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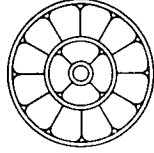
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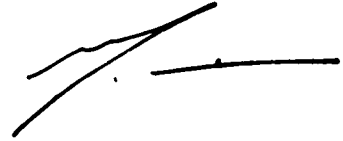


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MOTHER INDIA

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No. 1

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>		
A BIG CHANGE		5
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>		
REMEMBER (Poem)	.	7
CORRESPONDENCE ON POETRY	.	8
<i>C. Subbian</i>		
THOUGHT THE PARACLETE. SOME COMMENTS	.	12
<i>Sampadananda Mishra</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS (Compilation)	..	14
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>		
THREE LETTERS	.	16
<i>Nirodbaran</i>		
IN EXPECTATION (POEM)	..	18
<i>Chunulal Chowdhury</i>		
THE ONE AND THE MANY	...	19
<i>Nishikanta</i>		
BONNE FÊTE (Poem)		23
<i>Abani Sinha</i>		
KASHMIR A VISION BY THE MOTHER	.	26
<i>Richard Hartz</i>		
THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	.	27
<i>R Y Deshpande</i>		
THE FIVE SUNS OF POETRY	.	37
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA		41
<i>Vijay Ram</i>		
ASPIRATION (Poem)		44
<i>M S. Srinivasan</i>		
VEDIC PSYCHOLOGY	..	45

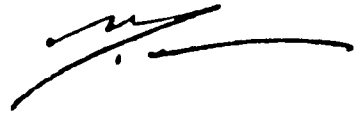
<i>Georgette Coty</i>	
SONG OF RETURN (Poem)	50
<i>Daniel Albuquerque</i>	
THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS	51
<i>Narad</i>	
SOUL BEHIND THE VEIL (Poem)	54
<i>Dinkar D Palande</i>	
SPEECH	55
<i>Ashalata Dash</i>	
A JOYOUS PATCH (Poem)	59
<i>Suresh Dey</i>	
THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL	60
<i>Anonymous</i>	
MINAKSHIAMMA A FLAME THAT STOOD THE STORM	64
<i>Suryakanti Mohanty</i>	
A DELICATE DIALOGUE (Poem)	68
<i>Sachidananda Mohanty</i>	
GLOBALIZATION OF CULTURE—WHO WINS?	69
<i>Aju Mukhopadhyay</i>	
ETCHING OF SONNETS ON THE BODY OF ETERNITY	73
<i>Rita Nath Keshari</i>	
CRUMBLING WALLS (Short Story)	75
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE	
<i>Alok Pandey</i>	
Review of GROWING UP WITH THE MOTHER by TARA JAUHAR	78
<i>Various readers</i>	
Review of LOG OF A JOURNEY THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO S SAVITRI by WILLIAM NETTER	79

A BIG CHANGE

1970

*The world is preparing
for a big change.*

Will you help?



Mother, "The world is preparing for a big change, will you help?" What is this great change of which you speak? And how are we to be of help to it?

This great change is the appearance upon earth of a new race which will be for man what man is for the animal. The consciousness of this new race is already at work upon earth to enlighten all who are able to receive it and heed it.

You have asked us to help You. How can I help You? What am I to do?

To concentrate and open to receive the new progressive consciousness, to receive the new things which are coming down.

4

The change does not need our help to come, but we need to open ourselves to the consciousness so that its coming is not in vain for us.

*

The first indispensable condition to prepare ourselves to receive the new consciousness is a true and spontaneous humility which makes us feel deeply that we know

5

nothing and are nothing in the face of the marvellous things we have to acquire

*

One thing you must know and never forget: in the work of transformation all that is true and sincere will always be kept, only what is false and insincere will disappear

*

The Victory is certain and with this certitude we can face patiently any amount of wrong suggestions and hostile attacks

*

Two things you must never forget. Sri Aurobindo's compassion and the Mother's love, and it is with these two things that you will go on fighting steadily, patiently, until the enemies are definitively routed and the Victory is won for ever.

Courage outside, peace inside and a quiet unshakable trust in the Divine's Grace

THE MOTHER

(CWM, Vol 15, pp 115-116, 93, 89, 88)

REMEMBER

. ‘REMEMBER why thou cam’st
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God’s meaning in thy depths,
Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God’s door, enter into his trance
Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see
Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit’s sight
In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal’s body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul
In the world’s contacts meet his single touch,
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.
Conquer thy heart’s throbs, let thy heart beat in God
Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,
Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death ’’

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, Book Seven, Canto Two, p 476)

CORRESPONDENCE ON POETRY

APPRECIATION OF "LOVE AND DEATH"

Q A E has made a few interesting remarks on some of my poems—remarks curious in some places while fairly perceptive in others. He warns against frequent use of words like "infinite", "eternal", "limitless". The difficulty about such words has struck me before—frequent use of them gives a not altogether agreeable Hugoesque flavour to mystic Indian poetry; but I wonder whether I have cheapened or misused them. At least you have never taken me to task on that score.

As regards those two poems of mine which you have liked immensely, he notes with pleasure only one phrase in "Ne plus Ultra"—"the song-impetuous mind"—and has nothing to say about "This Errant Life". Isn't that strange?

By the way, the copy of your "Love and Death" is ready to go to England. I wonder how the critics will receive the poem. They should be enthusiastic. It is full of superb passages. Do you remember Ruru's going down to Patala, the underworld? I have commented on its inspiration in my essay "Sri Aurobindo—the Poet". I can never stop thrilling to it. Here are the lines

In a thin soft eve

*Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,
A glimmering restlessness with voices large,
And from the forests of that half-seen bank
A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,
With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale
Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went
Down the mysterious river and beheld
The great banks widen out of sight. The world
Was water and the skies to water plunged
All night with a dim motion gliding down
He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,
As in a dream more real than daylight,
The helmsman with his dumb and marble face
Near him and moving wideness all around,
And that continual gliding dimly on,
As one who on a shoreless water sails
For ever to a port he shall not win
But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan
Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense
Of Ocean and the depths below our feet
But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him*

*His marble gaze coeval with the stars
 Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose
 And saw around him the vast sea all grey
 And heaving in the pallid dawning light.
 Loud Ruru cried across the murmur "Hear me,
 O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear
 If any cadence in thy infinite
 Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,
 Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.
 For I would travel to the despairing shades,
 The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell
 Souls unreleased and the untimely dead
 Who weep remembering Thither, O guide me,
 No despicable wayfarer, but Ruru,
 But son of a great Rishi, from all men
 On earth selected for peculiar pangs,
 Special disaster Lo, this petalled fire,
 How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"
 He held the flower out subtly glimmering
 And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,
 Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,
 Converging all its giant crests: towards him
 Innumerable waters loomed and heaven
 Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved
 Dreadfully swift, then with a prone wide sound
 All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
 Curving with monstrous menace over him.
 He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
 Descending, saw with floating hair arise
 The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
 A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
 And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
 A mute stupendous march of waters race
 To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.*

A: I did not object to your frequent use of "infinite", "eternal", "limitless", because these are adjectives that I myself freely pepper over my poetry. When one writes about the Infinite, the Eternal and the Limitless or when one feels them constantly, what is one to do? A E who has not this consciousness but only that of the temporal and finite (natural or occult) can avoid these words, but I can't Besides, all poets have their favourite words and epithets which they constantly repeat A E himself has been charged with a similar crime.

If you send your poems to five different poets, you are likely to get five absolutely disparate and discordant estimates of them. A poet likes only the poetry that appeals to his own temperament or taste, the rest he condemns or ignores. Contemporary poetry, besides, seldom gets its right judgment from contemporary critics, even. You expect for instance *Love and Death* to make a sensation in England—I don't expect it in the least: I shall be agreeably surprised if it gets more than some qualified praise, and if it does not get even that, I shall be neither astonished nor discomfited. I know the limitations of the poem and its qualities and I know that the part about the descent into Hell can stand comparison with some of the best English poetry; but I don't expect any contemporaries to see it. If they do, it will be good luck or divine grace, that is all. Nothing can be more futile than for a poet to write in expectation of contemporary fame or praise, however agreeable that may be, if it comes: but it is not of much value; for very few poets have enjoyed a great contemporary fame and very great poets have been neglected in their time. A poet has to go on his way, trying to gather hints from what people say for or against, when their criticisms are things he can profit by, but not otherwise moved (if he can manage it)—seeking mainly to sharpen his own sense of self-criticism by the help of others. Differences of estimate need not surprise him at all.

22 1932

AN INTERPRETATION OF "THOUGHT THE PARACLETE"¹

Q: Dr X has given an interpretation of your poem "Thought the Paraclete", which some other critic has fallen foul of. What is your own analysis of the thought-structure in this poem?

A: There is no thought-structure in the poem, there is only a succession of vision and experience, it is a mystic poem, its unity is spiritual and concrete, not a mental and logical building. When you see a flower, do you ask the gardener to reduce the flower to its chemical components? There would then be no flower left and no beauty. The poem is not built upon intellectual definitions or philosophical theorisings; it is something seen. When you ascend a mountain, you see the scenery and feel the delight of the ascent, you don't sit down to make a map with names for every rock and peak or spend time studying its geological structure—that is work for the geologist, not for the traveller. X's geological account (to make one is part of his *métier* as a critic and a student and writer on literature) is probably as good as any other is likely to be, but each is free to make his own according to his own idea. Reasoning and argumentation are not likely to make one account truer and invalidate the rest. A mystic poem may explain itself or a general idea may emerge from it, but it is the

¹ *Collected Poems* (Centenary Edition, 1972), p. 582

vision that is important or what one can get from it by intuitive feeling, not the explanation or idea; *Thought the Paraclete* is a vision or revelation of an ascent through spiritual planes, but gives no names and no photographic descriptions of the planes crossed. I leave it there

BHĀVA BEHIND “THE BIRD OF FIRE”²

Q: Your “The Bird of Fire” is full of colour and images, but if one can follow the bhāva behind or through them, I believe the appreciation becomes complete.

A: What do you mean by following the *bhāva* behind? Putting a label on the bird and keeping it *dried* up in your intellectual museum, for Professors to describe—to their pupils—“this is the species and that’s how it is constituted, these are the bones, feathers etc , etc., and now you know all about the bird. Or would you like me to dissect it farther?”

*

Literature and art are or can be a first introduction to the inner being—the inner mind, vital; for it is from there that they come. And if one writes poems of Bhakti, poems of divine seeking, etc., or creates music of that kind, it means that there is a Bhakta or seeker inside who is supporting himself by that self-expression. There is also the point of view behind Lele’s answer to me when I told him that I wanted to do Yoga but for work, for action, not for Sannyasa and Nirvana,—but after years of spiritual effort I had failed to find the way and it was for that I had asked to meet him. His first answer was, “It would be easy for you as you are a poet.” But it was not from any point of view like that that X put his question and it was not from that point of view that I gave my answer. It was about some especial character-making virtue that he seemed to attribute to literature.

18 11.1936

SRI AUROBINDO

(SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 270-273, 274-275, 279)

2 *Ibid*, p 571

THOUGHT THE PARACLETE: SOME COMMENTS

IN the year 1934 Sri Aurobindo wrote on the same day (31-12-1934) two poems, *Thought the Paraclete* and *Rose of God* which have somehow become the favourite Anthology pieces in Indo-English poetry. One of the earliest critics wrote a note on *Thought the Paraclete* and submitted it for Sri Aurobindo's comments. Sri Aurobindo said "Everybody is free to give a thought-structure to the poem but that is not what I meant," and gave his exposition. Coleridge said that poetry should only be generally understood and not too perfectly understood. It may be true of his poetry and the question we have to ask is "Why can't a poem be perfectly understood?" For example the *Gita* is poetry and philosophy and it is best understood when it is fully and perfectly understood. So it is with *Savitri*, or any poem of Sri Aurobindo.

Thought the Paraclete is no longer puzzling and intriguing the reader, and he is no longer floored by the imagery and its colour-symbolism. Also there is no philosophical background to the poem and it need not be studied in movements as modern criticism does and glorifies itself on that score. The poem does not visibly or invisibly indicate the principle of evolution-involution or ascent-descent of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics of *The Life Divine*. We cannot even say that it is a sudden, swift jet of unconventional melody, as for example, Gerald Manley Hopkins's poetry. The poem has a royal ascent with perfect ease in its movement from one plane to another and when it reaches the top of the ladder, thought disappears leaving behind a flame-word rune and merges with the Vast Beyond. "The flame-word rune is the highest word representing the highest Inspiration, Intuition and Revelation which is the highest achievement of Thought."

The poem is simply elegant and enjoyable. Thought moves higher and higher and finally merges with the highest *Brahman*, if we want to name it. There is no question of descent of anything. There is no question of ego or anything vanishing leaving the place for the silent witness Self. The poem clearly indicates how the Self (capital S) was bound by thought, and its relation with the movement of Thought till it has merged with the Superconscious in Sri Aurobindo's term. We have to imagine a movement of a gyre. There is a Being which watches the movement, that is the Witness Self. Thought merges with the Being or *Purusha*. Sri Aurobindo points out that Dynamic and Static *Brahman* merge. Beyond that there is something, a poise, a state of consciousness or even a Person like Shiva if we want to name it for our understanding. Sri Aurobindo does not name it.

The poem suggests a flying movement of the Paraclete. It is not any other bird, crow or eagle. It is the Paraclete mentioned in the Bible. St John Chapter 14, verse 26. The first line suggests the flying movement. "Bright archangel" shows how the Inconscious holds the Superconscious. It also suggests that the Superconscious holds the Inconscious. The word "crest" suggests spirit immensities as the line in *Savitri* says "Alone he watched by the Spirit's vast immensity". Also the movement of thought is there in all the planes, the life-plane, the mental plane and the higher

ranges The colour symbolism employed by the author is absolutely appropriate and real to the planes referred to To be brief, thought is the mediator between the Inconscient and the Superconscient. And what is this thought? “Knowledge of the Essence is Being Knowledge of the details is Thought ” (Professor Seetharaman) If we watch the movement of thought simply, silently, quietly as *sarva shākshu bhutānām* in the Sanskrit phrasing, we are led slowly to get at the vision of the poem in its origin and also the way it is expressed in the finest language to the extent that is possible in English.

Another difficulty which the critics face is the wrong reading of the key line in the poem, namely

Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune

This is the last line of the poem also. The words in this order beautifully describe the essence and the details of the movement of Thought, and also the joy that is “in widest commonalty spread” when we watch it Let us look a little more closely. “Was left” means was left by somebody. It is simple grammar, passive voice The Self was bound by thought and when it has left, it is lone, limitless, nude, immune So long something was limiting it. So long it was clothed as it were and now it is nude “Immune” means immune to something. All of us are not gifted with vision The least that we can do is to imagine. If we try to intellectually reproduce the experience in the poem, it will be but a lifeless façade and we will have to pathetically blink in our bewilderment How are we to experience what the poet has experienced is the question. Take the poem and do simply *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nidhidhyāsanam* with it, on it, by it The Revelation and the experience are sure at hand All that we then do is to swallow them like a huge python which does not move but waits for its prey silently, watchfully

C SUBBIAN

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of December 2000)

इन्द्रो मधु संभृतमुस्त्रियाया पद्वद् विवेद शफवन्नमे गो ।
गुहा हितं गुहां गूळ्हमप्सु हस्ते दधे दक्षिणे दक्षिणावान् ॥

(Rigveda, 3 39 6)

Indra found the honey stored in the Shining One, the footed and hoofed (wealth) in the pasture of the Cow. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 185) He having Dakshina with him held in his right hand (*dakṣiṇe dakṣiṇāvān*) the secret thing that is placed in the secret cave and concealed in the waters. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 186)

उदु ज्योतिरमृतं विश्वजन्य विश्वानरः सविता देवो अश्रेत् ।
ऋत्वा देवानामजनिष्ट चक्षुराविरक्भुवन विश्वमुषाः ॥

(Rigveda, 7 76.1)

Savitri, the god, the universal Male, has ascended into the Light that is immortal and of all the births, *jyotir amṛtam viśvajanyam*; by the work (of sacrifice) the eye of the gods has been born (or, by the will-power of the gods vision has been born); Dawn has manifested the whole world (or, all that comes into being, all existences, *viśvam bhuvanam*). (SABCL, Vol 10, p 188)

प्र मे पन्था देवयाना अदश्रन्नमर्धन्तो वसुभिरिष्कृतासः ।
अभुदु केतुरुषसः पुरस्तात् प्रतोच्यागादधि हर्म्येभ्यः ॥

(Rigveda, 7 76.2)

Before me the paths of the journeyings of the gods have become visible, journeyings that violate not, whose movement was formed by the Vastus. The eye of Dawn has come into being in front and she has come towards us (arriving) over our houses (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 188)

तानीदहानि बहुलान्यासन् या प्राचीनमुदिता सूर्यस्य ।
यतः परि जार इवाचरन्त्युषो ददक्षे न पुनर्यतीव ॥

(Rigveda, 7.76.3)

Many were those days which were before the rising of the Sun (or which were of old by the rising of the Sun), in which thou, O Dawn, wert seen as if moving about thy lover and not coming again (SABCL, Vol 10, pp. 188-189)

त इद् देवाना सधमाद आसन्नृतावानः कवयः पूर्व्यासः ।
गूळ्हं ज्योतिः पितरो अन्वविन्दन्त्सत्यमन्त्रा अजनयन्नुषासम् ॥

(Rigveda, 7.76.4)

They indeed had the joy (of the Soma) along with the gods, the ancient seers who possessed the truth; the fathers found the hidden Light; they, having the true thought (*satyamantrāh*, the true thought expressed in the inspired Word), brought into being the Dawn. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 189)

समान ऊर्ध्वे अधि सङ्गतासः सं जानते न यतन्ते मिथस्ते ।
ते देवानां न मिनन्ति व्रतान्यमर्धन्तो वसुभियादमाना ॥

(Rigveda, 7.76.5)

In the level wideness they meet together and unite their knowledge (or, know perfectly) and strive not together; they diminish not (limit not or hurt not) the workings of the gods, not violating them they move (to their goal) by (the strength of) the Vasus. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 189)

(*To be continued*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

THREE LETTERS

THANK you for your rose and your "Vijay". May your birthday be roseate and victorious—the triumphant blossoming of the inmost heart—the "crimson-throbbing glow", as a poet has called it—into the outer life.

Your feeling about great things happening in the last decades of the twentieth century is well founded. The sign of them is, as you put it, "the throb of a mighty Power behind the grand strides taken across Europe". As I have explained to a friend in Austria, what we are witnessing is not just a failure of Communism in favour of Capitalism. It points to a blend of both with a potential direction beyond either. Similarly, the grip of atheism is relaxed and religion is allowed its say, but the man who has brought this about is an atheist and he is a foreshadow of something beyond traditional religion, a denial of it and yet a recognition of its essence as a factor in general life. Emerson has written.

When the half-gods go,
The Gods arrive

I would say with the present paradoxes in view.

When the half-gods go,
A godless gap prepares
The true Gods' arrival

You are wondering why no sign of a new life is visible in India. Your reading is that the Indian character is more complex than the European and your hope is that an increasing heat of incubation will somehow deliver a finer future from the confused and violent present. I personally don't know what to diagnose and predict. All I can say is that no man of the Vibhuti-calibre of a Gorbachev has arisen in India today. When he comes, things will start looking up.

10 2 1990

*

I have read carefully your two poems. You certainly have a poet in you and with some self-discipline in the use of word and image and rhythm you will produce satisfying work. As things are, the poems are rather a mixture of the acceptable and the immature. In your long "Soul's Promise to Life" there are a number of stanzas which ring true, but others have come out flawed. Thus in the opening one—

I am a soul immortal at large and free,
No more hugged in mud and mire like a banyan tree—

the image, though essentially right, is not brought out in its full significance and looks like an arbitrary insult to the tree mentioned. By the way, your contraction of “and” to “n’ ” is freakish in form and does not help the metre at all.

The next two verses are not ineffective but don’t have sufficient inspiration in expression. Stanzas 4 and 5, however, have come out fine and need only two small touches to make them absolutely correct.

O petty glitterings, beauty unreal, ugliness stark,
I have lifted your veil and seen the face of the Dark

Pale imitations of joy, O sickly pleasure, hidden pain,
A moment’s smile under the shadow of tears’ long rain!

The remainder of the poem has some energy, especially the penultimate stanza, but it doesn’t penetrate to the deep heart and the intuitive mind which are the touchstones of poetry.

Your second piece, “My Lotus Blooms”, makes interesting reading, with the first stanza quite impressive with a little corrective touch—

My lotus blooms at the spine’s base opening out and high,
Breaking the aeonic coil of sleep looks up to the sky

The next two stanzas have good substance but the language does not go home everywhere. The third is a success, with one or two small changes needed.

My lotus blooms on velvet throne awaking Love’s deep trance,
All the cravings changed to rapture joined the cosmic dance

Stanza 5 is also good, especially its second line—

Kingdoms of a boundless wisdom open million doors

The next two stanzas have also merit, particularly the last:

My lotus blooms on the highest peak, a thousand-petalled Sun,
Where laughed the timeless Trio—Sat, Chit, Anand in One

I think that this poem, with some chisellings here and there, may be made fit for *Mother India* in some future issue.

21.1.1990

I was indeed glad to hear from you. You always had a place both in my heart and in my mind—with a warmth in the former and a glow in the latter—for we met most amicably as at once lovers of the Divine and aspirants to be

Thinkers and toilers in the Ideal's air

From what you write, "the Ideal's air" seems particularly breathable where you are. To make me understand the situation properly you will have to analyze this atmosphere into its elements and tell me in what way they are oxygen of "grace" and nitrogen of "challenge".

It is happy news that after realising so much by being a part of India's spiritual family you feel as if you can speak of the country where you are at present—the US—as still US.

Perhaps at some later date you will have time to let me know more intimately what exactly has happened

20 1 1990

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

IN EXPECTATION

O SKY-BIRD, thy golden wing
In Infinity outspread, tell, where goest thou
Into the dreaming golden-ray-covered meditation-eye
Of the solar mind's dawning horizon?
In plundered earth's withered night
What journey has begun, in death-defying, heroic
Formidable ascetic luminous Fire
Terminating the darkness of a Century's Sleep!

Intrepid, irresistible your expedition
Proceeds; blissful wonder-rapturous eyes
Fix their gaze on that limitless luminous path.
In Death's consciousness-stalk lighting unquenchable
Aspiration's blue-lotus-flame, they stay awake
Like the morning star, in calm expectation.

NIRODBARAN

(Translated from the Bengali poem *Pratikshāy*, by Debashish Banerjee)

THE ONE AND THE MANY

THE voice of the *Upanishads* from the ancient past still vibrates in the consciousness of many of us:

ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यान, भूत भवद् भविष्यदिति
सर्वमोङ्कार एव । यचयान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं मदप्योङ्कार एव ॥९॥

(माण्डूक्योपनिषद्)

“OM is this imperishable word, OM is the Universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, the present and the future, all that was, all that is, all that will be is OM. Likewise what may exist beyond the bounds of time, that too is OM”
(*Māndukya Upanishad*)

Again,

हरिः ॐ ॥ आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीन्नान्यत्किञ्चन मिषत्;
स ईक्षत लोकान्नु सृजा इति ॥९॥

(ऐतरेयोपनिषद्)

“Harī OM. In the beginning the spirit was one and all this (universe) was the spirit; there was none else moving. The spirit thought, Lo, I will make me worlds from out of my being.” (*Āitareya Upanishad*, Chapter I, Section I)

It transpires, therefore, that the spirit and the world are one and undivided.

They seem to be divided and many in manifestation only. But in this division and multiplicity is implanted the urge towards that original unity and oneness. It is as if the Truth has veiled itself under the garb of ignorance and untruth giving birth to a world of darkness and division. A self-willed slumber, as it were, of the seed of Light within the soil of night. Why? Different philosophies and sciences of the world have found and still strive to find an answer to this Why.

The answers found are controversial and dissimilar according to the diverse cults, creeds, religions and beliefs. But what appears to us the most credible and convincing is the reply that the spirit wanted to reveal itself anew, from the condition of inconscience and obscurity, by a creation of harmony and truth-consciousness. The self-finding of the sleeping seed in the blossoming tree of beauty and fragrance—that is why amidst the sounds of war drums, the *Sanātan Vāni*, the Eternal Voice resounds throughout the length and breadth of the universe.

“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

(कठोपनिषद्, प्रथमोऽध्यायः, तृतीयवल्ली, १४)

“Arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn of them” (*Kathā Upanishad*, First Cycle Chapter 3, 14)

Now let us turn our attention to the present-day world situation. Sri Aurobindo says, “At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny .”¹ The statement can be resolved into two parts—one, “evolutionary crisis” and the other, “choice of destiny” If we try to probe into the depths of these two aspects we shall stand face to face with the practical side of our initial assumption, i e , a concealed truth in the core of existence pressing to express itself against the opposing material and outer nature To know and appreciate the secret will, spirit and love at the back of everything is a matter of inner realisation But the action of the resisting forces without can be detected and seen in their material effects on day-to-day life. A daily paper or periodical provides us with ample proof of it It seems, therefore, that the universe stands on the equilibrium of these two interacting forces But at times the outer conflicting tendencies reach such a grievous state that the equilibrium gets terribly shaken and human life and security are at stake Such a juncture is a period of crisis for the world But God is ever vigilant to extend His helping hand to save His creation and to show the path of God to man. This He does, if needed, with pressure and compulsion although the nature of such enforcement is different from the usual meaning we give to the term That is why the heavenly messengers descend with indomitable will, and hearts full of glorious love and minds gifted with eternal wisdom

Sri Krishna came upon Indian soil when India was on the verge of a suicidal war between two rival camps, the *Kauravas* and the *Pāndavas* He came at a time when these two were ready to rush against each other for a deadly sacrifice He sided with the *Pāndavas*, the followers of the *Dharma*, and left an immortal message for the safety and guidance of humanity and the world The *Bhagavad Gītā* is and will remain a source of inspiration and help to the seekers of Truth at all times and in all countries Sri Aurobindo wrote in one of his letters, “ [I] practised the Yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads, these were the only books from which I found guidance, the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had than was any guide to my Sadhana I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it ”²

India today is also faced with a crisis, a crisis which is not confined this time to her soil alone It is a global affair with an infinitely complex bearing The means of its remedy are complicated and unforeseen by the mental view. The intervention of the incredibly advanced modern science has made its issue still more dangerous and uncertain But the possibility of such an upsurge was not altogether unanticipated and we find words of caution in the following words of Sri Aurobindo, “In Asia a more perilous situation has arisen, standing sharply across the way to any possibility of a continental unity of the peoples of this part of the world, in the emergence of

Communist China’’* The saviour spirit had descended this time in a person whose instrumentality is rightly equipped with the need of the time. The truths contained in books like *The Life Divine*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle* and others are not only in keeping with the mind and spirit of modern times, but they are also the Vedas of the world to be. In them are embodied and synthesised the mystic knowledge of the past, the living picture of the present and the future vision of divine life in an integral awareness.

Now let us see what may be the meaning of the expression ‘‘choice of destiny’’ Sri Krishna sided with the *Pāṇdavas* and at the same time the *Pāṇdavas* also chose and accepted Sri Krishna as their guide and guru. As a rule the Divine does not impose Himself. Man is a mental being and at this stage of self-unfoldment of the evolutionary spirit he is apparently free to make his choice. Says Nicholas Bardayev in his *Destiny of Man*, ‘‘There is a demoniacal element in man, for there is in him the fathomless abyss of freedom, he may prefer that abyss to God’’ Had it not been so, the omnipotent Divine would have transformed the world according to his plan within no time by the power of a supreme miracle. But perhaps that should not be. The creation should pass gradually through all the stages of its ascent. That is the divine *līlā*, the ecstatic dance of *Shiva*. According to Sri Aurobindo, what *Bhagavān* intends to do with man is to enable him to realise God in life, in the individual as well as in the collective society. The power requisite for the purpose is there within each one of us. Over and above our mental capacity we have in us our psychic being, the eternal portion of the Divine which can help us to see and discriminate the lines that lead towards the goal and the divine fulfilment of our life as against the others which oppose that attainment.

Fate is a balance drawn in Destiny’s book
Man can accept his fate, he can refuse †

There is a will and a purpose behind the cosmic evolutionary process. If our choice is in conformity with it we may be certain of our final attainment and victory. For, then the victory is not ours but the Divine’s. The directing will of the Divine behind the life of the individual can be experienced and known by the individual himself according to his own way of nature. But the purpose and process of collective growth can be studied and traced from observations made by the great seers and thinkers. The theory of evolution tells us that man, the mental being, is the third step of the evolutionary ladder. Two other steps, namely, plants and animals representing respectively the principles of matter and life, had already been traversed before the mental stage was reached. Now whether this third stage is the final or ultimate status of the evolutionary spirit is a matter of debate and controversy. But we are fully convinced by the following clear and definite exposition of Sri Aurobindo. ‘‘The soul is not

* The situation has since been changed somewhat

bound by the formula of mental humanity it did not begin with that and will not end with it; it had a prehuman past, it has a superhuman future.”⁵

So, by exceeding the mind, man must grow into the state of supermind or the truth-consciousness and it is said that that is inevitable in the nature of things to come. In the same way a study of the history of the human aggregate or collectivity will reveal that before the attainment of nationality, the present largest aggregate, it has passed successively through a number of other smaller groupings, namely, family, clan, tribe etc This growth also cannot stop short with reaching the state of nationality only It must embrace the whole human race and form a world-aggregate. But this unity must not be merely superficial and constitutional, it should be real, mainly inner and psychological. Our ideal and aspiration are towards this unity and presumably that is also the purpose and will of the Divine.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

References

- 1 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, p 1053
- 2 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, p 68
- 3 *The Ideal of Human Unity*, SABCL, Vol 15, p 567
- 4 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, p 458
- 5 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, pp 760-61

BONNE FÊTE*

(*Janmadin*)

1

THIS day my vital is astir,
My voice yearns to hum,
My heart is under a felicity's charm,
Swings fondly my teenaged bower!¹
Which flowers should I offer,
Which path to follow
in today's adventure,
How to tune my veena to produce
a musical charm?
This day my vital is astir,
My voice yearns to hum.

2

This day will sing my prayer
With songs deeper and more sublime,
This day my ardent desire
Dives into fathomlessness of life.
Wind from the secret grove
Will come to play my flute,
The heavens fill with silence' prime
This day will sing my prayer
With songs deeper and more sublime.

3

Many a song have I sung in public
With magical melody and rhyme,
Many a distant-land visited
Treading paths serpentine
Let me cry halt here
To be in Thy lap, O Mother!¹
For a sojourn with you in the
hidden inner shrine
Many a song have I sung in public
With magical melody and rhyme

* Since the Mother blesses us with the words 'Bonne Fête' on our birthdays, I have chosen this title instead of a literal 'Birthday'

4

Bestow on me the pleasure of being
 Thy evening Star,
 To shine beyond the buzz and
 bustle of the day,
 Fix on me Thy gaze of compassionate love
 To light a lamp in the darkness of
 my clay
 With which dreams the buds
 of Thy tuberose flowers
 Open their fragrant petals
 Caressed by the wind from wherever
 it may?
 Bestow on me the pleasure of being
 Thy evening star
 To shine beyond the buzz and
 bustle of the day

5

Departed the hour of wandering
 on the way,
 Disappeared the distance between
 you and me,
 Now shall I go on singing alone
 For You to listen to these
 offerings to Thee.
 Something my heart shall yearn to say
 Showered in Thy riches all through
 the day
 And Thou shalt put the words
 within me
 Now shall I go on singing alone
 For You to listen to these
 offerings to Thee.

6

O Mother, in Thy lap of the sky
 Smiling like the baby Moon I shall stay
 Swinging in the waves of Thy Light
 Like the stars of the Milky Way;

I shall blossom beside the parijat
 flowers
 At the source from where the gentle
 wind blows
 With Thy eternal spring to play
 O Mother, in Thy lap of the sky
 Smiling like the baby Moon I shall stay.

7

Needless will be the tuning of
 my veena,
 The veena in Thy hands shall be me,
 In Thy rhythm shall I garland the tune.
 Thy various musical modes' recipe.
 O Mother! Thy tender fingers
 Shall clang the body's fibres,
 Life will acquire a consciousness
 free
 Needless will be the tuning of
 my veena,
 The veena in Thy hands shall be me

8

Set the sail today, O Mother
 Hold in Thy hands the rudder
 Let my boat move on and sway
 Guided by Thy Pole Star
 Let me pass the whole of this day
 On Thy shore, in its every quay,
 With Thy playful Mandakini river.
 Set the sail today, O Mother
 Hold in Thy hands the rudder

9

Let my voice be in tune
 With the birds singing in Thy nest;
 Let me be the honey-bee
 Among the flowers in Thy
 garden secret

Hold me today, O Mother
 In the string of gems You wear,
 My consciousness shining at its
 best.
 Let my voice be in tune
 With the birds singing in Thy nest

(To be continued)

NISHIKANTA

(Translated by Satadal from the original in Bengali)

KASHMIR: A VISION BY THE MOTHER

It was a Darshan day. I do not remember the year now.

In the evening Physical Education Groups assembled in rows for marching in front of the Mother. At that time instead of taking the salute standing in front of the map of Mother India at the Playground, the Mother used to stand, along with Pranab, quite at a distance, facing the map, while the Groups marched past.

On one such occasion I noticed that the Mother had been looking at the map of Mother India on the wall during the march past. After the march past, while moving to her chair along with Pranab, she asked him something to which he shook his head indicating his ignorance.

Then the Mother took her seat as usual in front of the map and asked the people around her to bring an atlas. She pointed out something to those who were around her. Afterwards I heard that the Mother saw the vision of a roaring lion facing the East at the head of the map of India—that is Kashmir.

The map of united India is printed every month on the cover of the journal *Mother India*. Now anybody who looks carefully at the map will see a lion's head—a roaring lion facing the East. But nobody noticed it before the Mother.

ABANI SINHA

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 2000)

Ascent towards the Supermind

THE power that can transform life and conquer death is embodied in Savitri, the heroine of Sri Aurobindo's epic, who in Book Ten reveals herself as an incarnation of the Divine Mother and achieves the work for which she was born. But in early versions of the poem, there was nothing corresponding to the passage that now forms the last half of Book Ten. This passage was written in 1947 and contains an explicit description of the planes from Higher Mind to Overmind and Supermind. It is based, therefore, on a knowledge that goes beyond what Sri Aurobindo had realised when he began to write *Savitri*.

According to his own statement, he had not distinguished Supermind from Overmind when he was publishing the *Arya*.¹ A study of the revision of *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* confirms that the references to Overmind occur in passages that were revised or newly written in the 1930s and 1940s. Though much was said about "supermind" in the *Arya*, the meaning of this word there was not exactly the same as what it later came to signify in Sri Aurobindo's *Yoga*, where it is considered essential to differentiate it clearly from other planes beyond the mind up to Overmind. Sri Aurobindo clarified that the true Supermind, as he knew it by the 1930s, is "quite above"² what was described in the *Arya* and did "not enter into the scheme"³ of the first versions of *Savitri*.

This has been explained briefly in the previous instalment, but calls for further discussion in relation to the composition of Part One. For in the passages that developed into Part One, Sri Aurobindo began to introduce Overmind and Supermind—the former by name, the latter without using the word—in the late 1920s, long before he described these planes in Book Ten. A departure from the discussion of the later books of *Savitri* in the order in which they were revised is therefore necessary at this point, for the sake of an adequate treatment of a subject that affects the total meaning of the epic.

Sri Aurobindo realised progressively the nature of the power that could effect the transformation he intended to symbolise in *Savitri*. To see how his revision reflects the development of his realisation is undoubtedly the most interesting aspect of a study of the composition of the poem. Nowhere is the revision more significant than in the process that led to the creation of Book Three, "The Book of the Divine Mother". This and other revision of Part One fills in the long gap between the first and last phases of Sri Aurobindo's work on the later books of *Savitri*. Moreover, there are structural parallels between Book Three and the ending of Book Ten which make it worth while to look at these two books in connection with each other.

The consciousness and force that descend into a human form in Savitri and act

through her at the decisive moment evidently belong to the world reached by Aswapati at the end of his untiring search for “the almighty source of cosmic change”.⁴ In the final version, it seems clear that this world must be the supramental, though the word “Supermind” does not occur in “The Book of the Divine Mother”. It is because Aswapati establishes an initial contact between human nature and the supramental Light and Force that Savitri, incarnating that Light and Force, can cancel the decree of Death and change man’s destiny by the intervention of a higher principle in earthly life

In Sri Aurobindo’s view, each step forward in evolution is accomplished “by two co-operating forces, an upward-tending force from below, an upward-drawing and downward-pressing force from above”.⁵ In the passage from mind to supermind, unlike the previous evolutionary transitions, the interaction of these two forces can become entirely conscious. In the symbolism of *Savitri* it is primarily Aswapati, “the traveller of the upward Way”,⁶ who represents the aspiring movement. Near the summit of his ascent he has the vision of the Divine Mother, whose “upward-drawing and downward-pressing force” has sustained him all along. For she is

The magnet of our difficult ascent, .
The Might of all that never yet came down ⁷

The facsimile in this issue shows, among other things, the first appearance of lines for what eventually became Book Three, Canto Two, “The Adoration of the Divine Mother”, from which I have just quoted. This manuscript can be dated 1927, based on its relationship to drafts in another notebook which Sri Aurobindo used in that year for *The Mother* and other writings. In view of its date, one might expect it to show signs of the results of Sri Aurobindo’s intensive Sadhana in the early 1920s which culminated in his Siddhi on 24 November 1926. A study of the revision marked on the page reproduced here does suggest that a new element was making its entry into *Savitri* at this time.

This version of the first book is one of sixteen complete or incomplete versions entitled “Quest”, ten of which belong to the period up to 1920. It is the second of six versions of “Quest” written in the late 1920s, before Book One was renamed “The Book of Birth”. Four of these six are complete and end with a line that now concludes Book Four

The spring-winds failed, the sky was set like bronze.

The version of “Quest” shown here is incomplete; the page seen in the facsimile is the sixth page (not counting the title page) of a draft which breaks off after twenty-one more pages at a line now found in Book Four, Canto Three:

The nympholepts of the ecstasy and the blaze

It is, incidentally, in the version following this one that the opening line, whose evolution was discussed near the beginning of the present series,⁸ arrived at its final wording.

The page reproduced contains lines that in the final text belong to Book One, Canto Five, and Book Three, Cantos One to Three. They are now spread out over some 240 pages (pages 79 to 320 in the current edition). At this early stage, there was nothing corresponding to Book Two. Before Sri Aurobindo began to revise his neat fair copy of the previous manuscript, the top half of the page read as follows, including the last two lines on the preceding page

One in the many thousands never touched
Engrossed by the external world's design,
Walks chosen by an inner eye of light
And crosses an arcane of symbol Powers
Into the eternal courts of solitude.
A call is on him from intangible heights;
The watching geni of seven worlds
Have given to him the seven radiant keys,
He opens many masked and slumbering doors,
And meets an imaged press of viewless realms;
Watched by closed eyes, mute faces of the Unborn,
He moves between retreating lion shafts . .

Most of this is similar to the form the passage had reached by around 1920. The revision of it is complex, but it does not introduce anything radically new such as we will find in the lower part of the page. Therefore it need not be described in full detail. However, it may be of interest to indicate briefly the relationship of this passage to the printed text of *Savitri*. A line written at the top of the page,

Impassive he lived immune from earthly hopes,

is found in the final text a few lines before the sixth line in the above transcript, which now precedes the rest of the passage with "is" changed to "was":

A call was on him from intangible heights ...⁹

The fourth line, "And crosses an arcane of symbol Powers", was cancelled in the manuscript, but was written differently a few lines below and revised to

The spirits of the arcane obey his call....

The deleted "Powers" eventually returned; the final version of the line is found a few pages after the lines that originally surrounded it, in a section on the "secret Nature":

In shadowy chambers lit by a strange sun
 And opening hardly to hid mystic keys
 Her perilous arcanes and hooded Powers
 Confessed the advent of a mastering Mind
 And bore the compulsion of a time-born gaze.¹⁰

The lines about the seven worlds and the seven keys, the “masked and slumbering doors”, the “viewless realms” and “lion shafts” have all disappeared in the final text. However, these and related ideas developed into the last three of the seven sections of Book One, Canto Five. Similar imagery can be found there, as in these lines on the “occult Force”:

The worlds of a marvellous Unknown were near,
 Her reign received their mystic influences,
 Their lion-forces crouched beneath her feet;
 The future sleeps unknown behind their doors.¹¹

The remainder of the lines transcribed above have been preserved, in a similar or identical form, in the third section of Book One, Canto Five:

One among many thousands never touched,
 Engrossed in the external world's design,
 Is chosen by a secret witness Eye
 And driven by a pointing hand of Light
 Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes....
 Watched by closed eyes, mute faces of the Unborn,
 He journeys to meet the Incommunicable,
 Hearing the echo of his single steps
 In the eternal courts of Solitude.¹²

The rest of the manuscript page seen in the facsimile can best be discussed by likewise transcribing it first as it stood before revision. The next four lines, after those already quoted, conclude the long sentence that began “A call is on him”. In the published text of *Savitri* these lines come more than two hundred pages later, so they will be considered together with the lines that follow them. Here we can see an early form of passages in the first three cantos of the third book:

There where all ends and all again begins
 Where stands the far-seen Godhead at the end
 Omnipotent, a lonely seer of Time,
 Inward, inscrutable with diamond gaze.
 These things were done within, but he willed more;
 He called the embodying earth to be his shrine

Awake to an all-conscious Light concealed
 He hushed the waves of sense to a bright sleep
 A sign attending from the secrecy
 That knows the unuttered sense of all our work,
 Ephemeral voices from his hearing passed.

Before Sri Aurobindo began to revise it, this passage in the 1927 manuscript differed little from versions written around 1920. But the revision that can be seen in the facsimile marks the definite beginning of a process that would soon add a new dimension to the meaning of *Savitri*.

The first line of the passage, “There where all ends and all again begins”, was deleted and the idea it expressed disappeared temporarily. But it soon returned, more impressively than before, in a sentence added after “diamond gaze”

Attracted by the unfathomable regard
 The unsolved slow cycles to their fount returned
 To rise again from that invisible sea.

The cancelled line was replaced by “Where at the unimaginable end”, whose origin seems connected with the revision of “at the end” to “of the whole” in the next line. Another line, inserted between these two, amplified the description of the “far-seen Godhead” with a surrealistic image:

Where at the unimaginable end
 His feet firm-based on Life’s stupendous wings,
 There stands the far-seen Godhead of the whole
 Omnipotent, a lonely seer of Time,
 Inward, inscrutable with diamond gaze

Later, two lines were added to these to make a seven-line sentence. More important, a canto grew up around these lines: Book Three, Canto One, entitled “The Pursuit of the Unknowable”.

A study of the development of this passage, where in a slightly later version the word “Overmind” was introduced not far above these lines, points to the conclusion that “the far-seen Godhead of the whole” was intended to be the overmind Deity who, throughout the history of religion and spirituality, has usually been taken for the supreme Creator and Destroyer of the worlds. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, it is because spiritual seeking stopped at the Overmind and failed to discover a dynamic Truth beyond it that the secret of transformation was missed.

The Indian systems did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, one which we can call overmind and the other the true

And beauty, moulded to death-lens eyes
 And had the echoing wonder of thought

And that no human eye should
 spoil the fruits

Patience be sublimated
 meant to purify

Walks chosen by an inner eye of light
 And had the echoing wonder of thought
 And had the echoing wonder of thought
 Beyond the vast veil of men and the craft
 The eternal eaves of solitude

A calmness on him from intangible heights
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side

Have given to him the same radiant hues
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side

Watched by closed eyes, mute faces of the Unborn
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side

He stands the far-seen Gullhead of the end whole
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side
 The Gushers of the aether of the Powers, are at his side

Omnipotent, a lonely seer of Time,
 Inward, inscrutable with diamond gaze

These things were done within, but he willed more
 He felt the infinite and supernal force
 He called the embodying earth to be his shrine

Awake to an all-conscious Light concealed
 The waves of sense were hushed
 He hushed the waves of sense to a bright sleep
 The waves of sense were hushed
 He hushed the waves of sense to a bright sleep
 The waves of sense were hushed
 He hushed the waves of sense to a bright sleep

That knows the unuttered sense of all our works
 And that no human eye should spoil the fruits
 And that no human eye should spoil the fruits

(2) Ephemeral voices from his hearing passed by

supermind or Divine Gnosis. That is the reason why they got confused about Maya (overmind-Force or Vidya-Avidya), and took it for the supreme creative power....¹³

In this context, the revision seen in the next few lines of the present manuscript should be considered an important turning-point in the writing of *Savitri*. The word “his”, in the line “He called the embodying earth to be his shrine”, referred to the “Godhead” mentioned above. By changing “his” to “Her” and inserting lines about “an infinite supernal Force” before this line, Sri Aurobindo in effect linked *Savitri* to what he was writing in *The Mother* at that time. This small but important book, published in 1928, was to be his first explanation of the form his Yoga had taken since his Siddhi.

It must be acknowledged that, even before this revision, Aswapati did not stop here but “willed more”. In a deep trance, he had a vision of the Goddess who granted him the boon leading to the birth of Savitri. But in early versions, the status of this Goddess in the scheme of things—her relationship to the “far-seen Godhead”, for example—had not yet been made clear. Savitri’s victory near the end of the poem remained likewise somewhat unconvincing since the power by which it was achieved was not sufficiently revealed.

All this began to change when Sri Aurobindo wrote, between the lines and in the margins, three lines which point beyond the cosmic Godhead to the “Mother Might” described in later versions as being “supreme behind the God”. Including the lines which had been copied from the previous version, with their revision, this short but highly prophetic passage may be transcribed as follows:

These things were done in him, but he willed more.
Imperishable above our fallen heads
He felt an infinite supernal Force
That wore Love’s faultless form and Beauty’s face.
He called the embodying earth to be Her shrine

Some ambiguities in the manuscript have been resolved in this transcript by relying on Sri Aurobindo’s fair copy in the next version.

Only the second line, “Imperishable above our fallen heads”, remains unchanged in the final printed text. The first line was dropped after some time. The third became:

He felt a rapturous and unstumbling Force

The fourth line, found in the left margin, was initially written “And saw a stainless form and marvellous face”, which was not cancelled; in the next version, it became “A face of Beauty and a heart of Love”, but this wording also did not survive. The

last line remained more or less as it was for a long time. Finally it was altered and expanded to three lines

For all that he had been must now new-shape
In him her joy to embody, to enshrine
Her beauty and greatness in his house of life ¹⁴

But what is important is the substance of the lines in the 1927 manuscript, from which the canto entitled “The Adoration of the Divine Mother” would ultimately develop

It is tempting to assume that “an infinite supernal Force” must be the sheer supramental, and this may very well be what Sri Aurobindo intended in this line. But it must be remembered that the overmind itself is an immense domain with many planes, ranging upwards from what Sri Aurobindo called “mental overmind” to “supramental overmind or overmind gnosis”.¹⁵ If the “Godhead of the whole”, into whom the Demiurges lose their names and forms, stands at the summit of the overmind plane proper or “true overmind”,¹⁶ there is yet beyond this the overmind gnosis which forms a kind of transitional zone between overmind and supermind. And this seems to be the “intermediate plane” of which Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Mother*:

The Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world of the Ignorance stands in an intermediate plane between the supramental Light, the Truth life, the Truth creation which has to be brought down here and this mounting and descending hierarchy of planes of consciousness that like a double ladder lapse into the nescience of Matter and climb back again through the flowering of life and soul and mind into the infinity of the Spirit Determining all that shall be in this universe and in the terrestrial evolution by what she sees and feels and pours from her, she stands there above the Gods. .¹⁷

Sri Aurobindo explained “there” in the last phrase as meaning “in the Overmind plane”¹⁸ But since she is “above the Gods”, the reference must presumably be to the highest level of the Overmind, where it is flooded with the supramental Light.

To the human mind, this is hardly distinguishable from the Supermind itself But the relation between the second and third cantos of the third book of *Savitri* becomes clearer when it is understood that Aswapati first reaches the intermediate plane of overmind gnosis, where he sees the Divine Mother as “the Mahashakti of this triple world of the Ignorance”.¹⁹ She is not aloof from the world, for her Might broods upon it; she stands at “the head. of birth and toil and fate” and it is her mystery that “the Night conceals”, she is not altogether inaccessible, but leans to us “from the unrealised Vasts”. For she is “the golden bridge”²⁰ between the supramental Reality and the worlds created by the overmind Gods

After a “last and mightiest transformation”,²¹ in the next canto, Aswapati experiences what Sri Aurobindo describes in *The Mother* as “the worlds of a perfect supramental creation”. There the Mother is

the supramental Mahashakti, a Power of divine omniscient Will and omnipotent Knowledge always apparent in its unflinching works and spontaneously perfect in every process.²²

No doubt, the Mother herself does not essentially change on higher or lower planes, but modifies her self-manifestation according to the field of her action. In “The House of the Spirit and the New Creation”, however, the emphasis is not on the personal aspect, but on “the Truth creation which has to be brought down here”.²³ Like the passages that grew into “The Adoration of the Divine Mother”, those that form the middle sections of Book Three, Canto Three, depicting the supramental creation, began to be introduced into *Savitri* in the late 1920s

The vision of this “new and marvellous creation”²⁴ follows an account of Aswapati’s withdrawal into heights beyond Space and Time which had begun to appear even in the earliest drafts of *Savitri*. There, what we now know as the first two sections of Book Three, Canto Three, as well as its last section, were already taking shape. In the manuscript shown in the facsimile the next page and a half, after the page reproduced, lead up to lines printed on pages 322 and 331 of the present edition, with several pages between these two sentences:

He abode defended in his shoreless self
Companioned only by the all-seeing One
Far down below him like a lamp in night
His heart lay somewhere conscious and alone...

The beginnings of Sri Aurobindo’s revision of this passage in the late 1920s can be seen at the bottom of the page shown in this issue. The new lines inserted between the lines and in the margins are concerned mainly with the movements of aspiration and rejection that are given such prominence in the process of Sadhana described in *The Mother*.

The intended placement of a line written in the upper right corner of the page, “attent he sat like an incarnate prayer”, is not indicated, but it can be inferred from the next fair copy. Two lines on the next page were transposed with the last line on this page and must be included in the transcript. Another sentence from that page, revised only slightly from the 1920 version, is also included below to give a sense of the heights that had already been reached in many places in the early drafts of *Savitri*.

A sign he attended from the Secrecy
That knows the unuttered word behind each thought

And hidden significance of all our works.
 Patient he sat like an incarnate prayer
 Then lest a human cry should spoil her Truth,
 He plucked desire up from its tortured roots
 And offered to the Gods the vacant place.
 Awake to an all-conscious Light concealed
 The waves of sense were hushed to a bright sleep;
 Those timeless lids were closed, no opening came.
 The robes of mortal thinking sank cast down
 And left his knowledge bare to inspiring sight;
 Ephemeral voices from his hearing passed
 Fate's driving ceased and Nature's sleepless spur:
 The athlete heavings of the will were stilled
 In an unmoving and omnipotent peace:
 Life in his members lay down vast and mute;
 Naked, unwalled, unterrified it bore
 The immense regard of immortality.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

- 1 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, pp 369-70
- 2 *Ibid*, p 369
- 3 *Savitri* (1993), p 729
- 4 *Ibid*, p 298
- 5 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, p 790
- 6 *Savitri*, p 210
- 7 *Ibid*, p 314
- 8 *Mother India*, November 1999, p 1077
- 9 *Savitri*, p 79
- 10 *Ibid*, p 83
- 11 *Ibid*, p 87
- 12 *Ibid*, p 80
- 13 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 22, p 250
- 14 *Savitri*, p 315
- 15 *Letters on Yoga*, p 261
- 16 *Ibid*, p 262
- 17 *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, SABCL, Vol 25, p 23
- 18 *Ibid*, p 64
- 19 *Ibid*, p 23
- 20 *Savitri*, p 314
- 21 *Ibid*, p 318
- 22 *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, p 22
- 23 *Ibid*, p 23
- 24 *Savitri*, p 323

THE FIVE SUNS OF POETRY

It is often said that art should be realistic. Poetry, for instance, must reflect our common moods of life, our afflictions and our joys, pain and pleasure, hunger and surfeit, nudity and opulence, love and hatred, our failures and successes, jealousy and cruelty as much as kindness and humanitarianism. It cannot be irrelevant to us. All talk of idealism, nobility, grandeur is considered to be mere eloquence about things insubstantial and has no basis in our immediate common experience. Skylarks, daffodils, green cottages only imply escapism from the struggle and harshness of existence. Not only that; it leads to pretentious emotions and syrupiness which must be washed out from our mental make-up. There has to be a certain kind of directness and disaffected purity in our expressive creations. Modernists got tired of romanticism and turned more and more towards urban thinking and the conflicts of our daily occupations, towards existential issues. But that reaction itself was, paradoxically, indicative of a deeper search for other sets of values, of getting out of the routine and the common. While it has brought vigorous intellectualised intuition and a profoundness of thinking, it has also by its excesses made life bony and dry.

But then reality exceeds all imaginations and feelings, all ideas and fetishes. Therefore that intellectualised intuition itself is a search for a more comprehensive understanding of things in their truer essence, in the truth from which it derives itself and seeks to widen its possibilities of expression. If the voice of that ineffable, that unknown is to be seized in our language we have to set out on a new adventure. We have to make a new discovery in which the word we speak will carry other connotations and other associations. It will be not only loaded with thought and emotion but also will do things in its expressive richness and opulence. When the poetic inspiration comes from an inexhaustible source of joy then it also finds its own style and technique. It could be a physical action on the battlefield, it could be a life-force asserting itself in varied moods, it could be a justification of the creator's will in the creation, or it could be the epical song of triumph, or a search for beatitude in the love that moves the sun and the other stars. For the poet all this is the discovery of the word which could be an adventure in itself. It need not be a mystic or occult or spiritual pursuit, or an intense expression of devotion, or adoration of Nature with its rivers and mountains and green pasture-lands and grazing cattle. And yet it could be all these. It could be even the deep-sounding thought that has the urge to explore itself in the domain wherefrom spring all thoughts. Thus, for example, when a modern poet (*Listening in October*, John Haines) says that

There are silences so deep
You can hear
The journeys of the soul,

we at once hear some authentic voice in the deeper chambers of that silence itself. We

may read mysticism in it but essentially it is a realisation that has come in a secular way. Something has entered suddenly in the expression of which perhaps even the poet is not aware. Although in it is served well the Modernist's purpose, there is something more than that. It creates around us an atmosphere of silence in which is possible the birth of the Word which can express that silence in its joyous vigour and effectiveness; in it we can hear a voice that can lift us up, guide us in our search. Here is seized something of the profound and therefore it becomes meritorious, even spiritual. Yet what the poet has achieved here is simply the paraphernaliac preparation for the soul's aesthetic pilgrimage to the unknown. It sounds more like a well-rounded rhythmic thought than an intimately felt experience with its riches taking us on those journeys. In it the subtleties of silence are absent. In terms of Ezra Pound's rhythmic accord we do not have here overtones to set the absolute tempo of a masterpiece. If that journey has to be a soaring ascension to the snow-white peaks of silence in the ardour of climbing, in the warmth and intimacy of a vibrant experience, then it has yet to grow in the abundance of subtleties and suggestions that constitute multitoneal harmonies, has to grow in its flaming poignancy, has yet to get in touch with the sun that lives on the summits of silence which carries us yet higher on the Vedic journey of the ascending slopes of heaven. It happens very rarely, particularly when our approach to life and reality is entirely mind-based, mind with its thousand occupations of thought. But, when given to omniscient hush, unceasingly original inspiration streams forth, as we have in the following:

Oft inspiration with her lightning feet,
 A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops,
 Traversed the soundless corridors of his mind
 Bringing her rhythmic sense of hidden things.
 A music spoke transcending mortal speech¹

Or expression has actually its origin in silence,

Silence the nurse of the Almighty's power,
 The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word²

It is in this context that we have to recognise what Sri Aurobindo tells us about the future poetry with its intuitive and revealing character, poetry that descends from the all-seeing heights with the rhythmic sense of the creative Word. While describing the nature of this poetry he speaks of its five suns which shall illumine our skies,—the splendid Suns of "Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit"³

This poetry of the future is a search for the Reality that is present behind all our thinking and understanding, our longings, our life and the rich world around us, our possibilities that can open out in its discovery, behind our gainful sense of dedication to it. In fact it could be more than a search, it could be an expression of the ineffable,

of the all-beautiful. The more we try to know it the more we begin to realise that there is much as yet to be secured, much to be won. It is a spiritual quest. "...the poetic mind sees at once in a flood of coloured light, in a moved experience, in an ecstasy of the coming of the word, in splendours of form, in a spontaneous leaping out of inspired idea upon idea, sparks of the hoof-beats of the white flame horse Dadhikravan galloping up the mountain of the gods or breath and hue of wing striking into wing of the inspired broods of Thought flying over earth or up towards heaven"⁴ One need not be a Yogi to be such a poet because the creative rhythm and the word-image can be received by one who is sufficiently perceptive of things revealingly aesthetic. Though the creative soul of man with his keen intellectualised intuition has a certain inner mental penetration in its persuasiveness, a certain flight of thoughtful imagination, yet it does not have this sure and inevitable sweep of expression, many-extended in its implications, and hence cannot hold the joy it has the capacity to hold. It has to grow and therefore also have to grow with that our perceptions of poetry, our appreciations of the broad new dimensions that arrive in its luminous as well as sweet melodious wake, in the emerald of its surge, in its moods of temperate or else swift-pacing happinesses.

Thought-content and pursuit of Truth apart, there are also things warmly spiritual and they bring out flavours and flames and felicities which are always there behind Truth and Life and the Spirit. In Beauty and Delight are the soul and the origin of all art, of poetry, the creative and expressive nature of the free self is in them. Indeed, in the poetry of a large spiritual inspiration we shall hear "the song of the growing godhead of human unity, of spiritual freedom, of the coming supermanhood of man, of the divine idea seeking to actualise itself in the life of the earth, of the call to the individual to rise to his godlike possibility and to the race to live in the greatness of that which humanity feels within itself as a power of the spirit which it has to deliver into some yet ungrasped perfect form of clearness...to make life more intimately beautiful and noble and great and full of meaning is its higher office, but its highest comes when the poet becomes the seer and reveals to man his eternal self and the godheads of its manifestation."⁵ The poet of the spirit becomes a seer and a hearer of the voices of the Truth, *satyaśrutah*.

But this great poetry is possible only by opening ourselves to the higher planes from where comes the inspired utterance. In that inspired utterance there is also a certain kind of inevitability which in its resolute manner confirms the revelatory truth that it is proposing to establish here. It becomes the Word of Knowledge and Power wearing a form of Beauty and having the soul of Delight. About this overhead poetry with its objective to express some inmost truth of things, the deeper reality which is behind them, Sri Aurobindo writes as follows: "The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a plane of our being above and beyond our personal intelligence, a supermind which sees things in their innermost and largest truth by a spiritual identity and with a lustrous effulgency and rapture and its native language is a revelatory, inspired, intuitive word limpid or subtly vibrant or densely packed with the glory of

this ecstasy and lustre.... The inspired word comes, as said of old Vedic seers, from the home of Truth... The word comes secretly from above the mind, but it is plunged first into our intuitive depths and emerges imperfectly to be shaped by the poetic feeling and intelligence...’’⁶ It is born as the Mantra. In a letter written to Amal Kiran, Sri Aurobindo explains that the Mantra is ‘‘...a word of power and light that comes from the Overmind inspiration or from some very high plane of Intuition. Its characteristics are a language that conveys infinitely more than the mere surface sense of the words seems to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the Infinite and disappears into it...and the power to convey not merely the mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing uttered, but its significance and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness which is behind all these and greater.’’⁷

Seers and hearers of the Truth are those who receive this Word from the transcendental Muse in the delight of the truth-existent. It is in the greatness of the Mantra that the Upanishadic golden lid gets removed and is then received the higher power of expression. The suns of poetry can then freely pour their radiances in our creative expression. In it the ‘‘...rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul’s sight of God and Nature and the world and the inner truth—occult to the outward eye—of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being’’⁸ give value to our life and thought and to our aesthetic existence. In the completeness of its expression poetry is not only word and rhythm but is also vision. In it has to be the expressive power carrying sense and sound and sight all together borne by the spirit of joyous creation. Such a worship of the divine Muse also means our being able to receive more and more of her inexhaustible gifts. *Savitri* is that. To grow in it, to explore our inner potentialities, to climb the peaks of creation and live on those heights as their happy and bright denizens we have to be the worshippers of that golden-tongued Muse of Felicity. Joy grows in that growth and

The sun of Beauty and the sun of Power⁹

bestow these greatneses in the abundance of the dynamic spirit that wishes to be in its living expression.

R Y DESHPANDE

References

- 1 *Savitri*, p 38 2 *Ibid*, p 41
 3 *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, p 204 (N B Pp 199-256 describe these five suns of poetry)
 4 *Ibid*, p 213 5 *Ibid*, p 255 6 *Ibid*, p 279
 7 *Ibid*, pp 369-70 See also *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10, pp 303-13, *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol 12, pp 168-72, *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol 3, p 19, April 1979
 8 *Ibid*, p 34 9 *Savitri*, p 631

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 2000)

SRI AUROBINDO, a co-worker of Tilak in the political field, had similar perceptions, and when in 1910 he left politics he was certain that India would be free in the near future. He had a direct divine assurance to that effect during the Alipore trial. But as the high-priest of revolutionary nationalism, he, it will be seen later, never stuck to one form of political action. Chittaranjan Das, a supporter of Sri Aurobindo's revolutionary ideas, followed almost the same line of action as Tilak and this had Sri Aurobindo's approval. To these forward-looking souls, above everything else was their country's freedom and they knew which way it would come. It was a path of the constant fight annexing whatever ground could be gained in the course of the march and continuing the fight unabated till complete victory was won.

Sri Aurobindo has said about Tilak: "Sri Aurobindo's position and practice in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa" ¹

It was as though a more than human power and more than human management had arranged the singular sequence of events: Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal to Pondicherry in 1910, Gandhiji's coming to India in 1914 from South Africa, the return of Tilak from Mandalay, the launching of the Home Rule movement by Annie Beasant and Tilak, the great "shadow" of the Montague—Chelmsford Reforms. The most important political move of Tilak after his release was the formation of the Home Rule league. Even Montague who said that Tilak was very extreme held that as a political leader he had the greater influence in India.

Tilak was nominated by the Delhi Session of Congress in 1918 to represent India at the Peace Conference in Paris, he wrote and sent in an appeal to the conference in which he pleaded for consideration of the India question from the point of view both of world peace and of the progress of the Indian people. He urged that peace in India was not possible to maintain unless and until she achieved self-government and to this end the principle of self-determination should be applied to India. Behind his reference to peace in the appeal there must have been his mental reaction to the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy that occurred in the Punjab in April 1919, proving not only to India but to the whole world how imperialistic arrogance could degenerate into the brutality of destroying hundreds of innocent human lives, and strike at all the prospects of peace in a country reawakening to its inherent right to freedom, a right of which Tilak himself was a "God-appointed incarnation".

After the Amritsar Congress which accepted in principle this stand of Tilak, he started the Congress Democratic Party with a view to so organise the advanced political minds of the country that they might grow in influence and persuade the Congress to adopt his policy of "responsive co-operation" of whose effectivity he was as certain as he was of India's freedom resulting from his method of political

action. The methods of later leaders were not the same but what they achieved was possible certainly because Tilak and his co-workers had prepared the ground, created the spirit of sacrifice and the will to freedom at any cost. In the acceptance by the British Government of complete self-government as the final goal in Indian administration, Tilak could see a beginning of the fruition of his life-work.

There was a feeling in Nationalist circles that somehow Sri Aurobindo should be persuaded to return to Indian active politics. It is interesting to record that at this time an offer came from Tilak through Mr Baptista asking Sri Aurobindo to come out of his seclusion and take up the editorship of a new paper, like the *Bande Mataram* thirteen years earlier. This paper was to propagate the message of patriotism and educate the nation in the tasks of political debate and action. They had decided to start it under the auspices of the Social Democratic Party of Bombay. Mr Joseph Baptista was a well-known barrister and one of the famous leaders of Tilak's National Party which had grown strong and popular. Baptista wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's reply to this appeal is reproduced here in full.

Pondicherry
Jan. 5, 1920

Dear Baptista,

Your offer is a tempting one, but I regret that I cannot answer it in the affirmative. It is due to you that I should state explicitly my reasons. In the first place I am not prepared at present to return to British India. This is quite apart from any political obstacle. I understand that up to last September the Government of Bengal (and probably the Government of Madras also) were opposed to my return to British India and that practically this opposition meant that if I went back I should be interned or imprisoned 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. I do not suppose other Governments would be any more delighted by my appearance in their respective provinces. Perhaps the King's Proclamation may make a difference, but that is not certain since, as I read it, it does not mean an amnesty, but an act of gracious concession and benevolence limited by the discretion of the Viceroy. Now I have too much work on my hands to waste my time in the leisured ease of an involuntary Government guest. But even if I were assured of an entirely free action and movement, I should yet not go just now. 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. But if I were in British India, I should be obliged to plunge at once into action of different kinds. Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of tapasya, not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention. I must finish that, I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.

Next in the matter of the work itself I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 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 in place of the futile ambling Congress methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms, the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long. What preoccupies me now is the question what it is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future?

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. Your party, you say, is going to be a social democratic party. Now 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. But this is precisely what she will be obliged to do, if she has to start on the road in her present chaotic and unprepared condition of mind. No doubt people talk of India developing on her own lines, but nobody seems to have very clear or sufficient ideas as to what those lines are to be. In this matter I have formed ideals and certain definite ideas of my own, in which at present very few are likely to follow me,—since they are governed by an uncompromising spiritual idealism of an unconventional kind and would be unintelligible to many and an offence and stumbling-block to a great number. But I have not as yet any clear and full idea of the practical lines, I have no formed programme. In a word, I am feeling my way in my mind and am not ready for either propaganda or action. Even if I were, it would mean for some time ploughing my lonely furrow or at least freedom to take my own way. As the editor of your paper, I should be bound to voice the opinion of others and reserve my own, and while I have full sympathy with the general ideas of the advanced parties so far as concerns the action of the present moment and, if I were in the field, would do all I could to help them, I am almost

incapable by nature of limiting myself in that way, at least to the extent that would be requisite.

Excuse the length of this screed. I thought it necessary to explain fully so as to avoid giving you the impression that I declined your request from any affectation or reality of spiritual aloofness or wish to shirk the call of the country or want of sympathy with the work you and others are so admirably doing. I repeat my regret that I am compelled to disappoint you ²

Yours sincerely,
AUROBINDO GHOSE

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

Reference

- 1 *SABCL*, Vol 26, p 22
- 2 *Ibid*, pp 429-31

ASPIRATION

WITH aspiration's sweet enchanting tune,
The silver cord undulating rose;
And holding it little *Dwija** climbed
Up there under the crescent moon,
Helped along by a heavenly hand.
Then for an eternal moment he drank
Deeply the gods' nectar and milk of Paradise.
Drunk and dizzy with rapture sweet
He came down bathed in mute eternal hush.

VIJAY RAM

* A proper name which signifies one who has a second, a spiritual birth

VEDIC PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE GODS—1

WE have discussed in one of our previous articles the fundamentals of the Vedic vision of life. But the more important part of Vedic spiritual culture is the inner psychological and spiritual discipline or in other words the Yoga pursued by the Vedic seers. And this Vedic Yoga contains a treasure of psychological insights. But the key to the riddle of Vedic Psychology lies in the symbolism of the Gods. This article examines some of the fundamental psychological conceptions of the Vedic Yoga.

Vedic Gods: Their Psychological Significance

The Vedic gods represent in general subjective powers of consciousness and in particular those faculties, powers or states of consciousness beyond the “normal” or ordinary human mind. One of the central intuitions of Vedic psychology—which in a way anticipates the Freudian past as well as the transpersonal future of modern psychology—is that the ordinary conscious mentality is only an intermediary communicating channel between the subconscious ocean below it and the superconscious ocean above. In a hymn of the Rig Veda, Rishi Vāmadeva describes the whole of existence as established above in the seat of the divine Purusha, the Superconscious being and below, in the dark ocean of the subconscious, *ananta samudra hṛdi antarayasi*. The Vedic gods are the powers of the superconscious Self in man. The Vedic psychology is primarily the psychology of the working of the gods in man. The Vedic sages are not much interested in the minute analysis of conscious or subconscious mentality of man. For their aim is not to dwell in but to go beyond the conscious or subconscious ranges into the superconscious kingdom of the gods.

The Normal Psychological Faculties of Man

But still the Vedic sages have made a simple and effective classification of the ordinary mentality which we have to know before proceeding to the celestial psychology of the gods. There is a pregnant verse in the Rig Veda which prays to the Maruts *hṛdatasto manasa dhīya*. Thus *hṛda* heart, *manas* mind, and *dhi* intelligence are the three distinct psychological faculties of man recognised by the Vedic sages. They correspond to the *citta—manas—buddhi* of the later development in Indian psychology. They are the faculties of the ordinary human consciousness. The Vedic *hṛda* or heart corresponds somewhat to the concept of *citta* in Rājayoga; it is not merely the emotional being; it is the first, the most primitive and the mostly subconscious strata of human consciousness As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“The heart in the Vedic psychology is not restricted to the seat of emotions; it includes all that large tract of spontaneous mentality, nearest to the subconscious in

us, out of which rise the sensations, emotions, instincts, impulses and all those intuitions and inspirations that travel through these agencies before they arrive at form in the intelligence. This is the 'heart' of the Veda and Vedanta, *hrdaya*, *hrd*, or *Brahman*. There in the present state of mankind the Purusha is supposed to be seated centrally. Nearer to the vastness of the subconscious...''¹

This is especially true of the state of consciousness of the humanity of the Vedic age. The heart of the humanity of the Vedic age was much less conscious and nearer to the subconscious than the heart of the modern man. It was made much more of spontaneous subconscious instincts than of conscious mentalised emotions. The emotional being of the Vedic man was probably stationed somewhere near the abdominal centre, the *mulādhāra* of the Tantrics and not exactly at the chest centre which is the seat of conscious emotions. From this stuff of subconscious and instinctive mentality of *hrda* evolves the conscious mentality which is made of two layers: first, the sensational vital mind, *manas*, which is predominantly the mind of sensations, feelings and desires, and second, the thinking and discriminating intelligence *buddhi*. For the mind in general the Vedic sages used the word *mati* which includes the whole of mental consciousness, the sensational, emotional and thinking mind. Total illumination of this mental consciousness of man and all its faculties is a part of the Vedic ideal of self-perfection. Again as Sri Aurobindo explains.

“Right thoughts, right sensibilities,—this is the full sense of the word *sumati*, for the Vedic *mati* includes not only the thinking, but also the emotional parts of mentality. *Sumati* is a light in the thoughts; it is also a bright gladness and kindness in the soul’’²

This is the Vedic classification of the ordinary human consciousness. But as we have said already, the Vedic sages were not interested in a minute analysis of the psychology of the ordinary mind. Their primary interest was in that which is beyond the ordinary mentality, how to enter into this higher consciousness, bring down its powers into the lower mentality and enter into the superconscious kingdom of the Gods.

Indra and Agni: The Illumined Mind and Will

Among the Vedic gods, two gods stand out prominently and are invoked constantly by the Vedic Rishis; they are Indra and Agni. They are the constant inner helpers and companions of the Vedic Rishis in their mystic sacrifice. They are also constantly praised by the Vedic Rishis in their hymns as the path-finders in their inner journey and guides and helpers of humanity as a whole. What is special about these two gods which make them so important to the Vedic Rishis? The reason will become apparent when we examine the psychological significance of these gods in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Vedic interpretations.

In a cosmic sense Indra is the lord of Swar, Heaven. The Swar or Heaven in the Vedic cosmology is the plane or the world of divine Mind. Thus Indra represents the

universal divine Mind. And Agni, in a general cosmic sense represents the universal divine Will, more specifically the will which guides the evolutionary march of Nature from matter to life and from life to mind and from mind to whatever spiritual destiny awaits the future of man. In a psychological sense Indra and Agni represent respectively their corresponding self-expressions in the individual human consciousness as the illumined Intelligence and the aspiring Will in man

Now we can see why the Vedic Rishis gave the highest importance to these two gods. As cosmic godheads, Indra and Agni are the two divine powers who are directly involved in guiding the earth and humanity in its evolutionary march. And in a psychological sense, Indra and Agni represent the two higher faculties which are indispensable for success in the inner spiritual path. For in Yoga it is not the thought and feeling of the ordinary or surface rational and emotional being which can lead the way. It is only the higher and deeper Will of the subliminal being illumined by an intuitive intelligence which can give the right lead and direction in the Yogic path. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“In reality thought is only a scout and pioneer, it can guide but not command or effectuate. The leader of the journey, the captain of the march, the first and most ancient priest of our sacrifice is the Will. This Will is not the wish of the heart or the demand or preference of the mind to which we often give the name. It is that inmost, dominant and often veiled conscious force of our being and of all being, Tapas, Shakti, Shraddha, that sovereignly determines our orientation and of which the intellect and the heart are more or less blind and automatic servants and instruments”³

Again it is not thought or emotion but Will that ignites the flame of aspiration which burns upwards, keeps it alive and burning, shatters the obstacles and purifies the being by burning away all the dross. The Will is the priest of sacrifice who ignites the sacrificial fire in the altar of our heart. Can there be a more appropriate symbol for this aspiring flame and force of the Will, the inner Fire in man than Agni?

If Agni represents the higher aspiring will Indra represents the higher intuitive intelligence or the illumined mind beyond the intellectual, emotional and sensational mentality. Indra is called the Gopati. The word Go, which means cow, was used consistently by Vedic sages to symbolise inner illumination. Cows in the Vedic symbolism represent the herds of light. Indra is *gopati* or the lord of the herds of light which means the lord of inner illumination. As Sri Aurobindo explains the psychological significance of Indra:

“The principle which Indra represents is the Mind-Power released from the limits and obscurations of the nervous consciousness. It is this enlightened Intelligence which fashions right or perfect forms of thought or of action not deformed by the nervous impulses, not hampered by the falsehoods of sense. The image presented is that of a cow giving abundantly its yield to the milker of the herds. The word *go* means in Sanskrit both a cow and a ray of light. This double sense is used by the Vedic symbolists to suggest a double figure which was to them more than a figure, for light, in their view, is not merely an apt poetic image of thought, but is actually its

physical form. Thus, the herds that are milked are the Herds of the Sun,—Surya, God of the revelatory and intuitive mind, or else of Dawn, the Goddess who manifests the solar glory. The Rishi desires from Indra a daily increase of this light of Truth by his fuller activity pouring rays in a rich yield upon the receptive mind.’⁴

The Maruts: The Storm-troopers of Indra

The other important member of the Vedic celestial family is the Maruts or the wind-gods. The Maruts are the gods of the mind. For wind or air in the ancient traditions represent the principle of mind, as water the vital force and earth the principle of matter. So the Maruts are the powers of the higher illumined intelligence. But unlike Indra who represents more the aspect of light, knowledge and illumination, the Maruts represent the force and energy aspect of the higher mind. They are ‘‘energies of the mentality, energies which make for knowledge’’ and ‘‘powers of Thought which by the strong and apparently destructive motion of their progress break down that which is established and help to the attainment of new formations.’’⁶ We can say the Maruts are the storm-troopers of Indra. They are described as fierce and violent gods who forcefully break through obstacles in the path. The Maruts symbolise the forceful, energetic, adventurous and courageous thought, the Kshatriya energy in the mind which breaks down mental blocks, demolishes old and established mental formations and has the courage to venture into unexplored vistas of knowledge. The *Brāhmana*, force of knowledge of the Indra will be incomplete without the Kshatriya, energy of the Maruts.

These are the three gods Indra, Agni and Maruts who play an important role in the Yoga of the Vedic Rishis. There are other equally important gods like Surya who represents the supreme Light, the Lord of the supramental world of Truth, Right and the Vast, *satyam, ritam* and *bṛhat*, the goal of the Vedic Yoga; we name what Sri Aurobindo calls the ‘‘solar quaternary’’ the Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman and Bhaga representing the four spiritual powers or qualities of the Surya; we have also the very frequently hymned goddess of the Dawn *Ushā* representing the dawn of inner illumination. These gods have more of a spiritual than a psychological significance; they come into prominence during the later and more advanced stages of the Vedic Yoga. We will come to them a little later. First we have to be clear about the psychological dimensions of the Vedic Yoga before coming to the spiritual.

Panis: The Robbers of the Light

The other significant psychological symbol of the Vedas is the battle between the gods and the demons. This Vedic image like many others was grossly misinterpreted by Western scholars as the war between the gods of the fair-skinned and long-nosed Aryan invaders and the dark-skinned and snub-nosed Dravidians natives. We will not enter into the historical controversy regarding the Aryan invasion theory. But from

the psychological point of view the meaning of the symbol is obvious; it is the “inner war without escape” which every spiritual seeker has to fight and conquer to realise the higher aim of life. The image of war in the Vedas is the symbol of this inner war between the evolutionary powers of Light in man and the universe—which aspire and work for truth, strength, harmony, unity and light—and the anti-evolutionary force of Darkness in man and the universe. The terms used by Vedic sages for these dark powers are revealing. They are called by different names like Vala which means coverer, Vritra, tearer, and Panis who are described as miser traffickers and robbers. The names very clearly indicate the method of working of these hostile forces. The gods or the powers of light work by an increasing inner illumination which gradually unveils the undivided unity and wholeness of Truth and creates a progressive harmony and unification of the divided and conflicting elements in our own being and the universe. The dark powers, Valas, Vritras and Panis, work by the reverse process of covering, dividing and tearing the wholeness and unity of life and being, and stealing the redeeming light of Truth from man.

M S SRINIVASAN

References

- 1 *SABCL*, Vol 10, p 259
- 2 *Ibid* , p 251
- 3 *Ibid* , Vol 20, pp 275-76
- 4 *Ibid* , Vol 10, pp 250-51
- 5 *Ibid* , p 257
- 6 *Ibid* , p 243

SONG OF RETURN

To Yamas' Lok she went, to sleep,
To rest from the dusty journey
That all souls must tread, who
To their high place long to return,
The wayfarers of the twofold road
There, when the hour is set,
A clock chimes thrice and the soul
Awakened stands to behold its heavenly home
And to hear and receive the weighty quest
From the Great One, who lords it
Over the Threshold Realm
"Who are you, soul? How were your ways below?
What great things and deeds were yours on earth?
Show me your credentials here,
Open your stores to me "

She stands in silence, what is she to show?
Quickly she scans, fast searching,
The winding road just left behind and
Looks about maybe to find a witness
To plead her case.
"Speak, oh soul You, who on your brow
The Mighty Mother's touch
Shining bear Speak! I await "

Pearls, that make ornaments shine,
Tears of the heart roll down her lovely cheeks.
She, for the first time, to the Presence speaks.
"Oh Lord, I am humble, so poor,
What are my deeds to show?
Forgive it, please, I had no time,
You see, no time..
I was mother to so many
Wife and mother, no more than that,
I, an Indian wife, just that,
In India "

A smile, radiant such as heaven alone beholds
Lights up the face of Yama, the Lord
A choir of voices like music rise and chant,
"Oh a soul, a soul came home today,
To us today. Wife and mother,
Mother and wife from India
From India today."

GEORGETTE COTY

THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Introduction

TOWARDS the fag-end of 1995, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) organised a forum in New Delhi with the objective to study the mystery of the origin of the Universe, bringing into its ambit expertise from various fields, from anthropology to zoology and from paleontology to philosophy. The spectrum of study would deal with the serious questions with which today's science is engaged, it would aim at solving, or at least getting to know in a better perspective, the puzzling questions on ever mysterious signs from the cosmos, the unpredictable turns that the mass of matter takes, new vistas into space, time, light, energy, motion, the mystery of life, human mind and many other important issues. It goes without saying that studies in consciousness or mind, the subject to which everything else is referred and finds its meaning, would get its due importance. The science of mind, whether considered physically, psychologically or philosophically, is still believed to be in its infant stage as the world of technology and life-styles which develop answers to some very basic questions concerning the human mind remain obscure. Apart from the questions of natural science as to how man evolved as a species called Homo Sapiens, there are also unanswered questions as to how he developed a faculty called consciousness, so high in degree that it distinguishes him as the crown of evolution? What is the role of consciousness, apart from the role played in individual development of the mind, in a society, in a larger world context, e.g., international relationships, the United Nations Organization, human rights, or in special situations like war, commerce, famine and catastrophe?

Stating the Problem of the Western Concept of Consciousness

We are in the age of cybernetics, the ultra-modern science of our times, where machines are made capable of self-governance, i.e., machines built to respond to some pre-programmed states. Thus for instance, the recent chess 'tournament' between Gary Kasparov, the world chess champion, and a computer named 'Deep Blue', made world wide news, and the fact that the computer took the first game away from the champion made man's world look a little foolish. It could 'think' just like its opponent, and it could make 'moves' against him. The questions one asks are: Is it 'rational'? Can it 'think'? Even the one who programmed the computer agreed that it couldn't; the computer was merely 'programmed' with numerous computations, which it 'scans' when it has been made to do so and delivers a perfectly predictable result. However, since the machines solve a number of problems, in a much faster and efficient manner than any human, there is a strong opinion which suggests that these workings of the machines could supply us with some valuable

knowledge about the functioning of our mind. Human beings have increasingly started to think and explain their functions mechanically. For instance, it makes better sense to describe the heart as the 'pump' and the brain as the 'computer processor' of our body 'machine'. The functions of the mind which were once known as mental states are now described as 'mental processes'. In fact computer processes seem to be doing a better job by putting out an enormous data of information, the quickest possible calculations, and now even translation of language, voice and image projection and a colossal memory bank.¹

Although the mechanical efficiency seems to be awesome and its results impeccable, the snag may be that it is a totally consistent system which apparently leads to limitations. Kurt Gödel's theorem proves that the consistency of a formal system adequate for number theory cannot be proved within the system. As the consistency theory took hold of mathematics Gödel struggled in *Begriffsschrift* to define numbers, and Russell found further difficulties that led him to a dilemma of classes or non-classes of numbers which seemed absurd to accept and self-contradicting not to accept. Gödel realized that in a formal system adequate for number theory there exists an undecidable formula, which is neither provable nor unprovable.

Roger Penrose (Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics), presently the author of the two best selling books, *The Emperor's New Mind* and its sequel, *Shadows of the Mind*², has developed a theory claiming to solve the problem of the concept of mind. In the first book he refuted the idea of the functionalists who see consciousness as an association and interaction of various functions and proposed that brain and mind are like 'hard-ware' and 'soft-ware' respectively as one understands computer language. He advocated that mind is something more than a pack of neurons, rather it involves a process within our brain. Neurobiologists, however, do not have problems with such a view, but Penrose sees more problems, for our consciousness involves more than mere computations, however clever or resourceful. He finds we cannot solve the problem of mind unless we find a new physics to explain it. He is a mathematician and he starts where Gödel ended: No consistent formal system can prove the true propositions of arithmetic. Thus, it is clear that the truth of mathematics is a matter of intuition and cannot be established within a consistent system of rules; it is also clear, therefore, that a machine based on such a system would fail to clone human understanding.

The proposed new physics naturally proposes a new course, i.e., since no system could clone human understanding due to a non-computational element in our consciousness or mind, it is clear that we must find a physics that is non-computational. He advocates in a dramatic way that such a non-computational element called 'micro-tubulous' that lies in the 'cytoskeletons' of the cells in our brain or mind is merely a 'shadow' of these 'deeper' physical bases of our consciousness. However, like all those who tried before him to explain mind and were trapped, so too Penrose is trapped in his own web of mathematical entities trying to find solace in mental phenomena and then in turn trying to explain the world around him at times in a

Platonic way and at other times Cartesian.

Such endeavours as the above are not all that new. Jan Brouwer, the great mathematician from the Netherlands advocated the intuitionist element in mathematics in the first decade of the 20th century.¹ He proposed that theorems would be a mere circular argument to prove mathematical entities, thus making it a presupposition-free science; in other words, the mathematical objects or truths in some way depend directly on our intuition, we become automatically conscious about them. He and many others like him, e.g., Heyting, accept Kant's judgment that mathematical objects are synthetic a priori.

(To be continued)

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

Notes and References

1 See my series of articles *Man and Machine* in *Mirror*, of O Herald O (1994-95), Goa. The educational TV channels very often show "The Secret Lives of the Machines" or programmes concerning the "feelings" of machines

2 Both books were published by Penguin in paperback, 1995

3 Luitzen Egbertus Jan Brouwer,— "Intuitionism and Formalism" (from "Intuitionisme en Formalisme"), in *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, transl. A Dresden, Vol 20 (1913), pp 81-96, also see, "Consciousness, Philosophy and Mathematics", in *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy*, Amsterdam (1949), Vol II, pp 1235-1249

SOUL BEHIND THE VEIL

I CAUGHT a fleeting glimpse
Of a soul behind the veil
A soft white radiance
Beyond all human scale.

As in a cocoon it lay
Wrapped in splendid peace
Dreaming of a distant day
When ego's rule would cease.

All past lives it knew,
Gathered round its core,
And death and birth walked through
Its ever-welcoming door

Opening on worlds unknown
To man in his outwardness
In the star-fields of God it has grown
Through our joy, our pain and duress

To unite with the Godhead above
Who leans to aspiring earth,
Shaping from founts of his love
The mould for the superman's birth

NARAD

Amal's comment: "Very felicitous all through. I liked especially the third stanza "

SPEECH

THERE IS a story from Aesop's fables. When asked to be served a dinner with the best and worst things a human being knows, the king was served various dishes made of tongue. When the Vazir was asked to explain he said that the tongue has two aspects, the best that a human being knows and the worst, truth and falsehood, and which aspect we use and utilise is our choice. Both are very delicious and tasty.

Speech is usually the expression of superficial nature. "Speech comes," Sri Aurobindo tells us, "from the throat centre, but it is associated with whatever is the governing centre or level of consciousness—wherever one thinks from. If one rises above the head, then thought takes place above the head and one can speak from there, that is to say, the direction of the speech is from there."¹ But for most of us, most of the time our consciousness is in the external being and so is our speech. And it is for us, the budding sadhaks, that control of speech is such a necessity for our self-progress.

But what is after all the nature of normal human speech and where does it come from? What is its usual purpose? And why should it be controlled? One way is to find out what happens, what we observe when we stop speaking for a while, go into *mauna*. Swami Tadatmananda, a computer scientist who has become a Sannyasi, describes very well what he observed when he stopped speaking for a while. He says:

"As a student in an Ashram I had tried practising *mauna* for a few days. When others understood my intention, they simply stopped speaking to me. All around me conversation continued while I merely listened, feeling almost invisible like a researcher watching through a one-way mirror. I was amazed to discover that much daily chatter seemed prompted by social convention and habits rather than by a need to convey meaningful thoughts or feelings. Casual conversation is harmless, no doubt, but from my temporarily silent perspective, much of it seemed as pointless as seeing reruns on television. While practising silence, I found myself far less occupied with the countless trivial events taking place each day.

"I also discovered what a poor listener I had been. While others talked I often thought about what to say next. I became preoccupied with my own thinking, instead of giving my full attention. I began to listen with more attention and sensitivity and started to hear subtle messages to which I had previously been deaf. In a strange way, I felt as if cotton plugging my ears had been removed and I could hear clearly for the first time.

"Yet the greatest lesson I learned in silence came not from observing others, but from observing myself. Maintaining silence I could not help but notice a persistent pressure compelling me to speak. I was astonished to discover that this pressure often seemed to originate not from a need to say something but from a need to draw attention to myself, to have someone hear and understand me. In silence I began to hear a faint inner cry that had been drowned by my mind's usual chatter. It was the voice of someone crying out for attention, someone who felt unloved and perhaps

unlovable. It was the voice of a little boy who wanted to be held and cared for.

“I had been completely unaware of this subtle pattern of mine—using conversation to cover my feelings of inadequacy. I discovered how talking was a means I unconsciously used to feel accepted by others and to reduce my sense of isolation. While remaining silent, I could not hide from that part of myself which felt unacceptable.

“Many spiritual teachers and therapists say that what we unconsciously avoid is crucial in our process of self-inquiry, a necessary step in our journey towards emotional and spiritual growth.”²

Most of us have been told since childhood that our speech should be kind, true and beneficent and that we should avoid words that may cause fear, hurt, sorrow and trouble to others. At the time of the Sankranti festival in Maharashtra the greetings are accompanied by a sesame sweet and the request “Speak sweet words.” But I did not know the answers to questions like “Where is the source of talk?” and “Why and how to control it?” till I learnt them from the writings of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo explains: “Talk—of the usual kind—does very easily disperse or bring down the inner condition because it usually comes out of the lower vital and physical mind only and expresses that part of the consciousness—it has a tendency to externalise the being. That is of course why many Yogis take refuge in silence. There are some who have the flow of speech by nature and those who are very vital cannot do without it. But the latter case (not being able to do without it) is obviously a disability from the spiritual point of view. There are also certain stages in sadhana when one has to go inward and silence at that time is very necessary while unnecessary speech becomes a dispersion of the energies or externalises the consciousness. It is especially this chat for chat’s sake tendency that has to be overcome.”

Thus it is the lower vital and physical parts of the external mind from where our common speech and its pleasure arise. These parts are the most prominent and hence most resistant to the needed purification or change. And Sri Aurobindo agrees that “it is impossible to avoid it (speech) altogether.” And he adds: “what you must do is to learn to get back at once to the inner consciousness—this so long as you are not able to speak always from the inner being or at least with the inner being supporting the action.”

So the first step is to become aware of the need to control speech. The second step is to practise doing it. Talking is a habit, a mechanical habit established long before we turn to the spiritual path. The habit goes on for some time, even after our resolve to control it, because it is propelled by its inertia and by force from the subconscious. But eventually, once the resolve is there together with constant vigilance and perseverance, the control can be achieved by the aid of the Force from behind. As Sri Aurobindo tells us: “Mostly human speech and thought go on mechanically in certain grooves that always repeat themselves and it is not really the mind that controls or dictates them. That is why this habit can go on for some time

even after the conscious mind has withdrawn its support and consent and resolved to do otherwise.”

I find it very interesting that speech and thought are linked together here. Thus control of speech helps control of thoughts too. Even though most of us do not actively think before speaking, it is the thoughts from the superficial consciousness that get translated into our daily speech.

To a sadhak who finds speech-control difficult to achieve Sri Aurobindo writes: “The difficulty you experience exists because speech is a formation which in the past has worked much more as an expression of the vital in man than of the mental will. Speech breaks out as the expression of the vital and its habits, without caring to wait for the control of the mind; the tongue has been spoken of as the unruly member. In your case the difficulty has increased by the habit of talk about others,—gossip to which your vital was very partial, so much that it cannot even yet give up the pleasure in it. It is therefore this tendency that must cease in the vital itself. Not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of yogic self-control.”

How to do it? What to practise in order to achieve this control? Sri Aurobindo tells us in these precise words: “You have to persevere and form the habit of control. If you can succeed in controlling the speech often,—it needs a constant vigilance,—you will finally find that the control stamps itself and can in the long run always intervene. This must be done so long as the movement is not fully opened to the Mother’s Light and Force, for if that happens the thing can be done more quickly and sometimes with a great rapidity. There is also the intervention of the psychic,—if the psychic being is sufficiently awake and active to intervene each time you are going to speak at random and say ‘No’, then the change becomes more easy.”

Expounding about Silence and Speech Sri Aurobindo writes:

“Silence prepares, speech creates. Silence acts, speech gives the impulse to action. Silence compels, speech persuades.”

“The greatest exertions are made with the breath held in; the faster the breathing, the more the dissipation of energy...when thought ceases breathing ceases...when thought begins again, the breath resumes its activities. But when the thought flows without the resumption of the inbreathing and outbreathing, then the Prana is truly conquered. This is a law of Nature. When we strive to act, the forces of Nature do their will with us; when we grow still, we become their master. But there are two kinds of stillness—the helpless stillness of inertia, and the stillness of assured sovereignty which commands the harmony of life. It is the sovereign stillness which is the calm of the Yogi.”

“The more complete the calm, the mightier the yogic power, the greater the force in action. In this calm, right knowledge comes...in that calm, in that voiceless stillness illumination comes upon the mind, error begins to fall away and so long as desire does not stir again, clarity establishes itself in the higher stratum of the

consciousness compelling peace and joy in the lower.’’³

The knowledge flooding in as soon as the mind falls quiet, is a process. And it has its provisos. The speech has to be controlled, for, then only can the mind become quiet. “The error (or falsehood) begins to fall away’’; the error—the falsehood—that is normally always mixed with truth in our speech, thoughts, perception, judgement, imagination, memory, impulse, and even visions and dreams has to be driven farther and farther away from us. The other condition is that “so long as the desire does not stir again’’ the waters of a silent mind illumination continue to come upon the mind. There has to be a condition of desirelessness for the knowledge to flow into us through the calm, and therefore clear and transparent waters of the mind.

Notice the role of clarity. It is the establishment of clarity, a clear seeing and perceiving, in the higher strata of consciousness that *compels* the lower strata to be filled with or to become aware of the peace and joy. The peace and joy that are the normal qualities of the inner being shine forth when the thick veils of a busy mind and vital are withdrawn.

Like all changes in our nature, this change too is transient and recurs in our Sadhana and gets slowly established as we proceed on the road.

But what is this right knowledge? It is not the knowledge that science gives or reason and logic dictate. It is also not the knowledge that discriminates between evil and good and prefers the immediate obvious good.

This is the knowledge of the divine will, of divine action. It is knowledge of the whole scenario, the result in the distance, the final outcome and not the one in the immediate future. It is the knowledge on which true action is based. This is the knowledge that initiates truth action.

We know that speech creates. It creates forms of emotion, mental images, and impulses of action. The choice is ours about the quality of these forms and impulses we can create. After all becoming more and more conscious of our actions, becoming aware of our reactions and where they come from, to become much less of an automaton than we are is the wish and aspiration of all human beings wanting to progress. To become aware of what speech is, this so pleasant and common activity, is obviously an urgent need before we can proceed further on the path of progress, even in ordinary life. The limitations of human speech and its maximum capability are well explained by Sri Aurobindo while commenting on that marvellous phrase in Kena Upanishad—Speech of our speech. He says: “Human speech is only a secondary expression and at its highest a shadow of the divine Word, of the seed-sounds, the satisfying rhythms, the revealing forms of sound that are the omniscient and omnipotent speech of the eternal Thinker, Harmonist, Creator. The highest inspired speech to which the human mind can attain, the word most unanalysably expressive of supreme truth, the most puissant syllable or *mantra* can only be its far-off representation’’.⁴

Yes, we have this wonderful instrument. And like all our superb instruments, it is our choice how we practise speech as a means of self-revelation, to radiate the love

and joy and peace of the divine within us, to express the divine who is, in the words of Amal Kiran, simultaneously “the Lord overhead and the Love caved in the core.”

DINKAR D PALANDE

Notes and References

- 1 *SABCL*, Vol 22, p 374
 - 2 *Roar of the Ganges*, by Mark Barian, Business Publications Inc , 1999, pp 40-41
 - 3 Excerpted from *SABCL*, Vol 3, pp 366-368
 - 4 *SABCL*, Vol 12, pp 171-172
- All other quotations are from *SABCL*, Vol 24, pp 1550-1555

A JOYOUS PATCH

Of late, an open book
 I have been
 For Your perusal keen ..
 You are a joyous patch
 In my torn tale,
 A firm knot
 In life's frail thread

This thick-woven patch
 Will never weaken
 Nor that knot loosen .
 Grief-stricken, I may be
 Compelled by
 My human tendency,
 But that shining spot
 Will ever hum
 And enrich me
 With innumerable
 Notes and tones.

ASHALATA DASH

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of December 2000)

ACCORDING to the Sufi saints, the silent, motionless and eternal life, which is in fact, the "Life Absolute", from which has sprung (or emanated) all that is seen, felt and perceived by the sense-organs is called ZÂT. Every motion or movement that springs forth from this original "silent life" is a vibration and creator of further vibrations—in fact, within one vibration are created many-splendoured vibrations or myriad patterns of subtle vibrations. Thus it is the graded and stratified activity of these vibrations that leads to the manifestation of the various "planes of existence". The interaction of these multiplicities of vibrations makes the various planes of existence grosser and grosser and it is believed that in this process "the earth is born of the Heavens." This vibratory activity is supposed to be the basis of all sensations, pleasures and pains in this phenomenal world. The finest vibrations are imperceptible even to the human soul. The soul itself is supposed to be formed of these vibrations and it is their perpetual dynamic activity which makes the soul "conscious".¹

Creation begins with the activity of consciousness, which is also called "vibration" by the Sufi saints; according to them every vibration starting from its original source is the same, differing only in its tone and rhythm caused by a greater or lesser degree of force behind it. On the plane of sound, vibration causes an immense diversity of tones, and in the world of atoms, diversity of colours too. Sound gives to the consciousness an evidence of its own existence, although it is in fact "the active part of consciousness which turns into sound." All things being derived from and formed of vibrations have sound concealed within them, as fire is hidden in the flint. Each atom of the Universe is believed to confess itself by its tone, "My sole origin is sound." If any solid, liquid or hollow sonorous body is struck, it will answer back "I am sound." This happens in our phenomenal world of multiplicity where sound (called *Āhata Nāda* by the Grammarian Philosophers and Musicologists of India) has its "birth, sex, form, planet, god, colour, childhood, youth and age"; but that volume or nature of sound which is in the "abstract sphere", beyond the perceptible sphere of the concrete and phenomenal world, is the "origin and basis of all sound".² This mysterious, unique and primordial Sound is called *Anāhata Nāda* by the Grammarian Philosophers and *Nāda Yogis* of India because it remains literally "unstruck" or undiluted. Only the *Nāda-Siddha Yogis* (i.e., those who have attained perfection in *Nādānusandhāna*) have the extraordinary gift and supra-sensory capability of gaining access to this wondrous and most beautiful world of mysterious sound, called *Anāhata Nāda*.

It is believed that both sound and colour make their direct and indirect effect on the human soul according to the law of Harmony. Tone has either a warm or cold effect, according to its element, since all elements are made of different degrees of vibrations. Therefore sound can produce an agreeable or disagreeable effect upon

man's mind and body; even modern scientific research has established that musical sound (of certain selected varieties, especially from the deep and rich classical modes) has its superb healing effect. It is difficult to reject the Sufi-faith that each planet has its own "special tone"; therefore every individual has a note peculiar to himself which is according to his "birth-planet" and it is for this reason that "a certain tone appeals to a particular person according to the grade of his evolution."¹

In the Vedic tradition of India, it is said: "Words mean what they do...". The "words", before they were ever written down in the precisely evolved Sanskrit language (*Sanskrit*: a word itself formed from *Sam*, "together" and *kr*, "make": "together-make") were only sounds. This holy and significant concept "of a sound meaning what it does" is indeed very far-reaching. For example, in the Christian tradition, this concept can shed light on the opening of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word..." Obviously it suggests that the first impulse or vibration in the entire Creation was "Sound"...⁴ It has been very aptly mentioned by the ancient seers of the Vedic period:

"There are men who may see with eyes,
But they do not see the source of divine speech
There are men who hear but have no ability
To understand the deeper meaning of divine words.
But there are pious sages to whom
The Goddess of Speech reveals Her lovely form."

(Rīg Veda, 10.71.4)

It would now be worthwhile to contemplate the following excerpts from the Upanishadic lore:

Nachiketā asked: "What lies beyond right and wrong, beyond cause and effect, beyond past and future?"

Dharmarāj said: "The Word that the Vedas extol, austerities proclaim, sanctities approach...that word is OM".

"That Word is eternal Spirit, eternal distance, one who knows It attains to his desire."

"That Word is the ultimate foundation. One who finds It is adored among the saints."

"The Self knows all, is not born, does not die, is not the effect of any cause; It is eternal, self-existent, imperishable and the most ancient."

(Kathopanishad)

T. V. Kapali Shastri, the famous Tāntric scholar and *sādhaka*, has mentioned that among the stupendous achievements of the mystics of ancient India stands foremost the theory of Creation by the "Word". The creative Logos of the Greeks does

certainly correspond to the *Vāk* (Latin: *Vox*, Sanskrit, *Vāk*, to speak) that is, the “Creatrix of the Word”. But the Indian conception is distinguished by the ancient theory and the treatment it has received at the hands of the great seers of the Vedic age, the sages and intuitive thinkers of the Upanishads in succession, the philosophers of the *Darshana*, the *Tantra-Shastras* and the *Purānas*. The theory of *Vāk* which has permeated the religious literature of our country has influenced to a considerable extent many writers and poets of the later ages as exemplified in the utterances of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhuti. The former affirms *Vāk* as *Shakti* (or Power) that cannot be alienated from the meaning of substance. However, Bhavabhuti makes a profound statement in his dictum that is laden with a world of ideas about the original power of *Vāk* and its real nature on the one hand and on the other, *Vāk* as a “vehicle of thought” at the disposal of the decent-minded people. According to him, *sādhus* who are of a good, well-bred kind with regard to veracity normally give a correct expression to the thoughts in their minds. In contradistinction from this, meaning follows the Word in the case of primeval Seers, the “*Rishis*”.

The idea about the real nature of *Vāk* as transmitted from age to age from the Vedic times is revealed in the pregnant phrase—*Vācham arthonudhāvati*. The *Vāk* of the ancient “*Rishis*” is not a sound-symbol of a mere mental idea, vocally expressed as is done by all developed human beings. It is a voice in a deeper sense of the term which is in its source a power of expression, a force which impels the being to respond to the stimuli which are a demand made on the being by the environment or by the subtle or occult and spiritual forces from the deeper layers or higher levels of being. It is a voice that proceeds from the depths, or from the heights of one’s being which is not established in mind. .. The real character of the *Vāk* is that it creates, the *Vāk* which, in the words of a Vedic poet, became all these worlds *Vāgdeva vishva bhuvanāni yajña* ⁵

We have clues, found in the Rīg Veda itself, which we can follow with great advantage in our attempt to penetrate into the mysteries of the “Word”. The Rīg Veda announces in plain and unambiguous language certain facts of mystic experience which T. V. Kapali Shastry has reduced to categorical dicta for modern understanding in his book, *Lights on the Ancients*.

(a) There is the supernal Ether in the empyrean heights of Being called *paramam vyoma*.

(b) It is the abiding place—imperishable and immutable—of the *Rik*, i e., the *Mantras*.

(c) All the Gods, the Cosmic Powers, also reside there.

(d) What can anyone do with the *Rik* who does not know That (the Supreme Ether) which is the abode of the *Rik* as well as of the Gods? That is to say, the *Rik* has value only when one knows its source, the Supreme Ether

(e) There are four steps or planes, *padāni*, from which Speech issues; the fourth step (*Vaikhari*) is the human speech that is the ordinary word while the

other planes remain hidden in secrecy.

(f) The Word and the meaning of the *Mantra*, (*i.e.*, the Veda) belong to the higher planes.

(g) And the last and important statement is that the Veda is referred to by the Rīg Vedic Seers themselves as the Word-Eternal, *Nitya Vāk*, a phrase the *Rishi* applies to the *Mantra* in the urge for laudation of *Agni*, *nityayā vāca chodasva*.⁶

SURESH DEY

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MINAKSHIAMMA: A FLAME THAT STOOD THE STORM

MINAKSHIAMMA was born on 20 December 1899 at Thiruchengodu in a respectable Shaivite Brahmin family. There was a traditional Hindu house in three parts with the living rooms in front and the kitchen etc. at the back beside a courtyard with a well and a garden. At a little distance behind the house there was a temple on a small hillock. By the time Minakshiamma was ten she had developed such an intense devotion that her mother found her more often running off to the temple than playing with the other children.

When Sayana Doraiswamy Iyer married Minakshiamma, she was 12 and he 30. He had not wanted to marry but his mother, who was not keeping well and felt she did not have long to live, pleaded with him to get married. He was already a highly respected advocate at the Madras High Court, a patron of music and a philanthropist. But what he sought most was the company of spiritual personalities. In the early years before coming to the Ashram he would often visit Ramanasram and spend long hours in the company of the Maharshi, sometimes going up the hill of Arunachala with him. Doraiswamy took Minakshiamma to Bhagawan several times and she was so deeply influenced by Swami Ramana's life and teachings that the night he passed away (14 April 1950) he came to her in her dream. She was initiated by one of his foremost disciples, Vasishta Ganapatimuni (Nayana to his disciples). Nayana stayed with Doraiswamy whenever he was in Madras and was treated with great reverence as a senior member of the family. Nayana taught her the Renuka stotra which she repeated every morning unflinchingly.

Doraiswamy had an exceedingly lucrative legal practice and was well-known for his sense of fair-play and high ethical and professional standards which he maintained throughout his career. He won the esteem of the judges and his colleagues alike. Those who have seen him argue briefs recollect with nostalgia the poise, dignity and grace with which he handled cases. The judges always showed him great courtesy. To help an advocate friend who was in financial straits due to which he was unable to maintain his palatial property in Mylapore called Palm Grove, Doraiswamy purchased it from him. Prior to moving there he lived in Ramaswami Street where he had for his neighbour the famous nationalist and poet Subramania Bharati. There grew between the two a lasting friendship.

Doraiswamy had two brothers and two sisters. Minakshiamma developed a close intimacy with his younger brother's wife, Mangala Ammal and her son Nagaswamy. After Minakshiamma settled in the Ashram her children grew up with Nagaswamy under Mangala Ammal's care in Kurnool.

Doraiswamy first saw Sri Aurobindo in 1907 at the Surat Congress. He began to visit Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry around 1920. He was asked by Sri Aurobindo in 1923 to carry a special message to C. R. Das who was then in Madras after visiting Sri Aurobindo here in Pondicherry. In his letter of introduction he referred to

Doraiswamy as one in whom he had ‘implicit trust’.

There are other references to Doraiswamy by Sri Aurobindo in Nirodbaran’s correspondence. ‘Doraiswami was always a sattwic man, a very fine sattwic type . ’ To the question by Nirodbaran: ‘Isn’t it because of his change of consciousness resulting in a change of values of life that Doraiswamy could discard all fame, post of honour, etc.?’’, Sri Aurobindo replied: ‘I don’t think so. He never wanted to be a judge etc., he was never an office hunter His weakness was of a social character, desire to be generous, liked, scrupulous in the discharge of social duties, attachment to family, friends etc.’

Minakshiamma had her first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in August 1926 She came to the Ashram for good on the 6th of June 1928 with Skanda, her fifth child, a mere baby. Mangala Ammal (who thereafter looked after her other four children and also regularly visited the Ashram) accompanied her and stayed here until Amma was well settled Like most Ashramites of the period Amma had come with the firm belief that not only Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but even their disciples would never die. But events in her own life however disproved this belief because her baby suddenly fell ill with diarrhoea and died, followed by other tragedies in the family, namely, the loss of her two sons, Thyaga and Mithran in the prime of their youth and later of her daughter Anusuya who was in her forties. One can imagine how shaken and shattered any mother would feel at the loss of her children. But Amma was one who had her faith firmly anchored in the Divine and accepted with courage and fortitude whatever Providence had ordained for her.

Those who knew Minakshiamma closely would say that throughout her life she lived essentially within. All those years of her stay in Madras, she was more interested in Nayana’s luminous words than in mixing with the social celebrities who often visited them Once she came to Pondicherry and had the Darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, she felt she had found her home from where nothing could ever take her away. She never even went on a visit to Madras. It was something of a sensation when she did not attend even the big event of her own daughter’s marriage.

Here at the Ashram she joined the group of young women who were doing some very fine embroidery on saris for the Mother She is always remembered for her saris with the flowers of *Divine’s love, Grace and Realisation*. She also cooked sometimes for Sri Aurobindo and he was very fond of her lemon rice

Amma had only two or three years of schooling While in Madras an Anglo-Indian woman came home to give her English lessons. Apart from Tamil she had learned Telugu Here, with a few other ladies, she joined Suvrata’s French class. In the mid-thirties, Mother asked her to teach English to Bharati’s mother, Minakshiamma and Krishnamma (wife of Satyakarma who settled here in 1933 with her son Dayakar). After Appa’s (Doraiswami’s) passing in 1976, people approached her to take Tamil lessons from her. With great humility she would say, ‘I have had only two years of schooling’ But she was an excellent teacher She was very accurate with words. Sometimes she would struggle for the right word for days and when she

had discovered it she would share it with great joy with her pupil. She was also an excellent narrator and was a treasure of Puranic tales. At the opportune moment she would present one of them in all its strength and simplicity.

There was a time when Doraiswamy's offerings helped to meet a major part of the Ashram's financial needs. His help and hospitality were always available to anyone from the Ashram. The Mother gave him a room in the Ashram premises to come and stay whenever he wanted, and he generally came and stayed here every weekend. When he was in his mid-fifties he often asked the Mother's permission to retire to the Ashram but the Mother kept asking him to continue his work in Madras. He finally retired and settled in 1938.

Minakshamma had two daughters and two sons. Kowsiki, the elder, chose to get married and Anusuya to live in the Ashram. The Mother advised on the choice of the husband for Kowsiki and gave her a special message on the occasion of her marriage in March 1933.

When the Second World War broke out the Mother encouraged Amma's sons to join the armed forces. The elder, Mithran, joined the army and the younger, Thyagaraj, who was then studying in France, joined the Royal Air Force saying, "I am joining the war for my Mother's country" (Both brothers offered all their inheritance to the Mother). While in France Mithran was once mistaken for a European spy and arrested. When word reached the Mother, she arranged through her brother, who was then the Governor-General of French Congo, to get him released. Towards the end of the war Thyaga's bomber was shot down in France and he was killed. When the Mother broke the sad news to Amma, she saw tears streaming down the Mother's face. The Mother told her that while falling Thyaga had cried out again and again, "O Mother, hast thou forsaken me?"

When Mithran returned, he worked in the Ashram's Electricity Department with Bula-da. As ill luck would have it, he contracted an illness that was then rare in India. It was diagnosed later as a heart problem. After a long illness he passed away. The Mother used to go to see him daily in Doraiswamy's room in the Ashram. (For Mithran's upanayana Sri Aurobindo had written his Gayatri mantra.)

After Mithran's passing Doraiswamy used to be away for long spells in Delhi to be with his daughter Kowsiki and her husband, then Home Secretary to the Govt. of India. He used to also visit Calcutta and spend a few months with some of his very close friends there. But when he asked Amma if she wanted to accompany him, she told him she would not like to leave the Ashram which was her permanent home. He returned to the Ashram in 1967 for good and lived a rather secluded life.

Early in 1966, Anusuya developed a bad cough which somehow would not go, soon she began to get breathless. Generally, Doraiswamy consulted his nephew, Nagaswamy, who held a degree in medicine from the United States and was an expert physician. But somehow in this case he did not. Anusuya's health deteriorated and in April she had to be taken to JIPMER, where she passed away. Anusuya's death was a great blow to both her parents; but Doraiswamy's anguish was more visible.

Vasudha (who was of the same age as Kowsiki), known as Akka among her associates, was like a daughter to them, looked after Amma and Appa with unfailing care and diligence. With many people in the Embroidery Department joining in, there grew a devoted entourage around the ageing couple.

In 1976, Doraiswamy passed away at the age of 94. His had been a many-faceted life wherein he had achieved success and fulfilment in whatever he had undertaken. He felt greatly blessed to have come to know closely so many spiritual masters, who had held, as it were, his hands firmly in theirs, and led him on the way. It was no surprise that at the point of his soul's departure he felt Sri Aurobindo's presence and peace enveloping him. He was conscious till the very end

In 1983 Akka left, after a protracted and painful illness of cancer, leaving her Amma in the custody of her long-time colleagues Ichchha and Minoo and Bela and her young friends Bharati and Shanta. Amma suffered a severe heart attack in 1970 and became more and more dependent on Akka's team. Gradually due to glaucoma her eyesight also began to fail. In May 1991, Amma slipped and fell, leading to fracture of the hip bone. The next six months she was in bed in the Nursing Home. Thereafter things quickly went downhill and soon we had before us just a sleeping child; sleeping with total abandon with no need or wish for anything other than for the final call. Or was it the external proof of the Mother's words written on 12 January 1932 that had since then gradually penetrated deep into Minakshiamma's body? "Every thought of my mind, every emotion of my heart, every movement of my being, every feeling and every sensation, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, all, all is yours, yours absolutely, yours without reserve. You can decide my life or my death, my happiness or my sorrow, my pleasure or my pain, whatever you do with me, whatever comes to me from you will lead me to the Divine Rapture "

Minakshiamma had felt a deep affinity with the Mother's prayer of 25 October 1914:

"My aspiration to Thee, O Lord, has taken the form of a beautiful rose, harmonious, full in bloom, rich in fragrance. I stretch it out to Thee with both arms in a gesture of offering and I ask of Thee: If my understanding is limited, widen it, if my knowledge is obscure, enlighten it, if my heart is empty of ardour, set it aflame, if my love is insignificant, make it intense; if my feelings are ignorant and egoistic, give them the full consciousness in the Truth. And the 'I' which demands this of Thee, O Lord, is not a little personality lost amidst thousands of others. It is the whole earth that aspires to Thee in a movement full of fervour. In the perfect silence of my contemplation all widens to infinity, and in the perfect peace of that silence Thou appearest in the resplendent glory of Thy Light "

Surrender to the Divine Will was the foundation of Amma's life and a palpable peace was its chief achievement, "the peace that makes Thy presence felt and Thy intervention effective, the peace that is ever victorious over all bad will and every obscurity"

ANONYMOUS

A DELICATE DIALOGUE

The Heart:

O TINY wild flower!
Blooming in the silent moor
And swaying with the happy breeze,
What songs do you sing?
Songs of the earth or of the heavens?
To cast a rainbow upon your smile
The Sun and the dew arrive,
The wild wind scatters your fragrance afar
You are the glory of the soil,
The mystic marvel of cosmic art
And the supernal beauty of emerald earth
How if I were like you!

The Flower:

O humble simple heart!
Winging in amazing skies
And sailing on shimmering seas,
What words do you herald,
Words of peace or of bliss?
The earth, the heavens
And the other worlds
Take refuge in you.
You are higher than the heavens,
Deeper than the ocean,
And brighter than the Sun
O voyager of endless time
And a flame of world-life!
Swinging in earthly years
You still are stainless
How if I were like you!

SURYAKANTI MOHANTY

GLOBALIZATION OF CULTURE— WHO WINS?*

I

THERE are many ways globalization and hegemony—buzz words today—intersect with the world of contemporary literature and culture. Indeed, so potent, widespread and insidious seems to be its perceived influence that many doubt whether one could avoid the common fate of cultural servility

While globalization and hegemony have an insistent presence everywhere, it is only the latter which is uniformly perceived as baneful. The discourse over globalization leads in many areas to an ambivalent outcome. Some see it serving communitarian goals, the welfare of the weak and the marginalized. The advocates of transnational corporations argue, for instance, that global print-capitalism is not only good for the elite in the Northern Hemisphere, but equally beneficent for the rising middle-class reading public in post-colonial societies. And so, an Arundhati Roy, a Salman Rushdie or a Jhumpa Lahiri is packaged and promoted by the metropolitan culture-industry across the world. Authors and editors thus become corporate players, their works marketed and sold across the board. The vast outreach of the English language book-industry today exceeds immeasurably our earlier definition of pan-world culture, localized one time in hotel foyers, airport lounges and tourist resorts.

Thus, globalization speaks in many voices. Its advocates and acolytes in world bodies such as international financial agencies aligned with Wall Street and organs of multinational capitalism, insist that Satellite Television, Information Technology, Websites and the Internet are agents of democratic change and will eventually serve the interests of the poor “third world” countries, that far from swamping the native industry, Pepsi Cola, KFC and Benetton will promote quality, offering greater choice to the consumers in so-called backward nations.

In many post-colonial societies, debates over globalization are dramatically projected in the media in dualistic terms, as binary opposites, are you for big dams or are you for smaller check-dams? Are you for market driven transnational capitalism or do you stand for protectionistic trade and tariff barriers? Do you uphold the virtue of public television, supported by people’s movements, public trusts and philanthropic groups that, you claim, promote individual choice and public welfare? Or do you support media mergers across political frontiers? Is your hero Rupert Murdoch or a grassroots activist?

As “Baywatch”, “Dynasty” and “Santa Barbara” increasingly propel the new bourgeoisie in poorer countries to heights of Nirvanic bliss, they act as an aphrodisiac to vast millions of the dispossessed worldwide. In the post-Fukayama version of late industrial capitalism, marked by the absence of a counter ideology, globalized culture

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in its popular and visible manifestations from Mexico to Mumbai, and Cairo to Caracas, logically become tools in the hands of authoritarian States and power-structures. Asian tigers remain models for the West: the lesson is clear: democracy has to be watered down for the sake of an efficient economy!

II

Media and cultural criticism in post-colonial societies, for all their critique of “globalization” of culture, are far from remedies that can capture public imagination. Similarly, citizen groups and private voluntary organisations, for all their increasing power to shape public policy, seem to occupy for the most part an alternate political and social space.

Arguably much has been achieved by the thinking of avant-garde critics of literary theory and cultural criticism. Said, Spivak, Bhabha and Ahmed along with other practitioners have contributed much to our understanding of the world and the text, the social base of the knowledge system, the innovation of a more culture specific and egalitarian pedagogy. The notion of hybridity, the interrogation of grand narratives, the false divide between orality and literacy, the questioning of essentialism and Euro-centrism are signal insights that have the ring of truism today. Our understanding of the social base of a work of art, of nations and narrations, of the fallacy of anthropocentric and teleological thinking has been advanced by new research by women, minorities and people of colour. This has generated many emancipatory possibilities. Multiculturalism as an alternate model to the earlier form of nation building based on the primacy of a single language and culture. Pedagogy that reflects the consent of the taught, innovation of cultural and economic institutions that reflect popular choice rather than dictate of faceless bureaucracies. . .

How then shall we resolve the issues of globalization and cultural hegemony?

III

In many post-colonial societies globalization spawns xenophobia and fundamentalism of different kinds. As the dispossessed become increasingly rootless, incapable of coping with newer forms of social behaviour and patterns of consumption, earlier loyalties, tribal and ethnic, some of them atavistic, step in. The asymmetry in culture and economy that globalization brings in is compounded by the revival of older forms of conflicts that had their origin in our tribal past.

Many societies ban so-called foreign influences in order to preserve cultural purity. And thus, Khomeini's Iran blocked satellite television over its air space. Current rulers of Iraq often invoke rhetoric reminiscent of the greatness of the Babylonian empire, just as the late Shah of Iran harked back to the grandeur of the Persian dynasty. Similarly, the Academie Francaise, the premier organ of French culture, appears determined to ban the invasion of foreign lexicon just as the Basques,

the Corsicans, the Scots and the Welsh or the Tamils in Sri Lanka fight for cultural subnationalism.

Although these movements of resistance are not directed specifically at what is generally understood as globalized culture, some of these are often seen targeted at the advanced West especially America seen as the fountainhead

It is futile to expect that cultures can ever remain “pure” and remain untouched by so-called alien influences. Nor is it possible to take the good and leave out the bad of the West Imitation may be necessary, but as Sri Aurobindo says in his *Foundations of Indian Culture*, it has to be a creative imitation, not a mechanical one¹ For instance, due to the cultural encounter with the West it was possible to borrow Western literary forms and institutions such as the novel, the short story, the critical essay, scientific research, the press, the public platform and trade union movements He maintains that taking over the form was not the main issue Assimilation requires inclusion of certain vital ideas, influences and energies.²

Every individual, argues Sri Aurobindo, has to go through a double movement self-development from within and reception of impact from outside. These movements are not mutually exclusive Swaraj leads to Samrat, Swadharna is the first necessity but not to be able to make use of the external world can also spell decay and death³

Thus, as in the case of individuals so also with cultures, there is no escape from global intersections and collisions Asymmetry will always remain but for each situation of asymmetry, there will always be appropriate strategies of resistance. Cultural hegemony is precipitated by the West. But by no means is such hegemony a unique attribute of the West or of America alone Power-structures and hierarchies existed even prior to the British presence in India Particular villains change but the villainy of hegemony is a trans-historical reality Globalization, as it comes today, signals uniformity in cultural and economic practice and militates against the truth of our individual and collective existence Consequently such a model kills freedom and self-determination

As Sri Aurobindo aptly remarks

The principle of self-determination really means this that within every living human creature, man, woman and child, and equally within every distinct human collectivity, growing or grown, half developed or adult there is a self, a being, which has the right to grow in its own way, to find itself, to make its life a full and a satisfied instrument and image of its being. This is the first principle which must contain and overtop all others, the rest is a question of conditions, means, expedients, accommodations, opportunities, capacities, limitations, none of which must be allowed to abrogate the sovereignty of the first essential principle But it can only prevail if it is understood with a right idea of this Self and its needs and claims⁴

Clearly, there are no simple solutions to challenges posed by globalism. Each culture must find its own answer. Sadly our approach so far has been West-inspired. It is time we brought in insights and perspectives from other societies and cultures. Perhaps only then can we replace the hegemony of the current model of globalism with a true internationalism and combine judiciously the global with the local.

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

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ETCHING SONNETS ON THE BODY OF ETERNITY

SRI AUROBINDO, during the Evening Talks with his disciples, on 28.6.1926 (as recorded by A B Purani) said, "If you want the truth it was not light but darkness that I saw at Darjeeling. I was lying down one day when I saw suddenly a great darkness rushing into me and enveloping me and the whole of the universe. What I told Motibabu was that after that I had a great Tamas—darkness—always hanging on to me all along my stay in England. I believe that darkness had something to do with the Tamas that came upon me. It left me only when I was coming back to India."¹

During the same conversation he confirmed that he had no extraordinary spiritual experience in his early life, except that he had two mental experiences—a suggestion that he should give up selfishness and a realisation about the Atman

"It was a mental rather than spiritual experience of the Atman I felt the One only as true; it was an experience absolutely Shankarite in its sense. It lasted only for a short time."²

We also know about his dream-vision of the presiding deity of India, *Bhārat-mātā* and a *sannyāsi* with a trident in his hand, before his riding test for the I.C.S. Though Sri Aurobindo had some minor visions and received some mental suggestions, he really had no significant spiritual experience until he stepped on Indian soil at Apollo Bunder at 10 55 in the morning on 6 February 1893. He said, "... since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes."³

All such experiences were happening without asking for them, before his entering the path of yoga. Once a *Nāgā sannyāsi* miraculously cured the mountain fever of Barin, his younger brother. He did it by a mantric power, while cutting a cup of water with a knife and asking Barin to drink it. K. G. Deshpande, his friend, practised Hatha-yogic asanas. He was trying to convert Sri Aurobindo to his view. Sometimes they were experimenting with the planchette. Sri Aurobindo had neither knowledge of yoga nor a great belief in God. But eventually faith was instilled in him. He started doing *prānāyāma* after consulting Devdhar, an engineer, in 1904 and that was the beginning of his entering the path of yoga. Devdhar was a disciple of Brahmānanda of Chandod. Sri Aurobindo practised *prānāyāma* for five or six hours a day. The result was that he experienced an electric energy around his brain. He could write poems with a tremendous speed, which continued whenever he thought of writing them. Gradually he used to have some subtle visions.

Actually Sri Aurobindo remained in Baroda State service up to 17 June 1906. From 18 June he took a year's leave without pay and never joined again, contrary to the Maharaja's wish.

Before leaving Baroda he visited Brahmananda, the sage of *Gangānāth Math*

The yogi, who usually kept his eyes shut, looked fully at Sri Aurobindo with his beautiful eyes when he offered his *pranām*, as if he had recognised him.

After meeting Sakharia Baba, another yogi, Sri Aurobindo asked Barin to find someone who would help him in his *sādhanā*. When Lele had received the telegram at Gwalior to come to Baroda, he perceived intuitively that he would have to give initiation to a great soul, he later related this to A B Purani, in 1916

Amidst tremendous political activity Sri Aurobindo agreed and was, as if, whisked away to a small room on the top floor of Sardār Majumdār's house(wada) in Baroda. There he remained for three days with Lele. Lele asked him to drive back all thoughts as they would try to enter his brain. He saw the thoughts approaching independently and drove them back. "In three days—really in one—my mind became full of eternal silence—it is still there"¹, Sri Aurobindo wrote later

There was a radical change of consciousness. They were Adwaitic and Vedantic experiences which he himself had never wanted. Such a result was unexpected even to Lele. As he remained for some days with Lele, he had many more astounding experiences, like delivering speeches without thinking about them.

After those days in Bombay, Baroda, Pune and other places, Sri Aurobindo went on in his own way with political activities, without following Lele's routine. After he had returned to Calcutta in the third week of January 1908, a telegram was sent to Lele to come. Lele came to Calcutta, tried to persuade Sri Aurobindo to follow his advice. He wanted to take Prafulla Chaki, the young revolutionary, with him (as he felt that, spiritually, the boy had a great future) for yogic initiation. But Chaki refused to go. When he could not do anything to dissuade them from the dangerous political path, he left in a huff.

During his stay in Alipur Jail for a year, Sri Aurobindo had epoch-making spiritual experiences. He saw Vasudeva in everything, everywhere. At Chandernagore too he had extraordinary visions, yogic experiences. And after coming to Pondicherry, he heightened his earlier efforts. His experiences and spiritual realisations, in collaboration with the Mother, created new spiritual history.

While he had many great experiences later on, he had a few unexpected but different kinds of spiritual experiences during his stay in Baroda. He recorded each of his experiences in beautiful sonnets.

(To be continued)

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

Reference

1 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, p 98

CRUMBLING WALLS

A SHORT STORY

SHANKARAN hardly realized that he had a stoop. He refused to believe it despite his wife Manisha's nagging. He would shrug it off thus:

“I have to shoulder too many responsibilities.”

Manisha's vehement protest would follow immediately.

“You had left your hometown 25 years ago feeling guilty, so you have been branded with a stoop for this sin.”

He tried to pacify her with the following words:

“Like a dutiful wife you have shared my sin and responsibilities.”

This small ripple would disappear like the others in their placid life,—fetching a sigh of relief from Shankaran.

But that summer morning at the breakfast table Manisha's decision about “returning home” seized him totally unaware. He could only mumble “but why do so when we are almost settled here?” and then he turned towards his son. He had just qualified as an engineer and his T-shirt proclaimed the name of his institute. His nonchalant attitude intimidated Shankaran for he felt that mother and son had already formed their strategy. Their plans of uprooting and transplanting him in his hometown called Palampet were simmering slowly. He could hardly believe that all four of them would leave Delhi and settle in Palampet. His son crossed his legs and leaned back further in the chair and his daughter nuzzled against him.

There flashed across his mind a house down a narrow lane in a seaside town. The caretaker had sent a postcard that it badly needed repair. Surely, hadn't Manisha suggested then that he and his siblings should sell it off and share the money? She had even demanded a flat of their own in Delhi after retirement with a loan from his bank. And all these years she had sneered at his suburban roots and congratulated herself for settling in Delhi.

Shankaran extracted the information that his son was joining an automobile company near Palampet as an executive. He understood that his wife had completely yielded to this temptation, fed up as she had been with the megapolis for so long.

Somehow Manisha refused to comment as he argued about the disadvantages of leaving Delhi far behind. Manisha shot off a single remark. “I am not treating this city as your mistress.” However, his transfer order came when least expected. His daughter betrayed him thoughtlessly.

“Oh! Mummy says that I can have a bedroom all to myself.” Suddenly tears welled up in Shankaran's eyes as some images floated up from the past. Privacy was not seen as a necessity in those days and the house brimmed over with cousins, relatives, friends and acquaintances. The main door was never shut and the ground floor windows were bereft of curtains. He consoled himself thus:

“That was my home...” His daughter interrupted him jovially, “you could walk

in the middle of the road since there was no traffic ”

Some weeks later Shankaran witnessed the dismantling of his private empire in the small two-roomed Delhi flat. It was their home for more than two decades but he alone felt the pains of renouncing it. A home can so conveniently be tucked into large packing boxes and relocated in a new address.

On their first day in Palampet Shankaran could not help commenting, “In case your son shifts to some other city with a more lucrative offer ” His wife did not allow him to finish. “What do you mean by ‘your’ son? Isn’t he your son as well?”

To find refuge from this present turmoil he went towards the seashore for a solitary walk. Where were all those gracious houses? He could see only hurriedly constructed tall apartment buildings dotting the seaside.

He spotted an old coffee stall reminding him of the olden times. He sat down on a rickety stool and ordered a cup of coffee. A voice greeted him, “Oh! aren’t you Shankaran? Anandavelou’s son?”

Shankaran looked up and saw Bhima Uncle. His eyes smarted as he felt that he could at last communicate. Was he exiled in his own homeland? Must he live with this paradox?

Bhima Uncle’s first question could not be parried. “Why did you come to this town? Land prices are escalating, agricultural products are so expensive. People here don’t mix, it is the new culture you know.”

As soon as Bhima Uncle heard about Shankaran’s son he softened visibly and his voice jarred less on the ears.

“Well, you see, servants are still affordable in your area of the town. If you want your house to be renovated, let me know. My nephew undertakes this kind of thing. By the way, is not your brother claiming his portion of the house? Of course it’s bazaar gossip. But I heard that he wants to hand over the whole house to the promoter . . .”

The coffee turned bitter in Shankaran’s mouth. He jerked himself up and walked towards home. On the way he met his old schoolmate who brushed aside the passage of the years between them. Just as Shankaran was warming up to his presence he remembered his daughter’s school admission. He mentioned it hesitantly. This friend retorted immediately, “Of course, it is easier to bring up children here. They will study more and spend less on fashion. And don’t worry, I have a suitable match for your son. Just give his horoscope ”

Shankaran somehow extricated himself and started walking towards his house. Late at night, he stood in the inner courtyard. He felt the throbbing pressure of the past and remembered how he and his sister had stood here together on the eve of her wedding. Her tears and her prayers still haunted him. Does she still remember this incident, lost as she is in the vast sweep of a city in America? Why can’t she visit him here? And his brother? Sitting here he had called Shankaran selfish and ambitious. This outburst had actually helped his wife to nurture her hopes about the future. His parents had continued to live silently and unobtrusively but did not allow him to be

hedged in by their silence. His father had blessed his Delhi-bound son, his gnarled hands trembling on Shankaran's head

“A man must venture out into the world. Begin your journey ”

But why, since his son's journey has also begun, doesn't Shankaran raise his hand in blessings?

The night sky seemed to grow more luminous and the nooks and corners around him began to whisper to him and the shadows moved closer to him. He could not gauge anything and he felt as though he was being whisked off somewhere.

He was startled to see the denuded walls of his Delhi flat pressing around him—blotting out the overhead night sky and sucking in even the faint sound of the sea.

RITA NATH KESHARI

(Courtesy All India Radio, Pondicherry)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Growing up with the Mother, by *Tara Jauhar*. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch Trust. Pages: 222; price: Rs 100

GROWING up with the Mother is an exceptional privilege. It is not easy either. For to be too close to the source of light can be blinding to our vision. To be too close to the fire is to be ready to be purified of all dross in our nature. One has to be willing to be nothing if one seeks to bear the clasp of the All. And yet there are souls who have embarked upon this supreme adventure putting everything at stake. Such a one indeed is Tara Jauhar, the shining point of light blazing courageously in the night, that her name indicates. This book is in a sense the inner journey of this star as it grows in fire and light to shine in the firmament. But more importantly it is the story of the power, that blazing source of shadowless light whom we adore as the Mother, that stands behind the journey of every star supporting and leading its journey through the night.

It is this double character of the book that makes it so very interesting and useful. Tara Jauhar does not seem to waste a word on non-essentials. In fact she becomes only an occasion to bring out more and more of the Mother's light and love that pour through the pages. So complete is her self-effacement that one even forgets to notice it! It is only when we have finished the book that we discover to our happy surprise that the author is conspicuous by her near absence. And whenever we find her it is only to bring forth some unique aspect, some new attribute of our divine Mother whose infinite personality is ever beyond the grasp of gods and men alike.

The result is a wonderful work which could apply to any aspiring soul. There is a certain sense of impersonality and universality in the book that makes for a ready and wide appeal. Whether it be sadhana and meditations or education and life or even matters like flowers and photography, all are touched by that same universality. Even the last section of personal letters, correspondence and messages contains truths that could apply to all who seek to serve Her better. In short, one could well say, it is 222 pages of solid stuff that flows as the Mother's action. The reader cannot remain just a witness but becomes a participant in the journey and the process of growth. In the end, he is more than amply rewarded by receiving the 'prasada' of Her love and light and force.

The book indeed is a 'prasada' that Tara Jauhar has so generously shared with all. The pen is Tara's but the words are Hers. The hands are Tara's but the gift comes from Her. For it is She who has moulded Her disciple and child so patiently, so lovingly, with all the care of a mother and all the understanding of a father. We are grateful to the author for sharing Her glory with us, for bringing Her yet closer to our hearts, for bathing us in the Bliss of Her undying Love.

ALOK PANDEY

Log of a Journey Through Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, by *William Netter*. Published by Aurowilly Designs, Auroville, India Price not mentioned

This book breaks the rules. It ignores the usual limitations of the printed word. The pages give off light. They almost seem to come alive with the help of the gleaming illustrations on the pages opposite. The author is deeply inspired by Sri Aurobindo's prophetic vision of evolution, particularly as it is presented in his great epic poem, *Savitri*. William Netter's book, *Log of a Journey Through Sri Aurobindo's 'Savitri'*, is a production of astonishing elegance, beauty and meaning. It is in itself a work of art for the spiritually sophisticated. It is written with clarity and simplicity, and it is a special treasure with incredible pictures which embrace the senses with brilliantly colored archetypes and symbols, with numerologies and astrologies, with mantras and yantras. This breathtaking, breakthrough book has even a see-through map of evolution in progress, as one of the five pages devoted to each of the 49 cantos. At times it pushes the mind almost completely out of the way as it introduces realities which are psychic and invisible, and which go far beyond the mind. The words, the illustrations, the numbers, the map, the Mother's eyes, all together pull the reader up to higher levels of consciousness, to metaphysical worlds where spirit is completely identified with matter. Eternal Bliss is seen as the overwhelming reason for existence and it is realized that it is all One, Being, Consciousness and Bliss, with matter and spirit never separated from each other. This book is a wonderful companion to Sri Aurobindo's enormous poem, *Savitri*, the longest epic poem ever written in the English language. *Log of a Journey* will help establish Sri Aurobindo as the Avatar of Evolution, and prepare the path for the Divine Mother to come into her own as the great new Power of the Spirit in our times.

(A composite review made from the critiques of various readers)