow in the manuscript. The other principal differences from the version seen in the other facsimile are the substitution of “an” for “the old” and “mortal” for “new sweet” in the last two lines. As revised, the lines read:

The soul can recognise its answering soul
 Across dividing Time and, on life’s roads,
 Absorbed wrapped traveller, turning it recovers

Familiar splendours in an unknown face
 And touched by the warning finger of swift love
 It thrills again to an immortal joy
 Wearing a mortal body for delight.

The deletion of the comma after ‘‘roads’’, when Sri Aurobindo revised the typed copy of this canto, was his last change in these lines

Above this passage, one can see in the facsimile a series of lines, not quite in their final form, some of which evolved out of a line in the earlier version

Love leaps on us out of forgotten morns.

Following the indications in the manuscript regarding the order of the lines and adding some punctuation between brackets, we may transcribe the passage as Sri Aurobindo revised it.

He saw an embodiment of aeonic dreams[,]
 The mystery of the rapture for which all
 Yearns in this world of brief mortality
 Made in material shape his very own,
 Its promise and its presence and its fire.
 This golden figure given to his grasp,
 Seemed to him to hold the key of all his aims
 And power to bring the Immortal’s bliss on earth
 For these great spirits now incarnate here,
 Love brought down power out of eternity
 To make of life his new undying base.
 His passion surged a wave from fathomless deeps,
 Or leapt to earth from far forgotten heights[]

The last lines evidently developed out of the earlier line about ‘‘forgotten morns’’, now turned into ‘‘far forgotten heights’’. The dictated changes seen in the scribe’s handwriting belong to the mid-1940s, at least a decade after the manuscript was written. But it was only in the last year of his work on *Savitri*, when he revised the proofs of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, that Sri Aurobindo gave the finishing touches to these lines and added a line at the end:

In these great spirits now incarnate here
 Love brought down power out of eternity
 To make of life his new undying base.
 His passion surged a wave from fathomless deeps;
 It leapt to earth from far forgotten heights,
 But kept its nature of infinity

The remainder of the lines seen in the facsimile of the final manuscript may be transcribed to conclude this illustration of the revision of Book Five. Four lines written in the left margin, below two cancelled lines, are in the scribe's handwriting except for the first four words:

On the dumb bosom of this oblivious globe
 Although as unknown beings we seem to meet,
 Our lives are not aliens nor as strangers join
 Moved to each other by causeless force.

The last line does not seem to have been taken down exactly as Sri Aurobindo intended, for it is missing a syllable required by the metre. Sri Aurobindo must have dictated "a" before "causeless", which the scribe did not hear or accidentally omitted; the "a" was inserted when Sri Aurobindo revised the typescript.

After the lines already discussed, which date back to 1916, the manuscript continues with the lines seen at the bottom of the facsimile. The fifth line was changed in 1950 to "Love is a glory from eternity's spheres".

There is a Power within that knows beyond
 Our knowings; we are greater than our thoughts,
 And sometimes earth unveils that vision here.
 To live, to love are signs of infinite things
 There is a glory of eternal Love
 Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser might
 That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
 He is still the godhead by which all can change.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Broke forth in flame to recreate the world,
 And in that flame to new things she was born.
 A mystic tumult rose up from her crept
 Her life was taken into another's life,
 That forehead wore the crown of life her best,
 These eyes were her constant and eternal stars,
 Leds known through many lives and frames of love
 These knew each other though in forms thus strange.
 The spirit to the spirit was still the same
 And their bodies summed the sense of numberless births.
 Amazed they had come ~~through~~ distant journeyings
 And self-closed countries and through separate ways
 To a small meeting-place in limeloss fields
 And the unexpected glory of these odds.
 Love leaps on us out of forgotten moons,
 Touched by the warning finger of swift Love,
 The soul can recognise its answering soul
 Across dividing time, and on life's road
 Absorbed wrapped traveller turning it recovers
 Familiar splendours in an unknown face,
 And strolls again to the old immortal joy

OUTPATIENT AT JIPMER

POMP or arrogance doesn't make its quarters here,
The haughty, the self-assured fall silent, somewhat worried
In the face of pain. No pretence will hide so naked a thing
However robed,—in this hall of troubled state.
Here too I brought my needs and came to take a share in others' lots.
Eased in a chair, I take my station amongst the waiting for relief
And looking up, stare down the gaping mouth of hell

Accustomed to Christian-yoked Europe's sterile silence
Holding court in waiting corridors amidst the poor
And to faces like suffering Christs on Byzantine icons,
Hoping for charity's graced small issues,
This sight grips me.
What an orchestra for sight!
Though cruel masters of malady and need
Have bent my brothers' law and for their wage, bestowed poverty,
Those noble faces looking at me, nothing could mar
Or blot out the light which God has placed into Indian eyes,
I meet these eyes now in open field and become silent,
Ready to burst like a dam overfed,—and mine become dewy.
Ashamed, I turn aside from those others who do not weep,
Or let out a cry of pain, nor complain of heat, hunger,
Long waiting, heavy sores

Disarmed, unburdened of impatience and of foolish pride
I look on, into those eyes unprotesting—and become loving,
Sweeter of heart, better caring—and boldly ask answers
From unperturbed gods, who look on,
Is this your jest, your play?
Are they not of your blood, as they are of mine?
They choose to deny reply. Majestic silence, august unanswering

I am not deterred, inside my heart aloud I cry,
Unbound am I in my will freed,
If not you will stir, then will I!
Rise will I do, from half good to good,
Ever moving your portals will pass
To where the mighty on fire-steeds ride
Scanning the circumflex of time. and bring
Down the all-sustaining light.

GEORGETTE COTY

SADHANA

Some of our imperfections and our difficulties in dealing with them

Sadhana is full of joy but sometimes our responses to it are uncomfortable. Slowly we find reasons for these discomforts. That is the start of an interesting part of this journey. We see and understand our difficulties. We find a close relationship between our aspirations, our needs and our difficulties. We begin slowly resolving them. We know that the way is rejection and offering them at the feet of our Masters. But we seem to find a stumbling block. What is it? Often it is the refusal to accept our imperfections. Why is it so? I found the reason

1. Once we start consciously on the spiritual path it is harder to accept what we are. As a part of the discipline of this path, much of our life-effort has to be spent in achieving clarity and understanding of our nature. We want to improve ourselves. This aspiration leads to increasing awareness of our imperfections. We lay stress on our imperfections. Often this is also one way we create negative experiences in our life. The reason is that *it is difficult to find and accept the imperfections within ourselves unless we see them simultaneously with our positive qualities. Only then can we start appreciating our own efforts and achievements in purifying and perfecting the different parts of our being.*

2. There is another aspect. When we are engaged in spiritual work we move often from one level of consciousness to another. At the higher level the work is full of light and joy and peace. But when we come down to the material level and try to integrate what we have experienced, it is sometimes even more difficult to accept the imperfections of our humanness. The perception of fear is one example. It is difficult to feel and accept our fears while knowing at another level that there is no need for those fears. "How can the Mother's children have fear?" There is confusion in our mind at a lower level while at a higher, within the same self of ours, there is clarity and light.

3. The spiritual teachings and truths, which we believe to be true, sometimes create difficulties for us to accept and love ourselves. To be aware of what we want to be and at the same time know what we are creates conflicts. We are unable to accept the simultaneous existence within us of some parts that are full of light and others dark or gray, as if in a cave.

One solution is to regard our self as a family wherein some members are in need of more knowledge, more discipline, and more progress towards purity and perfection than others. This is a fairly common thing in a large human family. All our parts indeed form a large family. And all the parts have to be integrated, there is no other way unlike a family in the world where a joint family can be split and split again. Meditation and contemplation indeed aid in this integration. Of course there is often a double movement, three steps forward during meditation and two steps backward soon after. The Mother within us, fortunately, insists and manages that we take in the

end at least one step forward. The most important feature of sadhana here is the increasing participation and finally taking over of our sadhana by the Mother within us. This becomes more and more obvious as our sadhana progresses.

4 It is difficult to comprehend when we hear or read that we must free ourselves from the prison of our humanness and, at the same time, that we must trust the human condition. It is difficult to accept that the material world itself is an expression of the divine, and yet be aware of the chaos, the anger, the fears and hatred there. It is most difficult to accept the dual nature of reality in our world and yet try to move beyond that duality while continuing to live in it.

The way out of this conundrum is through self-love instead of self-disgust and through acceptance of the world as it is, of our lives as they are. We cannot change unless we accept first, we cannot offer what is not ours. In sadhana experiences gather to tell us that when we persist there is always guidance and a protection. We understand, often much after an event, that there is always a higher reason for whatever happens. Not the reason for our *response*, but for whatever *happens*. When this broad aspect of acceptance is incorporated in our conscious mind, into our conscious living, we find our progress to be less slow, and our life increasingly filled with joy and peace.

5 Disease and illness and how to deal with these are common problems. We learn and hear from enlightened persons that we are spiritual beings of light, and yet we feel trapped in a body full of pain and desires and disease. We are told to lovingly accept pain and disease as it is, to lovingly accept that we created it and to even lovingly accept how or why we created it. The difficulty is that we forget that 'lovingly' means with understanding. That means we have to come out of the denial that is a common response to something unpleasant. We have to accept that the pain or illness is indeed the truth, and is there for a reason. It means that we have to accept all of the thoughts and actions that might have aided in creation of an illness. Does this mean accepting the further continuation of the disease, the inevitability of pain?

No, even if it seems like that. Let us admit that acceptance does not mean surrender to the disease or to the disease process. It means deeply trusting, loving and accepting our lives and us no matter what. It means trusting that the ill part of us wants to be healthy again and needs our active support, by our will and by our evoking the Mother. The right means are then suggested by our inner being which we have to follow. It means really getting to know the deeper, the inner self, communing with it, identifying with it and finding its beauty, purity, the truth of what we really are. This we can do through meditation and contemplation. In so doing we find that the body is a dynamic expression of that deeper self. We find that a healthy mind and heart, ever growing in gentleness and tenderness and clarity and knowledge and strength and faith, are expressions of this inner self. Wherever there is an illness, a disease in our being, body or heart or mind, is where we have not allowed our deeper being to express itself, to illuminate, to light up these corners and crevices and dark rooms of our being. It is where we are confused between the real self and the outer

self that is really an impostor. We have allowed this impostor to reign. This knowledge and recognition we have to retrieve, again and again, till it becomes a part of every bit of our being. The only way is to identify the impostor within us, the outer self we confuse with our real self.

Of course, there is a limit, a threshold beyond which an illness cannot be aborted but only ameliorated. But even this limit can be extended depending on the quality and intensity of the Light we can bring from within or above to work on it.

6 The need to please others in order to gain something, their appreciation or something else, is another mode of our being that creates difficulties in sadhana. It is our love of appreciation. One of the needs that veil our true being from us is our desire to please others. From childhood we have learnt that the way to 'peace', the way to get what we want is by pleasing others. We continue even after experiencing that what we want only rarely brings us lasting happiness. Pleasing others becomes a habit. Once we start to refuse our urge to please others we begin to observe ourselves more objectively. We can, now, find out how we manipulate, betray and reject ourselves according to what we think others want from us and thereby how we lose connection with our true self. Of course this does not mean that we go to the other extreme and become unpleasant to others, that we stop smiling or refuse recognising even the need and presence of others. The true smile is an expression of the joy our being feels in just existing, in gratitude that we are alive to adore and love and reveal the divine within us, and to fathom the divine in everything around us.

We cannot love others, cannot love our Mother until we can love ourselves. When we talk of starting to love ourselves it means understanding and thereby accepting ourselves as we are, while knowing what we want to become. That aspiration is the key. The practical step is to slowly bring our different aspects into the light we get by going within, contemplating and meditating. More and more often in the day we have to live within. Meditation is not then just at fixed times only but also at all possible unfixed times. Every time we want to reject an impulse, going within makes rejection easier.

To start wanting no other influence but that of our Mother to guide our lives is an essential part of sadhana. Other influences not only mean those from other persons, from books and media, but also influences from our own superficial self, our ordinary mental and vital and physical selves. We start watching every impulse that comes to us, from within and from outside. We start observing every want that is created in us by contact with the world outside. Life then starts becoming more interesting, more fun. A sense of fun, the ability to laugh at our slipping and fumbling comes with our self-acceptance.

How do going within, contemplation and meditation help? In however small a measure, in whatever smallest portion of our being, contemplation and meditation, going within, is union with our Mother and this starts purifying that portion of our being. In the process other portions of our being get dragged into the light, slowly but certainly, often without our conscious cognition. Integration, purification and perfec-

tion of our parts are nothing but illumination of all the caves and crevices and dark corners in our being. The Mother's Light does this work, slowly, even insidiously but definitively, with our active collaboration. This collaboration is by aspiration, by learning to love, by increasingly living within and by increasing oneness allowing Her to do our sadhana

There are many guideposts in the writings of our masters directing our sadhana. Each one of us finds and chooses one aspect from time to time. I find in the Mother's Prayer of 28 November 1912 one such method which stresses a judicious combination of meditation and the outer life, the activity of each day and each instant. I quote from the prayer:

For meditation, contemplation, Union is the result obtained—the flower that blooms, the daily activity is the anvil on which all the elements must pass and re-pass in order to be purified, refined, made supple and ripe for the illumination which contemplation gives to them. All these elements must be thus passed one after the other through the crucible before outer activity becomes needless for the integral development. Then is this activity turned into the means to manifest Thee so as to awaken other centres of consciousness to the same dual work of the forge and the illumination. Therefore are pride and satisfaction with oneself the worst of all obstacles. Very modestly we must take advantage of all the minute opportunities offered to knead and purify some of the innumerable elements, to make them supple, to make them impersonal, to teach them forgetfulness of self and abnegation and devotion and kindness and gentleness, and when all these modes of being have become habitual to them, then are they ready to participate in the Contemplation, and to identify themselves with Thee in the supreme concentration. That is why it seems to me that the work must be long and slow even for the best and that striking conversions cannot be integral. They change the orientation of the being, they put it definitively on the straight path, but truly to attain the goal none can escape the need of innumerable experiences of every kind and every instant.

So, the way is to be patient because the road is long. The knowledge that She is ever by our side and that the more we face life with a smile and a faith in Her guidance the closer is Her hand supporting us, makes this Yoga easier.

DINKAR D'PALANDE

BEYOND THE EARTHLY GAME

MAN and God
Started playing
With identical iron-rods.

God knew man
But man did not
Again, God owned something
Which man didn't;
He could just show

A moment came
The game gathered both
Momentum and mass—
While God remained silent
Man bragged about
Being in his own.

Blasphemy or praise
Matters little to him—
Reaching the climax
Man started recognising
What he owed to his conscience
If not to posterity
That God is the sheet-anchor
In the lone hours of nothingness,
That God is the other name
Of sustained divine acclivity.

It was a sceptre
And not an iron-rod,

In the hand of God,
In the silent functioning
Of the supreme Lord

He also discovered
It was a rope-trick—
Playing with a rope
And not with iron-rod
That signifies the power
All along his life
Sought by him.

The game is all over
With worldly despair and hope,
Tied over a lifetime
To a tricky rope

A fragment of the eternal force
An embodiment—
Soil, water, energy, air and empty sky
Ultimately engulf all
That are duly shaped
In a lifetime.

And there remains nothing
To win over the ultimate nothingness
But to raise the hand above
And submit

MANAS BAKSHI

IMPRESSIONS OF IMMORTALITY: A REVIEW OF MONET'S LATE WORK

THE MEXICANS have a saying about the state of culture in the United States: "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States." Fortunately, we here in Boston seem to be a step or two ahead of the rest of the country, at least on good days. The birthplace of American liberty, the home of Emerson and Thoreau, the first spot Vivekananda set foot in the Americas—we live in an atmosphere uplifted by high ideas. As I look out my office window here at Harvard, just down the street I can see the block where the Sri Aurobindo Study circle has met every week for over 30 years, and to the right stands the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) which often brings us excellent things. The Museum's permanent collections include an original George Nakashima chair, copies of which are available through Harpagon in the Ashram, as well as a casket from the tomb of Queen Hatshepsut (767-656 B.C.) whom we know was the Mother in a former birth. This year we have also been blessed by a stunning exhibition on Akhenaten, the great Egyptian Pharaoh who was the first in the Western hemisphere to worship Aten, the solar godhead, as the one supreme being and creator of all life—Surya in the Vedic tradition.

But still the most spiritually vibrant exhibit I have seen at the MFA was the retrospective of Claude Monet's late work that came through town last winter. Even now, a year later, I can visualise it as clearly as if I had just seen it yesterday.

The show covered the years 1900 to 1926 and gathered together paintings from around the world, some of which have not been rejoined since they left the artist's studio almost a century ago. It was a well-organised review that allowed one to gain an intimate insight into the evolution of Monet's artistic thinking. One passed through a series of rooms, each of which featured multiple renditions of one or two motifs that the painter originally worked on simultaneously. In this fashion one was able to see him experiment and interpret a theme not only across several contemporary canvasses, but also to follow the growth in his style across time. Thus one proceeded from naturalistic views of his gardens and Japanese bridge at Giverny in 1900 to luminous apparitions of the Thames seen through London's mysterious fog c. 1904, to the emergence of his fascination with ponds and water lilies from 1906-1908. This last period marked a dramatic move towards abstraction and simplification of the elements of composition and several of the best pieces glowed with an aqueous ethereal light that came from some overhead plane, possibly the illumined mind or even an intuitive mental inspiration lifting up the aesthetic vital.

After these introductory salons one moved with Monet to Venice, c. 1910-1912, where he returned to an earlier more concrete style as he attempted to capture the city's architectural splendour and unique quality of light. However, upon his return to Paris, his beloved wife fell ill and died a little over a year later. He had barely recovered from this loss when his son suffered a stroke and eventually passed away as

well Monet did not return to painting until 1914, when he retouched two views of a Venetian palace. The deep mauve and violet hues of these canvasses were pregnant with a burden of grief and the curators artfully punctuated this dark passage in the painter's life by stationing these two pieces at the end of a narrow, dimly lit corridor. Thus one had literally to pass through a dark tunnel in order to emerge again into the light.

Yet what awaited one on the other side of this troubled passage was a spectacular rebirth. As one came out again into large well-lit salons, Monet's canvasses suddenly grew three or fourfold in size, stretching to 2 x 3 meters square, and everything was re-imaged afresh. He painted huge tree trunks, water lilies the size of melons, and these in free childlike scumbles with intense hues of blue, green and purple. Art historians have noted a sense of gratitude and joy in these pieces, as well as read echoes of the chaos of World War I in their jumbled brush strokes, and these qualities of consciousness are indeed there. However, there is also something fresh and dramatic from the standpoint of Integral Yoga, which is the first outflowering of a clearly psychic inspiration. It is subtle but, as I revisited this room on several occasions, repeatedly I felt an inner opening to a very transparent pure and quiet flame of aureate light. These paintings marked Monet's spiritual renaissance and set the stage for the sublime visions he was to complete a decade later.

The following two halls lacked the same clarity and depth of inspiration. They represented, rather, a multitudinous exploration and working out of technical innovations as the artist grappled with multiple inner and outer impacts on his life. Here one saw monumental visions of gnarled trees intended to symbolise the endurance of post-war France, and watched with angst and astonishment as Monet contended with bilateral cataract operations. After the surgery his images became diffuse and shot-through with almost garish hues, and his palette shifted to electric mint and emerald greens, fiery reds, oranges, ochres, and even mud browns. He heaped on the paint in sculptural daubs, rendering his signature bridge at Giverny almost as a model in coloured clay. In terms of technique this period, which lasted until the early 1920s, certainly evidenced that difficult fusion of spontaneity and discipline which only the greatest painters achieve after a lifetime of work—as, for instance, one sees in Cézanne's *Mt. Sainte Victoire* and Matisse's cut-outs. Still, from the perspective of Yoga it must be said that during this period Monet's inspiration was often agitated and unsettled.

What ensued, however, was a leap in consciousness so dramatic that, to the best of my knowledge, it has no precedent in the history of painting. From about 1922 until his death in early December 1926, Monet laboured lovingly to realise an aspiration which he had been gestating for over a decade—to create a physical space that would be covered from floor to ceiling with images of light, water, and flowers. He wanted the viewer to be surrounded on all sides by paintings and his intention was that these should be vehicles for the viewer to enter into a deep contemplation of the union between art, nature, and feeling. This was to be his final gift to the world, his

own type of Yantra born of a lifetime of self-cultivation

As I walked into the first reconstruction ever attempted of Monet's sacred space, immediately my consciousness rose upward above the head and expanded horizontally into a vast resonating space. Around me, on all sides, stretched four immense paintings, each the size of an entire wall, perhaps 6 by 3 meters squared or even more. Each piece was a unique evocation of the same theme, namely, a diffuse expanse of water in which subtly modulated reflections and movements of light enshrined a dream of floating lilies. And these flowers were absolutely astonishing, quintessential, what Sri Aurobindo might have called perfect perfection. Large and lone in a depth of silent light, or clustering in drifting formations of cloudlike nebulae, to behold them was to witness the birth of delicate avatars in paint; they seemed to arise miraculously from a drifting sea of numinous potential and fulfil their mission in the mystified fusion of the seer and the seen. To contemplate these blossoms was to fathom the imponderable, to vibrate on the border between the formed and the formless, to soar into that magic space between the finite and the infinite which is the fount of all wonder.

The more I studied these sublime paintings, the more I discovered there was to study; it was as if each new perception was a revelation and yet only an invitation to an even deeper exploration. From the standpoint of colour and brushwork, these *chefs-d'œuvre* are symphonic. Monet casts an entire canvas in a particular palette, say, the ruddy oranges and russet browns of a sunset on the water, or the soft pastels of morning or deepening purple shadows of late afternoon—and then within that vision he elaborates endless modulations. Seeing from up close, one becomes absorbed in the trance of his loose rhythmic squiggles and the musical progressions of colour harmonies. Seeing from afar, one savours the unique aura and spell of each painting, is lost in the play of light on the water, swayed by the ethereal floating movements of the lilies, extended into the unbounded enormity and simultaneity of the artist's all-encompassing vista. It was an enigma to me how Monet was able to hold these two vastly different perspectives—the near and the far—in his consciousness simultaneously and integrate them into a single unified whole. I was also fascinated by the complexity and fluidity of his creative process, for as I inspected the canvasses carefully, I was surprised to find that he had fortified certain areas to almost a centimeter thick in the process of multiple and patient revisions, while he left others as thin as a single layer of paint applied in a sudden and final inspiration. How he knew when he had arrived at just the right tone, shade, and stroke in each place was inexplicable, but the final product bore full testimony to the fact that he did indeed know.

From the moment I met Monet's magnificent living meditations, I knew that here, at last, was an art of consciousness itself. The effect these paintings had on me was extraordinary: within minutes of entering his sanctuary, my entire subtle body began to vibrate with a truly Yogic awareness. All fatigue and vexation with the Museum's noisy crowds melted away, and spontaneously my thoughts turned to Sri Aurobindo. I remember vividly on my first visit to the exhibit feeling His presence in

that glorious last room, and I could not help but note in passing that Monet finished these supreme works shortly after the Overmental descent in November 1926. It occurred to me that he might have responded subliminally to the pressure of this descent. However, I also told myself not to indulge in insubstantial speculation.

As if in answer to these inner musings the next morning, during meditation, Sri Aurobindo's presence came to me in the form of his Yantra which sprang to life in my inner eye. He descended from above, opening and activating infinity in every plane and part of my being as He slowly plunged into the depths below my feet. This movement repeated itself continuously in meditation for the next few weeks, and during this time I was fortunate enough to return twice to the exhibit. Each time the crush of my hectic work schedule threatened to force me to forfeit my ticket, yet always at the last minute an unexpected opening came and circumstances rearranged themselves so as to allow me to go. I had the intuition that it was Sri Aurobindo's will that I meditate on Monet's paintings, and as I returned to the museum my perceptions grew only more acute. By the end I was certain that the inspiration behind Monet's late water lilies is fully Overmental and, moreover, it became quite clear to me that Sri Aurobindo was present in those paintings. The atmosphere was unmistakable—stepping into Monet's sacred space felt like stepping into the Ashram. How this was or came to be, I could not explain, but the experience was so constant and reliable that I could not deny it.

With much hesitation, I finally decided to share my impressions with a fellow sadhak. I thought he would say that I was imagining things, but to my great surprise he quickly replied that Champaklal once had an experience involving Sri Aurobindo while visiting Monet's gardens at Giverny in 1985. He directed me to the appropriate passage from Champaklal's memoirs, which I read with utter astonishment. Here is an excerpt from Champaklal's vision:

Then this royal Being commanded me, "Wait here only. Do not move even an inch from here. I shall be back shortly." On his return, he took me to a place and explained. "This is my residence. Here too, do not ask questions. Discern on your own whatever you can. I shall display to you my paintings here. Before that let me tell you something. But then, no queries from you. After I have disclosed to you everything, I shall take you to Sri Aurobindo."

For a long time I lay in a condition of so-called deep sleep. But it was not 'sleep' as on earth. You will understand only when you yourself experience it. I had no mind to come out of this 'sleep'. But Sri Aurobindo aroused me in his own way, and advised, 'Now you have to do two things. First, on earth there are many children who are my own but only some of them are in search of my light. Out of them very few know what my light is. For these children you do not have to do anything. As for those who are seeking a new light, staying here only, you have to guide them in the same manner as I helped you to paint. I myself am doing this work. When you go on earth, you will see it in several places.' Then

this fascinating form addressed me. “Come, I shall now show you my paintings. Try to fathom them as much as you can according to your capacity. But do not ask even one question.” On seeing some paintings, I was simply overwhelmed with joy, and woke up. I was being told, “Sitting on the lawn is not allowed.” It was clear to me that I was not supposed to see more—that is why this came just as an excuse.

Later I came to know that the imposing figure which I had seen was that of the well-known French painter Claude Monet .. *

Needless to say, for me reading about Champaklal’s vision at Giverny was the definitive confirmation of my own experiences with Monet’s paintings. I went away from three visits to the Monet exhibit feeling both uplifted and hopeful about the future of Western art, as well as humbled by the mystery and majesty of Sri Aurobindo’s action. How little we know about what Sri Aurobindo does behind the veil.

In the year since the exhibit, on many occasions I have conducted therapy in an office that happens to have a large reproduction of one of Monet’s water lilies c 1915, from the period of his spiritual rebirth. The painting hangs right above where my patients sit, so that I have it in full view. Several times in the middle of a painful session—and especially when working through grief—I have felt a healing psychic aura emanate from the painting and enter into the patient, and then they fall quiet and gather together some inner strength. A subtle and beautiful reminder that the spirit of this great French painter is still active in the earth atmosphere.

MICHAEL MIOVIC

* “A Vision of the Famous French Artist,” in *Visions of Champaklal*, edited by Roshan and Apurva. Copyright Divyanand Kripandhi, 1990, 8 Sardarbag Society, Bardoli, printed by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, pp 144-45

ON THE BEACH OF PONDICHERRY

THIS evening as I sit on the Pandy beach
And watch the billows dancing high and low,
Silvery waves, vying and touching the beach,
I find your presence and my heart is again aglow

Your coming with all grandeur on the terrace,
A few thousand souls from below looking upward,
Bowls of all hearts turning to you for shower of grace,
Now as I look within, I enjoy that event grand

A mystic balm is sprinkled all round from above,
A unique peace pervades and permeates allwhere,
My heart gets drenched profusely with love
As soothing waves emanate from your face dear

Three decades have elapsed since that Darshan day
And though long back you have left that august form
You have ever been with me in sun and shade
Manifesting in many a name and form.

As I sit pensively and look across the sea,
I hear your voice "Coming", "Coming", "Coming"
The sweet voice is of much solace to me,
Indeed, hidden divinity it is revealing

You have taught me to love and aspire, O Divine,
And keeping me consciously away from the mundane race
You have mysteriously vibrated thro' my spine.
Thank you, Mother, Thank you, O Grace

M P JAIN

THE ODYSSEY — AN ADAPTATION

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

Scene 16

Odysseus: Seven years with Calypso I needed forgetfulness. The men in my care were lost. All I had sworn to bring home, but Helios was not bound by my vow. So I surrendered to the silken grace of Calypso. Her touch was so light yet it protected and healed abysmal wounds of the heart (*Looks at Calypso then turns back to the table with Nausicaa and others.*) My memories of Ithaca weaved only in and out of my dreams. My homeland forgotten, my wife an occasional vision, my son grows to manhood alone. Now I've given you all I possess, the tale of a man both cursed and blessed by the gods, a man who would return to his kingship, now master of himself, if not of his home.

Alcinoos: Such a gift has surely no equal, but I can attend to your most present needs, a ship, a crew, and provisions. To Athena we will appeal for fair winds.

Odysseus: Mighty king, great queen, intrepid daughter, the grace of the gods flows undiminished through you. Your gifts I accept with the deepest of gratitude and know that the gods will repay you in kind. My kingdom regained, its riches restored me, your generosity will live through a king who has studied your goodness.

Arête: Such is the wish of every true monarch, that his wealth can enrich and empower his realm. You came on our shores and became part of our destiny opening our eyes to truths far beyond. Now receive the gift of the stranger, carrying what wealth we can offer to those of your shores.

Demodocus: Thus began the last lap of the voyage of Odysseus; Odysseus, whose dream of Ithaca was at last to be true. The barque was made ready for this captain of captains, who had commanded his ships with a concentration so fierce that each shift of a sail, each pull of an oar, seemed to emanate directly from him. Odysseus, the end of his journey in sight. Did he stand at the prow to catch the first glimpse of his home? Were his senses alive to the change of the winds, the motion of tides? Did he cry out commands to a hearkening crew to ensure the swiftest of passages home? No. he slept. Ah! sleep. Sleep, who can torture, enlighten or soothe. Sleep who mocks at Death's arrogant grip with each laughing surrender to dawn. Sleep, whose premature visit had slyly loosened the knots from Aeolus's fat bag of winds, now allowed this crew to proceed unmolested, for Odysseus could now trust his fate.

Scene 17

So he landed, not stepping ashore with the pride of a king, but delivered to Ithaca with the other treasures Alcinoos gave. When Odysseus awoke he was alone and a mist covered Ithaca's shore Home at last, but poor Odysseus didn't know he was there ! Then Athena took pity and came dressed as a shepherd

Odysseus. Kind Sir, can you tell me the name of this place ?

Athena You've come well laden to a place of which you know nothing You are in Ithaca

Odysseus · If you were a god you could give me no better gift.

Athena : You know something of this island ?

Odysseus · (*remembering the need for concealment*) Once in my youth.

Athena Stop ! I need no tales from the master of craft You are irrepressible, an everlasting schemer ! Indefatigable fabulist. But .. you are right to hide your identity Ithaca has dangers in plenty for you, but from me you can conceal nothing I am Athena. (*Odysseus is struck dumb, goes down on one knee She takes off her robe to reveal her identity.*) I know more of your tale than even you do, for I see from a height inaccessible to mortals, or demigods, like you

Odysseus I am descended from Hermes

Athena He told you ?

Odysseus : On the mountains of the sun.

Athena. As you see, cunning and craft are your birthright, these wide-ranging wanderings your path Now knowing your heritage face these intruders, for quicksilver, though lovely, can be deadly as well Calling on the powers given you by Hermes, reclaim the kingdom of Laertes, your father on earth. For now, we will hide all your treasures, both the wealth of Alcinoos and your physical strength. These (*pointing*) we will put in the cave of the Naiads and your body we will cover with rags (*They do*) I must warn Telemachus of a plot set against him. (*Odysseus looks startled*) He will be safe I've seen you through many, much worse. But for now we will see how to rid your house of these vipers and discover if a goddess can contribute to Odysseus's tricks I'll take you to the home of your swineherd, Eumaeus, a servant who has ever been faithful to you. With him and his pigs you will be very

comfortable He is noble in birth and in heart, though a slave to your house (*They go to a hut Odysseus takes the stance of an old man*)

Scene 18

Eumaeus: Welcome Come sit by my fire

Odysseus How kind ' I'd heard strangers were not welcome near here

Eumaeus · All strangers and beggars are sent us from Zeus, but with Odysseus gone, in his house they are scorned.

Odysseus But I bring news of Odysseus himself.

Eumaeus: Don't they all? It's sometimes good for a meal Come, why tell lies? I'll give you a meal without asking.

Odysseus: Swineherd, I swear Odysseus will come.

Eumaeus By my life, I wish it were true, but this talk always grieves me Please, leave it for now. Accept hospitality from the house of Odysseus through its lowliest member That's me

Demodocus As they sat and they ate, Athena guided the ship of Telemachus The suitors were left to wait for their prey, while Telemachus found another way home In his sleep she had warned him of the plot on his life and sent him to the hut of Eumaeus.

(Telemachus enters as Odysseus and Eumaeus are eating. He stands still for a moment Odysseus sees him and slowly rises. Eumaeus looks to see who Odysseus sees and turns to greet him, but there has been a moment of silence)

Eumaeus. Telemachus, you do my home honour.

Telemachus. Your faithfulness is honour enough for one home. (*Odysseus points to his seat to offer it to Telemachus.*) No, old man, keep your seat. Eumaeus, please go to my house and inform my mother that her son has returned. With the help of Athena, I escaped death from the suitors (*Eumaeus gasps*) Once in my home they cannot touch me.

Eumaeus I will inform Penelope (*exits*)

(Telemachus sits and Odysseus offers him food. He accepts it gratefully and eats as Odysseus steps away out of the hut. Athena comes to Odysseus.)

Athena · He must be shown who you are

Odysseus He is young and he is beautiful Can he accept a father like me ?

Athena You're not perfect, but you'll do. (*She takes his stick and rags.*) After all that you've faced you are afraid of your son ? (*She blesses him*) Now he'll think you a god

Odysseus : Telemachus.

Telemachus . (*startled*) Who are you who came disguised as a beggar ?

Odysseus A man A king. A husband A father.

Telemachus . The king of .. ?

Odysseus . Ithaca (*A moment's silence and Telemachus goes down on one knee and takes Odysseus's hand to kiss. Odysseus goes down also and embraces him.*) Now together we will resume our lordship. (*He rises*)

Telemachus Father, you don't know what awaits you (*He rises*)

Odysseus Yes, I do

Telemachus . They are too many. Are there others who can help us ?

Odysseus I know of two.

Telemachus Two ? Against so many ?

Odysseus Two who can give the power of hundreds Great Zeus and Bright-eyed Athena. With their help I faced even my son

Telemachus . Then your son will be there beside you and call on the heavens to be worthy of that place. My mother can now finish her shroud and resume weaving the pattern of her life

Odysseus But you must not tell her yet. Even the breeze must not whisper "Odysseus" For though the gods are the source of this work and are our protectors, yet they will work through my tricks (*Music. They exit.*)

(*To be concluded*)

“AS IN A MYSTIC AND DYNAMIC DANCE...”*

As *The Future Poetry* is Sri Aurobindo's answer to what poetry of the future would be like and what should be its role in the evolutionary progress of man, so *Savitri* is “The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision” Human evolution has reached a level of development dominated by external physical life. “The truer light of God” lies hidden in man, the “burning Witness, our magic key” is still “concealed in life's hermetic envelope.” No more can, therefore, the “vigorous presentation of external action” be a fit and adequate theme for the imagination of an epic poet. The theme of the new epic is not to be thought-based any more, it has to be seen and much more to be lived in the inmost as well as in the highest consciousness of the poet if poetry is to reveal the “divine potentialities” of human life. The epic of the soul most inwardly seen by an intuitive poetry has to be the greatest possible subject for the future poet. This will reveal from “the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit” Such a supreme revelatory poetry is expected from “some profound and mighty voice of the future.” Breaking into “another Space and Time” Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is that mighty voice of

the epic climb
Of human soul from its flat earthly state
To the discovery of a greater self
And the far gleam of an eternal Light ²

Such an epic adventure of the soul cannot solely be undertaken by man himself, “not any human endeavour or tapasya” can itself do this; it needs the aid of some high power of the spirit. In response to earth's aspiration the Divine Mother condescends to incarnate herself and assures Aswapati

One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power ³

This incarnation is *Savitri*, the divine protagonist as Sri Aurobindo proclaims in the epic.

Book One, Canto 2 of *Savitri* contains a magnificent passage about *Savitri* and the God of love, beginning with “Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven” and ending with “In her he met his own eternity.” (The text is reproduced at the end of the article) The entire passage of 51 lines is indeed a marvel of poetic creation from the highest plane of inspiration. On being asked about the plane of inspiration, Sri Aurobindo commented in 1936 “This passage is, I believe, what I might call the Overmind Intuition at work expressing itself in something like its own rhythm and

* *Savitri* (1970), p 15

language”⁴ Weighing the above comment with his own later remarks in 1946 we have further light shed on it by him: “At that time I hesitated to assign anything like Overmind touch or inspiration to passages in English or other poetry and did not presume to claim any of my own writing as belonging to this order.”⁵ “. . . it seems certain that this passage. would have been traced by him to the supreme source if he had been privately asked about it again”⁶ It is true that great poets in the past have occasionally uttered in a line or two the revelatory Word from overhead planes of inspiration, but not in a sustained manner as in this passage of 51 lines. If read aloud with right intonation as we chant a mantra, and if “our inner chamber’s door is a little ajar”, the true mantric effect shall come to the fore; our inmost being is then thrilled with some unnameable joy and we are uplifted and transported “to things beyond” This is a poetry which is *Mantra of the Real*, to use a phrase of Sri Aurobindo, as if the poetic energy from the highest plane of consciousness poured in a flood of Truth and Vastness. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: “The ordinary reader of poetry who has not that experience will usually not be able to distinguish but would at the most feel that here is something extraordinarily fine, profound, sublime or unusual. One who had the line of communication open could on the other hand feel what is there and distinguish even if he could not adequately characterise or describe it.”⁷

The entire passage of 51 lines is of this kind. “It is not necessary to understand the passage in detail in order to feel its magnificence,” writes K. D. Sethna. “The phrases have an enormous weight of vision that strikes us to our knees, as it were, impressing us with a finality we dare not question. The rhythm has an overpowering fidelity to the inner thrill of the experience suggested and symbolised. . . This is an Overmind actually holding all the magnitudes that are pictured; its vision is from within, composed of its own substance and lit up with its own vast vitality. As a result the pictures are at once extra-immediate and extra-remote, they make an impact upon our solar plexus as no mental reflection of mystical realities can...” We would fail in our appreciation of this poetry “if we did not thrill to the rapturous wideness drowning all thought”⁸ It is in this passage that Sri Aurobindo’s poetic genius goes all out to build up the portrait of the divine heroine. The epic simile beginning with “As in a mystic and dynamic dance” finds a pre-eminent place in this passage. The nine lines of this simile “are perhaps Sri Aurobindo’s grandest achievement in mantric poetry.”⁹

To Sri Aurobindo, Savitri is the incarnation of the Divine Mother and she has descended here with the consciousness and force of the supreme Mother. The Divine Mother “consents to be manifest to her creatures” through Savitri so as to “break the iron Law” and “unlock the doors of Fate”. Reading these nine lines in conjunction with the last chapter of Sri Aurobindo’s invaluable book *The Mother* will be very profitable for the readers in appreciating Savitri’s divinity and her mission. Sri Aurobindo writes “There are three ways of being of the Mother of which you can become aware when you enter into touch of oneness with the Conscious Force that upholds us and the universe. Transcendent, the original supreme Shakti, she stands

above the worlds and links the creation to the ever unmanifest mystery of the Supreme Universal, the cosmic Mahashakti, she creates all these beings and contains and enters, supports and conducts all these million processes and forces Individual, she embodies the power of these two vaster ways of her existence, makes them living and near to us and mediates between the human personality and the divine Nature''¹⁰ The three ways of being of the Divine Mother are manifest in Savitri too The simile "As in a mystic and dynamic dance" describes the triple aspects of her being's divinity

Transcendent, Savitri stands above all the worlds, "intimate with heaven", and "bears in her eternal consciousness" the supreme Truth ".containing or calling the Truths that have to be manifested, she brings them down from the Mystery in which they were hidden into the light of her infinite consciousness. ''¹¹ These Truths come down infiltrating through "Truth's revealing vault" Whatever is transmitted by her transcendent consciousness comes into "the prophet cavern of the gods" where she is "inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault" This is Savitri's second state and aspect of being. "The prophet cavern of the gods" is the World of the Overmind gods Here the "rich creative beats" of her consciousness, signified by the phrase "dynamic dance", and moved by "immaculate ecstasies", her Universal consciousness, give the Truth "a form of force in her omnipotent power". And it is when the vault or lid of the Overmind, signified by the phrase "cavern of the gods", is broken that we overfly "the ways of Thought to unborn things" Individual, as the incarnation of the Divine Mother, Savitri "embodies the power of these two vaster ways of her existence, makes them living and near to us and mediates between the human personality and the divine Nature." This state of Savitri's individual divinity is described by the poet in several ways: "her body like a parable of dawn", "a niche for veiled divinity", "the golden temple door". The simile brings out in mantric language all the three ways of her being's divinity Savitri is the "golden temple door", "the beautiful body of the incarnate Word" that leads the seeker "to things beyond" into "the prophet cavern of the gods" When the vault of this 'cavern' is broken, the seeker overflies "the ways of Thought to unborn things", to the Supreme Mystery Here Savitri is the ascending ladder of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, taking us to "unborn things"

Also, harbouring "the absolute power" in her "eternal consciousness", Savitri brings down the golden Truth from the Mystery, the "Truth's revealing vault" and "pouring down her luminous transcendences from their ineffable ether and the harp of life is fitted for the rhythms of the Eternal''¹² This is described by the beautiful expression "Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps." Here Savitri is descending the ladder of Integral Yoga, bringing down the Truth from the heights Thus Savitri is the double ladder, the World-Stair of Integral Yoga.

In this brief passage of nine or ten lines, with the grandest of Sri Aurobindo's similes, the poet not only describes the three ways of her being's divinity but also states her divine mission It is Savitri, the incarnation of the Divine Mother, who

alone can bridge the highest height of supramental Truth and the lowest abysses of Matter. Her power and “not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal’s Ananda ”¹³

“Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss”, the simile proceeds with “the lines of a significant myth telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns” which the epic is to unveil.

Text of the quoted *Savitri* passage

Near to earth’s wideness, intimate with heaven,
 Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
 Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
 Overflow the ways of Thought to unborn things
 Ardent was her self-poised un stumbling will;
 Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
 Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
 As in a mystic and dynamic dance
 A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
 Inspired and ruled from Truth’s revealing vault
 Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
 A heart of silence in the hands of joy
 Inhabited with rich creative beats
 A body like a parable of dawn
 That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
 Or golden temple door to things beyond
 Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps,
 Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
 Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight
 Poured a supernal beauty on men’s lives
 A wide self-giving was her native act;
 A magnanimity as of sea or sky
 Enveloped with its greatness all that came
 And gave a sense as of a greatened world
 Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,
 Her high passion a blue heaven’s equipoise
 As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
 Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
 And a quiet reach like a remembered breast.
 In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
 One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,

Recover the lost habit of happiness,
 Feel her bright nature's glorious ambience,
 And preen joy in her warmth and colour's rule.
 A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,
 Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven,
 Love in her was wider than the universe,
 The whole world could take refuge in her single heart
 The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell
 Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air,
 Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath
 Spiritual that can make all things divine.
 For even her gulfs were secrecies of light
 At once she was the stillness and the word,
 A continent of self-diffusing peace,
 An ocean of untrembling virgin fire
 The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.
 In her he found a vastness like his own,
 His high warm subtle ether he refound
 And moved in her as in his natural home
 In her he met his own eternity ¹⁴

ASOKA K GANGULI

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CHILD OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

In the hierarchy of gods also, Sri Aurobindo differentiates between the young, 'later gods' and the 'elder gods' In *The Superman* he says

The Titan would unify by devouring, not by harmonising; he must conquer and trample what is not himself either out of existence or into subservience In Nature, since it started from division and egoism, the Titan had to come first, he is here in us as the elder god, the first ruler of man's heaven and earth Then arrives the God and delivers and harmonises.'"⁴

In *Love and Death* Cupid is the 'child god' who wrestles with Death who is the established elder god of rigid order Through Ruru, Cupid succeeds in shaking Death's apparently invincible throne. Similarly, in *Perseus the Deliverer* Poseidon is the god of the 'elder world' "where barbarous rituals are essential" Athene is one of the 'mild and later gods' who bring love, light and harmony

Andromeda in *Perseus the Deliverer* is regarded as a child and an immature idle babbler of impossible and impractical ideals Praxilla, her nurse, thinks that Andromeda would stop the idle talk and understand the Truth of things when she grows older. To this, Andromeda replies:

I'll not be older!
I will not understand!⁵

In Andromeda, Sri Aurobindo opposes childhood to adulthood wherein the former is not the precursor of the latter and the latter is not the natural development of the former They are opposite ideologies The childishness of Andromeda is much like the boyishness of Ruru where rigidity, fear, selfishness and conformity do not obstruct openness, wider thoughts and feelings Unlike the rest, Andromeda is not surrounded by a shell of national pride, racial superiority, frozen articles of faith and empty presumptions of class which stifle and suppress the breath of the spirit In both pleasure and pain, she identifies herself with the whole world and understands by a higher reason, above the limited ego Her love is untainted by any compromise with the perversities of practical, lower life The elderly world involves adaptation to the existing norms, double standards, while Andromeda's 'childish' world strives to question, contradict and transform the adult world It is in this sense that Andromeda retains her childishness, her 'virgin purity' till the end Goddess Athene sees that this child has the compassion of a 'mother's heart' She adopts Andromeda as her child, to guide and help. Andromeda is the Virgin, the pure and flexible being, the tender child who is not stiffened and set in the world mould.

In this drama of the world where the forces of Light and the forces of Darkness have a constant battle for supremacy, some humans, by virtue of their qualities, act as vehicles or channels for these superhuman or subhuman powers. To become a perfect instrument of the spirit and bear the descent of the higher forces successfully is a part of man's evolutionary programme. It needs a sincere, conscious and total surrender. It is in this sense that Perseus and Andromeda become the children of Athene. On the opposite side, Polydaon becomes the instrument of Poseidon and a channel to the elder god's bloodthirsty regime.

The concept of the perfection of the body, life, heart and mind to suit the descent of the Supreme Force and deserve the guidance of the Supreme Mother, appears through all the works of Sri Aurobindo and culminates in *Savitri*. The valiant Marathi warrior Bajji Prabhou in *Bajji Prabhou* is called 'Mother Bhavani's child'. So too, the Norwegian hero Eric finds himself an instrument in the hands of Freya, Mother of Heaven. In *Satyavan*, this process reaches its perfection.

In *Vasavadutta*, Sri Aurobindo uses many epithets like royal child, eagle's child, father's child, etc. The portrayal of King Mahasegn, Queen Ungarica and their daughter Vasavadutta dramatises the different ideas of parenthood which Sri Aurobindo expresses in *War and Self-determination*.

"The child was in the ancient patriarchal idea the live property of the father, he was his creation, his production, his own reproduction of himself, the father, rather than God or the universal Life in place of God, stood as the author of the child's being, and the creator has every right over his creation, the producer over his manufacture."⁶ King Mahasegn is a typical patriarch, a 'Titan', and Vasavadutta is his 'Pupil' who can always grasp his thoughts and says initially

Father, thy will is mine, even as 'tis fate's
Thou givest me to whom thou wilt, what share
In this have I but only to obey?⁷

As a contrast to King Mahasegn's ideology, Queen Ungarica treats the child as a soul with a being, a nature and capacities of his own who must be helped to find them, to find himself, to grow into their maturity, into a fullness of physical and vital energy and the utmost breadth, depth and height of his emotional, intellectual and spiritual being. The growth or inner evolution of Vasavadutta from the 'father's child' and the 'eagle's child' to the mother's child covers the whole play. Queen Ungarica treats Vasavadutta, who is in the prime of her youth, as a 'babe' and calls her so. Vasavadutta is a babe as she has not yet learnt to think and act by herself, because she is at an impressionable age and is ruled by outside forces. She belongs to the 'atavistic' period of 'girlhood' as per the description of Sri Aurobindo in *The Human Cycle*, for he says that this period considers the body and physical life as of utmost importance and is ruled by instincts. Vasavadutta considers herself 'older' than Vuthsa and thinks that she can 'play with him' and make him dance to her father's tune. But, as in all the other plays, the youngster is the teacher and the elder is the taught. With the

arrival of Vuthsa, the soft-eyed youth, she passes through the 'fiercest sweet ordeal' and all that she 'has thought and known' melts away and she is 'reborn' and she blooms like a flower for its flowerhood and her nature's growth and heart's delight and not to 'yield allegiance to the clear-eyed selfish gods'

Vuthsa is described as the 'royal child', the 'luxurious boy', a 'golden marvelous boy' in whom young Nature's 'infant powers' are divinely shaped. He is a 'tender boy' as soft as 'summer dews'. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo says that the gnostic soul is the Child but the 'King-Child' and it dwells in Ananda. Vuthsa, who is the 'royal child', is this gnostic soul. He is the expression of the ideal poet and artist in man who can seize the secret significances of the Universal Poet and Artist, the divine creator. The truth he seeks is the truth of beauty, the soul of beauty, the supra-rational beauty. In *The Human Cycle* Sri Aurobindo says.

When it can get the touch of this universal, absolute beauty, this soul of beauty, this sense of its revelation in any slightest or greatest thing, the beauty of a flower, a form, the beauty and power of a character, an action, an event, a human life—it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. God is Beauty and Delight hidden in the variation of his masks and forms.⁸

Vuthsa finds beauty and delight in everything around. He says 'war is beautiful' and has desire for 'every woman and for none'. He finds joy in bowing to Gopalaca's designs and Vasuntha exclaims that Vuthsa gives himself to all and all are his and seeks each thing in its own way. Vuthsa finds the earth to be honey which he should taste before ascending to 'other sweetness on some rarer height'.

Vuthsa's suprarational ecstasy seems a colossal madness to the rational minds. He commands a wider life, a larger existence and a happier soul-state. He is the true emotive soul, the real psyche which is 'a soul of pure love and delight', 'free from the actions of the Pranic or desire soul'. He shows the real function of Prana which is enjoyment—an inward spiritual Ananda by real inward possession and not outward seizing. He is tender and easily manageable only because he has a knowledge of his real self and his surroundings. In serious issues, he is a 'Wrestler with dangerous earth' and refuses a compromise. So, Vuthsa, the 'royal child', is truly the gnostic 'kingchild'.

(Concluded)

B VARALAKSHMI

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THE VEDIC VISION

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

BUT when we examine the spiritual history of the world this act or movement of sacrifice took two distinct paths with very different spiritual results. One is the path of absolute renunciation by which the “lower” life of the body, life and mind is totally rejected and condemned in an exclusive pursuit of the “higher” life of the spirit. The other path is the path of self-giving and surrender in which the life of body, vital and mind is not denied or rejected but offered as a sacrifice to the divine powers of the spirit so that they may be remoulded and transformed by the light and power of the spirit and participate in the higher life of the spirit. The result of the path of renunciation is a gradual shrinking and ultimate denial of the activities of the mind, life and body for the sake of an exclusive individual salvation in the pure spirit. The result of the path of self-giving and surrender is a gradual and integral expansion, fulfilment, perfection and divine participation of the powers of the mind, life, body and soul, or in other words, the whole being of man in the higher life and nature of the spirit. The path of sacrifice followed by the Vedic sages belonged to the second category.

The path pursued by Vedic seers was not a path of renunciation of life but a path of self-giving and surrender. None of the activities, powers and enjoyments of the body, life and mind are rejected in an ascetic spirit but all are offered to the gods so that they are illumined, purified and transformed and made into a fit vehicle and chariot of the gods.

The Vedic ritual of sacrifice is an expressive symbol of the inner psychological process of the Vedic Yoga. It signifies the lighting of the inner fire of aspiration, Agni, in the altar of the heart and pouring into it as oblations all the activities of our body, life and mind. It is said in the Vedas that Agni receives all the offerings of man to the gods, rises to heaven with them and brings down the gods and their bounties to man. It means that it is the inner psychic fire of spiritual aspiration which with all the inner and outer activities thrown into it as oblations, rises inward and upwards to the land of the gods and calls them down with all their light and force into the consciousness of man.

This is the inner significance and process of the Vedic sacrifice Yajna. What are the fruits and results of Vedic sacrifice? Light in the mind, Energy in the vitality and Joy in emotions and sensations are the three bounties for which the Vedic sages prayed and received from the gods. These are the fruits of the Vedic Yajna which the Vedic sages consistently hymned in the symbolic figure of the Cow, the Horse and the Wine, Go, Ashwa and Soma. In the symbolism of the Vedic mystics *go* and *ashwa*, cow and horse represent the two aspects of the divine consciousness: light and energy or knowledge and force. And Soma is the mystic wine which flows into the spiritually prepared, illumined and purified human vessel from the supreme Delight “Mayas” inherent in the one eternal Existence, *Ekam Tat Sat*.

The Vedic Social Ideal

The other important question regarding the Vedic spirituality is whether the Vedic ideal is purely individualistic or has a collective dimension. To answer this question we must have a clear understanding of the Vedic vision of human Society. Here also we have to get behind the symbolic language of the Vedic sages. The symbolic image of the Purusha Sukta conveys the idea of human society as an expression of the divine Being marching ahead with Brahmana as the Mouth, Kshatriya as his Arm, Vaishya as his Thighs and Shudra as his Feet. It will be beyond the scope of this essay to enter into the details of the psychological and spiritual significance of this Vedic conception of society. In brief the central intuition behind this Vedic conception is that human society or social organisation must be a faithful outer expression of the inner psychological organisation of the human being. Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra represent the four psychological faculties in Man and their self-expression in society—Brahmana represents the faculties of intelligence seeking for knowledge, Kshatriya the faculties of will seeking for power, strength and mastery; Vaishya the faculties of emotions and vitality seeking for mutuality and harmony, and Shudra the faculties of the physical being and its natural urge for work and service. Based on this intuition human beings are classified into four psychological types and human society organised according to their corresponding self-expression in the collective life of man. But these psychological powers in man and the human types they represent are themselves expressions of the corresponding cosmic and spiritual powers of the divine Being. Thus to make the whole of human society a direct and conscious expression of the fourfold powers of the creative Godhead in Man is the Vedic social ideal.

So the Vedic sages never shunned the society but lived within it and actively guided and shaped its life, ideals, values and institutions. Most of the Vedic sages lived a full and rounded life with wife, family and children and pursued both the spiritual and worldly life without any conflict between them. As a Vedic seer says in a bold image "I enjoy both heaven and earth as a man enjoys his two wives." The Vedic seers made no sharp distinction between the spiritual and secular life. The life of the world is a symbolic image of the life of the spirit, a distorted image perhaps, distorted by the ignorance and falsehood and crookedness of the human consciousness but still an expression of some truth of the spirit and not an illusion, Maya. If this "crookedness" in the world can be made "straight" then the world and human life can become a luminous, perfect and progressive expression of the powers of the spirit, the gods. And the way to make the life of the world "straight" is not to reject it but to offer it to the gods. So the Vedic path is not a path of renunciation but a spontaneous, joyous and child-like acceptance of life and the offering of all the inner and outer activities and enjoyments of life to the gods so that the whole of human life becomes a conscious expression of the spirit.

Thus the Vedic ideal of spiritual man is not a world-shunning ascetic or a

monk but the Rishi, one who has lived and transcended the life of the world. He has realised in himself the integral spiritual consciousness which knows not only the highest truth of the Spirit but also the deepest truth of Life and therefore can provide a much better and wiser guidance to the society than any "expert" of the world. As Sri Aurobindo, a modern Rishi, explains the Vedic ideal of the Rishi.

"The spiritual man who can guide human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient Indian idea of the Rishi, one who has lived fully the life of man and found the word of the supra-intellectual, supramental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within, he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. Therefore he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it."²

This is the reason why Indian culture gave the highest respect to the Rishi and viewed the spiritual man as the best guide not only of religious life but also of secular life. As Sri Aurobindo explains further the deeper truth and significance of this traditional Indian respect for the Rishi:

"The Indian mind holds that the Rishi, the thinker, the seer of spiritual truth is the best guide not only of the religious and moral, but the practical life. The seer, the Rishi is the natural director of society; to the Rishi he attributes the ideas and guiding intuitions of his civilisation. Even today he is very ready to give the name to anyone who can give a spiritual truth which helps his life or a formative idea and inspiration which influences religion, ethics, society, even politics. This is because the Indian believes that the ultimate truths are truths of the spirit and the truths of the spirit are the most fundamental and most effective truths of our existence, powerfully creative of the inner, salutarily reformative of the outer life."³

The later developments in Indian yoga moved towards a gradual loss of the dynamic and integral spiritual vision and ideal of the Vedic sages and culminated in the philosophy of illusionism and the ideal of a life-denying renunciation. Somewhere during the post-Upanishadic era an overwhelming attraction towards this ideal of life-negating renunciation, preached by great and powerful minds like Buddha and Shankara took hold of the spiritual and cultural mind of India. This led to a sense of world-weariness among the best minds of the age. We can very well imagine the subtle psychological damage wrought on the collective life of the people when the best minds of the society lose the motivation to work for the creative regeneration and transformation of life, preach a gloomy gospel of Maya and look forward to the forest, monastery and the mountain-top as the final station of life or the dissolution of individuality in a life-denying spirit or void as the highest aim of life. And the result of this unfortunate development is that the collective life of the civilisation lost the positive psychological motivation and the creative force needed for its regeneration. This is one of the major causes of the decline of India. For example Sisir Kumar Mitra points out in his illuminating study of Indian history that in the heyday of Buddhism

in India, many of the young, educated, intelligent and talented Kshatriya princes, attracted by Buddhist teachings, handed over their kingdoms to incompetent hands and became monks. But the greatest loss is the flight of spiritually illumined souls away from society—instead of remaining within the community, like the Vedic sages, as pillars of light and guidance for the moral and spiritual regeneration of the collectivity. And the result is that human society lost the transformative light and force of a power beyond mind, the power of the Spirit, the only power which can transform human life.

So the path to the regeneration of India lies in recovering the Vedic vision and ideal in all its integrality in thought and practice and giving it a new form suitable to modern conditions.

(Concluded)

M S SRINIVASAN

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REFUSE TO BE ENTERTAINED BY VIOLENCE

How do we build a peaceful world? This question demands an answer. The causes of war are many: economic, political, social, ethnic and religious. But most people would not include television among them. Let us look at the entertainment industry, movies and television in particular, and notice the amount of violence that is offered as entertainment. If the general public watches violence night after night, year after year, the world will be a violent place.

In order to understand the connection it is important to review the nature of the mind. The mind of man is like a computer; what you put in is what you get out. "Energy follows thought." You may believe that you are responsible for what you do but not for what you think. The reality is that you are responsible for what you think because what you think determines what you are. You cannot change yourself by changing your behaviour and keeping your old thoughts. But you can change your mind, and this is where real change comes from. Your mental world is the only thing over which you have complete control.

Are thoughts a subtle form of matter? The problem with violent images on television is that they combine thought and emotion, which gives the image more power. Listen to a violent TV programme from the next room and notice the role of music in controlling your emotions. The audience is played with like a puppet on a string. Do you find that honourable? When the TV show is over and you turn it off, these thoughts are still with you. Did the experience make you a better person? How many years will you carry the memory of those images around with you?

It is an old saying that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. If television is the modern day babysitter, then the quality of the images determines man's destiny. Should we be teaching our children that violence is an acceptable solution to the problems of life? The subconscious mind accepts whatever is offered to it if impressed with repetition and intense emotion. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Mankind is halfway between an animal and a god. Violence is a part of the animal world and therefore an integral part of man's past. War was the constant state of primitive man; peace is the measure of the advancement of civilisation. Freewill, or the ability to choose, is humanity's most precious possession. When you choose to be entertained by violence you are strengthening the animal nature within you. When you refuse to be entertained by violence you are treading the path of discipleship. A disciple is someone who consciously works on himself. The path of discipleship is also called the path of purification. At some point in the evolution of consciousness the individual chooses to weed out the elements of the animal nature like anger and fear, and begins to build into his consciousness the divine qualities like non-injury and compassion. The journey from seaweed to divinity is inevitable. You cannot change the destination, but you can choose to go quickly or slowly, to go forward or back. Divine consciousness is your inheritance, but to make the journey you must leave the animal nature behind.

Habit is one tool that humanity can use to its advantage or disadvantage. Everyone who has learnt to play a musical instrument or a sport knows the value of practice and more practice. If you make it a habit to practise your music one hour a day you will improve. If you watch violence every day you are tuning your instrument to resonate with violence. Is this what you want? Discipleship is hard work because it entails becoming conscious in areas of life that previously were unconscious. Habit can be consciously used to speed us along toward our goal. Be a disciple, turn off the TV.

MICHAEL VIRAT

N B If you are a Master/Teacher, use the TV for progress in creative possibilities of the spirit

—R Y D.

SOCRATES'S DEFENCE—LAST STATEMENT

WHEREFORE, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth—that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods, nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that to die and be released was better for me, and therefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason also, I am not angry with my accusers, or my condemners; they have done me no harm, although neither of them meant to do me any good, and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing,—then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.

(From Plato's *Apology*, translated by Benjamin Jowett)

MEMORY AND TIME AS PROCESSES OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

SRI AUROBINDO deals exclusively with memory, time, ego and self-consciousness in chapters VIII and IX of his work, *The Life Divine*. Particularly interesting is his relating time to memory and self. Memory makes us go back in time, and depending on the past experience helps us infer the future. Both memory and time are subjects relative to our mind; it uses the faculty of memory to process knowledge. Mind, through memory, is also able to experience the self. The object of these chapters is neither the study of mind nor that of memory, it is rather that of knowing oneself, self-consciousness through the events of memory in time; it is the self-experience of man or self-consciousness. We shall consider in this essay, initially, memory and time and in the later part their synthesis in self-consciousness.

Memory

Memory is greater. without memory men could think and know nothing. . . As far as goes the movement of Memory, there he ranges at will.¹

Although modern man is bound to accept as self-evident that the element which holds personality, the psychological integrity, of a person through the different stages of his temporal life is memory, yet one must admit that memory is a mere faculty to process our mental activity. It is, therefore, possible to admit that nature could have selected some other process instead. However, the selection of a process is adopted because of its utility, its ability to produce certain effects. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says:

The real truth of things lies not in their process, but behind it, in whatever determines, effects or governs the process; not in effectuation so much as in the Will or Power that effects, and not so much in Will or Power as in the Consciousness of which Will is the dynamic form and in the Being of which Power is the dynamic value.²

Memory, in other words, does not constitute personality, its value lies in its utility; "it is simply one of the workings of consciousness as radiation is one of the workings of Light."³ Our mind is endowed with many powers and processes that enable it to deal with Self, World and Nature. Memory belongs to it in this class of processes. Nonetheless, memory is an important process of the mind; it is of great utility in the assessment of our conscious existence. People with certain degradation or disability of the brain, for instance Alzheimer's disease, lose the powers of memory. Consequently, their awareness of the surrounding world decreases; they are unable to attend to the simplest mental tasks of recognizing their own close relatives, they even forget

their own names. On the other hand, in children, the memory is cultivated as they grow and their intelligence is measured by its sharpness and efficiency.

The two most important uses of our memory are the determination of our self and that of our experience. Memory helps to assert one's self through the passage of time. That I remain my own self yesterday, today and tomorrow helps keep my identity intact:

By memory Mind can only know of itself in the past, by direct self-awareness only in the moment of the present, and it is only by extension of and inference from this self-awareness and from the memory which tells us that for some time awareness has been continuously existent that mind can conceive of itself in the future.⁴

However, memory is woefully limited, it can stretch back, very often rather sketchily into the past of the self but ends abruptly at infancy; likewise the extension into the future too is limited to only possibilities, hence, uncertain. But one baffling characteristic of memory is that it uncannily convinces itself of its continuance into eternity.

Time

Two are the forms of Brahman, Time and the Timeless.⁵

However faltering may be the visualization of our memory about time, yet one must admit that through it we have concepts of time, a memory of an extended period in which events take place. This perception of time through our experience of events that occur in a given duration helps us to infer a time devoid of duration, that is, the concept of eternity or timelessness. But one cannot say for sure, depending on memory or deriving from memory, that what we arrive at about eternity is not a mere calculation of the mind reflecting on the past or not a hallucination or not an error in judgment of transferring the element of perpetuity of the universe to our own selves. There is a serious problem in understanding time

In fact, if we look at the mind's concept of this eternity, we see that it comes only to a continuous succession of moments of being in an eternal Time. Therefore it is Time that is eternal and not the continuously momentary conscious being.⁶

The scientific generation of today is brought up on the categories of space, time, mass and velocity. Time is a relative measure in these quantitative terms. Naturally, it is not possible to conceive something whose negation is not significant. Eternity or timelessness is not quantifiable in the known categories. The problem lies in the fact that our mind is unable to prove eternity or timelessness. All that we can evidence is

what happens in the temporal occurrence of events Eternity is beyond the sphere of mind Our mind is limited, its knowledge is conditioned by experience of the present, memory of the past and inference of the future

If real existence is a temporal eternity, then the mind has not the knowledge of real being for even its own past it loses in the vague of oblivion except for the little that memory holds; it has no possession of its future which is withheld from it in a great blank of ignorance; it has only a knowledge of its present changing from moment to moment in a helpless succession of names, forms, happenings, the march or flux of a cosmic kinesis which is too vast for its control or its comprehension ⁷

Thus our mind, basically, is ignorant, “an Ignorance fleeting through Time and catching at knowledge in a most scanty and fragmentary fashion”,⁸ then how can we claim that it can gain true knowledge? Let us assume, for a while, that there is a supreme knowledge beyond mind and beyond time, hence, one that has in its immediate comprehension past, present and future Knowledge has the consciousness of being in beyond-time, whereas ignorance sees itself in time. Our mind is time-bound, characterized by ignorance which vapours off as we become self-conscious in knowledge. The more we discard ignorance the more self-conscious we become; the more self-conscious we become the more silent we become to the ways of ignorance and time. We would then realize that duality such as mind and body, multiplicity such as found in the world of things, consequences of space and time such as functioning of the universe, all of these will dissolve and one would attain supramental knowledge:

Knowledge is the inherent power of consciousness of the timeless, spaceless, unconditioned Self which shows itself in its essence as a unity of being, it is this consciousness that alone is real and complete knowledge because it is an eternal transcendence which is not only self-aware but holds in itself, manifests, originates, determines, knows the temporally eternal successions of the universe ⁹

Self

This is he who is that which sees, touches, hears, smells, tastes, thinks, understands, acts in us, a conscious being, a self of knowledge ¹⁰

Our mind, however imperfect and ignorant, is able to have a glimpse of the self in the experience of the present moment, the self-consciousness, in the immediate field of space and time It uses memory, imagination and thought processes to know about things beyond the immediate moment of experience But the self is not a device of the mind. The self is stable consciousness that does not divide time into past, present and future The self is timeless We can become conscious of this self when we withdraw

ourselves from not only our activities in time and space but from our mind itself. It is when our mind is stilled and silent about the happenings of memory, space and time, when it is rested from conceptual activity related to these, that we become aware of a self-sufficient and self-abolished self. But the real self is yet to come, that is more still, immobile and actionless than the self-consciousness.

The real self is the eternal who is obviously capable of both the mobility in Time and the immobility basing Time,—simultaneously, otherwise they could not both exist, nor, even, could one exist and the other create seemings. This is the supreme Soul, Self and Being¹¹ of the Gita who upholds both the immobile and the mobile being as the self and lord of all existence.¹²

This supreme Self is Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical principle that supports the self-conscious self. Time, memory, space and time, knowledge and ignorance play their part in the apparent fleeting reality. He says that time is a bank that uses its experience to make the surface mental self-experience as the present at all times and further accumulates and saves the subsequent experience as deposits for the future. Our self, in reality, is the supreme Self merely playing with ignorance and striving, time and memory and trying to get all the delights of the adventure of self-discovery.

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

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ENTERING THE HALL OF LOGIC

In the records of the rocks, there are no logical fallacies found. Blessed was the age when there was no thought for there were none to think that it was not. Not half so bad as ours was perhaps that twilight interval when thought was dawning on man. Then one day very much like the man who first saw his own face in water and wondered, man began to see his own thought and reflect on it. The trouble began, of which we still bear the burden and which we delight in relaying to others. However, one who bears the burden, earns the honour.

It must be very easy to give a definition of Logic. Otherwise why should there be scores of definitions? We shall not increase the number by one. Suffice it to say that Logic analyses our thought. Logic does it with no therapeutic motive. Being less philanthropic by nature, Logic does it for its own sake. Indeed Logic analyses and deals with only the valid forms of thought (the existence of valid thought however is not being postulated).

Now, when we think, we think about things. In Logic it is not the things that we are interested in. That is the business of any other branch of science. In Logic we are concerned with our thoughts of things. These thoughts of things are the things of thought in Logic. It is for this reason that Logic is said to be the subject of 'Second Intention'.

We express our thought through language. Here we are not concerned with esoteric thought, the 'thoughts of more deep seclusion' as the poet says. Such thoughts may indeed be above language. We are here concerned with thoughts that are expressed in language. We know that language is necessary to express our thoughts to others, and what is important for us is not only to think, but also to express it to others. In language we use words to express the objects of thought. The first feeling of necessity that arises in the mind of any resolute analyst is that we must be absolutely clear about what the thing is that we are talking of. This brings in its trail the demand for every word or term to be well-defined. An undefined term carries no significance.

Let us see what may be the consequences of such a pious demand. Suppose Mr R. A. (Resolute Analyst) opens a book on Logic. The first line of the Book runs thus:

"In the beginning of our study of any exact science we must first know what we are going to study."

Mr R.A. might have been elated to find that his faith is shared by the author. But being true to his name he feels dejected to find that the author makes no attempt to define the terms, for example, 'beginning', 'study', that he has used, but passes smoothly on to the next statement.

"It is extremely difficult to answer this question."

How very extremely difficult it will be for gentle Mr R. A. to sail through this fresh storm of undefined words. Now, if we all resolve not to pass a single word unless its definition is given, we shall be creating a crisis for ourselves. Let us see why.

The first sentence of a book must contain the first occurrence of a word, say, x

Then this word there is either undefined or it may be that the scared author begins with the definition of x . But x cannot be defined in terms of x and therefore the definition must contain some other term y that is undefined. So in every case we find that the first sentence of the book is bound to contain at least one undefined word. It is no good if the author hastens to the publisher with a request to arrange adding a new sentence at the very beginning. For even then the book will have a beginning sentence which, for the same reasons as stated above, will contain at least one undefined term and therefore the sentence will require to be preceded by still another. The process will go on for ever. Even if we agree that the definition of a word may take place after the word then too we shall face an infinite regress, a type of which we encountered just before. Erstwhile the book could not begin, now it cannot end. And no publisher under the good liberal sun is going to publish a book unless precisely these two conditions are fulfilled.

Being rational creatures, as we all claim to be, we must set ourselves to overcome this trouble. For this we have to take cognisance of certain facts.

We use language to deal with any subject that we may have under consideration. The language itself does not enter into the subject-matter. We should agree that we are endowed with an intelligent language. Asking questions about this language will not be a part of the language that is being used to discuss the original topic. Suppose we are discussing a certain topic T and using much of a language, say L . If we require to say something about this language, then for that, this language L becomes the topic, and the language L used to discuss L has nothing to do with the original topic T . With respect to T , L may be called, as is done in the present day, the meta-language.

Another aspect closely related to this language issue is that a proposition in a language can talk of this or that, but cannot talk of itself. Indeed many paradoxes arise from violations of this basic principle. A well-known example may be cited here.

We open a book at page 120 and in the thirteenth line of the page find the sentence

“The thirteenth line at page 120 of this book is false.”

What should we conclude? We know a proposition can be either true or false. Let the proposition, which we denote by p , be true. Then we seek for such a line at such a place which must be false. We find there sentence p itself. So p is false. On the other hand if we suppose that p is false and proceed as above then we shall arrive at the conclusion that p is true. Thus here we meet with a proposition which is such that if it is true then it is false, and if it is false then it is true. We have to infer therefore that though p is grammatically a sentence, it really is not a proposition. But what is wrong with p ? Why do we cancel its membership from the *Association of propositions*? We do this because though p hoodwinked us for a moment it was found out to be talking of itself, which it cannot. (It is for this reason that even the proposition p and the proposition ‘ p is true’ are to be treated as two different propositions, though they may mean the same thing.)

(To be concluded)

ASHOK KUMAR RAY

SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

IN DEFENCE OF THE NEW MYSTIC POETRY

(Continued from the issue of May 2000)

MYSTICAL and spiritual poetry should not be equated with religious poetry. There is not much of tradition behind the true mystic poetry written by Sri Aurobindo, Sethna, Nirodbaran, Deshpande and others. While defending and clarifying the essence of this poetry, Sethna throws light on the technique and substance of the new mystic poetry.

But can mystical and spiritual poetry that is deeply dyed in the unknown be ever simple? No matter how bare and straightforward the style and how ordinary and current the words, will not a certain lack of simplicity result from the very nature of the experience embodied—an experience which is a play of figures and values remote from ordinary vision, rare and elusive to normal thought, sublime or subtle in a way that is not seizable by common perception?

(The Thinking Corner, p 138)

Sethna is obviously defending the language of the new mystic poetry, which is full of unfamiliar words and fantastic compound words. Francis Thompson is not the tradition behind this poetry.

My critic offered me phrases from Francis Thompson as examples of vivid mystical vision. But to be authentic mysticism, one's images and metaphors have to be alive with a subtle inner reality. Francis Thompson has that 'aliveness' in many of his poems, but I am afraid the phrases quoted to me were poor mysticism. There is a vividness that holds nothing subjective or subtle. To call the stars 'the burning fruitage of the sky' is to convey no spiritual height or depth, no hint of the Divine—it is only a beautiful and concrete image, a vision no doubt, yet not any glimmer of the beatific vision—it is merely a poetising of the ordinary man's wonder without even an appreciable quiver of the ordinary man's worship.

(Ibid, pp 139-40)

This is how Sethna differentiates between traditional mystic poetry and the poetry of his own school. He does not list the characteristic of his own poetry in the above passage, yet his negative criticism of Thompson contains the clues to the nature of the new mystic poetry. The 'subtle inner reality', the true 'subjective', the 'hint of the Divine', the 'glimmer of the beatific vision'—all these point to the achievement of a Sethna or a Deshpande or a Nirodbaran.

The new mystic poetry uses compound words profusely and quite naturally and a

question is raised about the ability of such compounds. Sethna's self-defence runs as follows

Particularly the compound of abstract nouns was condemned. Well, even such compounds may be quite living in their context but appear half-dead when torn out of it. The concrete is preferable on the whole to the abstract, yet all words in poetry cannot and need not be concrete in connotation. Abstract compounds must not be judged by a comparison with concrete ones nor must they be asked to impart by themselves any colour to the poetry—they must be taken *sui generis*, and in their own class what counts is point, power, sonority, rhythmic subtlety

(*Ibid*, p 142)

Sethna continues in his exhaustive manner in order to show the distinction between frigidity and the real expressive element. Then he passes on to a very apt example

A compound of any kind must not only represent, it must reveal, in order to be of paramount quality. A fair example is in a line I read the other day

The tiger with his fire-whipped hide,

where the urgent ferocity of the tiger is suggested no less than his tawny colour and striped appearance. In mystical poetry the subtle nuance is all the more requisite in a compound. And so long as it is there, either in the paired words themselves or by association with their context, the frequency of compounds must not be objected to. Of course, a plethora of them is hardly advisable, but it is not always easy to cry "Too much!"

(*Ibid*, pp 142-43)

That is the essential surplussage of the new mystic poetry, which is a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery. And it is the Spirit from within that dictates and disallows the brain-mind to interfere with the spontaneous efflux. Apart from the many compounds, the ornamentation of mystic poetry is another debatable issue. Sethna argues in favour of ornamentation, which is not a luxury but a necessity. Finally, he goes on to explain what mysticism really means and how it is misinterpreted by critics. The Divine is not a "remote inanity"

GOUTAM GHOSAL

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of April 2000)

WHILE the rich content and revolutionary message of the *Arya* have already been discussed in the earlier sections and chapters, it may be appropriate to say a word or two here about Sri Aurobindo's prose style,—more particularly about the *Arya* style. He was forty-two when the first issue of the journal came out on 15 August 1914, and already he was a master of many languages—classical and modern, Western and Indian—and of diverse realms of knowledge as well. Primarily a poet, he had turned his hand to brilliant journalism in Calcutta and found it equally easy to cultivate verse or “the other harmony of prose”

If any one takes a total view, it will be noticed that his prose writings cover a period of almost sixty years of ceaseless literary activity. The “New Lamps for Old” and the Bankim Chandra articles in *Indu Prakash* in the early 1890s, the editorial and other contributions to *Bande Mataram*, *Karmayogin* and *Arya*, the letters—thousands of them—to the disciples, one who views all this variegated opulence of writing can have little doubt that he is confronting a born lord of language, for Sri Aurobindo scattered words freely; at once with precision and liberality, he is both valuable in appearance and compact in effect, and his writing, with its effortless ease, has the native force of Nature itself. There is not, of course, one “style”, but many “styles”, each with its sufficiency and appropriateness. Samuel Butler once said that he never knew a writer who took the smallest “pains” about his prose. Nevertheless, it would not be far from the truth to say that Sri Aurobindo's most characteristic means of self-revelation is a polyphonic style that recalls English masters of the ornate like Burton and Browne and Lamb and Landor at different times, but is in fact *sui generis*, a style which Arjava (J. A. Chadwick) named “global”, descriptive of the range of thought as well as the manner of communication. Indeed the *Arya* style—the style of *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the other massively weighted and strikingly illuminating sequences—is truly “global”. Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1947 to a disciple about the epithet “global” “I heard it first from Arjava who described the language of *Arya* as expressing a global thinking and I at once caught it up as the right and only word for certain things, for instance, the thinking in masses which is a frequent characteristic of the Overmind.”¹

Madam Gabriel Mistral has correctly noted that Sri Aurobindo's writings present “the rare phenomenon of an exposition clear as a beautiful diamond without the danger of confounding the layman.” She cogently adds “Six foreign languages have given the Master of Pondicherry a gift of co-ordination, a clarity free from gaudiness, and a charm that borders on the magical. We have before us a prose which approximates to that of the great Eckhart, German classicist and fountain-head of European mysticism.” “These are indeed ‘glad tidings’ that come to us to know

that there is a place in the world where culture has reached its tone of dignity by uniting in one man a supernatural life with a consummate literary style, thus making use of his beautifully austere and classical prose to serve as the handmaid of the spirit''²

In *The Advent* of April, 1951 N Pearson has tried to show how well the 28 chapters of the first volume of *The Life Divine* have been organised; four chapters each to the three principles—Spirit, Soul, Divine Nature—then four chapters to Supermind, one to each of the three principles—Mind, Life, Matter—of the Lower Nature Pearson further sees this internal organisation “symbolised” in the ancient occult sign of the pentacle (or double triangle) enclosing a central sequence” which is also Sri Aurobindo’s symbol

Of the major works, only *The Life Divine* was fully revised, amplified and reorganised before publication in book form, and naturally it has a rounded structure and an incandescent finish that some of the other prose sequences lack.

The Life Divine is, in fact, vision and experiences rendered into inspired language and, without some rapport with such a world of intensities and radiances, all cavalier attempts at mere understanding must fail Here is a random sample “Infinite being loses itself in the appearance of non-being and emerges in the appearance of a finite Soul, infinite consciousness loses itself in the appearance of a vast indeterminate inconscience and emerges in the appearance of a superficial limited consciousness”³

Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya* in 1914 The Mother said that “It was neither a mental knowledge and nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, quite ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge (and even the expression) from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.” The Mother said. “That is true mental spontaneity.”⁴

The comprehensive Supramental Manifesto for the future—comprising the plea for change, the programme of spiritual evolution (or revolution) and the promise of individual, social and terrestrial transformation, evolving man, collective man and global humanity—the grand manifesto had been broadcast in all its sovereign amplitude and self-sufficiency

Owing to the exigencies of the war, circulation of the *Arya* had been largely confined to India and the French edition was—for the same reason—short-lived And even in India, how many were really willing to impose on themselves the continuous intellectual strain that Sri Aurobindo demanded from them? No doubt, the journal had its receptive (if limited) audience in whom the seminal ideas took root Especially the young men read it with avidity and thought that the *Arya* really spoke to them, that it tried to deliver a new message to the world, that its supramental manifesto was of

immense consequence to humanity's future. They didn't perhaps understand all that the *Arya* said, but what they understood was enough to make them thrill with the intimations of that new revelation and to sense with a wonderous new surmise, a great future for man and the world

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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SECULARISM IN SEARCH OF A MEANING

SECULARISM is brandished a great deal in this country, but its precise meaning is never clear. Is the refusal to give a concrete meaning dictated by inherent ambiguities in the word? Or, is it a deliberate public policy to perpetuate confusion by allowing its meaning to remain in the arena of political polemics rather than become liable to be enforced as a principle of governance?

When the leaders proclaimed, after independence, that the edifice of the state would be raised on the principle of secularism, this could have meant one of two things. That the state would start restructuring society in a manner that the secular principle established in the European context would be translated into Indian social life. Or that the state would be run on the principle of tolerance. Had the sense in which the development of India was to be carried out been clarified, we would have been spared a great deal of calumny that has been visiting us for a long time in the name of secularism. This was not done.

One possible reason was that there were sharp differences of perspective among the leaders over what secularism should mean. Gandhi was bold enough to admit that secularism could be relevant to India only in the sense of tolerance and accommodation and equated the secular orientation in the Constitution to *sarvadharmā samābhāva* (equal treatment of all religions). Nehru wanted the choice of secularism as an ideology of the Constitution to act as a lever on the state to promote the kind of social transformation which Europe had undergone in the course of its secular journey. As he increasingly realised that an effort in this direction could at best be a self-defeating exercise, Nehru abandoned the advocacy of the European type of secularism and equated secularism in India to "equal distance from all religions."

Critics of the secular credo in India have generally focused on precisely the ground that was either left open or imperfectly defined by the architects of new India. On the traditionalist and religious fundamentalist side, critics have claimed that the secular idea as enshrined in the Constitution undermines religion or negates its positive role in ordering life. On the secular liberal side, critics have faulted secularism for its foreignness to the distinctly indigenous genius which rejects the dichotomy of the religious and secular or encompasses both within a common framework for life.

Both sets of criticisms—traditionalist and religious fundamentalist as well as secular liberal—are widely off the mark in that they take the European conception of secularism and plant it on the Indian soil merely in order to attack it. Their criticism of the secular credo that India claims to espouse would have been wholly justified had the political leadership explicitly said it was the European conception that it was adopting and wished to follow in India. This it never did because either the decision would have been strategically wrong or it would have been rejected right at the start. On the contrary, the architects of India's future left the precise connotation of secularism (and hence also the idea that it was the European-type secularism that

they proposed to follow in India) largely undefined. Under the circumstances, the mounting criticism of secularism on grounds of its foreignness or its negation of the positive dimensions of religion is little more than a kind of shadow-boxing.

Taking a practical view, it would appear that leaving secularism largely undefined and neither rejecting nor accepting the idea that the state would function on the principles which had become established since the rise of secular ideology in Europe was after all not a bad strategic choice. The ambiguity allowed secularism to be accepted widely among the different social and religious communities. Of course, the readiness for acceptance of secularism, the speed with which it was accepted and the reasons that prompted the acceptance varied across social communities and groups. For example, secularism found relative readiness among a large body of Hindus right in the beginning.

Muslims and other groups were initially sceptical of what secularism might entail and whether the state was actually seriously committed to upholding it. They preferred to wait and watch. Then they rejected it, claiming that it carried the potential to deny them a basis for the preservation of their cultural distinctiveness and religious integrity. Finally, they recognised the positive role of secularism and have been using it to advantage wherever possible. There may be no clear recognition as yet among the Muslims that the claims of the secular state and society impose limits and they cannot simply take it as given but have a responsibility to play a role to strengthen it. They are enthusiastic in demanding that the state and others act in a secular fashion, but are reluctant to insist that secularism be adhered to when members of their own community act in ways which seem to undermine secularism. Even so, secularism is seen by most Muslims as a positive feature, in marked contrast to a growing section of Hindus which is inclined to reject secularism on the ground that it does injustice to the Hindu historical heritage and turns an "epistemic error into a political blunder."

Ambiguity over the precise meaning and content of secularism may have been an advantage to begin with, but it does not promise to remain so in the future. It is being turned fast into a cover to dislodge secularism from its place. Fundamentalist groups, no longer confined to any particular social or religious community, are trying to play upon this persisting ambiguity to enlarge the spaces for their operations and are suggesting their own ideologically surcharged points of view as alternatives to secularism. Under the circumstances, the need to define secularism and put a positive content into it so that it will remain capable of holding the imagination and allegiance of the people in the long run has become imperative.

While religion at the individual-personal level is slowly losing ground, it is increasingly being transformed into a collective asset. People see religion as a source of their self-definition in a world where their identity both as individuals and as groups or communities is constantly being threatened by developments at the national as well as global level. Therefore, while they might not be devout practitioners of religion on an individual-personal plane, they like to retain the integrity of religion as

the basis of a distinctive communitarian identity and flash it in obvious ways to demonstrate that they are part of a larger social or religious community which has a viable existence of its own. They are more than ever inclined to come out in demonstration of a sense of solidarity whenever any initiative on the part of the state or a similar group appears to threaten or undermine their communitarian identity.

People are unwilling to concede their religious faith and communitarian self-identification to the state, but they also expect that what communitarian self-identification they choose to project should not exercise a determining influence over their life chances. They want the choice to uphold their religion in both the private and the public domains and to stick to their communitarian self-identification without direct interference from the state or other social and religious communities. At the same time, they insist that irrespective of their religion and communitarian self-identification, they should enjoy equal access to assets in society, economy and the polity. They are contending that the present dispensation of secularism has acted to the detriment of some groups and the advantage of others and this is tantamount to a negation of the secular credo as espoused under the Constitution.

Unless secularism becomes an ideology and public policy capable of ensuring for a people so vastly different in their religious outlook and world-view, equal opportunities and access to social and economic assets without their religious faith or self-identification working as a negative factor against them, we are likely to have more and more of communalism, conservatism and religious fundamentalism and less and less of secularism.

IMTIAZ AHMAD

(Courtesy *The Hindu*, 31 July 1999)

LT.-COL. GUNINDRA LAL BHATTACHARYA'S *KRISHNA OF THE GITA*

A NOTE

I FIRST translated the Gita in 1947. The tenth canto was a text in the Intermediate Arts, and Sanskrit was one of my subjects in St. Xavier's College. I did it in passionately rhymed English verse. The version has, I think, some historical value, and, more, hysterical.

My love affair with Hinduism's central sacred text continued. I did three more versions and, finally, the rendering that became Fascicule 112 in my projected 250-fascicule transcreation of the Mahabharata.

The magnificent obsession mellowed (but did not dilute) when I had to teach the Gita to American students who took my course in Indian Literature (Sacred & Secular) in various colleges and universities between 1962 and 1990. I became a pucca pandit. I had to. I studied all the *tika*-makers, ancient and modern. I made a list of at least 12 different interpretations, from Tilak to Gandhiji, from Radhakrishnan to Mahesh Yogi to Christopher Isherwood, including the "Terrorist Gita" of the Bengal revolutionaries who fought the British with the Gita in one hand and a bomb in the other (after all, Krishna does advise Arjuna to fight, doesn't he—and on the battlefield too?)

I thought I knew all there was to know about the Call on Kurukshetra. I met my Waterloo in Lt.-Col. Gunindra Lal Bhattacharya. Imagine a military man teaching a punctilious professor a much-needed lesson!

Here then is the thirteenth interpretation—and what a splendid one. At one fell stroke, Lt.-Col. Bhattacharya goes beyond the pious pashas, the rigid ritualists, the vague visionaries, the prayerful pacifists, the romantic revolutionaries, the meditating maha-rishis, the Kshatriyan cracktroopers, and the *sthitaprajña* fence-sitters.

The Gita may be any or all of these, he seems to say, but above all it is a gospel of personal commitment. *Personal*—Arjuna not as Pandava, not as Kshatriya, not as Indraprasthan or Hastinapuram, not even as Hindu (whatever that means). Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga are all labels. Labels don't lead to truth. Personal struggle does. "Reject all dharmas," says Krishna to Arjuna. "Follow Me." Now that's a very daring near-dismissal of the Vedas and Upanishads, of Sankhya Yoga and all the other contemporary allied or contrary disciplines. Krishna is nothing if not provocative and stimulating.

The only ultimate discipline, according to Krishna of the Gita, argues Lt.-Col. Bhattacharya, lies in me, myself. If I am not for me, then who is? And if not now, then when? And if not here, then where? This tremendous stress on man's existential predicament, and on man's ability to comprehend and resolve it, *without recourse to external or adventitious aid*, is what makes the Gita so special and so *practical*. The Buddha knew it well when he advised Ananda, "*atta hi attano natho*"—"Your self

is lord of yourself'' There is no other lord—so be a lamp to yourself Walk alone, and walk fearless If you go wrong, try again Be humble Be open Beware of truth-peddlers, solace-suppliers, pill-poppers of all kinds The beautiful yet terrible, the terrible yet beautiful thing is that if you do not look after yourself, no one else will They are all looking after themselves anyway, and have precious little time for others, be they strangers, relatives, or friends

What is Arjuna to Krishna? Friend? Yes. The Nara is Krishna's brother-in-law, after all But are those the reasons Arjuna matters? Hardly "You are dear to me," says Krishna, because, finally and fully, Arjuna is walking alone, suffering moral choice and guilt on the battlefield of life—all by himself The others are secure and small in their traditions and dogmas. Arjuna is helpless and magnificent in his pathetic solitary questioning and questing.

They will win the kingdom. Arjuna will gain the light of wisdom. As Krishna says, *yathā icchāsī, tathā kuru*: "You are free to choose"

PURUSHOTTAM LAL

**THIRD EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS
BY BHAKTIBEN SHAH
IN THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM**

Adoration	Bombay
Adoration	Bombay
Adoration	Pondicherry
Adoration	Bangalore
Adoration	Delhi
The Mother's Portraits	Auroville
The Mother's Portraits	Pondicherry

THE above is the list of exhibitions held earlier at different places. The third exhibition of the Mother's portraits in Pondicherry was held in Sri Aurobindo Ashram Exhibition Hall from 15 to 25 November 1999.

Here in the Ashram silence beyond words takes charge of all those who come to see these paintings. Moving from one painting to another and yet another, displayed on the walls of the Exhibition Hall,—totally seventy-five vibrating paintings, an outcome of the seventy-five-year-old Bhaktiben's sadhana of several years,—the visitors get lost in another world. Someone truly remarked, these are not the Mother's portraits but embodiments of the Mother's living presence. The captivating consciousness works throughout and maybe it could be the field of photography to record the changes that take place in each individual. After carefully observing the entire art gallery, when they approach again the contriver of paintings with their expressions manifesting something of the Mother's expressions,—that must be the best reward to the artist for her labour of Love.

The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy (Savitri, p. 6)

Several moods of the Mother contemplated through these paintings help the individual spectator grow in the atmosphere and vibration of Her consciousness; one indeed discovers some inner treasure in one's own self.

Paintings of the Mother's childhood, the Mother in beautiful Japan, Her first meeting with Sri Aurobindo—an inspired expression of the artist's vision,—the Mother's life in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, paintings of Her Darshans on special occasions, Balcony Darshans are penetrating, are beyond words. Sometimes a small black-and-white photograph becomes instrumental in inspiring the artist to make enlarged paintings. Such paintings, painted with insight and aesthetically presented and displayed together so many at a time that none can resist or withdraw from the experience which is captivating and unique. It seems as if the entire exhibition and the

surroundings are surcharged with the Mother's powerful Force Sri Aurobindo's beautiful portrait on one wall in the middle gallery seems to be presiding over the exhibition. A unique expression of dancers in ecstasy on the opposite wall reveals the inspiration of the artist There are a number of paintings to see and realise their spirit

Made one with every mind and body and heart,
Made one with all nature and with self and God .

(Savitri, p 699)

MEERA

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE NEW MILLENNIUM

A REVIEW ARTICLE

WHEN K. D. Sethna's gradual withdrawal as the much-appreciated and even venerated editor of *Mother India* became apparent, there were many in Aurobindonian circles who asked the question who would or could eventually succeed him. This question has been answered. R. Y. Deshpande, who since October 1996 is 'associate' and *de facto* editor of the still widely read Ashram periodical, once declared by Sri Aurobindo to be his own paper. R. Y. Deshpande is already well-known to the readers of *Mother India* because of his articles. A selection of his 'reflections and reviews', as reads the subtitle of his new book *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium*, is now available to a larger public. The book presents us with an all-round depiction of the personality and the wide-ranging capacities of its author, and with a mosaic of in-depth views substantiating the fundamental importance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in the present times of bewildering evolution and revolution.

The author writes in an introductory note: "The present book, a compilation of diverse articles written over a period of time, is an endeavour to have a multiform glimpse of all that Sri Aurobindo attempted and achieved in his unceasing commitment to bring that executive power of the Supreme which shall take full charge of the evolutionary earth. The concern of the Avatar for this creation, the problem of the inconscience opening itself to the sense of its concealed divinity, the recognition of the role of death in the process of transformation, and the possibility of arrival of the new man who shall be the Truth's participative instrument are some of the aspects that have been touched upon just in their essence." (p. vii)

It is indeed no exaggeration to call the knowledge and interests of R. Y. Deshpande wide-ranging. Not only does the elaboration of the subjects in his book bear witness to a profound, life-long study of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, his writings show also an expert knowledge of the culture and literature of India and a concerned interest in things Western. He is, besides, a learned physicist and a spiritual poet—a rather infrequent combination. His volumes of poetry *The Rhododendron Valley*, *All is Dream-blaze* and *Under the Raintree* are still in print, and he quite recently published a new volume, tastefully brought out *Paging the Unknown*. The poems are sculpted signposts along the road of the inner exploration of a poet who uses his talent with language as an instrument of progress and discovery.

The articles and reviews constituting *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium* are arranged in four parts. The titles in the first part give us an idea of the contents: 'The Yoga of the Supreme', 'Before the Gods were Born', 'Earth is the Chosen Place', 'A World's Desire' and 'The Coming of the Avatar'. These essays constitute as it were the foundation of Deshpande's vision behind the whole book. This foundation he prefers to build on the rich ore found in *Savitri* rather than in *The Life Divine* or other

works of Sri Aurobindo, for R Y Deshpande is one of the great lovers and students of the epic, which he characterises as "the Agenda of the Supreme" (p 45) His *Vyasa's Savitri* and *The Ancient Tale of Savitri* have a place on the shelves of every *Savitri*-lover

Although the subtitle of 'The Yoga of the Supreme' is 'The Triple Sadhana of Ashwapati in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*', R Y Deshpande is very much aware that the protagonist of the whole first half of the epic poem is none other than Sri Aurobindo himself In the Yoga of the King, the explorations of the Traveller of the Worlds and the gradual discovery of the Great Mother, Sri Aurobindo describes, in the language of a future poetry, his own experiences in greater detail than any yogi has ever done, in spiritual and occult regions beyond anywhere any yogi has ever been As Deshpande writes "In *Savitri* the sadhana of Ashwapati is really the great Creator's Yoga itself" (p 102)—the great Creator embodied in the supramental Avatar To realise that *Savitri* is, among other things, the autobiography of Sri Aurobindo and part of the spiritual biography of the Mother is of crucial importance for people turned towards Them For if one reads the first part of the epic as the story of Ashwapati—who is named only once in it—one perceives it as a symbol, while in fact it contains the record of Sri Aurobindo's avataric effort, which indeed founded the new millennium and of which the world is still totally unaware

After having sketched in 'The Yoga of the Supreme', the order of things and the perspective in which they will develop *inevitably* (a keyword of Sri Aurobindo's), R Y Deshpande examines the important and fascinating question of the origin of the Gods and anti-Gods, who have been waging battle with each other since the beginning of the universe, as is told in all great myths of humankind Here he uses a lot of material provided by the Mother who stated that, according to the oldest tradition still surviving, the great Asuras were the 'first-born', and that they caused the manifestation to plunge, as it were, into the dark counterpart of Sachchidananda, to rectify this dramatic Fall and make the turn towards the divine Origin (which we call evolution) possible again, the Great Mother created the Gods, who therefore were the 'second-born'

In the essay 'Earth is the Chosen Place', the author examines an all-important fact peculiar to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, that Their *tapasya* initiated the transformation of the earth with the intention to establish a future divine life upon earth, not to escape to worlds or heavens beyond, which is the common goal of all religious and spiritual practice This elementary aspect of the Integral Yoga, so important for those who want to follow in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's footsteps, may be generally known, but the impression is that its portent is hardly, if at all, realised And if the newness, the difference, the momentous importance of a Yoga one professes to practise is not realised, one may easily, even unconsciously, divert onto established paths, valuable in their own right but a divine world away from what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to create

In 'A World's Desire' we read "In the Puranas we often read about Prithvi

having fallen into a state of sad plight She has been overpowered by the evil forces and is about to sink in the ocean of darkness Prithvi, the Earth who upbears this multifold creation, goes to the abode of the Gods, on Mount Sumeru, and offers her respects to Brahma and other Deities She tells them how the Daityas, the Sons of Diti, the mother of Division, have been afflicting her and causing great havoc The Gods listen to her prayer and approach Vishnu, with a request to redeem the Earth Vishnu comes as an Avatar and destroys the Daityas This happened several times in the past '' (p 115) This interesting bit of information from the Puranas also shows us the thread running through the essays in the book the need to bring the dominion of the Dark Forces over the world to an end, the task of the Avatar of the New Age (the double-poled Avatar Sri Aurobindo-Mother), the latest incarnation in the succession of Avatars; and the special importance of this mission which will at last make an end to the aeonic sufferings of Mother Earth, Prithvi, and render her and her superhuman offspring divine.

And so R. Y. Deshpande writes in 'The Coming of the Avatar'. 'We may therefore aver that the Avatar's coming is always to take care of all such serious illegitimacies that surge up from the dark Ocean of Inconscience, *salilam apraketam*. These are the real Crises of Evolution and to handle them does the avataric descent take place Only by handling them divinely can the ancient Path of Evolution be really made free of misadventure, free of even the possibility of a collapse, it is the Avatar who makes it safe for treading'' (p. 126)—this time safe for all eternity in 'a happy pilgrimage' towards the Infinite This, indeed, is the true 'never-ending story'.

The first part of *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium* also contains two substantial poems forming, as indicated earlier, an integral part of the mental and spiritual seekings of the author 'The Protagonist' (also included in *Paging the Unknown*) is, roughly speaking, written in the epic *Savitri*-style and expresses the author's insight into the task of the Avatar. 'Time's Opuscul', written in a style reminding one of Sri Aurobindo's matchless poem 'A God's Labour', relates the progress of the avataric adventure as re-lived and probed into by the poet In order to give the reader a taste of Deshpande's poetry, I quote the first lines of *The Protagonist*:

Was that the dream-prescient sleep
As though the bright gods retired
Behind the gathering dusk of deodars
When the throbbant green voices
Fell silent and when the brook
Withdrew into a frozen trance,
As though the ages sped
Towards some immobile timelessness.. ? (p. 90)

In the five articles constituting the second part of *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium*, R. Y. Deshpande directs some illuminating sidelights on the funda-

mentals expounded in Part One 'The Earthward Surge of Immortality' begins as follows "This world is steeped in falsehood Will the truth take possession of it? This world is wrapped in folds of darkness Is there a possibility of the sun of divine illumination penetrating into it? This world is under the sway of death Can immortality be made a luminous and enduring foundation of its future? Drifting and adventive is the fate of the earthly creature and there are pain and suffering in life Is this All? And what about the promised feast of everlasting felicity?" (p 137) We know this question to be present in many minds, also of devotees and sadhaks It is one of the merits of Deshpande's collection of studies, insights and reflections that he points towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's answer to that question, to be realised in the new millennium

A gem in this second section of the book under review is the essay 'Apropos of the Mantric Poetry' Not only is this a valuable complement to what K. D Sethna and of course Sri Aurobindo himself have written about the mantra it is a fairly complete treatment of the subject and as such reference material for all who are intellectually interested in the Integral Yoga Equally enjoyable is 'A Bhakti-Hymn of Delight—Rendering of a Marathi Composition of Sant Tukaram', the 17th century Marathi saint-poet 'The Deep of Delight', a poem on his experience of Ananda, here translated and commented upon by R Y Deshpande, deserves a place in any collection of authentic spiritual poetry. Writes the author "Tukaram's experience of bliss is as deep and living as the deep of bliss he is describing. All is bliss, bliss is all, bliss is in all This 'transient and sorrowful world' has become a place of happy dwelling for the soul that has discovered the unity of all existence, it is no more a Keatsian 'nest of pain', but a house of the spirit where the hearth-fire gives warmth and life-enriching energy." (p 197)

'The Mystery of Death', the opening essay of the third part of the book, starts with this surreally enchanting paragraph. "Once God sat under the Wish-fulfilling Tree and bemused himself to have worlds of beauty, joy, light, truth, plenty And these worlds sprang up in the heavens of his happy moods They blazed like bright flames in the everlasting honour of his creation. Having thus pleased himself with these majesties he bemused again and, then and there, soared a high towering jewelled mountain-pile of which neither the base nor the bright crown could be seen And he bemused again and wished to die, die to himself In a moment shorter than death and longer than time he became the Godly nothing Yet he wished to be in many ways He chose death to be so. It was God's own death and therefore from the creative pyre he wished to rise again, like a phoenix of another splendour" (p 201)

Although his main theme is about Sri Aurobindo and the new millennium, R Y Deshpande never forgets the important role the Mother played not only as the visible, acting head of the Ashram, but in the development of the Yoga Judging by what has been written about Her up to now and by the way one has written about Her, it is an understatement to say that many aspects of Her part in the avatic Yoga have remained unrecognised Even Her early writings, judged against Her realisations in

later years, deserve a whole new analysis in order to discover the richness of Her Yoga even at that stage. In 'The Marvellous Attempt' Deshpande quotes one of the many astounding passages from Her early writings, the *Prayers and Meditations*. "The body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Being, and it gave itself, it abandoned itself to It in an ecstasy of peaceful bliss. Then it felt that its body was absorbed into the body of the universe and one with it, the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, immobile in its totality, moving infinitely in its internal complexity..'" (p. 233)

Also included in the third part of *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium* is an article 'The Mind of Light—A Brief Note'. This note about an extremely significant development in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Yoga, at the critical moment when Sri Aurobindo voluntarily left his body, is very important. Anyone who is knowledgeable in Aurobindomana knows K. D. Sethna's articles on the topic. Deshpande, co-editor with Nirodbaran of *Amal-Kiran, Poet and Critic*, not only complements Sethna's views but also dares to disagree with them. K. D. Sethna's oeuvre is gigantic, and so is and will remain, deservedly, his influence among the followers and students of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I think he would be the last to claim infallibility on any subject except his personal experience, and it seems to me that his thinking about the Mind of Light is one of the subjects he studied which requires a new analysis. Deshpande's 'brief note' is a step in this direction.

"Can we say that the Mother's work of physical transformation is a triumph?" the author asks. "There are people who express doubts about it, maintaining that both she and Sri Aurobindo had promised it here and now, at this particular instance in our own lifetime, and not on some other day in the distant future. .. Naturally, therefore, the answer would also be in the manner of the physical mind passing judgement on matters beyond its domain, matters that are deeply occult-spiritual. Both lack perception and hence can be easily ignored to carry on the work. These need another vision and another observant intuition born of a wide luminous knowledge that comes only by identification with the spirit of things." (p. 235) Here we hear the voice of an R. Y. Deshpande who dares to speak out boldly. One may hope that in this way too, just as in the wide range of his knowledge and interests, he will be K. D. Sethna's worthy successor at the helm of *Mother India*. For the integral Yoga is not only *bhakti* and *karma*, but knowledge, *jnana*, too. And knowledge can only blossom in a spirit, in an atmosphere of open-mindedness. Were there ever two more open-minded beings than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?

Another interesting essay is the one on Sri Aurobindo's 'Physical Transformation—The Early Beginnings'. "It is perhaps not very wrong to say that the process of the last decisive physical transformation in Sri Aurobindo's sadhana began sometime in the mid-thirties," writes Deshpande. (In this sentence, I would like to see 'the last' qualified, as the Mind of Light, also acting in the physical, seems to have been a later

realisation—and there may have been many realisations we will never know about) Then Deshpande puts together the facts, especially those mentioned in Sri Aurobindo's correspondence with Nirodbaran, the marvellous autobiographic poems written by Sri Aurobindo in and after 1935, and the autobiographic material in *Savitri*. One of the merits of this essay is that it stresses the factuality of the 'poetic' experiences described by Sri Aurobindo in his poems and in *Savitri*. Not only is this spiritual poetry of the highest quality, it is also based on a spiritual and supramental realisation never accomplished before

In the last part of *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium*, R. Y. Deshpande has collected eight occasional pieces of his—reviews, introductions—that throw a ray of light on the topics mentioned above. All of these articles are interesting in their own right. His review of K. D. Sethna's *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo* is a touching homage to the great poet, scholar, litterateur and, last but not least, disciple of the integral Yoga—as an author always remarkable for his "clarity and penetrativeness and power of exposition set in a variety of keys and pointed in a multitude of directions." (p. 266) "The variety of topics in this 'little' book," writes Deshpande in his review, "is indeed very amazing and encompasses spiritual, yogic, philosophical, literary, social-political aspects with the stamp of an interpretative thinker, even at times of a *manishi*, something which comes only from concrete contact with a radiant presence" (*Ibid*). All who know K. D. Sethna and his oeuvre will agree with this. As the present review of Deshpande's book tries to make clear, his whole effort, availing itself of his many talents, consists in following the example set by his exceptional predecessor, without suppressing his own talents, personality and aspiration.

In some of the last articles in the book under review, we hear also the voice of the learned physicist who is R. Y. Deshpande, familiar to those who have regularly read his articles in *Mother India*. "In recent times people have made great claims about physics entering into the domain of mysticism. There are perhaps reasons for believing it to be so. When we look at certain formulations of scientific theories we immediately discern a change in their tone and manner. The harsh materialism of yesteryears has disappeared and it has now made happy room for newer fresher ideas and concepts. A definite plasticity has undoubtedly entered in our way of thinking. But we should also remember that, in the strictest sense, scientific formulations pertain to professional problems and to draw conclusions that go far beyond their operative domain may not be quite legitimate." (p. 300) "what has to be definitely regretted are the unholy extensions of the findings of science beyond the operative domain of science." (p. 304)

Let us now finally, in a post-modern way turn to R. Y. Deshpande's introduction to his *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium*: 'Indian Renaissance and Future of the World'. This is much more than just an introduction—it is an important and very outspoken essay about the present situation of India, as it is an essay that at once takes its place in the tradition of K. D. Sethna's polemical writings, until 1950 often directly under Sri Aurobindo's inspiration, in *Mother India*.

The question put in it is quite simple: what are the traditional Indian values worthy or capable of being assimilated by today's generations, and what is there of value in the Western way of living which is now flooding India, as it is flooding the whole globe? It is generally being felt, more and more, that this is an age of transition—not only locally, not only in one culture here or there, but on the whole planet humankind is being subjected to a fundamental, totally disorienting change for which *nobody* has any explanation. People do not know where they are standing any longer, they lose their sense of identity, and they do not know where they are going or what tomorrow will bring them. If this may have been part of the human condition individually all through history, the present upheaval is shaking humanity as a whole.

“What is our national *swadharma*, our basic dharma, the character of our inner being that must come out and assert itself in every walk of life?” (p. 34) Deshpande is not the only one to ask this question. The traditional answers are no longer satisfying, as one can learn from the reflections of the younger generation and still more as one can see in their lifestyle.

“The Indian spirit has a certain universality which is its strong merit and it is that we must uphold and promote. This universality lives in freedom in which it cherishes all the noble values of life and existence. Not that there were no sectarian wars and harsh conflicts between different groups and followers of different creeds and faiths. There are prevalent even today discriminatory social class customs, the low-caste members are at places debarred from temple entry. But these are unacceptable distortions and they have nothing to do with the Indian spirit of dharma which in its enlightened catholicity does embrace every mode of God-approach and every aspect of the plenteous One. Liberty, fraternity, equality are already assumed in it and the pursuit is of the ever-growing noble and the vast. That is true India.” (p. 28) Yes, but what do the younger, articulate people think of it, supposing they feel the effort worthwhile to look back before yesterday and forward past tomorrow?

The more one tries to keep up with the present evolution and to analyse it, the more it becomes clear that there is only one answer to the prevalent confusion: the answer given by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I am aware that this sounds rather sectarian from a person who is a professed disciple and who writes these lines for a periodical published by their Ashram. Yet, the views of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are time and again strikingly confirmed by the coming about of so much they have foretold, for instance, the unification of humankind, the inevitability and even necessity of the transforming upheavals humanity is subject to at present, and the collapse of Leninist-Stalinist Communism.

Also R. Y. Deshpande's analysis of the crucial theme of his essay is, of course, Aurobindonian. He is here extremely outspoken, even polemical, and questions the positions of various esteemed authorities, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Amartya Sen, with dartlike questions and comments. He writes: “The unfortunate thing is that in the decline of the age we have forgotten these basic truths [of the Gita] and we pride ourselves in following truths that are not applicable to us,

we do not recognise our *swabhava* and we do not follow *swadharmā*, the law of righteous conduct that promotes every merit of this world as much as the celestial gain. In fact, the entire stress should be on the growth of the soul and its expression. We have to recover the lost contact with the inexhaustible source of dynamic creativity and live more and more in it'' (p. 13)

However true, a statement like this has to be made intelligible, interesting, concrete, practical and practicable for the young adults throughout India shaken by the winds of change. The Aurobindonian viewpoint is as large as life, and thus it has to be presented to those whose soul is sufficiently developed to reverberate to it. R. Y. Deshpande's beautifully published *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium* is one of the literary vehicles representing an effort in that direction. The present 'associate editor' of *Mother India* is totally devoted to the Cause, broad-minded and widely knowledgeable. May he steer the 'monthly review of culture' in this spirit, and may he write about the many stimulating topics in this collection of essays and articles in many future works to which we are looking forward.

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

A TRIBUTE

MRS RITA DUTTA, wife of our beloved doctor Dilip Dutta, who is one of the trustees of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, passed away on 25th April 2000 at about 9 a.m. at her residence in Pondicherry. She had suffered from metastatic lung cancer for approximately a year. She was born on 5th September 1937. She lived in the Ashram with her husband and children from December 1966.

She was a loving sister to all of us in the Ashram. We are deeply moved by her demise. Her sweetness, as well as her modesty, attracted the hearts of all to whom she was close.

As soon as I saw her body, lying in profound silence, at once I remembered Sri Aurobindo's words:

“For the spiritual seeker death is only a passage from one form of life to another, and none is dead but only departed.”

Her calm body seemed to suggest a pilgrim soul marching towards a greater destiny.

We offer our deep sympathy to Dilip-da

NILIMA DAS

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RITA-DI was a figure of, to use Shakespeare's phrase, “gracious silence”,—quiet, noble, aristocratic. She was a lady of few words and always from her heart flowed smiling sweetness. Even during her terminal illness she used to make inquiries about people and show her concern for them.

During the last sixty years from Arjava to Rita-di there have been a number of deaths in the Ashram due to the same dreaded cause,—of inherent malignancy that is present in our physical nature. It appears that more and more the physical nature opens to the action of higher force and light greater is the resistance for change. Yet, as Sri Aurobindo puts it in *Savitri*, “Our body's cells must hold the Immortal's flame” (p. 35). If a prize has to be paid for this sadhana of the physical, these benign souls have really done that in a silent way. Our prayer to the Mother is “Let the body's cells open more and more to her peace; let her peace and joy be established in them.” In remembrance of Rita-di let us invoke the Mother's peace and presence in the physical.

R. Y. Deshpande

Students' Section

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF GRAVITY

Introduction

GRAVITY, of all known basic forces in nature, is the most enigmatic and universal. Universal simply because we always keep our feet on the earth, and in the eruption of volcanoes or the change in tides, the motion of our moon around our earth and the planets around the sun, the formation of stars, galaxies and clusters of galaxies, and the distribution of matter in the universe—everywhere the same phenomenon is at work. Enigmatic, because to this day we have not been able to explain its mechanism.

I have named my article “The Lighter Side of Gravity” because, without going into technicalities and high-powered maths, I will try to give you an insight into this strange force of nature.

Gravity has always occupied the best of minds, from Aristotle, Galileo, Newton to Einstein.

From the Apple to Apollo 11

From Aristotle to Newton

Aristotle was a pupil of Plato, and the tutor of Alexander the Great. Whereas Alexander's empire crumbled not long after his death, Aristotle's philosophy continued to dominate Europe for several centuries, right through the Middle Ages, and later his science came to acquire the authority of the Roman Catholic Church behind it. Today, in the age of modern science, we find Aristotle's approach strange and difficult to grasp. Yet, when seen against the background of Greece in 350 BC, it reflects a highly systematic attitude.

One of Aristotle's ideas that took firm root in European culture was the notion of a fixed earth amidst a revolving cosmos. This geocentric theory later became a religious dogma, which received its first major challenge in the work of Copernicus in the 16th century. In the heliocentric theory of Copernicus it is the sun that is the fixed centrepiece around which all planets including the earth move. Aristotle also maintained that gravity causes a heavy object to fall faster than a light one.

It was not until the 17th century that a serious challenge to Aristotle's ideas was posed. The man to do so was Galileo Galilei, mathematician and philosopher to the Grand Duke of Florence. Galileo's genius lay not so much in mathematics and philosophy but in clever experimental demonstrations to support his arguments. Not only did he defend the Copernican system, he also attacked the very foundations of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Because of his demonstrations Galileo may be said to have pioneered the spirit of experiment in modern science.

The Legend of the Apple

Apples have played a prominent role in many legends, myths and fairy tales. It was the forbidden apple that became the source of temptation to Eve and it ultimately brought God's displeasure upon Adam. It was the apple of discord that led to the launching of a thousand ships and the long Trojan War. It was the poisoned apple that killed Snow White, and so on.

For physicists, however, the most important apple legend concerns the apple that fell in an orchard in Woolsthorpe, in Lincolnshire, England, in the year 1666. This particular apple put Isaac Newton "into a profound meditation upon the cause, which draws all bodies in a line, which, if prolonged, would pass very nearly through the centre of the earth."

The quotation is from Voltaire's *Philosophie de Newton*, published in 1738, which contains the oldest known account of the apple story. This story does not appear in Newton's early biographies, nor is it mentioned in his own account of how he thought of universal gravitation. Most probably it is a legend.

One has to admire a genius like Newton who could meditate on such an event and come up with the law of gravitation. The legend also has it that Newton's meditations on the question "Why did the apple fall?" led him eventually to the inverse-square law of gravitation. Newton's answer to this question—"because the earth attracted it"—is more profound than it appears to be at first sight, for it not only resolves the mystery of the falling apple but helps resolve a number of long-standing questions about our solar system.

What is the Law of Gravitation?

Stated in simple words, the law of gravitation tells us that the force of attraction between any two material bodies increases in direct proportion to the product of their masses and decreases in inverse proportion to the square of the distance separating them. Because of gravity's diminishing influence, this law is often referred to as *the inverse-square law*.

The term *mass* is defined as the quantity of matter in a body; it is also a measure of its inertia. We now find in the law of gravity another meaning ascribed to it. *mass* is a measure of how strongly a body can exert gravitational force on other bodies and also a measure of how susceptible a body is to the gravitational influence of other bodies. Gravity plays a negligible role in the behaviour of atoms and molecules which have very small masses, whereas it becomes an important force in astronomy, a subject dealing with heavenly bodies of very large masses.

At this point it is worth asking "Why should gravity be important in astronomy and negligible in atomic physics, when the distances are large in the former and small in the latter?" The answer is that, although according to the inverse-square law the force of gravity should be strong at atomic distances, it is overshadowed by other forces of nature that are considerably more powerful. For example, the force of electrical attraction between the electron and the proton in the hydrogen atom is

estimated to be something like ten-thousand billion billion billion billion (10^{40}) times the force of their gravitational attraction! Inside the nucleus of the atom, the nuclear forces are even stronger than the electrical force. The atomic physicist, therefore, rightly ignores gravity in these calculations.

In astronomy, however, none of the other competing forces of nature are able to challenge gravity. The nuclear force is a short-range force, its effect dies out beyond distances of a thousand billionth of a cm! The electrical force does have a long range, however, as the heavenly bodies are electrically neutral, the electrical force of attraction is zero.

Newton argued, on the basis of the law of gravitation, that the apple fell because it was attracted by the earth's gravitational pull. But how did he arrive at the form of the inverse-square law of attraction? Surely, if the purpose of the law was to explain only the falling of the apple, then it could be served by any law of attraction! In fact, what led Newton to the inverse-square law was not the need to explain the falling of the apple, but the need to explain a much bigger phenomenon—the motion of planets and satellites in the solar system.

Who First Thought of Gravitation?

Newton was not, however, the first to have thought of gravitation. As early as the 15th century, some astronomers had the idea that a force of attraction might exist between heavenly bodies and the earth. It was argued that the earth is being pulled in all directions by a 'magnetic' force, but since the force is the same in all directions, the earth remains at rest. Two astronomers in the early part of the 17th century appear to have come close to the basic feature of the Newtonian law, as did Kepler, who once actually considered the inverse-square force.

The apple legend credits Newton with the idea of gravitation in 1666, although his first publication on it, a treatise called *Propositions de Motu*, was communicated to the Royal Society in February 1685, his *Principia* itself was published in 1687. In the meantime, in 1674, Robert Hooke published his work describing the motion of the earth around the sun in terms of a law of attraction that decreased with distance. Hooke is said to have communicated his ideas to Newton, who also had arrived at similar conclusions independently.

Why did Newton wait for so long—nearly two decades—before publishing his results?

It is argued that Newton was a perfectionist and wanted to wait until he had sorted out some problems with his theory. One of the problems was a need for mathematical proof that a spherical body attracts others as if its mass were concentrated at its centre. The other was an observational one. It seems that Newton wanted to wait until reliable estimates of the dimensions of the earth-sun-moon system became available so that he could test the correctness of his theory. These came in the late 1670s. It was only then that Newton felt confident of his law of gravitation.

Motion of Planets

We have already seen how Aristotle's ideas led to the so-called geocentric theory of the universe, which assumed that the heavens revolved around the fixed Earth. The geocentric theory, however, did not stop only at describing the motion of stars. The motion of planets was considerably irregular. To accommodate their irregularity the Greek astronomers, Hipparchus and Ptolemy, made elaborate geometrical constructions to accommodate such motions.

The geocentric theory was challenged by Nicholas Copernicus by proposing the heliocentric theory, which assumes the sun to be fixed in space and the planets to be orbiting around it in circular orbits.

The Copernican system received considerable opposition during Copernicus's lifetime. Copernicus did not see the published version of his book *De Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium* until he was on his deathbed. However, its impact on succeeding generations, though gradual, was far-reaching.

The Copernican theory was supported by Galileo. It was, however, Johannes Kepler whose painstaking observational work marked the next improvement over the Copernican theory. Kepler discovered that the orbits of the planets were not circular, as suggested by Copernicus, but elliptical. Kepler arrived at the following three laws of planetary motion.

1. The orbit of a planet is an ellipse with the sun as one of its two foci.
2. The radial line from the sun to the planet sweeps out equal areas in equal intervals of time.
3. The square of time taken by the planet to complete one orbit varies in proportion to the cube of the major axis of the orbit.

Newton used his system of dynamics to describe the motion of planets pulled by the sun's gravity. His equations of motion relate the acceleration of the planet to the force of gravity. Knowing the planet's acceleration, can we calculate its actual path in space? To solve this problem Newton, genius that he was, developed a new branch of mathematics, called *Calculus*. Years later the German mathematician Leibniz developed a similar system and his supporters claimed that his was better. Swiss mathematician Johann Bernoulli set out to resolve the dispute by publishing two problems requiring Calculus. After several months Leibniz had solved but one. When Newton received the problems, he solved both within 24 hours, submitting the results anonymously. Bernoulli then declared, "The lion is known by his claw." Coming back to our discussion, the methods of Calculus enabled him to prove that planets move along elliptical paths satisfying Kepler's laws.

The law of gravitation describes not only the motion of planets around the sun but also the motion of the moon around the earth and the motion of other satellites around their respective planets.

Success of the Law of Gravitation

Let us now review some of its achievements

The law of gravitation implies instantaneous action at a distance. The force of gravity between the sun and the earth is communicated instantly across a vast distance of some 150 million km. How is this done? Why did the attraction diminish according to the inverse-square law? Questions like these troubled Newton's contemporaries and his successors. Newton attached more importance to the requirement that the law should adequately describe observation than to speculate about nature's mysterious processes leading to that law.

Indeed, it was the successes achieved by Newton's law that established his approach so firmly in post-Newtonian physics. The bothersome deeper questions of how and why were relegated to the background by the successes of the inverse-square law. Let us look at some of its triumphs.

The first example is that of Halley's comet. Like a planet, a comet also moves in an elliptical orbit. However, unlike a planet, a comet moves in a highly eccentric orbit. As a result of moving in such an orbit, the comet is periodically seen in the vicinity of the sun after long intervals.

Edmund Halley, a contemporary of Newton, noticed that comets are sighted at regular intervals, and argued that these were not different comets but periodic visitations of the same comet. Thus, for a comet that was seen in 1682, Halley argued that this was the same comet that had come earlier in 1456, 1531, and 1607—at regular intervals of 76 years. Halley predicted that it would be seen again in 1758. This prophecy came true, although Halley did not live to see the comet's passage that year.

Halley's comet came in 1986, again as expected. Now, for the first time in its history, technology had advanced to such a level that several nations were able to launch spacecraft to rendezvous with the comet. These spacecraft went close to the comet and took pictures. The launching and routing of spacecraft in such orbits could be done so precisely because of the correctness of Newtonian laws.

Perhaps no one infused more confidence in the law of gravitation than did Pierre Simon Laplace (1749-1827), the French mathematician. Laplace's five-volume work *Mécanique Céleste*, published from 1799 to 1825, has been compared with Ptolemy's *Almagest* for its impact on contemporary astronomy. In this work Laplace applied the latest mathematical techniques to work out the motions of planets and their satellites under each other's gravitational influence. The problem is extremely intricate when one takes into account all the cross-influences of the eighteen bodies (then known) of the solar system. Faced with such a problem in modern days, the inclination of the physicist would be to 'put it all on a computer'. The success achieved by Laplace in solving this mammothian problem, and the resulting agreement between his calculations and the observations of planets and satellites, convinced the skeptics about the validity of Newton's law of gravitation. When Laplace presented his work to Emperor Napoleon, he looked at the contents and asked Laplace why his book made no mention of God. Laplace is said to have replied, "Sire, I had no need of that hypothesis."

The next triumph of Newtonian theory came in 1845, when it was used in the discovery of a new planet. Two astronomers, Adams in England and Leverrier in France, came to this discovery working independently. Their work was based on the irregularity that had been noticed in the orbit of Uranus, the then farthest-known planet of the solar system. Uranus was apparently not following the exact elliptical orbit predicted by Newtonian gravity. Both Adams and Leverrier concluded that irregularity in the motion of Uranus was caused by a new planet in its vicinity, the gravitational pull of this new planet would be responsible for the perturbation of Uranus's orbit. The two astronomers were able to calculate where the new planet should be located. Adams approached Challis (Director of the Cambridge Observatory) and later Airy (Astronomer Royal) with a request to observe this planet. But his several requests were ignored. Leverrier fared no better with the leading French astronomers. However, his work was taken seriously by Galle of the Berlin Observatory, who succeeded in observing and locating the new planet Neptune. The story has it that the Director was on leave celebrating his birthday and Galle, a younger astronomer, happened to be around when Leverrier's request came. Had the Director been present he perhaps might not have been sympathetic to it. The Neptune episode illustrates the fact that, if a scientific theory follows the right lines, apparent disagreement with its predictions can lead to new scientific discoveries. It also tells us that senior scientists should take their junior colleagues seriously!

While these three examples relate to the solar system, our fourth and last example deals with artificial satellites and spaceships. These objects—be they the first Sputnik to go around earth, or the Apollo 11 mission to the moon, or Viking, Pioneer, and other space missions to other planets or the space mission related to Halley's Comet—their motion is governed by the same law of gravitation that Newton gave three centuries ago.

For example, the Apollo 11 journey from the earth to the moon (and back!) had to take into account the following motions. First, there is the earth's motion around the sun and the moon's motion around the earth. In fact, we have a 'three-body problem' in which each body moves under the gravitational pulls of the other two. Next, the motion of the spaceship from the earth to the moon is governed by the gravitational pull of the earth and the moon on the spaceship. This calculation of the correct trajectory is complicated and can be done with ease only on a computer.

The accuracy of present-day space missions is considered to be a triumph of modern technology. But more importantly it is also a vindication of the law of gravitation, allegedly inspired by a falling apple. It is therefore with some confidence that we next consider even more remarkable manifestations of gravity in astronomy.

The Tidal Force

Consider the following situation. M is a gravitating mass exercising its force on three point masses A , B and C located in a straight line passing through the centre of M . From Newton's law we know that M attracts all the three masses. We also know

from the inverse-square law that the acceleration is largest on A and least on C, due to their positions. The tendency of this force is to make all the three masses move towards M. Now we wish to check this tendency by applying an equal and opposite force on B. This force is not sufficient to counter the gravitational force on A but will exceed the force of gravitation on C. The result is that A and C will move away from B. If A, B and C were connected to a string, the effect would be to stretch the string. This stretching force is known as the *tidal force*.

Consider now M to be the moon. The earth's crust being solid wouldn't get distorted by this tidal force, but where the surface is covered with water, it is a different matter. Unlike the crust, water does move. The effects are shown in the motions of ocean tides. The effects are strongest when the sun lies approximately in the earth-moon line. Therefore on the Full Moon and the New Moon tides are the most spectacular.

How Strong is Gravity?

Suppose there is a ball-throwing competition. The first thrower throws the ball and it reaches a height of 30 m. Mihir then comes and throws it up to 98 m. Then I come and I throw it up to 1 km! I come first of course! But the question now to be asked is, Is there a maximum height to which one can throw the ball? In other words, will the ball always fall back on the earth or is there a chance that the ball will overcome the gravitational force of the earth and be free? The answer is that there is a minimum velocity that will carry the ball beyond the confines of the earth's gravity. There is a minimum velocity with which when the ball is thrown it will never return to the earth. This velocity known as the *escape velocity* is independent of the weight of the object thrown. For the earth this value is 11.2 km/s or around 40,000 km/h. Therefore, if we have to launch a spaceship, we must launch it with a minimum velocity of 11.2 km/s. For the moon the escape velocity is only around 2.4 km/s. Neutron stars hold the record for the largest escape velocity, around half the speed of light. A neutron star is a very compact star; its density is a million billion times that of water. A neutron star, as massive as our Sun, may be only 20 km in radius! One might now ask: Is it possible that the escape velocity equals that of the speed of light? That is, even light will not escape the gravitational pull of the object. Surely such an object cannot be seen, but it can be detected by its strong gravitational pull. This is our first encounter with Black Holes.

(To be continued)

NISHIKANTA KHANDAI

(This article is based on the year-end talk given in 'Knowledge' in 1999)