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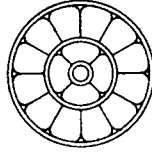
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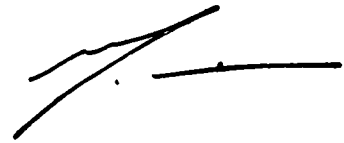


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIII

No. 7

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THEN A VOICE SPOKE

At first out of the busy hum of mind
As if from a loud thronged market into a cave
By an inward moment's magic she had come,
A stark hushed emptiness became her self.
Her mind unvisited by the voice of thought
Stared at a void deep's dumb infinity
Her heights receded, her depths behind her closed;
All fled away from her and left her blank
But when she came back to her self of thought,
Once more she was a human thing on earth,
A lump of Matter, a house of closed sight,
A mind compelled to think out ignorance,
A life-force pressed into a camp of works
And the material world her limiting field.
Amazed like one unknowing she sought her way
Out of the tangle of man's ignorant past
That took the surface person for the soul.
Then a Voice spoke that dwelt on secret heights:
"For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.
Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God
As man disguised the cosmic Greatness works
And finds the mystic inaccessible gate
And opens the Immortal's golden door,
Man human, follows in God's human steps
Accepting his darkness thou must bring to him light,
Accepting his sorrow thou must bring to him bliss.
In Matter's body find thy heaven-born soul."
Then Savitri surged out of her body's wall
And stood a little span outside herself
And looked into her subtle being's depths
And in its heart as in a lotus-bud
Divined her secret and mysterious soul
At the dim portal of the inner life
That bars out from our depths the body's mind
And all that lives but by the body's breath,
She knocked and pressed against the ebony gate.
The living portal groaned with sullen hinge.

Heavily reluctant it complained inert
 Against the tyranny of the spirit's touch.
 A formidable voice cried from within
 "Back, creature of earth, lest tortured and torn thou die."
 A dreadful murmur rose like a dim sea,
 The Serpent of the threshold hissing rose,
 A fatal guardian hood with monstrous coils,
 The hounds of darkness growled with jaws agape,
 And trolls and gnomes and goblins scowled and stared
 And wild beast roarings thrilled the blood with fear
 And menace muttered in a dangerous tongue.
 Unshaken her will pressed on the rigid bars
 The gate swung wide with a protesting jar,
 The opponent Powers withdrew their dreadful guard,
 Her being entered into the inner worlds
 In a narrow passage, the subconscious's gate,
 She breathed with difficulty and pain and strove
 To find the inner self concealed in sense
 Into a dense of subtle Matter packed,
 A cavity filled with a blind mass of power,
 An opposition of misleading gleams,
 A heavy barrier of unseeing sight,
 She forced her way through body to the soul
 Across a perilous border line she passed
 Where life dips into the subconscious dusk
 Or struggles from Matter into chaos of mind,
 Aswarm with elemental entities
 And fluttering shapes of vague half-bodied thought
 And crude beginnings of incontinent force.
 At first a difficult narrowness was there,
 A press of uncertain powers and drifting wills,
 For all was there but nothing in its place
 At times an opening came, a door was forced;
 She crossed through spaces of a secret self
 And trod in passages of inner Time

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 488-90)

THE TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

IF IT IS the sole intention of Nature in the evolution of the spiritual man to awaken him to the supreme Reality and release him from herself, or from the Ignorance in which she as the Power of the Eternal has masked herself, by a departure into a higher status of being elsewhere, if this step in the evolution is a close and an exit, then in the essence her work has been already accomplished and there is nothing more to be done. The ways have been built, the capacity to follow them has been developed, the goal or last height of the creation is manifest, all that is left is for each soul to reach individually the right stage and turn of its development, enter into the spiritual ways and pass by its own chosen path out of this inferior existence. But we have supposed that there is a farther intention,—not only a revelation of the Spirit, but a radical and integral transformation of Nature. There is a will in her to effectuate a true manifestation of the embodied life of the Spirit, to complete what she has begun by a passage from the Ignorance to the Knowledge, to throw off her mask and to reveal herself as the luminous Consciousness-Force carrying in her the eternal Existence and its universal Delight of being. It then becomes obvious that there is something not yet accomplished, there becomes clear to view the much that has still to be done, *bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam*, there is a height still to be reached, a wideness still to be covered by the eye of vision, the wing of the will, the self-affirmation of the Spirit in the material universe. What the evolutionary Power has done is to make a few individuals aware of their souls, conscious of their selves, aware of the eternal being that they are, to put them into communion with the Divinity or the Reality which is concealed by her appearances: a certain change of nature prepares, accompanies or follows upon this illumination, but it is not the complete and radical change which establishes a secure and settled new principle, a new creation, a permanent new order of being in the field of terrestrial Nature. The spiritual man has evolved, but not the supramental being who shall thenceforward be the leader of that Nature.

This is because the principle of spirituality has yet to affirm itself in its own complete right and sovereignty; it has been up till now a power for the mental being to escape from itself or to refine and raise itself to a spiritual poise, it has availed for the release of the Spirit from mind and for the enlargement of the being in a spiritualised mind and heart, but not,—or rather not yet sufficiently,—for the self-affirmation of the Spirit in its own dynamic and sovereign mastery free from the mind's limitations and from the mental instrumentation. The development of another instrumentation has begun, but has yet to become total and effective; it has besides to cease to be a purely individual self-creation in an original Ignorance, something supernormal to earth-life that must always be acquired as an individual achievement by a difficult endeavour. It must become the normal nature of a new type of being, as Mind is established here on a basis of Ignorance seeking for Knowledge and growing into Knowledge, so Supermind must be established here on a basis of Knowledge growing into its own greater Light. But this cannot be so long as the spiritual-mental

being has not risen fully to Supermind and brought down its powers into terrestrial existence. For the gulf between Mind and Supermind has to be bridged, the closed passages opened and roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence. This can be done only by the triple transformation to which we have already made a passing reference: there must first be the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul-instrumentation; on that or along with that there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of the life and body, even into the darkness of our subconsciousness, last, there must supervene the supramental transmutation,—there must take place as the crowning movement the ascent into the Supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, pp 889-91)

THE PERFECTION OF THE BODY

THE perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside, for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. *Śarīram khalu dharmasādhanam*, says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible. 1

SRI AUROBINDO

*

. Each time that the soul takes birth in a new body it comes with the intention of having a new experience which will help it to develop and to perfect its personality. This is how the psychic being is formed from life to life and becomes a completely conscious and independent personality.

Its descent into the physical body is necessarily a descent into darkness, ignorance, unconsciousness; and for a very long time it must labour simply to bring a little consciousness into the material substance of the body, before it can make use of it for the experience it has come for. So, if we cultivate the body by a clear-sighted and rational method, at the same time we are helping the growth of the soul, its progress and enlightenment.

Physical culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body. One may or may not know it, but it is a fact. When we concentrate to make our muscles move according to our will, when we endeavour to make our limbs more supple, to give them an agility, or a force, or a resistance, or a plasticity which they do not naturally possess, we infuse into the cells of the body a consciousness which was not there before, thus turning it into an increasingly homogeneous and receptive instrument, which progresses in and by its activities. This is the primary importance of physical culture. Of course, that is not the only thing that brings consciousness into the body, but it is something which acts in an overall way, and this is rare. I have already told you several times that the artist infuses a very great consciousness into his hands, as the intellectual does into his brain. But these are, as it were, local

phenomena, whereas the action of physical culture is more general. And when one sees the absolutely marvellous results of this culture, when one observes the extent to which the body is capable of perfecting itself, one understands how useful this can be to the action of the psychic being which has entered into this material substance. For naturally, when it is in possession of an organised and harmonised instrument which is full of strength and suppleness and possibilities, its task is greatly facilitated ²

THE MOTHER

References

- 1 *The Supramental Manifestation*, SABCL, Vol 16, p 5
- 2 *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, CWM, Vol 10, pp 29-30

WE CAN BECOME THIS NEW WORLD

.. SRI AUROBINDO says that if the Divine were not at the centre of everything, He could never manifest in the world; it is the same thing when he says that essentially, in its origin and deepest structure, the creation is divine, the world is divine, and that is why this divinity will be able to manifest one day, become tangible, express itself fully in place of all that veils and deforms it at present. Up to now, all that has manifested of this divinity is the world as we know it; but the manifestation is boundless, and after this mental world as we know it, of which the apex and prototype is man, another reality will manifest, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind, for it is in fact the next step after the mind, so, seen from the world as it is, it will naturally be ‘supramental’, that is, something above the mind. And he also says that it will truly be the changing of one world into another, for so far the whole creation belonged to what he calls ‘the lower hemisphere’ as we know it, which is governed by Ignorance and based upon the Inconscient, whereas the other one will be a complete reversal, the sudden appearance of something which will belong to quite a different world, and which instead of being based on Ignorance will be based upon Truth. That is why it will truly be a new world. But if the *essence*, the principle of this world were not included in the world as we knew it, there would be no hope of the one being transformed into the other, they would be two worlds so totally different and opposed that there would be no contact between them and that necessarily, as soon as one came out of this world and emerged into the world of Truth, Light and Knowledge, one would become, so to speak, imperceptible, non-existent for a world belonging exclusively to the Ignorance and the Inconscience.

How is it that even when this change has taken place, there will be a connection and this new world will be able to act upon the old one? It is that in its essence and principle the new is already enclosed, involved in the old world. So, in fact, it is there, inside, in its very depths, hidden, invisible, imperceptible, unexpressed, but it is there, in its essence. Still, unless from the supreme heights the supramental consciousness and force and light manifest directly in the world, as it happened a year and a half ago, this Supermind which in *principle* is at the very bedrock of the material world as it is, would never have any possibility of manifesting itself. Its awakening and appearance below will be the response to a touch from above which will bring out the corresponding element hidden in the depths of matter as it is now. . And this is precisely what is happening at present. But as I told you two weeks ago, this material world as it actually, visibly is, is so powerful, so absolutely real for the ordinary consciousness, that it has engulfed, as it were, this supramental force and consciousness when it manifested, and a long preparation is necessary before its presence can be even glimpsed, felt, perceived in some way or other. And this is the work it is doing now.

How long it will take is difficult to foresee. It will depend a great deal on the goodwill and the receptivity of a certain number of people, for the individual always

advances faster than the collectivity, and by its very nature, humanity is destined to manifest the Supermind before the rest of creation

At the basis of this collaboration there is necessarily the will to change, no longer to be what one is, for things to be no longer what they are. There are several ways of reaching it, and all the methods are good when they succeed! One may be deeply disgusted with what exists and wish ardently to come out of all this and attain something else; one may—and this is a more positive way—one may feel within oneself the touch, the approach of something positively beautiful and true, and willingly drop all the rest so that nothing may burden the journey to this new beauty and truth.

What is indispensable in every case is the *ardent* will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers the advance to throw far away from oneself all that prevents one from going forward, and to set out into the unknown with the ardent faith that this is the truth of tomorrow, *inevitable*, which must necessarily come, which nothing, nobody, no bad will, even that of Nature, can prevent from becoming a reality—perhaps of a not too distant future—a reality which is being worked out now and which those who know how to change, how not to be weighed down by old habits, will *surely* have the good fortune not only to see but to realise

People sleep, they forget, forget all the time. But if we could remember that we are at an exceptional hour, a *unique* time, that we have this immense good fortune, this invaluable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world, we could easily get rid of everything that impedes and hinders our progress

So, the most important thing, it seems, is to remember this fact; even when one doesn't have the tangible experience, to have the certainty of it and faith in it, to remember always, to recall it constantly, to go to sleep with this idea, to wake up with this perception; to do all that one does with this great truth as the background, as a constant support, this great truth that we are witnessing the birth of a new world.

We can participate in it, we can become this new world. And truly, when one has such a marvellous opportunity, one should be ready to give up everything for its sake.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers*, CWM, Vol 9, pp 156-59)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

अय देवः सहसा जायमान इन्द्रेण युजा पणिमस्तभायत् ।
अय स्वस्य पितुरायुधानीन्दुरमुष्णादशिवस्य माया ॥
अयमकृणोदुषस सुपत्नीरय सूर्ये अदधाज्ज्योतिरन्त ।
अयं त्रिधातु दिवि रोचनेषु त्रितेषु विन्ददमृत निगूळ्हम् ॥
अयं द्यावापृथिवी वि ष्कभायदयं रथमयुनक् सप्तरश्मिम् ।
अयं गोषु शच्या पक्वमन्त सोमो दाधार दशयन्त्रमुत्सम् ॥

(R1g Veda, 6 44.22-23-24)

This god born by force, stayed, with Indra as his comrade, the Panı, he it was wrested from his own unblest father (the divided being) his weapons of war and his forms of knowledge (*māyāh*), he it was made the Dawns glorious in their lord, he it was created in the Sun the Light within, he it was found the triple principle (of immortality) in heaven in its regions of splendour (the three worlds of Swar) and in the tripartite worlds the hidden immortality (this is giving of the Amrita in separate parts alluded to in the Atris' hymn to Agni, the threefold offering of the Soma given on the three levels. *triṣu sānusu*, body, life and mind), he it was supported widely heaven and earth. he it was fashioned the car with the seven rays, he it was held by his force the ripe yield (of the *madhu* or *ghrta*) in the cows, even the fountain of the ten movements. (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 139)

स गोरश्वस्य वि ब्रज मन्दान सोम्येभ्य ।
पुर न शूर दर्षसि ॥

(R1g Veda, 8 32 5)

So in thy ecstasy of the Soma thou didst break open, O hero (Indra), the pen of the Cow and the Horse, like a city (SABCL, Vol 10, p 140)

यमिन्द्र दधिषे त्वमश्व गां भागमव्ययम् ।
यजमाने सुन्वति दक्षिणावति तस्मिन् त धेहि मा पणौ ॥
य इन्द्र सस्त्यव्रतोऽनुष्वापमदेवयु ।
स्वैः ष एवैर्मुमुर्त् पोष्य रयिं सनुतर्धेहि त तत ॥

(R1g Veda, 8.97.2-3)

That which thou holdest, O Indra, the Cow and the Horse and the imperishable enjoyment, confirm that in the sacrificer and not in the Panı, he who lies in the slumber, doing not the work and seeking not the gods, let him perish by his own

impulsions, thereafter confirm perpetually (in us) the wealth that must increase (SABCL, Vol 10, p 140)

That nervous force and mental light and undecaying enjoyment which thou, O Indra, holdest, establish it in that sacrificer who expresses in him the Soma and has the discernment and not in the creature of sense-activity. That Power in us who has an inert activity after the way of sleep and seeks not the godhead, may he exhaust himself by his own movements, afterwards establish in us continuously an increasing felicity (Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research, Vol. 7, No. 1, p 56)

उच्छन्नृषसः सुदिना अरिप्रा उरु ज्योतिर्विदुर्दीध्याना ।
गव्यं चिदूर्वमुशिजो वि वब्रुस्तेषामनु प्रदिवः ससुराप ॥

(Rig Veda, 7 90 4)

The Dawns broke forth perfect in their shining and unhurt, meditating they (the Angirasas) found the wide Light; they who desire opened the wideness of the cows and the waters for them flowed forth from heaven. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 140)

The Dawns broke forth perfect in light and unhurt, they (the Angirasas) meditating found the wide Light (*uru jyotiḥ*); they who desire opened the wideness of the Cows, the waters flowed on them from heaven (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 149)

स्वाध्यो दिव आ सप्त यद्ही रायो दुरो व्यृतज्ञा अजानन् ।
विदद् गव्यं सरमा दृळ्हमूर्वं येना नु क मानुषी भोजते विद् ॥

(Rig Veda, 1.72 8)

By right thought the seven Mighty Ones of heaven (the seven rivers) knew the truth and knew the doors of bliss, Sarama found the strong wideness of the cows and by that the human creature enjoys. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 140)

The seven mighty ones of heaven, placing aright the thought, knowing the Truth, discerned in knowledge the doors of felicity, Sarama found the fastness, the wideness of the luminous cows, thereby the human creature enjoys the bliss. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 193)

अग्निर्जातो अरोचत घ्नन् दस्यूञ्ज्योतिषा तम ।
अविन्दद् गा अप स्व ॥

(Rig Veda, 5 14.4)

Agni, born, shone out slaying the Dasyus, by the Light the Darkness; he found the cows, the waters and Swar (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 140)

Agni born shone out slaying the Dasyus, the darkness by the Light, he found the Cows, the Waters, Swar. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 216)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

THE GOD OF VICTORY

SUBTLE beyond all gauging,
Sudden as lightning blade,
Unflawed by earthly aging,
The Woundless, the Undismayed

Back in the world's beginning
Wielded a three-pronged spear,
Unpierced by Falsehood's dinning,
Unswayed by soundless Fear.

Nor Maya-spell's devising
Nor seemings that divide
Dishevelled the assizing
Of the Wakeful Myriad-Eyed;

But many an eye-filled feather
Gathered in battle-dress
Betokened there together
Serene one-pointedness.

February 15, 1936

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Very fine indeed—bringing out the full power and life of the symbol.

A LETTER

THIS IS the letter I led you to expect about the statement, with which you had declared yourself in full accord, that the Ashram was for the Mother a mere scaffolding for bringing about the Supramental Manifestation of 29 February 1956 and that therefore it is now useless, especially as it has a lot of faults.

I believe there are several reasons why the statement cannot be accepted.

(1) Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not need an Ashram if their job was merely to bring the Supermind to the earth. They could very well have done it on their own. The Ashram was an organic part of the mission they explicitly set themselves of taking the whole of common humanity along with them instead of doing their Integral Yoga all by themselves. Perhaps their Yoga could not even be called Integral if it did not integrate us with them?

(2) The Mother never thought of disbanding the Ashram after the Supramental Manifestation. She looked forward not only to the Ashram's continuation as a focal point of her work but also to the continuation of the Centre of Education—and this she did even when envisaging the possibility of her own departure, as can be seen from a passage in her *Collected Works*.

(3) The Supramental Manifestation was in the subtle-physical of the earth, in what the Mother called "the earth's atmosphere." Surely the aim of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was not just the establishment of the Supermind there? They aimed at its manifestation in the gross-physical. Not to realise this is to mis-see their mission, or rather to see it in its incipience and not in its completion.

(4) Even in the subtle-physical of the earth the whole Supermind did not manifest. Only the Light, the Consciousness and the Force came. The Mother said that the Supramental Ananda had not come. Without the Supramental Ananda a new creation cannot take place, for Ananda is always the creative principle, using the organising principle—Supermind or Overmind—to put forth, or give birth to, a cosmos. As far as I can gather, the Supramental Ananda has not manifested up to now even in the subtle-physical. Besides, the very elements that have manifested there were said by the Mother to have been swallowed up by "dark blue waves of the Inconscient"—all the entrenched darkness of the ages—so that the new powers would have to fight their way through. Their future success is certain but the path to it may not be all smooth and to think that already the work is done is not to think far enough.

(5) Even if all of the Supermind had manifested in the subtle-physical and its action had been unimpeded, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's purpose would not have been served without a collective Yoga going on under their inspiration. For, that manifestation by itself can do no more than ensure a future evolution beyond Mind in the long march of time. What Sri Aurobindo and the Mother wanted was not a slow evolution but a swift accelerated evolving movement by means of a direct Integral Yoga. If so, the Ashram had an inevitable part to play from the beginning—for, where else could such a Yoga be practised on the collective scale on which they

insisted as much as they insisted on the individual scale?

(6) The assumed deterioration of the Ashram at present is certainly exaggerated. For one thing, there was plenty of deterioration even when the Mother was there. She was quite in the know of it but she did not consider it an ultimate bar, and she and Sri Aurobindo never thought that to take humanity forward with them—centrally in the shape of the Ashram—rather than to do the Yoga by themselves was a mistake. Defects and shortcomings were always expected by the Mother, and Sri Aurobindo has said that she never put any stress on them: positive qualities were her main concern—and I am sure they are to be found even now. To condemn the Ashram as hopeless because of certain errors and deviations is to lack sufficient insight into the very nature of such an experiment as the Mother dared—an experiment in which the outer life and its interrelations and its affairs (not necessarily in the sexual sense) pose a constant problem which the Mother was well aware of and quite patient with. The attitude needed in us is not to look upon the Ashram as hopeless but to regard it still as a promising field of the Mother's work. Her uplifting radiance definitely persists in concentrated power where her physical embodiment established the starting-point of a golden future. If complacency is out of place, so too is pessimism, and if one criticises, one would have the right to do it only if, instead of looking down on people, one feels that things are rotten not because others are rotten but because one is oneself such. Furthermore, who is ready to deem his own self irremediable? Why, then, indulge in a sense of hopelessness about others and about this collectivity of us and them, which we term the Ashram?

No doubt, physical transformation, in the way Sri Aurobindo and the Mother conceived it, is impossible without the Mother's physical presence. Hence the acute need of her return. All this talk,—fashionable with some deserters of the Ashram—of reprogramming the cells and bringing about their divinisation is, to my mind, bunkum and a wasteful sidetracking of our energies which should be concentrated on psychic and spiritual unfolding and calling, if possible, the Supramental Consciousness into our inner being and letting it have a general influence on the outer being. I know that some people believe that they are undergoing the Supramental change in their bodies. A professor at Kurukshetra University insists that his body is being supramentalised, starting with his feet! I expressed scepticism because I saw no sign of his mind or vital receiving any illumination—a great *sine qua non*, I am sure, before something so stupendous can happen to the body. I share with Nolini the sense, to which he gave expression long ago, that physical transformation has been postponed. But that does not mean we have nothing to do now. A lot of leeway has to be made up and our sadhana can continue quite intensely and the Ashram has still a fine role to enact in the world. The idea that it is played out hits really not at "illusions" but at "realities" which are not always on the surface to see. Although self-censure at several points is certainly salutary, to say that the Ashram has already served its purpose and is now superfluous is to overlook the complex, many-sided, long-spanned vision within which the Integral Yoga was conceived.

Finally, if the statement about the “scaffolding” fell into the hands of S and his “fraternal iconoclasts”, they would gain extra strength and exultingly declare that the very top level of the Ashram indirectly announces that the Mother’s presence, by being no longer with the dead wood that is the Ashram, is now uniquely with her supreme confidant and one and only true disciple who too thinks the Ashram an empty undivine simulacrum needing to be cast aside

7 3 1982

AMAL KIRAN
(K D. Sethna)

I WANT TO BE NEAR THE WORLD

THE whole effort of university life is to make men interested in books and in the remote interests which books discuss. And it is this spirit against which I struggle. I want to be near the world, I want to know the world, to retain all my sympathies with it—even with its crudenesses. I am afraid of being a mere student. I want to be a part of the nature around me, not an outside observer of it. Disraeli knew nothing about the true principles of politics, but he knew men—especially House of Commons men. . . You’ll never find in a cloister a fulcrum for any lever which can budge the world.

WOODROW WILSON

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 June 2000)

In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,
 In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite
 When all was plunged in the negating Void,
 Non-Being's night could never have been saved
 If Being had not plunged into the dark
 Carrying with it its triple mystic cross ¹

WHEN I sent some sketches to the Mother for her approval, she wrote "The sketches are all right The Divine with the triple cross is plunging down from Heaven into the Inconscient."

The Mother did not wish me to paint the cross as we see it in the churches, but something quite different from it She herself did the sketch of the divine Being with this cross

The Cross is in Yoga the symbol of the soul and nature in their strong and perfect union, but because of our fall into the impurities of ignorance it has become the symbol of suffering and purification ²

The cross is the sign of the triple being, transcendent, universal and individual ³

I made an assignation with the Night;
 In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous
 In my breast carrying God's deathless light
 I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.
 I left the glory of the illumined Mind
 And the calm rapture of the divinised soul
 And travelled through a vastness dim and blind
 To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.
 I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
 And still that weary journeying knows no end,
 Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
 There comes no voice of the celestial Friend,
 And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
 A pathway towards Immortality ⁴

He who would bring the heavens here
 Must descend himself into clay
 And the burden of earthly nature bear
 And tread the dolorous way

Coercing my godhead I have come down
 Here on the sordid earth,

Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began

For Man's mind is the dupe of his animal self,
Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
Enamoured of sorrow and sin⁶

Because God is invincibly great, He can afford to be weak, because He is immutably pure, He can indulge with impunity in sin; He knows eternally all delight, therefore He tastes also the delight of pain, He is inalienably wise, therefore he has not debarred Himself from folly⁶

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
Yet sitst above,
Master of all who work and rule and know,
Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
Nor even the clod,
Therefore we know by that humility
That thou art God.⁷

Let me make it clear that in all I wrote I was not writing to prove that I am an Avatar! You are busy in your reasonings with the personal question, I am busy more with the general one. I am seeking to manifest something of the Divine that I am conscious of and feel—I care a damn whether that constitutes me an Avatar or something else That is not a question which concerns me By manifestation, of course, I mean the bringing out and spreading of that consciousness so that others also may feel and enter into it and live in it

But you are surely mistaken in thinking that I said that we work spiritually for

the relief of the poor I have never done that My work is not to intervene in social matters within the frame of the present humanity but to bring down a higher spiritual light and power of a higher character which will make a radical change in the earth-consciousness⁸

It is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness towards the Divine The Gallo-like 'Je m'en fiche'-ism (I do not care)—would not carry me one step, it would certainly not be divine It is quite another thing that enables me to walk unweeping and unlamenting towards the goal

No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy I wish it were It is rather with the opposite end of things; it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it.⁹

What do you mean by lust? Avatars can be married and have children and that is not possible without sex, they can have friendships, enmities, family feelings, etc , etc,—these are vital things I think you are under the impression that an Avatar must be a saint or a yogi¹⁰

Consequently, the birth of the Inconscient is prior to the formation of the world, and it was only when the perception came that the whole universe was going to be created uselessly that there was a call and Divine Love plunged into the Inconscient to change it into consciousness. Therefore, it can be said that the formation of the material worlds as we know them is the result of the descent of the Supreme Consciousness into the Inconscient .¹¹

. Love is a supreme force which the Eternal Consciousness sent down from itself into an obscure and darkened world that it might bring back that world and its beings to the Divine The material world in its darkness and ignorance had forgotten the Divine Love came into the darkness, it awakened all that lay there asleep, it whispered, opening the ears that were sealed, "There is something that is worth waking to, worth living for, and it is love!" And with the awakening to love there entered into the world the possibility of coming back to the Divine...¹²

(It is an ancient Chaldean legend) A very long time ago, in the barren country that is now Arabia, a divine Being became incarnate to awaken the earth to the supreme Love Of course, he was persecuted by men, harried, suspected, misunderstood Mortally wounded by his assailants, he wanted to die alone and quietly so that he might complete his task Being pursued, he ran; all of a

sudden in the vast bare plain, he came across a small pomegranate bush. The Saviour crept in among the lower branches, so that he might leave his body in peace; and all at once the bush grew miraculously, became broad, thick and deep, and when the pursuers arrived there, they did not suspect that the man they were hunting for was hiding in it and they went along.

As the sacred blood fell drop by drop, fertilizing the earth, the tree blossomed out with marvellous, large flowers covering the ground with their petals, innumerable drops of blood.

These are the flowers that for us express and contain the divine Love.¹³

The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way—he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed above and done things from there.

If the Avatars are shams, they have no value for others nor any true effect. Avatarhood becomes perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself, if he takes on these things, it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if the sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves—the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise, his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. What is the use of admitting Avatarhood if you take all the meaning out of it?¹⁴

I don't know about Avatars. Practically what I know is that I had not all the powers necessary when I started, I had to develop them by Yoga, at least many of them which were not in existence in me when I began, and those which were I had to train to a higher degree. My own idea of the matter is that the Avatar's life and actions are not miracles. If they were, his existence would be perfectly useless, a mere superfluous freak of Nature. He accepts the terrestrial conditions, he uses means, he shows the way to humanity as well as helps it. Otherwise what is the use of him and why is he here?

I was not always in the Overmind, if you please. I had to climb there from the mental and vital level.

Let me remind you of what I wrote about the Avatar. There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature under the conditions of Nature and it uses it

according to the rules of the game—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle, then I have no use for it. If it is a coherent part of the arrangement of the omnipotent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it¹⁵

HUTA

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A NOTE

Here is Savitri is being prepared for publication in several volumes which will be coming out soon. We are therefore discontinuing the series in *Mother India* —R Y D

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

24:12:1995

Sri Aurobindo was working in me. He told me “Absorb my Consciousness-Force”

I was doing it. The whole of the lower being was receiving it. It went on like that all the time during the day. Next day it opened out above. Very wide, opened out above.

28:12:1995

The Mother rarely speaks to me. She will do her work and it is Sri Aurobindo who will tell whatever has to be told. But this time the Mother spoke. It was for the first time she spoke: “I can now do the work in you at my will, as I like it.”

I do not know what she was doing and was going to do; what was going on for a long time, that I do not know. “At my will I can work,”—that is what she indicated. I am so happy.

It is for the first time that I am getting this experience.

I am here now for 64 years; I came here in 1931. But this is for the first time she said “I can do my work in you at my will”

I am so happy.

30:12:1995

The Mother told me “I worked through the physical mind centre.” The work was going on all the while. I do not know what work, but it was going on all the while.

She told me this afterwards, that it was through the physical mind centre the work was going on.

Where is it, this physical mind centre?

Cannot say, but perhaps the brain-cells. Must have some connection with the Mind of Light. The whole thing appears to be closely knit together.

21:12:1996

In the evening I had come to the Ashram for meditation. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were doing the work for a long time.

I could see it, and know it also. But there was no mind. The work continued so

But in the absence of the mind, who is it that knows what is being done? I was puzzled.

Then I was told that it is the consciousness. I was told that I should be aware of it. I should try and learn to know by it, through consciousness.

I remember a letter of Sri Aurobindo, a very long letter, wherein he is talking of

consciousness I must find it and read it again I think I am being told that I should be aware of another method, not the mental method, to understand these workings

Can you find that letter for me, about consciousness?

(SABCL, Vol 22, pp 233-235)

Yes, you got it That is the letter I was referring to I must read it again.

11:01:1997

It was two or three days ago. I was meditating in the evening at the Samadhi During the meditation Sri Aurobindo told me to enter into his consciousness.

I did I went deep, and more deep, continuously, for a long time But then beyond a certain stage, I could not go any further, deep into the consciousness I stopped there and told Sri Aurobindo so

He said: "All right, I will enter in you " It continued for a long time I was still standing at the Samadhi, almost for an hour But then how long could I stand?

So I told him "As you are entering in me, it is not necessary for me to be here I can as well go home " I moved out.

I do not know when it stopped

02:02:1997

"It is through Ananda that your sadhana will be done now " This is what I was told.

Can Ananda be active? Can it do the sadhana directly? How does it act?

Normally Ananda does not work directly, without the Supermind. Yes, Supermind has to be established for its dynamism

Perhaps Ananda can work indirectly through some medium, through the agency of one or other. I don't think it will be directly through Ananda. Another kind of support is needed.

Perhaps it may be through psychic happiness and cheerfulness

19:02:1997

I was just coming out of my afternoon nap.

I saw a huge temple with figures of gods carved on its walls, as we have on Gopurams of the South Indian temples These gods suddenly became alive and started moving towards me

They were bringing their light with them. A very brief glimpse, or happening, as I immediately woke up

Or, is it that it was happening after my waking up? Did it happen when I was still in the dream-state? No, I can't say I don't know But it was a vivid thing

(Concluded)

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

The Book of Fate

AFTER dictating the revision of his manuscripts of Books Four and Five, Sri Aurobindo turned to Book Six, "The Book of Fate" In a letter written in 1946, he described this book as "almost complete" In that year he must have done much of the work of bringing Book Six close to its present form. But it was not until late in 1950 that he would finish "The Book of Fate", the last book of *Savitri* to be completed

A notebook Sri Aurobindo used in 1927 contains three pages of what was then the third book, called "Fate" Otherwise, almost no evidence has been found that he worked on any book after "The Book of Love" between 1920 and 1945. When he took up "The Book of Fate" and the later books for revision in the last phase of the composition of *Savitri*, he started from versions that he had written at least twenty-five years earlier

During this long gap, Part One had taken shape and Sri Aurobindo's conception of the scope of the poem had altered radically When he set about revising what he had written so many years before, he transformed some passages almost beyond recognition by making changes and additions which he drafted in chit-pads and dictated to his scribe Not infrequently he would reject a passage altogether and replace it by something quite different. But at other times, pages of the early manuscripts were incorporated into the final version with little modification

The dramatic dialogue that now forms Book Six, Canto One, has remained similar in many ways to what Sri Aurobindo had worked out in his first few versions of the poem Some of the most important differences are connected with the introduction of the queen In the early versions, some of Aswapati's speeches had voiced the ordinary reactions of the human mind and heart to the blows of fate. By the 1940s, this would have been inconsistent with the spiritual stature Aswapati had attained in Part One. Accordingly, this part of his role was assigned to the queen and the speeches in question were transferred to her

The most important result of the work on Book Six in the 1940s was the elaboration of a short passage on pain into one of the longest cantos in the epic, "The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain". Since Sri Aurobindo's final revision of this canto was the last work he did on *Savitri*, shortly before his passing, we will return to it at the end of this series The present instalment will focus on the development of Book Six, Canto One, "The Word of Fate"

Even before *Savitri* was divided into cantos or books, the scene in which Narad foretells the death of Satyavan had grown rapidly from the first draft, where it was not much more than a hundred lines, to the "first fair copy", where it was almost three hundred. Its length had nearly doubled again by the time Sri Aurobindo wrote out "Fate" as "Canto II" When he changed the six cantos to "books", "Fate"

became "Book II"; but the version in this form does not differ much from the previous version where it was "Canto II". The creation of a new first book, "Quest", keeping "Love" as the title of the second book, made "Fate" the third book. Sri Aurobindo worked on it at this stage also, but the two manuscripts headed "Book III-Fate" are incomplete.

When he returned to "Fate" around 1946, Sri Aurobindo revised by dictation a version called "Canto II". This must have been written in 1918 or so, about half-way through the early phase of the composition of *Savitri* (1916-20). At the time of the dictated revision in the 1940s, a few pages of the slightly later version of "Fate" as "Book II" were substituted for the corresponding pages of "Canto II". It is not known why the later manuscript was not used for the whole of this revision. But since differences between these early versions were minor in comparison with the amount of rewriting Sri Aurobindo planned to do, perhaps he chose the manuscript offering the cleanest fair copy, on which changes and insertions could easily be marked.

The facsimile shows a page of this manuscript of "Fate", marked with the revision dictated by Sri Aurobindo when he turned the old "Canto II" into the present Book Six. This page is an example of moderate revision in which many of the original lines remained intact. When a passage was altered much more than this, the version in the early manuscript was usually replaced by a dictated passage written on the back of the page. This seventeen-page manuscript of "Fate", written by Sri Aurobindo on one side of loose sheets of paper, has passages in the scribe's handwriting on the backs of about half of the pages, sometimes filling them entirely. Longer dictated passages were written in a separate note-pad.

The page seen in the facsimile is the one that immediately precedes Narad's disclosure of the fate of Satyavan. The passage occurs at a high point of the slowly mounting tension in this canto. Narad has let out ominous hints, but is withholding his foreknowledge of Satyavan's death until he is forced to declare it. Savitri, her father and, in the revised version, her mother do not yet know that Satyavan will die; but they have already been prepared for the worst.

In the earliest versions, there had been less subtlety in the dialogue. Some of the stages through which it reached its present form are worth noting. The first draft followed the Mahabharata more closely here than almost anywhere else in the story. As in the Mahabharata, Savitri's announcement of her choice of a husband elicited a sharply negative reaction from Narad:

Then turned the King his eyes upon the sage
 Who cried aloud, "O unseeing eyes of men
 That only look upon the moment's joy
 A bitter choice thou makest, Savitri,
 Not knowing whom thy heart and senses choose"
 And the King, moved, "O sage, what cry is this?
 Is this an evil heart my daughter loves?"

13

No ^{can} ^{from her path}
Kroon the cry and prayer from her path,
She has leaped an arrow from the bow of God

to if he own (from
we pierced the mother
soul

His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve,
Not held by calm the trouble of mortal things.

And held by calm, that the ^{and strike with the broad missile}
ancient human sentence strike her child,
The ancient human sentence strike her child,

Populant to the native gods
to a calm air a sunlit
The oblong vase and the
Human was the shield of
no doors to grief

Her sweetness that deceived another seems fate
Only a larger measure given of tears:

The story-eyed injustice she accused
Of the marble godhead of inflexible Law.

Not sought the struggle
Not extreme already
To lines that stand
To face the world
Heart appeared
Against the impersonal
Judge.

Deer as a common man beneath
his load grows scant
And breathe in a cry
She spoke

And what he called not, ^{the quiet}
And what he called not, ^{the quiet}
And what he called not, ^{the quiet}

Emerging from the dark forest's ^{light}
shien

What stealthy door has
into our path

What evil thing stood smiling by the way,
That won the beauty of the Shalwa boy?

Perhaps he came an enemy from her past
Armed with the hidden force of ancient wrongs,
And himself unknowing, and seized her unknown.
And dreadfully, entangled love and hate

Heet us from wanderers mid the perils of Time.
1. Messsage avenges casual steps;

Old coulties come back unrecognized,
The gods make use of our for-gotten deeds

It fallen from the
Rite last was made

And our own minds are ^{the} ^{the}
suspicious of doom.

1 There are due alchemies of the human heart
And fallen from his ^{the}
darkness

2 And fallen from his ^{the}
darkness

the
Wander's with
cannot yet forge

And grief has other passages for our life.
Strength have I my own ^{the}
knowing that we, but on this earth pleased,
In the sorrow of scourged and helpless things

See O.P. V

Sri Aurobindo soon modified this to a more compassionate response

And Narad smiling with celestial lips,
 “Well has thy daughter chosen, and yet, alas,
 Much sorrow also, since beset you live,
 Sweet souls of men obscured in earthly mind
 Loving with heart and senses fugitive forms”
 At that alarmed the father’s heart. ‘O sage,
 Has she then loved an enemy of her life?’ ”

Some elements that would remain or return in later versions have been introduced here. Narad’s first words anticipate Aswapati’s reaction as it is phrased in the final text

“Well hast thou done and I approve thy choice ”

The word “alarmed” is later applied not to Savitri’s father but to her mother, who says at one point

Perhaps he came an enemy from her past .

But more far-reaching changes appear in the next few drafts. In the very different speech given to Narad at this stage, we see the beginnings of a deeper interpretation of the meaning of fate and the purpose of grief and pain. The speech was eventually shifted to a later position and grew into Book Six, Canto Two:

Then Uswapathy bowed his head, calmly
 Consenting to her free and lofty will
 But Narad with the rapt celestial eyes
 Bare to whose gaze Time shrinks, his unseen works
 Detected. “Lo, a god’s tremendous touch
 Seems pain unbearable to mortal nerves
 And still that agony is the birth of heaven . . .”

The dialogue becomes more complex as the king responds to the seer’s enigmatic words and receives another elusive reply. New speeches are added which begin to have some relation to the version we know. But lines that will survive Sri Aurobindo’s revision in the 1940s are slow to emerge. In this respect, certain passages near the beginning and end of Book Six, Canto One, developed more straightforwardly from the earliest versions, which already contained many lines similar to those in the present text.

In what has been called Sri Aurobindo’s “first fair copy” of *Savitri*, some lines resembling those in the finished poem appear after the king, disturbed by vague

forebodings, asks for a way out of the impending misfortune. Narad replies

“Why vainly must thou ask for light in front?
 Safe doors cry opening, but the doomed pass on
 None can renounce the chain his soul desires
 Until a will eternal has been done.
 Man by his nature to great griefs is drawn,
 For a mysterious Power compels his steps
 And Life is stronger than the trembling mind”

This speech had doubled in length and come close to its final form by the time Sri Aurobindo wrote the version of “Canto II Fate” that he revised nearly thirty years later. At the top of the page of this manuscript that is reproduced in the present issue, we can see the end of the sentence that now concludes Narad’s speech. The strongest possible statement of the seemingly irresistible power of Fate, this sentence reads as revised:

None can refuse what the stark Force demands.
 Her eyes are fixed upon her mighty aim,
 No cry or prayer can turn her from her path.
 She has leaped an arrow from the bow of God

The rest of the manuscript page seen in the facsimile shows how much Sri Aurobindo has changed this part of the dialogue from the corresponding passage in the “first fair copy” There it had run

With troubled heart King Uswapathy heard;
 He reined his rearing thoughts to make reply
 “Still must man seek for light and quest in front,
 Chained to his passion on the labouring earth.
 Yearning to clasp an enemy of her heart
 Is cruellest grief for woman’s subject life,
 A bitter thing to love! Or two may cling
 United yet some natural fault in him
 Turn even their close daily tenderness
 A cherished suffering and a tortured joy.
 Which of these swords shall pierce my child. O sage?”

The speech found at the same point in the later version has little in common with this, except the general idea contained in the words “A bitter thing to love!”

The first two lines above, referring to the king’s “troubled heart” and “rearing thoughts”, were replaced in the manuscript of “Canto II Fate” by a longer passage It is transcribed below as Sri Aurobindo wrote it before he revised the manuscript.

His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve,
 But feel the touch of tears in mortal things
 And help by calm But the moved father saw
 The ancient human sentence strike his child,
 Her sweetness that deserved another doom
 Only a larger measure given of tears.
 The stony-eyed injustice he accused
 Of the marble godhead of inflexible Law,
 Called not his silent spirit to his aid,
 But even as cries a common man who faints
 Beneath the load and breathes his pain, he spoke.

In a later incomplete manuscript entitled ‘‘Book III: Fate’’, Sri Aurobindo tried to reconcile Aswapati’s outburst here with his Yogic poise described in the first book. He portrayed it as a surface reaction not shared by the inner being:

Then Uswapathy’s high and silent spirit
 Looked down and saw his human mind arise
 A passionate figure from the abyss of life ...
 Although disowned by the calm wiser will,
 His heart appealed against the impartial judge

At an early stage of the composition of *Savitri*, where Aswapati’s Yoga was as yet the subject of only a short section of the poem, this was perhaps enough to explain his momentary lapse from spiritual self-possession. But by the 1940s, Sri Aurobindo saw the need to bring in another character, the queen, who was better suited to express the thoughts and feelings of our normal humanity confronted by the rude enigma of this world.

As revised and expanded in the manuscript, the passage introducing the queen’s speech reads as printed below. Words in the handwriting of the scribe who took dictation from Sri Aurobindo are italicised. The second, third and fourth lines are not visible in the facsimile; they were written on the back of the previous page with an arrow indicating their place of insertion.

His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve,
And help by calm the swaying wheels of life
And the long restlessness of transient things
And the trouble and passion of the unquiet world
As if her own bosom were pierced the mother saw
 The ancient human sentence strike *her* child,
 Her sweetness that deserved another *fate*
 Only a larger measure given of tears

*Aspirant to the nature of the gods,
 Though to a calm air of knowledge she had risen,
 Though strong and wise and Aswapathy's queen
 Human was she still and opened her doors to grief,
 The stony-eyed injustice she accused
 Of the marble godhead of inflexible Law;
 Nor sought the strength extreme adversity brings
 To lives that stand erect and face the World Power
 Her heart appealed against the impartial judge.
 She called not the tranquil spirit to her aid,
 Even as a common man beneath his load grows faint
 And breathes his pain in a cry she spoke.*

A comparison of this with the printed text will reveal some differences due to Sri Aurobindo's later revision. The most significant changes were in the third sentence, whose first part was expanded by two lines on the typed copy and became:

*Aspiring to the nature of the gods,
 A mind proof-armoured mailed in mighty thoughts,
 A will entire couchant behind wisdom's shield,
 Though to still heavens of knowledge she had risen,
 Though calm and wise and Aswapathy's queen . .*

In a draft of the last line, Sri Aurobindo wrote "Aswapati's", not "Aswapathy's". The spelling with "t" instead of "th"—consistent with "Savitri" and "Satyavan", which replaced the former "Savithri" and "Sathyavan"—has been adopted in the latest edition

Another line was added at the end of the same sentence when the typescript was revised. Sri Aurobindo had written between the lines in the manuscript:

His heart appealed against the impartial judge.

This line was rewritten by the scribe in the margin, with "Her" replacing "His". When Sri Aurobindo revised the typed copy, he had the full stop changed to a comma and dictated a new line after it

Taxed with perversity the impersonal One

The next three lines were likewise revised on the typescript and a line was added. The scribe who took dictation had written "grows faint" at the end of the second of these lines instead of at the beginning of the third, making one line too long and the next too short for the metre. The mistake was corrected and the three lines were turned into four:

Her tranquil spirit she called not to her aid,
 But as a common man beneath his load
 Grows faint and breathes his pain in ignorant words.
 So now she arraigned the world's impassive will

The queen's speech, as far as it appears in the facsimile, differs little from what is published on page 428 of the current edition of *Savitri*. The arrow in the left margin near the bottom of the page points to two lines on the opposite page describing the torments inflicted by love, the "dreadful angel". These two lines were later expanded to three

He visits with his own pangs his quivering prey
 Forcing us to cling enamoured to his grip
 As if in love with our own agony

Otherwise, the most significant alteration Sri Aurobindo made when he revised the typescript was to change "poor wanderers" to "blind wanderers" in the ninth line of the speech, he also changed "into" to "across" in the first line and "the hidden force" to "a hidden force" in the sixth. Only the end of the speech, found at the top of the next page in the manuscript, was extensively revised and enlarged, first on the back of the manuscript page, then on the typed copy.

A few lines in this passage deserve comment with reference to differences between editions. The lines in question were not revised further by Sri Aurobindo after he dictated the revision marked on the manuscript. But if the facsimile is compared with editions of *Savitri* other than the most recent one (1993), some discrepancies will be found.

Sri Aurobindo inserted the first two and the last of the following lines between the original lines in the lower part of the page:

For nothing have we learned, but still repeat
 Our stark misuse of self and others' souls
 There are dire alchemies of the human heart
 And fallen from his ethereal element
 Love darkens to the spirit of nether gods
 This is one poignant misery in the world,
 And grief has other lassoes for our life
 Our sympathies become our torturers

When the scribe made a fair copy of this passage, he read "souls" as "selves" in the second line and omitted the next line altogether. He copied the last word, "torturers", as "tortures". The word "lassoes" in the second line from the bottom appears correctly in the scribe's copy, but was misread as "lessons" by the typist.

SRI Aurobindo corrected “lessons” back to “lassoes” when he revised the typed copy. But when the next line was read to him, he apparently did not hear that the last word was not what he had written and that a syllable was missing. The metrically defective line, “Our sympathies become our tortures”, was printed in the first edition (1951). After the error was noticed by Amal Kiran, “tortures” was corrected to “torturers” in the second edition (1954).

Like other accidental changes that occurred when Sri Aurobindo’s lines were copied, typed and printed, the scribe’s inadvertent substitution of “selves” for “souls” has been corrected in the edition published in 1993. In that edition, the previously omitted line—

There are dire alchemies of the human heart

—is printed for the first time

It is of interest to note that a cancelled line near the top of the page in the facsimile—

But feel the touch of tears in mortal things

—reappears on the next page, with “But” changed to “And”, in a passage inserted before the end of the queen’s speech. In a letter written in 1946, the year of most of the dictated revision of Book Six, Sri Aurobindo referred to this line as a “translation” of Virgil’s

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt

He explained in what sense the line in *Savitri* can be called a translation of the Latin line, in which he found “an almost direct descent from the Overmind consciousness”¹

As for my own translation—“the touch of tears in mortal things”—it is intended not as an accurate and scholastic prose rendering but as a poetic equivalent. I take it from a passage in *Savitri* where the mother of Savitri is lamenting her child’s fate and contrasting the unmoved and unfeeling calm of the gods with human suffering and sympathy.²

The queen’s lament and her demand to know the truth, “however hard to bear”, prompt Narad’s stunning revelation that Satyavan is destined to die a year from that day. His words “set free the spring of cosmic Fate”. They also set in motion the action of the rest of the epic. Savitri is brought face to face with the problem she had come into the world to solve. Death is not yet visible before her eyes, but hearing the word of fate, she has encountered “the marble godhead of inflexible Law”. She has not been shaken.

Sri Aurobindo defines fate, through the lips of Narad, as “Truth working out in Ignorance”³ Evidently, it is the distorting medium of ignorance that converts the working of Truth into the painful process to which we are now subjected. But, as Sri Aurobindo says,

when the soul and self emerges, when we become consciously spiritual beings, that change can cancel or wholly remodel the graph of our physical fate.⁴

This is what Savitri had come to show and it is what humanity must learn Though ignorance, fate and death seem to rule the world,

Yet can the mind of man receive God’s light,
The force of man can be driven by God’s force,
Then is he a miracle doing miracles⁵

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

- 1 *Savitri* (1993), p 810
- 2 *The Future Poetry and Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (1971), p 375
- 3 *Savitri*, p 458
- 4 *The Life Divine* (1970), p 809
- 5 *Savitri*, pp 457-58

MENDING WALL

SOMETHING there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen groundswell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast
The work of hunters is another thing
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance.
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours"
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head.
"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.

He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees
 He will not go behind his father's saying,
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

ANONYMOUS

SRI RAMA BHAVA PUJA

In a traditional *puja* (ritual worship), we offer to the One who made them those things that please our senses. beautiful flowers, fragrant sandalwood, incense, and camphor, soft silks, cool water, fresh fruits, and the glowing light of a candle or an oil lamp

The sincere devotee can find many ways of worship as pleasing to the Lord as a traditional *puja*. No place is not sacred, no time inappropriate, and no manner improper for communion with the Lord. Sri Tyagaraja, a great musician of Carnatic music and an ardent devotee of Rama, reveals to us a method of worship that suits any age and any place (—translated from the Telugu)

My body is Your favourite abode,
 My steadfast mind, Your golden throne.
 My meditation on Your golden feet is the water of ablution.
 My loving devotion is the garment You wear
 My praises of Your glory are the fragrance of sandalwood paste,
 My chanting of Your sacred names the full-bloom lotus
 Burning the effects of my past deeds is the burning of the incense sticks
 My devotion to Your feet is the all-day lamp glowing before You
 The fruits of my worship are the food that is offered to You.
 The lasting bliss derived from this worship is itself the tanpura *
 Your darsana (vision) is the waving of the lights before You.

TYAGARAJA

(*Manam*, Vol III, No 2, April 1980)

* The tanpura is a plucked string instrument used as a drone

RABINDRANATH TAGORE: FROM ROMANTICISM TO MODERNISM

“I WAS born in 1861; that is not an important date in history, but it belongs to a great epoch in Bengal, when the currents of three movements had met in the life of our country” This statement of Tagore can serve as the key for understanding the working of his mind. These three movements were. 1) the effort to revitalise the spiritual life of India which had lost its vigour in formal creeds and external practices, 2) the effort to free literature of which the vitality was oppressed by a rigid rhetoric and by conventions, 3) the rise of nationalism which “began to give voice to the mind of our people trying to assert their own personality” These movements were at once revolutionary and creative, and tried to re-create new values and forms of spirituality, literature and national culture Tagore was inspired, from his childhood, by this spirit of freedom and creative impulse In his poetry and life we find frequently the symbol of ‘the boundary’ which seems to have haunted him, and he tried to overcome this sense of boundedness by trying to become the traveller of the far-away, both in imagination and in actual journeys throughout the world

As a child he felt exiled and imprisoned in the boundaries of the school he attended for a few years His formal education was sporadic In order to be free from the boundaries of home he insisted on going to school, but his “great thirst for colour, for music, for the movement of life” could not be satisfied there Finally at home he found the necessary opportunity to discover poetry, music and art With teachers who came to the house he read the new literature developing in Bengal under the influence of the English romantics He also read the Sanskrit classics and was fascinated by the rhythm, the colour, the rich musicality and the deep life-vision of the ancient poets He learned English and read Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley and others

The family in which he was born was one of the richest and also the most progressive in Calcutta Describing the atmosphere in which he passed the formative years of his life he wrote: “Most of the members of my family had some gift—some were artists, some poets, some musicians, and the whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation. I had a deep sense, almost from infancy, of the beauty of Nature, an intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air”

Analysing English society and poetry, Tagore wrote “In English social life passionate outbursts are kept severely in check, for which very reason, perhaps, they so dominate English literature Its characteristic is the suppression of vehement feelings to a point of inevitable explosion At least this was what we in Bengal came to regard as the quintessence of English literature”

In Tagore the passionate outburst was tempered by the teachings of the ancient Indian sages for whom joy, not passion, was the origin and the foundation of life and

the goal of earthly evolution. This sense of ‘joy, whose other name is love’ gave a calm profundity to Tagore’s romantic poetry.

The experience of this joy was, in a way, the fountainhead of his poetry. One morning he was watching the sunrise. ‘‘As I gazed,’’ he later wrote, ‘‘all of a sudden a lid seemed to fall from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. The radiance pierced the sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart, and flooded it with universal light. That very day the poem *The Fountain’s Awakening* gushed forth and coursed on like a cascade. The poem ended, but the curtain did not fall upon my joy’’

The two great powers of romantic poetry are nature and love. ‘‘The essence of Romantic imagination,’’ writes Maurice Bowra, ‘‘is that it fashions shapes which display these unseen forces at work.’’ For Tagore both these forces were expressions of the original creative joy. And he sought this joy, which is eternal and unbounded, in nature, love and life. But joy does not express itself always in pleasurable experience only, it can also appear as tragic and terrible. In Tagore’s nature-poetry we find both these aspects. While living in a houseboat on the river Padma in Bengal, far from the urban life of Calcutta, he wrote in a letter: ‘‘It is as if I am now standing in a place outside the current of time. . . Each atom is immeasurable and each moment infinite’’ Such is the experience of nature in its vast peaceful aspect. But about a month later he was woken one night by a ‘‘violent bubbling’’ of the water which was streaked with starlight like a ‘‘gash of agony’’

We can grasp the benign image of nature in the following lines of the poem *Happiness*.

The day is unclouded, the bright sky
is smiling like a friend; the light breeze
is caressing sweetly the face, the eyes, the breast...
And the boat is floating
on the quiet and peaceful Padma making
melodious ripples .

Let us now take a few lines from another nature-poem, *Sea-Waves*, in which the poet describes a shipwreck:

On the breast of the shoreless sea Destruction swings and sweeps,
In dreadful festival.
The indomitable wind is roaming, ungovernable in strength,
Beating its thousand wings
Sky and sea in one are reeling together in vast confusion,
Darkness veils the eyes of the universe.

And further the terrible destruction, the offer of human lives demanded by the ogress Storm:

Lifting the ship, the Storm, an ogress, shouts
 'Give! Give! Give!'
 The sea one massed foam, clamours with its million upthrust arms,
 'Give! Give! Give!'
 Wrathful at the delay, foaming and hissing,
 The azure Death grows white with mighty anger.
 The tiny bark cannot bear the great weight,
 Its iron breast will burst!
 Above and Below have become one, they seize this tiny toy,
 Seize it for their sport!

(tr. Krishna Datta and Andrew Robinson)

In spite of all its terror and fury Tagore loved the earth, and viewed it as beautiful:

The earth is beautiful, I do not want to die

And although the Beyond, the Faraway always beckoned to him, although freedom was the goal he had set before him, yet he did not renounce the world like the ascetics. He wrote in a sonnet.

It is not for me, the liberation that comes from renunciation.
 I shall enjoy the immensely blissful freedom
 in the innumerable bonds of nature

The romantic imagination does not see nature as something bound by time and space, fully contained in its outward appearance. Ancient Indian sages too believed that all that is here is pervaded by the eternal divine presence. Tagore sees in nature an unending flow of life which, although rooted in the 'here and now', yet stretches far beyond. Seeing a flight of wild geese he wrote:

. It seemed as if the message of these wings
 brought
 just for a moment
 to the heart of the thrilled immobility
 the passion of speed.
 The mountains wanted to be Summer's vagabond clouds;
 the trees wanted to abandon their earth-boundedness

and with wings outspread followed the sound
 in search of the limits of the unchartered space
 The dream of the evening vanished
 and a nostalgic pain welled up,
 O liberated wings,
 for the far-away
 And an eager message rang in the heart of the universe,
 'Not here, not here, somewhere else, somewhere!'

Love is another great force of the romantic imagination. Tagore explored love in its various manifestations. In his early poems love was sensual and emotional.

O my love,
 when I ask for a kiss, do not turn your face away,
 pour the bright red nectarous bliss
 on my lips

Love is not unrelated to the body, it embraces both the body and the spirit. If love were only sexual necessity, a physical compulsion, it would lose all beauty, all joy. Real love unites the divine and the human.

I make god my beloved, and my beloved, god

For Tagore woman is neither an object of pleasure, a wily temptress, nor a bodiless angel. She has always a body even when she is idealised. Idealisation is a part of the image. There is always a woman of flesh and blood, but to her physical beauty the lover-poet adds his own imagination and creates the woman-of-love. Tagore wrote

You are half woman and half imagination

Perhaps the one poem that most powerfully expresses Tagore's idea of love is an ode to the ocean-born heavenly nymph, Urvashi. An ancient myth says that she fell in love with a human king and came to live with him. For Tagore she became the symbol of heavenly beauty incarnate. She is not an idea or an imagination alone, she is also a woman. But being heavenly she is not subject to social laws. She is beauty and love in perfect freedom. She is not bound by household duties, for, as the opening line says

You are neither a mother, nor a daughter, nor a bride, O beauty incarnate!

She is beauty incarnate, she is also eternally youthful

When, moulded in youth, awake, you stood before the world,
you were already in the fulness of bloom

She is the 'beloved of the world'. To her men pay the homage of love, not only sensuous men, men of the world, but also the sages; the ascetics abandon their meditation and offer their spiritual merits at her feet. She does not demand anything, she is free. If men love her, their love is the spontaneous outgoing of their own desire. We can perhaps best understand her if we see her as the dancer that she is, the dancer who moves the spectators to joy and sorrow without herself being moved by those feelings. She is full of rhythm. As the fragrance of her body spreads through the universe so the rhythm of her body makes the whole of nature dance. She is like the swaying wave. She becomes one with the earth and the sky

when you dance. .

the sea-waves dance in unison with your dance-rhythm,
Earth's raiment flutters on the waving ears of the corn,
stars drop on the sky's floor from your necklace

The sea, the earth and the sky are caught in a universal rhythm. All that is beautiful is the reflection of her beauty, all movement rises from the rhythm of her footsteps, the stars are nothing but the flashing of her necklace. Nature, the world of beauty, is pervaded by her marvellous presence. She is nature itself. And also a woman, bodied, real. She is supremely desirable, but for the spectators she is unreachable.

Smitten by her sidelong glances, says the poet, the world grows restless with the youthful yearning of love

the blind winds carry far and wide the intoxicating fragrance of your body,
and the enchanted poet like the honey-drunk black-bee roves longingly
singing songs of ecstasy

She is beauty perfect, beauty purified, the sublimation of all our earthly pains, the transmutation of pain into a work of deathless art. Desire lies at her feet, the world's desire has become her lotus-footstool

the slenderness of your body is washed with the world's flowing tears,
the heart-blood of the world has given the redness of your feet—
O naked beauty, your hair is unbraided, you have placed
on the full-bloomed lotus of world's desire your feet, lightly

Love is beyond the grasp of desire. Real love always eludes men, it is something near, a movement of the heart for a beauty that is bodied, yet unattainable

(To be concluded)

RANAJIT SARKAR

A SONG TO THE MOTHER OF ALL WORLDS

Dedicated to Chanticleer

SOUNDS fill me with sound, the earth around,
O splendid holy sound the seas surround

Light beckons me, bright celestial light
O Love that I might with brave unalloyed delight

Touch once more those seer and radiant feet
And gaze on eyes where earth and heaven meet.

Mother, Mira. Ma, the golden years
We glimpsed shall come and mitigate our fears,

Rapture and song shall bear us along, yet we pray
That not only the strong will touch the awakening Ray,

But all who love truly, who seek and aspire may come
To Thee, Lord: We offer our prayer through the power of Aum

A Song to the Mother of All Worlds is a meditation through sound and a prayer to invoke the descent of a new world and a reign of peace and divine light on earth. It is dedicated to Chanticleer. I was inspired to write the poem after listening to Chanticleer's recording of 20th century music and drew upon my experiences with Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, South India, and their vision of a life divine

We had a choir in Auroville—more than one in fact. And here, my soul's aspiration in song was often lifted far beyond any human expectation. For it was not just written music we sang, but for a number of years, with a small group, and later with a larger choir, we explored meditation in sound. Often only a vowel was utilized, or the word Aum, occasionally we sang poetry. But transcending all individual voices was a collective aspiration that welled from the inmost being of each member of the group, finding new musical expression through prayer and unity

The music for the poem should be spontaneous. Each singer is asked to produce an individual sound that is subsumed in the greater harmony and with the being concentrated within, to call upon one's highest aspiration and offer the soul's purest response in song for the body of the earth

The word Aum, also spelled Om, contains within it all sounds, from man's first utterance, Ah or Oh, to the final Mmm. It has been chanted for thousands of years and holds the power of transformation

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM—YOGISHRESHTHA

[In his Bengali essays on the Gita Sri Aurobindo wrote the following.

“Arjuna was not the best among his great contemporaries. In spiritual knowledge, Vyasa was the greatest, in all kinds of worldly knowledge of that epoch, Bhishma the best; in the thirst for knowledge king Dhritarashtra and Vidura led the rest, in saintliness and sattwic qualities Yudhishtira was the best, in devotion there was none equal to Uddhava and Akrura; his eldest brother Karna, the mighty warrior, led in inborn strength and courage. And yet, it was Arjuna whom the Lord of the worlds elected; it was in his hands that He placed divine weapons like the Gandiva bow and gave to him eternal victory, it was through him that thousands upon thousands of India’s world-renowned fighters were made to fall, and He founded for Yudhishtira his undisputed empire as a gift of Arjuna’s prowess. Above all, it was Arjuna whom He decided as being the one fit recipient of the supreme knowledge given in the Gita. It was Arjuna alone who is the hero and the principal actor in the Mahabharata; every section of that poem proclaims the fame and glory of him alone. This is no undue partiality on the part of the Supreme Divine or of the great Vyasa the author of the Mahabharata. This high position derives from complete faith and self-surrender. He who surrenders to the Supreme with complete faith and dependence and without making any claims all responsibility for his own good or harm, weal or woe, virtue or sin; he who wants to act according to his behests instead of being attached to works dear to his own heart; who accepts the impulses received from Him instead of satisfying his own propensities, who puts to use in His work the qualities and inspirations given by Him instead of eagerly hugging the qualities admired by himself—it is that selfless and faithful Karmayogin who becomes the Supreme’s dearest friend and the best vehicle of His Power, through him is accomplished flawlessly a stupendous work for the world. Mahomed the founder of Islam was a supreme yogin of this type. Arjuna too was ever on the alert to make an effort at this self-surrender, this effort was the cause of Sri Krishna’s love and satisfaction. He alone who makes a serious effort at self-surrender is the best fitted to receive the Gita’s teaching. Sri Krishna becomes his Teacher and Friend and takes over all responsibility for him in this world and in the next” (*Mother India*, June 1999, pp 629-30.)

“...you say that you ask only for the Truth and yet you speak like a narrow and ignorant fanatic who refuses to believe in anything but the religion in which he was born. All fanaticism is false, because it is a contradiction of the very nature of God and of Truth. Truth cannot be shut up in a single book, Bible or Veda or Koran, or in a single religion. The Divine Being is eternal and universal and infinite and cannot be the sole property of the Mussulmans or of the Semitic

religions only,—those that happened to be in a line from the Bible and to have Jewish or Arabian prophets for their founders Hindus and Confucians and Taoists and all others have as much right to enter into relation with God and find the Truth in their own way All religions have some truth in them, but none has the whole truth, all are created in time and finally decline and perish. Mahomed himself never pretended that the Koran was the last message of God and there would be no other God and Truth outlast these religions and manifest themselves anew in whatever way or form the Divine Wisdom chooses You cannot shut up God in the limitations of your own narrow brain or dictate to the Divine Power and Consciousness how or where or through whom it shall manifest, you cannot put up your puny barriers against the divine Omnipotence These again are simple truths which are now being recognised all over the world, only the childish in mind or those who vegetate in some formula of the past deny them ” (Sri Aurobindo on Himself, SABCL, Vol. 26, p 483)

We are reproducing here these two passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo in the context of the late Lt. Colonel Gunindra Lal Bhattacharya’s book *Krishna of the Gita* written in jail when he was taken as a prisoner of war at the time of liberation of Bangladesh. The Colonel was put in solitary confinement for 8 years in Dacca where he came across Sri Aurobindo’s Bengali essays on the Gita, *Gitar Bhumika (Introduction to the Gita* which was recently serialised in *Mother India*) His record of the sadhana inspired by this book drew him closer to one whom Sri Aurobindo called “Yogishreshtha” which marks a new dimension of appreciation of things genuinely spiritual

For the benefit of the readers of *Mother India* we serialise the relevant part of *Krishna of the Gita* pertaining to this theme While we always have natural sympathy for a prisoner of war, the discovery of Gunindra Lal Bhattacharya makes us perceive, and recognise, the values of life that transcend all religiosities In the process we also turn out to be much nobler heroes than what a war would make us —R.Y D.]

My Introduction through Sri Aurobindo

From 11 September 1961, I had been engrossed in the chapters of *The Life Divine*, Part I, because to me then it was all sheer novelty, and exciting. On rereading I would notice a word or a phrase, a turn in a sentence that I had missed earlier, or had not caught the significance of. By 11 November 1961, when I entered the Dacca Central Jail, life had been good, “nature” no longer untouchable, “man”, not exclusively my guards, and my trial no longer my concern My lawyer-counsel from India took on the job from the fifth day of my “in camera” trial He had brought to me from my wife *The Life Divine*, Part I, one of the publications we had purchased at Pondicherry in 1948 I had read none of them, and was amazed at the depth of my folly. The

volume replaced my reading material consisting of *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, and the Bible since April 1961, while under close military detention at 8th Punjab Regiment I even used to take it to my trial to see if a new significance emerged in that surrounding! I had found that the contents were “flexible”, and seemed to expand as my understanding strove to grapple with the words. The Special Military Court trying me had as its president an erstwhile colleague in the pre-partition Indian Army. He had given me a chair, and did not object to my reading. After all, for the first four days he had enough of me cross-examining the Pakistan Army witnesses and reminding each one of them that bearing false witness led one to hell as per the Holy Koran.

So it was that I had with me the Part I of *The Life Divine* on 11 November 1961 when I was handed out a sentence of eight years’ rigorous imprisonment for directing espionage operations against Pakistan Armed Forces. But on entering the Jailor’s office with my Army escort, a Major, the book was taken away for “censoring”! I was left without any reading material. A Deputy Jailor, in the barrack where I was to be exclusively confined under a special jail guard, brought me a copy of *Time*. Inside was a name “Jahanara Begum”. Within an hour the jailor was back. The *Time* copy should not have been given to me. He took it away, but promised to send me the Jail Library catalogue. I could have any “suitable” book.

During my detention, or the under-trial stage, it was clear that I was to be given only Shakespeare and religious books. They would not give me any writing material since I could “contrive” to send secrets. They would not give me a radio receiver as with my expertise they were sure I could use it as a transmitter! If they guarded me so severely, with four pairs of eyes watching me all twenty-four hours, it was because a helicopter was to land to “rescue” me! So when the Jail Library catalogue came, I looked only for “religious” titles, to avoid arguments and delays. In solitary confinement, books help.

The catalogue was by authors. Soon I saw “Aurobindo Ghose” and against it the name *Gitar Bhumika (Introduction to the Gita)*. Needless to say, I had no idea of the Gita, except that I had found the readers of the Gita, professing its greatness, singularly unpleasant. But having seen Sri Aurobindo quite by chance on 15 August 1948, and since then, having read *The Life Divine* from 11 September 1961, I felt intrigued as to what he could have had to say about the Gita.

Unlike *The Life Divine*, the Bengali text of *Gitar Bhumika* was as if meant for completely ignorant people like me. I read it again and again as even after twenty-five years I do not get the full value of Sri Aurobindo in a single reading. I liked to get ideas quite clear about “Mantra”, “Yagña”, “Chitta”, “Buddhi”, “Sanjam” and other terms. I understood that “Yagña” meant aspiring for “union with God”. Sri Aurobindo discussed “Yogis” and here what intrigued me was his reference to the Prophet of Islam as “Yogishreshtha”, the greatest of Yogins.

It was a very cryptic statement. He had not developed the theme fully.

Like my father, I had always admired the Muslims. Different in economic levels amongst themselves, all seemed to have had a positive attitude to life. In my college

(St Stephens at Delhi) I had found my fellow Muslim students highly cultured, open and more tolerant than those from Arya Samajist homes. Maybe it was really the Muslim cooking that appealed to me most. But in the service too I had found the Muslim soldiers, Punjabi Mussalmans, Baluchis and the Pathans excellent colleagues. I knew nothing of Islam. But here in Dacca in 1961 I read the unexpected: Sri Aurobindo referring to the Prophet of Islam as the greatest of yogis.

Why! I had "pended" religion till I was to be 45.

But at 43, "religion" was *all that I had to turn to*. Soon I got access to much intriguing fun. It all began by Sri Aurobindo's provoking statement on the Prophet.

After *Gitar Bhumika* I decided to read the Gita. The Jail Library had a small pocket book size of the text, in Sanskrit, but the script was Bengali. I had Sanskrit in my Delhi schooldays in 1931-1933, some thirty years previously. But I discovered that I could understand the text, more or less. I liked the lyrical Chapters VII, IX, X, XII most. They were easy to memorise. The Yoga for parting with grief in Chapter VI surprised me. I practised the technique, first for privacy.

The Jail warders guarding me used to perform their prayers while on duty by turns. These seemed to me just the rituals and a break from their dull duty. But they had much respect for *Namaz*. I told them that I was going to perform mine twice a day, after my midday bath before lunch, and later in the evening just after I was locked up. That allowed me a little privacy from their keen eyes, looking through the bars. On my right I hung, during my *Namaz*, a blanket over the bars as a screen. On my left I put a folding screen. Across the room on a table I had a photograph of Sri Aurobindo in a magazine left with me by my wife after her first visit in April 1962, one year after I had been in detention and prison. A table lamp used to illumine the photograph of Sri Aurobindo. Looking at it I used to recite Gita's Chapter VI, wondering if and when my grief would drop away! What was most welcome to me during the half-hour periods was the privacy. They left me alone during these periods.

(To be continued)

GUNINDRA LAL BHATTACHARYA

EARTH'S FACE

EARLY dawned the poverty of human love
Upon his passive, searching soul
Early shed the shackles that bind us
To the doleful pursuits of emptiness called life
The awakening call came noiselessly,
And the Way effortlessly opened,
Like a flower to the sun

Peace came trailing divine delight.
Cool winds of Grace unveiled the sacred Fire.
Nature's front shimmered with the Presence;
A warm aspiring Light arranged his days
And sought for that which can resolve all things
That all things here on Earth may find their place.

But, unconvinced within, that mental Knot remained;
Here was the work for which his life was made.
A half-seeing plateau was not his resting place.
The Fire fuelled a journey to a summit far beyond

A seeming downward plunge began
With She the unknown captain of his march,
She led him up and on to greater heights
While he in abject fear resisted still

Now gone the small spiritual gains
He clung to as an end, a goal
Gone the sense divine in smallest acts
And child-like wonder at momentous things.
An inner struggle shut him to the Light
Through mind's insidious chasmic intrusion.

All the retrograde emotion of the human lot arose
In all its cosmic strength and ugliness
His days became a shell of hollow doing
Flawed by self-important impotence
Life's barque foundered on a reef of jagged doubt.

'Dear God', he cried, in desperate wilfulness,
'Release me from this awful winding path

Where all amounts to nothing when That departs,
When separated from the Inseparable'

Her blow of Love responded swift and fierce
Upon his reckless being's mind-choked core
It tore a link and a searing pain
Within his depths exposed a severed knot,
A crucial evolution's anchor left its mooring'

A wave-mass tumbling seeing
Broke upon his island being's brow
And in the glistening midst of morning hue
He saw, he saw Her Face. Her Figure
Outlined against a dark and stormy sky,
In the shadowy whirling movement of Time's waves,
Upborne, immobile upon a mass of ocean being,
A single sentinel in Evolution's onward surge,
She gazed out from a wave-crest, magnificently alone,
Her Face impeccably resolved in purpose and pursuit.

In that gaze he felt the future's luminous ridge
Move near in tiny threads of interwoven light
A hurried glance within revealed a steady glow
That globe of Light installed and fixed
Marked out his being's course from Time's base.
This golden moment's seeing crowned his days
And set his feet upon Earth's path again

ARYAMAN

GLOBALISATION AND THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY

IN THE last chapters of *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo draws together the threads that he has introduced earlier in the work, leading to his conclusion. Though Jan Smuts was yet to coin the word ‘Holism’ to encapsulate the idea that a directed tendency towards the formation of ever-larger aggregates is observable in Nature, each such distinct stage marked by the presence of an identity and properties exceeding those of the sum of their parts, Sri Aurobindo’s model of history follows this course. Indeed, this teleology follows naturally from Sri Aurobindo’s master-idea of the progressive manifestation of intrinsic spiritual Oneness in Time, expressing itself politically as the drive towards world-union.

In earlier chapters an analysis of the processes of historical identity-formation, leading from tribes, through city-states and empires to the birth of the nation and its universalisation as a unit of collective identity in the modern period has been carried out by Sri Aurobindo. In the course of this analysis, he has taken us through the determinable formative steps of the modern nations of Europe, expressing the contentions of centrifugal and centripetal forces in the process through brilliant impressionistic selections of historical events. He has concluded from this that: (1) the forms that political unity has evolved in the formation of modern nations can be reduced to the ideas of the nation as State and the nation as Federation, and (2) all political unities, however cleverly or stringently maintained, are precarious unless accompanied by a real psychological unity.

These conclusions are important for the development of the last chapters, since they are now applied to the future scenario, seen as inevitable by Sri Aurobindo, of world-union. Just as past collective units of political and psychological identity have seen enlargement through history to their present reality as nation, so the nation-unit will be enlarged to the future world-unit. Thus the processes which have gone into the political and psychological building of national identities may very well apply in the transition from nation to world. Let us note at this point, however, that such a model of history, for Sri Aurobindo, does not translate into an ideology, as for instance, in Marx, an attempt to push the process along by constructed means. Rather, it takes the form of an analysis of possibilities and a measuring of their advantages and limitations. What is left as subtext only, is Sri Aurobindo’s knowledge, expressed in his letters, that when the Supermind descends, it will decide for itself the forms of its action. In the meantime, a clear seeing of tendencies and their consequences provides us with useful heuristics of evaluation and choice.

The idea of a World-State, like that of the Nation-State, Sri Aurobindo sees as a danger. This may come about by the domination of one or a block of a few nations over the world or through the ascendance of an internationalist ideology, such as Socialism. At the time of writing the book, both forms of danger lurked unseen by common eyes in the imminent future, in the imperialistic world-designs of Nazi Germany and the Communistic expansionism of Stalinist Russia. But the insidious

moves towards global State-control may take other and more innocent-seeming initial forms, leading eventually to complete totalitarian centralisations and the regimentation of individual lives worldwide. One such form may be a world-organ, formed by the common consent of free nations, whose sole initial function may be to mediate international conflicts through an appeal to reason and the common good. But reason is not the sole driving power of human goals and the "common good" is an ambiguous idealism, relativistic and prone to hegemonic appropriation. Such a world-organ could be driven to ensure its function through progressive interference in the internal affairs of nations, and to secure its existence through the progressive centralisation of information, economy, administration and finally, legislation and defence under its World-Statehood. Sri Aurobindo is at his most eloquent when exposing the insufficiencies of the rational ideal of State control, its inevitable uniformitarian and totalitarian consequences, its destruction of individual liberty and the spiritual life. Moreover, he sees the rationally designed and enforced equalisations of Socialism as resting, in their maintenance, on just such State totalitarianism, a socially engineered utopian idea, "not only the logical outcome, but the inevitable practical last end of the incipient urge towards human unity, if it is pursued by a principle of mechanical unification,—that is to say, by the principle of the State. The State principle leads necessarily to uniformity, regulation, mechanisation, its inevitable end is socialism. There is nothing fortuitous, no room for chance in political and social development, and the emergence of socialism was no accident or a thing that might or might not have been but the inevitable result contained in the very seed of the State idea. A strict unification, a vast uniformity, a regulated socialisation of united mankind will be the predestined fruit of our labour"¹ Further, on Socialism, he has to say "Socialism pursued to its full development means the destruction of the distinction between political and social activities, it means the socialisation of the common life and its subjection in all its parts to its own organised government and administration. Nothing small or great escapes its purview. Birth and marriage, labour and amusement and rest, education, culture, training of physique and character, the socialistic sense leaves nothing outside its scope and its busy intolerant control. Therefore, granting an international Socialism, neither the politics nor the social life of the separate peoples is likely to escape the centralised control of the World-State"²

Certainly, in Sri Aurobindo's vision, the liberation from all forms of oppression, the oppression of colonialism, of chauvinism and of capitalism must constitute any acceptable form of future society, but the peril of the oppression of individual liberty by machinery of whatever kind is a defeat of the human spirit and its destiny. On the other hand, alternate to the World-State, the principle of free variation that has developed as nationalism may be maintained in the form of a federated world-union. The idea of voluntaristic federation appeals to our sense of Liberty, just as the idea of Socialism answers to the sense of Equality. However, the idealism of a loose voluntary federation of national or regional social/cultural groupings of humankind rests on

the assumption, once again, of the clear perception by each constituting unit, of the "common good" as the "common goal". Such an assumption could only be justified under prevailing conditions of conscious psychological development, which the present world-conditions do not evidence. A persistence of the federal idea, under existing conditions, could not maintain itself on a basis of free choice and would inevitably transit in a direction of greater central control, as has happened in national federations, such as that of the U.S.A. Thus, "A federal system also would tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities. It could allow only a play of minor variations. But the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied with that scanty sustenance." Attempts to ensure the free variation, on the other hand, would, under present conditions, tend to a breakdown of unity, "a looser confederation might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle for centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength. A loose confederation could not be permanent, it must turn in one direction or the other, end either in a close and rigid centralisation or at last by a break-up of the loose unity into its original elements." (*Ibid.*)

Thus, whatever the political turn the urge for world-union might take, however idealistic, its engineering and maintenance by rational and mechanical means is demonstrated by Sri Aurobindo to lead to failure, without the corresponding development of the principle of psychological unity in the peoples of the world. The ideal of Internationalism seems at first sight to provide the foundations for such a psychological basis. Sri Aurobindo points out that this ideal was a child of the French Revolution, with its triple call for "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" for all human beings. Of these, the mechanical solutions to world-union have rested, as shown above, on each of the first two principles predominantly. But it is the third, the principle of fraternity, which if it can be made real and active, can provide the necessary psychological basis for a durable union. This is so because fraternity takes its origin in the spiritual truth of Oneness which is the Power that seeks realisation through world-union. Moreover, it would seem that just as the ideal of equality is linked closely to the idea of the State, so the ideal of the brotherhood of all human beings would be bound to the idea of Internationalism. If an international sentiment could awake in the peoples of the world, replacing the narrow separatist and genocidal nationalisms which prevail, the necessary psychological conditions would have been laid for the eventuality of world-union.

But can an international sentiment develop anywhere near the same passion and effectuating power that makes people die for their country? Sri Aurobindo points out that nations have come into existence serving territorial and cultural commonalities, which give them a basis of vital necessity less evident in the case of a world-union. Moreover, nations define themselves as identities and acquire power through a double process of amplifying factors of internal unity and external difference, whereas the international idea could not derive the strength that comes from opposition and resistance. The "collective ego" created would have to rely on the instinct of unity

alone, for it would be in conflict with the separative instinct which gives the national ego half its vitality.’⁴ It also suffers from the danger of the rooting out of free variation and cultural diversity, if made into a dogma and applied prematurely. This is more obvious today than when Sri Aurobindo was writing, though his prophetic thought shows ample indication of its possibility

Indeed, today the international idea is swiftly becoming a world-reality. Technological developments and economic interdependence have shrunk the globe, throwing cultures together in a huge planetary churning. ‘The International Style’ in architecture defines our living and working spaces in uniform and utilitarian urban cityscapes. Uniform life-styles, dress-habits, consumptions and acquisitions mark off the middle-class and the affluent everywhere, while the poor struggle to be admitted into the International club. Multinational conglomerates control our doing and having, dictating expectation, taste and goal worldwide. Globalisation has not meant the socialization of the world but its capitalisation. Though it is true that, relatively speaking, in more urbanised sectors, a wider mix of nationalities coexists amicably, it should not be forgotten that fraternity is easy when all men do the same. I do not believe that the ‘international sentiment’ has grown any greater than at the time of Sri Aurobindo’s writing, and if there is any emotional identification with larger groupings left today, it is as intenser and narrower temporary forms of localised ethnic or religious fanaticism while the majority of the ‘globalised world’ falls into the anodyne of customary sleep.

And yet, the globalisation process proceeds inexorably, moving towards the external and mechanical fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo’s prophecy. The scaffolding of world-union completes itself, with or without our adherence. Cyberspace spreads like an invisible Indra’s Net throughout the world, bringing the All into Each point; while the circulation of the Euro promises significant political changes in the not too distant future, initiating the process of regional unifications. But the vital or intellectual ideal of Internationalism ‘is yet not powerful enough to mould the whole life of the race in its image. For it has to concede too much to the egoistic side of human nature, once all and still nine-tenths of our being, with which its larger idea is in conflict. On the other side, because it leans principally on the reason, it turns too readily to the mechanical solution. For the rational idea ends always as a captive of its machinery, becomes a slave of its own too binding process.’⁵

What then could bring about the conditions of consciousness that can humanly match the unifying mechanics of civilisation? Sri Aurobindo finds a closer correlate to the ideal of fraternity in the Religion of Humanity. As it is commonly understood however, this too has a rational foundation, as the liberal humanism of post-Enlightenment Europe. A faith that all human beings are the same everywhere and an urge to serve humanity in its betterment, irrespective of nationality, caste, creed, gender or culture is the wide formulation of this ideal, less cold than Internationalism since it puts the heart’s passion behind its charitable rationality. But this ideal too is doomed to insufficiency and failure if it retains its rational basis and cannot embrace the

possibility of the spiritual realisation of the Oneness of all beings as its individual and collective goal. Such a spiritualised religion of Humanity would alone be able to transcend personal and ethnic egoisms in the living realisation of the One embodied in myriad forms. Though such a possibility looks distant, Sri Aurobindo says: “But if it is at all a truth of our being, then it must be the truth to which all is moving and in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence”⁶

The inexorable unification of the world will proceed, with or without our permission, but the choice is ours to match in consciousness and in individual and social expression this unification, through the practice of a collective yoga

DEBASHISH BANERJI

1 *Social and Political Thought*, SABCL, Vol 15, pp 482-83

2 *Ibid* , p 479

3 *Ibid* , p 553

4 *Ibid* , p 539

5 *Ibid* , p 554

6 *Ibid* , p 555

CHILD OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

In *Savitri* also, one sees words like 'Timeless child', 'flame-child' and so on King Aswapati, Savitri's father, is called the 'child of the Universal Mother'. He is chosen by the 'secret witness eye' to be 'driven by a pointing hand of Light across his soul's unmapped immensitudes.' He aspires for a 'conscious soul' in a 'conscious world' and desires to bring down a 'greater world' Under the guidance of the divine Shakti, he perceives the working of the forces of the Universal Mind. His consciousness is no longer divided, but close and single with that of the Supreme. He becomes the 'Timeless child' new-born, the infant who is limitless in his knowledge. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo describes the Supramental heights. The 'Timeless child' is not shut in the succession of the moments, but has the full power of the past and ranges seemingly through the future. So, Aswapati crosses the boundaries of mortal ignorance and limitations of Time and becomes the new-born 'Timeless-child' in the arms of the Primal Energy. Of the three crucial steps on the road to spiritual knowledge and integral consciousness, the first step of discovery of the psychic self or soul behind the egoistic desire self is shown through Vuthsa, the second step of the awareness of the kinship of the self with the self of all beings is shown through Aswapati The third and final step of an awareness of the divine being by an identity with it is shown in Satyavan:

Satyavan is a marvel of the meeting of earth and heaven, whose figure is 'the front of Nature's march'. He is evolutionary-Nature ready and awaiting the Supramental descent to liberate the supramental principle within itself and bring about the first unveiled manifestation of the truth of the self and spirit in the material universe. He is the spirit which has involved into matter and has evolved back to spirit in matter. Before Savitri meets Satyavan, he is already fit for her arrival. He is the 'recovered child' of Great Nature who reigns in a Kingdom of a nobler kind than what men build on dull 'Matter's soil' He is the happy child of 'warm mother' earth and is nourished in the wider embrace of heaven. Sri Aurobindo explains in *The Synthesis of Yoga* that any aspirant on his path towards self-knowledge must recognise the truth of the ego and its work, give up the physical, vital and mental 'I' and recognise that Prakriti—force of cosmic nature—following her fixed modes is in him and in all things and creatures the one and only worker. The sadhaka must realise himself in the spirit of the all and become aware of the one supreme universal Purusha being in Prakriti and surrender to the Divine Being through the Divine Mother. Satyavan is the perfect example for he is a totally surrendered soul. He is the 'recovered child' for he is the being who has returned to the Divine Mother's lap without going astray into the coils of Matter. The poet says that on seeing Satyavan,

her 'foster-child' and 'heir to the centuries of the lonely wise', the mighty mother was at ease as "All was in line with her first satisfied plan" and all was a "luxurious ecstasy of joy".

One with the single Spirit inhabiting all,
He laid experience at the Godhead's feet;
His mind was open to her infinite mind,
His acts were rhythmic with her primal force .⁸

Satyavan is the being back on the lap of the Divine Creatrix, seeking only Truth. His return is significant as a return to plasticity and openness of the free soul. Abandoning man's loud drama, he is ready to meet Savitri, the ancient Mother in her groves. He is the 'child of the void' who 'shall be reborn in God', by Savitri's celestial strength'.

But thou hast come and all will surely change:
I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs
And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.
The child of the Void shall be reborn in God.
My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance,
My body like my spirit shall be free:
It shall escape from Death and Ignorance.⁹

Before Satyavan is reborn as the 'flame-child', one sees that Savitri, who has descended at Aswapati's prayer, is herself a child who grows into absolute power, knowledge and love by the fateful day, when the ordeal comes her way. In *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Sri Aurobindo describes Agni as a seer-will (*kavikrauu*), as the will in 'the heart' (*kraturhrdi*) and says that the Vedic Rishis sometimes ask the Divine to give them heroes or fighting men as their retinue. Sometimes they ask for a complete hero-force (*svīryam*) and sometimes they combine the symbol and the object or ask for a son or sons (*apatyam*). Even this request is said to have an esoteric sense because the son born is clearly an image of some inner birth:

. Agni himself is our son, the child of our works, the child who as the Universal Fire is the father of his fathers, and it is by setting the steps on things that have fair offspring that we create or discover a path to the higher world of Truth¹⁰

The birth of Savitri to Aswapati is clearly hinted to have such an esoteric meaning. Sri Aurobindo names the Cantos in Book IV which describe her birth and childhood as 'The Birth and Childhood of the Flame' and 'The Growth of the Flame'. In the Vedic terminology Agni is the youngest of the gods who carries the offerings of the aspirant to the other powers of the godhead. Agni is also the Divine Will, and this immortal, when born in the mortal, is said to manifest himself as the flaming

force that mounts higher, burning and devouring on the way all that opposes the onward march. He lights up the darkened passages and lightens the burden of the worshipper since he takes upon himself the lead to arrive at the realm of the gods and bring them down to the worshipper. Agni forms the bridge for man to ascend from Earth to Heaven and beyond. Savitri is this Agni, the Divine Will and the youngest god who has come to act as the 'mediating ray', she is an avatar who has 'returned from the transcendent planes and borne anew the load of mortal breath' once more and taken up her 'divine unfinished task', proving the 'consanguinity of earth and heaven'. She descends and guides Earth's deeds to 'touch the superhuman's height' and changes 'Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power'. Satyavan, who is described as the 'living light plastic and passive to the all-shaping fire' is the perfect seeker of Truth, the son of the earth ready for the superhuman transformation. In this 'unfinished world' which is still a child according to Savitri, Satyavan is the 'radiant god', the soul of the world, who has become the first 'flame-child' by realising the unveiled manifestation of the truth of the self and spirit in the material universe. So, when Savitri fulfils her work, the Supreme Divine accepts her as His representative in creation, as the channel of his 'Timeless Force', the 'Cord of His Universal love' and empowers her as His Spirit's power and revealing voice on the roads of Time, marking the first victory of evolving Nature; he declares:

O Mind, grow full of the eternal peace,
 O Word, cry out the immortal litany,
 Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.¹¹

The birth of the Divine in Matter has made the 'void' or nothingness as its starting-point and the evolution is complete when this child becomes the 'flame-child'. From the son of the Aryans, Puru, who has desisted from ascending, one traces the evolution from Nothingness to Divinity and Light through varying degrees in Ruru, Andromeda, Bajı Prabhau, Eric, Vasavadutta, Vuthsa, Aswapati, Savitri and Satyavan. In the integral Yoga, Satyavan's rebirth as the 'flame-child' is only the beginning of the unfoldment of a new chapter on earth. It marks the 'dawn's victorious opening', for in the innumerable human forms made ready by Savitri and Satyavan, the 'first-born of the supernal race', God shall be born, Truth shall spread and prevail by and by till each 'child of the void' turns into a 'flame-child'. So, in future,

A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world..
 The superman shall reign as king of life ¹²

(Concluded)

B VARALAKSHMI

References

- 8 *Savitri*, p 394
 9 *Ibid* , p 406
 10 *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, SABCL, Vol 11, p 13
 11 *Savitri*, p 702
 12 *Ibid* , p 707

YEARNING

REVEAL! reveal
 O smiling expanses of life!
 Who hid you
 In the womb of grief?

As you move and grow
 The womb relents. .
 Will you not peep
 Through the door
 And lift up
 All shutters
 To register your name
 In a book of birth-records?

Rejoice! reconquer
 This tear-embedded region
 Of my throbbing heart,
 O new-born emperor!

ASHALATA DASH

ENTERING THE HALL OF LOGIC

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

ANOTHER thing we must not forget is that a word is a symbol, that is, it is something that stands not for itself, but for something else. Thus Darjiling is a hill-city containing thousands of men and women. But if we want to talk of the word itself which, instead, contains only a few vowels and consonants, then we have to denote that by 'Darjiling'. If we forget this, we may be reasoning in the following way only to be dangerously complacent:

Darjiling is bombed
Darjiling is a nine-lettered word
Therefore a nine-lettered word is bombed.

As a piece of deduction it is flawless. But nine letters of a word going down like ninepins under bombardment can hardly be news. If we are to disbelieve that the enemy took all the trouble to bomb a word, we must seek fault in the premises. The fault lies in the second premise which should have been:

'Darjiling' is a nine-lettered word.

As Darjiling and 'Darjiling' are rather different we get four terms in place of three and the above conclusion is a fallacy of four terms.

We may now take up the question of definition. In Logic our purpose is not actually to define things like 'man', 'mammal' or 'millipede'. That is for the zoologists to do. In Logic we want to see what a definition means and in what way we do define things.

It may be first mentioned that we do not define individuals. Individuals are objects of direct knowledge, and not the results of any acts of propounding. It is meaningless to ask the meanings of Rama, Shyama, Dick or Dalim. In the language of Logic we say that the names of the individuals are without connotations.

But such is not the case with terms like man, mammal or millipede. It will suffice to consider only one example, say, man. We define 'man' by the statement:

Man is a rational animal.

It is assumed that we know what animals are and also know that some animals are rational, some not. By a rational animal we mean an individual which, apart from having the property of being an animal, has the additional property of being rational. Thus the set 'rational animals' is obtained from the set 'animals' by abstracting from it those individuals who are rational. Whether we give a distinct name for this new set

is not logically important. Generally we are frugal enough not to waste names on things that are not important or things that do not exist, like a round square or a mare's nest. However when we give the name 'man' to 'rational animal' we can say that the set 'man' is obtained from the set 'animal' by abstracting from it the individuals having the property of being rational. Similar is the case with every definition. Whenever we define a term, we actually extract or abstract a subset from a known set by the criterion of having an additional property, mentioned in the definition. This additional property is also called the subset-property. The set, the subset and the subset-property as mentioned here were, we may recall, known as the genus, species and the differentia in the classical treatment.

Two types of sets deserve special mention:

(i) the null-set or the empty set: a set having no member, like 'a round square', 'a mare's nest', etc., as mentioned before. A null-set is generated by any property that is not possessed by any object whatever. A null-set is necessary for the completion of set-algebra and its role is similar to that played by the number zero in arithmetic.

(ii) a singleton set, i.e., a set consisting of only one member. 'the first prime minister of independent India' is an example. A singleton set is not to be confused with an individual. Thus while 'the first prime minister of independent India' is a singleton set, Jawaharlal Nehru is very much an individual. A property or a predicate (or a description) which, of necessity, defines a single object, is called a 'unique description'.

We have used the notion of a set in a rather commonsense manner. Since set-theory lies in the rock-bottom of Logic and Mathematics, it is imperative that we deal with set-theory specifically, at least to some extent.

The notion of a set was first introduced by Georg Cantor (1845-1918) who defined the notion as follows: "By a set we understand any collection into a whole M of definite distinct objects m of our intuition or our thought."

When the set is finite, it can surely be formed by collecting one by one definite distinct objects. But the process fails when the desired set is infinite, or at least, indefinitely large. Gottlieb Frege (1848-1925) proposed an alternative definition. He said that any predicate or property determines a set, it being formed by the abstraction of objects satisfying the predicate from the totality of our objects of thought. He referred to the process as the 'axiom of abstraction'.

However, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) soon obtained a contradiction in this notion. For this, consider all possible sets as the objects of thought and then consider the property of not having itself as a member. Let any set satisfying this property be called a normal set. Then the property under consideration determines the set S of all normal sets. Russell raises the question as to whether the set S is normal or not. Now, if S is normal then it is a member of itself, showing that S is not normal. On the other hand if S is not normal, then it is not a member of itself, showing that S is normal. Thus S is a set such that, if it is normal then it is not normal, and if it is not normal then it is normal. This is a contradiction. This consequence is known as Russell's

Paradox. To steer clear of it, various devices were taken recourse to, of which Russell's 'Theory of Types' is one, but that also begot new paradoxes

Various axiomatic systems have developed parallelly after that but one common feature amongst them is that, in any deductive system or in any systematic discussion, there will be a well-defined set such that the discussions or deductions will all be restricted within it. This set is called the universe of discourse. This set is determined by an affirmative proposition and, as a set, it does not contain itself as a member. In any such system it can be shown that there will be no further difficulty in assuming that every predicate will determine a set, in fact, a normal set, through the principle of abstraction, applied to the members of the universe of discourse only, whatever be the nature of the predication, affirmative or negative.

It may be noted that the process of defining 'definition', as described by us, was quite in accordance with this latest norm, and the process of abstracting a subset from a given set may be looked upon as abstracting a set from the universe of discourse.

It is worthwhile to note that if we admit the notion of 'totality of objects of thoughts' then abnormal sets are no rarity at all; they are, in fact, as plentiful as the normal sets. For this, corresponding to any affirmative predicate, consider its negative. Thus instead of the predication of being a man, consider the predication of not being a man. Then, for the corresponding set Non-man we see that not only rhinos and reptiles, rivers and rocks belong to it, but *exim* (export-import) policies and five-year plans as well; and worst of all, the set Non-man itself being not a man belongs to the set itself as a member.

It may be hoped that if the few basic norms enunciated here are correctly observed then thinking man can develop as much consistency as any non-thinking inanimate object. After all, it is thought that goes wrong at times, non-thought never

(Concluded)

ASHOK KUMAR RAY

MILLENNIAL CONCEPT OF GOD: BEQUEST OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE difficulty and near impossibility of giving a definition of the term God that will cover all of its usages and equivalent words in other languages is acknowledged by the scholars in the West.¹ According to them, even to define God generally as a "Superhuman or Supernatural being that controls the world" is inadequate. As they point out, originally 'the word god was.. a common name'² Soon it 'became the proper name of the one God of the theists and the atheists' conceived as 'the one personal God' In the West, the notion of universal "God" arose only as a result of a long period of development³ beginning with the ancient Greeks. Even so, before acquiring the name "God" (or its equivalent words in the various European Languages), the entity was identified with numerous different manifestations of nature For instance, Heraclitus of Ephesus considered fire as the prime element—the *Logos*—the most complete embodiment of the process of Becoming For him, thus, fire was supreme. For Aristotle, 'matter is.. potentially alive and striving to attain its particular form' for which it needed Divine Spirit which he called mind (Nous) Recognising the fact that the whole of Nature needs and depends upon a "Supreme source of all movement", he describes such Supreme Being "as the 'Unmoved Mover', the ultimate cause of all becoming in the universe. For him, this Being is pure intelligence, a philosopher's God, not a personal one". Aristotle also held that the divine, that is, the "immortal element" in Man is Mind. For the Stoics, on the other hand, such a divine supreme source was 'an all-pervading force related to the world as the soul is related to the body But significantly, they conceived of it as material' Philo, the Jewish philosopher who was a senior contemporary of Jesus, introduced the term *Logos* to signify the supreme supernatural entity. Ancient Roman philosophers and religionists such as Plotinus as also St Augustine who came later, contributed much to establish the concept of God as 'all good, all wise, all knowing transcendent, the creator of the universe, etc.' In the early centuries of Christianity, the concept of the *Logos* was introduced to signify a 'power of divine origin' which 'permeated the universe'. Quite a few thinkers of the time identified the *Logos* with Christ. but most of them termed the "power of divine origin" as 'the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost' This subsequently led to the Christian concept of Trinity 'Father, Son, (the Logos or Christ) and Holy Ghost', 'Three Persons of the same nature' In the Middle Ages, St Thomas Aquinas took sustenance from this and set the pattern for all subsequent Catholic belief for God's existence. From the Renaissance onwards, the term God (with equivalent terms in each of the European languages) came to be firmly established. From then onwards, the concept of God in the West took on a basically Christian or (more comprehensively) Semitic hue. Since then, the West has visualised God as 'an omnipotent Power separate from everything he has created'

Two other words signifying God are "Deity" and "the Divine". Deity symbolises 'what transcends the human being and .. lies hidden most deeply within him' With reference to theistic belief, however, deity is not wholly identical with God since one does not believe in deity but one may believe in God Yet the word deity signifies 'a certain mystery and shows certain features of [God such as] freedom, infinity, immanence, transcendence, or the like' It started as a 'general' term but 'became specific, concrete. . and evocative of emotion'. Thus, *Allah* probably comes from an original term whose meaning is "the God". In Judaism, *Yahveh* means "he who is" (or "he who shall be") which becomes Being par excellence for Christian scholastics. Shiva means 'auspicious, benign, kind'

The term Divine 'denotes a character of (divine) excellence' just as the term "deity" denotes 'the most communicable and the most exclusive aspect of the "divine" reality'.⁴ Since the term God also denotes an entity which is active, provident, above everything, personal and the creator of all that is, all arguments based on the western concepts of God, Deity or Divine tend to prove that they are not so different as to make the translation of the one by the other totally inaccurate. Almost always they are treated as equivalents by religionists in the West

Those scholars of the present times who accept the total identity of the terms maintain that in order to understand the Divine, God or Deity, it is essential to reflect on the horizons of the question Is the deity to be conceived as absolute consciousness? As a Supreme being? As the perfect ideal individual? Or as the creator of the world? Whereas they name cosmology, anthropology and ontology as the main horizons, they clarify that Deity is simultaneously cosmological and meta-cosmological, anthropological and meta-anthropological and ontological and meta-ontological

With regard to "cosmological horizon", it is stated that since the main concern of the human being in ancient times was the universe as a whole, the horizon of deity in those times was precisely the universe and therefore the world The ancients identified deity as immanent to the world, though it can also be transcendent to it. It essentially remains the deity of the world and the world is deity's world Therefore it is left to the different cosmologies and traditions to determine what type of function or functions deity is supposed to perform and what kind of relation it has with the world as a prime mover that sets the world into motion, sustains it, directs it and even creates it. Put in 'a temporal metaphor', 'the deity is represented as the beginning, present before the big bang or at the end of evolution of the physical universe'. Thus, 'the deity may be both . at the beginning and the end of the universe'. It matters little whether it is referred to as God, Varuna, 'the Supreme Lord ruling the spheres' or Yahveh 'who made heaven and earth' or Allah Thus, God is 'that from which truly all beings are born, by which when born they live and into which they all return'. In terms of the three horizons named, deity (or God, Yahveh, Allah, etc.) is first meta-cosmological as well as cosmological. 'Its most salient feature is its infinity The world we experience is contingent, and all things are transient, finite. Only the deity is infinite'.

In the same way, Deity came to be both anthropological and meta-anthropological when the main interest of man was no longer nature or the world outside, but man himself since deity here is seen as the symbol for the perfection of the human being. It is the real destiny of man, the beloved of the mystics, the Lord of history, the fully divinized man such as the Christ or the Purusa. It may even be a symbol of justice, peace and a happy society. 'Here deity may, [in addition], be considered immanent or transcendent, but its functions are related to the human being'. Thus it becomes 'a meta-anthropological category'.

By the same token, Deity can be recognised as meta-ontological too, since it is ontologically considered to be freedom itself, capable of liberating man from his limitations. It is a super-being beyond the physical world, outside any natural realm, outside the realms of the human world, intellect, desires and will. Its transcendence of this magnitude is so absolute that it transcends itself. In other words, it 'does not exist', it is 'beyond being', 'it is not even non-being' 'not thinkable or speakable' and hence a meta-ontological reality. 'Seen from below . it belongs to the unthinkable. Seen from within, it belongs to the unthought'. Immanence and transcendence together belong to it as its most salient features in this horizon. It is inserted in the heart of every being and everything.

Noteworthy, in the analysis of the nature of deity on these lines, it is averred that 'all relation to deity takes place in and through human consciousness'. It is further maintained that 'this in no way weakens the reality or the objectivity of deity'. Consciousness thus understood may vary in time and place. It may 'even be shaped by the power of deity' which is ultimately disclosed to humans 'in an act of consciousness' in spite of having a transcendent intentionality, in spite of being visible or intelligible not in physical terms but only in its alleged manifestations.

(To be continued)

SANJYOT D PAI VERNEKAR

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THE ODYSSEY—AN ADAPTATION

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

Scene 19

Suitors enter. Eumaeus goes up to Penelope's balcony and she comes out. They talk silently. She becomes furious. Eumaeus leaves. The music stops.

Penelope Telemachus? you sought to kill Telemachus? Antinoos, you are mad! This is the way to win a mother's heart? you take shelter in my house and eat up our substance, consuming whatever there is in your reach. But left unchecked you stop not at the fruit of the tree, but strike at its root. Don't you remember how your father was defended from mobs that sought to tear at his throat? Odysseus protected him and drove out his enemies keeping your family safe within our doors. In his name I have given hospitality to men not deserving of such, but now I will see that you clear out of my house.

(Telemachus has entered. but Penelope doesn't see him. She exits.)

Odysseus. (enters) Alms! alms! Alms for a poor beggar.

Sutor Hey! Look at the old beggar I found outside! Rotten old scoundrel. That old dog, Argos, took one look at him, wagged his tail, earned a petting and . . . died. *(laughter)*

Telemachus Another suppliant at the home of Odysseus, but this one at least admits what he is.

Antinoos. He knows what he is? Then I will remind him of his place. *(He kicks Odysseus, so that he falls flat. The others laugh. Antinoos is arrogantly laughing also. Odysseus has trouble controlling himself, but does.)*

Odysseus I would not have expected such treatment in the house of Odysseus. *(He says it humbly. The suitors hoot their derision. One suitor helps him up.)* I know of Odysseus. I sheltered him on his journey as he travelled to that infamous battle of Troy. Once I too was wealthy and could succour my fellows, till the gods changed the course of my life.

Eurycleia Come sir, let me help you and give you welcome. *(Takes him to wash his feet.)* Knew my master, did you? You know you are very like him. I nursed him when he was a babe. Many's the time I washed him like this when he was a small boy. He would come home from his hunts and sink into his chair and allow only me to clean

the mud from his feet What a rascal! As sly as could be, but bold with no question of fear I tried to restrain him but he was careless of danger. I remember the time he took on a bear which gave him a gash just about here *(She gasps as she recognises the scar on the back of his leg. She looks up slowly. He has his finger to his lips. She sinks down weeping.)*

Odysseus: (lifts her up) When I was a child you loved me and protected me No mother could have ever done more. Now once more you must help me. Your silence, though painful, will be as a shield before more reckless deeds.

Eurycleia But Penelope?

Odysseus. All in good time.

Eurycleia: She waits weeping as one hopeless of comfort When you sailed you took with you her world. If not for Telemachus and the hope of your coming, the thread of her life would have been cut long ago.

Penelope: (enters Odysseus stands up. He is seeing her for the first time) I have come to a decision. This wanton waste of our house must come to an end. You say I must marry, though my heart has been given to one whom no man can replace. Odysseus himself said that when Telemachus had attained his beard I should marry Very well. Who can match him? Who can equal his strength and his skill? Try. Harbour no hope to attain the vastness of Odysseus, but the winner of this trial will take his place by my side First you must bend and string the bow of Odysseus, then send an arrow through twelve axeheads placed in a row.

Sutor: Is it possible?

Penelope. These are my conditions. Many's the man that has seen Odysseus do it for sport.

(Odysseus whispers in Telemachus's ear. Penelope and Eurycleia are seated.)

Telemachus: First all our weapons must be removed from the room to protect the winner from jealous reprisal. *(This is done, then Eumaeus brings the bow. The suitors start trying to string it. No one succeeds)*

Odysseus. (to the sutor who had helped him up.) Good sir, there could be danger afoot, perhaps you should leave

Sutor: Danger, old man? It is simply a contest.

Odysseus: Should Odysseus return to find men seeking to replace him there could be trouble

Sutor Bah! Who cares for Odysseus

Odysseus Those choosing to stay could be punished

Sutor He has probably gone to the gods (*leaves*)

Odysseus: No, now the gods are with him

(*To Eumaeus*) If Odysseus would return now, I think you would fight to support him.

Eumaeus. I would do much to see Odysseus back on his throne and these wastrels laid in their graves

Odysseus: You would fight to the death?

Eumaeus. I relish life only in the service of that which is noble My pigs are dishonoured, sacrificed to men such as these Odysseus returning, I would gladly offer myself for his sake

Odysseus Your offer is accepted

Eumaeus You are Odysseus!

Odysseus I am

Eumaeus Only the gods could have veiled your visage from me.

Odysseus And the gods have unveiled the slave's nobility to his master Fight by my side and you will be as a brother to Telemachus

Eumaeus I will fight for the honour to put this king on his throne

(*None has been able to string the bow They come back as Antinoos is about to try They watch as he fails*)

Odysseus (*Athena enters*) In my youth I was strong I wonder how far misfortune has disabled me. Perhaps I could try? (*Hoots of derision and scorn.*)

Antinoos. You dare to think yourself an equal to us?

Odysseus. Zeus forbid such a thought!

Eurymachus (*sarcastically*) You aspire to the hand of Penelope?

Odysseus: My wife I prefer even to a goddess. I would wish no other (*More hoots* “*He has a wife*”, “*a goddess*”, etc)

Penelope: This man speaks gently Is this how guests are treated in my house?
Telemachus, see that this stranger’s request is honoured

Telemachus: Eumaeus, give him the bow.

Odysseus: You are a queen not only in name, but in nature Such sportive feats would be only the beginning to deserve such as you.

Telemachus. Mother, your women await you

Penelope Telemachus?

Telemachus: As master of the house in the absence of my father, I request your removal from the sight of these men. Eurycleia, accompany her. (*Penelope looks confused, but goes. Eurycleia willingly takes her*) Eumaeus, the bow (*To Odysseus*) My mother says you are to be given a chance (*The men joke and shove Odysseus as he takes up the bow He looks it over as an owner would to see if it is in good shape*)

Sutor He seems to know something of bows.

Sutor who helped Odysseus up: What if he succeeds?

Sutor His bones would surely bend before the bow does
(*Odysseus firmly, but easily bends it. The men are stunned to silence. He doesn’t look at them, but merely picks up an arrow. Athena points, he takes aim and shoots*)

Sutor: He has done it! Straight through twelve axeheads!

Telemachus. With the ease of a dove, flying straight to its nest

Sutor: As if he had done it many times before.

Antinoos: In sport. (*Sudden realisation*) I believe that he has.

Odysseus. Your belief is well founded, Antinoos, most treacherous of all. (*Takes off his hood.*) Odysseus is home. (*Sutors react violently* “*Odysseus*”, “*Zeus save us*”, “*He’s alive*”, etc)

Antinoos. I never thought this day would come.

Odysseus. This day has come. The sun has risen and its light will extinguish the stars. (*Shoots Antinoos in the throat. He drops dead. Telemachus and Eumaeus take bows they've hidden and there is confusion and fighting. All the suitors are killed*) It is done.

Eumaeus. (*pause*) Except for the mess.

Telemachus. This makes your pigsty seem rather clean (*They look at each other They drag the men out*)

Odysseus. And Penelope?

Eurycleia (*comes from where she has been watching*) She sleeps

Telemachus. She sleeps!?

Odysseus. It can happen. I know.

Telemachus. Well, wake her up! Tell her Odysseus has come! (*she exits*)

Eumaeus (*looking at Odysseus. He's filthy and his face is smeared.*) Will she believe that it's you?

Odysseus: I'm twenty years older and rather worse for the wear

Telemachus: Perhaps I should have given you some clothing of mine

Penelope (*enters*) Eurycleia is mad. Telemachus, she says.

Telemachus. Odysseus is home (*Silence as they look at each other.*)

Penelope: How can I believe it?

Odysseus. What proof do you want?

Penelope. (*pause—starts to speak—pause*) Tomorrow we will speak of proof For tonight, eat, rest, sleep Eurycleia, have the servants move Odysseus's bed into the hall. There shall you sleep

Odysseus My bed! The bed that I made? No one could move it! Its post was an olive

tree rooted in the earth. What have you done with my bed? (*He's half angry. She has had her proof.*)

Penelope· Odysseus It is you (*He goes to the foot of the stairs. She has always been on the balcony. He holds out his hands to her and goes up a step perhaps. She descends. They join hands. They look back at Telemachus. Telemachus and Eumaeus go down on one knee. Lights dim on them until only a spotlight is left on Demodocus.*)

Demodocus· This journey of Odysseus thus came to an end. There were more. For every soul there always are. Each soul has its journey, its monsters, its Ithaca, its Penelope. But for Odysseus those journeys were now shorter and closer to home and his wife. I won't tell of them now. I must limit myself, I promised not to put you to sleep.

The End.

NANCY WHITLOW

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

SRI AUROBINDO was interviewed after the Congress session of 1914 by the correspondent of *The Hindu*, the leading paper from the South. He spoke in the course of his talk about India's Destiny. We quote the following as it appeared in *The Hindu*:

“But what do you think of the 1914 Congress and Conferences?” the correspondent asked Sri Aurobindo. He replied almost with reluctance but in a clear and firm accent. He said: “I make an exception to the speech of the Congress President which struck me as far above the ordinary level. Some people, apparently, found it visionary and unpractical. It seems to me to be the one practical and vital thing that has been said in India for some time past.” He continued: “The old, petty forms and little narrow, make-believe activities are getting out of date. The world is changing rapidly around us and preparing for more colossal changes in the future. We must rise to the greatness of thought and action which it will demand upon the nations who hope to live. No, it is not in any of the old formal activities, but deeper down that I find signs of progress and hope. The last few years have been a period of silence and compression in which the awakened *virya* and *tejas* of the nation have been concentrating for a greater outburst of a better directed energy in the future.”

“We are a nation of three hundred millions inhabiting a great country in which many civilisations have met, full of rich material and unused capacities. We must cease to think and act like the inhabitants of an obscure and petty village.”

Question: *If you don't like our political methods, what would you advise us to do for the realisation of our destiny?*

A: “Only by a general intellectual and spiritual awakening can this nation fulfil its destiny. Our limited information, our second-hand intellectual activities, our bounded interests, our narrow life of little family aims and small money-getting have prevented us from entering into the broad life of the world. Fortunately, there are ever-increasing signs of a widened outlook, richer intellectual output and numerous sparks of liberal genius which show that the necessary change is coming. No nation in modern times can grow great by politics alone. A rich and varied life, energetic in all its parts, is the condition of a sound, vigorous national existence. From this point of view also the last few years have been a great benefit to the country. .

“The new idea that should now lead us is the realisation of our nationhood not separate from, but in the future scheme of humanity. When it has realised its own national life and unity, India will still have a part to play in helping to bring about the unity of the nations.”

“We Indians should begin to think seriously what part Indian thought, Indian intellect, Indian nationhood, Indian spirituality, Indian culture have to fulfil in the general life of humanity. I am convinced and have long been convinced that a spiritual awakening, a re-awakening to the true self of a nation is the most important

condition of our national greatness. The supreme *Indian* idea of the oneness of all men in God and its realisation inwardly and outwardly, increasingly even in social relations and the structure of society is destined, I believe, to govern the progress of the human race. India, if it chooses, can guide the world.”

And he concluded. “It is more important that the thought of India should come out of the philosophical school and renew its contact with life, and the spiritual life of India issue out of the cave and the temple and, adapting itself to new forms, lay its hand upon the world. I believe also that humanity is about to enlarge its scope by new knowledge, new powers and capacities, which will create as great a revolution in human life as the physical science of the nineteenth century. Here, too, India holds in her past, a little rusted and put out of use, the key of humanity’s future.”¹

While the British Government was anxious to have Sri Aurobindo expelled from Pondicherry and put out of circulation in one of their far-off colonies so that their representatives in India, the Viceroy and the Governors, could have peaceful sleep at night, the Indian Nationalists, on the other hand, and for diametrically opposite reasons, were strenuously trying to prevail on Sri Aurobindo to terminate his self-imposed exile, come out and once more give an effective leadership to the country, a leadership which would compel the foreign ruler to pack up and go home. But Sri Aurobindo refused to oblige both! True, a good number of his intimate friends, co-workers and collaborators were convinced that Sri Aurobindo had retired in obedience to a spiritual command from Above, in fact, a few of his colleagues sought for his spiritual guidance in their own sadhana, but there were others who, like the government, believed that Sri Aurobindo’s withdrawal from politics was a clever manoeuvre dictated by circumstances and aimed at forestalling the government’s move to deport him. They felt that sooner than later, after a successful organisation of an underground movement, he would emerge and take up the leadership with increased vigour and purpose. About this time i.e., 1917, the air was thick with the Home Rule movement sponsored by Annie Besant, well-known Theosophist and a good friend of India. One of her followers and supporters of this movement, B. Shiva Rao, came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo a couple of times, ostensibly to obtain his support for the movement, and requested him to return to politics.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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¹ Reproduced from the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1970, pp. 112, 113, 114, 117, 118.

THE SIMPLE WAY TO LIVE ONLY FOR THE DIVINE

(A talk at the Women's Council Seminar on 23 November 1999)

FRIENDS, I would first like to ask you all one question, a simple question. Do not formulate your answer, it should come straight from the heart. The question is: if the Lord were to appear suddenly in front of you and grant you one boon, what would you ask for?—wealth, power, knowledge, peace, love, Nirvana, liberation, realisation? To be able to ask for the right and the best thing, your highest aspiration should be in the forefront of your consciousness, it should dominate your consciousness—it should be there all the time. That means your highest aspiration should organise your whole life, your ideal should mould you, not just colour your life. So, be ready, maybe the Lord will appear before you tomorrow and tell you, 'ask for a boon!' Tomorrow is Siddhi-day (24th November). Remember the boon you ask for should be high, lofty, wide and you should cover everything in one boon. To illustrate this point let me recount to you a story, *The Boon of Boons* written by Manoj Das.

Once a king was pleased with the bravery of six youths from different villages of his kingdom, and wanted to reward them. He asked them what each one would like to have. The first man asked for a good house, as he was living in a hut. The second one blushed and said, "O King, you are like my father. find me a beautiful and good bride so that I can live happily." The third one simply desired lots of money. The fourth one asked for titles and the rank of a nobleman. The fifth said that a good road be built from his village to the town to enable the villagers to come daily to the town to sell their vegetables. All these boons were granted. The sixth one said, "My king, I wish you to be my guest for one day every year until one of us dies." People in the court laughed at his strange demand. But for the king to be his guest once a year, he had to get him a good house—a castle for the king to stay there for a day, a good wife who would serve the king well when he went there, and lots of money for the maintenance. Further, how can the king stay with a commoner, so special titles of honour were bestowed upon the young man. The king also ordered that a road be built to his village for his chariot to pass without difficulty. By asking one boon, the clever young man got all that his five friends got and much more! Your answer to the Lord too should be like that, simple but encompassing.

Coming to the subject of this talk, let me recount the Mother's guidance to a sadhak in the Ashram. After about twenty-five years of sadhana, he felt that he was not sure of his progress, so he asked the Mother whether he was doing the yoga correctly. He thought that the Mother would encourage him, appreciate his labour and give Her blessings. But no, the Mother replied that he was doing it all wrong! He was naturally nonplussed and asked Her what he should then do. The Mother smiled and asked "Why do you want to do yoga and do it all wrong? I will do it for you! I am here on earth for that. You can stop all you are doing and let me do it." The sadhak enquired, "What then is my part, Mother?" She stated, "Simply give yourself to me

and I will do it for you; you just continue to do the work you are given to do.”

After much thought, the sadhak found that it was easy to say ‘give yourself to the Mother’, but difficult to practise in day-to-day living. So he requested the Mother to explain in detail. She asked him, “In the morning when you get up what do you do?” The sadhak replied, “I do my toilet, I brush my teeth and get ready for bath and breakfast.” She further asked, “What do you think of or dream about when you brush your teeth?” He replied, “Nothing in particular, Mother.” Then She explained to him what he should do during each act of the day: “Feel my presence very much with you. Make me do with you the things you are doing. Talk to me, discuss with me the best way of doing what you have to do.” She further enumerated: “While eating, let us together find the wonderful taste of what we are eating. You will see how wonderful even a slice of bread will taste if you eat it with me.” The sadhak understood and started practising the Mother’s guidance.

Have you seen this precious book—*A Captive of Her Love* by Janina? Here are letters of a sadhika to her friend about her sadhana. Those of you who really want to live only for the Divine will find this book very helpful. I shall just read to you a couple of lines from it: “I talk with the Mother all day, from early morning till late in the evening, all my life changes, all becomes more and more simple in its purity and reality. My thoughts stop existing—they disappear—as it is all too holy” (p. 36). Further on she states (on p. 42): “Millions and millions of thoughts used to fill my life, now I understand what the Mother means by ‘wasting, squandering oneself’ instead of one single turning to Her and giving oneself to her completely.”

To live only for the Divine may sound a difficult proposition, but if you follow the simple way suggested by the Mother, if you practise it just for a month, you will be astonished to see how much you are changed and how much your life has become simple and easy. Every morning when you wake up, tell yourself, You have two choices before you today. You can either choose to rely on the Mother or prefer to face the world with your own strength. Choose consciously every morning to rely on the Mother. Then each time anything good happens during the day, thank the Mother from the depth of your heart. And each time anything unpleasant happens, remember, you have two choices before you, either to cry and become miserable or to rely on the Mother and ask Her: “Mother, what do you want me to learn from this?” The guidance always comes. Once in some discussion with a person, I was extremely straightforward, truthful and reasonable, but even then it took a very bitter turn. I had two choices before me, either to leave the place with bitterness and pain in the heart or to ask the Mother: “Mother, what do you want me to learn from this?” I chose to ask the Mother and a totally unexpected answer came. She said, “Love, Divine Love.” All my bitterness and anger melted away like butter in the sun. I could go home very light-hearted, filled with love. I thanked the Mother for the incident. With the practice of this attitude you will learn to rely more and more on the Mother, your *intimacy* with Her will increase, and you will start feeling Her presence in you.

Keep faith in the Mother. She will take full care of you. Sri Aurobindo has

written a magnificent poem *To R —On Her Birthday* (*Collected Poems*, p. 75) I shall read just four lines from it.

Rejoice and fear not for the waves that swell,
The storms that thunder, winds that sweep,
Always our Captain holds the rudder well,
He does not sleep

I would like to offer one clarification for the people who say “To live only for the Divine is not possible or not easy for the working women and men, and people who have families” Please note that ‘to live only for the Divine’ does not mean to worship an idol the whole day or sit for long hours in meditation or do pranayama, japa, etc. Here what is meant is an inner attitude. Once a sadhika was just going to her allotted work in the Ashram, when her husband asked her to do some work for him The sadhika asked him to wait until her return, but he was adamant. I asked her how she solved the problem She confided “I feel the Mother’s presence with me. I talk to Her. So I asked Her and did what She advised me to do That is all. To live for the Divine means to live as per the Divine’s will There was no problem. As such there are no problems. People make unnecessary fuss and agitation, and create more problems” Then she shared with me these words of the Mother: “The only thing which must count is the Divine His Will, His manifestation, His expression One is there for that, one is that and nothing else.” (*CWM*, Vol 7, p 191)

You may ask me, a woman who toils the whole day, from early morning to late night, for her husband, her children, her inlaws, is she not doing the Divine’s work or is she not living only for the Divine? My answer is “Definitely not, unless she is consciously executing the Divine’s Will” Hers is an unselfish work but not a selfless work When one lives only for the Divine, one works selflessly

I live only for the Divine, I work only for the Divine, I serve only the Divine, I do everything only for the Divine and for none else But here ‘I’ is predominant When you say ‘I serve only the Divine’, etc , watch out—this may be a path of ego, ego seeking its own satisfaction. In most cases it is living for oneself under the pretence of living for the Divine. The Divine remains behind and ‘I’ becomes important With the idea that one lives only for the Divine, one feels licensed to put forward one’s own ideas, one’s own will, etc Ego-centricity must change into God-centricity Our life must become a development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness and not of our ego.

The right way of living only for the Divine is to gift our house, with all its furniture and equipment, to the Divine, by a registered irrevocable gift deed. House means our whole self and furniture means all our instruments—the physical, the vital, the mental, the inner being, etc All will be at the disposal of the Divine seated in us, the Mother in us. And you just live for the Divine, you just exist for the Divine. “As Thou willest, as Thou willest.”

Sri Aurobindo has beautifully expressed this in just eight words: "God's servant is something, God's slave is greater" (SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 142)

So friends, in order to be a slave of God, to be only a vessel of God's will, to live only for the Divine, abandon all laws of living, all mental ideas, opinions, etc., all the vital nature's desires, cravings, etc., all the physical nature's obscurity, *tamas*, etc., and take refuge in the Divine सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज। This is what the Divine told Arjuna some 5000 years ago, and this is also His Mantra for the third millennium "Surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti." (SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 7)

Empty your vessel so that the Divine can pour himself into you. Once a very learned professor of philosophy went to the house of a Sufi (sage) for knowledge. The sage offered him a seat and brought him some tea. He went on pouring tea in the professor's cup even though it was full. The professor remarked, "Sir, you can't pour any more, it is full." The sage replied, "You are full, I can't give you any knowledge. First empty yourself, then come to me."

Why are we not able to live only for the Divine? First of all, if we want to live for Him, we should listen to Him. Do we listen to Him? No, we always go on talking, boasting, desiring and squandering ourselves, then how can we listen to Him? We should become quiet, and open ourselves to listen to Him. Secondly, we should reject all other diversions. Why are we not able to abandon all these things? Simply because we do not want to.

Once a disciple asked his Guru: "Gurujī, why are we not able to leave all our mental preferences, vital desires and physical *tamas*?" After a few days, one early morning when all the disciples and the Guru were returning after a bath in the nearby river, the Guru embraced the trunk of a tree with his arms and legs and started shouting "Help, help, this tree is not leaving me." Some of the disciples told the Guru: "Sir, you are holding the tree yourself. You are clinging to it. Nobody can help you. You have simply to leave it." The disciple who had asked the question bowed down to the Guru and told him that he had got the reply. In due course of time, he freed himself from all attachments, and surrendered to the Divine. The Guru had not only answered him but had also put his force in him.

In metaphysical terms, in our consciousness, there is a stubborn area called the *inconscience*; we have to take our Guru's light, the supramental light there for its transformation. That is why Sri Aurobindo insists on an opening to the Divine and surrender to Him. When our surrender becomes complete, our whole self will be available for the Divine to occupy, the whole of the Divine Nature will enter in us, we shall live in the infinity of the Divine's Nature, we shall have the whole of eternity before us, all the things, peace, power, knowledge, love, salvation, realisation, everything; what the Divine is, we shall be. Our nature shall be totally transformed into the Divine Nature and we shall live only for the Divine's will, the Divine's manifestation, the Divine's expression. We shall be That and nothing else.

So friends, if the Supreme Lord appears before us now and grants us a boon, let

us say, "O Lord, let my surrender to you be complete, let my surrender be total and integral " It will be one boon which will include everything, the whole of the Divine, "Samagram Mam" as the Gita puts it It will be the boon of boons, the prayer of prayers, the highest aspiration

K C ANAND

THE EPISODE OF KALU RAM

COMMENT

KALU RAM MEENA is a villager. He belongs to the Scheduled Caste. He is a sarpanch, a council member of his village panchayat. The village Naila is in the desert state, Rajasthan. This is where President Clinton had gone on Thursday to understand the deeper meaning of India.

This rustic villager shocked the American President with a question. He asked him straight: "President Sahab, most Americans think that our country is backward and poverty-stricken, where people die of hunger, and which is full of snake-charmers. You also think so?"

The head of the strongest and the richest nation was taken aback. He never anticipated this, especially at Naila village. And, never from a Kalu Ram. Against the background of whatever he had been told by Indians and Americans about Kalu Ram's country, he would have expected Kalu Ram to ask from the world's richest 'Raja'—this is how the Naila people called Bill Clinton—for some favours for himself and for his village.

But Kalu Ram wanted no favour. His profound question travelled way beyond Bill Clinton's understanding of India. He challenged the very picture that some of the best minds in the country, including ministers and prime ministers—whether it was Nehru then or Vajpayee today—officials and columnists, non-government organisations and intellectuals have presented about India to the Americans, to the West and even to us Indians.

Recovering from his shock, Clinton responded: "No, India is not a poverty-stricken nation. My visit will help to correct this wrong impression of my fellow Americans that India is poor." Bill Clinton understood that Kalu Ram's question also contained the answer, and that is, this nation is not a poor nation, as the whole world is made to believe.

It would have been shocking only if Bill Clinton were not shocked. That India means hunger and poverty, superstition and illiteracy, snake-charming and bride-burning, married children and prostituting widows, is the picture which has been unfailingly presented to the world and to the West for over a century. Not by foreigners, but by Indians since independence. The neo-Catherine Mayos are ever sniffing around the Indian gutters to make films and write books to tell the West and India that India means the gutter.

Contrast with Bill Clinton's own country.

One-third of the pregnant girls in America are schoolgoing children. But no American would define the American identity as unwed child mothers.

Before independence, the missionaries started advertising India's poverty abroad during the colonial period to raise funds for their religious conversion work. After independence, the success of their work inspired many voluntary organisations to

copy their method to secure aid for their work. This trend became the obsession of these organisations, which successfully made business out of the advertised poverty and hunger in India.

The Indian government too did not lag behind. It also confirmed the image of India as a poverty-stricken and hunger-ridden country. Just to secure aid for a few million. With the result that poverty and hunger ceased to be India's problems, and became her image, even her identity.

This is what Kalu Ram has challenged. But only very few know that Kalu Ram is right in challenging the entire opinion-making intellect of India. India was never poor, nor is it now.

If India is poor, it is in leadership. Not just political leadership. Even its intellectual leadership is as bad. It is poor not in its resources, human and material, but in properly augmenting them.

Just take one asset in which the masses of India and generally the women of India, have put faith—gold. Every economist would advise that it is a wasteful and idle asset and no one should invest in gold. But the Indian mind defied this advice and bought gold. The government virtually declared gold as an illegal asset and handed over the entire gold trade to smugglers who emerged as monopoly gold suppliers. Yet Indians continued to buy gold. Even Lord Balaji was forced to buy smuggled gold to mint the Balaji coin for His devotees.

Not many in our country know that Indians have accumulated a gold stock of nearly three lakh tons. The value of this is about 3000 billion US dollars. This may not make sense unless it is related to the wealth of America itself. The value of the gold stock in India alone is equal to one-third the market capitalisation of corporate America! Again it is equal to one-half of the GDP of America! The gold in unornamented form is estimated at 20,000 tons, which is equal to 200 billion dollars, or Rs. 9.5 lakh crores! The entire gold is in black form, because only smugglers supplied gold to the people for 50 years.

Unless the black gold is brought out into circulation, this vital asset will continue to be our liability. Suppose the government grants tax immunity to all gold deposited into banks. The estimate is that we will raise gold deposits of at least 5000 to 10,000 tons, that is equal to 50 to 100 billion US dollars. This will stabilise our foreign exchange front, help India control the world gold market and prices, bring down the interest rates and put into circulation a giant asset that moves around stealthily, like a thief, even now. This is how we have reduced one of our most valuable assets into a liability.

Kalu Ram knows nothing about this. But he is sure that we are not a poor nation. Will this open the eyes of Indians in the way it opened Bill Clinton's and made him promise to correct his fellow Americans about India? That is, Indians are worth trading and doing business with, and do not need the charity of Americans. Kalu Ram has in effect told Bill Clinton that Americans can invest in India, while those who projected India as a poor country had convinced themselves that India deserved

aid from the Americans.

Surprisingly, only a few newspapers had carried this report. Newspapers, which wasted hundreds of tons of newsprint to support Deepa Mehta and Shabana Azmi's constitutional right to project Indian widows as prostitutes, did not even print the Kalu Ram-Clinton dialogue.

Kalu Ram Meena deserves to be awarded the Bharat Ratna, for telling the truth to the most important man in the world today—a truth which most Indians have not noticed. Does he not?

S GURUMURTHY

(Courtesy *The New Indian Express*. 25 March 2000)

N B This significant Kalu Ram episode reminds me of a statement once made by Dr Raja Ramanna, ex-chairman of Atomic Energy Commission. He said that *Indians may be poor but India is not poor*. It is because of people like Kalu Ram who uphold the tradition and greatness of the country, and not sensation-mongers depicting its poverty and social distortion for getting recognition and rewards in the Western world, that some hope lies for a bright future. A robust sense of life, self-honour, commitment to deeper and nobler values is the gleaming hope that always leads us forward and in it we cherish our true Indianness. —R Y.D.

EXPANDING HUMANITY'S VISION OF GOD

THE world today lives in a paradoxical situation, paradoxical with respect to the place of God in it and to his relation with man. Obviously in the lives of most of the people the sacred cosmos, spirituality and God himself, manifested in a form of divine man or in other forms, become a subject in question. Different civilizations from the old times had the acquisition of a rich spiritual knowledge. It was put in the shape of various religions, sacred rites and customs. There is an abundance of spiritual writings of all the confessions and in every spiritual culture exist incarnations of God, saints and prophets. But the sacred cosmos is admitted by the modern man usually as a separate world, which acts according to its own laws and which neither has a connection with his existence, nor has an approach to it. This is very common to the West and the westernised countries of Asia. Such a statement at the first view may seem too categorical, especially if we would have in mind a quantitative and expanding circulation of spirituality in a broader sense, but the same *quantitative* means of expression in humanity shows us something different.

At the junction of the 20th and 21st centuries the rapid change of geo-political, social, economical and cultural situations brings to any man in any continent, except traditional secluded societies, the sense of immense tension. Though the hastening progress of international means of communication, in our century crowned by the Internet, expands without bounds man's possibilities for worldly contacts, man, being unable to change himself as quickly as do technologies, experiences it as an inevitable intrusion into his, until now, stable and clear world. The appearance of inter-phenomena requires change even in his orientation of values and his way of life. Even progressive minds, generating ideas about the open society and the necessity of super new technologies, cannot neglect the speeding change in the relation between man and the eternal truths of existence,—because we can't apply to them any progressive measure of time and space. That is why it is already a global problem; but as every problem this one also has a solution, inherent in itself.

Now, modern man has to spend more and more time in order to satisfy his physical, vital and mental necessities and to do it in a much more refined way than ever before, but a more complicated mechanism of satisfaction does not mean a better or qualitatively improved result. The latter we can see perhaps only in relation to natural development converted into its falsification. Natural food is replaced by biogenetically processed products, traditional garments by synthetic readymade clothes, living art by CD and TV; nature by zoo-substitutes and plastic flowers. In this respect we can think about man's lost capacity to differ from the real thing, from *Ersatz*. But the most important thing is his psycho-physiological state. However comfortable his life may be, however prosperous may be the rationalistic, pragmatic and material world-view and its cult, accidental man experiences inevitable stress, rising from the very depths of his being. Ignoring the natural existence of spiritual necessities, he gives a name to it, *i.e.* "emptiness", "depression" or "strangeness" and goes to the next-

door psychoanalyst. Sometimes, vaguely understanding the reason of his discontent, he moves one step forward—turns to religion. Unfortunately, very often he goes to the abode of God and doesn't find him there. The question stands: Why? Is it a fault of the so-called incapability of the Church to march in step with time? Or is theology separated from science, culture and social reforms? Perhaps, the man of today needs not the proclaiming of absolute truths, simplified *Kerygma*, formal rendering of sacraments, etc. There is no doubt that Divine manifestation on earth in new forms of being is an indispensable law of the Self-play. That is the origin of spiritual creativeness and bliss. The Bible, Torah, Veda, Avesta, Koran in universal terms do not speak of the eternal truths that are frozen in unchangeable forms, but rather of the ever-changing possibility of Divine expression. Nevertheless, such seeing of the hidden essence of sacred Scriptures requires a very high level of consciousness, insight, intuition and developed perception of the inner life. In this respect there arises one more danger to the human grasp of the image of God, and it depends upon his changing place in the world as well. At the same time man paradoxically looks for the place of God in *his* miserable little world! Very often it is determined by the "absence" of free time. His daily routine, running between the office, shopping center and fitness club does not leave a minute to stop and look around. He is always in a hurry and the more he is, the less time he has. His action doesn't have any hint of sacredness: his meal he prepares for himself, not for God, not to mention the restaurants he visits to save a bit of time. He works for the sake of career and money, but not for the sake of God. He studies and exercises to a pragmatic end, but not because he would like to perceive Divine Wisdom. Every action from body health to family duties is done without any thought about God. That is why in the place of an altar he puts a TV. He thinks that God is a kind of abstraction which requires *extra time*. Only when he finds himself in deep spiritual crisis—and it inevitably comes—man in terrible despair faces *something* or *somebody* whom he calls by God's name. If here his spiritual way begins, born in sleepless night and painful meditation, if he by Divine grace rises above everyday confusion and noise and finds peace in himself, the first and necessary condition for spiritual growth is fulfilled; his dependence upon one or another religion then gets secondary importance.

Let us take Christianity and its ethical aspect in relation to a believer. Every honest Christian makes an effort to perform his religious duties in a proper way and observe the Ten Commandments of God. If it were to be done, today Europe would be in a different situation. Indeed, we should try to understand what exactly in Christianity remains so unconvincing, incomprehensible and alien to the occidental man, that even punishment of God is not taken seriously by him. We can't blame only man's sinful nature. 2000 years of experience of Christianity proves the impossibility of keeping rigid orders in balance with real life. It seems, for the rational and empirical Western mind, that it ought to be able to hold the Ten Commandments, because it has an implanted consciousness governed by law. But "to be righteous in the eyes of the law" does not necessarily mean to be righteous in the eyes of God.

per se Here lies the main problem. The Command "Do not kill" points at exterior action. Nevertheless, if man won't perceive the inner moral imperative, the brutality of action and punishment will lose every sense. Only intuitive, direct experience, taking place firstly in the human psyche, or heart, only subtle inner apprehension will give him a chance to come to the point and harmonise the exterior and interior sides of the ethical whole. If he clearly understands the reason and origin of the wrong impulses to kill, tries to overcome them, then those impulses don't have any base for expressing themselves in an obvious form. That is why first of all we should say "don't be angry, don't envy," or "don't deceive yourself", we should not think that these are lesser evils. When a man learns how to differ and yet harmonise his feelings, he begins to perceive even more subtle forms of them, e.g., compassion, equality, divine love, etc. At last he learns to discern the essence of humanness from the caused action and relative nature of good and evil. That must be the only way to the higher oneness, *conjunctio oppositorum*. Then, ascending to the highest level of knowledge, the human being can reveal the secret of the impulses to kill, try to overcome them, then those impulses don't have any base for expressing themselves. That is why first of all we should say "don't be angry, don't envy," or "don't deceive yourself". The Trinity and the Sacraments are inaccessible to the ordinary mind. It is said that the shortest way to God lies through the heart. The "heart" we must understand as a kernel of the human being, the *psyche per se*, the center of human microcosm, identical to the Divine. Only identification with one's kernel can brighten the intellect to give power to the knowledge of the essence of things, to harmonise life. We are made in the image of God, St. Augustine of Hippo says. C. G. Jung in that respect has noticed that destruction of the God-image is followed by the annulment of the human personality.

It can hardly be said that such an approach is the conscious position of every Christian. Our present condition impelled Jung to define the end-result as "a true *antimumon pneuma*, a false spirit of arrogance, woolly-mindedness, criminal amorality, and doctrinaire fanaticism, a purveyor of shoddy spiritual goods, spurious art, philosophical stuttering, and Utopian humbug, fit only to be fed wholesale to the mass man of today".¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote "The West has acquired the religious mind rather than possessed it by nature."² A man of any religion engaged in exterior ethical action finds himself in the same situation.

In human history there has always been a dialogue between the exterior forms of spiritual expression and its inner content. In my opinion it is, as never before, an urgent problem of today needing attention. The Chinese Confucian school, Hindu Brahmans, orthodox followers of Islam or Judaism attach great importance to the scholastic knowledge of sacred writings and rites. At the same time the existing doctrines of Zen Buddhism, Tantra, Vaishnava-Sahajiyā, Bāuls, Sufi and Kabbalah, alchemists and gnostics of the Middle Ages and contemplative Christian Orders emphasised the inner broadening of spiritual truths and the highest benefit it brings. In spite of the fact that there has been cast on them the shadow of heresy, all of them

from time immemorial could catch the very core of something that is common and general to all religions. When a Baul sings "Hindu-Muslim—there is no difference, nor are there differences in caste" and "from one seed is the whole creation sprung",¹ isn't that song worthy of being listened to? It would be good to give up pride and to try to understand *what that song is about*, to understand what exactly escapes from the eyes of *vaidhi-bhakta*. Maybe there is a way to reconcile the antithesis of Islamic and Hindu worlds. Dalai Lama XIV treats the practice of Buddhism as a whole complex of religious customs suitable for Tibetans which is also a primarily universal method to perfect oneself. So isn't it a stimulus to distinguish between the Eastern tradition and approach and having a universal spiritual origin, common to the West as well? Sri Aurobindo speaks about the many-field systems of consciousness, the concept surpasses every religious determination and points to the possibility of seeking methodically after the highest level of knowledge, irrespective of race, nationality and creed. Wouldn't that be the most real guarantee for expanding humanity's vision of God? If we can understand that the basic spiritual truth lies in the ineffable, infinite and universal Divine, that God, man and the universe are one inseparable reality *par excellence*, then why don't we try to find the power to realise it *here and now*? Our earth would symbolise a universal archetypal basis, a pedicle—an original inspiration, and a flower—with its various forms of spiritual and religious activity in humanity. The way we understand the beauty and divine aroma of a lotus—its indivisible and spontaneous beauty and perfection—in the same way we should conceive the various fields of spiritual activities. Only the integral (not levelling!) point of view can guarantee the progress and expansion of human spirituality. The deepening global processes make an almost inevitable alternative to it. The barriers of misunderstanding gradually break down. At the same time the universal or global integration determines the infinite development of spiritual expression. Nevertheless, the first condition must be the direction towards inner growth, of a unique action of man becoming the Divine Man. From that standpoint the way of occidental man can be equated with the path of Thomas Merton. It is not necessary to go to a contemplative monastery. The aim of modern theology must be to create suitable conditions for the secular man. He must have a possibility not only to meditate upon eternal truths, but to open as well to their inner suggestion and transcendental power. He needs help to find an intimate individual relationship with the Divine. Man must fulfil his destiny and its inherent spiritual possibilities. Only then will every act of his be a conscious act, of seeking the Divine, then expanding humanity's vision of God will become a manifested universal reality.

DAIVA TAMOSAITYTE

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Paging the Unknown by R. Y. Deshpande. Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry. First published 21 February, 2000. Price: Rs. 50.00.

(i)

A BOOK with a catchy title *Paging the Unknown* at once conveys a sense of the mysterious, luring the Unknown 'into the arms of Time' through words. The book is a collection of poems from a man of science, a physicist. The curiosity sky-rockets as to how a scientist has shut the limitless Unknown in these pages.

A cursory glance reveals that many of the titles of these poems have on them the stamp of science. Take the poems *Journey to the Equinox*, *His Name is Quark*, *The Tele-Eye*, *La Caverne du Proton*, and the like. Besides, the poet has profusely used phrases, metaphors and symbols from the domain of physical science. Of course, this is very natural and expected from a scientist-poet. But these expressions fit in very well and add to the poetic intensity and serve well the poet's purpose. This mode of expression has brought in the element of modernism to English poetry and helped to widen the canvas of modern poetry. This is certainly a great contribution and adds savour to poetry. Some of the expressions so used may be cited here: the winging of Time across the pages of human history has been aptly described as "moving with super-Mach velocities"; unison of the cosmos with the Unknown as "couple the cosmos to God's gears". In poems like *The Winds* the scientist-poet has used ultra-modern scientific discovery towards expressing the Inexpressible—"breaking the bounds set by quasar lights", or breaking the sound-barrier with a huge crash so as to be freed from the pull of pain, suffering and grief.

Oh at last have the rocket-sounds
Rid the griefs of gravity.

The expression "griefs of gravity" symbolises our habit of earthly suffering that clings to us and can be broken only by a huge escape, like a rocket breaking the sound-barrier.

Modern poetry in a certain aspect of it has been called surrealistic, i.e., expressing the subconscious mind by images. That the surrealistic genre of poetry does express the subconscious is true. But that is not the whole truth. The prefix *sur* connotes, besides, the meaning of super or supra. From this new angle let us redefine 'surrealism' as expressing not only the subconscious but other layers of consciousness too. It can be safely said that surrealistic poetry expresses all that is hidden or occult. It is in this sense Deshpande's poetry should be judged—not as mere expression of the subconscious but of other planes too.

Reading Deshpande's poems in this collection certainly gives the impression that physical events and phenomena have always behind them some unknown and occult cause,—the cause may be in the subconscious, inconscient or other planes. Take the expressions "falling not with their weight but with deathfulness of thickening gravity", or "a strong devouring was at the base of things". These give expressions to the subconscious or inconscient vast, the obverse aspect of the Unknown. It is "filled with jewelled lights of hooded force" of the Unknown and its whisper is "the queer atomic beginnings" of the creation. The Unknown pervades all that is. The Inconscient too is "the Nirvana of the sombre infinite" that would move "as in a bright magic's sequence" towards "a greater Nothing", in the Superconscient "And took him to a sky where the solar waters flow"—the Supramental Light. Thus the poetry of Deshpande is not the expression of the subconscious as the votaries of surrealism would make us believe, it is a poetry that opens the occult hidden to our eyes.

Indeed *The Diver of the Deep Sea* is a beautiful poem that successfully pages the Unknown. *Rendezvous with Zulash* is another such poem where is the

Quiescent emotion or else the flowing grandeur
Mysteriously pursued by time

See how transformation is attained by the great Descent:

A Might descended and made the occult body
Her home to build the everlasting day.

In *La Caverne du Proton*, proton symbolises "an infinitesimal of substance" and weightlessness, "to break the last support" that makes the being rise from the density of gross matter.

The poems in the volume under review, when read carefully with an open mind, give almost a picture of the Unknown drawn by the poet. The Unknown is confined neither to the superconsciousness nor to the subconscious and the inconscience. This is a poetry surrealistic in a wider sense of the term. Lastly the poems form not only a passage-way to the Unknown and its expression in words, but they are a song of hope for a brighter and greater world. They invite the reader to a stroll on *The Beach Road* or to a wonderful adventure to *Lake Turkana under the Sun*:

You have grown wiser across these rolling years,
Not a disdain the Sunday haste on the Beach Road,
O perfect sage, your spirithood has richened
To offer a greater world to the coming age

Listen to the following verse:

Now in the grey cells awaits
 Another marvel of the mind of truth,
 From the realms of undimming light
 A person walking with large steps
 To claim Lake Turkana under the Sun

Paging the Unknown is only the fourth book of Deshpande's collections of poems and a yet brighter poetic achievement awaits this scientist-poet

A word about the style and technique that give expression to the soul of these poems. As a general rule poetic style is a conscious or deliberate attempt by the poet to give expression to his thought, imagination or even his experiences, spiritual or intellectual or otherwise. But, in truth, style and technique of poetry, as Sri Aurobindo has elaborated in *The Future Poetry* and in his *Letters on Savitri*, are inseparable from poetic inspiration. This is so, specially in all 'Overhead' poetry. The poems of Deshpande are certainly moving away from the poetry of the so-called 'modernist' poets. He has done well to use metre and rhythm, as Sri Aurobindo advises, so that poems could be truly poetic. Yet the style in general of these poems is intellectualised and heavy. Vocabulary and phrases have on them the unmistakable stamp of intellectuality, of course a natural outcome. Some of the deeper experiences have found thought expressions. How one wishes those poems to have spontaneity of the lyric!

Consistency of expression and inspiration could not, understandably, be maintained throughout. Poems like *His Name is Quark* and *The Tele-Eye* are typical modernistic lyrics. *La Caverne du Proton* is thought provoked, missing its lyric spontaneity. Yet *Paging the Unknown* has some gems of poems, visions and jewelled expressions. The concluding verse of the poem *Rendezvous with Zulash* has attained a lyric height of vision. Perhaps the most satisfying and enjoyable is that exquisite poem *The Diver of the Deep Sea*. It combines all the attributes of good poetry—high inspiration, rhythmic movement, equally highly expressive metaphorical language with images and symbols carrying deeper, sometimes occult and spiritual meaning. This poem could very well be said to be the lyric of the future. Space forbids us to cite the entire poem. The poem *Go to Lake Turkana* is another such poem, though not of the lyric intensity of the *Diver*. In poems like these, Deshpande has really attained harmonisation of inspiration, style, technique and expression of the poet's vision. Such poems created more frequently will be the heralds of the Lyrics of the Future. But to be that the poet has to shed his love and deliberate attempt at intellectuality and be a spontaneous "ungarbed entity within". This is the lyric creation of the future.

ASOKA K GANGULI

(ii)

You gave me a smart cotton seed
 And when I put it under the microscope
 My mind went wandering .
 You gave me a rounded word.
 And yet the critics called it a poem
 Par excellence and congratulated me
 For the cyberscopic feat

(*A la Mode*, p 58)

And if that critic be the great master himself, Sri Aurobindo, then one would be still in silence to see if the sage, roving his probing, reading, eyes over these lines, *paging* through, would break into a smile. Deshpande's prolific output, both in prose and poetry, is a testimony to Sri Aurobindo's inspiration that gives the author the courage to make forays into the nuances of the *Unknown*. *The Rhododendron Valley*, was the author's first adventure in poetry that expressed the Unknown through Mother Nature, now he continues to do so despite the loyalties to physical science and the cyber-world jargon:

The winds rose from behind
 And the winds from around
 Breaking the bounds set by quasar lights
 Oh at last have the rocket-sounds
 Rid the griefs of gravity.

(*The Winds*, p. 3)

There is a single-mindedness in all the thirty poems; the author does not pretend and try to know the Unknown, he skips the possible contradiction and concentrates himself in finding signs and symbols of Him in manifest Nature. earth, water, fire, storm, sea, ice, rain, sun, moon, stars. . And suddenly there is a burst of the Unknown in, otherwise, a mundane little kite.

Who is there
 Flying a lonely kite
 Behind the shadow of the night
 When the winds cease?

(*His Name is Quark*, p. 8)

The Unknown is the central theme, knowing more of it makes one know nothing; *Watchmakers know not time* (*La Caverne du Proton*, p. 37) and going deeper in its quest results in *The cavern that grew less distinct* (*ibid.*, p 38). Yet the Unknown is not incommunicable.

You would not perhaps know
 Why I wrote that letter in such a hurry,
 At the midnight hour

(In the Little Temple, p. 42)

The times change, the world progresses from a simple post-office to information technology, people spend less time in temples and more in the super-bazaars, . *the old bangle-seller does not repeat/ His daily rounds to our locality (ibid., p 43)*, but one thing remains, the mystery. Indeed, the sages explain mysteries in myths and the poets bare their mystic souls in verse

On a deer it rode past morning fields,
 Greeting the green yet,
 As though borne by wakeful silentness
 A new sun it met

(Dream-Image, p 12)

The great hindrance to knowing the Unknown is man's distinguishing faculty, the reason, the reason that we glory in, the foundation of science and technology, man's progress and pride, stands exposed in its limitations before the Yogi.

Presently in a moment of perfect entirety
 Sophie walked through the door marked "seven"
 When in a big hall the holy wrath of Kant
 Gave her the things in themselves to eat

(Sophie's Enterprise, p. 57)

Pretence to scale, gauge, analyse the Unknown through intellectual criticism is childish for someone who revels on the lap of a rainbow Philosophy, with a host of doctrines, howsoever logical, rational, indubitable and certain, has been painfully awkward in its enterprise.

With meaning and contents of the unknown,
 Logos brought language too,
 Word rich in its potency
 Held rainbow-hues and sounds
 Of another sentient world,
 A power to realise what it sees

(Go to Lake Turkana, pp. 62-63)

To benefit from Despande's new collection of poems one needs to page, browse, reflect and meditate over these lines, one should read them with an inner eye and a

higher significance; one should practise poetry through thoughtless silence and let the Unknown invade one's being.

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

(iii)

Prof P. Lal writes: "What fine poems! I was deeply impressed by *Paging the Unknown*. It's easy enough to write about what one sees, but what one in-sees—ah, that requires the wisdom and grace of a real kavī." (18 April 2000)

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Dr. S. Rajendran (Ed). Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad, Essays by Five Competent Scholars. Mrs. R. Savithri, Annamalai Nagar-608002, 1999. Pages 100. Price Rs 70.

It was a pleasure going through the book *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, a collection of four essays by eminent scholars of Indian Philosophy and Upanishadic studies. The editor has chosen the essays with great care. The authors include both Indian and Western scholars of Indian Philosophy and Indology. The essays represent the various approaches to the *Īśa Upaniṣad* in general and to the Upanishadic statement "ātmahano janāḥ" in particular. They are also arranged with a definite plan. Each succeeding essay evaluates the earlier and presents its own understanding of the *Upaniṣad*. The last essay by Jayashanmugam rounds up the discussion, as it were, by upholding the metaphorical interpretation of *ātmahano janāḥ* as expounded by Śrī Aurobindo. He rightly concludes "Where the context gives a contrary sense to it [a word] here its conventional sense may be overlooked and the new sense accepted."

The first essay is by T. M. Mahadevan, a noted Advaita scholar. It is a restatement of the Advaitic position. However, the quotation from Mahatma Gandhi as the conclusion, does not fit in well with the Advaitic standpoint. For Gandhi is understood by the word God a personal God. The essay by P. Thieme holds that *Īśāvāsya* is Absolutistic and not Theistic. It interprets *ātmahano janāḥ* as "those who kill any living being". He looks upon verse 1 as *pūrvapakṣa*, verse 2 as *uttarapakṣa* and verse 3 as *siddhānta*. Sharma and Young have given a detailed evaluation of this position in their essay and have pointed out some of the difficulties in a lengthy note (35) on page 73 and I need not dwell on it further.

Coming to the essay by Sharma and Young, they have used the history of Hinduism to come to the conclusion that the expression *ātmahano janāḥ* was understood literally, at least in some Hindu circles as far back as the 18th century. They also point out that many Hindu scholars in the 20th century have not taken verse 3 literally. They contend that verse 3 condemns suicide, forced or self-willed death, on the basis of history of Hinduism, semantics and chronological order of the verse 1, 2 and 3 of the Upanishad.

They are right in holding that Īśāvāsya is theistic. They are also right in interpreting *tena tyaktena* to mean *tena dattena*, i.e., “allotted by God”. But they are not right in concluding that the theistic interpretation is “mildly favouring the literal interpretation of suicide”. While they have followed the translation of the Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan, whose Advaitic leanings are well-known, they have preferred Hume’s interpretation in respect of the second line of verse 2. This is quite understandable. The theistic interpretation of verse 2 should be “wishing to live a hundred years you should live by doing your proper duties without any sense of independent agency but in a spirit of dedication to God. Other than in this way (i.e., by renouncing all duties) there is no possibility of remaining unaffected by past and future sins” (*akurvatah karma na lipyate iti nāsti*).

The theistic interpretation of verse 3 will be—“Such persons as hate God (*ātmahano janāh*) go after death to the notorious worlds full of great suffering and deep darkness. This is certain.” This position is supported by Vāmana Purāna—“*maha duḥkaikahetuvāt praptyavādsurahi tathā / asūryā nāma te lokāh tān yānti vimuktā harau.*” The authors know that Īśāvāsya is interpreted in the Purānas. They refer to Bhāgavata Purāna which states “*ātma vāsyamidam sarvam*”, etc. Again, Īśā also occurs in Brahmānda Purāna. Svayambhūva Manu praised Lord Hari, by Name Yajña, born of his daughter Ākūti, by Īśāvāsya Mantras. It is also commented on and interpreted in Vāmana and Varāha Purāna.

Further, the Smṛtis and the Mahābhārata say that censuring or cursing a person in strong terms or giving expression to hatred is tantamount to killing the person. The word *ātman*, the authors admit, is used sometimes to mean “Lord God”. This is so used in *Bhagavad Gītā*. According to the *Brahmasūtra* 3-3-6 (*ātma śabdācca*) there are *śrutis* which teach contemplation on ‘Lordship’ or ‘Rulership’ of Brahman. *Brhad-āranyaka Upanisad* 3-4-7 states: “Contemplate on the Lord as the Ruler.” *Brihat Tantra* says, “Bliss, knowledge, freedom from blemishes, and eternity—because of these attributes, the knowers of Vedas speak of God as Ātman.”

Therefore, theistically considered, “*ātmahano janāh*” should mean “those who censure God or hate God go to hell.” I do not think that verse 3 is meant to condemn those who kill themselves or is about “suicide”. The whole *Upanisad* is about *īśa* as the all-pervading controller of the universe. He is the creator of this universe (verse 8). Commenting on and interpreting this verse *Varāha Purāna* says: “*evam bhūto mahā viṣṇuḥ yathārtham jagadidrśam anādyananta kalinam sasarja atmecchaya prabhuh*” He is thus to be known as the cause of *sambhūti* and *vināśa*.

Sharma and Young have quoted Bhavabhūti in support of their interpretation of *ātmahano janāh*. They should have also referred to Kalidasa’s *Raghuvamśam*. Kalidasa refers to the Rāghu Dynasty kings with admiration—*yogenānte tanutyajām* (leaving the body by “*samādhi*”). They have failed to see the difference between “suicide” and “attaining *samādhi*”. They have termed the latter as “willed death”. This does not appear to be correct. A fruit falls from the tree when the tree can no longer hold it (i.e., when it is ripe). The former is suicide and the latter is entering

into *samādhi*. Saint Jnaneshwar entered *samādhi* alive (age 22); Swami Raghavendra entered *samādhi* alive (age 75), Swami Vadiraj entered *samādhi* alive (age 120), and many others. The self-realised soul (*jñāna yogi*) lives to suffer or enjoy the *prārabdha* and to exhaust the *anīsta kāmīya puṇya*. Once that is done, like the ripe fruit, he drops down or falls down from the tree (body). There is a mantra in *Rg Veda* addressed to God Tryambaka. The second line of the mantra is as follows: *urvārukamiva mrtyoḥbandhanāt muksīya mā amrtatvāt*. Hence the two learned authors do not seem to have appreciated this difference between suicide and *samādhi*, and have translated them mechanically as “forced killing” and “self-willed death”.

Jayashanmugam has taken stock of all the views, evaluated them and rightly supported the metaphorical understanding of *ātmahano janāḥ*. His essay thus is more comprehensive. However, he has not said anything about the theistic interpretation of the *Upanisad*. He has whole-heartedly supported Śrī Aurobindo’s view.

On the whole, the book is a valuable addition to knowledge. I recommend it to all students and research scholars of Indian Philosophy and Indology. I wish to mention that the two essays by (a) Sharma and Young and (b) Jayashanmugam are really thought-provoking and worthy of serious study. I congratulate the Editor of this valuable collection of essays.

S MUDGAL

Students' Section

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF GRAVITY

(Continued from the issue of June 2000)

Adaptation of Life to Gravity

WHAT would life be like without gravity? Surely, it wouldn't be there at all. Without gravity there wouldn't have been the aggregation of matter, thus no objects and therefore no living beings. Or, let us ask otherwise, how has life adapted itself to gravity? How does it make the best use of gravity?

Life first appeared in water some 4 billion years ago. Now let us see how the living organisms have adapted themselves to gravity. Let us take first chlorophyllian organisms: plants, algae etc, in the oceans. We know that solar radiation is absorbed by water and its intensity decreases as we go deeper; at a depth of about 20 meters it becomes negligible. Thus these plants and algae, in want of light, have to live at the surface. In addition, minerals—which come from the erosion of soil—are more abundant at the coasts. So not only do these organisms have to live at the surface, but also they thrive in waters which are not too deep. In fact, these organisms are constituted in such a way that their density is equal to that of water so that they are always near the surface. The density of jellyfish is the same as that of water and some of them have devised ingenious ways to navigate in water. They have a kind of shell which makes them heavier to go down. But when they wish to go up to the surface, they discard the shell and start producing fats which make them less dense in water.

Let us take another example. We know that due to gravity the pressure of a fluid increases from top to bottom with the weight of the fluid standing on it and that the solubility of gases also increases with increasing pressure. At one atmosphere the pressure is not enough to make nitrogen soluble in blood. But if one does deep sea diving, this nitrogen from the atmosphere gets absorbed into our blood and the effects may be fatal. Surprisingly however this does not happen with seals and other sea mammals. They have developed something remarkable, a protective means to avoid nitrogen getting into their circulatory system. As soon as a seal attains a depth of around 50 meters, the alveoli in its lungs shut down, stopping all exchange of gas with the circulatory system. The air in the alveoli is in fact pushed back in the windpipe.

Plant life existed in the oceans for around 450 million years before it moved over to the soil—a richer source for minerals and a more direct way of getting sunlight. But the colonization of the earth by plants posed a serious problem for them. How would they stand up at all? They would get crushed under their own weight! Therefore they developed tissues which are more solid and much more sophisticated.

As the first plants evolved into what are today trees, they developed a mechanism to circulate minerals and water right from the roots to the leaves. The next question which arises is, how did they multiply?

Earlier water was the carrier for the spermatozoids and eggs of the algae and unicellular plants. If now they fall on the soil, they would get dehydrated and die. Eventually plants with flowers evolved so that there was no necessity for the fertilization to be done elsewhere.

Now if we move on from plant life to animal life we would be digressing too much. But as a passing statement we can say that much had to be done for animal life to adapt itself to gravity. Nature had to devise an absolutely different system of dealing with this new problem.

Before the Theory of General Relativity

From what we have discussed so far we get the impression that Newton's law of gravitation is successful in describing most of our observations. In fact it has not only helped us discover other planets; it has also helped us in taking a giant step, a step for mankind by making man land on the moon. What more or what else could one ask from this simple yet universal law?

Yet science by nature is a perfectionist. Laws and theories of science are accepted only as long as they are able to fulfil its primary purpose, of explaining natural phenomena. Any law of science, despite the history of past successes, is inevitably discarded if it fails even in one particular instance. To a scientist this brings mixed feelings: disappointment and confusion that an old and well established idea has to be given up or modified, coupled with excitement and expectation that nature is about to reveal a new mystery.

Newton's law of gravitation was no exception to this rule. By the beginning of the twentieth century cracks started appearing in the Newtonian ideas of gravitation and motion. The cracks were conceptual as well as observational.

Let us first take a look at the observation which started creating doubts about Newton's law. The orbits of planets are supposed to be closed ellipses, as proposed by Kepler. However observations extending over several decades after 1764 began to reveal a minor discrepancy in the orbit of Mercury. Mercury is the closest planet to the sun and has the most eccentric orbit. It takes 88 days to complete one orbit round the sun. Thus if Mercury is at the closest point P to the sun on a certain day, it is expected to return to that point after 88 days. However, Mercury behaves anomalously in this respect. After completing the orbit its closest approach to the sun, the perihelion, is shifted. The rate of advance of this perihelion is slow, around 575 seconds (or 9.58 minutes) of arc in one hundred years. In one hundred years the perihelion advances by 9.58 minutes. Minor though this discrepancy is, it bothered many scientists. In fact, of these 575 seconds, 532 were due to the perturbing effect of

other planets. We have seen earlier how this effect of perturbation helped us discover the planet Neptune. The residual effect of the perihelion advance rate of around 43 seconds remained unaccounted for in the Newtonian framework and this cast doubts on the validity of Newton's law of gravitation.

However, conceptual difficulties rather than observational led Einstein to cast a critical look at the Newtonian law of gravitation. The most bothersome aspect of this law of gravitation was its concept of instantaneous action at a distance. Thus the sun and the earth attract each other, according to this law, by a force that acts across 150 million km without taking any time to do so. This force is not only acting at great distances but it also acts instantaneously. Suppose now that the sun disappears. The earth will feel itself free from the sun's attraction and will move away in a direction tangential to its orbit. To the people on earth, the sun's disappearance will be relayed 8 minutes after it has disappeared (light takes 8 minutes to travel from the sun to the earth). Thus here we have a situation where a certain effect is communicated to the earth by gravity faster than it is communicated by light!

Such a situation is contrary to the Special Theory of Relativity, developed by Einstein in 1905. The Special Theory of Relativity puts an upper limit on the speed of travel. Therefore the instantaneous action of gravity is inconsistent with this theory. Having developed this theory Einstein was compelled to revise the theory of gravitation.

At this point one might ask: "What is this Special Theory of Relativity? Why conform with it if we have to discard the theory of gravitation which has lasted for two centuries?" In this talk, however, we are primarily concerned with gravity and cannot devote time to these interesting questions. The following discussion, though short and sufficient for our purpose, will hardly do justice to the important place that the Special Theory of Relativity occupies in modern physics.

The Special Theory of Relativity questioned the validity of absolute space and absolute time. Based on Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism, Einstein postulated that the speed of light represents an upper limit at which any material particle or physical information could be transmitted and that it is constant, independent of the observer's state of motion. He also postulated that all inertial frames of reference are equivalent. From these two postulates some remarkable results can be derived, notably the equivalence of mass and energy.

Against this background Einstein, in the years 1905-15, looked for a theory of gravitation that possessed all successful features of the Newtonian law of gravitation and yet was free from the conflicts between the Newtonian law and the Special Theory of Relativity.

(To be concluded)

NISHIKANTA KHANDAI