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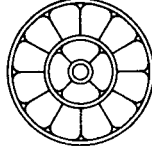
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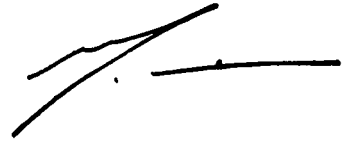


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 8

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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HER SPIRIT WAS MUTE AND FREE

AT LAST she broke into a form of things,
A start of finiteness, a world of sense
But all was still confused, nothing self-found.
Soul was not there but only cries of life.
A thronged and clamorous air environed her ...
A mob of visions broke across the sight,
A jostled sequence lacking sense and suite,
Feelings pushed through a packed and burdened heart,
Each forced its separate inconsequent way
But cared for nothing but its ego's drive. .
This state now threatened, this she pushed from her
As if in a long endless tossing street
One driven mid a trampling hurrying crowd
Hour after hour she trod without release,
Holding by her will the senseless meute at bay;
Out of the dreadful press she dragged her will
And fixed her thought upon the saviour Name;
Then all grew still and empty, she was free.
A large deliverance came, a vast calm space.
Awhile she moved through a blank tranquillity
Of naked Light from an invisible sun . .
But now a mightier danger's front drew near
The press of bodily mind, the Inconscient's brood
Of aimless thought and will had fallen from her
Approaching loomed a giant head of Life
Ungoverned by mind or soul, subconscious, vast .
It cried to her listening spirit as it ran,
Demanding God's submission to chainless Force
A deaf force calling to a status dumb,
A thousand voices in a muted Vast,
It claimed the heart's support for its clutch at joy,
For its need to act the witness Soul's consent,
For its lust of power her neutral being's seal.
Into the wideness of her watching self
It brought a grandiose gust of the Breath of Life;
Its torrent carried the world's hopes and fears,
All life's, all Nature's dissatisfied hungry cry,
And the longing all eternity cannot fill....
It brought its cry and surge of opposite powers,
Its moments of the touch of luminous planes,

Its flame-ascensions and sky-pitched vast attempts,
 Its fiery towers of dream built on the winds,
 Its sinkings towards the darkness and the abyss,...
 Its fear and joy and ecstasy and despair,
 Its occult wizardries, its simple lines
 And great communions and uplifting moves,
 Its faith in heaven, its intercourse with hell
 These powers were not blunt with the dead weight of earth,
 They gave ambrosia's taste and poison's sting. ..
 Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;
 Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes,
 And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here.
 Those galloping hooves in their enthusiast speed
 Could bear to a dangerous intermediate zone
 Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.
 Or they enter the valley of the wandering Glean
 Whence, captives or victims of the specious Ray,
 Souls trapped in that region never can escape....
 All this streamed past her and seemed to her vision's sight
 As if around a high and voiceless isle
 A clamour of waters from far unknown hills
 Swallowed its narrow banks in crowding waves
 And made a hungry world of white wild foam:
 Hastening, a dragon with a million feet,
 Its foam and cry a drunken giant's din,
 Tossing a mane of Darkness into God's sky,
 It ebbed receding into a distant roar;
 Then smiled again a large and tranquil air:
 Blue heaven, green earth, partners of Beauty's reign,
 Lived as of old, companions in happiness;
 And in the world's heart laughed the joy of life.
 All now was still, the soil shone dry and pure.
 Through it all she moved not, plunged not in the vain waves
 Out of the vastness of the silent self
 Life's clamour fled, her spirit was mute and free

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 490-95)

THINGS SEEN IN SYMBOLS

WHAT is *dhyāna*? Ordinarily, when a man is absorbed in thought and dead to all that is going on around him, he is supposed to be in *dhyāna*. Or concentration of the whole thought on a single object to the exclusion of every other, is called *dhyāna*. But neither of these ideas corresponds exactly with the whole truth; they represent only particular stages of the process of meditation. *Dhyāna* is a wide term covering a number of processes which rise from ordinary attention to *nirvikalpa samādhi*.

The distinguishing feature of *dhyāna* is that it puts out a steady force of knowledge on the object of knowledge. When this process is successful, when there is a steady demand on the object to give up its secret, it is called by Patanjali *samyama*. Even when it is only partially successful, it is called *dhyāna*.

Ordinary thought is not *dhyāna*. Ordinary thought is simply the restlessness of the mind playing with associations, speculations, trains of reasoning. In order to have *dhyāna*, the restlessness of the mind must be utterly settled, the intellect must become like a calm and waveless sea, not a ripple on its surface.

The principle is that all knowledge is in oneself, in the knower. The knower is in myself, he is also in the object of knowledge, e.g., a stone or a tree. By *dhyāna* the veil of ignorance, the chaos of misunderstandings which interfere between the knower in me and the knower in the tree or the stone is removed; we enter into relation with each other, we are in Yoga. All knowledge about the stone is in the stone itself; in *dhyāna* it comes into my mind. When it comes into my mind, the knower in me says: "It is true, the knowledge is in me also and I see it there." Or, if there is a mistake, he says, "There is a mistake, the mind is interfering; the knowledge is in me and I see it otherwise."

The whole world is one. The knower in the stone and the knower in myself are one, I am He. It is God in me, God in the stone. The knowledge in me and the knowledge in the stone are one; I am that. It is God in me, God in the stone. The stone is an object of knowledge, I am also an object of knowledge. These two also are one, God as myself, God as the stone. God is the only object of knowledge, there is no other. God is the only knower, there is no other. God is the knowledge also. *Jñātā, jñānam, jñeyam*, they are one.

The mind creates difference. When there is disturbance on the waters, there are many waves, and each wave cries, "I am I, I am I; you are you; we are different." When the sea sinks to rest, the waves as they go inward, no longer cry, "I am I", but "I am He". The still and waveless sea, that is a delightful and beautiful condition. The stormy, myriad-crested ocean, that also is a very beautiful and delightful condition. Only let the waves have the knowledge, let them say, "I am I for the sake of delight, you are you for the sake of delight. But also you are I, I am you. And both you and I are He." That is *jñānam*, that is Yoga.

The still sea is a condition, and the thousand waves are a condition. He who is

the sea, is more than disturbance, more than stillness. He contains All He is All. Even the infinite sea is only one of His manifestations.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Harmony of Virtue*, SABCL, Vol 3, pp 450-51)

WATER

WE find that water is produced by a combination in a fixed quantity of the two first elements, hydrogen and oxygen. We do not know or do not yet know why this should be so. All we can say is that [it] is a fixed law of Nature that when this formula is scrupulously followed without deviation something called water appears,—becomes a phenomenon of material Nature. There seems to be no reason in this miracle. We could partly understand if oxygen and hydrogen by their very nature tended to produce in any combination water or something like water, but only in the fixed amounts could bring out the perfect article.

But this is not the case; only by the fixed relative combination can it be done. This formula then is of the nature of a magic formula. Only by pronouncing a fixed combination of words or syllables or sounds can the [..] magic result follow and not otherwise. Any variation voids the effect and leaves the incantation barren.

Hydrogen itself is produced by a combination of a fixed number of electrons or electric particles of energy in a fixed relative position in their movement. Oxygen is produced by another such combination. The elements are alike in kind, it is a positional quantitative [*remainder of piece missing*]

*

. we fail to discover. . how a fixed formula for the combination of oxygen and hydrogen comes to determine the appearance of water which is evidently something more than a combination of gases, a new creation, a new form of substance, a material manifestation of a quite new character.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol 12, p. 245, *The Life Divine*, p 298)

SRI AUROBINDO

It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.

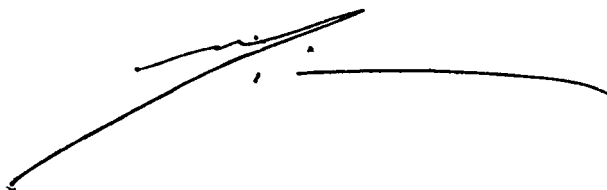
O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds.

My adoration is beyond all words, my reverence is silent.

30 March 1914¹

*

*What Sri Aurobindo
represents in the world's
history is not a teaching,
not even a revelation;
it is a decisive action
direct from the Supreme*



What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme.

14 February 1961

*

What Sri Aurobindo represents in the history of the earth's spiritual progress is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a mighty action straight from the Supreme.

15 August 1964²

1 From a meditation written on the day after the Mother first saw Sri Aurobindo.

2 Message for broadcast by All India Radio, Tiruchirappalli

He has come to bid the earth to prepare for its luminous future.

15 August 1964³

*

Sri Aurobindo has brought to the world the assurance of a divine future

*

Sri Aurobindo has come on earth not to bring a teaching or a creed in competition with previous creeds or teachings, but to show the way to overpass the past and to open concretely the route towards an imminent and inevitable future.

22 February 1967

*

Sri Aurobindo does not belong to the past nor to history

Sri Aurobindo is the Future advancing towards its realisation

Thus we must shelter the eternal youth required for a speedy advance, in order not to become laggards on the way

2 April 1967

THE MOTHER

SOUND—AN UNPUBLISHED INTERVIEW

I MEDITATED at the Mother's feet for a while, then looked up.

“Your song on ‘Sound’* last evening,” she said, “was power, power, power—all through. You expressed all the conflicts of Nature so powerfully and truly that I was very pleased I saw descending upon you from above an intense white light and a great power. Under its pressure there was proceeding from you a very generous distribution of vital force—in the best sense of the term—all around you. And the resolution of the conflicts into the chords of Victory was remarkable. Even, above some of the notes you sang I contacted a vast Peace and Ananda, which will be expressed completely and permanently all through when you will be identified with it. But even at this stage of your sadhana the peace that was waiting above lasted for not an inconsiderable space of time; and in some portions of your music I saw you were not you but Music itself.”

“That’s what constitutes genius,” the Mother added with one of her sweetest smiles. “Of course you know I don’t believe in complimenting, and I don’t say all this to you to pay you compliments. I tell you this because I saw it.”

“And this source of Peace and Ananda that you contacted at times,” continued the Mother, “I wanted to bring down. But as you haven’t yet experienced it, it didn’t come down to stay, or rather, it didn’t last. Nevertheless, the notes you sang on Peace rang, at times, with an intensely concentrated fervour. Your theme of Sound was truly expressed. The conclusion towards which it was leading was the grandeur of the descent into this world of a greater World beyond, and that reminded me of Beethoven’s grand Ninth Symphony. You have heard it, haven’t you?”

“I have, Mother,” I said “it is wonderful”.

“Your music yesterday seemed to me to be making an opening towards that grand power, of course, not in the European way, but in the Indian way—and not yet in its native fullness and glory but in the full process of formation and crystallisation.”

“Great geniuses, when they truly achieve great things,” the Mother went on, “lose the sense of their separate ego and identity—*namarupa*—and become the thing itself, the thing they manifest; it was so with you when you sang certain of these notes, which were truly marvellous. These could not come down to stay, to endure, at this stage of your sadhana, but when you’ll have had experience of the Divine—this will be permanent, it is then you will touch the acme of your personality. It is not yet come, but it is fast coming. And the white light descending on you which was also flowing and reaching others was dazzling like, what shall I say—you have seen

* “Your song Nada (Sound) is truly wonderful. And it is a beautiful poem, too, not colourless and poetically wooden like Satyen Datta’s lines in his Bengali reproduction of Mandakranta. As for the inner rhythm, it is surely the Mandakranta Rhythm, less elegiac than the movement of the Meghaduta, but still the same. Your statement of the distinction—in the spirit of the movement as opposed to its body, or rather an immobile clay figure representing the mobile body (for that is what Satyen Datta’s reproduction comes to)—is, I believe, quite accurate.”

snowy mountain-tops reflecting dazzling white light, haven't you?"

"Yes, Mother," I said in great joy

"The light I saw round you was like that," the Mother said, "It was a descent of Power—Power—Power concentrated "

"It is so pleasing to me," Mother went on, "to see true and rapid growth in people, to see them expanding and rising to heights, to rise and swell and grow—in every possible direction "

"But how about being ambitious, Mother?" I asked "For sometimes I feel I am so irretrievably ambitious by nature . "

"I always blame people for not being ambitious enough," countered the Mother. "I always tell people—'Be more ambitious—ambitious to grow, ambitious to become a divine warrior, ambitious to achieve things really worthwhile.' The only thing is, the human limitations must be consciously transcended. Otherwise unimpeded true growth is not possible "

"I have lately had some inexplicably and, if I may say so, curiously vivid feelings, Mother," I said, "I have felt again and again that I must grow and grow as I have never done before, only I must purge myself of all personal ambition and that ruthlessly My one-pointed aim and endeavour must be, this voice has persistently cried out to me, to dedicate all my gifts for Divine Service And even in my most trying moments in the course of my sadhana, I have never for a moment felt tempted to exploit my capacities for purely personal ends as used to be my wont before My greatest defect in this connection seems to me to be that I am still extremely sensitive to praise even of outsiders and charlatans even, which praise fortunately for me, however, comes my way but rarely, now-a-days—covered as I have become with infamy—as you know."

"What need have you for the appreciation of outsiders, whether competents or charlatans, since *you* know you have come for the Divine sincerely, and that the Divine has accepted you? Let the whole world misunderstand you, how *can* it make even a little difference now?—But you need not look frightfully abashed, Dilip," added the Mother twinkling at me, patting me on the hand, "few artists are there who aren't avid of praise, who don't feel morally convinced that the world has been created to circle round them, and if far more serious defects of your character have had their backs so thoroughly broken, this pertinacious enemy will too certainly be prevailed upon to capitulate, don't you worry As for your difficulties too, they will disappear as shamefacedly as one could wish This, incidentally, I saw once again yesterday as you were singing For as I told you just now, yesterday, while you were producing certain specific notes, I saw you no longer as Dilip, but as Music pure then it was that flashed before me your true being (which, by the way, is an old acquaintance of mine), a splendid being But about this I don't wish to speak *now*. You will yourself know later on."*

* As reported by the author in his language

The Mother changed the topic and added: “Most people are content with what they are—that is to say, with their human mould and limitations, talking a lot of nonsense about ‘being oneself’. But it is only when they realise the Divine that they are face to face with their real selves. We get a partial glimpse of this truth when we see the geniuses working miracles. They achieve the impossible—how?—simply by ceasing to be themselves, transcending their mundane moulds and becoming identified more or less with what they express, embody.”

“When you were singing yesterday,” the Mother continued, “you testified to this once again, when you were no longer yourself, I said ‘but become identified with what you expressed, or rather, with what got expressed through you.’”

I hung on every word that dropped from the Mother’s lips, overjoyed. For the Mother had seldom spoken to me like this.

“It is very remarkable and interesting,” pursued the Mother, “to trace the changes and evolution in your music and creative power. The fund of vital force in you one day suddenly turned and from that day forth your music was fundamentally altered in its character and outlook, you have continued ever since progressively to succeed in expressing what you sang. For instance when you sang your song on Kali the other day, she had actually appeared in the subtle and danced before my eyes, as I had told you, and also the red colour had appeared. When you sang of Krishna, the deep blue colour—which is his colour—had appeared, and just when I invoked him and he was about to respond you stopped.”

“I regret it so much, the Mother,” I said smiling, “I wish I had known.”

“No matter,” said the Mother, smiling, “it will come back later, all in good time. Besides, Krishna is difficult to invoke in this way,—much more difficult than Kali. But what I was emphasising was that you have been succeeding more and more in expressing your theme: the white light which developed yesterday is too an instance in point.”

“I see a most beautiful shimmering golden colour on your face, Mother,” I exclaimed, in great joy, “this morning I saw too, a most lovely green on the wall—most like a lambent flame. But I have never before seen this sort of flashing gold on your face at such close quarters. What does it mean?”

“It shows that your inner vision is developing,” said the Mother with a beaming smile, “and when this power will grow further a new and vivid world will open before your eyes. This is only the beginning, the outer fringe, as Sri Aurobindo wrote to you the other day when you started seeing these colours everywhere round about you, which he advised you to develop.”*

“If you had more of these powers of vision,” the Mother added, “you would

* “Develop this power of that inner sense and all that it brings you,” wrote Sri Aurobindo, in Feb. 1932. “These first seeings are only an outer fringe—behind lie whole worlds of experience which fill what seems to the natural man the gap (your Russel’s ‘inner void’) between the earth consciousness and the Eternal and Infinite.”

N.B. Sri Aurobindo wrote to Sahara Devi on her singing of this evening: “Your singing was wonderful today, your voice has marvellously improved, it had a warmth and richness and variety and power of expression you never showed before.”

have been delighted to see—what I saw the other day while meditating with you—how beautifully certain lovely colours were organising themselves within you; symbolical of the flowering of your creative powers.... It is also so very interesting to me to observe how the musical atmosphere is gradually concentrating round all the participants—to notice how the first amateurish feeling of the *sadhikas* too are vanishing ”

“And I wanted it to be precisely like that, as you know,” the Mother went on. “I want people to come and hear such music here the like of which they can hear nowhere else. I don’t care to have music here to please a few people who have nothing to do or who are easily satisfied ”

“With your blessings, Mother, it will be like that I am sure,” I said, “and one of the reasons is that I do feel the bubbling of such a new power when I sing now-a-days and such new turns of melodies when I compose that I feel convinced thanks to your grace ”

“I want to tell you, Mother, of two very significant dreams I have had of late.” I added after a pause, “One was day before yesterday I dreamt first that I was questioning myself: What will be your relationship with others *after the Realisation*? To this the answer came. you will have a *new* relationship which will be determined by a common seeking—the quest of the Divine ”

“It is not a dream—it is an experience, for the answer is precise and correct,” said the Mother, pleased

“I knew it to be so at once, Mother,” I said overjoyed, “for as soon as I heard this voice I felt such a fervour of devotion that I woke up in joy.”

“I regard this as particularly significant in as much as I have often caught myself wondering how I would react to the friendly approaches of my former friends,” I added, “as also because the problems of friendship have appeared a little difficult—always. What about the intimacies of my many friends to which I used once to respond vividly and on which I still lovingly dwell?—I have often asked myself: To all these questionings this voice gave a reply which, curiously, gave me deep peace—not that the answer was in any way remarkably striking or new or original—but that it came home to me with a curious and altogether new force—like a force of realisation, almost.”

“I have told you before that such dreams are symbolical of realisation,” the Mother said “And what is the other?”

“I saw as though I was sailing on board a boat bound for Europe,” I said, “where applause and reception were awaiting me. I suppose I saw this because I have of late received some interesting and glowing accounts from my friends Udaysankar and Timirbaran to which I have given some publicity in the Press, congratulating them on their getting on so famously in Europe, which work I once deeply valued. It gave me a sort of wish-fulfilment too, maybe, for I must own I have, sometimes, felt a short-lived stir within me—particularly on receipt of some letters from Europe wishing me to come to Europe on a lecture tour—for which I do feel a little ashamed. But let that pass. To come back to the dream:

“It was a most cogent sort of dream, Mother,” I continued, “for at first I found a sort of ticklish sensation on the neck. But as soon as the boat weighed anchor, I felt a deep melancholy—a sense of utter futility—an indefinable poignant nostalgia for something precious and beyond my reach. By the time the steamer touched the next harbour my anguish had become all but unbearable, when something very remarkable happened

“I ruminated on the successes of all such vain egoistic missions and a deep dissatisfaction seized hold of me. I lost faith in my so-called self-imposed mission, and began asking myself the wherefore of it all. Why must I sweat thus—as I used to, once—for fame and name and art and so forth? To what end? Why even move heaven and earth to convince Europe that Indian music is great? Why such a tremendous expenditure of my precious energy to compass something which leaves the eternal hunger of the heart unappeased?—Why—why—why?—surged up all around me, when suddenly your image, Mother, flashed—with that of Sri Aurobindo, and I heard a voice within me saying: There—there you must go, your life’s work awaits you there and not in the garish unreality of such transitory applause and volatile self-satisfaction. For what use is it all if the Divine remains veiled—unrealised? What use is your ambition if it is not directed towards the Divine Realisation?—And I found the key to my misery, Mother, and I left the ship for refuge at your feet. Does it not show how much I have changed in the last few years?”

“It does of course,” replied the Mother, pleased. “And as for your questioning about ambition, too, it was quite right. I have told you that ambition in itself isn’t a bad thing at all. Only it must be well-directed. Let it be your ambition to be content with nothing but the highest.”

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(Revised and approved and slightly altered by Sri Aurobindo on 11 7 32)

SOUND

Who is she, the Formless, flaming and hurtling through
the sky in the flashes of the lightning?

Who is she, the Fearless, clanging in the breath of the
storm-wind and the music of the tempest?

Who is there dancing sombre in the roar and the
swaying orgies of the ocean?

Who is there resonant in the ululation on high
and monster drum-beats of the thunder?

Who is the ravishing one that comes pouring as rain
in a melodious murmur and patter?—

Like unto a Mother of Peace responding to the child-soul

of her devotee in his heart's still hush?
 All the world breaks into a chant of love
 "While still fear trembles, O Thou Terrible,
 What radiance elysian rainest Thou on us after the anguish
 Of the outcry and the black flame of the burning?"

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(Translation corrected by Sri Aurobindo)

EAST OF THE RISING SUN

BUT I would go far out to the east of the rising sun
 Where morning's dove-grey mists from emptiness are spun
 And Silence bears its echo and Night in a looking-glass
 Sees the unlit shadows of Dayhood stealthily come to pass

Bright were the colours of earthdawn, empty gay and bright.
 But my lips ever craved for the goblet brimmed with the lack of light.
 Nesh and green were the woodways, rhythm-curved at the beck of Time:
 Bound for the stirless axle, up the time-quelling steep I would climb

September 19, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment. Very beautiful—perfect in rhythm and expression and suggestion; the light and colour are admirable

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

ता योधिष्ठमभि गा इन्द्र नूनमप. स्वरुषसो अग्न ऊळ्हा ।
दिशः स्वरुषस इन्द्र चित्रा अपो गा अग्ने युवसे नियुत्वान् ॥

(R1g Veda. 6 60.2)

Ye two warred over the cows, the waters, Swar, the dawns that were ravished, O Indra, O Agni, thou unitest (to us) the regions, Swar, the brilliant dawns, the waters and the cows. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 141)

भिनद् वलमङ्गिरोभिर्गृणानो वि पर्वतस्य दृहितान्यैरत् ।
रिणग्रोधांसि कृत्रिमाण्येषां सोमस्य ता मद इन्द्रश्चकार ॥

(R1g Veda, 2 15.8)

He, hymned by the Angirasas, broke Vala and hurled apart the strong places of the hill; he severed their artificial obstructions; these things Indra did in the intoxication of the Soma. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 141)

स्वर्यद् वेदि सदृशीकमर्कैमहि ज्योती रुरुचुर्यद् वस्तोः ।
अन्धा तमांसि दुधिता विचक्षे नृभ्यश्चकार नृतमो अभिष्टौ ॥

(R1g Veda, 4.16.4)

When by the hymns of illumination (*arkath*) Swar was found, entirely visible, when they (the Angirasas) made to shine the great light out of the night, he (Indra) made the darkneses ill-assured (i.e. loosened their firm hold) so that men might have vision (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 143)

यस्मै त्वं सुकृते जातवेद उ लोकमग्ने कृणव स्योनम् ।
अश्विनं स पुत्रिणं वीरवन्त गोमन्त रयि नशते स्वस्ति ।

(R1g Veda, 5 4.11)

He for whom, because he does well his works, O Agni Jatavedas, thou wiltest to make that other world of bliss, attains to a felicity full of the Horses, the Sons, the Heroes, the Cows, all happy being (SABCL, Vol 10, p 144)

O Knower of the Births, the man perfect in his works for whom thou createst that other blissful world, reaches a felicity that is peopled happily with his life's swift-nesses, his herds of Light, the children of his soul, the armies of his energy. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 375)

The doer of great deeds for whom thou shalt make that happy other world, O knower of all things born, reaches in peace a wealth in which are the Horses of swiftness, the Ray-Cows, the Son, the Heroes (SABCL, Vol 11, p 211)

इन्द्र स्वर्षा जनयन्नहानि जिगायोशिग्भि पृतना अभिष्टिः ।
प्रारोचयन्मनवे केतुमहामविन्दज्ज्योतिर्बृहते रणाय ॥

(Rig Veda, 3.34 4)

Indra who winneth Swar, bringing to birth the days, has conquered by those who desire (*uśigbhuh*), a word applied like *nr* to express men and gods, but, like *nr* also sometimes especially indicating the Angrirasas) the armies he attacks, and he has made to shine out for man the vision of the days (*ketum ahnām*) and formed the Light for the great bliss, *avindaj jyotir brhate ranāya* (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 144)

Indra, Swar-conquering, bringing to birth the days assailed and conquered by the desires (the Angrirasas) these armies (of the Dasyus), he made to shine for man the knowledge-vision of the days (*ketum ahnām*), he found the Light for the vast enjoyment . (SABCL, Vol 10, p 220)

कुविदङ्ग नमसा ये वृधासः पुरा देवा अनवद्यास आसन् ।
ते वायवे मनवे बाधितायाऽवासयन्नुषस सूर्येण ॥

(Rig Veda, 7.91.1)

The gods who increase by our obeisance and were of old, without blame, they for man beset (by the powers of darkness) made the Dawn to shine by the Sun (SABCL Vol 10, p 147)

तद् देवानां देवतमाय कर्त्वमश्रथन् दृळ्हाव्रदन्त वीळिता ।
उद् गा आजदभिनद् ब्रह्मणा वलमगूहत् तमो व्यचक्षयत् स्व ॥

(Rig Veda, 2 24 3)

That is the work to be done for the most divine of the gods, the firm places were cast down, the fortified places were made weak, up Brihaspati drove the cows (rays), by the hymn (*brahmanā*) he broke Vala, he concealed the darkness, he made Swar visible . (SABCL, Vol 10, p 148)

नकिरेषा निन्दिता मर्त्येषु ये अस्माक पितरो गोषु योधा ।
इन्द्र एषा इहिता माहिनावानुद् गोत्राणि ससृजे दसनावान् ।
सखा ह यत्र सखिभिर्नवगैरभिङ्वा सत्वभिर्गा अनुगमन् ।
सत्य तदिन्द्रो दशभिर्दशग्वै सूर्यं विवेद तमसि क्षियन्तम् ॥

(Rig Veda, 3.39.4-5)

None is there among mortals who can blame (or, as I should rather interpret, no mortal power that can confine or obstruct) these our fathers who fought for the Cows (of the Panis); Indra of the mightiness, Indra of the works released for them the strongly closed cow-pens; when a friend with his friends the Navagwas, following on his knees the cows, when with the ten, the Dashagwas, Indra found the true Sun (or, as I render it, the Truth, the Sun), dwelling in the darkness (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 150)

None is there among mortals who can blame (or, as it rather seems to me to mean, no power of mortality that can confine or bind) our ancient fathers, they who were fighters for the cows, Indra of the mightiness, Indra of the achievement released upward for them the fortified pens,—there where, a comrade with his comrades, the fighters, the Navagwas, following on his knees the cows, Indra with the ten Dasha-gwas found that Truth, *satyam tad*, even the sun dwelling in the darkness. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, pp. 184-85)

(*To be continued*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

STRAY THOUGHTS

IN painting composition is nothing but playing with space.

In drama one plays with time and space. In music with time in space

30 7 1957

*

When God made man the innermost heart of the Godhead was put into man.

*

Where does the flame go when the candle is put out?

3 8 1957

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

A LETTER

You have gone to some length introducing yourself. This was unnecessary. I remember you quite well. Our friendship has been for years, and all the twists and turns of your fortune are known to me. The only piece of news to me is that your elder brother has passed away and that you and D (another person I have never forgotten) have been carrying on a powwow on various Aurobindonian topics, about which you want my views. You mention ‘controversy’, but you haven’t detailed the points over which you and your friend fall out. I hope my answers will make both of you feel ‘a Daniel come to judgment’.

Your first question bears on—in your own words—‘Self (Paramatman), Atman (Soul), Psychic Being, Jiva and Jivatman.’

To my understanding, Paramatman is the transcendent status of what in the universal is Atman. Both terms denote the ‘Self of selves’, the one essential being in all—infinite and eternal. Only in popular parlance is Atman called ‘Soul’ and related to individuals. In this parlance Jiva is any living creature and particularly the ‘soul’ of a human creature. What seems indicated is the individual life which can survive the body. Popularly, such a Jiva is also termed Atman. In current non-Aurobindonian philosophy, the Jivatman is the individual form of the universal Atman and is at the back of all our psychological parts: it is the individual self which is to be freed and identified with the cosmic Self which too is deep-hidden in us. In Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy Jiva and Jivatman are two names for the same entity and this entity is not within us but above in the superconscient realm which Sri Aurobindo calls ‘overhead’. It does not participate in the changing evolutionary world but presides from beyond it over our existence in the midst of change and evolution. Its delegate here below is the Psychic Being which develops in birth after birth and seeks to manifest divinity through mind, life-force and body and at the ripest stage to express divinity directly through itself as well as to unite with the Jivatman.

Your second question concerns ‘the difference between the Soul and Psychic Being’. You add: ‘It is said that even animals, birds and trees have Soul but not Psychic Being. The Mother said that Russia’s Stalin had no Psychic Being.’

Let me start with the last statement. The Psychic Being has a role to play only in an evolutionary process as on earth. There is no evolution in the supra-terrestrial planes, for these planes are ‘typal’. One aspect or another of the Ultimate Being’s potentialities is set forth in such a plane which is a universe peopled with interacting individualities. Constant change is there but no progression from a lower to a higher level of consciousness. The typal planes corresponding to our common humanity are the subtle-physical, the vital and the mental. Sometimes the beings of these planes not only intervene on earth, as they often do, but also incarnate here. Stalin was one of them. He came from a world of forces which Indian occult tradition knows as that of Asuras, a domain of the vital plane where functions a cold and cunning, calculating and cruel power of mind. Another ‘hostile’ type is the Rakshasa, a power equally

ruthless but reckless rather than sly, boastful instead of underhand, openly devouring in place of subtly ruining with some specious pretence. Such a type we see in Hitler. He was not the Rakshasa incarnate but a human being whom the Rakshasic agency had made its instrument of falsehood. That is why he used to have repeated nervous breakdowns, unlike Stalin who seems to have fully digested, as it were, the formidable non-human force while Hitler may be said merely to have ingested it from time to time. I suppose that there was a Psychic Being in him but thrust utterly into the background by the often invading monstrous misleader.

Now to "Soul" and "Psychic Being". Soul is the divine principle present in all that lives, holding all potentialities of God's manifestation. Gradually from this "spark" an individual formation takes place: that formation is the growing Psychic Being. It is not true that there is nothing of it in trees and animals. Flowers are the psychic expression in the plant world. And surely the higher animals definitely show the play of the Psyche. A dog acting with unabated love and fidelity towards its master, even though the master may beat and ill-treat it, is a superb example of the Psychic in a particular non-mental field.

In the third place you have inquired: "Please explain the seat of the Soul and Psychic Being in the human body. It is said in the Upanishads that Soul is the Spiritual Flame the size of a human thumb in the centre of the chest deep within. Are Soul and Psychic Being joint twins or separate?"

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Upanishad's "Purusha no bigger than the thumb of a man" is the Psychic Being, what he calls the Chaitya Purusha or Antaratman, the Inner Soul. Its seat is behind the place where we feel the emotional heart to be: the middle of the chest. From somewhere deep in this location the Psychic Being is felt as acting—giving the right guidance at all moments. The sense of it is as of a warmth and a glow turned spontaneously towards the Divine whose presence is to it both within and without, a presence of which it is itself a projection. Sri Aurobindo has characterised the quality of the Psychic Being as "sweetness and light". We may understand from the fact of Agni, the Divine Flame, being centred in the deep heart that strength also is a psychic characteristic—the strength of a quiet intensity. In a general manner, the Psychic Being is spoken of as the Soul in each of us. Strictly speaking, it is a progressive individual formation from the basic divine principle in the evolution which is the Soul. Thus it cannot be considered separate from the Soul but can be distinguished from it in terms of individualisation.

Now for your final statement: "Does the Karma theory apply to the Soul or to the Jivatman? What is the difference between the human soul and the Jivatman? Is it true that Sri Aurobindo believed that only Brahman (the Self) exists behind every being and thing and that the world is Brahman's *Lila* (Play) but this *Lila* is a reality and not a dream or illusion?"

The Karma theory is relevant only to the evolutionary process. As the Jivatman is above this process, it cannot be subject to Karma. The theory applies only to the Psychic Being in the course of the many embodiments. But the Psychic Being itself

cannot carry the Karma-impressions with it. It has always been a puzzle to me as to who or what carries them. All the sheaths—mental and vital no less than the physical—dissolve ultimately. So who or what could be the carrier? The Karma-impressions accompany the Psychic at each new embodiment, but from where?

As I have said before, the Jivatman is our reality above the plane of evolution—rather our reality in the overhead dimension. The human “soul” represents it on earth.

Brahman is indeed the ultimate reality of all that exists, the ground of all being and becoming. Brahman is both static and dynamic. Its dynamic nature assures that the world-play (*Lila*) is not an illusion, but one can say that in the form in which we generally know it it is a “delusion”, the true nature of the ultimate reality is covered up by it. By Yoga this nature is known.

We may also affirm that Brahman in relation to the world it has formed can be known as the Lord of the world, the Super-Person with whom our personal being can come into contact and communion and from whom we can receive love and guidance, illumination and purification and finally transformation of all our parts. Brahman as the Super-Person takes a special role in earth-history as the Avatar, the direct incarnation of the Divine at critical junctures of evolution and as the Vibhuti, the indirect manifestation in which the Divine stands at the back and inspires from there the personality in front who feels the enlightened drive from behind without knowing who the inspirer is. One may be religious and feel that God is impelling one, but one may well be intellectually something of an atheist and materialist and still be driven by the Divine if one’s being is somehow open to forces beyond the world. It may even be that the Divine, in order to bring about a new dispensation, chooses just such an instrument. I believe Lenin was a Vibhuti driven to make an end of old Russia. At the present moment Gorbachev has been chosen to get rid of the perversions of Leninism that have occurred since Lenin’s death. He strikes me as the supreme Vibhuti of our age. And the greatest Avatar of all ages—Sri Aurobindo—who has laid the foundation of a luminous future—is now acting through him in the international political field to break the moulds of ignorant division. The future towards which Sri Aurobindo set his force working in that field is showing its face through Gorbachev’s.

(4 10 1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

APROPOS OF 29 FEBRUARY 1956

An Interview

In your opinion what is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's contribution to the people of Pondicherry, to the country and the whole world? How will the human race be fulfilled in their work? What does the new millennium mean for us?

Your question is very comprehensive and I do not know if it can really be answered in one short session. But I will try to touch upon just a few aspects.

Let us first talk about Pondicherry. And the context is Sri Aurobindo's arrival here on 4th April 1910, in the afternoon, by the steamer SS Duplex.

Sri Aurobindo came here and took shelter in Pondicherry. It was apparently to escape from the British clutches that he came here, seeking political safety. But actually he had received the divine command, *adesh*, and that brought him to Pondicherry. At that point of time, perhaps unknown to him in its details, was the avatic work he had to initiate. In that sense it was not he who took shelter in Pondicherry, but it was Pondicherry that took shelter in him.

Sri Aurobindo called Pondicherry the place of his retreat, the Cave of Tapasya. Pondicherry has that ancient tradition of doing Yogic sadhana. It is said that Rishi Agastya is the guardian spirit of this place. There was a Vedic school of learning here and hence it is also called Veda Puri.

Puducheri or New Town was known as Poduka to the Greek philosopher Ptolemy of the 2nd century AD.

But with the arrival of Sri Aurobindo Pondicherry became New Town in its true sense. It has undergone a totally different transformation. Prior to his coming here the city was a ghost town. It was a cemetery with its full complement of ghouls. Deserted streets, sleepy population, shops of cheap wine, ruled by ruffians,—that was the condition during the French regime. The ideals of Liberty, Fraternity, Equality were not known to the crude bureaucracy, and poverty and precariousness had full sway over the town. A decadent feudalism had sucked the vitality of the people. The life here was immersed in full *tamas*. It was a God-forsaken place, without any hope in it.

It is to this place that now honour goes for being one of the most progressive and dynamic centres of activity. Commerce is flourishing; modern industry has taken deep roots, the professional population is increasing and is yet attracting newer and brighter talents from outside, even from abroad. The growth is so fast that it is becoming more difficult to cope with the ever-growing demands of modern industrial organisations. Infrastructure developments need a concerted effort to meet the expectations of these complex operations. Now prosperity is bursting at the seams, to the degree that the official machinery is unable to manage it.

Pondicherry is today a cosmopolitan place and has its own distinct flavour. Great experiments are being constantly tried here. The international City of Dawn, the

dream-vision of the Mother that has come to reality in Auroville, has no parallel in the world. Perhaps there is a deeper reason behind this and it may be worthwhile to appreciate it. Even in a most superficial sense we may inquire if it has not given employment to a large number of persons. Has Pondicherry not come on the international map?

When the Mother came here in 1920, returning from Japan to stay here for good, she at once felt that she was entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo,—even as the boat bringing her here was two nautical miles away from the shore. We constantly live in that aura, even perhaps not knowing it.

But the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is not confined only to this place; it is there for the sake of the country as well as for the sake of the world, for humanity. Perhaps, more appropriately, it is all in the will of the Divine.

The world itself has now become a global village. Conquest of space, information technology, genetic sciences, improvement of health, rapid growth in professional fields, the speedy and efficient development in industrialisation, trade, commerce, banking, management, are just a few outer manifestations of the collective mode of life into which more and more we are entering. And this is happening in every nook and corner of the world. Not that there are no problems, of drug trafficking, juvenile crime, terrorism on an unprecedented scale, constant skirmishes and clashes of the worst kind, of pollution, exploitation, human degradation. But from a deeper perspective these seem to be of a transient kind. Not that one should not be vigilant about such matters lest we do stupid things, but there need not be worrisome concern if we are sincere in our basic approach.

A firmer material basis for spiritual growth on such a dimension is something new in the entire history of mankind, something very welcome, something marvelous. The visible signs of the great work are there for all of us to see. Yes, we are living in a new millennium, *nava yuga*, that has brought a new dynamism of the spirit to our life, into our life. Such vast social changes take place only if a higher power can enter into life and mould it in its operative purpose and determination.

A society is shaped by its rishis and yogis, by mahatmas, swamis, the enlightened leaders, open-minded and open-hearted souls of the future, strong forerunners and pioneers, and it is in their tapasya, in their sacrifices that a new order is born. We are in the period of this renaissance and we must be thankful to the bringers of that prosperity, of every kind, to us. Our thanks have to be shown by living in this Hour of God, by standing in the truth of the purpose, in dedicating ourselves to it in all purity and sincerity and frank fearless candidness to its glory and greatness.

It is with that determination that we must see the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

But then what exactly was the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? the aim for which they came here and which they unswervingly bore as their God-given mission? They saw in this creation the Will of the Supreme and did long and arduous yogic sadhana to achieve it, they visualised the possibility of the terrestrial evolution

stepping into a new mode of growth and expansion in the scheme of operation here, of the arrival of divinity itself in our midst in its widening aspects, of the dawn of *satya dharma*, conduct in the truth taking the earthly existence to its completest fulfilment

Well, these are big assertions and it is necessary that we look at them in the totality of their implications. The implications are universal, in fact the implications are divine in nature. Perhaps we may not be really able to gauge their importance and relevance.

This world has always been thought to be a nest of pain, as Keats would say. It is full of evil and falsehood and ignorance and death and these have had their sway all along. The cry of an ardent devotee praying to Govinda for the release of the soul from suffering and distress, to liberate it from this harsh worldly existence, from this death-bound and sorrowful life, *bahu duḥkham iti saṃsāram*, was one of the ancient ways to come out of the difficulty. Moksha was the cherished aim.

But that left the world as it was, sorrowful and death-bound. The individual soul escaped into the infinity of peace and joy but the world remained where it was. The *samādhi* of a Rajayogi, or the *prema* of a Bhakta, the *kāyasiddhi* of a Tantrik are great spiritual achievements, but these are not sufficient to take care of the problem of the world. Lao Tse spoke of absolute Reality which we cannot understand and about which nothing can be gainfully said. It can be experienced but not realised in life here. At the same time, we must assert that this world is not an illusion, nor can it be simply dismissed as something for ever worthless. There is a will behind this creation and our task is to find that will and live in it. It is a world for the habitation of God, *īśa vāsyam idam sarvam*, says the Upanishad and, in a way of speaking, we have to make it fit for His habitation. There is the divine will, *divya* or *param saṅkalpa* behind it.

What is the divine will behind this creation? According to Sri Aurobindo it is the universal incarnation of God in the material existence itself, in the body which is presently a nest of pain, bound by death and ignorance. But the body can open itself to divine life and divine knowledge, it can also know and in it become goldenly immortal, *brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati* as the ancient scripture says. But how is this going to be achieved? If this is a distinct and realisable possibility, then what is the *modus operandi* to accomplish it? Sri Aurobindo's Yoga-Yajna was for this Yoga-Satya. He saw that the only way to do it is to invoke the omnipotent Goddess, Mahadevi, and plead to her to take birth in human form. It is she who alone can work out the transforming miracle. To the earth's dumb need must be brought down a radiant power which can take charge of this mortality and recreate it in the splendour of Truth and Consciousness and Delight, in Sachchidananda, the Triple Glory of the Transcendent.

Has this happened? Yes, it has happened. This has been the Yogic triumph of the omnipotent Goddess herself, or in avataric terms of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in the Will of the Supreme. The Mother always maintained that we are here upon earth

to accomplish the work of transformation and in it is the divine fulfilment for endless progress. It is in that certitude that she declared that a new world is born, a wonderful world of delight. The things that were promised have been fulfilled in it. That marks a unique event in the Annals of the World, the epoch-making event of 29 February 1956. This was on a Wednesday, in the Playground, during the evening meditation after the Mother's class

Why did the Mother select 29th February of every leap year as a Supramental Manifestation Day? Please explain to our listeners and viewers what exactly happened on this day in 1956.

Let me first dispel the impression that the Mother selected 29th February 1956 as the day of Supramental Manifestation. All that we can say is that it happened on that day, on a Wednesday. On Wednesdays the Mother used to take classes in the Playground and there used to be a brief meditation at the end. It happened during the meditation on this day. She was anticipating that something would happen soon and a few others also had a kind of vague intuition of the event likely to take place in that year. She had given earlier an indication to that effect. But there was never a question of selection, not at all. Celebrating its occurrence, its anniversary every leap year is then quite understandable.

Well, to describe it briefly. During the meditation the Mother saw that there was a golden door separating the world from the Divine. As she looked at the door she at once knew, and willed, in a single movement of consciousness that *the time had come*. It was a will and not a thought or deliberation. She at once knew that the time had come. Lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer she struck one blow, one single blow, and the massive door was shattered to pieces. Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow. That is how she describes it. She wrote it down on a piece of paper on the same day after returning to her room.

The Upanishadic golden lid was removed and the divine Illumination flooded the subtle physical of the earth. Now in it shall grow here the Law of the Truth, Satya Dharma.

It happened on a Wednesday. In the South there seems to be a belief that Wednesday is more golden than gold. For the sake of Wednesday one will even forgo gold. Well, by taking a sudden leap, that *hiranmaya* or golden Supermind did manage to be in time to catch the golden Wednesday!

Afterwards the Mother wrote the message which was later distributed in 1960:

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

That is the significance of the great event. Maybe we can appreciate it better in the context of the spiritual history of the earth.

In the deepest sense it is concerned with the possibility of a divine life with all its progressive richnesses here itself, in this mortal world, *mṛtyuloka*. There were a few attempts made earlier on an individual level, as an aspect of spiritual realisation but not on a collective level as an aspect of manifestation. In the Vedic times Rishi Agastya tried to transform his body but found it difficult. The body could not hold the transcendental splendour in it; it was *atapta tanu*, unbaked vessel. The golden body of Agni, *hiranya tanu* or *divya tanu*, remained only a heavenly grandeur. Rishi Vamadeva lived a life of sixteen years in the state of immortality and finally had to give it up. The Greek mystic Pythagoras had a thigh of gold, indicating that a part of the lower subconscious nature had been transformed. Occultists and saints talked about the glorious body but it was a far-off possibility,—meant not to be realised presently. Now the yoga-tapasya of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has changed the whole thing. Their entire endeavour was to fix the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo found that it was coming but not staying here lastingly; it was coming and going and could not remain for too long in the body. But then in a supreme Yogic bid he fixed it in his body on 5th December 1950 and made it a permanent base for its universal operation. Not too long after this unparalleled Yogic action, just within six years of this Great Act of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother accomplished the miracle by smashing the golden door that separated the world from the Divine. Such is the spiritual meaning of the action of the incarnate Power, of Mahashakti, the omnipotent Goddess.

Now a new world is waiting at our doorstep, waiting to be called in. To prepare ourselves to receive it, and to be a part of it is our responsibility.

That, in my view, is the significance of this day, 29th February 1956.

Would you please explain in this context the importance of the four aspects of the Divine Mother, the four leading powers and personalities that have stood out in this universe?

You are asking a difficult question. In the tradition of the Upanishads, the disciple approaches the Rishi and solicits him for the Knowledge of the Eternal, Brahman. I do not have any personal knowledge through spiritual experience about these four aspects of the omnipotent Goddess, her powers as Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, Perfection—Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati. I don't think we can speak about them in the manner of a Rishi. But we may try to understand something of these powers from what Sri Aurobindo has written about them in his little magnum opus *The Mother*. This answer of mine has therefore severe limitations; it is essentially paraphrasing *The Mother*. But perhaps it might help us at least to mentally understand something of the eternal Truth given to us by him.

If, *en passant*, we are to hazard a guess as to which books of Sri Aurobindo will live for the millennia to come, then we might say that these are his supremely

revelatory epic *Savitri*, the grandest formulation of the vision of new humanity given in *The Life Divine*, and the neo-Tantrik scripture of the integral yoga, his *The Mother*. It is in this Tantra Vidya that we meet the four great aspects of the supreme executive Power of the Divine not only as presences but also as embodied persons

The concept, so to say, of the four aspects of the Mother as given to us by Sri Aurobindo is not altogether new. But it puts in focus the active powers that are presently operating in this creation. In the Vedic tradition,—and also in that of the Gita,—it is the Purusha who is represented in his several expressions for upholding the universe. But Sri Aurobindo sees them as might, powers, aspects of one transcendental Shakti.

The hierarchy of these powers is something like this. At first we have the Original Transcendental Shakti, call her if you like *parātpara*, Aditi, omnipotent Goddess, Mahadevi, or Consciousness-Force or Chidshakti or the Divine Mother who is closest to us. What we describe as Nature or Prakriti is only the outward aspect of the supreme executive force. Nearer to us but above she is the supramental Mahashakti. She has the power of divine omniscience and divine omnipotence, Knowledge and Will. On an intermediate plane she is Mahashakti of the triple world of Ignorance. It is here that the four powers of this Mahashakti operate and govern the evolutionary world.

Maheshwari is the Power of Wisdom. She, with her knowledge, opens us to the worlds of Sachchidananda. Hers is a personality tranquil and wonderful, calm, one who knows everything, comprehends everything. She is Mother to all, even to the hostile, to gods and to men and to demons. In her wisdom she has always with her the divine concern.

Mahakali is Force and Strength. She rushes with divine impetuosity to shatter all limits, destroy all obstacles. She is the Warrior of the Worlds, her spirit tameless and her action straight and frank. To knowledge she gives a conquering might.

Mahalakshmi is the Power of eternal beauty, of charm, harmony, love, sweetness. In our relationship with her is our profound happiness and she is one who lavishes the riches of the spirit when we open to her. God-plenty and God-abundance are her special gifts to us.

Mahasaraswati is the Mother's Power of Work. Order and perfection are what she brings to all that she does and supports. Attention to details is her untiring concern. She is strong, she is attentive and conscientious, she is skilful and efficient in all that she undertakes to do. Her work is flawless and in its technicalities and minutiae nothing is forgotten. She is kind, smiling, close, helpful and is the most easily approachable.

We do not have any such description of the Powers of the Supreme in the Veda. The Gita speaks only of Para Prakriti and Yoga Maya. But the elements of these powers can be traced in them also. The Vedic Purusha Sukta is a Hymn of Sacrifice of the Divine Being. When it talks of the four parts of that Being, we then at once see that Mahaeshwari is his head, Mahakali his arms, Mahalakshmi the heart, and

Mahasaraswati the feet. In the four orders of society of the Gita we have a correspondence of Maheshwari as the Brahmin, Mahakali the Kshatriya, Mahalakshmi the Vaishya, and Mahasaraswati the Shudra. It is in this Chaturvarna established since ancient time, as the Gita also declares, that we see psychological justification for the fourfold soul-force operating in the world. That in the present mode of existence is an aspect of the divine functioning itself and behind it there is the eternality of the transcendental Mahashakti herself.

Take any society and any time in the history of civilisation and we recognise that these four aspects have always been present. There have been Brahmins all over the world and workers and businessmen and heroic people and warriors. Men of learning, men of adventure and mighty action, men of commerce and trade, men of professional skills,—where are, or in a dynamic culture, when were they absent? Plato and Einstein were Brahmins; Julius Caesar and Eisenhower were Kshatriyas, Henry Ford and Bill Gates must be considered as Vaishyas, so too the unnamed builders of Hagia Sophia and the New York skyscrapers as Shudras. The essential qualities behind them all are universal and are the manifestations of these Four Powers.

The present degradation of Chaturvarna in India is a totally unacceptable distortion. It has become so because of the heavy *tamas* that spread over the country for the past several centuries and there is nothing really Indian in it. It has to go. It has, on the basis of what is called caste, which was never there, reduced rather fissured the country into smaller and smaller bits. But this illegitimate division can go away not by choices and preferences, by laws or edicts or ordinance, nor by priority promotions. It has to go by a reorganisation of our society in the values of knowledge, strength, harmony, perfection. Each one has to recognise the basic precept, the *dharma*, the inner working of one's own soul and act in it. Well, that is how I understand the role of the four aspects of the Mother in upholding the order of the society. It is based on inalienable psychological principles and any departure from them will have its disharmonious consequences.

But in the Yogic vision and experience of Sri Aurobindo there are also the higher powers of the omnipotent Goddess who have not yet come down into the evolutionary play. These can come down only when the Truth-dynamism of the Transcendent, the creative Supermind, descends into it. This has now happened and there shall be hence the multifold order, far beyond the Chaturvarna System, which shall organise life in the meaning and purpose of the Spirit.

Can you please say something about the contact you had with the Mother?

It is unfortunate that I came in contact with the Mother rather late.

But I am also fortunate in yet another sense. I received blessings directly from the Mother on many occasions; I visited the Ashram several times for the Darshan, received messages, received napkins from her, also groundnuts in the Playground.

Yes, my very first contact with the Mother was on 12th December 1950 when

she gave blessings for the first time after Sri Aurobindo's passing away. The message carried Sri Aurobindo's calm and triumphant Samadhi picture, of the God of Light sleeping in a mystery-flame. The envelope in which the photo was put has a beautiful painting in oil, of a mountain rising in its tranquil serenity. The message has the Mother's prayer to the physical body, the inscription that we have now on the Samadhi. It also asserts that whatever Sri Aurobindo had come to do he accomplished fully, that he "attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us". It is necessary that we recognise it and live in it.

Well, this contact of mine with her may sound like that of 50 years of contact, yet I feel that I came in contact with her rather late. Perhaps that is also her way of showering grace on us!

R.Y. DESHPANDE

(N.B.. The author was interviewed by Pradip Kumar Sen for All India Radio Pondicherry and for JVR Cable TV for programmes broadcast on the occasion of 29 February 2000. The presentation given here combines both the interviews.)

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

The Book of Death

AFTER 1945, much of Sri Aurobindo's work on Parts Two and Three consisted of revising what he had written nearly thirty years earlier. His suspension of literary activity during the 1920s had been followed by a long period when most of his attention to *Savitri* was concentrated on what eventually became Part One. The sections that developed into Books Four and Five were also included to some extent in his work during this period. But it was only around 1946 that Sri Aurobindo began to take up again the books or cantos he had previously entitled "Fate", "Death", "Night", "Twilight" and "Day".

We have seen that he took the second canto of an old six-canto version of *Savitri* as a starting-point for "The Book of Fate". After revising the manuscript of "Fate", Sri Aurobindo must have asked his scribe to read to him the next section of the early poem. It was probably at this time that he dictated some revision of the last part of a manuscript of "Canto III: Death", which was used for Book Eight, "The Book of Death".

Under the heading "Death", he had originally narrated not only the day of Satyavan's death, but also Savitri's year in the forest leading up to this event. Savitri's Yoga had not yet been introduced, but the description of her life with Satyavan later became the first canto of "The Book of Yoga". The last manuscript of this section of "Death", which was revised to become Book Seven, Canto One, is incomplete. This version, called "Book III", stops before reaching the day when Satyavan dies. At this point, Sri Aurobindo went back to an earlier "Canto III", whose second half became the manuscript for "The Book of Death".

His dictated revision of the manuscript of "Canto III" is much lighter than his revision of the manuscripts of the books that precede and follow it. It was evidently intended to be only the first step towards the final text of Book Eight. It was, in fact, about "The Book of Death" and the Epilogue that Sri Aurobindo reportedly said, in the last session of his work on *Savitri* in 1950, "We shall see about that later on."¹

Other evidence also suggests that "The Book of Death", in the form in which Sri Aurobindo left it, was not finished. A letter written in 1946 provides a glimpse of his plans for Books Seven and Eight. Here he outlined the structure of Part Two and summarised the progress he had made with it. After referring to the first three books of this part as completed or almost complete, he continued:

Two others, the Book of Yoga and the Book of Death, have still to be written, though a part needs only a thorough recasting.²

“The Book of Yoga” was written in 1947. This included fairly extensive rewriting of the passage from the old “Book III Death” that became the first canto of Book Seven with the long title “The Joy of Union, the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart’s Grief and Pain”. But the passage that was renamed “The Book of Death” remained similar to what it was in 1917-18. Though Sri Aurobindo made minor stylistic changes in a few places and added a number of lines near the beginning and the end, this revision seems to fall far short of the “thorough recasting” he had said this passage needed.

Sri Aurobindo’s reference to “The Book of Death” as having “still to be written” implies that he wanted to do much more with it. One can only speculate about what he had in mind. But as a result of his leaving it substantially as in the original narrative poem, sensitive readers may feel that there is an abrupt change between Books Seven and Eight. The discontinuity is due to the juxtaposition of passages written thirty years apart.

It is partly for this reason that “Death in the Forest” has been called “Canto Three” in some editions of *Savitri*, though Book Eight has no other cantos. The designation of it as “Canto Three” can be taken to refer to the origin of the passage as part of the third canto of an early version of the poem in six cantos.* The footnote necessitated by the anomalous numbering serves to alert the readers to the fact that Sri Aurobindo did not fully work this canto into the final text.

The facsimile in this issue shows the fourth page of the seven-page manuscript of “Canto III Death”. This is the page where the section that has become Book Eight begins. At the top of the page, one can see the point at which six cantos were inserted by Sri Aurobindo when he took up “The Book of Yoga” in 1947.

The first four lines on this manuscript page do not appear in the printed text of *Savitri*. They concluded a passage that has been replaced by the paragraph now found at the end of Book Seven, Canto One. That paragraph in the final version describes the last days of the monsoon, when Savitri’s Yoga begins. But in the early version, there was no such Yoga and the seasons passed in quick succession—all too quickly, from Savitri’s point of view:

Fast the days fled. The rains rushed by, autumn
Hastened his serene pace, winter and dew
Their glories moist or cold ended too soon;
Spring bounded by armed with the cuckoo’s plaint,

* At the place in the manuscript where the present Book Eight begins, a roman numeral “III” was written by the scribe under the heading “Book of Death”, as if “Death in the Forest” was meant to be the third canto of that book. It is possible that when Sri Aurobindo revised this manuscript, he had begun to envisage a description of the Yoga of Savitri, but had not yet conceived of “The Book of Yoga” as a separate book. “The Book of Death” would then have become an expanded version of the whole of the old canto entitled “Death”, and would have been numbered Book Seven. Its first canto might have been similar to the present Book Seven, Canto One. The second canto could have been an account of Savitri’s Yoga much shorter than what was eventually written, while “Death in the Forest” would have been the third canto. But this explanation is purely speculative.

Their careless glances, though ^{his steps} he seemed to her
 & different down's in heartless splendour clad:
 Who hid with his bright hands the death of joy.
 Swiftly the fatal day came striding on → *Both death
death in the forest*

Now it was here in this great golden dawn.
 By her yes sleeping husband lain she sagged
 Into her nest as one about to die
 Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life
 Whose ~~are~~ too rare and spotted with the red:
 Lifting his head above the huge dark stream
 Before he plunges down. She lived again

The whole year, in a swift and eddying race
^{in swift thought he and the day}
^{then she arose and swept down}
 Boarded down to the great goddess simply carved
 By Subhayan upon a forest stone.

What prayer she breathed her soul and ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~regain~~ ^{to} ~~know~~
 Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge
 The infinite Mother watching over her child,
 Perhaps the shrouded voice spoke some still word
 At least she came to the pale mother queen
 And spoke: "For me, that I yearn, it is
 → ~~Here and the aged king and my dear love~~
 I have not gone into the silences
 Of this great forest that munged my thoughts
 With mystery, nor in its green miracles
 Wandered, but this small clearing was my world.
 Now has a strong desire seized all my heart
 To go with Subhayan holding his hand
 Into the life that he has loved and touch
 Herbs he has bred and know the forest flowers.
 And hear at ease the birds and ^{the} scurrying life
 That starts and crosses, rich for rattle of laughs
 And all the mystic whispering of the woods.
 Release me now and let my heart have rest."
 She answered: "Do as thy own mind desires,
 O calm child-sovereign with the eyes that rule."

P
 She actually she rose and
 one year that I have lived with Subhayan
 like on the sacred eye of the great woods
 for the crown ring of the enormous peaks
 under the blue ribs of the forest sky

into those depths he went for his plunge.
 All marks seen and done she had again.

Piercing her heart with beauty of his flowers
 Then summer like a stately king came in
 In opulent purple and in burning gold
 She hated not his mornings and his eves,
 But rather besought that they would linger out
 Their careless glories, though he seemed to her
 Indifferent doom in heartless splendours clad
 Who hid with his bright hands the death of joy
 Swiftly the fatal day came striding on

In the fourth line from the end of this passage—the first line of the page seen in the facsimile—“he” was changed to “his steps” by the scribe at Sri Aurobindo’s dictation, “doom” accordingly became “doom’s” in the next line. These changes, in lines that were later omitted, give a clue to the date of the revision of this manuscript. For they show that the revision was done before “The Book of Yoga” was written—that is, before 1947. In Book Seven, Sri Aurobindo depicts the seasons changing in the course of Savitri’s Yoga, as when autumn arrives at the beginning of Canto Six. Once he had proceeded very far with Book Seven, there would have been no place for the lines quoted above. So the changes he dictated show that he revised this manuscript at an earlier stage, most likely in 1946.

Book Eight begins with a line whose meaning was more obvious in its original context than it is in the final version

Now it was here in this great golden dawn

If one glances at the facsimile of the manuscript, one sees that “it” referred to “the fatal day” mentioned in the preceding line

Swiftly the fatal day came striding on

As the epic is now printed, the line about the approach of the fatal day has disappeared, due to the introduction of several cantos on Savitri’s Yoga replacing the short passage on the passing of the seasons. The sense of “Now it was here” has become less transparent as a result. But even with no direct antecedent, “it” must be the day that was announced at the end of the first canto of *Savitri* after the description of a glorious dawn

This was the day when Satyavan must die

Most of the epic, after the first two cantos, has been a long flashback to the Yoga of Aswapati and the story of Savitri’s life up to this momentous day. The reader, knowing that this is “The Book of Death”, can be expected to understand that “it”

in ‘Now it was here’ is the day of the fated event to which the last several hundred pages have been building up.

Therefore the omission of the full stop at the end of this line in the first three editions of *Savitri* (1951, 1954 and 1970) cannot be regarded as a legitimate emendation of Sri Aurobindo’s own punctuation. In the absence of a full stop, ‘it’ would be indefinite and this line would have to be connected by an understood ‘that’ with the lines that follow it

Now it was here in this great golden dawn
By her still sleeping husband lain she gazed .

But in all four of his manuscripts that have this line, Sri Aurobindo put a full stop after ‘dawn’. He did not delete it when he revised the manuscript marked with his last changes

The facsimile shows that he had written the next few sentences as follows, before he expanded two lines by dictation:

By her yet sleeping husband lain she gazed
Into her past as one about to die
Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life
Where he too ran and sported with the rest,
Lifting his head above the huge dark stream
Before he plunges down She lived again
The whole year in a swift and eddying race
Of memories. Then she arose and service done,
Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved
By Suthyavân upon a forest stone
What prayer she breathed her soul and Doorga knew

Sri Aurobindo’s revision of this passage affected the two places where sentences started and ended in the middle of a line. It illustrates a typical stylistic difference between the earlier and later versions of *Savitri*. This difference is the free admission of enjambment in the older style, in contrast to the technique Sri Aurobindo had perfected by the 1930s and explained in his letters

Savitri is blank verse without enjambment (except rarely)—each line a thing by itself³

The structure of the pentameter blank verse in *Savitri* is of its own kind and different in plan from the blank verse that has come to be ordinarily used in English poetry. It dispenses with enjambment or uses it very sparingly and only when a special effect is intended, each line must be strong enough to stand by

itself, while at the same time it fits harmoniously into the sentence or paragraph like stone added to stone .⁴

In revising the section of his old ‘‘Canto III’’ that was destined to become Book Eight, Sri Aurobindo hardly touched most of the lines that were already consistent with this aspect of the mature technique of *Savitri*. Alterations and insertions are found mainly in places where there was an enjambment to be removed. But these changes and additions often went far beyond the minimum that would have been sufficient for this purpose, resulting in some of the most memorable lines in ‘‘The Book of Death’’

The opening passage provides striking examples of the effect of eliminating enjambments. The second sentence originally ended like this

Lifting his head above the huge dark stream
Before he plunges down

As revised, the concluding half-line has been replaced by a line in which the prospect of the last plunge has a far more overwhelming sense of terrible finality and unfathomable mystery:

Into whose depths he must for ever plunge

The next sentence continued

She lived again
The whole year in a swift and eddying race
Of memories

The complete line in the middle of this has remained intact, but as one of four lines into which the sentence was expanded:

All she had been and done she lived again
The whole year in a swift and eddying race
Of memories swept through her and fled away
Into the irrecoverable past.

This is reminiscent of the corresponding passage at the beginning of Book One, Canto Two, ‘‘The Issue’’. It is in no way inferior to lines such as these

All that she once had hoped and dreamed and been,
Flew past her eagle-winged through memory’s skies.⁵

Most of Sri Aurobindo's dictated revision of "The Book of Death" is found on the first page and can be seen in the facsimile. But two sets of lines do not appear there. One of them consists of twenty lines that were inserted before the last two lines of the canto. The other set of lines relates to the page reproduced in the facsimile, but was written by the scribe on the back of the previous page because of lack of space. An arrow in the left margin indicates the insertion of these lines, which the scribe wrote down as follows

She spoke but guarded lips and tranquil face
As some stray word or some betraying look
Should let pass into the mother's unknowing breast
Slaying all happiness and need to live
A dire foreknowledge of the grief to come
Only the needed utterance passage found
All else she pressed back into her anguished heart
And forced upon her speech an outward peace

The first two lines of this are problematic from the point of view of English and give reason to suspect that Sri Aurobindo's dictation was not taken down altogether accurately. In the first line, "with" was inserted after "but" in 1951 by the editors of the second volume of the first edition.* With regard to the second line, Amal Kiran wrote the following comment when the second edition was being prepared in 1954

Either "As" here is a misreading for "Lest", or "should" in the next line is a misreading for "would" or "might". Otherwise the grammar is faulty. "As" and "should" can't go together here.

There was, in fact, no question here of the manuscript being misread. But other kinds of errors were liable to occur when Sri Aurobindo dictated his lines. Small words such as articles, prepositions and conjunctions were most easily affected. For the scribe cannot have written each word down at the moment when Sri Aurobindo dictated it. He must have remembered a few words at a time and was naturally more prone to forget or confuse the less important words.

In spite of Amal's comment quoted above, "As" remained in the 1954 edition, whose editors only added commas at the ends of the third and fourth lines. "As" was

* The editors of the 1951 edition of Parts Two and Three supplied full stops and commas in several of the dictated lines that appear in the margins and between the original lines of the page reproduced in the facsimile. They also substituted the spelling "Satyavan" for "Suthyavân", which had been Sri Aurobindo's usual spelling of the name when this manuscript was written. Elsewhere they similarly substituted "Savitri" for "Sâvithî" where the manuscript has the latter spelling. "Doorga" in this passage was regularised in the 1954 edition to "Durga", as Sri Aurobindo spelled the goddess' name in Book Seven, Canto Four. It is evident that when Sri Aurobindo dictated his revision, he generally did not concern himself with spelling, just as he often did not dictate the punctuation. He expected his disciples to take care of such details, where necessary, before the poem appeared in print.

corrected to ‘‘Lest’’ in 1970 Thus the first sentence of the dictated passage has been printed in this form since the Centenary Edition

She spoke but with guarded lips and tranquil face
 Lest some stray word or some betraying look
 Should let pass into the mother’s unknowing breast,
 Slaying all happiness and need to live,
 A dire foreknowledge of the grief to come

Later in Book Eight, five lines were omitted due to an oversight when the manuscript was transcribed for the first edition

A tree that raised its tranquil head to heaven
 Luxuriating in verdure, summoning
 The breeze with amorous wideness of its boughs,
 He chose and with his steel assailed the arm
 Brown, rough and strong hidden in its emerald dress

These lines were written by Sri Aurobindo on the otherwise blank reverse side of a page The place where they were meant to be inserted was not indicated on the manuscript, but is fairly obvious On the front side of the page, the last lines are these

But Suthyavân had paused He meant to finish
 His labour here that happy, linked, uncaring
 They two might wander free in the green deep
 Primal mystery of the forest’s heart

The next page of the manuscript begins with lines that describe Savitri watching Satyavan at work:

Wordless but near she watched, no turn to lose
 Of the bright face and body which she loved

The lines on the back of the page provide a natural link between these two sentences and would not fit anywhere else But since the reverse sides of most of the pages of this manuscript are blank, what was written there could easily be overlooked This is what actually happened A systematic study of the manuscripts of *Savitri* was first undertaken in the late 1970s The omitted lines were not discovered until then and have been included in the printed text only since 1993

‘‘The Book of Death’’ is the shortest of the twelve books of *Savitri* Yet the problem of death, representing the ultimate negation of the Spirit’s freedom to

express itself in Matter, is central to the theme of the epic. We do not know how much or in what way Sri Aurobindo would have expanded Book Eight if he had come back to it. But even as it is, its brevity does not contradict its importance in the scheme of the poem.

It is not inappropriate that "The Book of Death" simply presents, through a straightforward poetic narration, the fact of death as it affects the surface human consciousness. It is left to Part Three to explore the deeper questions raised by this "Unreal, inescapable end of things"⁶. Book Eight serves as a gateway to realms beyond, where Savitri's confrontation with the force behind death takes place.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

- 1 Nirodbaran *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* (1988) p. 266
- 2 *Savitri* (1993) p. 733
- 3 *Ibid* p. 727
- 4 *Ibid*, pp. 799-800
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 11
- 6 *Ibid*, p. 588

WHO ARE THE OUTCASTES?

(Holaya Horagihave)

ARE outcastes always found without
And none inside the town?
Pray, tell me, ye who revere God,
Ye men of great renown!

Is not the one an outcaste who
Betrays his master's trust?
And what is he who casts his eyes
On others' wives in lust?

A wretch he is who knows what's right
And yet in doing fails,
So too is one whose ears are closed
To Krishna's glorious tales

The one who fails to pay back loans
Is a mean outcaste indeed,
And he that hath no sense of shame
Is of the selfsame breed

An outcaste he who gives no gifts
Though blest with heaps of wealth
So one who boasts of purity
But always sins in stealth

The man who breaks up happy homes
By malice and by guile,
And one who plots to kill another
Are the vilest of the vile

A foul one he who reveres not
His elders with a bow,
But the worst of outcastes he it is
Who doth not Vitthal love

PURANDARADASS

(Translated by the late B T Acharya)

(Courtesy *Kalyanakalpataru*—September 1961)

RABINDRANATH TAGORE: FROM ROMANTICISM TO MODERNISM

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

TAGORE is generally considered to be a mystic poet, outside India, or we may even say, outside Bengal. This comes from the fact that only a part of his work, which was mainly written in Bengali, has been translated into other languages. In 1913 Tagore got the Nobel Prize for literature. He was the first Asian to be awarded this Prize. He had himself translated some of his poems into English. This formed the English edition of *Gitanjali*, for which he won the Prize. The experience behind these poems is mystical, and it is this that caused Tagore to be marked as a mystic poet.

The mysticism in his poetry is a development of his romanticism. When the mystery and wonder that is the foundation of romantic imagination deepens and becomes the mystery and wonder of the soul, when in the beauty of nature we see the expression of the infinite and the divine, then we can speak of mysticism.

Thou art the sky and Thou art also the nest
O Thou Beautiful! how in the nest thy love embraceth the soul with
sweet sounds and colour and fragrant odours!
Morning cometh there, bearing in her golden basket the wreath of
beauty, silently to crown the earth
And there cometh Evening, o'er lonely meadows deserted of the herds,
by trackless ways, carrying in her golden pitcher cool
draughts of peace from the ocean-calms of the west
But where thine infinite sky spreadeth for the soul to take her flight, a
stainless white radiance reigneth; wherein is neither day
nor night, nor form nor colour, nor ever any word

This is a fine example of his mystical vein. But Tagore did not stop there. He had enough vitality to move with the changing times. Tagore got the recognition of the West in 1913, and in 1914 began the World War I. The old order broke down. And one can say that the modernist way of seeing took hold of the creative arts. A new generation of poets and artists tried to break away from the past. It is not easy to define what modernism is. But we can perhaps say that it is a new attitude of the mind, an attitude which derives from "genuine discontinuities discovered in the world." To the modern mind everything seemed to fall apart. Old ideas were lost, the romantic vision of beauty and love seemed to vanish in thin air. The great relations that seemed to hold together the finite and the infinite, the body and the spirit, disintegrated. Man could live only in the daily, in the tangible and the limited. The only reality was the ephemeral. Modern man had no faith in anything, in any values.

Tagore evolved. He did not break with the past, but he recognised the demands

of the present, the ordinary and the discontinuous. He experimented with new forms, wrote prose-poems about unromantic things. For the boy who did not comply with the bourgeois respectability he wanted to write "the tragedy of a stray dog". Tagore admits that he has not always been able to speak the language of the common man, language which would touch this boy's heart.

The teacher Ambika complained to me,
 "He does not put his mind to reading your poems
 that are in his text-book,
 he is really dull-witted!
 That good-for-nothing tears off the pages
 and says that rats have eaten them up
 Such an imp!"
 I said, "The fault is mine
 A poet who would be of his own world
 would put so vividly a dung-beetle in verse
 that he would not be able to deny it.
 Have I ever been able to write the real truth about the frog,
 or the tragedy of a stray dog?"

Tagore wrote about 'an ordinary girl', about 'a man', about all those who had been denied their existence in the romantic world, about a ship's boy, a broker, a clerk, even insects and worms were no longer exiles from the poetic world. Yet there was doubt in his mind whether he really understood them. (Doubt is an essential element of the modern mind.)

But the world of the spider remains for ever
 closed to me,
 before my eyes there is always a curtain
 that hides the ant's heart

Besides the sense of the eternal he became aware of the sense of changing history.

Like a bubble rose Mohenjo-daro,
 and then vanished under the desert-sand, silently
 Sumer, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt
 appeared bearing great strength,
 in history's arena
 surrounded by time's low fence,
 then was effaced
 like the writing in washable ink
 leaving a few pale marks

His own country, India, was in turmoil India was demanding to be free from the British domination The aspirations of the people were harshly suppressed by Government forces And the poet could not live withdrawn in the world of imagination In a poem in which he reviews his life, he compares the romantic imagination to the music of a one-stringed instrument, *ektara* And he says that he had to take up the war-drum, symbol of his commitment to the struggle against colonial oppression This too is an instance of his modernism where the historical present with real socio-political issues takes the place of the romantic past in the poet's mind Recalling those days of struggle he wrote

On that day in life's battlefield
 the clash of war surged up from all sides
 like the rumbling of rain-clouds
 I had sometimes to drop my *ektara*
 and take up the war-drum
 I had to run in the terrible midday-heat
 through the whirlwinds
 of victory and defeat
 Thorns pierced my feet,
 blood flowed from my wounded breast

His commitment can best be illustrated by a poem he wrote when two political prisoners were shot dead and twenty others were injured by police firing Tagore referred to this event as "homicidal callousness" The poem he wrote was *The Question*

God, you have sent your prophets time and again
 to this callous world,
 they have said, "Forgive one and all!" they have said, "Love!
 Banish malice from your hearts!"
 We revere them, we remember them, yet in these dark days
 we have turned them away with false homage
 I've seen Justice, without the power to prevent the crime of the mighty,
 weep silently, alone
 I've seen young boys running in distress
 striking their heads in agony against unrelenting stones
 My voice is choked now, my flute has lost its tune,
 the prison of the moonless night
 has plunged my world in deep-dark nightmares
 This is why I ask you through my tears,
 "Those who poison your air, those who extinguish your light,
 do you really forgive them, do you really love them?"

Tagore had lost the simple and constant faith of the romantic mind. In the above poem, it is the flute, symbol of sweet romantic music, which has become silent, like the discarded *ektara*. He was assailed by doubts and questionings. He had believed in universalism and the civilising effort of the West. "I had at one time believed," he wrote towards the end of his life, in 1941, when he was eighty, "that the springs of civilisation would issue out of the heart of Europe. But today when I am about to quit the world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether." He had seen the arrogance and abuse of power of British imperialism, he had seen the rise of German Nazism and Italian Fascism. When Mussolini invaded Abyssinia in 1935 he wrote a poem, *Africa*, in which he expressed the view that modern civilisation was a form of savagery.

They came with iron chains,
 they whose nails were sharper than the wolves' claws,
 they came, the man-catchers
 who were more darkly blind than your sunless forests
 The savage greed of the civilized
 laid bare its shameless inhumanity.
 And beyond the seas, in their towns and villages, at that same time,
 church-bells were ringing
 during the matins and the vespers
 proclaiming the glory of the merciful god,
 children were playing in the laps of their mothers,
 and poets were singing
 songs of beauty's adoration

The Second World War did not leave Tagore unperturbed. He saw the world falling apart. Although the war had been raging in Europe yet he knew that India and the rest of the world would not be left in peace. He felt that the quiet scenes of his youth, full of simple delight and peacefulness, would also be shattered. This is expressed in a poem of which I shall quote the last lines

The sugar-cane is cut, beside the stubble
 Two friends indolently amble
 Inhaling the scent as they pass
 Of rain-washed forest and grass
 They are on holiday—
 Met each other by chance in some village by-way
 One of them being newly-wed;
 Their delight in talking seems to have no end
 All around, the *bhati* flowers are in the bloom of youth;
 In the maze of forest paths

Their soft fragrance has wings
 Scattering the ecstasy of late Spring.
 While nearby in a *jarul* tree
 A cuckoo hammers its note dementedly

A telegram comes.
 'Finland pulverized by Soviet bombs '
 (tr Krishna Datta and Andrew Robinson)

He did not lose faith completely in man. Looking at the ruins of civilisation he said: "And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man." He did not finally succumb to the modernist sense of nihilism. He knew that man had not yet got the answers to his questions, he had not yet discovered the meaning of life. Just a few days before his death he dictated a small poem:

The first day's sun
 put the question
 when life first appeared—
 Who are you?
 There was no answer
 Years after years passed by
 The last sun of the day
 uttered the last question
 on the shore of the western sea
 in the quiet evening—
 Who are you?
 He got no answer.

Tagore too got no answer. But this did not mean that man would not get the answer. He never forgot the words of the ancient seers. Echoing them he wrote in one of his last poems:

The sky is full of honey, earth's dust is full of honey.

Honey was the symbol of sweetness and delight. He said that when the moment of death would come, he would leave the earth uttering:

I have adorned my forehead with your dust,
 behind the veils of dark weather I have seen the everlasting light,
 it is in this dust that truth has manifested as joy.
 knowing this I bow down to this earthly dust

Thus we may say that the falling apart of the world, the loss of the romantic vision, did not throw him into utter despair. He saw the ugliness of life, saw unrighteousness and injustice, saw the horrors of war, but he did not lose faith in man or in nature. Nature, he saw, was often deceptive, but it had also its stars, and the path that the stars illumine, is that of the heart. He never lost that faith.

The path that your star shows him
is that of his heart,
it is forever clear,
and it illumines him
with the light of inborn faith

To conclude I would like to say that we have seen here only a small part of this ‘myriad-minded man’. He was not only a poet but also a novelist and writer of short stories. Tagore also wrote plays which were successfully staged in India and abroad. He was an accomplished singer, he wrote many songs and created a new musical genre. And during the last twelve years of his life he produced more than two thousand paintings, although he had no formal education in art. These paintings show the tension of his inner life. They are a far cry from his romantic imagination. A study of these paintings could reveal to us the dark side of his modernism, the inner tensions, the unconscious movements of his soul, the various masks of his personality. These were expressions nearer to the western modernism. Tagore himself said ‘‘My poetry is for my countrymen, my paintings are my gift to the west.’’ In fact it is hardly possible to appreciate poetry if one does not know the language in which it is written. Much is lost in translation. The language of painting is more universal. But in my opinion the paintings do not show the richness and diversity of Tagore’s creative genius. In his poetry, we find the evolution of his imagination which was able to embrace existence in its discontinuity, its brokenness, as well as in its wide spiritual aspect. But unfortunately much of the power and vision of that poetry is bound to be lost to the non-Bengali reader.

(Concluded)

RANAJIT SARKAR

JERUSALEM

O JERUSALEM, you've entered my heart,
I never thought it would hurt to part

Your glowing domes and amber towers,
Shadows and shades in rays sublime,
Reflecting a memory yet ungraspable,
Sieved through the cryptic hands of time

I never thought I'd feel your pulse
Of pain and hope within my veins,
I never thought I'd hear you singing
A hymn to the listening desert planes

Wherever your tawny pathways lead,
Sunstreaked buildings descend and rise,
Stone walls of roseate glory
Raise their arms to the listening skies

Within you a melody streams,
As eager feet long to dance,
In rounds of unifying rhythm,
Gathering in a million dreams

Softly your lids close at eve,
Revealing a world in Seraph-gleam,
Flaming walls kiss the night,
A love only the star-eyed see

Beautiful Jerusalem, I gently bow,
Your blessed soil washed in sorrow,
May your children behold your face
And failures of time turn to Grace.

LINDA

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM—YOGISHRESHTHA

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

ABOUT this time I had a strange talk with one of the warders. As I had grown quite friendly with the non-Bengali warders, they replaced them with Bengali warders. The shifts changed once in four hours, with much noise, so that sleep or quiet rest was not possible.

At night I used to devour *The Life Divine*, Part II, which had also been left with me by my wife, as well as two other booklets, the *Bases of Yoga* and *Lights on Yoga*. All very mysterious and attractive to me, very novel, but much fun. By then I had read and re-read and made my own notes on *The Life Divine*, Part I.

After midnight one Bengali Mussulman warder peeped through the bars, found me reading *The Life Divine*, Part II, the lyrical chapter on Ishvara, the Atman and the Soul. He coughed and drew me into conversation. "You must be reading a good book," he said. I asked, "How do you know?" He said, "From your face." Then I asked him about his *Namaz* that he had just performed. I asked him to tell me why that ritual drill and how that helped him. He smiled, and said that the *Namaz* was a technique to open up the body which he said was "jammed." Curious, I asked him to explain what he meant by our body being "jammed" and what happened when that was made loose. He smiled and said he would answer me on the following night. I anxiously awaited him at midnight next.

Explain he did. "A thrill of joy is experienced when the 'unjamming' takes place." "What happens," I asked him, "to prove that joy?" He said, "The body's hairs stand erect, the heart is filled with happiness." "So what?" was my question next. He replied, "You can see the Divine." Most intrigued, I told him that Islam believed in the Formless Divine. What then was there to see? He smiled and said "Such teachings are meant for the uninitiated so that they do not worship idols. Man makes idols, but God makes man. So idols cannot be God." "What do you see then?" was my next question. "Any Form that you adore. He appears in that Form." He added, "There are some Pirs who preside over the initiation of selected individuals. This is not for the ordinary Muslims. But all must practise the drills laid upon in the *Namaz*, the physical movements. These are designed to loosen the 'jamming'. Faith is supplemented by Grace. Once that stage is reached the individual will always search for and find his Pir."

About this time I had been reading of the "Chakra" centres in the *Bases of Yoga*, *Lights on Yoga* and in Sri Aurobindo's *Letters*. The talk with the semi-educated Muslim warder almost confirming the spiritual probes through an Islamic technique made me recall Sri Aurobindo's reference to the Prophet of Islam as one of the greatest of Yogis.

I started to learn Urdu from one of the Jail warders. In the Books, Parts I to III, I read about the Prophet. It was historical. There was nothing mystical or Yogic in them.

A convict cooked for me—I had a separate kitchen, and officially I was a cook for purposes of good conduct remission. He “assisted” me—but in fact he cooked. I was a Class I convict. The European scale of rations was too much for me, and the four convicts with me, supposed to watch me secretly, and take care of me, had all the excess of my fresh and dry rations. They were my friends, and were changed every two months or so. That way I came to know many murderers, dacoits and even pickpockets, and learnt of their cases. Of over 21, during my stay, only one had lied. He had killed his wife, but had got away with it, getting only 7 years for “grievous hurt” in another case. I found him out while he was explaining his case, mentioning his wife’s death by the way. He broke down on my questioning. I had him removed, the Jailor being willing to keep me contented.

But it was my cook who next helped me with Arabic and the Koran. He had been sentenced to 15 years by a Military Court. I found out the “charges” against him. Under Military Law, familiar to me, his sentences under two counts should have been concurrent. The 10 and 5 years should not have been added up. I drafted an Appeal for him. He did not believe me, but nevertheless signed. The Martial Law Commander’s HQ corrected the sentence as concurrent. At one stroke 5 years of prison life was struck off. He wept with joy, and in return, promised to teach me Arabic provided I could get an Arabic text of the Koran. It was easy as I used to get pocket money of Rs. 100 per month from our High Commissioner to supplement my needs as regards tobacco, and toilet articles. Thus from my dacoit friend I learnt a little Arabic. He also used to read the text and explain to me the passages in the East Pakistan Bengali dialect.

I found nothing about any “Yoga” technique.

I had yet to learn what Sri Aurobindo had meant in that mysterious reference to the Prophet of Islam as a Yogi.

After one year in jail, in November 1962, a “good” edition of the Gita was purchased for me at my expense, duly censored and passed by the DIG, Special Branch, East Pakistan. It was edited by Shri Jagadish Ghosh of Dacca. In Bengali script, it had for me a unique advantage. The long words in Sanskrit were split up into their component parts. I found that I could recollect my grammar. This helped me to get at the meaning of the text on my own, and I must say that I was surprised at the difference in many cases of the Bengali translation by the editor and what I seemed to sense. This experience intrigued me.

Sri Aurobindo’s advice in several of his letters to his disciples, that in matters spiritual one must have a “plasticity” of mind, made me read and re-read the Gita. While I was helped by the *Gitar Bhumika*, which got me back to the basics, I noted my favourite verses. I found quite a few hints for practice too on “meditation” during what I called my “namaz” so that no one then disturbed me. It was a bit difficult when I was put in cells just behind the mental ward. But the doctor of the jail kindly let me have boric cotton. I had my ears plugged by them for over a year. That, incidentally, helped in concentration.

The results were funny to me I could not agree with the chapter headings of the so-called 18 chapters of the Gita The text did not justify these Nor did any of the many Indian and foreign admirers of the Gita, quoted extensively by the editors, explain how the Gita could have been communicated to Arjuna on the battlefield, with the chariot in between the opposing lines After all, I timed the reading to about four hours I may be wrong, but I found my own explanation of this mystery in the last chapters of *The Life Divine*, Part I How spiritual knowledge “descends” in a “torrent” What may take place in seconds or minutes, could in mental rendering take hours The other unusual fact I noticed was that what was taught by a warrior Divine Avatara to a general of armies, had been commented upon only by learned saints and philosophers Was Krishna’s teaching made to “conform” to Hindu ideas? The headings of chapters deepened this doubt

Along with my “Practice”, as suggested by Sri Aurobindo in his *Letters*, and as given also differently in chapters 5 and 6 of the Gita, I started reading from the jail library the Bengali texts of Swami Vivekananda on various types of Yoga These became my nightly reading, and for noting down My afternoon was for my Arabic and Urdu as my instructors were then free from Inspecting Officers as well as from their daily duties Limited within my block of four cells securely guarded, over whose walls on one side I could see a jackfruit tree, watch the jackfruit grow in size from month to month, repeating the process from year to year, I walked up and down, read, and waited

In my Arabic lessons, apart from learning to write that beautiful script, I was interested in the ninety-nine names of the Divine coined by the Prophet From a bearded scholar, a warder, I learnt that the “hundredth” name was to be communicated to a “momin” or one ready for “initiation” by a “Pir” or a spiritually accomplished and gifted Muslim

The ninety-nine names of the Divine I carefully copied in Arabic, each with its meaning In no way were these less adorable than the vibhutis of the tenth chapter of the Gita Vivekananda in his writings had said that “Sachchidananda” was the final conception of the Vedantists, who also proclaimed the Divine Presence in the “Prakriti” The Koran, even though translated ineffectively by my dacoit cook, seemed to hint much more beyond the words A peculiar image formed, that of physics the floating ice was only one-tenth or so of the real ice block

I “pended” my study of Islam, as by 1964, apart from routine, I seemed to be on the edge of discovery after three years of practice of what Sri Aurobindo called in his writing “the Pressure” and then the “Descent” In science one accepts a “hypothesis” and follows up confirming or rejecting the “hypothesis” I had accepted Sri Aurobindo’s suggestions as a “hypothesis”, had sincerely given it a trial, particularly as the privacy from roving eyes during meditation time had been the attraction But the result in April 1964 came as a surprise, pain reappearing, constant working, headache, penetration, peace during a period of six months till my release on 31 October 1964,—this was my condition

But I had no clue till then of the Prophet as a “Yogishreshtha”

On retirement, I aimed, among others, to find an answer to my query about Islam and particularly on the Prophet as a “Yogi”

The Prophet called the path he prescribed to those who believed in him “Islam”, submission, or surrender to God.

His life, the early Caliphs (Abu Bekr. Omar I, Othman), the Moawiya-Ali conflict, the Omayyad Caliphs of Damascus, the Abbasid Caliphs of Bagdad, the Omayyad Caliphs of Cordova in Spain, the Mongol Hulagu’s slaughter of the last Abbasid Caliph in 1258 at Baghdad, cover a vast historical panorama in time and space. From 570 A D., the probable date of the birth of the Prophet, it was about 700 years if we are to exclude the Turkish Caliphs who did not belong to the Koreish tribe. By that time Islam prevailed from Spain in the West (it had reached the Loire in Southern France) to India in the East.

Extensive and detailed again are the commentaries on Islam

Many sects arose soon after the passing away of the Prophet on 7 June 632. The Prophet himself is reported to have said that there would be 73 such schools and sects, and only one would be true.

Before turning to the Prophet as a “Yogishreshtha”, I wanted to be clear on the fundamentals of Islam. Here is what I found

It is a divinely revealed religion

The Prophet was the last of a succession of Prophets divinely inspired

The Koran is the Book of God. It exists in the *Highest* Heaven. It was revealed to the Prophet by Gabriel in the *Lowest* Heaven

Tradition (*Hadith*) containing the sayings and manner of life of the Prophet (*Sunna*), the use of analogy (*qiyas*) as applied to the Koran and the *Hadith* and “*Ijma*”, the universal consent, constitute the basic essentials of Islam as a religion, as religions are understood by Western minds, Westernised minds

The *worship* consists in (1) the recital of the Creed, (2) the recital of the ordained prayers, (3) the fast during the Ramazan, (4) almsgiving and (5) the Hajj

Every single one of the fundamentals mentioned above has fascinating aspects. They are merely “frontal” of something “occult”

Most important and significant to me is the fact that Islam not only is the latest or the last of the world religions, but that the Prophet freed and unified Arabia in his lifetime

(To be continued)

GUNINDRA LAL BHATTACHARYA

MILLENNIAL CONCEPT OF GOD: BEQUEST OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

SRI AUROBINDO'S views on God (or Deity, the Divine, the Supreme, etc) on the one hand incorporate all such views emanating from thinking based on western concepts and on the other exceed them This is but natural since Sri Aurobindo had acquired an encyclopaedic mastery over 19th century western lore as a whole during his fourteen-year-long stay in England and after his return to India in 1893, re-Indianised himself so thoroughly as to be able to master, interpret and explicate the whole of Vedic literature in the light of both the Indian standpoint and in that of the western lore, including the various theories of evolution emerging from the mid-19th century onwards The net result of this meeting of the West and East in his holistic understanding of spirituality was the birth of his original metaphysical system which he named Integral Philosophy or Integral Yoga evolved for the purpose of transforming the earthly life into the life divine As the term itself implies, his philosophy is inclusive and holistic though largely derived from the Veda and allied ancient Indian sacred writings collectively called the Sacred Trinity of Scriptures (the Veda, Brahmasutras and the Bhagavadgita). In addition, two other factors contributing their essence to Sri Aurobindo's concept of God/Divine are: (i) the spirituality of the Tantras and, (ii) his own interpretation of evolution Treating the terms God, the Divine and Spirit as synonyms, he therefore says that by a process of involution and evolution and out of its own initiative, the Spirit issues forth in innumerable forms. Being infinite, it is neither diminished nor affected by the creation of its innumerable forces and universes. By means of its inverse movement of evolution it begins to evolve after its involution in Nescience or the Inconscient. After all, involution is inevitably followed by evolution. In this spiritual evolution the *Chit* or Consciousness aspect of *Sachchidananda* started taking the lead from the very beginning of the universe. Emerging from Nescience and ascending through Inconscient and Subconscient, *Chit* has now attained the stage of mind in man, the *homo sapiens*. *Chit* is characterised in humans by self-consciousness and is capable of apprehending the Spirit though limited by its own individual existence In the course of the next stages of its evolution, Consciousness (*Chit*) is destined, further, to overcome its remaining limitations and attain to its original divinity in earthly life itself

SRI Aurobindo's concepts, definitions or descriptions of God stem from such a myriad wealth of knowledge as well as from actual experiences he had as a Yogi. As such, there is a certain kind of novelty about his concept of God, Deity or the Divine since it is rather puzzlingly holistic Take for example the term Spirit with which he begins his conceptualisation of God and amplifies by giving numerous other terms as its equivalents.

Like Aristotle with regard to *Nous*, Philo with regard to *Logos*, St. Augustine

with regard to the entity he envisaged as “all good, all wise, all knowing, creator of the universe”, and the later Christian conceptualisation of God as “Father, Son and Holy Ghost”, Sri Aurobindo declares that “the Spirit alone exists in the universe” Every phenomenon in existence “is willed manifestation of the Spirit”⁶ “representing Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and immanent in all manifestations.” As such, Sri Aurobindo found it impossible to subscribe to the view that Spirit and Matter are opposed to each other. On the contrary, he maintains that Matter, Life and Mind are also Spirit assuming different forms. In fact, material phenomena are nothing but infinitely multiple and still multiplying manifestations of the Spirit described by Sri Aurobindo as “infinite potentiality”, among other things noted above. Sri Aurobindo adds that as such, the Christian or Semitic concept of God “as an external omnipotent Power who has ‘created’ the world and governs it like an absolute and arbitrary monarch... has never been mine; it contradicts too much my seeing and experience.”⁷ Equating the term “Divine” with the term “God” he says on the contrary

The Absolute, the Spirit, the Self spaceless and timeless, the Self manifest in the cosmos and the Lord of Nature—all this is . God

God is the All and that which exceeds, transcends the All, there is nothing in Existence which is not God but God is not anything in that existence

God is the one stable and eternal Reality, one because . all existence and non-existence are He.

Sri Aurobindo says “The Divine is Supreme Truth”, “the supreme Being from whom all have come and in whom all are” “It is the Spirit and Master of our own being within us” “The Divine is transcendent Being and Spirit, all Bliss and Light and divine Knowledge and Power.” “He is the one Existence, he is the original and universal Delight that constitutes all things and exceeds them, he is the one infinite consciousness that composes all consciousness and informs all their movements; he is the one illimitable Being who sustains all action and experience, his Will guides the evolution of things towards their yet unrealised but inevitable aim and plenitude. To him the heart can consecrate itself, approach him as the supreme Beloved, beat and move in him as in a universal sweetness of Love and a living sea of Delight” “All begins from the Divine . all abides in it alone and by it alone, all ends or culminates in the divine Eternal and Infinite.”⁸ “All here is secretly the Divine” He is the “one indwelling Consciousness” in infinity, which is nothing but “a house of manifest being” Sri Aurobindo has no hesitation in giving to God or the Divine any of the names “Allah, Shiva, Krishna, Narayana, God” or Yahveh. For him, these names and forms are but “so many houses of Being and within each the same great Inhabitant dwells.” This is so, Sri Aurobindo explains, because “God has made this world in His own being [so] that He may in mind and other principles live phenomenally in phenomena and enjoy this phenomenal existence even while secretly or openly He enjoys also His transcendent existence.”

This Aurobindonian explication is further strengthened by the dynamic spirituality of the Tantras, as mentioned above. This is so because the Tantras stand “next to

the Vedas” not only “in their hoariness” but also in “spiritual and cultural importance”⁹ They are themselves vastly inclusive, touching as they do upon such varied disciplines as philosophy, biology, psycho-physics, self-hypnotism, medicine, clairvoyance and symbology Moreover, their approach to things such as metaphysics, logic, etc., is radically different The metaphysics they follow is the one which naturally manifests in the process of self-opening and not the one which can be built by logicism Similarly, with regard to truth they insist that it is to be realised in life, which for them is an art Therefore, they give the complete *art* of life. Since the unfolding of life requires biological, psychological, ethical and metaphysical adaptation, the study of practically all sciences enters into the Tantras on account of their pragmatic usefulness Incorporating into his concept of God the Tantric approach to the Divine, Sri Aurobindo maintains that the complete Truth of Life in its finest flowering cannot be enjoyed unless all the forces natural and spiritual can be controlled and applied to the unfolding of life in its increasing fineness Such a complete and full code of life accentuates Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual concept of the Divine The Tantras appeal to him all the more because their philosophical conclusions are not much different from the fundamental Upanishadic Truth In addition, they lay emphasis upon the dynamic principle, *Shakti* (Force or Energy), just as Sri Aurobindo does In the Tantras, Shiva is actively associated with Shakti, and the Reality or the Absolute is conceived in them as Shiva-Shakti, a combination of Being and Becoming What is more, the Tantras believe that Becoming is an ideal unfolding of the Divine effected by Shiva as the Supreme Consciousness No doubt, this conception corresponds to that of Ishwara and Maya found in the Upanishads But the Tantric conception is quite different For Ishwara of the Upanishads, represented as the Super-subject reflecting the whole existence, is not very important in the life of spiritual illumination In contrast, the Tantras insist on the psychological opening of our whole nature and being as does Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual philosophy In them, as in Sri Aurobindo, Shakti is the source of all possibilities,—spiritual, psychic, mental, vital as well as supramental Shakti manifests herself as (i) Creative Force, (ii) Preservative Force, and (iii) Withdrawing Force The Tantras designate these three forms or manifestations of Shakti as (i) Brahmī or Saraswatī, (ii) Lakshmi, and (iii) Shivamī The gist of this Tantric approach to the Divine as Shiva-Shakti is found in Sri Aurobindo’s integral approach to God For instance, he says

In all that is done in the universe, the Divine through his Shakti is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yoga Maya and works through the ego of the Jiva in the lower nature

In Yoga also it is the Divine who is the Sadhaka and the Sadhana, it is his Shakti acting upon the Adhara of the Sadhaka. pouring into it divine forces¹⁰

(To be concluded)

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A DREAM ON THE MOTHER'S MAHASAMADHI

IN the dark silence of a grave
 The Mother lies
 All force to the world She gave
 To rise

I penetrate the crypt
 Embraced by Her
 —Sweet Mother, quick,
 Come to the world!

—Don't be in a hurry, my child,
 One must wait
 For the time in the wild
 I was laid

—If it is needed now
 May I
 Here instead of Thou
 Lie?

G NESTEROV

(The poem was originally written in Russian and translated into English by the author)

MATRIMANDIR GARDENS—29 JUNE 1973

1

It beckons, I come.
I approach, it recedes
Calling me ever deeper
Into my soul it proceeds

It is there above me
And I feel its all,
A manifest vision of Thee
A garden of light so fair.

Where delicate bowers
Of earth's finest stone
Set in the dream-fields of flowers,
Midst jasmines and creepers full-blown

Immersed in the life-sense
Of flora and seed,
Touching their symbols, their essence,
Vibrant with learning their need

Calm waters hold lilies
And miracles we seize,
Soft grasses invite the tread
And the great carved statues speak peace.

2

Sunlight and the rustle of leaves
And life reflected in smooth argent pools
The graceful movement of fishes,—
Bright plumage wings on the breeze

Aged stones of the orient abound,
Great presences home in protecting trees
Mosses and ferns of the forests
Her radiant glories surround

Awaiting the purity to describe
Her dream, the divinity of earth,
I sing of the flowers, plant seeds,
Prepare the soil for new birth.

3

Each garden I enter I find
Filled with significance,
Music soars above the mind,
A chant descending pure and free

Above and beneath me is green
And the blue of lake and sky
Meet in each facet of green and gold
Against the temple rising high.

Life vibrant, the bees hum pure,
A rainbow of beauty abounds,
Richness and joy follow pathways sure
And sweetness the Matrimandir surrounds.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERG)

GLOBALISATION FROM AN EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE AND THE AUROVILLE EXPERIMENT*

DEAR Friends, Guests and Panel Members.

I've been asked to speak about globalisation from an ethical and religious perspective. However, I've taken the liberty to talk to you about globalisation from an integral and evolutionary perspective.

When Edgar Mitchell, the NASA astronaut, returned from his mission on the moon in 1972 and looked at that blue globe, which we call planet Earth, he had a profound inner experience that changed his life. He suddenly experienced the interconnectedness of the vast universe around him and became deeply aware that all life on our planet is one. Later, he would explain in simple terms. "It's rather crude to be standing on the moon, looking back at Earth and saying 'I come from the United States'. That tiny little point of light out there is Earth and we come from planet Earth."

Whether we like it or not, we *are* global! And globalisation as the emergence of a global market in terms of labour and commerce is just one facet, one expression of an evolutionary force that is guiding present humanity towards the recognition, the acceptance and the conscious experience of mankind as *one* family.

It is true that economic globalisation has worked so far more for profits than for people! The recent Human Development Report from UNDP, the United Nations Development Program, states clearly that the present market-dominated globalisation has led to a growing marginalisation of poor nations. "The global gap," says the report, "between the haves and the have-nots, the knows and the know-nots is widening," and it makes a passionate plea for globalisation with a human face.

However, as I already indicated, there is a conscious evolutionary force that is acting behind this rather blind creation of a global market. This force is a force of unification, which is embedded in the evolutionary design of planet Earth itself! This force doesn't look at globalisation from an ethical or religious perspective. This force just knows that the planet *is* global and that we, human beings on this planet, *are* one! And it works through human history and through all of us at present to manifest and materialise this oneness.

In other words, the evolution of mankind is not finished. On the contrary, the planet is preparing for its next step in evolution. And, as a result, we are in the midst of a global crisis, which challenges all mental concepts and existing realities that are based on division and separation. We have created a world of tremendous prosperity and abundance and yet half of the world's population is still living below the poverty line. Conflicts and wars are still dividing us along national, religious, ethnic and social borders. And, at the same time, we are overshooting the planet's resources and threatening the survival of the human species itself with an ecological collapse.

* A talk given by the author at the 52nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference on 'Challenges of a Globalised World Finding New Directions' at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 17 September 1999.

Standing at the threshold of the 21st century, humanity is faced with the global challenge to move into the next cycle of its evolution: the creation of a truly global, gnostic society that integrates matter and spirit, unifies science and religion, and embraces all aspects of life, including economy and trade, as an exploration and manifestation of the oneness that we fundamentally are. As André Malraux, the well-known French writer, said “The 21st century will be spiritual or will not be!”

In this context the world needs R&D stations and laboratories for the future where volunteers from all over the world consciously dedicate themselves to the challenge of an inner spiritual transformation and, at the same time, embrace all outer activities and material aspects of life. Volunteers are to be dedicated to the manifestation of that unifying force on this planet by creating relevant collective models on a significant scale for the world at large.

Auroville, the “city of dawn”, an emerging international township in rural India, is such a laboratory. Endorsed by the General Assembly of UNESCO, it was founded in 1968 with the intention to become such a collective model. Based on new economic, environmental and spiritual values, Auroville wants to promote peace, international understanding and, to quote from its Charter, be a “living embodiment of an actual human unity”

Today, about 1500 people from 30 countries are, in cooperation with the local population, engaged in wasteland reclamation, soil and water conservation, reforestation, organic farming, integral education, alternative healing, renewable energy, appropriate building technologies, arts and culture, handicrafts and small-scale industries, architecture and town planning, and an integrated development of the neighbouring villages and the larger bioregion. At the same time, they are working on themselves so that this unifying, evolutionary force can raise their consciousness and transform their mind, their heart and their body.

As such, Auroville stands as a global evolutionary experiment on the planet that, according to its Charter, “belongs to nobody in particular but to humanity as a whole”. And it carries the vision, the hope, the challenges, and the aspiration to become truly “the City the Earth needs”!

GUY RYCKAERT

SULJA

Translated from the Original in Tamil

['SULJA' is the incredible but true tale of a Muslim princess falling in love with the 'Hindu' God Sri Ranganatha (Sri Vishnu) of Srirangam temple in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. It is one more instance of a human soul transcending the narrow confines of religious creed into which it was born, yearning for the Supreme Lord towards whom it is inexorably drawn. Sulja has been raised to the status of a 'Nachiyar', the Divine Consort, and a separate shrine has been dedicated to her in the holiest of holies, the Vaishnava temple of Sri Ranganatha in Srirangam which is held as the 'Bhooloka Vaikuntam' (Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu, on earth).

'Sulja', the original Tamil play was written by Smt. Ranganayaki Thatham of Tiruchirappalli. She was a famous writer besides being a dedicated social worker. Smt. Prema Nandakumar, her daughter-in-law and daughter of Sri K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger writes about her mother-in-law:

'Ranganayaki Thatham, 'Kumudini' (1906-1986) was the daughter of the brilliant humourist 'Konashtai' (S. G. Srinivasa Acharya) in Tamil. Educated at home, she mastered Sanskrit, Tamil and English; she also learnt a little of Bengali, Hindi and Gujarati....

She began writing short stories and essays in Tamil with a Gandhian slant. Her novel *Divan Magal* created waves for nearly sixty years. She advocated intercast marriage, the brahmin heroine marrying a kshatriya boy. She translated Rabindranath Tagore's *Yogayog* as *Kumudini*. Her short stories 'Anthapura Tapaal' is being studied as part of a major critical work on Ramayana inspiration in modern Tamil literature by the famous Dravidologist, Paula Richman.'']

Dramatis Personae

Sultan of Delhi

Sulja—*the princess, Sultan's daughter*

Rangadasar—*Chief Priest of Srirangam temple*

Vilancholai Pillai

Karambanoor Amma

Sthalathar

Amudanar

Mudaliyandan

Kaveriyan

Parandaman

Minister in the palace of the Sultan

Officials, soldiers, servants and others

devotees and servants of the Lord

youngsters and helpers of Rangadasar

ACT I

Scene 1

Place: A Mandap in Srirangam
Time: 14th Century: An Afternoon

(Rangadasar, the chief Priest of Srirangam Temple, is sitting, sadness and despair writ large on his face.)

Rangadasar

Alas! what can I do? My whole being shivers to think of that. I can neither sleep nor eat, ever since the muslim horde took away my Lord. Even though they caused havoc, now, for the past one month, peace has been returning albeit slowly. Alas! there is no pooja in this temple and it remains locked.

(Vilancholai Pillai is coming)

Rangadasar (*gets up with surprise*):

Vilancholai Acharya! When did you come here?

Vilan:

I am just coming, running in haste. I heard in Ananthasayanam about the atrocities committed here by the muslim horde. There were all sorts of rumours about our Acharya Swamy. So I have come to find out the truth myself.

Rangadasar

Please sit down. I shall tell you all in detail.

(*The two sit down.*)

Vilan

Is it true, what I heard? Did the Tulukkars* come here?

Rangadasar:

Yes. But before their descent here, our Acharya Swamy was very worried about the imminent danger. He buried those things which could be buried and departed at night carrying the Lord in a box. We too accompanied him.

Vilan:

Then?

Rangadasar.

The Tulukkars came here and saw that the temple and the Sanctum were closed and half the town's population had fled. They were incensed and killed the guards, and drove away the King's army, and plundered all the gold, grains and other things before they left.

Vilan

Alas! What suffering! I met in Tirunagari Acharya Venkatanatha. He told me

* Tulukkar—all muslims are called so in Tamil Nadu. 'Tulukkar' has come from the word 'Turukkar' which means a person from Turkey or Turukki in Tamil.

how he escaped along with his son, Sritha Prakash Bhattar, pretending to be dead amidst the corpses Lord! it was really horrible to hear

Rangadasar (*sadly*)

That light is gone The Tulukkars killed Sritha Prakash in anger He was the Chief Priest and they thought that he was responsible for the temple being locked up. They found him out and killed him

Vilan (*closing his ears*)

Ranga! Ranga!

(Karambanoor Amma comes and bows.)

Rangadasar

Who are you, lady?

Karam

I live in Karambanoor

Rangadasar

Yes, yes Aren't you a disciple of our Acharya?

Karam

I and my sister, both of us have taken him as our God

Rangadasar

How is your sister?

Karam

She is no more

Rangadasar (*shocked*)

Dead?

Karam:

Everyone has something to hold on to as dear life When Acharya Lokacharya left here my aged sister, not able to accompany him, grieved and died. The moment she heard that our Acharya was leaving she passed away. Only I accompanied the Acharya

Rangadasar

Yes, I do seem to have seen you in the crowd

Karam

Is it not that before Acharya could reach the village of Jothidakudi, the Tulukkars came chasing him and beat him down and took away the Lord kept in the box in the palanquin?

Rangadasar

Yes, indeed

Karam:

I too followed them

Rangadasar (*surprised*).

You went behind the Tulukkars! Oh! What devotion! What courage!

Karam:

The Tulukkars not only plundered gold and things but took away all the ele-

phants and horses they could lay their hands on There were also some elephants belonging to our town Mahout Keshavan could not bear parting with his elephants So he told them he would ride his elephant himself to their place Most of the Mahouts had done the same thing I know Keshavan well He declared that I was his mother and took me, seating me on the elephant's back along with the luggage
Vilan:

How incredible! How can one extoll your devotion which made you undertake such a perilous journey

Karam

Lord Ranganatha took me.

Rangadasar

How and what did you eat on the way?

Karam:

That is nothing. Whenever I found some roots and fruits I used to offer them to the Lord and eat them The commanders rested for two days and took all that they had plundered to the Sultan's Durbar The Sultan was very happy He took what he wanted and distributed the rest to the soldiers, commanders, vassals and others. Nobody touched our Lord. So our Lord went with the Sultan's things to the Treasury. By this time I had learnt their language I followed the guards who were taking away the things to the Treasury and I thought I could beg them to give me our Lord

But alas! just then there came the only daughter of the Sultan, a most beautiful young girl She surveyed all the things and picked up 'the Lord' and embraced him like a mother would embrace her child and pleaded with the Sultan, with her innocent face, to give her the Lord The Sultan could not refuse his only daughter Sulja. Then the servants put our Lord in the harem

(She leans on the pillar, tired but continues her narration.)

Not only could I speak their language but I also got acquainted with some soldiers I had treated their wounds with herbal leaves With their help I arranged to visit the harem of the Sultan I bathed in the Yamuna and like them I put a veil over my face and went to Sulja's abode Somehow I felt great love for that wonderful girl She was sitting, wide-eyed in wonder, before our Lord I felt that she had been completely overwhelmed by a spontaneous and deep emotional upsurge that took place in her pure and guileless heart With her permission I installed our Lord on a pedestal, dressed Him in fine clothes, garlanded Him and showed her the ritual worship of our Lord *(She wipes her tears away)* She just lapped up all that I told her, like Dhruva who got his initiation from Sage Narada My heart melted at her spotless devotion to our Lord

I felt reassured that our Lord would be safe with her and taking leave of her I joined a group of pilgrims coming to the South and here I am I came to tell the temple authorities that our Lord is safe in the palace of the Sultan at Delhi

Rangadasar:

Amma, I marvel at your devotion and sincerity

Scene 2

(A temple Mandap Rangadasar is seen seated on a platform Amudanar, Sthalathar, Mudaliyandan and others are seated along with him The town folk are seated on the ground packed closely)

Rangadasar (*getting up*):

My friends. All these days we were pining for our Lord not knowing who took Him away, where etc. We did not do anything and were feeling guilty like one who has betrayed his friends. We were dazed, confused but did not do a thing. May the Lord forgive us (*with a sigh*). Now, fortunately a lady from Karambanoor had gone along with the Tulukkars and had seen our Lord in the Sultan's harem and has reported to us. We heard the voice of our Lord in the Sanctum, extolling the incredible deed of Karambanoor Amma. The voice said. "O Lady of Karambanoor! May your devotion and sincerity be an example to others. I name you 'the Lady who followed the Lord'. Accept the honour." We took this as the Lord's command and did accordingly. I am sure all of you know this (*there is a general nodding of heads*). Now our duty is to go to Delhi and bring back our Lord without further delay

(Someone from the crowd gets up)

Thiran:

I am one of the merchants of this town. Please accept this offering of mine to meet your expenses.

(Puts down a money bag. Vying with each other, the crowd gives money, blankets, vessels, clothes, etc., which make a considerable pile. Kaveriyan and Parandaman, two young brahmin boys, receive them.)

Rangadasar (*stunned*):

What is this? This is all your grace, Lord! I cannot go alone. Let them come who want to share the burden.

Sthalathar:

Myself and Amudanar, we will come with you.

A Dhobi:

We are the Lord's hereditary washermen. We will also come.

(Some farmers, potters shout that they will also come.)

Mudali (*rising, visibly angry*):

Do you all think that going to Delhi is a joke? It will be a difficult journey. Even if we reach Delhi crossing the forests, mountains etc., do you think the Sultan will consent to give us back our Lord just for our asking? What if he dumps us in prison and tortures us?

Dhobi (*laughing*):

You need not come. We shall go. We do not care for comforts or safety.

Rangadasar:

Mudaliyandan, you are right. Please explain this to everybody. After that whoever is willing to come let them accompany me. Distribute this money and these things to

those who have resolved to come Let them give it to their families so that they won't suffer till we return Let us not carry money. We shall be starting on the coming Shukla Paksha Panchami, in the third part of the night before dawn.

(Sings happily the praise of the Lord.)

(To be continued)

K BALASUBRAMANIAM

MY TINY AND GREAT LEFT HAND

I WAS not aware of your existence,
 I neglected you, I behaved badly with you.
 I did not know about your will of living.
 I escaped and escaped.
 You were always here attached to my body,
 Patient, waiting for my love.
 Now it is as if you smiled at me,
 Talked to me.
 I pray you: "Forgive me."
 I ran and ran with anger
 Grasping illusions.
 I did not know of the Divine's infinite
 Endless and encouraging Love.
 His love is so wide that he gave you to me
 As a gift, my dear hand
 By willing to destroy you,
 Lancets, knives, pliers penetrated into your flesh,
 A poor stupid human being I was!
 Now I really know that you are
 A precious present of the Divine,
 A proof of His Love,
 His instrument to manifest Perfection.

SUMITA (MADDELENE)

THE PATH OF PERFECTION

WE shall begin with the Bodhisatva vow "I shall become enlightened for the sake of all living things"

There are three basic requirements before we set foot on the path. They are Concentration, Meditation, Contemplation. Also, the functionings and aspirations of the mind must be understood. On close observation we find that the mind always operates between pairs of opposites, however noble they may be, in fact, it needs them for its very survival. In other words, the mind divides itself into two parts: the Self and the Not-Self. The one stands in judgement over the other. Both are projections of the mind. The mind that is free of both these is an alert and sensitive mind that alone can experience Reality or God. call it what you will.

We shall briefly note the above three requirements.

Concentration: Withdrawal from objects of perception and being indifferent to them. This does not mean running away from them but knowing that these objects are caused by the projection with which the mind has endowed them. There are projections of the outward conscious mind which distorts objects and the association of the unconscious mind which inquires into the motive of such perception. When no such images are cast on the mind, there comes the state of true concentration.

Meditation: The stillness of the mind is essential. In this stillness, there comes the knowledge and vision of the non-existent and hence, the right perception of manifested things is made possible.

Contemplation: The duality of subject and object does not exist. However, the relationship of the part to the whole must be carefully understood. The significance of true contemplation is to bring the parts into a unified whole. We must not lose sight of this vision while we are on the path.

We have now approached the path and the six Virtues on the path must be thoroughly known before we come to the door of Nirvana (the untying of knots). These are Charity, Harmony, Patience, Indifference, Energy, and Contemplation of the Eternal.

Charity: To have a compassionate view of all that exists and to give oneself unreservedly without hesitation or fear. We may note here that any charity done with a selfish motive is not true charity. "He who would do good must do so in minute particulars, general good is the plea of the scoundrel," said Blake.

Harmony: It is the fundamental quality of one's own being. Such a man is complete within himself and does not crave for something with which to fill his incompleteness.

Patience: We must not confuse patience with passivity. True patience requires great courage. We must also know that it is not hope that sustains but the *Certitude* in the depth of one's own being that "the Divine always tends towards the Light and nowhere else."

Indifference: It means to be indifferent towards our needs and not towards the needs of others. Bread for myself is a material question but bread for my neighbour is spiritual question

Energy: Obviously great energy is required since we have opposition from the diverse forces to stop us from taking the spiritual path.

Contemplation. Here, one becomes attuned to the Divine and as the Divine contains all life, one is attuned to All.

Now the disciple is at the door of Nirvana and a choice has to be made; either to enter the Bliss of Nirvana or to renounce it for the sake of all living things who are still suffering. This renunciation is the highest form of spiritual wisdom

JALI

DURYODHANA REMEMBERS

I

Now I know peace at last,
In death realise what life hid!
Death shall crown me—
A prince in the other lands.
Bravely I lived, fought and shall die,
A warrior's death to heaven leads.
Peace shall be my consort there,
Like a coy maiden, stand by me,
Lead me to realms beyond Indra's reign
What life denied, death shall give,
What earth denied, heaven grants

My life was not vain,
My whole life I burned in wrath,
At injustices fate hurled.
Love was a passion alien to me,
Those eyes, where I longed to see love
Where blind behind folds,* their language
I never read. Nurses reared me
And to them I turned my infant anger.

Son to a blind father, I lost my crown
Yudhishtir inherited, who never was a king—
Spineless, doubtful, slave to ethical laws!
His brothers, worst of all Bhim—
Arrogant, wolf-bellied, loud-mouthed.
If only he fought like a man—
My thighs his mace crushed,
While I hardly doubted his intent.
Arjun, the most handsome warrior,
He too defiled, his arrows stuck
My faithful peer, sun-crowned Karna,
While he stooped to lift his sunken wheels.

All is fair in war, they say!
And they who strayed most from truth

* To share her husband's blindness, Gandhari kept her eyes blindfolded

Are paragons of virtue in the world's eye.
 Treacherous I became, but who wouldn't,
 When one's very manhood was scoffed?
 That woman* born of holy pyre
 Born to wreak destruction on my house,
 While I slipped on Maya's palace floor
 Her laughter rang like peals of thunder:
 "Blindman's son, born eyeless," she said.
 And my wrath was pledged to humble her pride.
 Wedded to five men, her lust insatiable.
 She laughed destruction's laugh, sowed seeds
 That spread hell fire on Kurukshetra fields.

II

Who was it who wronged first?
 I or they? Hard to answer.
 But this I know, quick to be hurt,
 When I pledged to revenge, sought war,
 The Gods must have turned their faces.
 The Gods spurned me, or perhaps I spurned them.

Adieu, earth!
 Though thou mayst remember me, a son
 Who soaked thee in blood, I loved.
 I loved thee, ask my subjects, those mute ones,
 Whether their sufferings I hadn't made mine.
 Remember me a cursed son, much wronged.
 Give me rest, to thy bosom I come.

K N VUU

* Draupadi

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

THERE WAS a feeling in Nationalist circles that somehow Sri Aurobindo should be persuaded to return to active politics. At Tilak's instance his colleague, Joseph Baptista therefore wrote in December 1919 requesting Sri Aurobindo to accept the editorship of a paper that was to be the organ of the Social Democratic Party of Bombay; like *Bande Mataram* thirteen years earlier, this new paper was to give Sri Aurobindo an opportunity to spread the message of patriotism and educate the nation in the tasks of political debate and action. In his long reply of 5th January 1920 Sri Aurobindo set forth the reasons to reject the "tempting offer". Two reasons are given in the letter. First, the Government was unlikely to leave him free but would almost certainly intern or imprison him "under one or other of the beneficent Acts which are apparently still to subsist as helps in ushering in the new era of trust and cooperation."¹

That was not going to help the Party,—only the work he had in hand would suffer. Secondly, even if he were assured of "an entirely free action and movement", even then he felt he shouldn't have his treat then. He said:

"I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics—in which I have taken no direct part since my coming here, though what I could do for the country in my own way I have constantly done,—and until it is accomplished, it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public activity ... I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it [Pondicherry]"²

The answer was indeed "No". Sri Aurobindo gave the impression that he was not superior to the claims of the world. His idea of spirituality had nothing to do with asceticism. He included all human activity—and therefore politics too—in a complete spiritual life. From 1903 to 1910 he had actively involved himself in politics, "with one aim and one alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it..."³

The aim had already been achieved. Moderatism had first been forced into defencism, and was no more a force in politics. In the wake of the Rowlatt Act and the Jalianwalla atrocity, the Amritsar Congress of December 1919 under Motilal Nehru's Presidentship had "set the seal" upon Sri Aurobindo's revolutionary ideology of "a settled will for freedom" and his progress of self-help, passive resistance and political and economic boycott as outlined in his "Open letter" of July 1909. The leadership of the Congress was in tried hands and Sri Aurobindo thought that if the country maintained its current revolutionary tempo, the "will to prevail" would succeed in the end and through appropriate action.

We can observe that the Home Rule movement did not come to much, except that it induced, directly or indirectly, the British Government to come out with a declaration of fresh reforms which came to be known as Montagu-Chelmsford

Reforms. On pressing requests from Mrs. Besant, Sri Aurobindo wrote an article under the signature “An Indian Nationalist” describing the Reforms as a “Chinese Puzzle” and a “great Shadow”.

This did not mean that he was indifferent to the reforms and would not accept them. It meant that they did not satisfy the Nationalist aspiration and therefore even while accepting them for what they were worth, he would clamour and agitate for more. It was a fact that the new reforms were an improvement on the previous ones which they replaced. In this progressive transfer of power, Sri Aurobindo had perceived the British temperament quite willing to be shouldered out of India gradually though it would vehemently object to being hustled out peremptorily. This psychological study apart, the spiritual view of Sri Aurobindo had clearly perceived that India was destined to be free, for this country had a great spiritual destiny to fulfil not only for herself but for the whole world. He was unhesitating in his affirmation of the coming freedom of India. Sri Aurobindo too had this clear knowledge, and he had no desire to take part in the current political action because he knew that in the circumstances then prevailing he wouldn't be able to give a turn to politics which he thought desirable. As he put it:

“You may ask why not come out and help, myself, so far as I can, in giving a lead? But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times,—some might say, out of time altogether into the world of the ideal. I believe in something which might be called social democracy, but not in any of the forms now current, and I am not altogether in love with the European kind, however great an improvement it may be on the past. I hold that India having a spirit of her own and a governing temperament proper to her own civilisation, should in politics as in everything else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe.”⁴

A notable interview of the year was the one given to A. B. Purani in December, 1918. It will be recalled that Ambalal B. Purani was the younger brother of Chhotalal B. Purani who had received instructions from Sri Aurobindo during his Baroda days for revolutionary work. He had been an enthusiastic member of the group then formed and had now come with a view to getting Sri Aurobindo's permission for the revolutionary activity for which he and his group felt they were ready. He had corresponded with Sri Aurobindo earlier on matters of Sadhana, particularly after reading the *Arya*. Naturally Sri Aurobindo first enquired about the young man's spiritual practice. Purani describes the scene in *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*

“I described my efforts and added, ‘Sadhana is all right, but it is difficult to concentrate on it so long as India is not free’.

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps it may not be necessary to resort to revolutionary activity to free India.

Purani. But without that how is the British Government to go from India?

Sri Aurobindo. That is another question; but if India can be free without revolutionary activity, why should you execute the plan? It is better to concentrate on the yoga—spiritual development.

Purani: But India is a land that has Sadhana in its blood. When India is free, I

believe thousands will devote themselves to yoga. But in the world of today who will listen to the truth or spirituality of slaves?

Sri Aurobindo India has already decided to win freedom and so there will certainly be found leaders and men to work for that goal. But all are not called to yoga. So, when you have the call, is it not better to concentrate upon it? If you want to carry out the revolutionary programme you are free to do it, but I cannot give my consent to it

Purani But it was you who gave us the inspiration and the start for revolutionary activity Why do you now refuse to give your consent to its execution?

Sri Aurobindo Because I have done the work and I know its difficulties Young men come forward to join the movement being inspired by idealism and enthusiasm. But these elements do not last long It becomes very difficult to observe exact discipline Small groups begin to form within the organisation, rivalries grow between groups and even between individuals. There is competition for leadership The agents of the government generally manage to join these organisations from the very beginning And so the patriots are unable to act effectively. Sometimes they sink so low as to quarrel even for money.

Purani. But even supposing that I admit and agree to sadhana, that is, yoga, as being of greater importance and even intellectually understand that I should concentrate upon it, my difficulty is that I feel intensely that I must do something for the freedom of India I have been unable to sleep soundly for the last two years and a half. I can remain quiet if I make a very strong effort. But the concentration of my whole being turns towards India's freedom. It is difficult for me to sleep till that is secured.

Sri Aurobindo remained silent for two or three minutes It was a long pause. Then he said. Suppose an assurance is given to you that India will be free?

I could feel the echo of doubt and challenge in my own question. Again he remained silent for three or four minutes. Then he looked at me and added: Suppose I give you the assurance?

I paused for half a minute, considered the question within myself and said: If you give the assurance, I can accept it

Sri Aurobindo: Then I give you the assurance that India will be free.

Purani relates how he then spoke of other things and, "it was time for me to leave. The question of Indian freedom again arose in my mind, and at the time of taking leave, after I had got up to go, I could not repress the question—it was a question of life for me—'Are you quite sure that India will be free?'"

Sri Aurobindo became very serious His gaze was fixed at the sky that appeared beyond the window. Then he looked at me and putting his fist on the table he said:

'You can take it from me, it is as certain as the rising of the sun tomorrow. The decree has already gone forth, it may not be long in coming'."

(To be continued)

References

- 1 *SABCL*, Vol 26, p 429
- 2 *Ibid* , pp 429-30
- 3 *Ibid* , p 430
- 4 *Ibid* , pp 430-31

THE REWARD

A Short Story

BIMAL'S appointment as an inspector in the Civil Supply Department, Balia, was a lucky change after his long search for a job at different places. His Mama (maternal uncle) was an established doctor there. So he had not to bother about boarding and lodging. Everything went on well for him for some time. But then he felt ill at ease because he could not find any suitable associate amongst his colleagues or from anywhere outside the office. Hindi was the common language there but Bimal could not pick up the language well. Of course he could speak English but he marked that in Independent India they ridiculed speaking in English. So he abstained from any conversation unless absolutely necessary.

To avoid boredom and to get relaxation Bimal used to go to his Mama's chamber in the evening after office hours. There he discovered some friendly faces amongst the waiting patients and visitors to talk with. Or else he would while away the time by reading books. One day it so happened that just as he stepped into the chamber Mama exclaimed, "Bimal, you have come, very good, they have been waiting for you, they are the members of the local Cultural Association. There are Amiyababu, Branch Manager, UCO Bank, his wife Ramala Devi, and their daughter Daita; there sit the High School Headmaster, Samarbabu, the music teacher, Sunilbabu, etc., etc."

After the usual exchange of namaskars Bimal asked, "Mama, you have omitted to introduce that pretty small but smart girl with curly hair."

"Oh yes, you are right, she is worth introducing. I am sorry. She is Suchhanda, the wonder-girl, the daughter of the Headmaster. She learnt dancing at the time she learnt walking. Now, of course, she is an adept in the art of dancing." All present seconded the remark unreservedly. Then Amiyababu asked Bimal, "Bimalbabu, before I raise the main topic I should like to know how you find your work at the Civil Supply Department."

"Not bad, but the difficulty is that my colleagues abhor speaking in English. And I am not at home in Hindi."

"No problem, you can speak in Bengali."

"Bengali!"

"Why not? They are fond of Bengali conversation. Most of them understand it. Some can even speak Bengali a bit."

"Is it so? Then there is no problem. I shall try to accommodate myself."

"Yes, please try. Now for the main purpose for which we have come. You know, every year during the Saraswati Puja we organise some Cultural Programme: music, dance, recitation, etc. This year we have decided to stage a small Bengali drama. You have recently come from Calcutta and know the modern trend of Bengali drama. Please suggest, direct and guide us in our endeavour to select a book of drama

suitable for the Saraswati Puja.

“My God! I shall select! By the irony of fate I myself am a living example of a dramatist knocked like a shuttle-cock from one end to another.”

At this point Mama opened his mouth, “Bimal, that day you were reading a poem from *Sanchayita* to the children What was it? I appreciated the reading very much Can’t a *chitranatya*, dramatic feature, be made out of it?”

“I don’t know, in fact it’s a long poem named *Puraskar*, The Reward, narrating the episode of a poet and a king. The characters are few and the dialogues are also scanty but it conveys the philosophy of life of a poet, worthy of the modern mind. Those who are adept at staging dramas can judge, by perusing the poem, whether it can be converted into a drama ”

Amiyababu agreed, “Yes, we shall go through it But before that please tell us the story in short.”

“For that I shall need the help of the book to read from here and there, the book is not with me.”

Mama said, “No problem, Bimal, please escort them to the open terrace of our house I shall also join you as soon as possible ”

The atmosphere of the terrace was very fine. It was neat and clean with a few flower-pots around wafting mild fragrance to the joy and ease of everybody.

Bimal with the *Sanchayita* in hand addressed the audience, “Friends, the story is simple but the recital of a long poem by the poet is the main thing. So my narration will be of little interest unless I read the poem at places ”

The assembled visitors opined in unison, “Yes, what’s the harm? We have enough time to spare. Please start ”

Once upon a time there was a poet He was simple, unwise about the affairs of the world and careless in his household duties. It was his wife’s headache to look after everything concerning their livelihood. But he himself would spend hours together sitting at his writing desk

One day his wife got annoyed and approached him in an angry mood. “The roof is broken, the floor cracked, food wanting, but you are busy writing pages after pages. Will they give you means of sustenance? You don’t know. I have come to show you the means Please go to our king with your poems and wait. I have heard that he is benevolent like Karna of the Mahabharata. Whoever goes to him with whatever quality he may have is being rewarded by the recommendation of the minister.”

On being rebuked and directed by his wife the poet had to set out for the king’s court, hesitant and afraid Afraid, because the dress and the weapon of the sentries at the court’s gate always created repulsion in him However, finally he could manage to enter the crowded court and sat down in one corner He saw that people from different walks of life approached the king one by one and the king, on hearing each one’s case from the minister, ordered a proportionate reward to be given.

But he himself could not gather sufficient courage or felt reluctant to go to the

king. Meanwhile the court dissolved and the crowd departed gradually. The bewildered poet sat on motionless, not knowing what to do. Suddenly the king caught sight of him and asked, "Minister, let us find out about the one who is still sitting there in the corner."

The poet stammered, "I...I... I am nobody special, I am simply a poet."

"Are you a poet? What a joy! Come, come; after this tremendous hotchpotch let me listen to the melody of your poems." The king took the poet by the hand and made him sit in front of him. The minister thought it to be simply a waste of time and left the place with the king's permission.

"Now, O poet, I am all ears to enjoy the sweetness of your poems, please start," observed the king.

At this point Bimal stopped narrating orally in prose and said, "Now I shall read from the book here and there with your kind permission."

"Of course you will read, the story is interesting and we have ample time at our disposal," all spoke in unison.

Then the poet with folded hands and bowed head invoked the Muse thus: "O Thou Mother, who dwellest in the clear water of mind, seated in a lotus bower, clad all in white, please manifest Thy happy figure with a resplendent smile, in front of my inner eyes. O Thou, Thy voice is sweeter than the tune of a harp. Having enthroned Thee in the secret cave of my heart happily do I stay ever confined in my house like an abnormal man without name, fame, and money.

"The people around are busy collecting their own share of worldly gains. But I have tasted the nectar of heaven by simply listening to your sweet words of affection."

Some time later the poet's recitation developed in this way:

"Amidst that rings always a note—limitlessly vast, deep and sweet, entirely absorbing the whole ethereal sphere with its vibration. One who has heard this, sets his emotion afloat without caring for himself, the world and its maddening noise..."

Still later—

"O Mother, make me forget once for all who is great and who is small; who is poor and who is rich; who is advanced and who is retarded; who wins and who loses; who develops and who dwindles; who is good and who is not; who is high and who is low. Let all differences be resolved in a single song of reconciliation in this limited world of ours."

After this the poet briefly depicted in his own way the picture of some episodes of the Ramayana. A bit of example:

"Think for a while how the people passed that day when Sita Devi set out for the forest as an exile, dressed in dirty bark. ."

Again:

"Also imagine how they felt when the same Sita Devi in the king's court humbly making a departing bow to Raghuraj with immense shame and wounded

feeling disappeared through the opening of the earth.. ”

Then the poet touched upon some aspects of the story of the Mahabharata. A few lines as example:

“The dire madness of a family conflict engulfed the whole country. As if two twin adjacent trees with severe friction created a huge destructive fire which devoured the forest surroundings....”

After a long while:

“This beautiful world is merged in love of men without number, depicted with the joy and sorrow of countless years and mingled with the music of many centuries ..”

Then the concluding prayer of the poet to the Goddess Saraswati. This came after the poet described at length his philosophy of life with magnificent expressions and images.

“Simply hand over to me Thy sacred flute and let me play on it with my whole heart and mind, composing a series of songs like blooming flowers across the vast sky. Collecting words from the inmost heart I shall create a sphere of bliss and shower musical riches on this sordid earth.”

The poet’s prayer of final surrender:

“That is the best, O Mother, whatever has to go let it go. I do adore Thee eternally and offer obeisance again and again at Thy lotus-smelling divine Feet.”

The delighted king with glittering eyes and throbbing heart descended from the throne and with outstretched arms embraced the poet. He said, “Congratulations, O poet, my mind is overwhelmed with joy. What else shall I tell you? Remain happy for all time to come. I cannot think out with what present I shall satisfy you. I can give you all that I have in my treasury...”

With tears of joy and love in his eyes the poet requested the king, “Please present that garland of flowers around your neck to me.”

Bimal stopped reading and said, “The conclusion of the story you will know yourselves by going through the poem fully to the end. If you don’t have the book, please take this one from me and let me know if the poem is suitable for a drama ” After two days they came and informed Bimal that there could not be a better selection than *Puraskar* for a drama on the occasion of Saraswati Puja, but some additions and alterations would be necessary here and there.

“Yes, I also thought so,” remarked Bimal. Just then Ramala Devi suggested, “Bimalbabu, you will have to take the role of the poet.”

“I? When Amiyababu is there with such a fine poet-like appearance?”

“The appearance does not count much. He always stays miles apart from any poem, feels feverish to get by heart a few lines even.” Amiyababu burst into a hearty laugh and proposed, “Why don’t you yourself take the part of the poet, eh? You know, Bimalbabu, she has got by heart most of the main poems by Tagore.”

Ramala Devi blushed a little but then retorted, “In that case you will have to

lend me your fine moustache ” “Why lend—there is no dearth of artificial moustaches to buy in the market.” Mama intervened, “Then who will take the part of the poet’s wife? Are you ready to do that, Amiyababu?” All laughed at the joke including Amiyababu. Then Mama put forward the solution, “Amiyababu you will have to act as a poet on the stage. But you won’t have to learn anything by heart, you will simply have to move your lips in unison with the recitation of your part by Bimal from in front of a mike, behind the wings ”

Everybody agreed that it was the best proposal but one of the members added, “The two have to practise a lot so that the reading by Bimalbabu and Amiyababu’s acting agree with each other and maintain the rhythm.”

“Of course they have to and it needs no mention.”

The Puja Pandal and the stage for the drama were built side by side in one part of the school compound. Bimal was impressed by the exquisite image of the Goddess Saraswati. Her face, nose, eyes and limbs expressed heavenly excellence and beauty.

The spectators had started arriving right from the afternoon and the compound was packed with them even before the drama began. The first scene itself drew the attention of the audience. Ramala Devi appeared to be a born actress and Amiyababu in his special role as the poet kept perfect rhythm with Bimal’s reading from the wings. In the second scene his timid, reluctant, fearful movement on the way to the king’s court was superb.

In the third scene, the deep emotional meeting of the king and the poet touched every observer’s heart. Both of them knew very well how to act effectively under the particular circumstances. Bimal’s art of recitation was always praiseworthy. Particularly this time, his voice through the mike exerted a magical effect on the spectators. So much so that they looked on devotionally at the image of Saraswati, many with folded hands even.

Just then something unforeseen and perilous happened. The mike in front of Bimal went out of order. Yet Amiyababu on the stage went on moving his lips non-stop without producing any sound. Bimal got terribly nervous as he was aware of the dire consequences from his Calcutta-experience,—shouting, throwing of stones, breaking of bulbs, etc. But to his extreme astonishment he noticed that pin-drop silence prevailed. No one moved from their seats. Rather they looked on at the image of Saraswati meditatively as before .

This helped Mama, the prompter, to release the drop scene. After a while when the drop scene was raised a miraculous view on the stage impressed the audience and kept them spell-bound.

They saw with awe-stricken eyes that the image of Saraswati appeared on the stage in a living form, as it were, and was absorbed in a heavenly dance. Instantly Bimal remembered Mama’s opinion and praise about Suchhanda, the headmaster’s daughter. He and all others were overwhelmed to see the elegant and subtle pose and gestures of the dance.

All is well that ends well. After such a divine performance nothing more was necessary, neither music, nor acting nor recitation. The drama ended then and there. The spectators with hearts full of joy and satisfaction started returning home. Suddenly Bimal noticed that one of the spectators, instead of returning, was coming forward towards the stage. Immediately he knew that the gentleman was no other than the one whom he had named Krishnapremik (Lover of Krishna). He had met him in his Mama's chamber a few months earlier.

With silent and steady steps and dreamy eyes he approached Bimal and said, "Bimalbabu, I am leaving tomorrow. Hereafter we may not meet. please take this present from me and keep it with you carefully." Bimal looked at the reward and saw that it was a small book named *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHUNLAL CHOWDHURY

GOLDEN REMEMBRANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Nagpur

FOLLOWERS of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother celebrated the Golden Day on the last day of February, but for the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Nagpur, the Golden Rays already spread their light and warmth in the first fortnight of the month. The occasion was the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Circle on 13th and 14th February.

The completion of fifty years of existence is itself an important landmark in the life of any institution and when such an event takes place on the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, its significance is enhanced to a more profound and lasting experience. Such was the case with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Sri Aurobindo Circle, Nagpur

From a modest beginning in November 1949, the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Nagpur has come a long way to acquire a prestigious place on the socio-cultural platform of this metropolitan city. A highly placed executive from Delhi, Sri Jagadishchandra Khanna was the forerunner of this spiritual movement which gathered momentum in due course. The weekly Sunday prayer meetings gave place to daily collective study and meditation sessions. Fragrance from the word-roses of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is inhaled and assimilated by the group of devotees in right earnest.

A stream of individuals were fascinated by the activities of the Circle. Gajraj Sukhdev, Ramkrishna Mukherjee, Sheetal Prasad Jain, Mahadeo Prasad Jain, Gangadina Bawaria, Vitthal Khaparde, Mahesh Jangade, B. L. Sahu and the Jadies, the Bagades and the Kars formed the core group from time to time.

The year 1972 marked the watershed in the annals of the Nagpur Circle. It was the birth centenary year of Sri Aurobindo and a lot of curiosity was kindled in the public mind. To give it a concrete shape and direction an ad-hoc committee was formed to implement vigorously a twelve-point programme to create an awareness of Sri Aurobindo's thought, especially in the Vidarbha region.

Sri Shekhar Baante, then in his energetic forties, headed the ad-hoc committee. Many dignitaries including Dr. Karan Singh, Chairperson of the National Committee and Sri Navajat, President of Sri Aurobindo Society lauded the work done by the committee.

Now in his early seventies Sri Baante with his characteristic modesty still holds the (Sitabuldi) fort alone. His singleminded devotion and artistic perception has become the most effective instrument in the Mother's hand. Perfect perfection seems to be his watchword. In fact the Golden Jubilee Celebrations were the fruitful culmination of his long-term association with the Nagpur Circle.

As part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations word-roses were offered to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the form of an enchanting souvenir with a rare portrait of the Master on the cover page. In the words of the 'Board of Children of the

Mother' this little souvenir is nothing but Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's own word-flowers reverentially tumbled back to their lap.

By and large it is the most compact and comprehensive collection of the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Not a single aspect of their integral teaching is left untouched. In fact it is a sort of bonanza for those who are hitherto uninitiated in the life and letters of the Great Yogi and the Great Yogini. For more advanced seekers the exquisite collection gives an additional impetus to take a further plunge into the vast and varied aspects of Aurobindonian philosophy.

One gets a strong perception of the hidden hand of Mahasaraswati in bringing out this inspired volume with "her close and profound capacity of intimate knowledge and careful and flawless work and quiet and exact perfection in all things."

Meanwhile the Nagpur Circle was very fortunate to have a person of Dr. Karan Singh's stature to inaugurate the main function of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations on the morning of 13th February. As is well known, Dr. Singh is the recipient of a Doctorate degree for his thesis 'Prophet of Indian Nationalism', submitted under the inspired guidance of Prof. Arabinda Basu of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo was a steadfast champion of India's inner unity and territorial integrity. For him the division of the subcontinent was a temporary and passing phase. He firmly believed in its eventual unification. Dr. Karan Singh hopefully echoed the noble sentiments of the great Master and gave a positive thrust to the proceedings of the Golden Jubilee deliberations. If European nations can resolve their five-century-old conflict amicably and stay under one economic roof, why can't India and Pakistan follow suit after five decades of stress and strain, he argued. Those words, uttered by the former Sadar-E-Riyasat of the Princely State of Kashmir, were quite convincing.

Dr. Singh started his address by unfolding the eventful life of Sri Aurobindo, his metamorphosis from a brilliant ICS student to an ardent revolutionary and then to a spiritual master. He emphasised that Indian Culture is deeply rooted in the philosophy of the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita and was nurtured by the great Acharyas and Saints of the past. He pointed out that the so-called Indian Culture is nothing but Universal in its nature and totality and is predominantly rooted in the Indian soil.

The possibility, nay, the certainty of the realisation of Divine Life upon earth on the basis of the Supramental Consciousness was pin-pointed by Dr. Singh as the main contribution of Sri Aurobindo to the great spiritual tradition of India.

The first citizen of Nagpur Mayor Dr. Kalpana Pande, newspaper baron and former M.P. Banawarilal Purohit, former minister Dr. Srikant Jichakar, the President of the Nagpur Circle Dr. P. Y. Patil, graced the dais for the inaugural session.

The positive and hopeful tune of Dr. Singh's address was orchestrated by fellow participants in the Golden Jubilee seminar. Dr. Kedarnath Verma of Sri Aurobindo Gram, M.P. and Prof. Mrs. Saral Nagraj of the Amaravati Yoga Centre were the chief

contributors to the Golden Jubilee discourse. Both the speakers were well versed in the study of *Savitri* and threw light on various aspects of the great epic. Dr. Kedar-nath Verma was keen to emphasise that Mirra Richard's first meeting with Sri Aurobindo amidst the dark clouds of the first World War signified nothing but the descent of the Divine Force as described in *Savitri*. According to Dr. Verma the new world which has eliminated the apparent division between Matter and Spirit was already born and it was knocking at the door to enter into the human psyche. He gave a clarion call to the followers of Sri Aurobindo to get rid of the ego and be prepared to bring the Life Divine on Earth

The Yoga of Savitri was the main theme of Mrs Nagraj's address. She took the opportunity to expand the topic in her valedictory remarks. Her speech in vernacular language was easily followed by most of the delegates. Her vivid and racy account of Savitri's ascent was much appreciated by the responsive audience.

Mrs. Nagraj was keen to describe in minute detail every step of Savitri's forward march. She emphasised that all that Sri Aurobindo wrote in the epic had the strong foundation of his own spiritual experience and is fully supported by his realisation. She explained how the sunlit path from Matter to Spirit is laid bare in the great epic.

Sri Aurobindo's progressive journey from extreme nationalism to total humanism was traced by the leading journalist and eminent writer Suresh Dwadashiwar, editor of *Daily Loksatta*. His intuitive evaluation of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual sadhana was much appreciated by the audience. The learned editor had a firm conviction that the new century and millennium belong to Sri Aurobindo as the common man can find solace in his noble vision as well as in his towering personality.

His line of thinking is thus. Great founders of religion, kings and nobility, saints and sages have gradually lost their influence over society in the course of time. So the next century and millennium belong to the common man. Sri Aurobindo's realisation which gives equal opportunity to each and every individual to uplift his consciousness is a sort of boon to this psychological yearning.

Prajnabharati Dr. Shreedhar Varnekar (Alas! he is no more), Dr. N. R. Varadpande, Journalist S. N. Vinod, Dr. Om Bihani were associated with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in various capacities and contributed their own shares to enrich the deliberations.

Exhibitions on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as also on flowers and their mystic significance were appreciated by the delegates.

Twilight meditation was held on the premises of Sri Aurobindo Circle Shrine at South Sitabuldi.

A dance drama by Ms. Barhona Basu and devotional songs by Sri Gopal Kaushik and party added grace to the occasion.

There was a sort of millennium hype among the delegates. They were in search of a bridge between the teaching of their twentieth century Messiah and the impending challenges of the twenty-first century and the third millennium. Of course each of

them firmly believed and echoed the Mother's sentiment, quoted in the Souvenir, that Sri Aurobindo belongs to the future, he is the messenger of the future. So they were keen to be in tune with that evolutionary trend and were happily convinced of being on the right path.

The fruitful deliberations at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in Nagpur gave them an excellent opportunity to recharge their inner batteries. It was a glittering golden experience worth remembering for years to come.

PRABHAKAR NULKAR

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Musings on the Mother's Prayers and Meditations, Vol. 2, by Shyam Kumari
Pages XVI+352 Price Rs 250 Available from SABDA and VAK. Also from the Author

(i)

SHYAM KUMARI'S second volume of *Musings on the Mother's Prayers and Meditations* has recently come out. It is in perfect continuity with the first volume. Whereas the first volume consists of 93 essays, the second consists of 112. The author's musings are not merely essays, the loose sallies of her mind. They are her offerings to the Divine Mother in the form of Shradha Suman (Flowers of Faith), a kind of obeisance.

The first volume ends with the Divine Mother's first meeting with Sri Aurobindo which was a great event in the spiritual history of mankind. There the Mother writes.

It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth, his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.

The second volume begins with her musings after the great event, a new beginning when the twin Avatars (Sri Aurobindo and the Mother) of the Supermind were to collaborate for the earth's transformation into a new Heaven through integral Yoga, yet unknown to the people of the world. Whether the collectivity believes in such a transformation or not matters very little. What Sri Aurobindo has prophesied in *Savitri* is bound to take place. He writes:

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

This transformation is Earth's due to Heaven and Heaven's debt to Earth and it is a certainty that it will take place though it may take several millennia.

The author's second volume of musings needs to be read in this light. Her musings are the heart-throbs of an inspired soul who has found perfect identity with the Mother's Consciousness. They are the symphonies of her inner being, the sweet cadences of which may be heard by the occult ears of an aspiring soul and have the power to create the same rhythm and vibration in the heart of a Sadhak who has chosen to tread the path of integral Yoga.

A word in regard to the very style of these *Musings* would not be out of place. The captions, the context of the opening and other paragraphs with the Mother's

words of Her prayers to the Divine in between and the apt conclusions are so harmoniously blended that the essays appear to be of one piece. By writing these volumes of *Musings*, Shyam Kumari has rendered the same service for the aspiring souls as M P Pandit did by his 10 volumes of *Readings in Savitri*. No reader even with the slightest faith and devotion for the Divine can go unimpressed by the power of these *Musings*; for such is the rhythmic beauty and delight hidden in them. To cite the author's own sentence in regard to what her devotional heart piously holds about the *Mother's Prayers and Meditations* would be the best tribute to her faith and surrender to the Divine Mother and her very style:

The prayers of the Mother are the pearls of love strung on a triple thread of reverence, adoration and worship and surrendered at the feet of the Lord.

(*Musings*, Vol 2. p 209)

J S TANDON

(11)

When I first heard of Shyam Kumari's musings on the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* I thought, as many others must have done, "What can be written about those simple ardent invocations and supplications that rise like flames into the highest regions?"

But when I saw the first one in *Mother India* it was obvious that someone had received an inspiration and, while "musing" is probably the best word for this three-volume collection of commentaries, the impassioned tone sustained throughout somehow belies the title. Each piece is an exuberant paean of praise, a joyful chant itself, and always a burning faith-filled affirmation of the Mother's victory.

On June 9th, 1914, the Mother wrote in her diary

O beloved children, unhappy and ignorant, O thou, rebellious and violent Nature, open your hearts, calm your forces, for here comes the sweet omnipotence of Love, here is the pure radiance of the light that penetrates you. This human hour, this earthly hour is beautiful over all other hours. Let each and all know it and rejoice in the plenitude that is given.

O sorrowful hearts and careworn brows, foolish obscurity and ignorant ill-will, let your anguish be calmed and effaced. Lo, the splendour of the new world arrives.

"Here am I."

Shyam Kumari brings these promises of past generations to bear upon the world on the threshold of the new millennium. With her ardent faith she uses their mantric power to demolish the fears of humanity.

In Vol II of *Musings* Shyam Kumari shines her torch on the period immediately after the Mother's first physical encounter with Sri Aurobindo, from April 1st, 1914, to September 14th 1914.

Her musings often resonate with allusions to legends of Hinduism, analogies which adorn her insights. Her enthusiasm is contagious, her flights of poetic inspiration enriching. I would write more but I want to go on to Vol. III.

MAGGI

The New Panorama: Short Stories and Reflections, by Raman Reddy. Pages 138. Publisher V Manmohan Reddy, Aurobharati Trust, 5 Kumaran Street. Pondicherry 605012 Price Rs 60

The New Panorama is a delightful book. In spite of the fourfold classification of the Contents we have in it twenty-seven short stories which are reflections on the new panorama or the ever-unfolding picture of life in which a Higher Consciousness has descended and is trying to assert itself. The men in the lower consciousness respond, react and try to exploit it for self-aggrandisement with their pseudo-scholarship and so-called spiritual seeking. This is brought before us with a vivid imagination. But then, there are also people who are sincere at various levels. If those who profess to do yoga end in disaster, those who do not know yoga sometimes turn out to be true yogis

The narrator of the stories is a young Brahmin aspirant who has a friend, philosopher and guide in a German savant, Wagner. He guides the sincere to their goal and ridicules the hypocrites and relishes their disastrous end. He is a friend of Lord Ganesha and an acquaintance of other gods. Since the days of religion are over and since the Higher Consciousness has made spirituality our goal, the gods play a beneficial role. If there are the gods, Raman has not forgotten our "good friend" Satan (spelt in the reverse *Natas*) who believes in the reversal of all that is good and divine. Even Wagner succumbs to him momentarily and it is the narrator of the stories who restores him to the normal state with the help of Lord Ganesha. All the stories are "bound each to each" not only by the presence of Wagner and his friend but also by a unity of theme and purpose.

It is impossible to summarise all the stories and reflections in a brief review. Before highlighting a few stories, it may be said that Raman has a gift for fine phrasing as in the title *The Cockroach Approach*. His English is very good, notwithstanding Indianisms like "pindrop silence" and occasional slips in grammar. He is old enough to know life in its different aspects and levels, and is familiar with various gadgets and their mechanisms. He is capable not only of sarcasm and satire but also of gentle pathos and sweet response to the best in life. But he is young enough to ridicule personal ambition and hypocrisy with a childlike ruthless observation of things.

If from one point of view *The Battle of the Pundits* in its different aspects, verbal, political and other, reveals Raman's talent for satire, some of the stories in the first section reveal his talent for presenting humour mixed with pathos. For sheer humour, one could turn to the story of *Bokanath Mukherjee*. It begins with Wagner's weekly visit to his dear friend Ganesha in Heaven. The Ganesh Puja has just been concluded and discussion revolves around the hotly debated subject of the idols of Ganesha drinking milk offered by devotees. The author boldly makes Ganesha say that scientists give stupid explanations to whatever they don't understand. Wagner is then sent to enquire about a distress call from Bokanath Mukherjee who has been stopped at the gates of Heaven. Chitragupta with his computer and a team of experts wouldn't let Bokanath in. Wagner recognises Bokanath as an old sadhak and delivers the chit from Ganesha that instructs Chitragupta to admit the sadhak or face the prospect of a municipal clerk's life on Earth. Meanwhile Ganesha himself appears, gives a sound scolding to Chitragupta for his dependence on computers and psychoanalysis, and welcomes Bokanath to Heaven.

Another beautiful story is *American Management*. Two American scholars, an old professor and his student, seek to apply management techniques to spheres other than business. They question Wagner about his yoga and convince him to give it up. But even as they are talking, a young Brahmin priest of a nearby temple enters the scene and introduces himself as the one hundred and twenty-eighth descendant of Rishi Gurumitra who has founded the fifty-fourth sub-sect of Shaivism. His forefathers have predicted that two men would come from the West and bring salvation to India with their new techniques. The professor is pleased and follows him to the temple where, ironically, he gets converted to Hindu rituals. On his return to America, the professor tells the University authorities.

The rites, the practices, the ceremonies of the Hindus, represent the acme of procedural clarity that we have not achieved even with the help of our super computers. In the life of the Brahmin, every act has a significance, every colour has a code, every dress has a purpose, every time has an importance, with a precision beyond our imagination.

The Story of the *Chartered Accountant* needs special mention. Wagner succeeds in making a super industrial magnate realise the beauty of life and throw currency worth two lakhs into a pond of goldfish. There is superb irony in more than one place as when meditation is introduced as a special therapy discovered in America. The most pathetic tale is that of Subba Rao who rises from being a sweeper to a very high position but is unloved by the members of his own family. His wife takes to prostitution. Subba Rao's attempt to save his little daughter from it fails. Wagner shows that there is no point in regretting the behaviour of his daughter. He advises him to adopt another girl and shower his affection on her.

One is tempted to refer to story after story. But we could end with the com-

mencement of the book, the story about *The Scholar* Sick of books, he turns to life Wagner shows him the goldfish in his pond. The scholar would like to become a fish himself and to look at life from its point of view. Wagner transforms him into one Perhaps, if the scholar returned to human life with the new experience, he would achieve a better life since the Master and the Divine Mother have shown that the highest achievements are possible only in human life.

Even to those who do not bother about Higher Consciousness, the little book could be a thing of beauty and therefore a joy for ever

K B SITARAMAYYA

Leading Lights, by Samir Kanta Gupta Published and printed by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry. Price Rs. 70.

As stated in the Preface, this is a compilation of editorial notes which appeared in *The Advent* over a period of time Indeed these stray thoughts or sketches are a veritable garland of sparkling gems of thought covering an astonishingly wide and varied range of subjects from the many basic issues of our life and existence, musings on life's aims and other deep philosophical cogitations, such immediately contemporary relevant topics as globalisation, the concept of one earth and a deep concern for the environment, the values and aims of true education, the lengthening shadow of violence and terrorism stretching across the globe, etc

The sweetly moving opening prose poem in adoration of the Divine Mother sets the tone of the book What impresses us most is the simple, direct and forthright manner in which the author approaches various subjects. He always goes right to the heart of the matter and with the sure deft strokes of a master artist, in one clean swift sweep places before us the true and lasting solution to the problems posed, something that is at once full of light, meaning and hope. The teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo permeate the entire book, as a result there is a soft glow and tender warmth of their presence throughout that lends a special lustre to the writing. Nowhere is the author seen to be imposing his personal views, nor is there any strident or discordant note All solutions to the problems emerge as a natural outcome of the process of a progressively evolutionary cycle and therefore appear to be organic to the whole To every issue Samir Kanta turns his steady, unfaltering and upward gaze that beckons to the future and comes up with a finding that is at once total, harmonious and in tune with the highest aim in life The articles reveal a mind that is capable and all-encompassing, firmly rooted in the highest ideals of Indian spirituality yet open to new and emerging ideas—a quality that is rare in contemporary writing; and that is what makes his writing so fresh and lively. The style is limpid and free-flowing, often reminiscent of Nolini Kanta's own inimitable, pellucid and simple style concealing vast depths of learning and wisdom

If there is anything that the reviewer finds wanting, it is the small measures in which the author has doled out such bounties. Each article is so short and sweet that it leaves the reader asking for more and yet more. No sooner has the reader been lured into these rich treasure houses of thought-gems than he is whisked away. It is only to be hoped that the author will lay out a more substantial and sumptuous repast for his reader in his next venture. The cover design and printing measure up to the very highest standards of the Ashram Press and are a visual delight. There are, however, one or two very minor typographical errors, e.g. "advised" in place of "advised" on p. 23 line 1, and "liner" in place of "linear" on p. 62 line 2. But these are mere peccadilloes in an otherwise impeccable production.

ARUP BASU

Students' Section

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF GRAVITY

(Continued from the issue of July 2000)

General Theory of Relativity

WE HAVE already seen the difficulty that threatened the coexistence of the Newtonian law of gravitation with the Special Theory of Relativity. This theory attaches special significance to the speed of light as the upper limit that cannot be exceeded by any physical interaction; on the other hand gravity, according to Newton, seems to be working instantaneously across vast distances. Any inertial observer is one on whom no force acts. Can we actually pinpoint any observer or object on whom no force acts? The answer is “no”,—simply because wherever you are in the universe you cannot escape the force of gravitation be it of the earth, the moon, the sun or any other object of the universe.

In short, nowhere in the universe can we eliminate gravity as a force and so our definition of the inertial observer seems unrealisable in practice. Since inertial observers form the starting point of the special theory of relativity, it looks as if the theory is based on unrealistic foundations! Thus the Special Theory of Relativity not only makes Newtonian gravitation inconsistent; it also threatens the existence of gravity itself.

Einstein discovered an ingenious way out of these difficulties by proposing an entirely new approach to the phenomenon of gravity, which he called the General Theory of Relativity. We have already seen how all-pervasive gravity is so that we cannot ignore its existence anywhere in the universe. Einstein took this property of gravity as evidence that it is intimately linked with another all-pervasive entity around us—spacetime. Spacetime is the three-dimensional space in which we exist and time whose passage we all experience. To link gravity and spacetime Einstein proposed another form of geometry, non-Euclidean geometry.

Do We Live In Curved Spacetime?

We now ask whether there is any evidence that we live in some non-Euclidean curved spacetime. In 1916, soon after Einstein proposed his theory, Karl Schwarzschild solved Einstein's equations to find out how the geometry of spacetime behaves if there is a massive spherical object placed in it. This solution can be used to determine how planets move around the sun.

A planet's orbit around the sun will be a straight line in space whose geometry is given by Schwarzschild's solution. And here we discover that despite different approaches, for all practical purposes the planetary orbits as determined by Einstein's

criterion are the same as those in the Newtonian theory! But there are very slight differences which are most noticeable for the orbit of the planet Mercury,—because it lies closest to the Sun and has the most eccentric orbit. If we recall our earlier discussion, we saw that Newton's law couldn't explain the rate of advance of Mercury's perihelion of 43 arc secs. But Einstein's theory provides an extremely good agreement with the observed rate of advance.

This remarkable success inspires confidence in the theory. It was, however, another astronomical observation that established the viability of the theory. This was the observation of the bending of light rays near the sun as observed in 1919.

Cosmic Illusions

The example of the star's image shifting because of the bending of light by the Sun's gravitation conjures up many more interesting possibilities. Imagine, for example, a source of light S and an observer O with a massive object G lying in between them. In this situation there are two possible routes for light to arrive from S to O. In fact in an idealised situation when S, G and O are aligned, the observer will see not only two images of S but a ring of source. One can call such a phenomenon *gravitational lensing*.

In 1979 a group of astronomers (D. Walsh, R.F. Carswell and R.J. Weymann) came up with a startling case exactly of this kind. The case concerned a pair of quasars. They found that this pair was very close, around 6 arc-secs apart and that it had considerably similar spectra and other features. This phenomenon of quasar twins is not very common. One could ask, instead of two identical looking quasars in reality, because of gravitational lensing, are we seeing two images of really one source? If so where is the gravitating object G to bend the light? The group looked more closely and found a galaxy that just did the trick.

The discovery demonstrated that gravitational bending of light can very subtly distort the astronomer's perception of reality. After this pair of quasars, more such discoveries were made and in some cases three or even four images were seen. Whatever the outcome of these discoveries, the mere possibility warned the astronomers against the old adage "Seeing is believing".

Black Holes

Loosely speaking, a black hole is a region of space that has so much mass concentrated in it that there is no way for a nearby object to escape its gravitational pull, not even light.

A star of twenty to twenty-five solar masses forms a black hole. The star sustains itself by turning hydrogen into helium. As it is wholly made up of gas, the gas creates an outward pressure which counter-balances the gravitational force of the star. Thus the star remains in equilibrium. But when it exhausts all its fuel the gas pressure

decreases. Then gravity takes over and the star collapses. The enormous mass of the star is squeezed into an extremely small volume, thus forming an infinitely dense star, called a black hole

In the General Theory of Relativity, gravity is a manifestation of the curvature of spacetime. Massive objects distort it to such an extent that the usual rules of geometry don't apply any more. Near a black hole this distortion is extremely severe and causes black holes to have some very strange properties. In particular, a black hole has a boundary called an 'event horizon' or the 'Schwarzschild radius' which is proportional to the mass of the object. This is a spherical surface that marks the boundary of the black hole. One can pass in through the horizon, but one can't come out of it. The extreme distortion is called a singularity.

When Newton and Einstein Agree

Einstein's General Theory of Relativity and Newton's law of gravitation offer radically different interpretations of the phenomenon of gravity. Yet, in practical terms, the difference between their predictions seems to be very small. Mathematical analysis of Einstein's equations tells us that the agreement between the two approaches is not incidental. That is why, in spite of the conceptual and observational superiority of Einstein's theory, Newton's law is still usable. Because the mathematical formalism of Einstein is much more complicated than Newton's, astronomers prefer to use the latter in cases of weak gravity.

FLAWS IN THE GENERAL THEORY OF RELATIVITY

The General Theory of Relativity Predicts Spacetime Singularities

Spacetime singularities and event horizons are a consequence of the General Theory of Relativity. Although the "big bang" singularity and "black holes" have been a topic of intensive study in theoretical astrophysics, many physicists seriously doubt that such mathematical monsters should really represent physical objects. In fact, in order to predict black holes one has to extrapolate the General Theory of Relativity far beyond observationally known gravity strengths. Albert Einstein in fact was quite aware of this conceptual problem. Many physicists would prefer a gravity theory without mathematical anomalies in its field solutions.

The General Theory of Relativity Failed to be Quantized

Quantum mechanics can be said to be *the* cornerstone of modern physics. For every physical field theory there should be a quantum field theory. The possibility of formulating gravity as quantum field theory is essential in the context of the unification of all fundamental interactions. However, all attempts to find a consistent

Quantum Gauge Field Theory of General Relativity have so far failed. This indicates again that the General Theory of Relativity can hardly be an absolutely correct theory of gravitation if quantum representation is the final description of the physical world.

Our discussion of gravity began with the falling of an apple and has taken us from the animal life's adaptation to gravity to ocean tides, motion of planets, comets, satellites of the solar system, to the curved spacetime of the General Theory of Relativity, to the illusions of gravitational lensing and, finally, to the weird concept of black holes. None of the other basic forces of physics has such a wide range of applications as has gravity. Although gravity is the weakest of the four known basic forces, its effects are by far the most dramatic.

Indeed, it would be an interesting exercise to speculate on the state of the world if there were no gravity at all! Would atoms and molecules be affected? As far as we know, the presence or absence of gravity does not play a crucial role in the existence and stability of the microworld. The strong, weak and electromagnetic forces are the main forces at this level. Even at the macroscopic level of the objects that we see around us in our daily lives, gravity does not appear to play a crucial role in their constitution or equilibrium. After all, even astronauts have demonstrated that they can live in simulated conditions of weightlessness. One way to create a nearly realistic feeling of weight would be to create a spinning space station or shuttle.

But we can go no further in dispensing with gravity. When we eliminate gravity on a bigger scale, disasters lie in store. With the earth's gravity gone, there is no force to bind the earth as a spherical object, to retain the protective layer of the atmosphere around it, or to keep us on the surface. The living systems on the earth have complex biological systems that have evolved with and have adapted themselves to the explicit existence of the earth's gravity. Without gravity, the earth would no longer be attracted by the sun and would take off in a straight path instead of going round the sun. The sun would no longer be stable and would expand. This applies to any other star or bigger objects such as quasars and galaxies. These are just speculations of a zero-gravity universe.

In spite of its importance and omnipresence, gravity remains shrouded in mystery. Having stated the inverse-square law of gravity, Newton declined to find out further how this law operates. Einstein provided an ingenious connection between gravity and the geometry of spacetime, but even he was conscious of the fact that his description of gravity placed it farther apart from the rest of physics. Einstein's prescription eliminated gravity as a force. In fact, there is no concept of force in Einstein's theory. Mass affects the geometry of spacetime as spacetime affects the motion of an object. To bridge the gap between gravity and other physical forces, Einstein hoped to provide a *unified field theory* of all physical interactions. He spent his last years unsuccessfully in this ambitious task. Today's physicists are pursuing this goal via a different route. They hope that one day gravity will also come into this fold.

But as of now, partly because of its unusual description as a geometrical

property of spacetime rather than a normal force, gravity is not yet unified with quantum mechanics, the cornerstone of modern physics. Quantum theory usually deals with the microscopic world where gravity is weak. How then can physicists study its effects?

But here we leave our study of the many faces of gravity. Through the study of gravity, nature has so far revealed many of her secrets, but many more are still reserved for the future.

(Concluded)

NISHIKANTA KHANDAI