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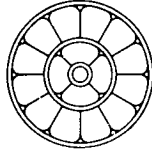
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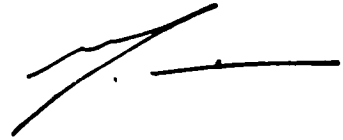


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIV

No. 10

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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HER DIVINE EMPTINESS

IN the little hermitage in the forest's heart
The old beauty smiled of the terrestrial scene,
She too was her old gracious self to men.
The Ancient Mother clutched her child to her breast
Pressing her close in her environing arms
As if death were not there nor end nor change
Accustomed only to read outward signs
None saw aught new in her, none divined her state,
They saw a person where was only God's vast,
A still being or a mighty nothingness
To all she was the same perfect Savitri
A greatness and a sweetness and a light
Poured out from her upon her little world
Life showed to all the same familiar face,
Her acts followed the old unaltered round,
She spoke the words that she was wont to speak
And did the things that she had always done
Her eyes looked out on earth's unchanging face,
Around her soul's muteness all moved as of old,
A vacant consciousness watched from within,
Empty of all but bare Reality
Perhaps she bore made conscious in her breast
The miraculous Nihil, origin of our souls
And source and sum of the vast world's events
It used her speech and acted in her acts,
It was beauty in her limbs, life in her breath,
The original Mystery wore her human face.
Thus was she lost within to separate self,
Her mortal ego perished in God's night
Only a body was left, the ego's shell
Afloat mid drift and foam of the world-sea
An impersonal foresight could already see
The individual die, the cosmos pass;
These gone, the transcendental grew a myth
Yet all was not extinct in this deep loss,
The being travelled not towards nothingness
There was some high surpassing Secrecy,
And when she sat alone with Satyavan,
Her moveless mind with his that searched and strove,
In the hush of the profound and intimate night

She turned to the face of a veiled voiceless Truth
 Hid in the dumb recesses of the heart
 Or waiting beyond the last peak climbed by Thought
 Out of that distant Vast came a reply
 Something unknown, unreached, inscrutable
 Sent down the messages of its bodiless Light.
 And spoke immortal things through mortal lips
 Or, listening to the sages of the woods,
 In question and in answer broke from her
 High strange revealings impossible to men,
 Something or someone secret and remote
 Took hold of her body for his mystic use
 Her vacant heart was like a stringless harp,
 Impassive the body claimed not its own voice,
 But let the luminous greatness through it pass
 A dual Power at being's occult poles
 Still acted, nameless and invisible
 Her divine emptiness was their instrument
 Inconscient Nature dealt with the world it had made,
 And using still the body's instruments
 Slipped through the conscious void she had become,
 The superconscient Mystery through that Void
 Missioned its word to touch the thoughts of men
 But now the unmoving wide spiritual space
 In which her mind survived tranquil and bare,
 Admitted a traveller from the cosmic breadths
 A thought came through draped as an outer voice
 No more shut in by body's walls and gates
 Her being a circle without circumference
 Already now surpassed all cosmic bounds
 And more and more spread into infinity
 There was no person there, no centred mind,
 No seat of feeling on which beat events
 Or objects wrought and shaped reaction's stress
 There was no motion in this inner world,
 All was a still and even infinity
 In her the Unseen, the Unknown waited his hour

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 551-54)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

Sometimes in dreams, I find I am with old relatives Does this show that some part of me actually goes there to them or is it merely a mental formation? Does it happen because during waking hours such thoughts are allowed?

It may be either the coming up of old impressions from the subconscious or it may be that you meet them on the vital plane Of course, if you have thoughts about them in your waking hours, that would tend to make the sleep contact with them more frequent But it is quite possible to meet in “dreams” people you never think of and have practically forgotten for years

To deal with the sex-impulse, which has occasionally attacked me recently, I have been using the crude method of giving pain to some part of the body by pinching it or thrusting a pointed iron into the skin, when I found that no inner method worked. For more subtle forms of the impulse, such as the desire to see pretty faces or think about them, I have found it similarly useful. But unless the root of the pleasant sensation is burnt out, it will not be possible to conquer it completely What part of me takes a sense-perception as pleasant or unpleasant? How is the real Being related to a sensation — does it take up an experience and feel it or does it merely remain aloof? If it remains aloof, who identifies itself with a perception or conception? If it remains aloof, what is its relation with the one who identifies with perceptions and conceptions? Is reduction in diet helpful in conquering the sex-impulse or in the purification of the Adhara?

Hurting the flesh is no remedy for the sex-impulse, though it may be a temporary diversion It is the vital and mostly the vital-physical that takes the sense-perception as pleasant or otherwise If by the real Being you mean the silent Atman, that does not identify itself, but is felt as standing aloof If you mean the Purusha, the sensation is a movement of Prakriti and the Purusha can stand back from it and reject it or identify and accept it

Reduction of diet has not usually a permanent effect, it may give a greater sense of physical or vital-physical purity, lighten the system and reduce certain kinds of tamas But the sex-impulse can very well accommodate itself to a reduced diet It is not by physical means but by a change in the consciousness that these things can be surmounted

12 June 1932

There is no reason why your present condition should be more than a passing phase, unless you yourself choose that it should be otherwise. If it is the "imposition" of the rule of Karmayoga on you that is the cause of your doubts, it is unjustified, because there is no imposition or compulsion, and you need only work if you wish to do so, if you think that by sitting in meditation only you will best progress, you are free to do it.

I did not answer to your statement of your doubts, because they seem to repose on certain statements and suppositions about myself (which are quite inaccurate) and I do not usually care to enter into personal matters. I do not know who gave you this information, e.g. that I have not done my sadhana in full heat of work but have had to lead a very quiet extremely retired life all the time. I am afraid, whoever he is, he knows nothing about either my past life or my present life or my Yoga. As to the ground put forward that there is no precedent for progress during work or for such a method, nor have people in past been able to do it, it amounts to a statement that there has never been any such thing as Karmayoga or a Karmayogi, that the Gita was never written or was not founded on any truth of experience and that no Yogi ever did works as part of his sadhana. There seems to be some exaggeration in these statements from whatever quarter they may have been breathed in your mind. I have never said that the Supermind is working in the sadhaks here, I have said the contrary in many letters.

I say so much however only to indicate the quite gratuitous character of the affirmations on which these doubts are founded—from whatever they may come. But a detailed answer is hardly necessary, for meditation is not forbidden in this sadhana. Except for those who prefer to go through works alone, meditation and works and bhakti each in its place make up the foundations of the sadhana. But you are free to follow the way of meditation alone, as some others do, if you think that better.

2 August 1932

On the night of the 6th in a dream I saw several monkeys on a tree who at once took up a fighting attitude towards me. I began to throw stones at them. One or two monkeys were struck on the head, one or two ran away, and one or two threw pieces of wood at me, which just missed. Afterwards two of them came near for a hand-to-hand fight. I pushed them away and then I awoke. What is it suggestive of?

The monkey is a symbol of the leaping restless mind, these monkeys are the doubts and suggestions that have been assailing you.

Today I was feeling a little tired and lethargic, so I tried to sleep after the mid-day meal. Why do I get sexual dreams whenever I try to sleep here during the day? Is day sleep harmful?

According to the old Ayurvedic shastra “sleep by day impairs the vitality”, but there are conditions in which the rule may not apply. It is however true that these dreams do easily occur during sleep by day and the dreams themselves come in a state of deep subconscious relaxation, tamasic inertia when the system can be touched by any subconscious suggestion or influence.

Sometimes during work, while issuing materials or counting money, the required amount comes up in the hand at the first attempt, for example, today 20 screws were to be given and on putting my hand in the tin exactly 20 screws came up. This happens more frequently when the mind is quiet and at ease, not tense. Till now I thought it may be merely an accident. Is there anything in this?

The correct counting is not an accident, there is a sort of intuitive consciousness that comes in the body and makes it know the right thing or do the right thing. This growing of consciousness in the body is one of the most important results of Yoga turned to action and is especially important in this Yoga.

Sometimes I get experiences which I wish to be enlightened on, but I do not relate them for fear of being a burden on your time. Hence I write only when I am in difficulty or very anxious to get an explanation. How should I act in future?

It is better to write. I shall answer wherever it is necessary, though I may not always be able to answer at once.

8 August 1932

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

PURANI It seems then our Indian system was the best. How did it succeed so well?

SRI AUROBINDO The Indian system grew out of life. It had room for everything and every interest. There were monarchy, aristocracy, democracy. Every interest was represented in the Government, while the Western system grew out of mind. In Europe they were led by reason and want to make everything cut-and-dried without any chance of freedom or variation. If it is democracy, then democracy only, and no room for anything else. They can't be plastic.

India is now trying to imitate the West. Parliamentary Government is not suited to India. Sir Akbar Hydari wanted to try a new sort of government with an impartial authority at the head. There in Hyderabad the Hindu majority complain that though the Mohamedans are in a minority they occupy most of the offices in the State. By Sir Akbar's method almost every interest would have been represented in the Government and automatically the Hindu would have come in but because of their cry of responsible government the scheme failed. They have a fixed idea in the mind and want to fit everything to it. They don't think. And we take up what the West is throwing off.

SATYEN It is possible in Hyderabad which has a Nizam, but how to do the same in an All-India Constitution? What is then your idea of an ideal Government for India?

SRI AUROBINDO Sir Akbar's is as good as any. My idea is like what Tagore once wrote. There may be one Rashtrapati at the top with considerable powers so as to secure a continuity of policy and an assembly representative of the nation. The provinces will combine into a federation, united at the top, leaving ample scope to local bodies to make laws according to their local problems. Mussolini started with the fundamentals of the Indian system but afterwards began bullying and bluffing other nations for the sake of Imperialism. If he had persisted in his original idea, he would have been a great creator.

PURANI Dr Bhagawan Das suggested that there should be legislators aged above forty and completely disinterested like the Rishis.

SRI AUROBINDO A chamber of Rishis? That would not be very promising, for they would at once begin to quarrel—*nana munir nana mat*—as they say. Rishis in ancient times could guide the kings because they were distributed over various places.

PURANI His idea is like R's idea of gathering all great men together.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) And let them quarrel like Kilkenny cats, I suppose. The Congress at the present stage—has it not the look of a Fascist dictatorial organisation? There is no opportunity for any difference of opinion except for the Socialist Members who are allowed to differ provided they don't seriously differ. Whatever resolutions the Congress passes are obligatory on all the provinces, whether the laws suit the provinces or not. There is no room for any other independent opinion. Every-

thing is fixed up before and the people are only allowed to talk over it—like Stalin's Parliament. When we started the movement, we began with the idea of throwing out the Congress oligarchy and opening the whole organisation to the general mass

PURANI. Srinivas Iyengar retired from Congress because of his differences with Gandhi. He objected to Gandhi's giving the movement a religious turn and bringing religion into politics.

SRI AUROBINDO. He made the Charkha a religious article of faith and excluded all people from the Congress membership who could not spin. How many even among his own followers believe in his gospel of Charkha? Such a tremendous waste of energy just for the sake of a few annas is most unreasonable

PURANI. He made that rule perhaps to enforce discipline.

SRI AUROBINDO. Discipline is all right but once you begin to concentrate on a particular thing you tend to go on concentrating

PURANI. The Charkha failed in agricultural provinces and seems to have succeeded in other places, especially where people had no occupation

NIRODBARAN. In Bengal it didn't succeed

SRI AUROBINDO. In Bengal it didn't. It may be all right as a famine palliative but when it takes the form of an All-India Programme it looks absurd. If you form a programme that is suited to the condition of the agricultural people it sounds something reasonable. Give them education, technical training, and give them the fundamental organic principles of organisation, not on political but on business lines. But Gandhi doesn't want any such industrial organisation, he is for going back to the old system of civilisation and so comes in with his magical formula "Spin, spin, spin." C. R. Das and a few others could act as a counterbalance. It is all a fetish. I don't believe in that sort of autarchy, for that is against the principle of life. It is not possible for nations to be like that

In what a well-ordered way have Denmark and Ireland organised their agriculture! Only now they are beginning to suffer because other nations are trying to be self-sufficient

PURANI. What do you think of Hindi being the common language? It seems to me English has occupied so prominent a place that it will be unwise and difficult to displace it

SRI AUROBINDO. English will be all right and even necessary if India is an international State. In that case English has to be the medium of expression, especially as English is now replacing French as a world-language. But the national spirit won't allow it and also it is a foreign language. At the same time Hindi can't replace English in the universities, nor the provincial language. When the national spirit grows, it is difficult to say what will happen. In Ireland after the revolution they wanted to abolish English and adopt Gaelic, but as time went on and things settled themselves, their enthusiasm waned and English came back

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

नि काव्या वेधसः शश्वतस्कर्हस्ते दधानो नर्या पुरूणि ।
अग्निर्भुवद्रयिपती रयीणा सत्रा चक्राणो अमृतानि विश्वा ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72 1)

He has created, within, the seer-knowings of the eternal Disposer of things, holding in his hand many powers (powers of the divine Purushas, *naryā purūni*), Agni creating together all immortalities becomes the master of the (divine) riches. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 210)

He forms within us the seer-wisdoms of the eternal Creator holding in his hand many powers of the godheads. May Fire become the treasure-master of the riches, ever fashioning all immortal things (SABCL, Vol 11, p 61)

अस्मे वत्स परि षन्त न विन्दन्निच्छन्तो विश्वे अमृता अमृताः ।
श्रमयुवः पदव्यो धियधास्तस्थुः पदे परमे चार्वग्ने ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72 2)

All the immortals, they who are not limited (by ignorance), desiring, found him in us as if the Calf (of the cow Aditi) existing everywhere, labouring, travelling to the Seat, holding the Thought they attained in the supreme seat to the shining (glory) of Agni (SABCL, Vol 10, p 210)

All the immortals, the wise ones, desired but found not in us the Child who is all around, turning to toil on his track, upholding the Thought, they stood in the supreme plane, they reached the beauty of the Flame (SABCL, Vol. 11, p 61)

तिस्त्रो यदग्ने शरदस्त्वामिच्छुचि घृतेन शुचयः सपर्यान् ।
नामानि चिद् दधिरे यज्ञियान्यसूदयन्त तन्वःसुजाता ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72 3)

O Agni, when through the three years (three symbolic seasons or periods corresponding perhaps to the passage through the three mental heavens) they, pure, had served thee, the pure one, with the ghrta, they held the sacrificial names and set moving (to the supreme heaven) forms well born (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 210)

When for three years, O Fire, they worshipped thee, the pure ones thee the pure, with

the clarity of the light, they held too the sacrificial Names, their bodies came to perfect birth and they sped them on the way (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 62)

आ रोदसी बृहती वेविदाना प्र रुद्रिया जग्निरे यज्ञियास ।
विदन्मर्तो नेमधिता चिकित्वानग्निं पदे परमे तस्थिवांसम् ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72 4)

They had knowledge of the vast heaven and earth and bore them forward, they the sons of Rudra, the lords of the sacrifice, the mortal awoke to vision and found Agni standing in the seat supreme (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 210)

The masters of sacrifice discovered and in their impetuous might bore the Vast Earth and Heaven, then the mortal knew them and by his holding of the upper hemisphere perceived the Fire, standing in the supreme plane (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 62)

सजानाना उप सीदन्नभिञ्जु पत्नीवन्तो नमस्य नमस्यन् ।
रिक्कांसस्तन्व कृण्वत स्वा. सखा सख्युर्निमिषि रक्षमाणाः ॥

(Rigveda, 1.72.5)

Knowing perfectly (or in harmony) they kneeled down to him, they with their wives (the female energies of the gods) bowed down to him who is worthy of obeisance; purifying themselves (or, perhaps, exceeding the limits of heaven and earth) they created their own (their proper or divine) forms, guarded in the gaze, each friend, of the Friend (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p 210)

Utterly knowing him they with their wives came and knelt before him and adored with obeisance the adorable. They made themselves empty and formed their own bodies guarded in his gaze, friend in the gaze of friend (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 62)

(*To be continued*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

WORD OF REMAKING

STAR-ISLANDS in wide welkin lake,
A continent of Moon,
The firestones with their shimmery wake
Through deeps of anti-noon

Soothlight-true being's underwork—
With a welter of Nothing between,—
May Light prevail where shadows lurk
Of empty, lonely teen

Then utter argosies of Light
Across the Unshape sea,
Refashion worlds arrayed with Sight
At speech of 'Let Love Be '

ARJAVA

Arjava I am afraid this is far from being coherent and unified

Sri Aurobindo: On the contrary it is very coherent, unified, well-built—very beautiful in idea and image and execution

ATMOSPHERE ON DARSHAN DAYS

*Sweet Mother, why does one feel a different atmosphere on Darshan days?¹
What should one do on these days?*

DIFFERENT? You ask this question! There is an invasion of more or less dark and foreign elements, who may come with goodwill, possibly, but who come with an almost total ignorance and throw it all out in the atmosphere, and so, naturally, if one is the least bit open to what is happening, one feels crushed under the weight of this increased ignorance

I don't mean that there is no ignorance here! But still, the dose is different Here, for all that, there is a sort of manipulation of the consciousness going on constantly, night and day, visibly, invisibly, and whether one wants it or not, in spite of everything one takes it in, and after some time it acts

When a few people come, something changes, but it is not so much as to give a painful feeling, but when it is a rush like this, dashing in all at once, then the whole level comes down immediately, and unless one is able to withdraw into oneself and keep one's head above these submerging waters, this swamping flood of ignorance, if one can't raise one's head above it, well, one feels very uneasy

No, Mother, it is an atmosphere of joy!

You find it an atmosphere of joy!

Yes, Mother

Then it is personal, my child It is something purely personal And you ought to be able to keep it

It comes because at this time there are memories awakening in you, a certain concentration Or perhaps what you call joy is a vital pleasure, no? Isn't it a sort of excitement? When do you feel this joy?

Today, it was after Darshan

I think it is the same thing that happens to people who are more receptive on their birthdays or who need to remember an event to awaken their receptivity

In the days when Sri Aurobindo used to give Darshan, before he gave it there was always a concentration of certain forces or of a certain realisation which he wanted to give to people And so each Darshan marked a stage forward. each time

¹ On Darshan days visitors and disciples were allowed to pass one by one in front of Mother (and formerly Sri Aurobindo) to receive directly their spiritual help August 15, Sri Aurobindo's birthday, is one of the four Darshans of the year This year (1956) there was a particularly large number of visitors

something was added. But that was at a time when the number of visitors was very limited. It was organised in another way, and it was part of the necessary preparation.

But this special concentration, now, occurs at other times, not particularly on Darshan days. And it occurs much more often, on other kinds of occasions, in other circumstances. The movement is much accelerated, the march forward, the stages succeed each other much more rapidly. And perhaps it is more difficult to follow, or in any case, if one doesn't take care to keep up, one is much more quickly out-distanced than before; one gets the feeling of being late or of being abandoned. Things change quickly.

And I ought to say that these Darshan times with all this rush of people serve not so much for an inner progress — that is to say, inside the Ashram — as for a diffusion outside. The use we make of these days is a little different, above all, it is to go farther, have a vaster field, reach more distant points. But the concentration is less and there is this inconvenience of a large crowd, which was always there but which has been much greater during these last years than at the beginning. At the beginning there was not such a crowd, and perhaps the quality of the crowd was also a little different.

So the joy you were speaking about would rather be a kind of excitement or the feeling of a more intense or more active life, but it is not actually a greater Presence. One puts oneself, perhaps, into a more receptive state in which one receives more, but there is no intensification of the Presence — not to my knowledge.

So it must be within you that you have to find the reason, and the remedy for keeping this joy.

*But Mother, what is the significance of the message you give every Darshan? For example, today you gave the picture of the flower that symbolises the supramental manifestation?*²

Yes, as I have just told you, this is spread in thousands of copies all over the world. It is an externalisation of the thing, it is a way of spreading the influence, spreading the message, reaching farther. Everything that is said in a Darshan message has been studied, proved, tested, *beforehand*. And on Darshan day it is given. First the experiment is made, then it is declared publicly. The first movement is the individual development, at the Darshan time it is spread abroad.

Sri Aurobindo always spoke of two movements: the formation of the individual in order to be able to reach the goal individually, and the preparation of the world. For the progress of the individual is, so to say, not exactly delayed or helped by the condition of the whole, but this brings about a certain balance between the two. The individual movement is always much more rapid and more penetrating, it goes farther, more deeply and more quickly. The collective movement forms a sort of basis

² The *haemanthus* which is like a ball composed of hundreds of red and gold stamens.

which both restrains and supports at the same time And it is the balance between these two movements which is necessary So, the more rapidly one goes individually, the more necessary it is to try to extend and strengthen the collective basis

*Mother, has this day, the fifteenth of August, an occult or a simple significance?
For, in history, important events occurred on this day*

What exactly do you mean? The fifteenth of August is Sri Aurobindo's birthday Therefore, it is a date which has a capital importance in the life of the earth, from the physical point of view So?

On August fifteenth other important events took place?

What, the liberation of India? Is it because the liberation of India came about on the fifteenth of August? And so, it is necessary to tell you why it happened, you can't find it out by yourself, can you? It needs to be said, does it? I think Sri Aurobindo has written it also, hasn't he, in the message he gave? Hasn't he said it?

(Silence)

Yes, it is exactly that .

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol 8, pp 262-65)

THE BALLAD OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

PART II

GREAT joy in Madra Blow the shell
The marriage over to declare!
And now to forest-shades where dwell
The hermits, wend the wedded pair
The doors of every house are hung
With gay festoons of leaves and flowers,
And blazing banners broad are flung,
And trumpets blown from castle towers!
Slow the procession makes its ground
Along the crowded city street
And blessings in a storm of sound
At every step the couple greet

Past all the houses, past the wall,
Past gardens gay, and hedgerows trim,
Past fields, where sinuous brooklets small
With molten silver to the brim
Glance in the sun's expiring light,
Past frowning hills, past pastures wild,
At last arises on the sight,
Foliage on foliage densely piled,
The woods primeval, where reside
The holy hermits,—henceforth here
Must live the fair and gentle bride
But this thought brought with it no fear

Fear! With her husband by her still?
Or weariness! Where all was new?
Hark! What a welcome from the hill!
There gathered are a hermits few
Screaming the peacocks upward soar,
Wondering the timid wild deer gaze,
And from Briarean fig-trees hoar
Look down the monkeys in amaze
As the procession moves along,
And now behold, the bridegroom's sire

With joy comes forth amid the throng,—
 What reverence his looks inspire!

Blind! With his partner by his side!
 For them it was a hallowed time!
 Warmly they greet the modest bride
 With her dark eyes and front sublime!
 One only grief they feel—Shall she
 Who dwelt in palace halls before,
 Dwell in their huts beneath the tree?
 Would not their hard life press her sore;—
 The manual labour, and the want
 Of comforts that her rank became,
 Valkala robes, meals poor and scant,
 All undermine the fragile frame?

To see the bride, the hermits' wives
 And daughters gathered to the huts,
 Women of pure and saintly lives!
 And there beneath the betel-nuts
 Tall trees like pillars, they admire
 Her beauty, and congratulate
 The parents, that their hearts' desire
 Had thus accorded been by Fate,
 And Satyavan their son had found
 In exile lone, a fitting mate
 And gossips add,—good signs abound,
 Prosperity shall on her wait

Good signs in features, limbs, and eyes,
 That old experience can discern,
 Good signs on earth and in the skies,
 That it could read at every turn
 And now with rice and gold, all bless
 The bride and bridegroom,—and they go
 Happy in others' happiness,
 Each to her home, beneath the glow
 Of the late risen moon that lines
 With silver, all the ghost-like trees,
 Sals, tamarisks, and South-Sea pines,
 And palms whose plumes wave in the breeze

False was the fear, the parents felt,
 Savitri liked her new life much,
 Though in a lowly home she dwelt
 Her conduct as a wife was such
 As to illumine all the place,
 She sickened not, nor sighed, nor pined,
 But with simplicity and grace
 Discharged each household duty kind
 Strong in all manual work,—and strong
 To comfort, cherish, help, and pray,
 The hours past peacefully along
 And rippling bright, day followed day

At morn Satyavan to the wood
 Early repaired and gathered flowers
 And fruits, in its wild solitude,
 And fuel,—till advancing hours
 Apprised him that his frugal meal
 Awaited him Ah, happy time!
 Savitri, who with fervid zeal
 Had said her orisons sublime,
 And fed the Bramins and the birds,
 Now ministered Arcadian love,
 With tender smiles and honeyed words,
 All bliss of earth thou art above!

And yet there was a sceptre grim,
 A skeleton in Savitri's heart,
 Looming in shadow, somewhat dim,
 But which would never thence depart
 It was that fatal, fatal speech
 Of Narad Muni As the days
 Slipt smoothly past, each after each,
 In private she more fervent prays
 But there is none to share her fears,
 For how could she communicate
 The sad cause of her hidden tears?
 The doom approached, the fatal date

No help from man Well, be it so!
 No sympathy,—It matters not!
 God can avert the heavy blow!

DIALOGUE WITH AMAL KIRAN

In the Summer of 1999, I had a series of dialogues with Amal Kiran at the Ashram's Nursing Home on the topics of Mind of Light, Supermind, and Cellular Transformation. They were recorded primarily to verify my interpretation, understanding, and edification and to determine if over the course of time Amal Kiran had any reason to revise or augment his published views. Amal Kiran had reviewed my summarization and consented to its publication. The summarized version is shared with a belief that it might provide some guidance to others with similar queries.

Arun: Is it likely that the Avataric Mission's essence was *a priori* known but not the details as the details were worked out and established along the way?

Did Overmind become an intermediary attainment along the way as Supermind became the highest goal of realisation?

Did the Mind of Light become an intermediary step towards the Supermind?

Amal Kiran: Yes, the essence of the Avataric Mission was known from early on but the details got worked out along the way. The scope of the work changed progressively as the details of the work got more specific.¹

Arun: Some consider that the supramental transformation of the mind of the body cells is the Mind of Light.

Is that a correct understanding?

Was it a new creation of Sri Aurobindo or was it an intermediary step towards the Supermind in a preestablished order of things?

What is its role and the significance in the scheme of the things to evolve from a man to a Superman to a Supramental being?

Amal Kiran: The Mind of Light according to the Mother is "physical mind receiving the supramental light."

Sri Aurobindo probably created the Mind of Light. I suppose that it did not pre-exist like Overmind. However, I have no proof of that. It was a momentous spiritual event.

Arun: Please verify, clarify or modify the following interpretations or define and distinguish them.

¹ Context and supportive information for the above question.

Q: In the *Arya* there is no mention of the Overmind. Why?

A: "The distinction [between Overmind and the Supermind] has not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind." (*SABCL*, Vol. 26, p. 369)

Cf: "What he probably means by the Supramental is the Above Mind—what I now call Illumined Mind-Intuition-Overmind. I used to make that confusion myself at the beginning." (*Ibid.*, p. 359)

Superman is man with the possession of the Mind of Light ²

Supramental Being will embody the totally transformed matter of the supramental world

Amal Kiran Your descriptions of Superman and Supramental Being are fine. Nothing to revise or new to add

Arun Through the Avataric Work, Nature's work requiring thousands of years is believed to have been shortened to about 300 years, which is still a long time on earth

Does it mean that with the expected required time of 300 years, none would become a Superman in this century?

Amal Kiran It is likely that there will be Supermen in the next century but not the Supramental Being considering that the Mother has said it would require about 300 years for the descent of the Supramental in all the aspects and forms on the earth

Before the descent of the Supramental Being will come a "new race" and it will have the Mind of Light. It will be called Superman

Arun A sound "adhar"—supportive foundation—is always considered essential in any spiritual undertaking

Is Superman a precondition of manifestation of the Supramental?

Is spiritualisation of the human a precondition of a Superman?

Is cellular transformation without a spiritualised adhar possible?

Amal Kiran Yes, Superman is a precondition of manifestation of Supramental Being and so is the spiritualisation of a human being before it can transform into a Superman. These gradations and steps are essential

The transformation in the Integral Yoga follows distinct and progressive steps

- a. Psychic to emerge from the veil
- b. Spiritualisation of being
- c. Operative Mind of Light
- d. Supramental Being

Arun Do you believe that the key reason for the Avatars' descent was not just to shorten the time from several thousands of years to a mere 300 years for the manifestation of the Supramental Being, but it was to ensure it?

² More appropriately the intermediate race is characterised by the Mind of Light. This was Sri Aurobindo's yogic creation as a stepping-stone towards the fully transformed race of gnostic beings. Sri Aurobindo's "strategic sacrifice" on 5 December 1950 was to hasten the coming of this new race. Instead of speaking of 'superman', it would be better to describe 'man' as 'overman' belonging to the Mind of Light. In that sense Georges Van Vrekhem's coinage of the term 'overman' for the beings of the intermediate race seems to be more acceptable. —R Y D

Amal Kiran I suppose so

There are two messages from Amal Kiran in response to my questions put to him in the summer of 2000

Arun What would be your message to the West?

Amal Kiran Along with the development of the creative mind there has to be a deepening of the consciousness which comes into contact with it and which is beyond the mind

That would be a progress, but by itself it would not mean corresponding development of the rest of the being. The rest of the being itself has to join the progress of the mind. Then only a new state can be established on earth.

All the parts may not progress simultaneously, but all the parts eventually have to progress to a point.

According to the testimonies of some from the Ashram, Auroville, and outside, something has begun to happen in the body as a result of the coming of the Consciousness of the superman [1969 Mother's *Agenda*]

Sri Aurobindo had hinted that even the psychicisation which is the first step in the integral transformation could be helped by what was happening in other parts of the being, including the body's changes.

Arun What should be the focus of followers of the Sunlit Path? (a pathway of sadhana that is illumined with the teachings of the Integral Yoga)

Amal Kiran The development of the psychic being is the basis for pursuing the Sunlit Path. Follow the triple requirements conveyed by Sri Aurobindo: Aspiration—Rejection—Surrender.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother both believed that the prerequisite for their Yoga—the Yoga of transformation—was first the finding of the soul within and uniting with it, and then the harmonisation of all the parts of the being becomes possible by the psychic having come in the front.

Amal Kiran's message and the encapsulation of my dialogue provide a bridge of understanding on the perplexing concepts of the Supramental Mind and related concepts and facilitate understanding of Sri Aurobindo's message—the ultimate source of enlightenment and encouragement.

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

The Vision and the Boon

8

A PHRASE in the *Record of Yoga*, ‘Night of the eternal negation’,¹ has given us some insights into the experience symbolised by Night in *Savitri*. But before we see how this experience was reflected in the development of the opening page of the epic, we must look at a related phrase in the same diary entry of 27 January 1927

This other phrase, ‘obstruction and conservatism of the material negation’,² indicates more specifically the nature and effects of the negation represented by Night. There are reasons for considering this phrase relevant to certain lines in *Savitri*, as where Night is depicted as blocking the way of the human being on his journey through life

Across his path sits the unconquered Night

We have seen the history of this line in the August instalment. First written in the late 1920s, it is found in its final form in the last canto of Book Three.³ It occurs in a sentence where the somnambulist Force, the Dragon and the Sphinx are arrayed along with Night in opposition to the human advance. In the *Record of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo called these the ‘Four Matter Powers’.⁴

The ‘unconquered Night’ became the ‘dim camp of Night’ when the word ‘unconquered’ was transferred to a related sentence on the previous page:

How shall thy mighty spirit brook repose
While Death is still unconquered on the earth. ?

But ‘unconquered Night’ remained through almost a dozen versions and is of interest in itself. For if Night in this line is the ‘material negation’, ‘unconquered’ would suggest a connection with expressions found elsewhere in Sri Aurobindo’s writings, such as ‘our yet unconquered earth-matter’.⁵ In another place he summarises the view of most spiritual traditions regarding the ‘ultimate terrestrial possibility’. The conclusion almost universally accepted as the highest wisdom has been that here on earth

we can only pursue or attain an internal preparation or victory and, having liberated the mind and life and soul within, must turn from the unconquered and unconquerable material principle.⁶

This raises the central issue of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga and points to the theme of *Savitri*. Is Matter really unconquerable? Or is it, though unconquered until now, destined to be the field of a divine victory?

"Across his path" implies an obstruction. So far, there is a clear enough correspondence between the line in *Savitri* and the phrase "obstruction and conservatism of the material negation" in the *Record of Yoga*. But obstructions can be of many kinds. Every part of our outer being presents its own type of obstruction to the spiritual force. The greatest obstruction is perhaps that of the hidden Inconscient, of which we are not even aware. Therefore we have to consider the relation of the inconscient obstruction and negation to the material obstruction and negation, and determine whether this "unconquered Night" could be either or both of these.

In the last instalment, we started from Sri Aurobindo's statement that "utter Night" in the Veda is a symbol of the Inconscient. We found this significance of Night in *Savitri* as well. Since there are other symbols of the Inconscient, such as the Dragon and Sphinx, we may distinguish Night from these as the Inconscient's all-negating aspect.

The Mother tried to explain this aspect of the Inconscient to children in a talk on 24 March 1951.

If there is a negation of something, it is truly the Inconscient, it is the negation of everything. It has not even the capacity of emptiness. One needs to have descended there to know what it is and explain it. Words cannot describe it. It is the negation of all things because everything begins with consciousness. Without consciousness there is nothing.⁷

In the same talk, the Mother emphasised that the apparent unconsciousness of inanimate Matter is far from being the same thing as the absolute Inconscient.

If one of you went down into the Inconscient, what is called the pure Inconscient, you would realise what it is. A stone will seem to you a marvellously conscious object in comparison. You speak disdainfully of a stone because you have just a wee bit more consciousness than it has, but the difference between the consciousness of the stone and the total Inconscient is perhaps greater than that between the stone and you.⁸

But the gulf between Matter and the Inconscient does not seem to have been so apparent to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the early stages of their Yoga, before the plunge into the Abyss of which Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1936. If one studies *The Life Divine*, for example, in the original form in which it was printed in the *Arya*, one discovers not only that "inconscience", "the Inconscient" and the adjective "inconscient" occurred much less frequently than in passages or chapters that Sri Aurobindo revised or added in 1939-40, but that these words were usually used with reference to

Matter. In the following sentence, for instance, which appeared in the May 1916 issue of the *Arya*, no distinction is made between the material world and the Inconscient

The second relation [between Consciousness and Force] is that of material Nature, it is the poise of being in the material universe which is the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself, for here there is the utter apparent separation of Force from Consciousness, the specious miracle of the all-governing and infallible Inconscient '9

Later, Sri Aurobindo was often more careful to distinguish the Inconscient from Matter. Yet we find such an expression as "the night of the material Inconscience" even in a chapter of *The Life Divine* added when the first volume was published in 1939.¹⁰ The difference between the seeming unconsciousness of organised but inanimate Matter and the total unconsciousness of the Inconscient proper is evidently one of degree more than kind. Their affinity is so strong, and Matter is so firmly rooted in the Inconscient, that for some purposes they may be spoken of together as "the material Inconscience" or "Inconscient Matter".

We are free, therefore, to interpret Night as the "material negation", without having to give up the idea that it stands for the Inconscient. The meaning of "material negation" can, in fact, only be rightly explained in terms of the relation of Matter to its inconscient origin. This is equally true with regard to the other three of what Sri Aurobindo called in the *Record of Yoga* the "Four Matter Powers". All of these are said elsewhere in his writings to symbolise the Inconscient.

The apparent inconsistency might be explained as due to the development of Sri Aurobindo's thought and experience, so that what he termed a "Matter Power" in 1927 came to be a symbol of the Inconscient a few years later. But it must also be kept in mind that the orientation of the *Record of Yoga* was rigorously practical. Sri Aurobindo was not then making a direct attempt to transform the Inconscient, but was working on its effects in Matter. Among these effects, the crux of the difficulty is encapsulated in the formula, "obstruction and conservatism of the material negation".

Matter as such, in its intrinsic nature as one of the seven eternal principles of existence, does not imply any negation of the infinite existence, consciousness and bliss of the Spirit. According to Sri Aurobindo, the negation came from "the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself" whose first results were the Inconscient and a material world based on the Inconscient. Due to its inconscient foundation, this world has ingrained in it a rejection and exclusion of all that was denied and negated in the process of its formation. Philosophically stated, this is what seems to be meant by "the material negation".

The "obstruction and conservatism" of Matter follow from the nature of this negation. Yet these are not merely negative terms. Even the negation is the paradoxical affirmation of an infinite power. The so-called obstruction is a defence

mechanism to shut out the flood of the higher forces pressing down from above for manifestation, admitting only occasional trickles. Without this protective barrier, we may suppose, these forces might break in prematurely and overwhelm the delicate equilibrium of mind, life and matter being gradually built up here.

Conservatism in the fundamental sense may be understood as Matter's instinctive attempt to imitate what it negates, translating the immutable eternity of the Spirit into the nearest approximation to permanence that is possible in a world of perpetual change. The Mother observed, commenting on the Buddha's discovery of the futility of the search for terrestrial permanence and his realisation that permanence—and therefore, for him, perfection—can be found only in the Unmanifest:

But in the Manifestation, perfection consists in having a movement of transformation or an unfolding identical with the divine Movement, the essential Movement, whereas all that belongs to the inconscient or tamasic creation seeks to preserve exactly the very same existence.¹¹

Thus Matter's conservatism ensures the stability of the foundations that have been laid for the evolutionary movement, but opposes the movement itself. Nevertheless living and, later, thinking beings have made their difficult appearance in this inconscient scene. This "partial affirmation emerging out of the total denial"¹² points to the possibility of the ultimate outcome Sri Aurobindo has envisaged,

the complete affirmation fulfilling all that was secretly there contained in potentiality and intended in fact of evolution behind the mask of the great denial.¹³

This gives us a glimpse of what the world is intended to become when it is persuaded to follow the divine Movement. For Sachchidananda cannot deny Himself for ever. The possibility of converting the powers that now make Matter an impediment to transformation is suggested by what Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Record of Yoga* on 29 January 1927, two days after the entry where he identified the resisting powers. A degree of success is indicated. But the difficulties he was encountering are evident:

The opposition of the Four Matter Powers is being wrought into assent, but the process has necessarily slowed down the action which tends often to flicker down into quiescence.¹⁴

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

- 1 *Record of Yoga*, CWSA (Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo), Vol 11, p 1261
- 2 *Ibid*
- 3 *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol 33, p 336
- 4 *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol 11, p 1262
- 5 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, p 723
- 6 *Ibid*, SABCL, Vol 18, pp 250-51 In the preceding paragraph, we find what seems to be Sri Aurobindo's first explicit published mention of a "divine body" as something that should in principle be realisable on earth This chapter called "The Knot of Matter" appeared in the *Arya* in the issue of August 1916, the month Sri Aurobindo began the first draft of *Savitri*
- 7 *Questions and Answers 1950-51*, CWM, Vol 4, p 241
- 8 *Ibid*, p 240
- 9 Cf *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, p 211, where this sentence differs only in punctuation from the *Arya* text
- 10 *Ibid*, p 272
- 11 *Questions and Answers 1950-51*, CWM, Vol 4, p 214
- 12 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, p 211
- 13 *Ibid*
- 14 *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol 11, p 1262

AN EXTRAORDINARY VISION

AFTER stating that God's glory shines throughout the universe, Dante informs us that he has been to paradise, and has seen things so extraordinary that he cannot possibly hope to tell about them Nevertheless, he determines to make this final song his crowning achievement as a poet, and he calls on both the Muses and Apollo for inspiration as he focuses on his journey heavenward At noon on the spring equinox, Dante, still in the Earthly Paradise, sees Beatrice gazing into the sun, and he imitates her gaze In so doing, he becomes aware of an extraordinary brightness, as though God had placed in the heavens a second sun, and feels himself being "transhumanised" in preparation for his experience of Paradise He then finds himself soaring heavenward through God's grace, although he is uncertain whether it is his soul or his corporeal self that rises As Dante and Beatrice pass out of the earth's atmosphere into a sphere of fire that lies above it, Dante hears the music of the spheres This music fills him with wonderment and perplexity, but before he can question Beatrice about it, she explains to him the teleological order of the universe, and how it is only natural that, having been purified, he should now rise heavenward

(Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, Paradise, Canto 1—From a Website)

OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

Overman to make Superman

WHAT does it mean, a transformed, divinised body—a body of which the cells are not only fully conscious in the way we humans understand consciousness, but divinely conscious? It is a perfection “which now we can hardly conceive”, wrote Sri Aurobindo. The Mother sometimes tried to give an idea of the capacities of a supramental body to one or other of the Ashram youths. You want to grasp something out of your reach? Just wish to get it and you’ve got it. “Physically, I shall be able to be here and there at the same time. I shall be able to communicate with many people at the same time. I shall be free of the fetters of ignorance, pain, mortality and unconsciousness. I shall be able to do many things at the same time. The transparent, luminous, strong, light, elastic body won’t need any material things to subsist on. It will be a true being, perfect in proportion, very, very beautiful and strong, light, luminous or else transparent.”⁹⁸

And the Mother added “The human body is closer to the animal than to the [supramental] body. It reacts like an animal, subsists like an animal. There is almost no difference between a man and an animal.”⁹⁹ And there lies the problem in the enormous difference between our present state and the envisioned, godlike one “. as the human body had to come into existence with its modification of the previous animal form and its erect figure of a new power of life and its expressive movements and activities serviceable and necessary to the principle of mind and the life of a mental being, so too a body must be developed with new powers, activities or degrees of a divine action expressive of a truth-conscious being and proper to a supramental consciousness and manifesting a conscious spirit”, writes Sri Aurobindo.

And he goes on “While the capacity for taking up and sublimating all the activities of the earth-life capable of being spiritualised must be there, a transcendence of the original animality and the actions incurably tainted by it or at least some saving transformation of them, some spiritualising or psychicising of the consciousness and motives animating them and the shedding of whatever could not be so transformed, even a change of what might be called its instrumental structure, its functioning and organisation, a complete and hitherto unprecedented control of these things must be the consequence or incidental to this total change. These things have been already to some extent illustrated in the lives of many who have become possessed of spiritual powers but as something exceptional and occasional, the casual or incomplete manifestation of an acquired capacity rather than the organisation of a new consciousness, a new life and a new nature.”¹⁰⁰

“This destiny of the body has rarely in the past been envisaged or else not for

the body here upon earth; such forms would rather be imagined or visioned as the privilege of celestial beings and not possible as the physical residence of a soul still bound to terrestrial nature. The Vaishnavas have spoken of a spiritualised conscious body, *cinmaya deha*, there has been the conception of a radiant or luminous body, which might be the Vedic *jyotirmaya deha*. A light has been seen by some radiating from the bodies of highly developed spiritual persons, even extending to the emission of an enveloping aura and there has been recorded an initial phenomenon of this kind in the life of so great a spiritual personality as Ramakrishna. But these things have been either conceptual only or rare and occasional and for the most part the body has not been regarded as possessed of spiritual possibility or capable of transformation.

More ordinarily in the spiritual tradition the body has been regarded as an obstacle, incapable of spiritualisation or transmutation and a heavy weight holding the soul to earthly nature and preventing its ascent either to spiritual fulfilment in the Supreme or to the dissolution of its individual being in the Supreme. If a total transformation of the being is our aim, a transformation of the body must be an indispensable part of it, without that no full divine life on earth is possible''¹⁰¹

But there remains that huge gap to be bridged between the human and the supramental physicality. As long as bodies are formed by the method of procreation which is the sexual process, they will not be transformable into the refined adharas needed to embody a supramental being. The principal reason is that the sexual process inevitably involves an element of the Inconscient, the basis of gross Matter, and that the Inconscient is irreconcilable with the Supermind. "the necessity of a physical procreation", writes Sri Aurobindo, "could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available. A development of this kind must necessarily belong to what is now considered as the sphere of the occult and the use of concealed powers of action or creation not known or possessed by the common mind of the race. If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists¹⁰² and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility. For in the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter, and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation, without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of life and form in a divinised earth-nature''¹⁰³

All this shows that Sri Aurobindo was fully aware of the problem of the transformation of the animal-human body, and that he suggested a possible solution to it. We now again take up the thread of the Mother's effort to solve precisely this problem. On 4 December 1957 she said "the problem before us is: How will this higher form be created? Will it be by a process to be imagined that this [present human] form will little by little transform itself in order to create a new one? Or will it be by some other means, still unknown to us, that the new form [of the supramental being] will appear in the world? What I mean is: will there be a continuity or will there be a sudden appearance of something new? Will there be a progressive transition between what we are now and what our inner spirit aspires to become, or will there be a gap? In other words, shall we be obliged to drop this present human form and wait for the appearance of a new form—an appearance the process of which we do not foresee and which will have no relation with what we are now? Can we hope that this body, which is our present means of earthly manifestation, will have the possibility of transforming itself progressively into something that will be able to express a higher life, or will it be necessary to give up this form entirely to enter into another that does not yet exist upon earth?"¹⁰⁴

When this *Entretien* was due to be published, the Mother added "Why not both? Both will exist at the same time, the one does not exclude the other. The one will be transformed and be like a rough sketch of the other." This reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's "first sketch of supermanhood" "And the other, the perfect one, will appear when the first one will be existing. For both have their beauty and their reason of existence, therefore they will both be there. The mind always tries to make choices, decisions, but things do not work like that. Even all that we can imagine is much less than what will be. In truth, anyone who has an intense aspiration and an inner certitude will be called upon to realise it. Just as all sorts of possible intermediaries have been found between the animals and man, possible intermediaries that have not remained, so [now too] there will be all sorts of possible intermediaries. Each individual will try in his own way, and all this together will help in preparing the future realisation."¹⁰⁵

A few months earlier she had already said "There are two things. There is the possibility of a purely supramental creation on the one hand, and [on the other hand] the possibility of a progressive transformation of a physical body into a supramental body, or rather of a human body into an overman body [*surhumain*]. In the latter case, it would be a progressive transformation which could take a certain number of years, probably a fairly considerable number, and which would produce a being that would no longer be a human being related to the animal, but that would neither be the supramental being formed fully free of any kind of animality, for the present origin [of man] is necessarily an animal origin. This means that a transmutation may take place, a transformation sufficient to liberate [the new being] from its [animal] origin, yet [that new being] would not be a supramental creation pure and simple. Sri Aurobindo said that there would be an intermediary race—a race or perhaps some

individuals, we don't know—an intermediary degree that would serve as a transition or that would become permanent according to the requisites and the necessities of the creation. But if one starts from a body generated in the same way human bodies are at present, the result will never be the same as a being generated entirely according to the supramental method and process. It will perhaps be more of the kind of the overman [*surhumain*] in the sense that every animal likeness may disappear, but it will not be able to have the absolute perfection of a body that is purely supramental in its formation''¹⁰⁶

On 25 September 1957, the Mother read a passage from chapter six of *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, the last paragraph of this chapter reads as follows: "At its highest it [i.e. the new humanity] would be capable of passing into the supermind and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature." She commented: "This was certainly what he expected of us, what he conceived of as the overman [*surhomme*], who must be the intermediate being between humanity as it is and the supramental being created in the supramental way, in other words: in no way part of the animal life any longer and freed from all animal needs.

"As we are, we have been created in the ordinary way, the animal way, and as a consequence something of this animal origin will remain, even if we transform ourselves. The supramental being as he [Sri Aurobindo] conceived it, is *not at all* formed in the ordinary animal way, but directly, through a process that for the time being still seems occult to us, but that is a direct manipulation of forces and substance in such a way that the body is a "materialisation" and not a formation according to the ordinary animal principle.

"It is quite obvious that intermediary beings are necessary, and that it is these intermediary beings who must find the means to create beings of the Supermind. And there is no doubt that, when Sri Aurobindo wrote this, he was convinced that this is what we have to do.

"I think—I *know*—that it is now certain that we shall realise what he expects of us. It is no longer a hope, it is a certainty. Only, the time needed for this realisation will be long or short according to our individual effort, our concentration, our goodwill, and the *importance* we give to this fact. To the inattentive observer things may seem to be very much what they were in the past, but to somebody who knows how to look and is not deceived by appearances things are going well. Let each one do his best and it may be that not many years will have to go by before the first visible results become apparent to all.

"It is for you to know whether this interests you more than anything else in the world. There is a moment when the body itself finds that there is *nothing in the world* so much worth living for as this, the transformation, that there is nothing which can be of an interest comparable with this passionate interest for the transformation. It is as though all the cells of the body were thirsting for that Light that wants to manifest. They cry out for it, they find an intense joy in it, and they are *sure* of the Victory.

“This is the aspiration that I am trying to share with you, and you will understand that everything else in life is dull, insipid, futile, worthless in comparison with that the transformation in the Light”¹⁰⁷

(*To be continued*)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

Notes and References

98 Mona Sarkar, *Sweet Mother Harmonies of Light II* pp 18-19 (noted from memory)

99 *Ibid*, p 20

100 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, pp 538-39

101 *Ibid*, p 540

102 “Occultism means rightly the use of the higher powers of our nature, soul, mind, life-force and the faculties of the subtle physical consciousness to bring about results on their own or on the material plane by some pressure of their own secret law and its potentialities, for manifestation and result in human or earthly mind and life and body or in objects and events in the world of Matter” (Sri Aurobindo *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, p 548)

103 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, pp 548-49

104 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, p 233

105 *Ibid*, p 234

106 *Ibid*, pp 130-31

107 *Ibid*, pp 190-91

IN THE WARM EMBRACE

AGED eighty-one
 I had lost my childhood,
 Blessed by the Master
 And by the Mother's love
 I regained my childhood
 Hidden inside Reason's fortress
 And under the cloud of years
 I had preserved anguished life
 Now has dropped all gravity,
 All garbs of futile needs
 Tears of sweetest joy
 Flow from the eye,—
 As a naked child's
 In the Mother's warm embrace,
 The eye at one
 With the look divine

G N SARMA

THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

Part Two (contd)

LET us now proceed to the exploration of the nature of sight in these different hidden zones of our being.

7. Sight in the Inconscient:

The Inconscient is at the basis of this material world, where the Divine has, as it were, hidden himself in what seem to be his opposites, Non-Being, Insentience and Non-delight. This Inconscient seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy, but this is only an appearance. For in the Inconscient there is an involved Consciousness with endless possibilities, a concealed and self-imprisoned Divine, imprisoned in Matter but with every potentiality held in its secret depths. (*Letters on Yoga*, p 26)

While referring to this Inconscient Sri Aurobindo has used many striking expressions. Here are just a few of them: "eyeless waste", "eyeless depths"; "battle-fields of the Abyss", "A leaden Nescience"; "viewless vast", "eyeless muse", "closed eyes of vanished memory", "fixed regardless eyes", "dead and staring eyes", "blinded eyes"; etc.

Here are some representative verses from *Savitri* depicting the Inconscient

- (1) "An Eye unseen in the unseeing vast" (168)
- (2) "To its own sight unrecognisable" (331)
- (3) ". . . the Inconscient's depths
That veil themselves even from their own regard" (449)
- (4) "A cavity filled with a blind mass of power" (489)
- (5) "A heavy barrier of unseeing sight" (489)
- (6) "Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes" (494)
- (7) "In the uncaring trance it groped for sight" (129)
- (8) "God hid himself from his own view" (222)
- (9) "His being from its own vision disappeared" (218)

8. Sight in the Subconscious:

The subconscious part of our being represents an obscure unconsciousness or half-consciousness submerged below and inferior in its movements to our organised waking awareness. It is in Sri Aurobindo's words "the Inconscient vibrating on the

borders of consciousness, sending up its motions to be changed into conscious stuff, swallowing into its depths impressions of past experience as seeds of unconscious habit and returning them constantly but often chaotically to the surface consciousness, missioning upwards much futile or perilous stuff of which the origin is obscure to us ” (*The Life Divine*, p 559)

Here are some *Savitri* verses concerning the Subconscient

- (1) “The little deities of Time’s nether act
Who work remote from Heaven’s controlling eye” (151)
- (2) “Against the sword of Flame, the luminous Eye,
Bastioned they live in massive forts of gloom” (226)
- (3) “Aroused from the darkness where they crouched in the depths,
Prisoned from the sight, they can be held no more”
- (4) “A whisper lures to evil the human heart,
It seals up wisdom’s eyes, the soul’s regard” (448)

9. Sight in the Intraconscient Subliminal: Inner Sight:

The intraconscient represents the subliminal part of our existence, the large luminous realm of interior consciousness, that corresponds to the subtler life-plane and mind-plane and even subtle physical plane of our being. Indeed, behind our outer existence, our outer mind and life and body,

“Our larger being sits behind cryptic walls
There are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts
That wait their hour to step into life’s front .
Our inner mind dwells in a larger light,
Its brightness looks at us through hidden doors
A mighty life-self with its inner powers
Supports the dwarfish modicum we call life
Our body’s subtle self is throned within
In its viewless palace of veridical dreams ” (484, 485)

Thus the subliminal reach of our being comprises our inner existence. It is the realm of subtle supraphysical experiences and visions and heavenly intimations, a veritable world of wonderful illuminations, and it is in this realm that our mind and vital being retire when they manage to withdraw by inward-drawn concentration from their absorption in surface activities.

Here are some verses from *Savitri* describing the nature of the inner awakening and what happens when the inner sight opens

- (1) “ when our sight is turned within,
Earth’s ignorant veil is lifted from our eyes” (47)

- (2) "[Saw] in still lucidities of sight's inner world" (412)
- (3) "Plunging her deep regard into herself" (538)
- (4) "Opened the windows of the inner sight" (28)
- (5) "Lived on the tablets of my inner sight" (405)
- (6) "Upon an inner vision's motionless verge" (360)
- (7) "Plunged into an inner seeing Mind" (407)
- (8) "With the arrow-point of being's inmost gaze" (438)
- (9) "Her inner gaze [beheld] the movements of the soul" (416)
- (10) "Through an inner seeing and sense a waking came" (404)
- (11) "Where all is deep and strange to the eyes that see" (64)
- (12) "And passes over the edge of mortal sight
To a new vision of himself and things" (71)
- (13) "And Fate revealed a chain of seeing will" (76)
- (14) "He looked into the unseen with seeing eyes" (423)

10. The Intermediate Sight: Its Lures and Risks:

We have been speaking about the visional experiences of the inner realm of consciousness but we should not forget that this field of vision is a mixed world and there is in it not only truth but much half-truth and error. For the rash and unwary sadhaka to enter into it without sufficient preparation and wise guidance may bring much confusion, misleading inspirations and false lights and voices. Sri Aurobindo has sounded a note of serious warning against these alluring but often dangerously misleading visions and experiences in his writing "The Intermediate Zone" (*Letters on Yoga*, pp. 1039-46), also in *The Life Divine* (p. 905). Here is a passage from his *The Synthesis of Yoga* dealing with the same topic:

"The seeker of spiritual perfection has to pass as quickly as possible, if he cannot altogether avoid, this zone of danger, and the safe rule here is to be attached to none of these things, but to make spiritual progress one's sole real objective, and to put no sure confidence in other things until the mind and life and soul are purified and the light of the spirit and supermind or at least of the spiritually illumined mind and soul are shed on these inner ranges of experience" (pp. 843-44)

We reproduce below a few of the verses from *Savitri* which graphically describe the sight in this dark zone of experiences, also indicate how to avoid its lure

- (1) "Whose very gaze was a calamity" (205)
- (2) "Alluring lips and eyes" (205)
- (3) "fascinating eyes" (214)
- (4) "Laughing with the eyes of truth" (207)
- (5) "With evil eyes for lamps" (221)

- (6) "a look of [deceptive] light" (215)
- (7) "Forcing reluctant lids assailed the sight" (214)
- (8) "A mob of visions broke across the sight,
A jostled sequence lacking sense and suite" (490)
- (9) "Or harboured the demoniac in their gaze" (625)

A FEW ANTIDOTES

- (1) "Casting a javelin regard in front" (211)
- (2) "The calm and sovereign eyes of thought" (214)
- (3) "Eye could not see but only the soul feel" (211)
- (4) "Warned by the spirit's inward eye" (215)
- (5) "Then peace returned and the soul's sovereign gaze" (219)

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

“REMEMBER WHY THOU CAM’ST”

Comments on a Passage from *Savitri*

[The following comments were made by Mangesh Nadkarni on 7 March 2001 at the Pondicherry residence of Kantilal and Giridharilal Dalal. He was asked to explain a passage from *Savitri* published in the *Mother India* issue of January 2001 under the title *Remember* (*Savitri*, p. 476). He has edited the transcript of his tape-recorded comments for publication here —R Y D]

. 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.

THIS passage from Sri Aurobindo’s great epic poem *Savitri* occurs in Book VII, Canto 2. “The Parable of the Search for the Soul” We have in this canto a description of the early stages of Savitri’s yoga. The dreaded day on which Satyavan was to die, according to sage Narad’s prediction, was fast approaching, and naturally Savitri’s thoughts were very much taken up with the problem of Death. The canto begins in a very dramatic manner. Savitri is seated in meditation, she is thinking of Death and its unchallenged domination over life. Death represents here the Inconscience that has wrapped itself around human life in the form of all the ignorance, incapacity, inadequacy and limitation that bedevil it. She thinks, “Death has so far dominated this world and nobody has really been able to do anything about it. All have submitted themselves to Death’s sovereignty. What can I do about it now? This is the way of Nature. So I will submit myself to Death and if necessary I will make a pact with it.”

Then she hears a higher voice, her own inner voice, which asks her, “Savitri,

was this why you came here—to make a pact with Death, to accept defeat at the hands of Death and go back? Don't you remember who you are? Don't you remember why you came down?" These are the words in which her own inner being talks to her

Is this enough, O spirit?
 And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows
 The work was left undone for which it came?
 Or is this all for thy being born on earth
 Charged with a mandate from eternity,
 A listener to the voices of the years,
 A follower of the footprints of the gods,
 To pass and leave unchanged the old dusty laws?
 Shall there be no new tables, no new Word,
 No greater light come down upon the earth
 Delivering her from her unconsciousness,
 Man's spirit from unalterable Fate?
 Cam'st thou not down to open the doors of Fate,
 The iron doors that seemed for ever closed,
 And lead man to Truth's wide and golden road
 That runs through finite things to eternity?
 Is this then the report that I must make,
 My head bowed with shame before the Eternal's seat,—
 His power he kindled in thy body has failed,
 His labourer returns, her task undone?

Savitri, pp 475-76

These lines and the reply that Savitri gives to the commandment of her inner voice raise some fundamental questions, such as who we are, why we are here, and what we are supposed to do with our lives. The modern scientific establishment gleefully admits that it has no answers to these questions and is not overly bothered about them. But we need answers to these questions so that we can live our lives with a certain degree of confidence. Those who cannot take the indifferent attitude of the scientific establishment have offered three different answers to these questions.

The first answer can be formulated as follows. The aim of life is to seek happiness, and happiness consists in satisfying our senses with whatever the senses take delight in, and in continuing to do this as long as we can. Our eyes like to see beautiful things, we like to eat delicious things, all our senses crave for fulfilment, and we should satisfy them. For this we need money, power, influence, for they bring us the things in which our senses take delight. Money symbolises the power to satisfy our senses, so let us earn as much money as we can and use it to buy things that give satisfaction to our senses. Let us keep doing this as much as we can, as long as we can. There is no other aim to life.

Those who take this approach to life by and large do not think much about the questions we raised earlier—questions like “Why are we here?” and “What are we supposed to be doing here?” If we raise these questions with them, they just brush them off. If pressed for an answer, they justify their stand by claiming that we are just accidents here and that this whole creation is the outcome of a series of accidents. We just happen to be born here. So they say, “Make the best use of your lifetime on earth. Accumulate, amass as much happiness as you can, devote yourself to the acquisition of the means which will bring you this happiness.” This is the materialist’s view of life, this is the philosophy by which most people live. There is really nothing wrong with this approach to life except that most people find that a life lived according to this philosophy is deeply unfulfilling in the long run.

Then there is a second view, which begins with the discovery that however much you try to satisfy your senses, your satisfaction is never permanent. This satisfaction is almost always followed by a dissatisfaction which is graver, more distressing than it was in the beginning. However much you try to make yourself happy with the finite objects of this world, you never get lasting happiness from them. You may collect as many such objects as you wish, but the result will be the same. Before you get the object of your desire, you are convinced that it will make you happy, but once you get it you find that it amuses you for a while, then very soon this pleasure gives place to some dissatisfaction within. Then you think, “Apparently it is not X that I wanted, maybe it is Y.” All right, then you go after Y. And you get this Y, but the end-result is the same. “Oh, it is not Y that I really wanted but Z and that will surely make me happy.” Thus you go on chasing different things. This is our journey through life and we carry on like this life after life until we come to the conclusion, “Oh, I have been going after the wrong things, these things will never give me complete fulfilment in life. I have gone after finite things. All the objects belonging to this world of time and space are finite and the happiness they bring therefore cannot but be finite and fleeting. Therefore I must seek something which is infinite.”

Now where do you find this infinite? The scriptures and the spiritual leaders have always said, “The centre of infinity is within yourself. Go within yourself, reject your desire soul, and try to find your real soul. Then you will realise that this real soul is none other than a spark of the Divine itself and that this spark is infinite. The Divine dwells in you and once you reject your desire soul and find your real soul, the divine spark in you, you make another astounding discovery—the very nature of that divine spark in you is Sachchidananda. Now, the Sat is infinite, the Chit is infinite and the Ananda is infinite. So there is no problem any more. You have found infinite bliss, infinite knowledge, infinite power, immortality, you are immersed in profound fulfilment and perfection and joy, you have achieved the liberation of your soul from subjection to ignorance, incapacity, imperfection and death. Find this Kingdom of God within you. This is the aim of life.”

That is what the second approach says, but there is a serious problem with this approach too—it is exclusivist in its orientation. Because our efforts to find happiness

in the outer world fail in their objective, we turn within with a fierce determination to reject the external world. We tend to regard the external world in its very nature as imperfect and corrupt and therefore not deserving of our attention. Once we find our inner perfection, peace, bliss and immortality, the external world ceases to mean anything to us. We live in it as long as we must, but essentially we ignore it. We are convinced that the external world is not worthy of our effort. We have found the Kingdom of God within, and with that we are completely satisfied. Our physical body continues to be the same as before, an abode of disease, decay and death. Our life energies continue to be at the mercy of the three Gunas, except that because of the inner victory we are able to exercise a greater control over our passions, emotions and vital reactions. Our mind remains still the same old mind, a home of uncertainties and doubts, even though we enjoy a certain measure of peace and stability. This has been regarded as the final goal of life by almost all the past yogas and spiritual luminaries of the world.

The one crippling limitation of our refusal to take the external world seriously is that it short-circuits the evolutionary process through which God is gradually manifesting His perfection in this material world. Why are we born here? Is it merely to achieve freedom, bliss and immortality for our soul? Our soul is a spark of the Divine, so it already had the Divine's freedom, power, bliss and immortality before it took birth here on earth. But then why did the Divine choose to come down on earth and accept the limitation of ignorance? Why did the Divine take upon Himself this veil of ignorance? It is indeed wonderful to realise that "I am not the body, I am not the vital, I am not the mind." True, the ignorance which led to the identification of our real self with the body, vital and mind has been removed and we have found out who we really are—we are in fact the Sachchidananda. But wasn't that what we were before this adventure of manifestation began? What then is the meaning of this entire saga of manifestation? If our journey is from formless Sachchidananda to formless Sachchidananda, what is the meaning of this journey? Is it no more than a sterile interlude? Why was this world created at all? I may not be the body, the vital or the mind, but why did I take on a body, vital and mind? Why did the Divine spend fifteen billion years to embody Himself in a form comprising the mind, vital and physical? What is the significance of this long evolutionary journey?

Is it the aim of this creation merely to bring us to a point where we find it corrupt and imperfect and therefore decide to reject it? Is the rejection of the world a condition for finding God within ourselves? If this is our attitude, then what we are really saying is "This world, this creation has been a blunder made by God, and we in our wisdom have decided to correct it." And how do we propose to do it? By negating it, by rejecting it, by dying to this world so that we can inwardly unite with the Divine. But we have not fulfilled God's intention in creating the world. This is the basic inadequacy with the second approach to the problem of life.

It must be admitted that turning within and doing the sadhana needed to find God within is not easy. It may take several lives before the ignorance is lifted, before

you realise who you really are, before you understand and experience that you are Sachchidananda. This achievement is such a great and wonderful thing that most people cannot even imagine a greater fulfilment than this. And this is why so many past spiritual journeys have ended at this station. Those who get this far are so ecstatic with their inner freedom that they never bother to question the how and why of their initial bondage.

(To be continued)

MANGESH NADKARNI

THE ONE CONSTANT

How shall we speak of gratitude
Who lean to the call of the day's desire?
Impassioned, blind, in aspect crude
We cannot fan the spark to fire

A greater Love has moved our soul
But small our means and mean our will
To follow the path of an unseen goal
Where life must pause and mind must still

And body bear descending force
Atomic in lethargic cell,
Annihilating mind's recourse
To reason where it lives to dwell

Yet is every moment tinged with light
And Grace comes streaming softly down,
Through the tangled skeins of earthly plight
The veiled Creator extends the crown

For now no longer can we hide
Or set our sails towards safer shores
Or hurling through the skies to ride
Away from God's great golden doors

That beckon to our errant feet
And call our hearts with angel-song
We must shed the ego, Self to meet,
Undo the false, redress the wrong

Of insularity and greed,
Tend the temple night and day
In the inner garden plant the seed
Of consecration, seek the Way

Yet all proceeds on an ancient plan
By Him who is our blood and breath,
Transforming earth, transcending man
Annulling by His life our death

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

A TREASURY OF THOUGHTS

HE who does not bellow the truth when he knows it makes himself the accomplice of liars

—*Charles Peguy*

Inaction in a deed of mercy is an action in a deadly sin

—*H. P. Blavatsky*

He who has built a new heaven has found the strength for it in the agony of his own hell

—*F Nietzsche*

Men who do not look for God in His heaven may yet find Him in the agony of their own hearts.

—*N Berdayev*

The mad man is not one who has lost his reason, but one who has lost everything but his reason

—*G K. Chesterton*

It requires moral courage to grieve, it requires religious courage to rejoice

—*Kierkegaard*

Bread for myself is a material question, bread for others is a spiritual question

—*N Berdayev*

There is no not-holy, there is only that which has not been redeemed to its holiness

—*Martin Buber*

Let Satan be free to accomplish God's work

—*Edmund Fleg*

The most important lesson in this life is not that there is pain in this world, but that it is possible to transmute it into joy

—*Tagore*

(Presented by Fali Choksi)

THE CONQUEST OF INERTIA

THE Night-Queen reigned sovereign, supreme,
In the darkness and solitude all around,
As I longed for witnessing her veiled beauty,
While peeping through the crannied nettings in my bed,
The crooning music of the intruder mosquito,
Piercing my ears and the mawkish mind-frame,
Tried to snatch away the supernatural glimpses
Of the dark Beauty-Goddess hovering overhead

The blowzy, fluttering creature appeared like a bloodhound,
With its tremendous zest and insatiable thirst
For sucking the blue-blood flowing in my veins,
And shatter my heritage with feigned Aristocracy,
The cranky marauder never cared for my megalomania,
The cosy moments of fleeting happiness and assumed serenity,
Or the self-imposed penchant for Peace and sacred Silence,
As the huffy enemy attacked the fortress of hypocrisy

When with one master-stroke of a thundering genius
I shot down the vampire romping around,
My blood-smearred palms resembled a painter's collocation
And revealed Nature's poetic licence given to me,
Even though I had life-long inhibition against killing,
It provoked me enough towards a new awakening,
To shun my hesitancy, drowsiness, fear and inertia,
And open the supernal dreamland, with the magic key

SURESH DEY

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

Indian Professionals Abroad

ALTHOUGH during the past several decades Atomic Energy, Space, Fundamental Research, Applied Sciences as well as high class Technological Institutions have come up in a major way in the country, and although also the infrastructural developments have made a sizable progress, yet the entire system appears to be geared up for an activity which doesn't seem to have wise roots in the genuine Indianness that can grow more and more creatively and meaningfully in its cultural context. This is not to say that we should go back to the spinning wheel or cottage wares or village pushcarts. Strong commerce and economy are a must for the robust health of the nation. We must be modern also, if not ultra-modern, capable of setting up large and complex operative assembly systems, sophisticated and with a degree of academic distinction. There has to be organisational efficiency coupled with work-discipline. But this ultra-modernity should not mean adopting life-styles and mannerisms of something not native to us. We have to have the state-of-the-art, we have to have aircraft industry and efficient textile mills and large petrochemical complexes and enlightened management and banking establishments. The deeper concern in them all should however be to discover our own true individuality, our own organic personality and not a photo-modelled replica of the foreign brand. Perhaps that is the most important task the social worker will have to undertake and execute. Otherwise all the gains of science that we have accrued will prove of no avail. We will not have fulfilled ourselves.

It is often said that for doing science in India conditions are not very favourable. What we are essentially doing is the follow-up research and nothing that is innovative or first-rate. The reasons given for this failure are multifold. It is persuasively argued that we do not have well-equipped laboratories. We have no access to the latest findings or to literature dealing with scientific discoveries. Our technical infrastructure is altogether inadequate to measure up to the demands of online research. The industrial support that is the *sine qua non* for carrying out any worthwhile investigation is practically not available. Our universities do not have the culture of scholastic excellence that will bring out freer thinkers or nourish creative talents. Along with the mediaeval bureaucracy in scientific management, we have other reasons also to justify why a thing cannot be done rather than how effectively and swiftly it can be implemented. If some important scientific equipment has to be imported, it can easily take a couple of years to arrive at the laboratory, generally by that time the intended research becomes outmoded. We thus tend always to do second-hand work which does not bring much scientific credit to us, particularly in this very competitive business where large alert teams are engaged in tackling problems all over the world.

Most of the time we have been occupying ourselves with residual investigative matters and the effort can become frustrating when recognition turns out to be elusive. We get caught in the web of futility and fruitlessness.

This has an unfortunate and unhealthy consequence in our talented experts and specialists rushing abroad to advance centres, basically in order to satisfy and promote their professional ambitions. The United States is obviously one of the most preferred destinations. It is a land of plenty in several respects and the working conditions are so ideal that one has to only concentrate on one's interests and the rest is taken care of by the operative system. No hassle, no polemic discussion, no delay and the whole thing runs with the smoothness of a well-engineered piece of machinery. We have Indian professionals practically in all the walks of life there and they have made very significant contributions not only in terms of advancement of pure science and technology, but also in the furtherance of commerce and management.

Let us take a couple of examples. The first could be that of information technology and its applications. Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of San Francisco is the capital of the digital world governing practically every modern industry in one way or another. It is a fifty-mile stretch of land where every square-inch produces tons of high-tech crop. It is also a place where we find a large number of Indian professionals engaged in several activities contributing substantially to the prosperity of the region.

In his studies of Asian-Indians in the Valley, Jonathan Thaw of Oxford University analyses the diverse economic and social networks that link the high-profile communities in the competitive areas of computer science, technology and applications. The dissertation evaluates the motives and processes behind Indian migration to the United States. "The focus of the text is on the social and economic networks which Indians establish and how formal and informal networks provide a support structure for the community as well as a foundation for economic action. These networks and connections also extend to communities back in India. The Indian network in Silicon Valley is identified as having a number of layers, with numerous professional and cultural communities operating under a collective Indian identity. Indians are shown to maintain close connections and cultural ties with their homes and although professional ties are weaker, a significant number are in some way involved with businesses at home. Indian communities are shown to be virtual as well as physical, as new technologies such as email and the internet tie together disparate peoples."

There are some seven thousand information technology related industries in the Bay Area and these have made progress essentially by tapping the highly skilled immigrants seeking better job prospects and opportunities in advanced spheres. It is estimated that roughly one-fourth of the professionals are Indians who greatly contribute to business of the region. Their knowledge of English coupled with technical competence has been the asset towards the promotion of these activities. "In 1988, almost 43 percent of Indian immigrants in the United States," tells the investigator, "held managerial or professional positions, and another 36 percent held technical,

sales and administrative support jobs” It is also reported that “23 percent of e-commerce companies in Silicon Valley were started by Indians” In the dignified over-all global context brain-drain is treated as brain-upgradation and brain-circulation Prospects of economic well-being and modern comforts of life drive these professionals to places where they can be creative as well as productive In the strict eyes of the traditionalists this may sound merely an animal hangover seeking greener pastures beyond the hills or across the farther sea-shores But the mantra of pragmatism remains the guiding factor for these seekers of wealth

“What is it,” asks Jonathan Thaw, “that makes Indians travel halfway around the world to settle in a land that is economically and culturally poles apart from their home?” Based on the survey he has carried out, the answer is as follows “It appears that the primary motive for moving to the United States is economic while there are jobs in the hi-tech industry available in India, moving to the United States offers Indians better paid jobs and opportunities to build up savings and possibly send money back to their families in India” The feeling of alienation from the cultural roots perhaps comes very little in the entire reckoning America, and for the IT experts Silicon Valley, is a place of milk and honey “It is the place to be in for making a large amount of money and to be in the midst of leading edge technology” This is what Thaw was told by one of the professionals Perhaps there is nothing wrong in the attitude of these expatriates What could be wrong however is forgetting the foundational principles of the Indian life and culture

From a small number of very early Sikh farmers as migrants to Northern California we have today approximately 30,000 Indians in the Silicon Valley itself The major supply of these professionals comes from the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs),—almost geared up to produce them and meet the demands of the American industries About one-third of the IITians rush to the US almost immediately after completing graduation This only means that our educational system has practically no social relevance at all Thaw’s survey states that the majority of these engineers are from four states Tamil Nadu (20%), Andhra Pradesh (16%), Karnataka (15%), Maharashtra (15%), essentially the southern states “Results from the questionnaire sample population suggest that the Indian community in Silicon Valley is generally young, male-dominated, well paid and employed in the hi-tech industry The respondents to the questionnaire were generally clustered in the corridor of land between Redwood City and San Jose” The total number of Indians—3.22 million—constitutes about 1.5% of the US population If we go by the percentage of professionals in different fields the data are as follows doctors 38, scientists 12, engineers in NASA 36, Microsoft 31, IBM 28, Intel 17, Xerox 13 There are successful traders and business professionals also

These Indian engineers hailing from different parts of the country occupy high positions in American establishments Indeed, we have co-founders of companies, creators of IC chips, innovators of hot-mail, presidents, inventors, testing directors, editors-in-chief, corporate owners, venture capitalists, authors, writers, artists, speak-

ers drawing on quantum physics and Hindu scriptures while proposing holistic approach towards health, plant breeders, very successful doctors, scientists, Nobel winners. And the list could be much longer than that, with each individual carrying his personal success story. A particular doctor has performed 40,000 operations and is a celebrity in the profession. If once there was a boy in Bangalore selling sandwiches after school hours to make some pocket money and eventually landing in the US with just \$250 in his pocket to revolutionise world-communication through the digital mail, we also have now a millionaire who as a child saw his grandmother die of starvation as the family could not afford even boiled rice and a pinch of salt. The Nobel winner Har Gobind Khorana was born in a small village Raipur, now a part of Pakistan. His father was a *patwari* who saw that his children were well educated. The boy's assets were his keen intelligence and hard work which helped him to go to England and later migrate to the US. We also have examples of the subcontinentals as a cricket captain in England and a Master of Trinity College in Cambridge. Opportunities were created and opportunities also did come around for these adventurers to give direction to the uncertain tides of their life. "Therefore if we don't see even a glimpse of that great India in the India that we see today, it clearly means that we are not working up to our potential and that if we do, we could once again be an ever shining and inspiring country setting a bright path for the rest of the world to follow." But is there a glimmer of hope that we shall work towards the true welfare of India and say proudly that we are Indians? Or is it that we live in Indian bodies but with American souls? Perhaps such questions in the present-day milieu are altogether irrelevant. When back home, for their own reasons, one wonders whether they will at all identify themselves with the Indian spirit. Very often their children come to India more as tourists to enjoy vacations rather than with any feeling of belonging to the country. Enormous social stresses are developed in the entire process and the disparities that are inevitably present in these conditions further complicate the problems of life here. Social imbalances aggravate operations. In fact these people have not too very untypically a tendency of thinking that there should always be a small England or America for them in India.

At the time of the visit of President Bill Clinton last year to India a report was prepared highlighting the Indo-American connections in various fields. A part of it runs as follows: "Indians have been playing an important role in the US. The 3.22 million-plus Indians in the US are the third largest Asian American group in that country after the Chinese and the Filipinos. They are largely engaged in professional occupations and have also become successful entrepreneurs. About 30,000 Indian doctors are practising in that country. The US department of commerce has estimated the annual buying power of the Asian Indians at around \$20 billion. These figures illustrate the growing integration of Asian Indians in the US economy. Already there are estimates of about 300,000 job-vacancies in the US in the software industry. Skilled Indian manpower on the one hand and US technology on the other hand constitute a winning mix."

There was also a statement by a high American official indicating that "the Indian industry will be retooled and much will be sourced in America . . . The US, India's largest trading partner and investor, is looking at investing nearly \$250 billion in power projects in India over a period and about \$100 billion in telecommunications. But everyone knows it will be Information Technology that will bring in more dollars. Experts point out that between 30 and 50 per cent of Silicon Valley start-ups were launched by Indian engineers and about a third of the world's software engineers are of Indian origin." These figures only indicate that a substantial contribution by Indians has been made to technology, commerce and economy in the American milieu. This may be taken as a good index of their capability given the appropriate environments. It may also be taken as a colossal operating failure of our organisations and systems.

But perhaps there are much subtler and deeper issues which need another approach. Can we really call the success of these brilliant entrepreneurial Indians an Indian success at all? In the least, at the most debatable perhaps. The same can perhaps be applied even to the winners of Nobel prizes who hail from the subcontinent. We may include the names of Har Gobind Khorana, S. Chandrasekhar, Abdus Salam and, with a certain pertinence, Amartya Sen. Their contributions are quite significant in the respective professions, something which they could not have done by remaining back home. The ambience, the academic or even the cultural surroundings that are required for their kind of work are altogether absent here, which also means that it is not just the question of facilities in the country. True, science has its own life-style and manners and needs its own greenhouse to grow and flourish. Yet what is basically important is the over-all attitude towards things. We have to recognise that,—assuring the availability of rich tools and the relevant paraphernaliac provisions,—genuine creativity has to be always incontinent, incontinent of the parametric factors or external circumstances which at the best can promote only a copyist's mentality. A well-prepared and pioneering mind moulds its own eventualities and its own harmonious accordances, produces its own rich tools and instruments,—as was done by J.C. Bose and C.V. Raman. Let us therefore look, though very hurriedly, at another aspect, the present-day psychological build-up of us Indians. Perhaps in it we may discover the causes of why there is no Indian science whether it is in India or abroad and what we practise today in India is only the Western, or more specifically, the American science. That may also explain why the kind of science we do cannot receive applause from the world which is needed for science itself to make a quantum leap into the mystery of Matter.

In the professional activities we have seen so far it may be noticed that the roots may not be sufficiently Indian; yet the soul of the country once in a while seems to be peeping out for its assertion in a positive way. A welcome degree of readiness is a good asset to raise the national edifice to imposing heights. We have seen how in the state-of-the-art fields we can contribute meaningfully and substantially to the world knowledge. We may also see another example in the field of art, for instance, the

contribution of the sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar

About him G N Joshi writes as follows "The melodious strains of Ravi Shankar's sitar have carried Indian music across the seven seas. He has contributed a golden page to the history of Indian classical music. His sangeet sadhana was as strenuous and gruelling as the tapasya (penance) done in the olden days by ascetics seeking knowledge in the ashrams of their gurus. Living with Ustad Allaudin Khan [known in the inner circle as Baba] and pursuing his study, Ravi Shankar had to undergo rigorous trials. The Ustad was a difficult master. At times Ravi Shankar was even subjected to physical punishment. Coming as he did from an affluent and very highly placed family, it was very difficult for him to bear the hard work and humiliating treatment" (*Down Melody Lane*, 1984). But the rewards have more than compensated for the difficulties he had to face. When Ali Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar combined their skills at mehfilis and on records, and presented their artistic craftsmanship on the sarod and sitar, they received tremendous ovations.

Soon in search of wider audiences they proceeded to Europe and America and received almost instantaneous popularity. Here were tried new experiments to set new trends in music. Pandit Ravi Shankar started a music school, the Kinnara School, at Los Angeles in California, but he very recently closed it and has returned to India with the intention of starting an Ashram in the holy city of Varanasi. Ali Akbar, however, has decided to stay on in San Rafael, to coach Americans in the art of playing Indian classical music.

Ravi Shankar adopted a technique of presentation different from the old traditional style. This entailed "polluting the high and chaste standard of presentation" and knowledgeable critics feared that the purity of ragas was at stake. His experiments of combining the Eastern and the Western styles, it is said, "will never hold lastingly together."

In his *My Music My Life* Ravi Shankar writes "I went and stayed in the little house next to Baba's, and in the beginning it was very difficult for me. Maihar was just a small village, and it was very quiet. Alone at night in my house, I was frightened when I heard the howling of the jackals and wolves nearby, and the deep croaking of the frogs and all the racket of the crickets. After eight years of luxurious living in Europe, it took me months to accustom myself to sleeping on the cot made of four pieces of bamboo tied together with coconut rope." Baba was a teacher in the old style and demanded total humility and surrender of the student to the guru, "a complete shedding of the ego." Now all that has disappeared or is on the verge of disappearing. Will that mean the loss of Indian art in the harsh materialism of the West? "Ali Akbar told me he had been compelled to practice," Ravi Shankar informs us, "for fourteen to sixteen hours every day, and there were times when Baba tied him to a tree for hours and refused to let him eat if his progress was not satisfactory. Ali Akbar was born with music in his veins, but it was this constant rigorous discipline and *riaz* (Urdu for "practice") that Baba set for him that has made Ali Akbar one of the greatest instrumentalists alive." Who can do that today? Neither

have we such masters nor such disciples to undergo the rigour of acquiring the finest of the art. Ditto for science

Ravi Shankar "is a performer, composer, teacher and writer—all rolled into one. He has ridden the crest of popularity for over three decades now while contributing a golden chapter to the annals of Hindusthani classical music. According to many, he has singlehandedly done more for Indian music than any other musician, so much so that his time will always be known as the Ravi Shankar Era." But is that sufficiently satisfying?

He popularised Indian music in the West and proved himself to be an excellent cultural ambassador. He "has written concertos for the legendary violinist Yehudi Menuhin, composed for the flute virtuoso Jean Pierre Rampal, Koto maestro Musumi Miyashita, and Hosan Yamamoto—master of the Shakuhachi. In 1967, Ravi Shankar appeared with Yehudi Menuhin in a concert at the United Nations in New York, and his composition for the Human Rights Day celebration was voted the Classical Record Performance of the Year by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences."

"Indian dance and music were previously unknown in the West," writes Oliver Craske about the great artist. But even as an innovator and composer we may have certain reservations in acknowledging him as somebody who can be world-class for ever. There is skill, there is professional élan, there is mastery over the art, there are even creative flights, and in the whole process at times there is the rush of inspiration and intuition to light up the spirit. But it has to leap into the world of many-hued original harmony, it has to enter the womb of hush wherefrom arrives the music of the soul. We cannot say that Ravi Shankar has any access to that. Perhaps at one time there was a possibility but that got attenuated and dimmed by too much of his own externalisation, by coming too much in contact with the Western world. We do not hear in his music the footfall of the luminous gods stepping into the world of Time, entering our little rooms and lighting them with their presence. We yearn to listen to

Some far tune of the immortal rhapsodist Voice,
Some rapture of the all-creating Bliss,

as *Savitri* would say (p. 111) but sadly we are disappointed. But this is a disappointment which is ubiquitous, prevailing in all the walks of our life, science and the arts, be they in India or abroad, as if impressing on us the fact that we have not discovered our souls to live in the freedom of the timeless and the true. Thus in the success story of the Indians abroad, we do not quite read the success story of India itself. It becomes more poignant when we perceptively see the contributions of the great luminaries who have found a place in the gallery of the nobles.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

NILGIRI MOUNTAINS

NILGIRI mountains,
vast, eternal,
Blue-bosomed,
maternal!

We are come
to adore
the essence of all
that was before.

Prodigals can't see,
so we must seek
with tired minds and
eyes grown weak

The milk of life
flow over your breasts
in shola stream and
glade and nest

somewhere in here
lies an umbilical cord
cut by wire
word and sword

Twenty millennia
or so ago

as we stole and fled
from our mothers' door

Now the seeds of time
and grain are spent
with a harvest of thorn—
the land is rent

To seek forgiveness
four thieves return,
our sins go on
but still we yearn

To raise an offering of sweat
to the height of a hill
to touch a high mountain meadow
with the greening of will

To taste a sun-dancing stream
with the thirst of ages
to pick a small perfect flower
and read it like pages

To offer warm breath
to a cold morning star
to take one perfect moment
and not stretch it too far

AMITMOHAN S DAHIYABADSHAH

THE PIANO LESSON

My name is Mildred Hondorf. I am a former elementary school music teacher from DeMoines, Iowa. I've always supplemented my income by giving piano lessons—something I've done for over 30 years. Over the years I found that children have many levels of musical ability. I've never had the pleasure of having a protégé though I have taught some talented students.

However I've also had my share of what I call "musically challenged" pupils. One such student was Robby. Robby was 11 years old when his mother (a single mom) dropped him off for his first piano lesson. I prefer that students (especially boys!) begin at an earlier age, which I explained to Robby. But Robby said that it had always been his mother's dream to hear him play the piano. So I took him as a student. Well, Robby began with his piano lessons and from the beginning I thought it was a hopeless endeavour. As much as Robby tried, he lacked the sense of tone and basic rhythm needed to excel. But he dutifully reviewed his scales and some elementary pieces that I require all my students to learn. Over the months he tried and tried while I listened and cringed and tried to encourage him. At the end of each weekly lesson he'd always say, "My mom's going to hear me play someday." But it seemed hopeless. He just did not have any inborn ability. I only knew his mother from a distance as she dropped Robby off or waited in her aged car to pick him up. She always waved and smiled but never stepped in.

Then one day Robby stopped coming to our lessons. I thought about calling him but assumed, because of his lack of ability, that he had decided to pursue something else. I also was glad that he stopped coming. He was a bad advertisement for my teaching! Several weeks later I mailed to the student's homes a flyer on the upcoming recital. To my surprise Robby (who received a flyer) asked me if he could be in the recital. I told him that the recital was for current pupils and because he had dropped out he really did not qualify. He said that his mom had been sick and unable to take him to piano lessons but he was still practising. "Miss Hondorf I've just got to play!" he insisted. I don't know what led me to allow him to play in the recital. Maybe it was his persistence or maybe it was something inside of me saying that it would be all right.

The night for the recital came. The high school gymnasium was packed with parents, friends and relatives. I put Robby up last in the program before I was to come up and thank all the students and play a finishing piece. I thought that any damage he would do would come at the end of the program and I could always salvage his poor performance through my "curtain closer." Well, the recital went off without a hitch. The students had been practising and it showed. Then Robby came up on stage. His clothes were wrinkled and his hair looked like he had run an eggbeater through it. Why didn't he dress up like the other students? I thought. "Why didn't his mother at least make him comb his hair for this special night?"

Robby pulled out the piano bench and he began. I was surprised when he

announced that he had chosen Mozart's Concerto #21 in C Major I was not prepared for what I heard next His fingers were light on the keys, they even danced nimbly on the ivories He went from pianissimo to fortissimo from allegro to virtuoso His suspended chords that Mozart demands were magnificent! Never had I heard Mozart played so well by people his age

After six and a half minutes he ended in a grand crescendo and everyone was on their feet in wild applause Overcome and in tears I ran up on stage and put my arms around Robby in joy "I've never heard you play like that Robby! How'd you do it?" Through the microphone Robby explained "Well Miss Hondorf remember I told you my mom was sick? Well, actually she had cancer and passed away this morning And well she was born deaf so tonight was the first time she ever heard me play I wanted to make it special "

There wasn't a dry eye in the house that evening As the people from Social Services led Robby from the stage to be placed into foster care, I noticed that even their eyes were red and puffy and I thought to myself how much richer my life had been for taking Robby as my pupil No, I've never had a prodigy but that night I became a protégé. of Robby's. He was the teacher and I was the pupil. For it is he that taught me the meaning of perseverance and love and believing in yourself and maybe even taking a chance in someone and you don't know why This is especially meaningful to me since after serving in Desert Storm Robby was killed in the senseless bombing of the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in April of 1995, where he was reportedly playing the piano

And now, a footnote to the story If you are thinking about forwarding this message, you are probably thinking about which people on your address list aren't the "appropriate" ones to receive this type of message The person who sent this to you believes that we can all make a difference We all have thousands of opportunities a day to help realise God's plan

So many seemingly trivial interactions between two people present us with a choice Do we pass along a spark of the Divine? Or do we pass up that opportunity, and leave the world a bit colder in the process?

(An e-mail message from Saikat)

SOME NOTES FROM THE MAHABHARATA APROPOS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S NARRATIVE POEM *ULOUPIE**

ARJUNA TAKES THE VOWS OF *VANAPRASTHA*

“BOWING unto all the elders, and congratulated by everybody, Partha at last approached Yudhishtira and, addressing him, said,—‘Give me leave, O lord, to observe the vow I took! In beholding thee sitting with Draupadi, I have violated the rule established by ourselves! I shall, therefore, go into the woods, for this is even our understanding!’ Then Yudhishtira, suddenly hearing those painful words, became afflicted with grief, and said in an agitated voice, —‘Why!’ A little while after, king Yudhishtira in grief said unto his brother Dhananjaya of curly hair who never departed from his vows, these words —‘O sinless one, if I am an authority worthy of regard, listen to what I say! O hero, full well do I know the reason why thou hast entered my chamber and didst what thou regardest to be an act disagreeable to me! But there is no displeasure in my mind The younger brother may, without fault, enter the chamber where the elder brother sitteth with his wife It is only the elder brother that acts against the rules of propriety by entering the room where the younger brother sitteth with his wife Therefore, O thou of mighty arms, desist from thy purpose! Do what I say! Thy virtue hath sustained no diminution Thou hast not disregarded me!’

“Arjuna, hearing this, replied,—‘I have heard, even from thee, that quibbling is not permitted in the discharge of duty I cannot waver from truth. Truth is my weapon ’ ”

Vaisampayana continued,—“Obtaining then the king’s permission, Arjuna prepared himself for a forest life; and he went to the forest to live there for twelve years ”

Thus ends the two hundred and fifteenth section in the Arjuna-vanavasa of the Adi Parva.

Vaisampayana said,—“When that spreader of the renown of Kuru’s race, *viz*, the strong-armed Arjuna, set out (for the forest), Brahmanas conversant with the *Vedas* walked behind that illustrious hero at a certain distance Followed by Brahmanas conversant with the *Vedas* and their branches and devoted to the contemplation of the Supreme Spirit, by persons skilled in music, by ascetics devoted to the Deity, by reciters of *Puranas*, by narrators of sacred stories, by devotees leading celibate lives, by *Vanaprasthus*, by Brahmanas sweetly reciting celestial histories, and by various other classes of persons of sweet speeches, Arjuna journeyed like Indra followed by the Maruts And, O thou of Bharata’s race, that bull among the Bharatas saw, as he journeyed, many delightful and picturesque forests, lakes, rivers, seas, provinces, and waters At length, on arriving at the source of the Ganges, the mighty hero thought of settling there

* *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, pp 325-32

“Listen now, O Janmejaya, to a wonderful feat which that foremost of the sons of Pandu, of high soul, did, while living there. When that son of Kunti, O Bharata, and the Brahmanas who had followed him, took up their residence in that region, the latter performed innumerable *agni-hotras* (sacrificial rites by igniting the sacred fire). And, O king, in consequence of those learned vow-observing and illustrious Brahmanas, who never deviated from the right path, daily establishing and igniting with *mantras* on the banks of that sacred stream, after the performance of their ablutions, fires for their sacrifices, and pouring libations of clarified butter into the same, and worshipping those fires with offerings of flowers, that region itself where the Ganges entered the plains became exceedingly beautiful. One day that bull amongst the Pandavas, while residing in that region in the midst of those Brahmanas, descended (as usual) into the Ganges to perform his ablutions. After his ablutions had been over, and after he had offered oblations of water unto his deceased ancestors, he was about to get up from the stream to perform his sacrificial rites before the fire, when the mighty-armed hero, O king, was dragged into the bottom of the water by Ulupi, the daughter of the king of the *Nagas*, urged by the god of desire. And it so happened that the son of Pandu was carried into the beautiful mansion of Kauravya, the king of the *Nagas*. Arjuna saw there a sacrificial fire ignited for himself. Beholding that fire, Dhananjaya, the son of Kunti performed his sacrificial rites with devotion. And Agni was much gratified with Arjuna for the fearlessness with which that hero had poured libations into his manifest form. After he had thus performed his rites before the fire, the son of Kunti, beholding the daughter of the king of the *Nagas*, addressed her smilingly and said,—‘O handsome girl, what an act of rashness hast thou done. O timid one! Whose is this beautiful region, who art thou and whose daughter?’

“Hearing these words of Arjuna, Ulupi answered,—‘There is a *Naga* of the name of Kauravya, born in the line of Airavata. I am, O prince, the daughter of that Kauravya, and my name is Ulupi. O tiger among men, beholding thee descend into the stream to perform thy ablutions, I was deprived of reason by the god of desire! O sinless one, I am still unmarried. Afflicted as I am by the god of desire on account of thee, O thou of Kuru’s race, gratify me today by giving thyself up to me!’

“Arjuna replied,—‘Commanded by king Yudhishtira, O amiable one, I am undergoing the vow of a *brahmacharin* for twelve years! I am not free to act in any way I like. But, O ranger of the waters, I am still willing to do thy pleasure (if I can)! I have never spoken an untruth in my life. Tell me, therefore, O *Naga* maid, how I may act so that, while doing thy pleasure, I may not be guilty of any untruth or breach of duty!’

“Ulupi answered,—‘I know, O son of Pandu, why thou wanderest over the earth, and why thou hast been commanded to lead the life of a *brahmacharin* by thy superior! Even this was the understanding to which all of you had been pledged, *viz*, that amongst you all owning Drupada’s daughter as your common wife, he who would from ignorance enter the room where one of you would be sitting with her, should lead the life of a *brahmacharin* in the woods for twelve years! The exile of

any one amongst you, therefore, is only for the sake of Draupadī. Thou art but observing the duty arising from that vow. Thy virtue cannot sustain any diminution (by acceding to my solicitation). Then again, O thou of large eyes, it is a duty to relieve the distressed! Thy virtue suffereth no diminution by relieving me! Or, if (by this act), O Arjuna, thy virtue doth suffer a small diminution, thou wilt acquire great merit by saving my life. Know me for thy worshipper, O Partha! Therefore, yield thyself up to me! Even this, O lord, is the opinion of the wise (*viz.*, that one should accept a woman that woeth). If thou do not act in this way, know that I will destroy myself. O thou of mighty arms, earn great merit by saving my life! I seek thy shelter, O best of men! Thou protectest always, O son of Kuntī, the afflicted and the masterless! I seek thy protection, weeping in sorrow. I woo thee, being filled with desire! Therefore, do what is agreeable to me! It behoveth thee to gratify my wish by yielding thyself up to me! ”

Vaisampayana said,—“Thus addressed by the daughter of the king of the *Nagas*, the son of Kuntī did everything she desired, making virtue his motive. The mighty Arjuna, spending the night in the mansion of the *Naga*, rose with the sun in the morning. Accompanied by Ulupī he came back from the palace of Kauravya to the region where the Ganges entereth the plains. The chaste Ulupī, taking her leave there, returned to her own abode. And, O Bharata, she granted unto Arjuna a boon making him invincible in water, saying,—‘Every amphibious creature shall, without doubt, be vanquishable by thee!’ ”

Thus ends the two hundred and sixteenth section in the Arjuna-vanavasa of the *Adi Parva*.

Vaisampayana said,—“Then the son of the wielder of the thunderbolt narrated everything unto those Brahmanas (residing with him there), and set out for the breast of Himavat. Arriving at the spot called *Agastyavata*, he next went to Vashishtha’s peak. Thence the son of Kuntī proceeded to the peak.

“Purifying himself with ablutions and other rites, Bhrigu, that foremost of the Kurus, gave away unto Brahmanas many thousands of cows and many houses.

“Thence that best of men proceeded to the sacred asylum called *Hiranyavindu*. Performing his ablutions there, that foremost of the sons of Pandu saw many holy regions. Descending from those heights, that chief of men, O Bharata, accompanied by the Brahmanas, journeyed towards the east, desiring to behold the regions that lay in that direction. That foremost one of Kuru’s race saw many regions of sacred waters one after another. And beholding in the forest of *Narmisha* the delightful river *Utpalini* (full of lotuses) and the *Nanda* and the *Apara Nanda*, the far-famed *Kaushiki*, and the mighty rivers *Gaya* and *Ganga*, and all the regions of sacred water, he purified himself, O Bharata, (with the usual rites) and gave away many cows unto Brahmanas. Whatever regions of sacred waters and whatever other holy places there were in *Banga* and *Kalinga*, Arjuna visited all of them. Seeing them all and performing proper ceremonies, he gave away much wealth. Then, O Bharata, all those Brahmanas

following the son of Pandu, bade him farewell at the gate of the kingdom of Kalinga and desisted from proceeding with him any further. The brave Dhananjaya, the son of Kunti, obtaining their leave, went towards the ocean, accompanied by only a few attendants. Crossing the country of the Kalingas, the mighty one proceeded, seeing on his way diverse countries and sacred spots and diverse delightful mansions and houses. Beholding the Mahendra mountains adorned with the ascetics (residing there), he went to Manipura, proceeding slowly along the sea-shore. Beholding all the sacred waters and other holy places in that province, the strong-armed son of Pandu at last went, O king, to the virtuous Chitravahana, the ruler of Manipura. The king of Manipura had a daughter of great beauty named Chitrangada. And it so happened that Arjuna beheld her in her father's palace roving at pleasure. Beholding the handsome daughter of Chitravahana, Arjuna desired to possess her. Going unto the king (her father), he represented unto him what he sought. He said,—'Give away unto me thy daughter, O king! I am an illustrious Kshatriya's son.' Hearing this, the king asked him,—'Whose son art thou?' Arjuna replied,—'I am Dhananjaya, the son of Pandu and Kunti.' The king, hearing this, spoke unto him these words in sweet accents: 'There was in our race a king of the name of Prabhanjana, who was childless. To obtain a child, he underwent severe ascetic penances. By his severe asceticism, O Partha, he gratified that god of gods, Mahadeva, the husband of Uma, that supreme lord holding (the mighty bow called) *Pinaka*. The illustrious Lord granted him the boon that each successive descendant of his race should have one child only. In consequence of that boon only one child is born unto every successive descendant of this race. All my ancestors (one after another) had each a male child. I, however, have only a daughter to perpetuate my race. But, O bull amongst men, I ever look upon this daughter of mine as my son. O bull of Bharata's race, I have duly made her a *Putrika*. Therefore one amongst the sons that may be begotten upon her by thee, O Bharata, shall be the perpetuator of my race. That son is the dower for which I may give away my daughter. O son of Pandu, if thou chooseth, thou canst take her upon this understanding.' Hearing these words of the king, Arjuna accepted them all, saying,—'So be it.' Taking Chitravahana's daughter (as his wife), the son of Kunti resided in that city for three years. When Chitrangada at last gave birth to a son, Arjuna embraced that handsome princess affectionately. And taking leave of the king (her father), he set out on his wanderings again."

Thus ends the two hundred and seventeenth section in the Arjuna-vanavasa of the Adī Parva

ANONYMOUS

A Note

It would seem appropriate here to refer to another unfinished poem of a similar type by Sri Aurobindo. The story is drawn from the same source, the Mahabharata, Adī Parva, Arjuna's Vanaprastha

This proposed poem was meant to be written in several cantos. It excels in its descriptive lines and sensitive, direct dialogues.

The subject in *Chitrangada* has been given a concise and striking form of a shorter narrative poem. The dialogues have a depth and a complexity of thought-arrangement appealing to the modern mind.

ABOUT CALENDARS

WHEN human communities started organized social life in the valleys of the Indus and the Ganges (India), the Nile (Egypt), the Tigris and the Euphrates (Mesopotamia) and the Hoang Ho (China), several millennia before Christ, these phenomena (day, month and year) acquired new importance. For these early societies were founded on agriculture, and agricultural practices depend on seasonal weather conditions. With these practices, therefore, grew national and religious festivals, necessary for the growth of social life, and of civilisation. People wanted to know *in advance* when to expect the new moon or the full moon, when most of the ancient festivals were celebrated, when to expect the onset of the winter or the monsoon, when to prepare the ground for sowing; the proper time for sowing and for harvesting. Calendars are nothing but predictions of these events and were in those days framed on the basis of past observations.

MEGHNAD SAHA

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of September 2001)

THE Siddhi on 24 November 1926 is the descent of the Overmind. It marks a symbolic victory of the mission of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The event was not only important in itself, but can very well be considered as the preparation for the descent of the Supermind. A. B. Purani says: "The Delight consciousness of the Overmind which Sri Krishna incarnated—as Avatar—descended on this day into the physical, rendering possible the descent of the Supermind in Matter."¹ On 11th November of the same year Sri Aurobindo was trying to bring down the "World of Gods"

The Siddhi Day was observed without any fanfare and speeches. In Datta's (Dorothy Hodgson) words: "The Lord has descended into the physical body."² When Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry He was groping for the path. He said: "It took me four years of inner striving to find a real Way even though the divine help was with me all the time, and even then, it seemed to come by an accident, it took me ten more years of intense yoga under a supreme inner guidance to trace it out and that was because I had my past and the world's past to assimilate and overpass before I could find and found the future."³

Sri Aurobindo was fully conscious of the tremendous task he had set before himself and was not troubled by delays, difficulties or disappointments, least of all the misunderstanding of his high objective by others. He wrote: "It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others."⁴

Sri Aurobindo said that keeping an inner poise in the midst of physical disturbance is quite easy: "It is nothing. I am not disturbed by disease or death. They are quite natural to man's present condition. But I care because their acceptance means defeat of the whole effort of Yoga. These lower forces used to thwart and have always been trying to thwart all efforts at spiritual transformation of the physical being."⁵

He again spoke about the same problem in December 1938: "It is when the

sadhana came down into the physical and the subconscious that things became very difficult I myself had to struggle for two years, for the subconscious is absolutely inert, like stone Though my mind was quite awake above, it could not exert any influence down below It is a Herculean labour, for when one enters there, it is a sort of unexplored continent Previous Yogis came down to the vital If I had been made to see the difficulty before, probably, I would have been less enthusiastic about the work There is the instance of blind faith and they were quite right in doing so, but if I left it at that, the real work would have remained undone And once the physical is conquered, things become easy for people who come after me, which is what is meant by realization of one in all.”⁶

In a letter to Barin written in April 1920 Sri Aurobindo wrote that “after 1910 the charge of his Yoga was taken by the Divine and the path was revealed to him in ten limbs of the sadhana He was all along conscious of the existence of the Supramental plane above the mind, and by 1920 he had succeeded in ascending to the lowest stratum of that consciousness and also in drawing up all the movements of his nature into it”⁷

What had happened during the six years after this letter was written to Barin? We get some idea about it from the evening talks Sri Aurobindo had on his birthdays with his disciples during 1923-1926, he indicated the possibility and the process of the Supermind descending into his physical

On 26 March 1924 a question was put by a disciple and an answer by Sri Aurobindo followed

Question “Could it be that the Supermind descended in the past at some time and again retired to its own higher plane afterwards?”

Sri Aurobindo “If an Avatar (incarnation) came, it was a promise. The truth was not made a fact in Matter I can say this, that it may have been tried but it was never made a dynamic factor in the world The difficulty in bringing down Truth is not so much in the upper physical layers as in gross Matter—the most material plane The Earth-Law has to be changed and a new atmosphere has to be created. The question is not merely to have knowledge, power, etc , but to bring them down”⁸

On 15 August 1924, the following impressions of the day are reproduced from the records of a disciple “It was the 15th August No other day can come up to it the depth and intensity of spiritual action, ascending movement of the flood of emotions, and the way in which each individual here was bathing in the luminous atmosphere”

“It is the supreme sign of the Master to assume all possible relations with the disciples, make them real and concrete each disciple knows him as his own, and, each the Master accepts as his Each believes the Master loves him most and it is true that he loves each the most This is not an illusion or delusive half-hypnotism, but quite real The spontaneous dynamic law of the Supreme Truth which he embodies, is love—divine Love”⁹

“But all this was before Darshan As one actually stands in front all curiosity, all pride, all thoughts, all questions, all resolutions are swept away in some terrific divine

Niagara Thou embodiment of Love Supreme! What transparency! In the heart of the Supreme Master also an ocean of emotion is heaving The heart melts and falls at his feet without knowing, it surrenders itself Where is here a place for speech? There is only one speech—the language of the body and its flexion, that of the prostration of the body in the act of surrender, the throbbing of the heart and the flow of tears from the eyes What a peace, pregnant with divinity What beauty, this experience!”¹⁰

“ it is not possible for the tongue of human speech to tell all the utter unity and all the eternal variety of the Ananda of divine love Our higher and our lower members are both flooded with it, the mind and life no less than the soul even the physical body takes its share of the joy, feels the touch, is filled in all its limbs, veins, nerves with the flowing of the wine of the ecstasy, *amṛta* Love and Ananda are the last word of being, the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries ”¹¹

On his birthday in 1925 Sri Aurobindo spoke “There is an idea that this Yoga has been attempted times without number in the past, that the Light descended and has withdrawn again and again This does not seem to be correct I find that the Supramental physical body has not been brought down, otherwise it would have been there We must not therefore belittle our effort and throw obstacles in the way of its accomplishments

“The time has not yet come to say what would be the nature of ultimate transformation What the old Yogins manifested in their life was largely due to the control of the vital being over physical functions Our aim is not this attainment of the vital siddhi—the control of the physical substance and functions through vital force What we are attempting to achieve is a complete transformation of our entire being in all planes of manifestation In old disciplines the goal was not transformation or victory over the physical being They did not lay direct hold on it Then there is an idea that since everything is One, what we have to do is to realise the One Consciousness and have some experience of it on various planes of our being . Our Yoga is an attempt at conscious evolution The Spirit is here involved in matter and appears subject to it By the process of evolution the vital and the mental being have come into manifest existence here Our effort is to reach Supermind from mind

“The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the physical being taken up into the vital, and then into the mental and that again into the Supramental and Ananda Consciousness Another Upanishad says that the man who attains the Supramental escapes through ‘the door of the Sun’ There is no idea of a conscious descent into life after ascending to the Supermind ”¹²

On another occasion he had said “The Vedic Rishis never attained to the Supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt They tried to rise individually to the supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth-consciousness Even there are verses of the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of the supermind) and yet retain an earthly body It was because of this failure that the spiritual effort of India culminated in Mayavada ”¹³

Sri Aurobindo has mentioned that “in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity, first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge”¹⁴

It is the whole man who needs to take the leap in evolution. The aim should be to effect a total change in body, life, mind, will, emotion, thereby outgrowing man’s current limitations and imperfections and reaching the superman’s puissance, tranquillity, knowledge, power, love.

The effort of a spiritual seeker in the traditional yogic systems is largely directed towards gaining an entry into the domains of the spiritual consciousness. In short, the seeker strives for a spiritual ascent. When his effort begins to bear fruit, some part of his being comes slowly or quickly, into contact with the Higher Consciousness and eventually dwells in it. It may be the mind, purified and subtilised, that realises Divine Consciousness. The idea of ascending to the higher Truth-Consciousness of the Supermind and of bringing down its dynamic Peace, Light, Truth, Harmony, Ananda to the mental, vital and physical levels and to the still lower regions of the subconscious and the Inconscient, as a condition for their total liberation and transformation was neither given due importance, nor pursued with earnestness by the old Yogas. It was the liberation, Moksha, that was the aim and the goal of the past spiritual disciplines and to achieve this it was sufficient if the mind got certain spiritual experiences and the vital being was in contact with it.

Sri Aurobindo did not stop with the single movement of ascent. It was not enough for him to have climbed to the highest or enlarged into the widest or plunged into the deepest in spiritual consciousness, with any one of these in himself first, things would be easier and surer for those others who followed him then or later. What was the nature of the Power that he wanted to establish in the earth’s consciousness? Certainly not the higher mental or even the overmental consciousness and power, but a Power higher and more dynamic than even the Power of the Overmind.

He said “We have not to rest content merely with the ascent. We have to descend again and consciously bring down the Supramental Light, Truth, Harmony to govern and transform our nature—that is, our mind, life, and body. There is thus an involution of their lower powers upwards into Truth from which the Spirit descends into Matter and then a manifestation of the Truth in all the nature”¹⁵

Transformation is one of the key terms of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga. He said “By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature—I do not mean, for instance, sainthood or ethical perfection or yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik’s) or a transcendental (*chinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of

the being of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and yoga''¹⁶

The Sadhana in the physical and the lower levels of subconscious and Inconscient is extremely difficult and hazardous. And the subconscious is absolutely inert. Sri Aurobindo says that the subconscious and inconscient regions are unexplored continents. The previous Yogis never bothered to come down beyond the vital. "When I was doing Sadhana in the mental plane," writes Sri Aurobindo, "things came so easily. It was child's play. With the vital being though it was not easy, yet it was interesting. But this physical is absolutely hard. It has been left untried by the ancient Yogis, it has been neglected. Of course, it is not that no effort was made, but the physical and the physico-vital were neglected. All the accumulated difficulty is lying there. Any attempt to conquer them is full of drudgery and labour''¹⁷ In another context he wrote: I am myself living in the physical consciousness and have been for several years. At first it was a plunge into the physical—into all its obscurity and inertia, afterwards it was a station in the physical open to the higher and higher consciousness and slowly having fought out in the struggle of transformation of the physical consciousness with a view to prepare it for the supramental change.

Sri Aurobindo who had grown and experienced the Supramental state, had felt that it is very vivid and it carries the promise of certain realisation in the future. "the eye gets a new and transfigured vision of things and of the world around us. There is at the same time a subtle change which makes the sight see in a sort of fourth dimension, the character of which is a certain internality. Nothing will be really external to it, for it will experience all in the unity of the cosmic consciousness which will be its own. It will experience matter, not only gross matter but the subtle and the most subtle, as substance and form of the spirit, experience life and all kinds of energy as the dynamics of the spirit, supramentalised mind as a means or channel of knowledge of the spirit, supermind as the infinite self of knowledge and power of knowledge and Ananda of knowledge of the spirit''¹⁸

The summary of the speech of Sri Aurobindo on 15th August 1926, is given below which is recorded in *Evening Talks* by A. B. Purani (2nd series, p. 327). He has explained the process of transformation. The mind cannot be transformed unless the vital is fully transformed, and the vital in turn cannot be transformed unless the physical being is changed and transformed. It is not enough that the inner physical being is changed if the external man remains untransformed. Thus each higher element depends on the transformation of the lower for full transformation and the lower changes only under the pressure of the higher. All has to be changed before anything permanent can be achieved.

There are many gradations or levels of consciousness above the Mind. Above the

Mind is the Higher Mind Above it the Illumined Mind and still above it the Intuitive Mind, and so on. Above the highest reaches of the Intuitive Mind and still above the Overmind with its own different gradations, one over-topping the other, is the Supermind It is the gods or the powers of the Overmind who have exercised their rule on the earth, at present they support the evolutionary universe in which we live in Matter It is only the Supermind, the supramental Truth-Consciousness, that has an absolute freedom from error Overmind is still a part of the Ignorance, in the sense that while it is ever in contact with the One Truth above it, it releases multiple aspects or truths of that One Truth in manifestation below it The Overmind has to be reached and brought down before the Supermind descent is at all possible Overmind has so far exercised its rule on earth, supporting the present evolutionary universe It is thus Overmind that descended into the Physical on 24 November 1926 and made the descent of Supermind a certitude

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* by A B Purani, p 217
- 2 *Ibid*
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- 4 *SABCL*, Vol 26, pp 143-144
- 5 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* by A B Purani, p 201
- 6 *Ibid*, pp 201-202
- 7 *Ibid*, pp 210-211
- 8 *Ibid*, p 193
- 9 *Ibid*, p 195
- 10 *Ibid*, p 197
- 11 *SABCL*, Vol 21, p 579
- 12 *Evening Talks* by A B Purani, 2nd Series, pp 314-315
- 13 *SABCL*, Vol 22, p 102
- 14 *Ibid*, Vol 20, p 36
- 15 *The Evening Talks* by A B Purani, 2nd Series, p 315
- 16 *SABCL*, Vol 22, p 98
- 17 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* by A B Purani, p 201
- 18 *SABCL*, Vol 21, pp 837, 852

KARMA: ELECTABLE, IMMUTABLE AND INEXORABLE

In tragic life, God wot, no villain need be,
Passions spin the plot We are betrayed
By what is false within ¹

Noble blood is of little help
Deluded by passions, the best
of men turn wicked, and reap
the evil that they sow ²

The Doctrine

WHETHER it is Meredith writing in *Modern Love* in England of the 1860s, or Vyasa dictating to Ganesha in India's mythic past, the finger points unwaveringly not outwards at the other, but inwards at oneself. The moving finger writes and, having writ, moves on, but it is the individual who is responsible for making that choice, thinking that thought, feeling that emotion, doing that act which sets off the inexorable chakra of karma, and not just blind nemesis that visits unjustified calamity on his head. The Indian insight into this law was voiced memorably by Robert Frost:

Two roads diverged in a lonely wood
And I took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference ³

Whether it is Sri Aurobindo choosing to turn away from comfortable employment with the Maharaja of Baroda to leading the revolutionary movement for India's freedom, and on to the sadhana of the Supramental, or Mahatma Gandhi choosing non-violence to challenge the brutal might of white dominance, or Lincoln choosing to face the spectre of civil war to wipe out slavery, in each case it is the choice of the road less travelled that has made all the difference, not just for the individual taking the option but for society in general. That difference in the consequences may not necessarily be evident immediately. The anguished cry may well ring out:

The best lack all conviction While the worst
Are full of a passionate intensity ⁴

Christianity overcame the Roman Empire centuries after Jesus was crucified. Indeed, that is why we bemoan the unjustified misery suffered by the good while the evil enjoy the best of times. Sri Aurobindo's short story, *Svapna* (Dream) slices through this Gordian knot at one fell stroke: the external appearances are deceptive, the mind of the evil-doer—who seems to be floating in a lake of bliss—is full of

scorpions, the righteous person mired in poverty enjoys a far higher quality of being—the ineffable wealth of a mind at peace with itself

In both cases, the condition of being—whether it is lack of conviction or passionate intensity—is a function of conscious choice, with its inevitable consequences to be borne Surely, it is critically significant that of all creatures man alone has the option of making choices instead of compulsively following instinct As Krishna tells Arjuna after all the advice of the *Gita*—*yatha icchasi tatha kuru* “Act as you wish” Given that undeniable fact, how is one to make sure—as the Pepsi jungle has it, “*Yehi hai right choice, baby—aha!*”^{*}—that the correct choice is being made? As Professor Albus Dumbledore tells the novice wizard Harry Potter, “As much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings would choose above all—the trouble is, humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things which are the worst for them”⁵ Ravana and Vibhishana, both are sons of the sage Vishravas and the *rakshasi* Kaikesi, yet, how different are their ends, in each case the consequence of individual decisions regarding the way of life adopted Ravana is the egotist par excellence who conquers the world but is a slave of his passions, Vibhishana’s unclouded vision clearly distinguishes between right and wrong Surya is the deity upholding *Rita*, truth, while Dharma is the god of righteousness Both sire sons on Kunti—Karna and Yudhishtira—who make choices that differ radically in motive and in implementation Yudhishtira perceives truth and grapples it to his heart with hoops of steel, Karna, knowing what is righteous, elects to oppose it The law of karma can provide an invaluable guide in choosing the road to take

Karmic law is quite plainly stated every act has a reaction, a result This consequence may not, however, be immediate So when, on occasion, it appears long after the act, the chooser is unable to connect and complains of unjustified, inexplicable misery being visited upon him, as King Lear does

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport

Arnold Toynbee, the great historian, even spoke of a national karmic effect, citing the examples of England, France, and Russia We could add Italy Great empires all, fallen to the dust and today living in the shadow of a super power The lesson. before making the choice, be aware that it is bound to produce not just a result but also a reaction A corollary is that “good” acts do not wipe out the reactions produced by “bad” acts The consequences flow along their own individual paths, they do not cancel one another The only exception is the path of yoga which, when adopted, is said to wipe the past slate clean⁶

How many births have I known
Without knowing the builder of this body!

^{*} This is the right choice, baby—aha!

How many births have I looked for him
 It is painful to be born again and again
 But now I have seen you, O builder of this body!
 All desire is extinct, Nirvana is attained!
 The rafters have crumbled, the ridge pole is smashed!
 You will not build them again

The Wish-fulfilling Tree

One way of gaining insight into this cosmic doctrine is through a parable that sets forth the existential predicament of humankind in the universe. the parable of the *Kalpataru*, the wish-fulfilling tree, narrated by Sri Ramakrishna ⁷

Into a room full of children at play walks the proverbial uncle, back from the city, who, of course, knows better. Laughing at their preoccupation with make-believe games, he asks them to lift up their eyes and go out to the massive banyan tree, which will grant them whatever they wish—the real stuff! The children do not believe him and remain busy with their toys. The uncle shrugs and leaves. And then they rush out, stand under the branches of this huge tree that cover the sky and ask for what all children crave: toys and sweets. In a flash they get what they want, but along with an unexpected bonus: the built-in opposite of what they wished for. With toys they get boredom; with sweets tummy-ache. Sure that something has gone wrong with their wishing, the children ask for bigger toys and sweeter sweets. The tree grants them their wishes and along with them bigger boredom and bigger tummy-ache. Time passes. They are now young men and women and their wishes change, for they know more. They ask for wealth, power, fame, sexual pleasure—and they get these, but also cupidity, insomnia, anxiety, and frustration/disease. Time passes. The wishers are now old and gather in three groups under the all-encompassing branches. The first group exclaims. “All this is an illusion!” Fools, they have learnt nothing. The second group says “We are wiser and will wish better next time.” Greater fools, they have learnt less than nothing. The third group, disgusted with everything, decides to cop out and asks for death. They are the most foolish of all. The tree grants them their desire and, with it, its opposite rebirth, under the same tree. For, where can one be born, or reborn, but within this cosmos!

All this while one child has been unable to move out of the room. Being lame, he was pushed down in the scramble and when he dragged himself to the window, he was transfixed watching his friends make their wishes, get them with their built-in opposites and suffer, yet compulsively continue to make more wishes. Riveted by this utterly engrossing *lila* of desire and its fruits, a profound swell of compassion welled up in the heart of this lame child, reaching out to his

companions. In that process, he forgot to wish for anything for himself. In that moment of spontaneous compassion for others, he sliced through the roots of the cosmic tree with the sword of non-attachment, of *nishkama karma*. He is the liberated one, the *mukta purusha*.

This wondrous *kama-vriksha*, tree of desire, is portrayed in a marvellously eidetic image by Vyasa in the *Mahabharata* (*Shanti Parva* 254. 1-8)

A wondrous kamavriksha grows in the heart,
 a tree of desire, born of attachment
 Anger and arrogance its trunk,
 impulse to act its irrigating channel
 Ignorance its root, negligence nourishes it
 fault-finding its leaves, past misdeeds its pith
 Grief, worry and delusion its branches,
 fear its seed.
 Vines of craving clasp it around
 creating delusion
 All around this fruit-giving mighty tree of desire
 sit greedy men,
 shackled in iron chains of desire,
 craving its fruit
 He who snaps these bonds of desire
 slices this tree
 with the sword of non-attachment
 He transcends grief-giving age and death.
 But the fool who climbs this tree
 greedy for fruit,
 it destroys him,
 even as poison pills destroy the sick
 The roots of this tree reach far and wide
 Only the wise can hew it down
 with the yoga-gifted
 sword of equanimity
 Who knows how to rein in desires
 and knows the study of desire itself binds,
 He transcends all sorrow.

(my transcreation)

The cosmic fig tree itself is figured forth by Krishna in the *Gita* (15 1-3) thus

Mention is made of a cosmic fig-tree
 rooted above,

whose leaves are said to be the Vedas ,
 the knower of this fig-tree
 is the knower of the Vedas
 Its branches reach out below and above,
 its flowers are the objects of the senses ,
 below the ground flourish more roots
 giving birth to action
 You may not see its real shape,
 nor its end, birth and existence
 Slice this fig-tree with non-attachment *

Maya: The Unanswered Question⁹

Another way of approaching an understanding of this predicament is through trying to answer, what is Maya? This is the question put by the wandering sage Narada to Vishnu. The story that follows was retold—curiously but typically Indian in happenstance—to Andre Malraux in Varanasi by a passerby. In *Anti-Memoirs* Malraux writes that suddenly an Indian came up to him and said, “Malraux Sahib, would you like to listen to a story?” Taken aback, Malraux muttered that he was going to an official meeting. “But this is a very good story,” was the insistent reply. Malraux, perforce, agreed and here is the story he heard

Narada, the itinerant divine sage roaming the three worlds, sowing seeds of discord and inveterate experimenter, goes up to Vishnu and demands that Maya be explained to him. Vishnu is silent. Narada is not one to be denied. He insists so persistently that the god has to answer him. “Maya cannot be explained, it has to be experienced,” he says. “If you can’t explain what you create, then I won’t believe in you,” retorts the never-say-die sage. Quickly deserting his serpent couch—for the fate of gods in whom humans do not believe is shrouded in uncertainty—Vishnu beckons him to follow. Walking together, they reach a desert where Vishnu sits down under a tree and exclaims, “I am so tired, Narada! Take this *lota* and get me some water from that oasis. When you return I will explain *Maya* to you.” Eager to plumb the mystery, Narada speeds off to the oasis and finds a well there beside a hut. He calls out, and a lovely girl opens the door. Looking into her eyes Narada is reminded of the compelling eyes of Vishnu. She invites him in and disappears indoors. Her parents come out and greet the guest, requesting him to rest and eat after his journey through the burning sands before he returns with the *lota* of water. Thinking of the lovely girl, Narada agrees. Night falls, and they urge him to leave in the cool morning. Awakening in the morning, Narada looks out and sees the girl bathing beside the well. He forgets about the *lota* of water. He stays on. The parents offer him their daughter’s hand in marriage. Narada accepts, and settles down here. Children

arrive, the parents-in-law die, Narada inherits the property 12 years go by Suddenly the floods arrive—floods in the desert!—His house is washed away His wife is swept away Reaching out to clutch her, he loses hold of his children who disappear in the waters Narada is submerged in the floods and loses consciousness. Narada awakens, his head pillowed in someone's lap Opening his eyes he gazes into the eyes of Vishnu, seated at the desert's edge under that same tree, those eyes that remind him of his wife's "Narada," asks Vishnu, "where is the *lota* of water?" Narada asked, "You mean, all that happened to me did not happen to me?" Vishnu smiled his enigmatic smile

Is the karmic law real? Who experiences what happens? Shankaracharya entered a dead king's body, experienced a royal life of luxury with queens, courtesans, retainers, war—the lot And he returned to answer the riddle put to him by a wise woman Which of these was real? Do we dream or live? Certain things remain an enigma It is said that the path of yoga shatters the adamantine shackles of karma That is why the Buddha exclaimed that he had seen through the labyrinth of creation—the rafters are shattered, the edifice has crumbled, and never again will he be in the clutches of birth and rebirth

The Drop of Honey

After the Kurukshetra holocaust, when the blind Dhritarashtra bewails the unjustified misery thrust upon him and turns to Vidura for consolation, this child of a maid-servant narrates a gripping parable that provides yet another clue to understanding our existential situation.¹⁰

Take a certain Brahmin who loses himself in a dense jungle filled with wild beasts Lions and tigers, elephants and bears Yelling and trumpeting and roaring a dismal scene to frighten even the god of death, Yama The Brahmin is terror-stricken He horripilates His mind is a bundle of fears He begins to run, helter-skelter, he looks right and left, hoping to find someone who will save him But the fierce beasts—they are everywhere—the jungle echoes with their weird roaring—wherever he goes, they are there, ahead of him

Suddenly he notices that the fearful forest is swathed in a massive net In front of him, with open arms, is a horrendous-looking female Also, five-headed snakes hiss at him—tall snakes, their hill-huge bodies slithering up to the sky

In the middle of the forest is a well covered with grass and intertwining creepers He falls in that well and dangles there, clutched by a creeper, like a jackfruit ripe for plucking He hangs there, feet up, head down

Horror upon horror! At the bottom of the well he sees a monstrous snake On the edge of the well is a huge black elephant with six heads and twelve feet hovering at the well's mouth And, buzzing in and out of the creepers, are giant,

repulsive bees surrounding a honeycomb. They are trying to sip the deliciously sweet honey, the honey all creatures love, the honey whose real taste only children know

The honey drips out of the comb, and the honey drops fall on the hanging Brahmin's tongue. Helpless he dangles, relishing the honey drops. The more the drops fall, the greater his pleasure. But his thirst is not quenched. More! Still more! 'I am alive!' he says, 'I am enjoying life!'

Even as he says this, black and white rats are gnawing the roots of the creeper. Fears encircle him. Fear of the carnivores, fear of the fierce female, fear of the monstrous snake, fear of the giant elephant, fear of the rat-devoured creeper about to snap, fear of the large buzzing bees. In that flux and flow of fear he dangles, hanging on to hope, craving the honey, surviving in the jungle of *samsara*, this world.

The jungle is the universe, the dark area around the well is an individual life span. The wild beasts are diseases. The fierce female is decay. The well is the material world. The huge snake at the bottom of the well is *Kala*, all-consuming time, the ultimate and unquestioned annihilator. The creeper from which the man dangles is the self-preserving life-instinct found in all creatures. The six-headed elephant trampling the tree at the well's mouth is the year—six faces, six seasons, twelve feet, twelve months. The rats nibbling at the creeper are day and night gnawing at the life span of all creatures. The bees are desires. The drops of honey are pleasures that come from desires indulged. They are the *rasa* of *kama*, the juice of the senses in which all men drown.

This is the way the wise interpret the wheel of life, this is the way they escape the *chakra* of life.

Dhritarashtra, of course, misses the point. Vidura is making man, literally hanging on to life by a thread and enveloped in multitudinous fears, is yet engrossed in the drops of honey, exclaiming, "More! Still more! I am alive! I am enjoying life!" And, like the blind king, we tend to miss the point too. Ignoring the law of karma, taking that other road, we fall into the pit and rage, but inveterately, compulsively strain to lick the honey. If heeded, this doctrine becomes a powerful instrument for building character, maintaining integrity and establishing a society that functions not on *matsya nyaya* [the big devouring the small] that celebrates individualism, but on dharma that upholds society and the world itself.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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- 7 Pradip Bhattacharya *Desire under the Kalpataru*, *Journal of South Asian Literature*, XXVIII, 1 & 2, 1993, pp 315-35 Cf P Lal's Introduction to Barbara Harrison's *Learning About India*
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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Education in Ancient India by *Mitali Chatterjee*, Printworld (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi 110-015 Price Rs 380, xii + 303 pages

VALUE education has been the term which is in vogue these days. There is a strong case also made to introduce it into the formal curricula of schools and universities. But perhaps the necessity for value education in the modern sense was not required in the olden days. It was taken for granted as an aspect of complete upbringing of the younger generation. In fact there were internal as well as external factors which were invariably taken into consideration. The intrinsic capacities of the students and the contingent aspects were well integrated into each other. The excessive emphasis on professional teaching that has come in our time has caused several disparities which are being sought now to be corrected by giving to the system a human touch.

But what are these values? They have, and quite understandably, different connotations for different educationists. At one time ethics was a compulsory subject in schools. In several cases a political-ideological turn is given to the concept. To some these can also imply truth, righteous conduct, peace, love and non-violence. Sri Aurobindo himself speaks of the fivefold purpose of education—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. That is undoubtedly the completest system possible, harmonising all the aspects of human personality with its need for building a strong and responsive body, emotional nobility, intellectual acumen, cherishing love, sweetness, joy, and beyond all these an opening to the worlds of luminous thought and intuition with a certain universality in the outlook. In it the secular and the spiritual are not separate. He in fact envisions that children should be helped to grow up into “straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature.”

Study of educational systems of the past can benefit us. In that context Mitali Chatterjee's *Education in Ancient India* is welcome. It is an in-depth study of the system belonging to a particular period of Indian history. During the Gupta period (319-550) the arts, literature and sciences flourished in the country with an astonishingly high degree of excellence which could not have happened without an enlightened educational system. Dr Chatterjee's is a work of “painstaking research” and has succeeded well in its aim. In its comprehensive sweep it traverses the Puranas, Smriti texts, literary classics such as the works of Kalidasa, Vishakhadatta, Kumardasa and others, as well as Jain and Buddhist works, astronomical treatises of Aryabhata and the narratives of the foreign travellers. The study has been presented in six chapters and concludes with the relevance of the Gupta educational legacy to the educational system of the modern age.

“Transmission of knowledge,” says the author, “to the student from the teacher was the main factor in ancient education. Since the philosophy of education is part of social ethics, it is concerned with human acts. Sometimes education is used in the

sense of that lifelong process of development which is identical with the course of a human life itself'' Life and education thus turn out to move together

Another important point the author makes is as follows ''Hindu students received a thorough training of self-control and self-sacrifice for the good of the world It is the training which was in marked contrast to the modern secular education'' In the imperial Gupta age the emphasis on education was to make a democratic society in which free thought, creative arts and innovative industrial occupation flourished simultaneously There were big libraries and the observatory at Nalanda proves that a scientific approach was much encouraged

Although Dr Chatterjee provides a brief discussion of education in the Purana and Smriti literature, it would be interesting to go to the roots of the education of the Rigvedic period with its multidimensional richness in all branches of human pursuit of excellence The publishers will do well if such a comprehensive study is presented in one of their forthcoming tracts dealing with the reconstruction of Indian history and culture The education of the future as proposed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother should also be made known to the wider world to mould a new society in that Light

R Y DESHPANDE

No High Romance—An Anthology of Poems by *Goutam Ghosal* Pages 34 Price Rs 50. Reena Publications, Howrah

Goutam Ghosal has written poetry in various strains love, Nature, various kinds of nostalgia, friendship, God, Mother and so on Although the poet declaims that he had never entered the boundaries of high romance, there is a very authentic note of Godward emotion in his poems of this new collection

In his earlier collection *Magic Mirror and Other Poems* mundane love was absent In *No High Romance* there are some very refined love poems in between poems of Nature and mystic dreams, like

I woke up in the lane of a large building,
and as I turned its bend
I saw large pink temples before me,
large, closely-knit walls in an aura
of dim yellow light

(*Inside the Temples*, p 8)

or

Who are those
that walk hastily
through the dark

between the two lakes
with dim lanterns?

(*A Time to Save*, p. 11)

Ghosal seems to have seen life very minutely since his boyhood days and some of his images are not just original—they speak of the seeing eye of the artist

Remember the dark trees at night
that bordered the other side of the river?
the sudden pyre from the dark crematory
leaping up to kiss the far away blue?

(*Those Memories*, p. 19)

The memory of the Mother creeps in here and there, even in the love poems. Even though the poet has achieved no high romance, there are images with little glories, which light up the life of man. The Aurobindonian myth of *The Dream Boat*¹ becomes a metaphor when the poet speaks of a chance which came and passed by

The gold God never came back.²

(*Pride*, p. 16)

All the poems read well and make us curious about the poet's life

SARONI MONDAL

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- 1 *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p. 561
- 2 Compare with the line in *The Dream Boat*
"And the gold god and the dream boat come not"