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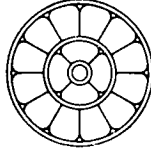
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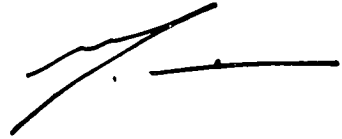


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 11

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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## ETERNITY LOOKED OUT FROM HER ON TIME

BUT now she sat by sleeping Satyavan  
Awake within, and the enormous Night  
Surrounded her with the Unknowable's vast.  
A voice began to speak from her own heart  
That was not hers, yet mastered thought and sense  
As it spoke all changed within her and without;  
All was, all lived; she felt all being one;  
The world of unreality ceased to be...  
There all was conscious, made of the Infinite,  
All had a substance of Eternity  
Yet this was the same Indecipherable,  
It seemed to cast from it universe like a dream  
Vanishing for ever into an original Void.  
But this was no more some vague ubiquitous point  
Or a cipher of vastness in unreal Nought.  
It was the same but now no more seemed far  
To the living clasp of her recovered soul.  
It was her self, it was the self of all...  
It was all Love and the one Beloved's arms,  
It was sight and thought in one all-seeing Mind,  
It was joy of being on the peaks of God.  
She passed beyond Time into eternity,  
Slipped out of space and became the Infinite;  
Her being rose into unreachable heights  
And found no end of its journey in the Self...  
She was all vastness and one measureless point,  
She was a height beyond heights, a depth beyond depths,  
She lived in the everlasting and was all  
That harbours death and bears the wheeling hours  
All contraries were true in one huge spirit  
Surpassing measure, change and circumstance.  
An individual, one with cosmic self  
In the heart of the Transcendent's miracle  
And the secret of World-personality  
Was the creator and the lord of all .  
Her spirit saw the world as living God;  
It saw the One and knew that all was He  
She knew him as the Absolute's self-space,  
One with her self and ground of all things here  
In which the world wanders seeking for the Truth

Guarded behind its face of ignorance:  
 She followed him through the march of endless Time  
 All Nature's happenings were events in her. .  
 Her mind became familiar with its mind,  
 Its body was her body's larger frame  
 She was a single being, yet all things,  
 The world was her spirit's wide circumference,  
 The thoughts of others were her intimates,  
 Their feelings close to her universal heart,  
 Their bodies her many bodies kin to her,  
 She was no more herself but all the world.  
 Out of the infinitudes all came to her,  
 Into the infinitudes sentient she spread,  
 Infinity was her own natural home.  
 Nowhere she dwelt, her spirit was everywhere...  
 All Nature reproduced her in its lines,  
 Its movements were large copies of her own  
 She was the single self of all these selves,  
 She was in them and they were all in her  
 She was a subconscious life of tree and flower,  
 The outbreak of the honied buds of spring;  
 She burned in the passion and splendour of the rose,  
 She was the red heart of the passion-flower,  
 The dream-white of the lotus in its pool.  
 Out of subconscious life she climbed to mind,  
 She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,  
 She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,  
 She was the climbing of his soul to God  
 The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed  
 She was Time and the dreams of God in Time,  
 She was Space and the wideness of his days.  
 From this she rose where Time and Space were not,  
 The superconscious was her native air,  
 Infinity was her movement's natural space,  
 Eternity looked out from her on Time

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 554-57)

## SRI AUROBINDO'S GAYATRI

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं रूपां ज्योतिः परस्य  
धिमहि ।  
यन्नः सत्येन दीपयेत् ॥

(*Tat savitur varam rūpam jyotiḥ parasya  
dhimahi, yannah satyena dipayet*)

Let us meditate on the most  
auspicious (best) form of Savitri  
on the light of the Supreme  
which shall illumine us with  
the Truth.

NB The invocation in the Mantra is to the Sun-God *savitr* (सवित्) Accordingly in its English rendering the word *Savitri* should be read in that context



## SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of October 2001)

*When I was working for Satyagraha, I worked with a zeal and energy which I don't think I am using here. There one did not care for body or vital or anything else, but there was concentration and interest. Here there is not that concentration and interest. Is it because here there is no fighting programme except against one's own self? Can one work here with deep interest, vigour and selflessness?*

THE Satyagraha was one of those movements in which the vital part of the nature gets easily enthusiastic and interested—it meant a fight on the vital level (its only difference from other revolutionary activities being its “non-violent” character), with universal support and applause and approval, a nation-wide excitement behind you, the sense of heroism and possible martyrdom, a “moral” ideal giving further support of strong self-approbation and the sense of righteousness. Here there is nothing that ministers to the human vital nature; the work is small, silent, shut off from the outside world and its circumstances of value only as a field for spiritual self-culture. If one is governed by the sole spiritual motive and has the spiritual consciousness, one can take joy and interest in this work. Or if, in spite of his human shortcomings, the worker is mainly bent on spiritual progress and self-perfection, then also he can take interest in the work and both feel its utility for the discovery and purification of his egoistic mental and vital and physical nature and take joy in it as a service of the Divine.

11 August 1932

The Mother: The great secret for overcoming all difficulties is to give oneself to the Divine unreservedly.

12 August 1932

*For the last few days I cannot read anything of a serious nature, such as philosophical books, and I have practically a passion for reading stories and novels whenever I get time. Is it harmful? I have found that for myself serious books bring in too much mental activity and sometimes even doubts.*

The reading of books of a light character may act as a relaxation of the mental consciousness. In the early stages it is not always possible to keep the mind to an unbroken spiritual concentration and endeavour and it takes refuge in other occupations, feeling even instinctively drawn to those of a lighter character.

*The same question applies to newspaper reading. It does not seem helpful at all but it appears to be a necessity. Is it necessary to keep in touch with world-movements?*

It is not necessary to be in touch with the outside world in this way, it may be useful under certain circumstances and for some purposes. It may act too as a hindrance. All depends upon the consciousness from which it is done.

*In dealing with workmen, I sometimes behave in a very familiar and affectionate way, sometimes in a neutral way, and sometimes I get angry and even dislike or hate a particular person. How to behave with them?*

None of these ways is the right one; the first weakens the authority, the second is not dynamic, the last is obviously not helpful. In all work the nearer one gets to an entire equanimity (which does not mean indifference) in the mind and the vital feeling, the better. A calm detached attitude, with a fundamental sympathy in it but not of the sentimental kind, a clear unbiassed eye observing their character and reactions, and a quiet and firm authority without harshness, capable both of kindness and of quiet severity, where severity is needed, would be the best attitude.

*The other day I dreamt that I was flying in the air and showing the people near me that I was flying, not walking. Is vanity present in the subconscious also?*

Yes, surely it is present. All normal reactions and characteristics are there in the subconscious, and even remain there after they have been rejected from the conscious nature and can return from it in the conscious nature

*Yesterday in a dream I saw a serpent at first small and then very large. I was not afraid, but I showed it to people This is the fourth time I have seen a serpent in dream and usually something wrong follows thereafter. What is it indicative of?*

A snake in these vital visions is always the indication of a hostile force, usually when it is about to attack (you or others) or when one is about to cross the way of some hostile vital force in oneself or in the atmosphere or in Nature. The wrong or untoward happening is the result of the attack or the contact, but it can often be prevented or at least minimised if one puts oneself on guard, rejects or destroys the hostile formation or knows how to put a counteracting influence.

*Three days ago I saw in dream a railway train being derailed and the engine separating and moving here and there on ordinary ground; the engine driver was weeping.*

This and the snake appearances are very common symbolic experiences in the vital plane. This one is indicative of some interruption and perplexity in the progress of the sadhana. A journey by train, carriage, ship, etc. is almost always indicative of some part or line of the inner progress.

*Yesterday I was feeling a little feverish. After some months I felt the necessity of getting a fever, thinking it is purifying. I didn't get any fever, but K got slightly ill. G, whom I told about my wishing for a fever, explained that by so wishing I had invoked the fever but it was transferred to K. Does it happen like that? Is not fever purifying, to the body and the mind as well?*

It is always wrong to wish for illness. Fever is not a purifying action, it is the sign of an attack on the body and fight and resistance to the attack. Illness in the body is like impurity in the vital, a thing undesirable and to be rejected. It may happen that in throwing out the illness (the attacking force) one throws out also something within, some impurity which helped it to come, but that is the result of a Force working within and not of the illness. It is quite possible that an illness or attack can be transferred in this way from one to another—indeed it very commonly happens, but it does not follow that it happened in this instance.

20 August 1932

I return to you your wife's letter, but this does not mean that you are expected to reply to it—or even read it, unless you wish to do so.

22 August 1932

*(To be continued)*

SRI AUROBINDO

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of October 2001)*

PURANI Gandhi seems to express modesty. When he differs from Malaviya or somebody else, he says, "He is my superior but I differ."

SRI AUROBINDO: But does he really believe that? When I differed in anything, I used to say very few words and remain stiff, simply saying, "I don't agree."

Once Surendranath Banerji wanted to annex the Extremist Party and invited us to the U P Moderate Conference to fight against Sir Pherozshah Mehta. But there was a clause that no association that was not of two or three years' standing could send delegates to the Conference. Ours was a new party. So we could not go. But Banerji said, "We will elect you as delegates." J L. Banerji and others agreed to it, but I just said, "No." I spoke at most twenty or thirty words and the whole thing failed. How can you call a man modest when he stands against his own party?

Tilak used to do the same thing. He used to hear all the speeches and resolutions of the delegates but at the end pass his own resolutions. They said, "What a democratic leader he is! He listens to and considers all our opinions and resolutions."

Then at the Hooghly Provincial Conference we met again to consider the Morley-Minto reforms. The Moderates urged in favour of accepting the reforms. We were against. We were in the majority in the Subjects Committee, while in the Conference they were so. S. N. Banerji was very angry with us and threatened that he and his party would break away from the Conference if their resolution was not accepted. I didn't want them to break away at that time, for our party was still weak. So I said to him, "We will agree to your proposal on condition I am allowed to speak in the Conference." In the Conference there was a great row and confusion. In the midst of it Aswini Dutt began jumping and saying, "This is life, this is life!" Banerji tried hard to control the people but failed and became furious. Then I stood up and told them to be silent and to walk out silently. I said that whatever agreement we came to, we would inform them. Everybody became silent at once and walked out. This made Banerji still more furious. He said, "While we old leaders can't control them, this young man of hardly thirty commands them by just lifting a finger!"

He could not understand the power of a man standing for some principles and the people following the leader in obedience to those principles. The influence of the Moderates was mainly on the upper middle class, the moneyed people.

It was at that time that people began to get the sense of discipline and order and of obeying the leader from within. They were violent but at the command of the leader they obeyed. That paved the way for Gandhi.

The Conference at that time was a very tame affair. There was nothing to do but pass already framed resolutions. Nobody put in even an amendment.

Banerji had personal magnetism, was sweet-spoken and could get round anybody. He also tried to get round me by flattering, patting and caressing. His idea was

to use the Extremists as the sword and use the Moderates for the public face. In private he would go up to Revolution. He wanted a Provincial Board of Control of Revolution. Barin once took a bomb to him. The name of S. N. Banerji was found in the Bomb Case. But as soon as Norton pronounced the name there was a "Hush, hush" and he shut up.

Barin was preparing bombs at my place at Baroda, but I didn't know it. He got the formula from N. Dutt who was a very good chemist. He, Upen and Devabrata were very good writers too. They wrote in the *Yugantar*.

Here Purani brought in the topic of the Oundh State and described the reforms the Chief of the State was introducing. They seemed to be something like Sri Aurobindo's own idea.

SRI AUROBINDO: What provision is there for autonomous government in villages?

PURANI: The village panchayets have considerable power.

SRI AUROBINDO: But suppose the people want Socialism or Communism?

PURANI: The Chief is introducing co-operative farming.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is an excellent thing. But Dictatorship of the Proletariat is different. On paper, of course, it sounds nice but it is quite a different matter in practice. Everyone is made to think alike. That is all very good in church or religion, but a church or religion is voluntary: you can choose there but you can't choose your country. If you think alike, there can't be any progress. If you dare to differ from Stalin, you are liquidated. I don't understand how humanity can progress under such conditions.

Look at Hitler. After all what do all his ideas come to except that the Germans are the best nation in the whole world and Hitler should be their leader; all Jews are wicked persons; all people on earth should become Nazis, and France must be crushed. That's all!

Then there was a little further talk and then somebody spoke of certain Governments acting like robbers.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are not all governments robbers? Some do the robbing with legislation and some without. In some countries you have to pay 50% of your income as taxes and you manage with the rest as best you can. Customs is another robbery. What an amount of money they collect in this way and yet I don't understand what they do with such a huge income. France was complaining that the Government produces only 250 aeroplanes as compared to the 1000 of Germany. England produces 500 and yet England has a sufficiently honest administration. There was a question the other day in the House of Commons as to what they were doing with the money and how it was they were still unready for war.

PURANI: I heard a story from a Customs Officer that even Princes join in smuggling. Recently a Prince was caught along with a jeweller.

SRI AUROBINDO: With such Customs rules smuggling seems almost a virtue! It looks like robbing a robber. You must have heard that the Maharajah of Darbhanga had to pay Rs. 50,000 as duty on the necklace of Marie Antoinette which he had bought for one lakh.

Purani then brought in the question of Congress Ministry, saying that Nariman had been elected again as Congress member by Vallabhbai Patel. He had been punished for betrayal of Congress in the election campaign.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is not betrayal but indiscipline. Dr. Kher, the Bombay Premier, seems to be a solid man.

PURANI: Congress Ministry appears to be fairly successful everywhere except in C. P.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the weak point. Yet Nagpur was a very good centre for Extremists in our time.

PURANI: They are thinking of separating C. P. Hindustani from C. P. Marathi.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the obvious step to take. I wonder why they did not take it before.

*(To be continued)*

*(Nirodbaran, Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 1, pp. 111-14)*

## EVER THE AMPLER DREAM-DAY

NEWLY woken day  
Build the unbroken light,  
Sweep far far way  
Sullenness of night

Tumult of gold descending,  
Thou diapason bright,  
All our Darkness rending  
With melody of Sight

Ever the ampler Dream-day  
Spreading calm wings of flight  
Watted through widening gleam-way  
On the peaks of the world will alight.

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment Very beautiful

## SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of October 2001)

त्रिः सप्त यद्गुह्यानि त्वे इत् पदाविदन्निहिता यज्ञियास ।  
तेभो रक्षन्ते अमृतं सजोषाः पशूञ्च स्थातृञ्चरथं च पाहि ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72.6)

In thee the gods of the sacrifice found the thrice seven secret seats hidden within, they, being of one heart, protect by them the immortality Guard thou the herds that stand and that which moves. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 211)

When the masters of sacrifice have found hidden in thee the thrice seven secret planes, by them they guard with one mind of acceptance Immortality Protect the Herds, those that stand and that which is mobile. (SABCL, Vol. 11, p 62)

विद्वाँ अग्ने वयुनानि क्षितीना व्यानुषक् छुरुधो जीवसे धा ।  
अन्तर्विद्वाँ अध्वनो देवयानानतन्द्रो दूतो अभवो हविर्वाद् ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72.7)

O Agni, having knowledge of all manifestations (or births,) in the worlds (or, knowing all the knowledge of the peoples) establish thy forces, continuous, for life. Knowing, within, the paths of the journeying of the gods thou becamest their sleepless messenger and the bearer of the offerings. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 211)

O Fire, thou art the knower of our knowings, ordain for the people an unbroken succession of strengths that they may live The knower within of the paths of the journey of the gods, thou hast become a sleepless messenger and the carrier of the offerings (SABCL, Vol 11, p 62)

स्वाध्यो दिव आ सप्त यद्ही रायो दुरो व्यृतज्ञा अजानन् ।  
विदद्गव्यं सरमा दृळ्हमूर्वं येना नु कं मानुषी भोजते विद् ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72.8)

The seven mighty ones of heaven (the rivers) placing aright the thought, knowing the Truth, discerned the doors of the felicity, Sarama found the fastness, the wideness of the cows whereby now the human creature enjoys (the supreme riches) (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 211)

The seven mighty Rivers from Heaven, deep-thinking, knowers of the Truth, knew



the doors of the treasure; Sarama discovered the mass of the Ray-Cow, the strong place, the wideness, and now by that the human creature enjoys bliss (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 63)

आ ये विश्वा स्वपत्यानि तस्थुः कृण्वानासो अमृतत्वाय गातुम् ।  
महा महद्भिः पृथिवी वि तस्थे माता पुत्रैरदितिर्धायसे वेः ॥

(Rigveda, 1.72.9)

They who entered upon all things that bear right issue, made the path to Immortality; by the great ones and by the greatness earth stood wide, the mother Aditi with her sons came for the upholding. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 211)

These are they who set their steps on all things that have fair issue, making a path towards immortality. Earth stood wide in greatness by the Great Ones, the Mother infinite with her sons came to uphold her. (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 63)

अधि श्रियं नि दधुश्चारुमस्मिन् दिवो यदक्षी अमृता अकृण्वन् ।  
अध क्षरन्ति सिन्धवो न सुष्टाः प्र नीचीरग्ने अरुषीरजानन् ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72 10)

The Immortals planted in him the shining glory, when they made the two eyes of heaven (identical probably with the two vision-powers of the Sun, the two horses of Indra); rivers, as it were, flow down released; the shining ones (the cows) who were here below knew, O Agni. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 211)

When the immortals made the two eyes of Heaven, they set in him the splendour and the beauty Then there flow as if rivers loosed to their course, downward they ran, his ruddy mares, and knew, O Fire. (SABCL, Vol 11, p 63)

*(To be continued)*

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

## THE POWER OF WORDS

It seems unnecessary to draw your attention to the quantity of useless words that are uttered each day; this evil is well known to all, although very few people think of remedying it

But there are many other words which are spoken needlessly. That is to say, in the course of the day, we often have the opportunity of expressing a helpful wish by pronouncing one word or another, provided that we know how to put the appropriate thought behind the words.

But too often we lose this opportunity of drawing a beneficial mental atmosphere around the people we know and thus of truly helping them. It would be very useful to remedy this neglect

To do this, we must refuse to allow our minds to remain in that state of vague and passive imprecision which is almost constant in most people

To cure ourselves progressively of this somnolence, we can, when pronouncing a word, force ourselves to reflect upon its exact meaning, its true import, in order to make it fully effective.

In this regard, we can say that the active power of words comes from three different causes.

The first two lie in the word itself, which has become a battery of forces. The third lies in the fact of living integrally the deep thought expressed by the word when we pronounce it.

Naturally, if these three causes of effectiveness are combined, the power of the word is considerably enhanced.

1) There are certain words whose resonance in the physical world is the perfect vibratory materialisation of the more subtle vibration produced by the thought in its own domain.

If we examine closely this similarity between the vibrations of thought and sound, we can discover the limited number of root syllables which express the most general ideas, and which are to be found in most spoken languages with an almost identical meaning (This origin of language should not be confused with the origin of written languages, which are of an altogether different nature and correspond to different needs.)

2) There are other words which have been repeated in certain circumstances for hundreds of years and which are instinct with the mental forces of all those who have pronounced them. They are true batteries of energy.

3) Finally, there are words which assume an immediate value when they are pronounced, as a result of the living thought of the one who pronounces them.

To illustrate what I have just said with an example, here is a very powerful word, for it can combine the qualities of all three categories: it is the Sanskrit word "AUM"

It is used in India to express the divine Immanence. There, it is associated with

every meditation, every contemplation, every yogic practice.

More than any other sound, this sound "AUM" gives rise to a feeling of peace, of serenity, of eternity.

Moreover, this word is instinct with the mental forces which for centuries all those who have used it have accumulated around the idea that it expresses, and, for Hindus especially, it has the true power of bringing one into contact with the divine Essence it evokes.

And as Orientals have a religious mind and the habit of concentration, few pronounce this word without putting into it the conviction that is needed to make it fully effective.

In China, a similar effect is obtained with a word of identical meaning and somewhat similar sound, the word "TAO"

Our western languages are less expressive, in their present form, they are too far removed from the root language which gave birth to them. But we can always animate a word by the power of our living and active thought.

Besides, there are formulas which we could profitably add to all those in common use.

These formulas were used in certain ancient schools of initiation. They served as greetings, and in the mouth of one who knew how to think them, they had a very special power of action.

The disciples, the neophytes who were taking their first steps on the path, were greeted. "May the peace of equilibrium be with you"

All those who by their constant and progressive inner and outer attitude had shown their deep and lasting goodwill, were greeted "May the highest good be yours"

And in certain instructors manifesting especially high forces, this word was endowed with the power of transmitting true gifts, for example, the gift of healing.

THE MOTHER

(A Talk dated 18 June 1912 *Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol 2, pp 63-65)

## A DREAM-EXPERIENCE

ON 13th August [1934] I had this dream in the afternoon. There was a very large ship—ship or aeroplane I cannot say exactly, let me call it a ship. It was of silvery colour and richly ornamented with various artistic workmanship. The bottom of the ship was in darkness—I cannot say whether it was in the sea but when seen from above, i.e. from the level of the deck of the ship, it was seeming like an unfathomable abyss, it was not possible to distinguish whether it was water or a fathomless abyss from where the ship has risen upwards. From that dark abyss this ship had risen at a wonderful height. I was somewhere very near the ship at a plane in the same level with the deck of the ship. From that place I saw only this middle portion of the ship—the two extremities were beyond my view—and the lower part of it was covered with darkness. The part I saw was of silvery colour. A ladder of rope has gone up from this dark abyss below to the deck of the ship. One has to go to the ship by climbing this ladder. This ladder is of golden colour and has run up just by the side of the ship. This has become brighter and brighter as it has gone up but it has retained its enlightened golden colour even when it has reached the height of the deck of the ship. Climbing up this ladder is very strenuous and it requires firmness, courage, vigilance, and carefulness. A little carelessness may bring one down below into the fathomless abyss. Just by the side of the ladder there was something else like a net having large meshes. While climbing this ladder one has to hold mesh after mesh as one's support. At the time of climbing both the net (which is a support for climbing) and the ladder swing at a slight movement. The ladder is not ended at the level of the deck but it has gone above perhaps, so the distance between the ladder and the edge of the ship was only 2 ft.

I saw the Mother climbing this ladder very easily and going up in the ship with some other sadhaks whom I do not know. Entering the ship she disappeared. I was seeing from a height of the level of the deck. Then came the turn of myself. Pavitra was before me and behind me were some two or three sadhaks. I climbed very strenuously and reached near the deck. The ladder was swinging and I was feeling dizziness to see downwards for that place is very high from the abyss. With the supporting net in his two hands Pavitra sat on the edge of the ship keeping his feet still on the ladder. I cannot say why he sat there. I was on the ladder with the other persons behind me. Now there was a bundle of thread or something like that—but it is sure that it was thread, its colour was like black. If anybody wants to enter into this ship he has to do something with this thread bundle. I cannot say what work it is but the bundle was there. I saw it, and someone told me: "You have to do some work with this thread—if you can do it you can enter into the ship. But at the time [of] doing the work there is every chance of falling down into the abyss if one is not sufficiently vigilant and careful." When I saw the thread bundle I came to know or a suggestion automatically came to me that this thread work was originally done in the Moonlight or the origin of the thread is in the Moonlight. I was preparing for the task at that moment I awoke.

MANO MOHAN DHAR

Sri Aurobindo's comment: The ship is the spiritual consciousness—that is indicated by the silvery colour—the deck indicates secure position in the spiritual consciousness—the dark abyss is the ignorance of the ordinary nature—the golden ladder is the Truth power which becomes more and more bright as one rises from plane to plane up to the supramental (golden)—the net with meshes is the ascending consciousness—the black ball is probably the subconscious mind which has to be turned into the moonlight (spiritual mind) of which it is the dark reverse—for the spirit is involved in the subconscious.

[N B We are reminded of the Mother's experience of 3 February 1958 of the Ship of the Supramental World, *Questions and Answers*, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 271-76 See also pages 853-54 in this issue of *Mother India*. The text of the letter is as was seen by Sri Aurobindo —R.Y.D.]

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## THE SPIRIT'S CHARGE

Too often we forget the spirit's charge  
 Lost in the splendid centuries of man,  
 The magnificent creations of his art  
 And his mental constructions evolving plot and plan.

Yet are there moments that awaken the inner life  
 Occurring in sudden spaces of the soul,  
 By chance encounter, harmony or strife  
 And set our steps towards the heightened goal.

All life's perfections are born from vision within,  
 For a greater consciousness moves our hearts and hands  
 To create the masterworks transcending time  
 From realms alone the spirit understands

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

(Written after a visit to Venice and the Louvre in Paris )

## A GARLAND OF TRIBUTES

AMAL KIRAN IS viewed by the Aurobindonian world with admiration, respect, and affection. He is like a pure diamond refracting light revealing a harmonized spectrum of inner splendour and reflecting light with dazzling intellectual brilliance. Amal Kiran is a versatile genius and a polymath. He is an acclaimed poet, humorist, artist, historian, critical-thinker, holistic philosopher, and a sadhak of Integral Yoga among other things. He is a prolific writer with over fifty published books on varying subjects

A small illustrative sample of tributes is narrated here with a hope that these tributes may kindle sufficient curiosity and arouse earnest interest in readers to pursue their search for more information on Amal Kiran and get some insight and understanding of his pilgrimage on the path of Integral Yoga that may have relevance to their own quest:

Aldous Huxley's message dated 29 January 1949 for the first issue of *Mother India* with a birth date of 21 February 1949 is indicative of the young Editor's challenge.<sup>1</sup>

I wish you all the success in your venture. You will, of course, be a voice crying in the wilderness.. But if a few individuals pay attention, something will have been accomplished.

Kathleen Raine had extensive correspondence with Amal Kiran for almost a year about Blake's 1794 poem, *The Tyger*. A famous English authority on Blake, Kathleen Raine is known for her scholarly pursuit to trace in details of the poem, 'Tyger', the play of a gnostic-hermetic-alchemical-kabbalistic tradition. Regarding Amal Kiran, she had conveyed to Sir Geoffrey Keynes<sup>2</sup> "I think he has found a profound truth not seen by any one of us hitherto" She unreservedly endorsed Amal Kiran's publication,<sup>3</sup> "I think you have more insight into the poem (*Tyger*) than any other commentator has ever done, hope to see your Essay published soon, with or without the modifications I have suggested Some you may accept, others reject, of course" Her fond respect for Amal Kiran is evident in her letter of December 31, 1993:<sup>4</sup> "... the aspiration of your life-work as a poet has been a yoga, as Blake would say a use of one of 'the three powers of conversing with paradise' and Blake would surely applaud and delight in that vision you share with him... I look forward to dipping in *The Secret Splendour* and finding always something that speaks to me from that paradisaical vision to which we all—Blake, Sri Aurobindo, yourself and I hope I too, aspire Those friends who share that 'divine vision' or seek it are very precious, in this dark world.."

Nirod-da who prides his seventy-two years young (and kicking) unbroken friendship with Amal crystallized his fondness for him on his 90th birthday with these statements:<sup>5</sup> "...Amal Kiran—whose cultural and intellectual achievements have been

outstanding in a number of fields, apart from those of a remarkable spiritual and psychic embodiment. A poet of rare height, a man of vast knowledge, intuitive perception, exceptional calm, and a charm hard to resist, he follows in his Master's footsteps and what I came to admire in him most was his freedom from vanity, largeness of spirit and an inborn equanimity."

R. Y. Deshpande, a physicist and the associate editor of *Mother India*, referring to Amal Kiran's poem *Two Birds* indicates.<sup>6</sup> "The *Two Birds* unmistakably demonstrates that the path chosen by Amal Kiran is aesthetic-spiritual rather than that of an austere tapasvin of the bygone days and that it has taken him to the courtyard of the Beautiful who is also the Truthful and the Joyous."

Internationally reputed C. V. Devan Nair's personal tribute may be shared by many around the world.<sup>7</sup> "I love and admire Amal Kiran, not only for himself, but for the entire context of space, time and atmosphere which engendered so variegated a flower. And for the fact that I personally came to know this phenomenon and to partake of some at least of its hues and scents. I deliberately use the plural in this regard, simply because this particular bloom is so multi-hued and multi-scented that one does not know where to begin." Nair goes on to add<sup>8</sup> "With his innate poetic genius, his phenomenal memory of everything he reads, and an extraordinary sensitivity to ever-so-subtle nuances of shade and significance, Amal proved to be an uncommonly clear conduit for the Truth-burdened word and phrase."

Dilip Kumar Roy who enjoyed being among the greats has this to convey<sup>9</sup> "The friend who impressed me so deeply in the early years of my Ashram life was K. D. Sethna who has since become famous both as a poet and a priest of high—shall I say, spiritual-journalism. Yes, Sethna was nothing if not perspicacious and wide-awake on being sensible." He goes on to add "Sethna impressed me the more because he not only never made such a claim to having reached 'a superior consciousness' but also he had the uncommon wisdom of common sense to see that one should accept what the Guru said even if it seemed—as it often enough must, intellectual egoism being what it is—unacceptable to one's mental preconceptions. That is why he often helped me by bowing to Sri Aurobindo's verdicts even though he too, like me, wanted first to understand with the mind as far as one could achieve it."

Udar Pinto who came to Pondicherry for business in 1934 became informed about the Ashram and its Gurus through social encounters with Kekushru *aka* Amal Kiran. Subsequently, he joined the Ashram in the service of the Mother and became responsible for the Ashram's engineering requirements. A message that he would like to share with the world about Amal Kiran is<sup>10</sup> "One trait in Amal's character which I admire a great deal is his courage. In spite of his crippling affliction, he does not ever bemoan it but carries on as if it were a great opportunity for further adventure and progress. This is something many are apt to forget. When troubles and tribulations fall on us, instead of looking on them as misfortunes we should take them as challenges for our development. Amal exemplified this and continues to do so in all his life."

Interesting to note the significance of this tribute in the light of Sri Aurobindo's following messages.

The very first lesson in this yoga is to face life and its trials with a quite mind, a firm courage and an entire reliance on the Divine Shakti.

Sri Aurobindo has revealed to us a blessed process to effectively deal with the issues of life:<sup>11</sup> "To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two that go always together—the Grace of the Divine Mother and on your side an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let your faith be pure, candid and perfect... Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire. The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear?"

The Darshan Day message of 21 February 2001 is a quotation of Sri Aurobindo, which reinforces the same theme <sup>12</sup>

Self-surrender to the divine and infinite Mother, however difficult, remains our only effective means and our sole abiding refuge

In the case of our Aurobindonian poet, his sadhana of self-surrender finds a poetic expression bringing him ever closer to the divine. The following sample of poems written over a span of number of years provides glimpses of Amal Kiran as a true Aurobindonian poet

### **Waiting<sup>13</sup>**

Humble and calm will I wait  
Until the hour of Grace  
Fulfils Your ancient vow  
To lift my fallen face.

### **This Scattered Life<sup>14</sup>**

This scattered life, both flux and flame,  
You must seize as one and stamp  
As a love-letter to Eternity  
From the transience of a tramp

### **My Soul<sup>15</sup>**

Into the depths of night  
I sent my soul—



A little searching speck,  
It was clasped by the Whole

Out of the depths of night  
My soul turned home,  
Feeling its own small head  
A starred sky-dome.

### **Grace<sup>16</sup>**

Take all my shining hours from me,  
But hang upon my quiet soul's  
Pale brow your dream-kiss like a gem  
Let life fall stricken to its knee,  
If unto lone-faced poverty  
You give your blessing's diadem  
Make of these proud eyes beggar-bowls,  
But only drop your smile in them

Total and unconditional surrender to the Divine is only possible if one can recognize and experience the Divine deep within as well as without. We know that this is easier said than done. Radha we are not, but a Gopi one can be with a true willingness to surrender. Amal Kiran's following two poems provide us guidance in this matter:

### **My Life<sup>17</sup>**

I live not from hour to hour  
But in dream on dream of you, Sweet!  
The dawn is the ten-petalled flower  
Of your holy feet. .

All time is the shine of your shape,  
All space is the stretch of your soul;  
When the truths of your silence undrape,  
The rhythms of Creation roll!

### **Saviour-Guide<sup>18</sup>**

So many ways I had gone,  
Called by the hues  
Of a myriad thronging dreams  
That never could fuse....

Deep and more deep within,  
 I am guided to my rest  
 Where the wells of deathless nectar  
 Hide in each mortal breast.

In the considered opinion of C. V. Devan Nair: “It is not knowledge which fulfills all. It is Love which is the fulfilment of knowledge, and of all else besides”<sup>19</sup> Amal Kiran’s ongoing dialogues recorded in the series ‘Life-Poetry-Yoga’ with his friend PR do reveal a lot about Amal Kiran’s genius in expounding his enlightening views and intuitive insight. In addition, his interaction with PR also offers a glimpse of him as a Bhakta—aspirant of the divine Love. Amal Kiran had confided in PR about his inner prayer, which he described as an echo in his depths of Sri Aurobindo’s lines.<sup>20</sup>

Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart,—  
 Call of the One!  
 Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,  
 O living Sun

ARUN VAIDYA

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- 3 *Ibid*
- 4 Amal Kiran, *The Secret Splendour*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993, p. 36
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- 6 R. Y. Deshpande, *The Parable of Two Birds*, *ibid*, p. 165
- 7 C. V. Devan Nair, *Forerunner of the Divine Word*, *ibid*, p. 166
- 8 *Ibid*, p. 172
- 9 Dilip Kumar Roy, *The Friend who Impressed Me So Deeply*, *ibid*, pp. 183-84
- 10 Udar, *Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!*, *ibid*, p. 432
- 11 Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, pp. 9-10
- 12 Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 72
- 13 K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), *The Secret Splendour*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993, p. 612
- 14 *Ibid*, p. 654
- 15 *Ibid*, p. 620
- 16 *Ibid*, p. 42
- 17 *Ibid*, p. 244
- 18 *Ibid*, p. 255
- 19 C. V. Devan Nair, *Forerunner of the Divine Word*, in *Amal-Kiran: Poet and Critic*, p. 173
- 20 *Ibid*, p. 325. The lines are from Sri Aurobindo’s poem ‘Bride of the Fire’, in *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 103

## THE BALLAD OF SAVITRI

*(Continued from the issue of October 2001)*

UPON the fourteenth of the moon,  
As nearer came the time of dread,  
In Joystee, that is May or June,  
She vowed her vows and Bramins fed

And now she counted e'en the hours,  
As to Eternity they past;  
O'erhead the dark cloud darker lowers,  
The year is rounding full at last  
To-day,—to-day,—with doleful sound  
The word seem'd in her ear to ring!  
O breaking heart,—thy pain profound  
Thy husband knows not, nor the king,  
Exiled and blind, nor yet the queen;  
But One knows in His place above  
To-day,—to-day,—it will be seen  
Which shall be victor, Death or Love!

Incessant in her prayers from morn,  
The noon is safely tided,—then  
A gleam of faint, faint hope is born,  
But the heart fluttered like a wren  
That sees the shadow of the hawk  
Sail on,—and trembles in affright,  
Lest a downrushing swoop should mock  
Its fortune, and o'erwhelm it quite  
The afternoon has come and gone  
And brought no change,—should she rejoice?  
The gentle evening's shades come on,  
When hark!—She hears her husband's voice!

“The twilight is most beautiful!  
Mother, to gather fruit I go,  
And fuel,—for the air is cool,—  
Expect me in an hour or so ”  
“The night, my child, draws on apace,”  
The mother's voice was heard to say,  
“The forest paths are hard to trace

In darkness,—till the morrow stay.”  
 “Not hard for me, who can discern  
 The forest-paths in any hour,  
 Blindfold I could with ease return,  
 And day has not yet lost its power ”

“He goes then,” thought Savitri, “thus  
 With unseen hands Fate draws us on  
 Unto the place appointed us;  
 We feel no outward force,—anon  
 We go to marriage or to death  
 At a determined time and place;  
 We are her playthings, with her breath  
 She blows us where she lists in space  
 What is my duty? It is clear,  
 My husband I must follow, so,  
 While he collects his forest gear  
 Let me permission get to go.”

His sire she seeks,—the blind old king,  
 And asks from him permission straight  
 “My daughter, night with ebon wing  
 Hovers above, the hour is late.  
 My son is active, brave, and strong,  
 Conversant with the woods, he knows  
 Each path; methinks it would be wrong  
 For thee to venture where he goes,  
 Weak and defenceless as thou art,  
 At such a time. If thou wert near  
 Thou might’st embarrass him, dear heart,  
 Alone, he would not have a fear ”

So spake the hermit-monarch blind,  
 His wife too, entering in, exprest  
 The self-same thoughts in words as kind,  
 And begged Savitri hard, to rest  
 “Thy recent fasts and vigils, child,  
 Make thee unfit to undertake  
 This journey to the forest wild ”  
 But nothing could her purpose shake.  
 She urged the nature of her vows,  
 Required her now the rites were done

To follow where her loving spouse  
Might e'en a chance of danger run.

“Go then, my child,—we give thee leave,  
But with thy husband quick return,  
Before the flickering shades of eve  
Deepen to night, and planets burn,  
And forest-paths become obscure,  
Lit only by their doubtful rays.  
The gods, who guard all women pure,  
Bless thee and keep thee in thy ways,  
And safely bring thee and thy lord!”  
On this she left, and swiftly ran  
Where with his saw in lieu of sword,  
And basket, plodded Satyavan.

Oh, lovely are the woods at dawn,  
And lovely in the sultry noon,  
But loveliest, when the sun withdrawn  
The twilight and a crescent moon  
Change all asperities of shape,  
And tone all colours softly down,  
With a blue veil of silvered crape!  
Lo! By that hill which palm-trees crown,  
Down the deep glade with perfume rife  
From buds that to the dews expand,  
The husband and the faithful wife  
Pass to dense jungle,—hand in hand.

Satyavan bears beside his saw  
A forkèd stick to pluck the fruit,  
His wife, the basket lined with straw,  
He talks, but she is almost mute,  
And very pale The minutes pass;  
The basket has no further space,  
Now on the fruits they flowers amass  
That with their red flush all the place  
While twilight lingers, then for wood  
He sees the branches of the trees,  
The noise, heard in the solitude,  
Grates on its soft, low harmonies.

And all the while one dreadful thought  
 Haunted Savitri's anxious mind,  
 Which would have fain its stress forgot;  
 It came as chainless as the wind,  
 Oft and again: thus on the spot  
 Marked with his heart-blood oft comes back  
 The murdered man, to see the clot!  
 Death's final blow,—the fatal wrack  
 Of every hope, whence will it fall?  
 For fall, by Narad's words, it must;  
 Persistent rising to appall  
 This thought its horrid presence thrust.

Sudden the noise is hushed,—a pause!  
 Satyavan lets the weapon drop—  
 Too well Savitri knows the cause,  
 He feels not well, the work must stop.  
 A pain is in his head,—a pain  
 As if he felt the cobra's fangs,  
 He tries to look around,—in vain,  
 A mist before his vision hangs;  
 The trees whirl dizzily around  
 In a fantastic fashion wild,  
 His throat and chest seem iron-bound,  
 He staggers, like a sleepy child.

“My head, my head!—Savitri, dear,  
 This pain is frightful Let me lie  
 Here on the turf.” Her voice was clear  
 And very calm was her reply,  
 As if her heart had banished fear  
 “Lean, love, thy head upon my breast,”  
 And as she helped him, added—“here,  
 So shalt thou better breathe and rest.”  
 “Ah me, this pain,—’tis getting dark,  
 I see no more,—can this be death?  
 What means this, gods?—Savitri, mark,  
 My hands wax cold, and fails my breath.”

“It may be but a swoon.” “Ah! no—  
 Arrows are piercing through my heart,—  
 Farewell my love! for I must go,  
 This, this is death.” He gave one start

And then lay quiet on her lap,  
 Insensible to sight and sound,  
 Breathing his last . The branches flap  
 And fireflies glimmer all around,  
 His head upon her breast, his frame  
 Part on her lap, part on the ground,  
 Thus lies he. Hours pass Still the same,  
 The pair look statues, magic-bound

*(To be continued)*

TORU DUTT

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## SURRENDER

OBSERVING waves crashing against the shore,  
 I hear behind their seeming mirth,  
 The gentle voice of the Infinite  
 "This is surrender," it sings to me,  
 "In a heedless plunge, give all that you are"  
 One finds the self renewed, rediscovered  
 Identified again with the vastness of the sea

Total abandonment, holding nothing back,  
 If we are to find ourselves as we truly are,  
 If we are to enter that boundless joy,  
 Imperishable, we are of that sea  
 Infinite force that moves our being  
 But to know this we must leave our "little selves"  
 And find our Self, eternal and eternally

STUART LANE

## SRI AUROBINDO AND THE EARTH'S FUTURE\*

SOMETIMES a great wandering Thought sees the yet unaccomplished ages, seizes the force in its eternal flow and precipitates on earth the powerful vision which is like a power able to materialize that which it sees. The world is a vision coming into its truth. Its past and its present are perhaps not really the result of an obscure impulse which goes back to the depths of time, of a slow accumulation of sediments which little by little fashion us only to stifle and hem us in. It is the powerful golden attraction of the future which draws us in spite of ourselves, as the sun draws the lotus from the mud, and drives us to a glory greater than any of our mud or our efforts or our present triumphs could have foreseen or created.

Sri Aurobindo is this vision and this power of precipitating the future into the present. What he saw in an instant the ages and millions of men will unwittingly accomplish. They will unknowingly set out in quest of that new imperceptible quiver which has penetrated the earth's atmosphere. From age to age great beings come amongst us to hew a great opening of Truth in the sepulchre of the past. And these beings are, in truth, the great destroyers of the past. They come with the sword of Knowledge and crumble our fragile empires.

This year, we are celebrating Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary. He is known to barely a handful of men and yet his name will resound when the great men of today or yesterday are buried under their own debris. His work is discussed by philosophers, praised by poets. His sociological vision and his yoga are acclaimed. But Sri Aurobindo is a living **action**, a Word made manifest which is even now being realised. And through the thousand circumstances which seem to rend the earth and smash its structures we daily witness the first reflux of the force which he has set in motion. At the beginning of this century, when India was still struggling against British domination, Sri Aurobindo declared: "It is not a revolt against the British Government... (which is needed), it is, in fact, a revolt against the whole universal Nature."<sup>1</sup>

For the problem is fundamental. It is not a question of bringing a new philosophy to the world nor of so-called illuminations. It is not a question of rendering the Prison of our lives more habitable, nor of endowing man with ever more fantastic powers. Armed with his microscopes and telescopes the human gnome remains none the less a gnome, wretched and powerless. We send rockets to the moon but we know nothing of our own hearts. "It is a question," says Sri Aurobindo, "of creating a new physical nature which is to be the habitation of the Supramental being in a new evolution."<sup>2</sup> For, indeed, he says, "the imperfection of Man is not the last word of Nature, but his perfection too is not the last peak of the Spirit."<sup>3</sup> Beyond mental man, which is what we are, there opens the possibility of the emergence of another being who will be the spearhead of evolution as man was once the spearhead of evolution.

\* The Talk was broadcast by All India Radio in February 1972 to mark the beginning of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary Year.



among the great apes. "If," says Sri Aurobindo, "the animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man, man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom *and with whose conscious co-operation* she wills to work out the superman, the god."<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo has come to tell us how to create this other being, this supramental being, and not only to tell us but actually to create this other being. He has come to open the path of the future to hasten upon earth the rhythm of evolution, the new vibration which will replace the mental vibration—as a thought came one day and disturbed the slow routine of the beasts—and which will give us the power to shatter the walls of our human prison.

Indeed the prison is already crumbling. "The end of a stage of evolution," announced Sri Aurobindo, "is usually marked by a powerful recrudescence of all that has to go out of the evolution"<sup>5</sup> Everywhere about us we see this paroxysmal exploding of all the old forms: our frontiers, our churches, our laws. Our morals crumble on all sides. They do not crumble because we are bad, immoral, irreligious, nor because we are not sufficiently rational, scientific, human, but precisely because we have come to the end of being human! to the end of the old mechanism—because we are in a state of transition towards **something else**. It is not a moral crisis that the world is going through, it is an "evolutionary crisis". We are not moving towards a better world, nor, for that matter, towards a worse one. We are right in the midst of **mutating** into a radically different world, as different as the world of man was different from the ape-world of the Tertiary Age. We are entering a new era, a supramental quinquennium. We leave our countries, become itinerants. We go in quest of drugs, in quest of adventure. We go on strike here, enact reforms there, start revolutions and counter-revolutions. But this is only an appearance; in fact this is not at all what we are doing. We are unwittingly in quest of the new being. We are in the midst of human revolution.

And Sri Aurobindo gives us the key. It may be that the meaning of our own revolution escapes us because we seek to prolong that which is already in existence, to refine it, improve it, sublimate it. But the ape, in the midst of his revolution which produced man, may have made the same mistake and perhaps sought to become merely a super-ape, a better climber of trees, a better hunter, a better runner, in short an ape with greater agility and increased capacity for malice. With Nietzsche we also wanted a "superman" who was nothing more than a colossalisation of man. The spiritually minded want a super-saint more richly endowed with virtue and wisdom. But we want nothing of human virtue and wisdom! Even when carried to their extremest heights these are no more than the old virtues gilded over, the obverse of our tenacious misery. "Supermanhood," says Sri Aurobindo, "is not man climbed to his own natural zenith, not a superior degree of human greatness, knowledge, power, intelligence, will, .. genius,... saintliness, love, purity or perfection."<sup>6</sup> It is **something else**, another vibration of being, another consciousness.

But if this new consciousness is not to be found on the peaks of the human, where are we to find it? Perhaps, quite simply, it is to be found in that which we have

most neglected since we entered the mental cycle, it is to be found in the body. The body is our base, our evolutionary foundation, the old stock to which we must always return, and which painfully compels our attention by making us suffer, age and die "In that imperfection," Sri Aurobindo assures us, "is the urge towards a higher and more many-sided perfection. It contains the last finite which yet yearns to the Supreme Infinite. God is pent in the mire .but the very fact imposes a necessity to break through that prison."<sup>7</sup> The old Ill is still there never cured, the root has never changed, the dark matrix of our misery is hardly different now from what it was in the time of Lemuria. It is this physical substance which must be changed, transformed, otherwise it will pull down, one after another, all the human and superhuman artifices which we try to impose on it. This body, this physical cellular substance shuts in "almighty powers",<sup>8</sup> a dumb consciousness which harbours all the lights and all the infinitudes just as well as all the mental and spiritual immensities. For, in truth, all is Divine and unless the Lord of all the universe resides in a single little cell he resides nowhere. It is this original, dark cellular prison which we must shatter, and as long as we have not shattered it, we will continue to turn in vain in our golden circles or our iron circles of our mental prison "These laws of Nature," says Sri Aurobindo, "that you call absolute...merely mean an equilibrium established by Nature. It is merely a groove in which Nature is accustomed to work in order to produce certain results. But, if you change the consciousness, then the groove also is bound to change."<sup>9</sup>

This is the new adventure to which Sri Aurobindo calls us, an adventure into man's unknown. Whether we like it or not the whole earth is passing into a new groove, but why shouldn't we like it? Why shouldn't we collaborate in this great, unprecedented adventure? Why shouldn't we collaborate in our own evolution instead of repeating the same old story a thousand times, instead of chasing hallucinatory heavens which will never quench our thirst or otherworldly paradises which leave the earth to rot along with our bodies? "Why should life have begun at all if it is only to be climbed out of?" exclaims the Mother, She who continues Sri Aurobindo's work. What is the use of having struggled so much, suffered so much, of having created something which, in its outer appearance at least is so tragic, so dramatic, if it is only to learn how to climb out of it—it would have been better if it had not been started at all .. Evolution is not a tortuous path which brings us back, somewhat battered, to the starting-point. "It exists," says the Mother, "quite on the contrary, in order to teach the whole of creation the joy of being, the beauty of being, the grandeur of being, the majesty of a sublime life and the perpetual development, perpetually progressive, of this joy, this beauty, this grandeur. Then everything has a meaning."<sup>10</sup>

This body, this obscure beast of burden which we inhabit, is the experimental field of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, which is a Yoga of the whole earth. One can readily understand that if a single being amidst our millions of sufferings manages to negotiate the evolutionary leap, the mutation of the next age, the face of the earth will be radically changed. Then all the so-called powers with which we glorify ourselves

today will seem childish games before the radiance of this all-mighty spirit incarnated in the body Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is possible, not only that it is possible but that it will be done. It is being done now and all depends not so much perhaps on a sublime effort of humanity to transcend its limitations—for it means still using our own human strength to free ourselves from human strength—as on a call, a conscious cry of the earth to this new being which the earth already carries within itself. All is there, already within our hearts, the supreme Source which is the supreme Power, but we must call it into our concrete forest. We must understand the meaning of man, the meaning of ourselves. The multi-voiced cry of the earth, of its millions of men who cannot bear the human condition any longer, who no longer accept their prison, must create a crack through which will surge in the new vibration. Then all the apparently ineluctable laws which close us into our hereditary and scientific groove will crumble before the Joy of the “sun-eyed children.”<sup>11</sup> “Expect nothing of death,” says the Mother, “life is your salvation. It is in life that we must transform ourselves. It is on earth that we progress. It is on earth that we can accomplish. It is in the body that the Victory is won.”<sup>12</sup> And Sri Aurobindo says:

Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear, for it is the hour of the unexpected<sup>13</sup>

December 9, 1971

SATPREM

(Translated from the French by Maggi Lidchi)

### *References*

- 1 *Evening Talks*, p. 45
- 2 *On Himself*, p. 172
- 3 *The Life Divine*, p. 680
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 5
- 5 *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, p. 42
- 6 *The Hour of God*, p. 6
- 7 *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, p. 414
- 8 *Savitri* (Univ. Ed.), p. 420
- 9 *Evening Talks*, p. 92
- 10 The Mother's Talk, 12 11 58
- 11 *Savitri*, p. 389
- 12 The Mother's Talk, 27 12 57
- 13 *The Hour of God*, p. 4

# OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

*(Continued from the issue of October 2001)*

## **The Ship from the Supramental World**

THE Mother knew from experience that the supramental world already existed, that it was there, “a world that wants to incarnate in the world”<sup>108</sup>, waiting to dock with the world we are living in. Sri Aurobindo has often explained that within the Supermind itself there exist uncountable layers or worlds, hierarchically, each more concrete than our gross material world and each with its own splendid beings—the “brilliances”—all greater than the gods. We may suppose that the supramental world ready to contact the material one was the nearest and therefore the lowest in that hierarchy, but supramental it was nonetheless. The problem therefore now consisted in the connection of that supramental world to the material world, for the kind and density of both substances are so different.<sup>109</sup> To put it metaphorically the one is sun-stuff, the other is mud. (This will become a continuous concern for the Mother’s body in the coming years: the dosing of the transforming power, in order to prevent her material body from disintegrating.)

The Mother knew perfectly well what the supramental world was like, she had been there often and, as we will see, she even had a permanent presence or emanation there (as in any other world). On 5 February 1958, she offered a simile to help the children understand how the Divine works out his manifestation within the eternal plenitude of the Reality: “All is absolutely determined, for all is from all eternity, and yet the path traversed [by the Consciousness] has a freedom and unpredictability that is also absolute.” The movement of the Consciousness within itself she called “the great Journey.” “This is how there can exist simultaneously worlds that have no apparent relationship with each other, but that nevertheless coexist and are discovered gradually, which every time gives the impression of a new creation.

“Seeing things in this way, one can understand that simultaneously with this physical world as we know it, with all its imperfections, all its limitations, all its ignorance, there are one or several other worlds which exist in their own regions, and are of such a different nature from ours here that to us they are practically non-existent, for we have no contact with them. But when the eternal great Journey moves from one world to another, by the very fact of this movement of the eternal Consciousness the link will necessarily be created, and the two worlds will gradually enter into contact with each other.

“Truly, this is what is actually happening now, and we can say with certitude that the supramental world already exists, but that the time has come for it to become the goal of the Journey of the supreme Consciousness, that little by little a conscious link will be formed between our world and that new one, and that they will have a

new relation as a result of this new turn of the journey’’ And the Mother added “‘This explanation is as good as any other, and it is perhaps easier to understand for people who are not metaphysicians. As for me, I like it!’”<sup>110</sup>

When she said this, she had just had a mighty experience, on the 3rd of February, on which these reflections were based. She had had experiences by the dozen, not to say by the thousands, for her whole life was *one* uninterrupted flow of experiences. However, from time to time an external or internal occasion, in herself or in “‘the family of the aspiration’’ she was guiding, caused her to reveal something to others. Compared to the whole of the experiences of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s Yoga, we know just about nothing—the incredible literature they have left us, the richest spiritual literature in history, is but fragments of what they knew and have gone through. These fragments, however, allow us like adventurous Tom Thumbs to retrace to a certain extent the path they have hewn in “‘the virgin forest’’, and they contain the magic power, when assimilated, to trigger any experience needful for the personal progress on that path. The experience the Mother had on 3 February 1958 is a revealing one.

She starts by comparing the world of the animals with the one of the humans. “‘Between the beings of the supramental world and the humans, almost the same separation exists as between humans and animals.’” She had a long and thorough experience with animals, especially with cats.<sup>111</sup> “‘They do not understand, they do not see us as we are and they suffer because of us. We are a constant enigma to them. Only a very tiny part of their consciousness has a link with us. And it is the same thing for us when we try to look at the supramental world. Only when the link of consciousness is established shall we see it—and even then only the part of our being which has undergone transformation in this way will be able to see it as it is—otherwise the two worlds would remain apart like the animal and the human worlds.

“‘The experience I had on the 3rd of February is proof of this. Before that I had an individual subjective contact with the supramental world, whereas on the 3rd of February I moved in it concretely, as concretely as I once used to walk in Paris, in a world *that exists in itself*, outside all subjectivity... Here is the experience as I dictated it immediately afterwards.’”

The Mother read<sup>112</sup>: “‘The supramental world exists permanently and I am there permanently in a supramental body. I had the proof of this even today when my earth-consciousness went there and remained there consciously between two and three o’clock in the afternoon. Now I know that what is lacking for the two worlds to unite in a constant and conscious relation is an intermediate zone between the physical world as it is and the supramental world as it is. This zone remains to be built, both in the individual consciousness and the objective world, and it is being built. When I used to speak of the new world which is being created, it was of this intermediary zone that I was speaking. And similarly, when I am on this side, that is, in the field of the physical consciousness, and I see the supramental power, the supramental light

and substance constantly penetrating matter, it is the construction of this zone which I see and in which I participate

“I was on a huge ship, which was a symbolic representation of the place where the work is going on. This ship, as large as a city, was fully organised, and it had certainly already been functioning for some time, for its organisation was complete. It was the place where the people were trained who are destined for the supramental life. These people, or at least part of their being, had already undergone a supramental transformation, for the ship itself and everything on board was neither material, subtle-physical, vital or mental: [everything consisted of] a supramental substance. This substance was of the most material supramental, the supramental substance nearest to the physical world, the first to manifest. The light was a mixture of gold and red, forming a uniform substance of a luminous orange. Everything was like that. The light was like that, the people were like that—everything had that colour, although in various shades, which made it possible to distinguish things from each other. The general impression was of a world without shadows. The atmosphere was full of joy, calm, order. Everything went on in an orderly way and in silence. And at the same time one could see all the details of an education, of a training in all fields, through which the people on board were being prepared.

“This immense ship had just reached the shore of the supramental world<sup>113</sup> and a first group of people who were destined to become the future inhabitants of the supramental world [on earth] were to go ashore... I was in charge of the whole enterprise from the beginning and throughout the proceedings. I had prepared all the groups myself. I stood on the ship at the head of the gangway, calling the groups one by one and sending them ashore..

“On the ship the nature of the objects was not as we know it on earth. For instance, the clothes were not made of fabric, and what looked like fabric was not manufactured: it formed part of the body, it was made of the same substance [as the body] which took different forms. It had a kind of plasticity. When a change had to be made, it took place not by any artificial and external means but by an inner movement, a movement of the consciousness, which gave that substance its shape and appearance. Life created its own forms. There was *one single substance* in everything; it changed the quality of its vibration according to need and usage.”

Then the Mother describes herself as she was on that ship: “My upper part, particularly the head, was not much more than a silhouette of which the contents were white with an orange fringe. The further down towards the feet, the more the colour looked like that of the people on the ship, that is to say orange, the further upwards, the more it was translucent and white, with less red. The head was only a contour with a brilliant sun in it. Rays of light radiated from it, which were actions of the will.

“As for the people I saw on board the ship, I recognised them all. Some were from here, from the Ashram, others were from elsewhere, but I know them too. I saw everybody, but as I knew that I would not remember them all when coming back, I decided not to mention any names...

“When I came back I knew, simultaneously with the recollection of the experience, that the supramental world is permanent, that my presence there is permanent, and that only a missing link was needed for enabling the connection in the consciousness and in the substance, and it is this link which is now being established . . .”

When the Mother had finished reading the report of her experience, she commented upon it “One thing—and I want to tell you this—seems to me at the moment to be the most essential difference between our world and the supramental world (and it is only after having gone there consciously, with the consciousness that normally is active here, that this difference has become apparent to me in what one might call its enormity). everything here, except what goes on within, very deep within, appeared to me absolutely artificial. None of the values of the ordinary life, of the physical life, are based on the truth . . . This artificiality, this insincerity, this complete lack of truth became so shockingly apparent to me that one wonders how, in so false a world, we can make any valid evaluations

“But instead of becoming despondent, morose, rebellious, or dissatisfied, one rather has the feeling of what I was telling you at the end [of the text she read] of something so madly ridiculous that for days I was seized with uncontrollable laughter when I looked at things and at people—an uncontrollable laughter, totally inexplicable except to myself, because of the ridiculousness of the situations” Those who are turning the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother into a religion or a sect, in spite of their warnings, should keep this in mind <sup>114</sup>

And the Mother finished with the words “When I invited you on a journey into the unknown, a journey of adventure, I did not know I was so close to the truth And I can promise those who are ready to attempt the adventure that they will make very interesting discoveries” <sup>115</sup>

### With Lightning Speed

The last paragraph of the passage the Mother read from *The Life Divine*, on 16 April 1958, went as follows: “If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and Supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at Supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature” <sup>116</sup> The last sentence is one of the several pointers in *The Life Divine* to the possibility, if not the necessity, of an intermediary being between the human and the supramental species The Mother’s comment is not only important, it is also a kind of summary of everything we have examined up to here She is speaking throughout of the overman.

“Anyway, we have now arrived at a certitude, since there is already a beginning of realisation We have the proof that in certain conditions the ordinary state of humanity can be exceeded and a new state of consciousness worked out which

enables at the very least a conscious relation between mental and supramental man

“It can be affirmed with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of overman [*surhomme*] who will still have the qualities and in part the nature of man, which means that he will still belong in his most external form to the human being [i.e. species] of animal origin, but that he will transform his consciousness sufficiently to belong, in his realisation and activity, to a new race, a race of overmen [*surhommes*]”<sup>117</sup>

“This species may be considered a transitional species, for it is to be foreseen that it will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method, and it is these beings—who will have a truly spiritual birth—who will constitute the elements of the new race, the supramental race. So we could call overmen [*surhommes*] those who, because of their origin, still belong to the old method of generation but who, because of their accomplishment, are in conscious and active contact with the new world of supramental realisation.

“It seems—it is even certain—that the very substance that will constitute this intermediate world, which is already being built, is richer, more powerful, more luminous, more durable, with certain new, subtler, more penetrating qualities, and a kind of innate capacity of universality. It is as if its degree of subtlety and refinement allowed the perception of vibrations in a much more extensive, if not altogether total way, and it abolishes the sensation of division one has with the old substance, the ordinary mental substance.” The Mother is here describing the new, more refined kind of Matter necessary for the embodiment of the new species.

In the coming years her descriptions of this new kind of Matter will become more and more detailed, but as early as in *New Experiences of the Body Consciousness* (1954) she had written “In this intensity the aspiration grows formidable, and in answer to it Thy Presence becomes evident in the cells themselves, giving to the body the appearance of a multicoloured kaleidoscope in which innumerable luminous particles in constant motion are sovereignly reorganised by an invisible and all-powerful Hand.”<sup>118</sup> What is essential to the understanding of the Mother’s Yoga during the rest of her life is that her body gradually became more universalised as a consequence of the transformation of its cells. Her (and Sri Aurobindo’s) mind and vital had already been universalised, because supramentalised, in the Twenties. The problem of the transformation of the body consisted precisely in the fact that up to now its universalisation had proved impossible and, consequently, that its supramentalisation or divinisation too was impossible, for there is no divinity without universality. We have step by step gained a notion of the fantastic—but on the surface rather logical—transformation that was going on in the Mother

The *entretien* continues: “There is a subtlety of vibration which renders global, universal perception spontaneous and natural. The sense of division, of separation, vanishes quite naturally and spontaneously with [the presence of] this substance. And this substance is at present almost universally spread out in the atmosphere of the earth



“One may conclude from this that the moment one body, of course formed according to the old animal method, is capable of living this consciousness naturally and spontaneously, without any effort, without going out of itself, it proves that it is not an exceptional, unique case, but that it simply is the forerunner of a realisation which, even if it is not general, *can at least be shared by a certain number of individuals* who, moreover, as soon as they share [that realisation], will lose the feeling of being separate individuals and become a living collectivity

“*This new realisation is proceeding with what one might call lightning speed, for if we consider time in the usual way, only two years have passed—a little more than two years—from the moment the supramental substance penetrated into the earth-atmosphere [on 29 February 1956] till the moment that this change in the quality of the earth-atmosphere took place [in 1958]*”<sup>119</sup>

(*To be continued*)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

#### *Notes and References*

- 108 The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol 11, p 317
- 109 If human beings came in the presence of the Supermund “each of them would disappear”, said the Mother. The reason is that the Supermund is an absolute Truth-Consciousness whose substance of supramental Light would cause the falsehood, present to a high degree in *all* human beings, to disappear in the blink of an eye “When That comes, when the Lord is there, there is not one person in a thousand who is not terrified. And not in their mind, not in their thought in their substance [in the cells of their body]. Suppose then, just suppose that it happens, that a certain being becomes the condensation and expression, a formula of the supreme Power, of the supreme Light just imagine what would happen then!” (The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol 11, p 51)
- 110 *Ibid*, p 266
- 111 See Chapter 8 in Georges Van Vrekhem’s *The Mother The Story of Her Life*
- 112 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol 9, p 271 ff
- 113 It is obvious from the context that the Mother here means the outer border of the supramental world, which seems to be associated with a sea or an ocean, and, therefore, that the ship in fact reaches the shore of our material world. This text was first dictated and afterwards written down from a tape recording—a procedure which may explain the error.
- 114 Time and again Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have warned against the danger of turning their vision into a new religion “No new religion, no dogmas, no fixed teachings. One must avoid—one must avoid at all costs—that this should become a new religion” (The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol 11, p 133)
- 115 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol 9, pp 277-78
- 116 Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, p 847
- 117 In both cases in this paragraph (as elsewhere), *surhomme* has been translated by “superman”, which proves how deeply the confusion was and is ingrained.
- 118 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol 15, pp 302-303
- 119 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol 9, pp 313 ff (emphases added)

# THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of October 2001)

## The Symbolism of Night in ‘The Symbol Dawn’

### 1

BETWEEN the mid-1930s and the mid-1940s, the depiction of Night at the beginning of *Savitri* grew from a few lines to its present length and changed radically in its significance. It came to represent, in symbolic but precise language, the resistance Sri Aurobindo was encountering to the action of the spiritual Force in the material world. Specifically, he revised the passage to include explicit or implicit references to the four ‘Matter Powers’ he had noted in his diary in 1927—four aspects of the Inconscient that underlie the rigidity, obscurity, inertia and conservatism of Matter and the physical mind.

The focus of the last few instalments has been on a sentence in Book Three, Canto Four, connected with entries in the *Record of Yoga* where these four resisting powers are mentioned. Comparing that sentence with the first page of the poem, one finds several correspondences. The most conspicuous of these are the image of Night blocking the path and the use of the word ‘somnambulist’ in similar contexts.

At first glance, the opening passage does not seem to refer to the Dragon and Sphinx which appear in the sentence in Book Three along with Night and the ‘somnambulist Force’. However, a deeper study shows the presence of what the Dragon and the Sphinx represented for Sri Aurobindo—the perpetuation of the law of the Inconscient and an obscuration and fragmentation of knowledge that turn life into an insoluble riddle.

So interpreted, the opening of *Savitri* becomes a striking example of the concrete, exact experiential nature of the poem even where it has an appearance of abstruse mystical symbolism. From the practical standpoint of sadhaks of the Integral Yoga, this massive evocation of the darkness before dawn corresponds to the situation Sri Aurobindo described in 1944, close to the time when the beginning of his epic reached its present form:

There is another cause of the general inability to change which at present afflicts the sadhak. It is because the sadhana, as a general fact, has now and for a long time past come down to the Inconscient; the pressure, the call is to change in that part of the nature which depends directly on the Inconscient, the fixed habits, the automatic movements, the mechanical repetitions of the nature, the involuntary reactions to life, all that seems to belong to the fixed character of a man.

Here we have precisely the ‘conservatism of the material negation’ discussed in the

last instalment in connection with the symbol of Night as used in the *Record of Yoga*. The power that sustains this conservatism is seen at work on the first page of *Savitri*.

Repeating for ever the unconscious act,  
Prolonging for ever the unseeing will .

Sri Aurobindo's letter continues, referring to the pressure for "change in that part of the nature which depends directly on the Inconscient"

This has to be done if there is to be any chance of a total spiritual change. The Force (generally and not individually) is working to make that possible, its pressure is for that,—for, on the other levels, the change has already been made possible (not, mind you, assured to everybody). But to open the Inconscient to light is a herculean task, change on the other levels is much easier. As yet this work has only begun and it is not surprising that there seems to be no change in things or people. It will come in time, but not in a hurry.<sup>1</sup>

The "total spiritual change" envisaged here, whose condition is an opening of the Inconscient to light, is evidently the fullness of "the divine Event" mentioned in the second line of *Savitri*. It is noteworthy that the working of the Force towards this end is not individual, but general and collective. This accounts for the slowness of the process, but ensures its thoroughness and the decisiveness of the eventual outcome which can no more be prevented than the sun can be stopped from rising. The symbol of the dawn in the final version of the opening of *Savitri* conveys powerfully this irresistible movement of the coming of the divine light and the passing away of the darkness of ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

On 25 October 1936, Sri Aurobindo sent Amal Kiran the first sixteen lines of *Savitri* as it then stood. For a number of years the description of Night had stayed strangely immobile, like the Night itself, while the dawn grew from splendour to splendour. In a dozen manuscripts after the opening line reached its final form in the late 1920s, the first signs of dawn still appeared after the sixth line, which was.

The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still

During this long period only a word or two in the first six lines was altered. But the version Sri Aurobindo copied out for Amal contained a new line that ended with the momentous expression quoted above.

Across the path of the divine Event

The insertion of this line introduced a new element into the opening passage and soon led to a series of far-reaching changes. Up to this point, the dawn had been a beautiful but relatively uneventful efflorescence of spiritual light. Night foresaw her own end. Dawn arrived in a few lines, encountering no apparent resistance. But the first words

S A V I T R I

PART ONE: EARTH

I

THE BOOK OF BIRTH

§ 5. The Symbol Dawn

1. The Last Dawn (4) It was the hour before the Gods awake.

(1) Across the path of the divine Eventy,  
The huge un<sup>un</sup>umbering spirit of Night, alone  
In the unlit temple of imm. reality,

Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge,  
Vute with the un<sup>un</sup>numbered provisions of her change.

The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.

Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.

A slow miraculous gestures dimly came,

The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch

Persuaded the inert black quietude,

And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.

A wandering Hand of pale enchanted light

That glowed along the moment's fading brink,

Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge

A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.

A thought was sown in the unscandled Void,

A sense was born within the darkness' depths,

Vague like a promise from <sup>for</sup> ~~still~~ powerless suns,

A memory quivered in the heart of Time,

As if a soul long dead were moved to live,

The opening of the 1936-37 version of Savitri  
(Copy typed by Amal Kiran and revised by Sri Aurobindo)

of the new line link it to the portrayal of Night as an opposing power in the passage we have discussed:

Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.<sup>2</sup>

The difference between these two lines which begin with almost the same words is only that in one case Night sits across the path of the human ascent to the Divine, in the other she lies across the path of the divine descent into the mortal's world. Her obstructive role is the same in both places.

The facsimile in this issue shows the first effects of the insertion of the new line. What is reproduced is Amal Kiran's typed fair copy of the 1936 version of the opening, which he sent to Sri Aurobindo in January 1937, Sri Aurobindo revised it, extensively in places, probably sometime during the same year. On receiving the 25-page typescript of the first three sections (corresponding to the present Book One), Sri Aurobindo immediately wrote to Amal

Very magnificent copy, but I have only had time to glance over it

The following year when he was revising the fourth section, 'The Ascent through the Worlds', Sri Aurobindo apologised to Amal for his treatment of the typescript.

I have been kept too occupied with other things to make much headway with the poem—except that I have spoiled your beautiful neat copy of the "Worlds" under the oestrus of the restless urge for more and more perfection, but we are here for World-improvement, so I hope that is excusable.<sup>3</sup>

Before Sri Aurobindo 'spoiled' the appearance of the typed copy of the opening passage, the first seven lines ran

It was the hour before the Gods awake  
 Across the path of the divine Event  
 The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone  
 In the unlit temple of immensity,  
 Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge,  
 Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change  
 The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still

The title of the first section of the poem was typed in the left margin as "The Last Dawn". The revision included writing a new section title, "The Symbol Dawn", below "The Book of Birth". It is significant that this title, the present title of the first canto, was introduced here. For the symbolism of Dawn depends on the symbolism of Night for its full import. It was while revising this typescript that Sri Aurobindo began to bring out the negation that Night represents, as well as the potential of luminous transformation she conceals within herself.

These two purposes of his revision can be seen in connection with the cancellation of the sixth typed line:

Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.

All the main words in this line—"mute", "unplumbed", "prevision" and "change"—were preserved in the revised passage or replaced by near equivalents ("fathomless" for "unplumbed", "foreboding" and "prescience" for "prevision"), but they were dispersed so that the line seems to have disappeared altogether. The two substitutes for "prevision", with opposite senses in their respective contexts, are of particular interest. For they suggest Sri Aurobindo's intention of depicting two contrary elements, not clearly distinguished until now, in the state of being symbolised by Night.

Prevision is neutral: it can be the foresight of either a desirable or an undesirable event from the point of view of the one who foresees it. Thus the phrase "unplumbed prevision of her change" does not tell us whether Night wanted to change or not—"unplumbed" suggests that perhaps she herself did not know. There was a similar ambiguity in "expectation of her change". This was found in more than two dozen versions, before "expectation" was replaced by "unplumbed prevision" in the version where "Across the path" was inserted. But in spite of the ambiguity, the impression created in all these versions was that Night not only expected the change, but was prepared to consent to her own metamorphosis.

A mood of hushed expectancy had reigned in the opening lines ever since Sri Aurobindo dropped the mention of the huge forest and its "phantom tribes" and began under the heading "Book I Love".

A starless hush prepared epiphany  
Near was the hour of the transfiguring gods  
Night lost below in leaves, enshrined above  
In her own mantle of immensity  
Waiting upon the marge of silence sat  
Mute with the expectation of her change

The typed version seen in the facsimile, before it was revised, shows that the vision of Night in this passage had remained similar in its substance for nearly twenty years. Only the recently introduced "Across the path..." suggests for the first time a resistance to the expected change. Until Sri Aurobindo deleted the last line of the sentence, however, it is not certain that he intended a reversal in Night's attitude. Possibly he still meant that she was willing to undergo the change she foresaw, but due to the darkness of her nature she stood in its way in spite of herself.

In a sense, it is some such self-contradiction in the nature of Night that Sri Aurobindo now began to develop into a stark dichotomy between two aspects of her

being. "Foreboding", which he substituted for "unslumbering" in the third line of the typescript, is related to "prevision" in the cancelled sixth line, but has a distinctly negative connotation "Prescience", on the other hand, in a line written in the left margin further down on the page, is neutral in itself, but acquires a positive sense by being coupled with "yearned".

But a blank prescience yearned towards distant change

This is actually the line in the revised version that takes up the central idea of the cancelled line,

Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change

But while the cancelled line referred directly to Night, the new line does not. By its position it marks the beginning of the movement from Night to Dawn, rather than belonging to the portrait of Night herself. It refers to something in the heart of Night that is the very antithesis of her huge foreboding and forbidding spirit. This unidentified entity prevails in the end, not by its own strength, but by calling in a third element out of the silence upon whose "marge" Night lies. This is the essence of "The Symbol Dawn".

Once the suggestion of any willingness to change was shifted after the line about "impassive skies", what precedes this became a picture of unrelieved darkness that would increase with time. Two lines which Sri Aurobindo drafted in the right margin, then copied between the first two lines of the typescript, and finally transposed with a "(2)" so that they come after

Across the path of the divine Event,

show unmistakably what Night came to represent in this passage. These lines,

Abysm of the unbodied Infinite  
Whose fathomless zero occupies the world,

mark at this time, in the late 1930s, perhaps an unprecedented level of profundity in Sri Aurobindo's poetic unveiling of the mystery of what he called the Inconscient.

In the final text, these lines are found with slight changes in the sentence after the one into which they were first inserted. That sentence reads

Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,  
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse  
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite,  
A fathomless zero occupied the world

Undoubtedly, it is in this form that the full inevitability of these lines comes out. But the original wording is of interest because of the present tense of “occupies” in this and several subsequent manuscripts.

In its printed version, this passage is often understood to symbolise the emergence of the world from the primal Inconscient. There is no need to dispute this interpretation, which is surely one level of the complex meaning of this symbol of symbols. But what a study of the history of the passage suggests is that Sri Aurobindo’s Yogic experience was the immediate source of his inspiration. If he could speak authentically of the Inconscient, it is because it is there even now at the back of all things and was a constant reality to him.

When he wrote that a “fathomless zero occupies the world”, Sri Aurobindo must have been expressing his concrete sense, in those days when the sadhana had “come down to the Inconscient”, of the Negation whose grip on mind, life and matter blocked the path of the divine manifestation he was working to bring about. It should be noted that this line does not refer to a state of things when there was no world but only a fathomless zero. It is a zero that occupies the world (or, in the final version, “occupied” at the time described in the poem). This may be understood almost in the sense of occupation by a foreign Power—the “dim camp of Night” of our sentence in “The Vision and the Boon”.

The first twelve lines of the revised 1936-37 version, expanded from seven lines in the typescript and including four new lines depicting a shadowlike and self-oblivious earth, may be transcribed as follows:

It was the hour before the Gods awake  
 Across the path of the divine Event,  
 Abyss of the unbodied Infinite  
 Whose fathomless zero occupies the world,  
 The huge foreboding spirit of Night, alone  
 In the unlit temple of Immensity,  
 Lay stretched immobile upon silence’ marge  
 A shadow spinning through a soulless Vast,  
 Earth wheeled abandoned in the hollow gulfs  
 Of a mute inconscient semblance of the Unknown  
 Forgetful of her spirit and her fate  
 The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.

*(To be continued)*

RICHARD HARTZ

### *References*

- 1 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 24, p 1609
- 2 *Savitri* (1993), p 336
- 3 *Ibid*, p 732



# THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of October 2001)

Part Two (contd)

## 11. Sight in the Circumconscient:

We have so far spoken about the Inconscient and the Subconscient reaches of our being into which we may penetrate by a downward plunge of our consciousness. We have also referred to the subliminal Intraconscient which can be made accessible by the deepening and inwardization of the consciousness. Now we come to another range, the Circumconscient or the environmental, which can be explored by the progressive widening of the consciousness. It is in this now secret circumconscient that are determined our unseen connections with the world outside us. Currents are constantly pouring upon us from the universal Mind, universal Life, even the universal subtle Matter-field through this enveloping circumconscient consciousness. An uninterrupted widening of our consciousness may finally lead us to the acquisition of what is called 'cosmic consciousness'. Here is a relevant passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*.

“The subliminal has besides a formation of consciousness which projects itself beyond and forms a circumconscient, an environing part of itself, through which it receives the contacts of the world and can become aware of them and deal with them before they enter. The subliminal is able to widen indefinitely this circumconscient envelope and more and more enlarge its self-projection into the cosmic existence around it. A point comes where it can break through the separation altogether, unite, identify itself with cosmic being, feel itself universal, one with all existence.” (p. 541)

Now, as usual, we append below some illustrative verses from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

- (1) “The conscious ends of being went rolling back  
The landmarks of the little person fell,  
The island ego joined its continent ” (25)
- (2) “As so he grew into his larger self” (26)
- (3) “In beings it knew what lurked to them unknown,  
It seized the idea in mind, the wish in the heart,  
It plucked out from grey folds of secrecy  
The motives which from their own sight men hide

- He felt the beating life in other men  
 Invading him with their happiness and their grief;  
 Their love, their anger, their unspoken hopes  
 Entered in currents or in pouring waves  
 Into the immobile ocean of his calm  
 He heard the inspired sound of his own thoughts  
 Re-echoed in the vault of other minds,  
 The world's thought-streams travelled into his ken,  
 His inner self grew near to others' selves'' (26-27)
- (4) "The mind leaned out to meet the hidden worlds  
 And glowed and teemed with marvellous shapes and hues'' (29)
- (5) "Ever his consciousness and vision grew;  
 They took an ampler sweep, a loftier flight'' (31)
- (6) "A new world-knowledge broadened from within'' (44)
- (7) "He grew one with a covert universe  
 Forms he descried our mortal eyes see not.  
 His wide eyes bodied viewless entities,  
 He saw the cosmic forces at their work  
 And felt the occult impulse behind man's will '' (44)
- (8) "Through an inner seeing and sense a waking came.'' (404)
- (9) "All things the eye had caught in coloured lines  
 Were seen anew  
 And in the shape it sought to seize the soul '' (404)
- (10) "I glimpsed the presence of the One in all '' (405)

## 12. Sight in the Waking State:

We now come to the waking consciousness, the habitual consciousness of most men, which the subliminal and the subconscious have thrown up on the surface, just a wave of their secret surge

The normal man's waking consciousness is a limping surface consciousness shut up in the body's limitation and within the confines of the little bit of personal mind. One is ordinarily aware only of his surface self and quite ignorant of all that functions behind the veil "And yet what is on the surface, what we know or think we know of ourselves and even believe that that is all we are, is only a small part of our being," and by far the immensely larger part lies hidden "behind the frontal consciousness, behind the veil, occult and known only by an occult knowledge" (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 348)

While dwelling in this normal waking consciousness, a man becomes externalised and gazes outward and rarely if ever inward. No true spiritual life or any higher or deeper realisation becomes possible if one remains fettered to this waking state

Now what is germane to our main theme of discussion is the interesting fact that

every individual human being even in his ordinary waking existence is not composed of one but of many strands of consciousness and each of these strands has the possibility of having a characteristic sight of its own. The intellect, the will, the sense-mind, the desire-self, the heart, even the body-consciousness, all "see" in different ways. All these and other similar parts of the being are "like fields into which forces from the same planes of consciousness in the universal Nature are constantly entering or passing" (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 947). Our mind and life and physical consciousness with all their complex sub-levels can each in its own way become aware of all that is there or happening in their corresponding domains and transcribe their awareness in the form of suitable visions. In the words of the Mother

"there are many different planes in which you can see. There is a mental seeing, a vital seeing, and there are some visions that are seen in a plane very close to the most material" (CWM, Vol 3, p 13)

However that may be, we now proceed to select some verses from *Savitri* characterising the sights of different parts of the waking consciousness of the majority of men, starting with his material body and culminating in Reason, the highest faculty, passing through the different rungs such as "little life", "greater life", "heart", "physical mind", "little mind", "greater mind", "intellect", "thought", etc. Here are a few verses in each case:

**(a) Matter's Sight:**

- (1) "Out of the inconscient and subliminal  
Arise, we live in mind's uncertain light  
And strive to know and master a dubious world  
Whose purpose and meaning are hidden from our sight" (484)
- (2) "But this is only Matter's first self-view" (484)
- (3) "Limited .. now by the dull body's sight" (372)
- (4) "A lump of Matter, a house of closed sight" (488)
- (5) "And Matter hides the soul from its own sight" (702)
- (6) "God wrapped his head from sight in Matter's cowl" (621)
- (7) "A miracle structure of the eternal Mage,  
Matter its mystery hides from its own eyes" (623)

**(b) Sight in "Little Life":**

- (1) "Arriving with heavy eyes that hardly see" (139)
- (2) "An eyeless Power that sees no more its aim" (133)
- (3) "The upward look was alien to her sight" (136)
- (4) "Fixed not his inward eye upon himself" (143)

- (5) "None thought to look beyond the hour's gains" (145)
- (6) "A half-awakened Nescience struggled there  
To know by sight and touch the outside of things." (145)
- (7) "He peered across its scanty fringe of sight" (151)
- (8) "Time has he none to turn his eyes within  
And look for his lost self and his dead soul" (165)
- (9) "It tied the thought to visible things" (148)

**(c) Sight in "Greater Life":**

- (1) "There was an ardour in the gaze of life  
That saw heaven blue in the grey air of Night" (493)
- (2) "Pale dreams grew real to the dreamer's eyes" (175)
- (3) "Tied to some immediate sight and will" (188)
- (4) "The magnificent wrappings  
That fold her desirable body out of sight" (189)
- (5) "Life's visage hides life's real self from sight" (192)
- (6) "Her action imprisons its immortal gaze" (196)

**(d) Sight in the Ordinary Heart.**

- (1) "Our heart's sight is too blind and passionate" (161)
- (2) "The seeker's sight receding from his heart" (452)

**(e) Imagination's Sight:**

- (1) "The dreaming deities look beyond the seen" (601)
- (2) "A joy of light, a joy of sudden sight" (38)

**(f) Sight in the "Physical Mind":**

- (1) "That strange observing Power imposed its sight  
It forced on flux a limit and a shape,  
It gave its stream a lower narrow bank" (148)
- (2) "It had no inward look, no upward gaze" (149)

**(g) Sight in "Little Mind":**

- (1) "All she conceives in hazardous jets of sight" (244)
- (2) "Absorbed and cabined in external sight" (245)
- (3) "External fact it figures as sole truth,  
Wisdom identifies with the earthward look" (246)

- (4) "Error discouraged not its confident view" (248)
- (5) "Unguided by reason or the seeing soul" (248)
- (6) "The eye that looks at the dark half of truth" (192)
- (7) "None had the inner look which sees Truth's whole" (242)
- (8) "Displaced the spirit's finer view of things" (242)
- (9) "Its morning rays illumine our twilight's eyes" (243)

**(h) Sight in "Greater Mind":**

- (1) "A seeking Mind replaced the seeing Soul" (223)
- (2) "They erected absolute walls of thought and speech  
And made a vacuum to hold the One.  
In their sight they drove towards an empty peak" (273)
- (3) "By an abstract purity of godless sight,  
By a percept nude, intolerant of forms,  
They brought to Mind what Mind could never reach  
And hoped to conquer Truth's supernal base." (272-273)
- (4) "They seized and held by their precisian eye" (266)

**(i) Sight of Mental Reason:**

Reason is the highest faculty available to normal man. But in the matter of its search and holding of the true truth of things, it suffers from many basic disabilities.

- (i) It proceeds with labour from ignorance to truth
- (ii) It starts with appearances and never loses at least a partial dependence on them. It tries to show the truth in the light of the appearances.
- (iii) Reason proceeds to a conclusion with the crutch of inferences: it can never give us the direct vision of the truth
- (iv) The knowledge offered by the intellect and reason is always a mere "acquisition" and hence there hangs around it even in the best of circumstances a certain shadow of doubt and uncertainty
- (v) The mental reason cannot see the totality at all and hence does not know fully any whole.
- (vi) The reason deals not with any thing in itself, its reality or its essence but only with its constituents, processes and properties
- (vii) Reason deals with the finite and is helpless before the infinite

All these and other related deficiencies render the sight of mental reason altogether fallible. Here are some illustrative verses from *Savitri* emphasising the penury of reason's vision.

- (1) "... a pensive face and close peering eyes" (249)
- (2) "... a rigorous stare in her creative eyes" (250)

- (3) "She travels on the roads of erring sight" (252)
- (4) "This constant change spells progress to her eyes" (251)
- (5) "Its highest, widest seeing was a half-search" (256)
- (6) "Reason cannot tear off that glimmering mask,  
Her efforts only make it glimmer more,  
In packets she ties up the indivisible" (257)
- (7) " whose confident sight  
A bounded prospect took for the far goal." (257)
- (8) " the great truths escape her narrow cast,  
Guarded from vision by creation's depths" (266)

Although man the mental being prides himself on the possession of mind, and his "seeing thoughts" fill in "the blanks left by the seeking sense" (268), it remains a patent fact that mind, the intellect and the reason of man cannot grasp "the naked body of the Truth" (517) they are for ever "baffled by her endless garbs" (517) There is always a limit to the capacity of mind's vision.

**(j) Limit of Mind's Sight:**

- (1) "That which moves all is hidden from his gaze" (517)
- (2) "His poring eyes miss the unseen behind" (517)
- (3) "Sight retiring behind the walls of thought" (457)

*(To be continued)*

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

## SRI AUROBINDO

A GREATER CONSCIOUSNESS surpassing mind,  
A wider sight outreaching mortal ken  
Appeared in the silent universe of his soul  
A larger feeling came, a higher flight  
The shining wings of glory broadened above;  
Into the still bright emptiness of his being  
The Light poured down of the unreachable founts,  
The Power that bears the burden of the world,  
The Silence that thrills with the eternal Word,  
The Being immortal, the Bliss ineffable  
A flame of revelation filled his heart  
Awakened from his mysterious timeless sleep  
The soul's great seer peered out from his deep cave  
On the transient world's ambiguous miracle,  
Embracing the universe with his single sight,  
And met Infinity's gaze in each finite frame  
His soul soared up to uncharted continents,  
The unknown domains of happiness and peace,  
Aspiring to the nameless Goal of all  
In the azure ocean of calm infinite Mind  
The flame-eyed thought-birds swam like dreaming stars  
Glistening with the wide golden wings of prayer,  
To the blessed viewless shores of the Unknown  
Celestial syllables swayed on his mortal lips;  
Bridging the gulf twixt God-light and man's dusk,  
The swift word-lightnings leaped from the Truth-skies,  
Like flaming eagles of the Ineffable,  
The messengers from the high-peaked Beyond,  
Bringing the deathless Wisdom on their wings  
Beneath the infinite flame-white heavens of Bliss  
The golden phalanxes of the eternal Truth,  
Innumerable rays of a single Sun,  
Bore the Supreme's irresistible decree

DIMITRY MELGUNOV

## A TREASURY OF THOUGHTS

SECRETLY Nature seeks, hurts, tries to ferret out the track on which God may be found.

—*Meister Eckhart*

When our foundations are shaking, we often turn to the Spirit for help, only to find later that He Himself was shaking them

—*Anon*

Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself.

—*Cato*

For who could live or breathe if there were not this Delight in existence?

—*Taittiriya Upanishad*

Is not everything Brahman, when the name and the form have been removed from it?

—*The Vedanta*

God is...even in the depths of hell.

—*Blake*

Evil cannot exist but in good,  
Sheer evil is impossible.

—*St Thomas Aquinas*

The stain of sin is not something positive, existent in the soul. It is like a shadow which is the privation of light

—*St Thomas Aquinas*

If God exists, there is nothing absolutely evil.

—*James Ward*

The wise man...beholds all men as things made for holy uses

—*Tao Te Ching*

(Presented by Fali Choksi)



## “REMEMBER WHY THOU CAM’ST”

### Comments on a Passage from *Savitri*

*(Continued from the issue of October 2001)*

Now Sri Aurobindo came along and revolutionised spiritual thinking by pointing out that this rejection of the world to find God within is not the only solution or the most satisfying solution to the problem of life, and that a third approach is possible. The sole purpose of this creation which has been evolving over the last fifteen billion years can't be just to convince us that this whole thing has been a mistake and that we must reject it and go back to our starting point, perhaps to start another cycle of this sterile exercise. Granted that our suffering in this world is due to ignorance. But why did God create ignorance and bury Himself in it? The old spiritualists keep saying, “God put on this ignorance for no purpose at all. It was a mistake. So as soon as we realise that it was a mistake, we must try to escape from this world of ignorance into the Kingdom of God within us.”

Sri Aurobindo is not prepared to accept that God could have made a mistake in embracing ignorance. There must be a purpose behind it. Let's not go into the metaphysical underpinnings of the problem. The embrace of the ignorance, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not a limitation forced on God by some Power outside Him. It is a limitation freely chosen by God so that He can have the great delight, as the Veda puts it, of the One becoming the Many, of multiplying Himself into countless millions of forms. Now these forms are made out of Matter, a substance which looks as though it is exactly the opposite of Spirit. Matter and Spirit are supposed to be antagonistic to each other. Matter is believed to be the opposite of Spirit. But it is not so. Out of this substance, Matter, God has created innumerable forms of Himself. Having done so, He is seeking to manifest progressively in each of these forms His fullness, His perfection, His bliss, His immortality. When that happens each of the forms will manifest God's perfection in its own unique way. That seems to be the Divine's agenda. If you look at the external world, you will notice that God, or a Godlike consciousness, is manifesting in this creation progressively. Notice that a tree is more like God than a clod of mud, an animal is still more like God than a tree, and most like God is man with his mental consciousness, compared with the rest of this creation. But man is still far too imperfect a being to be accepted as the final manifestation of God in this material world. There is in man scope for a great deal of further growth. Man's task on earth may just be to co-operate with God in growing beyond the present limits of his consciousness so that he becomes a perfect manifestation of God on earth.

Now how did God's putting on the cloak of ignorance help in this venture? This ignorance has done wonderful things. Let me give an example. The world is full of millions and millions of people. Each of them is a unique individual, each has his own

likes and dislikes, no two human beings are alike. How did this come about? It came about because of ignorance. The supreme instrument of ignorance is the ego, which makes each one of us think, “This world is divided into two domains. one of them is ‘I’ and the other is everything else which is not ‘I’ I am in opposition to the rest of the whole world. I must grab my share of happiness before others in this world take it. To do this, I must have more of this and more of that I must be different from all others. I must be fit to be able to survive in this world ”

In this effort at becoming fit, in this search for uniqueness, in this search for my own little world of happiness, I desired, I hated, I struggled, I tried to conquer All this drama went on. Now this drama became necessary because without it, when the One became the Many, each of the Many would have been exactly identical, like so many cakes of soap as they come out of the factory — one piece indistinguishable from another It is the ego which marks the stamp of uniqueness, of separate individuality on each of these Many. If right from the beginning, we had no ego to hide from us this awareness that we have all come from God, there would have been no effort on our part to be different individuals What hides from us the knowledge of our oneness, our unity in God, is the ignorance.

So this ignorance has helped us. As Sri Aurobindo has said. Ego was the helper, ego is the bar, ignorance was the helper, ignorance is the bar. But when our individuality is fully formed, this ignorance begins to bother us, we want to get rid of it Now once you want to get rid of this ignorance, it is an indication that you have arrived at the gate of the spiritual life The discipline you follow to get rid of ignorance is the same discipline, at least in part, as the discipline recommended by the various yogic schools and spiritual leaders You have to conquer desire, you have to develop detachment from the objects of desire that ensnare you, you have to be at peace with yourself so that your mind can become one-pointed. Go deep within yourself, deep, deep, deep, in quest of that light, that flame, that spark of the Divine within you.

Now if you do that and succeed in it, you find union with the Divine in your soul But once this goal is achieved, what do you do with the body, what do you do with the mind, with the vital energy? The traditional spirituality says, “Don’t bother about them any more. They belong to the corrupt and imperfect external world and are bound to remain as they are for ever ” Now Nature has invested a tremendous amount of energy and ingenuity in building the mind-life-body complex of the human being over millions of years Can we simply throw it into the wastepaper basket of Nature? Or, just as the soul has its perfection, is it possible that the body, life and mind also have their perfection? Could it be that the aim of this creation is to bring forth a being who is a perfect soul wearing a perfect body, possessing perfect vital energies and having a perfect mind?

Sri Aurobindo says that this is precisely the aim of this creation. And so in the name of spirituality, we must not sabotage this evolutionary attempt halfway If you say, “I want to have my Nirvana, I want to have my Moksha, my liberation, my

bliss," well, you can have them, but if in the process you have abandoned the world, you have done very little for it. Of course, some of the people who became spiritual luminaries have taken disciples and started organisations where they have tried to train others to be like them. In this way they have saved a few people. Someone like Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa has been able to save a large number of people through his example, influence and teaching. But when you take the whole of humanity into consideration, this way of saving souls doesn't seem to be a very meaningful proposition. It doesn't go very far. The reason for this is simple. How many Sri Ramakrishnas and Ramana Maharshis would we need before the whole of humanity could be saved in that way? Many. Unfortunately Sri Ramakrishnas and Ramana Maharshis cannot be produced en masse. They come only rarely.

What Sri Aurobindo is saying has much in common with what all the world's great spiritual luminaries have said. He agrees with them that first of all one must seek union with the Divine Consciousness. There are many different highways and byways to this difficult goal. But when this is done, to remain there rapt in the ecstasy of this union would be an act of selfishness. Buddha's instinct was right when he decided not to take a plunge into the beatitude of Nirvana as long as there are countless millions immersed in ignorance and misery. But what he did for these countless millions was limited to what all the great spiritual luminaries have done. They have tried to save as many people as possible through their personal example, influence and teaching. Sri Aurobindo found a more effective way of helping these countless millions. He discovered that the power one gets through union with the Divine can be used to ascend to a new level of consciousness, the Supramental Consciousness, the Supermind. This is why it is said that Sri Aurobindo's yoga begins where all other yogas end. His yoga aims at manifesting the Divine's perfection in all the parts of the being. This new yoga will ultimately enable man to ascend to a new level of consciousness, the Supramental Consciousness, which is a further step on the ladder of the evolution of consciousness. When this happens it will be an evolutionary breakthrough even more significant than the breakthrough that took place when man evolved out of the ape.

This highlights another crucial difference between this yoga and other yogas. Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not aimed at one man's liberation, one person's freedom, but at the liberation and freedom of all mankind. Since the fulfilment of this aim will come about through an evolutionary breakthrough, its result will not be confined only to one human being. It may start with one, but gradually it will include more and more people, and some day we will have here on earth a new species, a new race of what Sri Aurobindo called gnostic beings. So this is what Sri Aurobindo's aim is, and this is the purpose for which life is given to us—to manifest here on earth God's perfection at all the levels of our existence.

A sadhak of Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not engaged in an enterprise whose rewards are only private and personal. The aim of his yoga is to emancipate not just himself but the whole of mankind by making a perfect life possible here on earth in a physical

body through the attainment of what he called the Supramental or Truth-Consciousness. This may sound revolutionary but it is absolutely logical. In the evolutionary history of this world, we have already seen that out of chaos creation has come, out of Matter Life has evolved, out of Life Mind has evolved, and each new level of consciousness in this evolutionary ascension has brought changes not even dreamed of at the stage before it. Why should we then not envisage the possibility of a consciousness higher than Mind evolving out of Mind? Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that before man’s appearance on earth, evolution did not have any conscious agent to understand its secret purpose and co-operate with it. At last in man it has found a being who is able to co-operate with it and accelerate the process of evolutionary change from Mind to the Supermind. If the Supermind or Supramental Consciousness comes, what will happen? Automatically we will be in possession of a greater power, and this greater power will enable us to transform human nature, and bring to the human body, vital and mind the perfection latent in them.

It is not difficult to understand this once we recognise what a tremendous power a higher level of consciousness is. Compare a chimpanzee and a human being. A human being has just one higher level of consciousness than the chimpanzee—a fully developed mental consciousness. Now, with this mental consciousness, what humanity has done, the kind of perfection humanity has been able to achieve, is beyond the wildest dreams of a chimpanzee. Man was able to achieve all this through just one higher level of consciousness. Let us take for example the capacity to use language. A chimpanzee doesn’t have a fully developed mental consciousness and therefore it cannot learn a system of communication which has the structural complexity of a human language. But a human child automatically learns the language to which it is exposed; you don’t have to teach it to him; at the right time, at the age of less than two, a child automatically begins to learn the language to which it is exposed and by about four years of age it has a language adequate for its purposes. This facility with language is the function of a new level of consciousness. What I am trying to say is that a new consciousness is a new power.

Science and technology are gifts of our mental consciousness. We have today science and technology, and through them we are immensely powerful, yet men seem to be unhappy everywhere. What is it that we need now to make our lives happy and complete? More and more people have come to the conclusion that the limitations on human happiness are not primarily external limitations any more—they are inner ones. If a famine comes today, its ravages can be averted to a large extent because science and technology have equipped us to alleviate it. There is plenty of food elsewhere in the world, there is no dearth of transport facilities either, and yet even today people die of starvation in famine-affected areas because we do not have the heart and the will to share with our unfortunate brothers what we have in plenty. The limits of our happiness are essentially inner ones—our narrowness, selfishness, ego. That is the basis of this tendency to exploit, to take advantage of people who are weaker than us. Whether you are a communist or a capitalist, you can still be an

exploiter, and history has many examples to bear this out

And so, if a new consciousness comes, the consciousness that Sri Aurobindo is talking about—the Supramental Consciousness—sainthood or the capacity to love all human beings will not have to be taught through a course. Harmony and the consciousness of oneness with all are natural to this new consciousness. Chanting that we are all brothers, holding prayer meetings to inculcate love for our fellowmen, preaching universal love, making religious exhortations, starting moral rearmament movements, we have tried all these things to bring about a change in human nature but not with much success. These are all exercises in giving a spiritual orientation to the human mind, these are all ways of training the mental man to be spiritual. But with them we have not gone very far. Just as a human being does not need any special coaching to learn his mother-tongue, similarly if you grow into this Supramental Consciousness, intuition, love, brotherhood, the feeling of oneness, all these qualities will come naturally to you—as naturally as language comes to the human mind now. Thus, the mastery over our inner nature, which we need so much even to benefit fully from the power which science and technology have given us, will be automatically ours. Strife, division, hatred, exploitation will not afflict us and torment us any more. This will enable us to realise the age-old dream of all civilisations, to establish the Kingdom of God here on earth.

*(To be continued)*

MANGESH NADKARNI

## THE GREATEST CONQUEST

It is an inescapable law of earthly existence that all creatures are subject to growth, decay and death. From birth to death, it is just a one-way journey and there is no way of reversing it. No wonder why Time is considered to be the devourer of the world, *kālo jagadbhaksakah*. In fact Yama, the Lord of Death, is also called *kālah*.

Is there anything that is an exception to this law or that defies the ravages of time and remains unaffected? Raja Bhartrihari says there is indeed one, and that is “desire” in the human heart, which not only does not attenuate with time, but remains ever fresh, even when the ageing body is afflicted by infirmities. In a verse in *Vairāgyaśatakam*, Bhartrihari says:

वलीभिर्मुखमाक्रान्तं पलितेनाङ्कित शिरः।  
गात्राणि शिथिलायन्ते तृष्णैका तरुणायते ॥

*Valībhirmukhamākrāntam palitenankitam śirah*  
*Gātrāṇi śīthilāyante trshṇaikā taruṇāyate*

The face is all wrinkled, grey hair covers the head, limbs have grown weak, but desire alone grows ever younger

Indeed, desire springs eternally in the human breast. Sadly, this is mankind’s greatest misfortune, because as the sages have declared from very ancient times, desire is the root of all life’s problems and miseries. Desire is the first among the six internal enemies that man has to deal with and is the most formidable of them all. If only one can conquer this enemy, life is bound to be one of unbroken felicity. “Overcome this difficult-to-conquer enemy of yours lurking in your heart in the form of desire.” This was Sri Krishna’s advice to Arjuna (*The Gita*, 3.43).

Desire, whether it be for wealth, satisfaction of the senses, for name and fame, is nothing but the expression of the ego. Elimination of desire is possible only when the ego is totally dissolved in one’s true Self which is all-pervading and eternal. Once that state of identity with the eternal Self is reached, even the most desirable and alluring of all things fails to hold any attraction. Acharya Shankara, in his *Upadeśa Sahasri* says.

ईश्वरत्वेन किं तस्य ब्रह्मेन्द्रत्वेन वा पुनः।  
तृष्णा चेत् सर्वतच्छिन्ना सर्वदैन्योद्भवाऽशुभा ॥

*īśvaratvena kim tasya brahmandratvena vā punah,*  
*Trshnā cet sarvataschinnā sarvadainyodbhavā 'subhā.*

[For the knower of the Self] of what use is Lordship of the world, Indrahood or Brahmahood, if all inauspicious desires, the cause of misery, are entirely up-rooted?

Therefore sublimation of desires in one is the greatest of all conquests

B G PATTEGAR

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## LAUGHTER

THE joy of life and the merriment of love  
 I have known, enjoyed fully, but now  
 In the midst of the vast ocean of Becoming  
 A deeper sadness prevails  
 Unquenched by all the beauty or bliss world can give.  
 Like a wound made eternal by depth of seeking  
 A search is on even when all's asleep.  
 Midst laughter and travail, and intensest activity,  
 Always this ceaseless dissatisfaction says,  
 "Not this, not this", and looks for an ever Unseen  
 Always opaque

Heavenless and pure, silence beckons  
 Beyond all knowings, all strivings,  
 Goallessly absolute, Whole, immutable

There, there is no joy, but purity self-contained, ever immaculate  
 And a deeper sense of all this universe  
 Unburdens the mind of its noise, dissolves agitation,  
 Looks at body extraneously All matters not at all  
 But sheer self-silent existence and the beginnings of a first unclouded sign.

ARVIND R HABBU

## CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

*(Continued from the issue of October 2001)*

### Indian Celebrities Abroad

THE success of Indian professionals and artists in foreign lands may not necessarily reflect the Indian character, the Indian dharma in secular activities. They have certainly acquired worldwide and perhaps desirable, if not deserving, recognition. Plenty of money also has flowed back into the national treasury. But that has brought into the system a good deal of falsification of values too. Now there is a fairly influential segment of people which wants a small America for themselves in India. There have to be in India for them American airports, the American banking system, American management, American hospitals, hotels, clubs, recreation centres. The vast land of rich and noble tradition has no relevance for them. If there are societal or political or cultural shortcomings here they are not concerned about them, they do not have any solution to offer to remove them.

No wonder, the mismatches cause internal as well as external stresses. There are gains no doubt but there is no integration, no genuine harmonisation of what can make society truly progressive. All that we can say about the success of the professionals is that, they have demonstrated our capacity to acquire skills in advanced areas and apply them to solve technical problems. A certain degree of competence of the Indian mind gets acclaimed. But that is not enough. We may apply the same consideration while assessing the great contributions of the celebrities from India. Let us briefly look into the works of Nobel winners from the subcontinent.

Har Gobind Khorana, the Nobel biochemist, had his higher education in England where he also got introduced to Western civilisation and culture. He stayed in Cambridge during 1950-52, a period which proved of decisive value to him. Interest in both proteins and nucleic acids took root at that time. Later in Vancouver he began work in a group engaged in the field of biologically interesting phosphate esters and nucleic acids. In 1960 Khorana moved to the Institute for Enzyme Research at the University of Wisconsin. Soon he became a naturalised citizen of the United States. He cracked the genetic code and shared with Marshall Warren Nirenberg the Nobel for Medicine and Physiology in 1968. He was the first to synthesise oligonucleotides, which have a wide range of applications in biotechnology.

“Har Gobind Khorana was married in 1952 to Esther Elizabeth Sibley, who is of Swiss origin. Esther brought a consistent sense of purpose into his life at a time when, after six years’ absence from the country of his birth, Khorana felt out of place everywhere and at home nowhere. They have three children. Julia Elizabeth (1953), Emily Anne (1954), and Dave Roy (1958).”

From biotechnology let us move to astrophysics where the name of S. Chandrasekhar shines like a star in the new horizon that has suddenly come into our view. He



studied at Presidency College in Chennai and then at Trinity College. From 1933 to 1937 he worked at Cambridge and then joined the University of Chicago where he remained for the rest of his life. In 1930 he showed that a star of a mass greater than 1.4 times that of the sun had to end its life by collapsing into an object of enormous density, unlike any object known at that time. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1983.

in recognition of his distinguished researches in mathematical physics, particularly those related to the stability of convective motions in fluids with and without magnetic fields.

“He has contributed significantly to many disparate branches of physics, including rotational figures of equilibrium, stellar interiors, black holes, radiative transfer, hydromagnetic stability, stellar dynamics, and many others. Chandrasekhar’s name is immortalised in connection with the Chandrasekhar limit, which is the largest mass a white dwarf can attain. The theory underlying this result was viciously attacked by Eddington, who used nonsensical and contradictory arguments to try to show it invalid.” In fact this was a strong reason for him to leave Cambridge and go to the U.S.

According to Nobel laureate Hans Bethe, “Chandra was a first-rate astrophysicist and a beautiful and warm human being. I am happy to have known him.”

“Chandra probably thought longer and deeper about our universe than anyone since Einstein,” said Martin Rees, Great Britain’s Astronomer Royal.

The following is a brief account from one of Chandrasekhar’s students: “My association with Professor Chandrasekhar dates back to 1964 when I reached the University of Chicago to do my Ph.D. studies in physics. I saw an Indian looking professor dressed in a black suit wearing a Cambridge University tie. He was sitting in the first row of a physics colloquium and I could easily connect that the distinguished person was Professor Chandrasekhar, whom everybody affectionately called Chandra. He appeared to me then both very reserved and unapproachable. Professor Chandrasekhar spoke on General Theory of Relativity and its relevance to Cosmology and Astrophysics. I do not think I followed the lecture. He would emphasise to me the importance of diligence and observance of discipline in daily working habits. He emphasised that personal targets had to be continually advanced further so that life may remain an unending challenge without ever getting the feeling of arrived at. He once mentioned that in having decided to live abroad he could only live the life of a scientist. From his own experience he pointed out that living the life of a scientist in a foreign country is extremely difficult and very rarely and very few persons can hope to contribute to science at levels that bring lasting recognition and scientific immortality.” (A. N. Maheshwari)

With a certain degree of relevance we may also include here the name of the theoretical physicist Abdus Salam. Abdus Salam, co-winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize

in Physics, was a professor at Imperial College in London and also Director of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste, Italy, where over a period of more than thirty years, 60,000 scientists from 150 countries have taken part in activities. His convictions were typically Islamic and he firmly believed in his heritage. He considered that the universe was “created by God with ideas of beauty and symmetry and harmony, with regularity and without chaos. The Koran places a lot of emphasis on natural law Thus Islam plays a large role in my view of science, we are trying to discover what the Lord thought ”

Born in Jhang, Pakistan, in 1926, Salam was educated at Panjab University, St John's College, Cambridge and Cavendish Laboratory. In 1952 he returned to Pakistan where he served as professor at Government College, Lahore and Panjab University. “There he suffered the isolation which scientists experience when they are not supported by their home countries There was no tradition of doing any postgraduate work, there were no journals; there was no possibility of attending any conferences He suffered the tragic dilemma of having to make the choice between physics and Pakistan. So he returned to Cambridge.” Abdus Salam is famous for the electroweak theory which synthesised weak and electromagnetic interactions—the latest stage reached until now on the path towards the unification of the known four fundamental forces of nature

The Pakistani physicist Pervez Hoodbhoy recollects about Abdus Salam as follows “Strong, assertive, enthusiastic, vibrant, bluntly authoritarian, and with a mind sharp as a razor's edge, Abdus Salam was a most remarkable person Born in a lower middle-class family in a village near Jhang, he went to a perfectly ordinary Urdu-medium school. One of his brothers, who now lives in Islamabad, says that as a boy Salam had never seen an electric light until one day he was told about it by somebody, at which point he was wonderstruck Subsequently, he was delighted to go to Lahore and have the exquisite pleasure of studying under an electric light An unsophisticated home and environment notwithstanding, this child prodigy mastered his studies and rapidly outpaced his teachers who recognised and respected the young boy's talent, and bore him no grudge.. How great a scientist was Salam? This is an important question because in our country one has to chart a delicate course between the Scylla of adulation and hyperbole, and the Charybdis of stupidity and prejudice An honest answer is made still more unlikely because there is no community of scientists in Pakistan which can understand and sensibly evaluate his work The truth is that Abdus Salam was not Isaac Newton or Albert Einstein or Richard Feynman, he never claimed otherwise and would have felt deeply uncomfortable if someone else had claimed this for him. But his achievement of unifying two basic forces of nature has had greater impact upon the development of physics, and is deeper and more profound, than the works of most other Nobel Prize winners in this century ” (Encounters with Abdus Salam, *Sangat*, January 1997)

Moving away from science to economics we have the first-rate contribution from Amartya Sen “I was born,” says Amartya Kumar Sen “in a University campus and

seem to have lived all my life in one campus or another'' He studied in Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan where the emphasis is on fostering curiosity rather than competitive excellence The Bengal famine of 1943, in which between two and three million people had died, made a deep impression on young Amartya to look into economic factors that govern a country 'Calcutta itself, despite its immensely rich intellectual and cultural life, provided many constant reminders of the proximity of unbearable economic misery''

Kenneth Arrow's path-breaking 'impossibility theorem'' of social choice (*Social Choice and Individual Values*, published in New York in 1951) made a deep impact on Amartya Sen Poverty, inequality, unemployment, real national income, living standards were the important considerations in making any worthwhile economic assessment.

'While these were intensely practical matters,' tells Amartya Sen, 'I also got more and more involved in trying to understand the nature of individual advantage in terms of the substantive freedoms that different persons respectively enjoy, in the form of the capability to achieve valuable things. My work in social choice theory was initially motivated by a desire to overcome Arrow's pessimistic picture by going beyond his limited informational base''

During his Harvard years he was occupied with the implications of welfare economics and political philosophy For his work that 'encompassed welfare economics, economic inequality and poverty, on the one hand, and the scope and possibility of rational tolerant and democratic social choice, on the other'' the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences made its highest award to him

What about India? 'While I have worked abroad since 1971,' answers Amartya Sen, 'I have constantly retained close connections with Indian universities. For various reasons—personal as well as academic—the peripatetic life seems to suit me, in this respect After my student days in Cambridge in 1953-56, I guess I have never been away from India for more than six months at a time This—combined with my remaining exclusively an Indian citizen—gives me, I think, some entitlement to speak on Indian public affairs, and this remains a constant involvement When the Nobel award came my way, it also gave me an opportunity to do something immediate and practical about my old obsessions, including literacy, basic health care and gender equity, aimed specifically at India and Bangladesh The Pratichi Trust, which I have set up with the help of some of the prize money, is, of course, a small effort compared with the magnitude of these problems But it is nice to re-experience something of the old excitement of running evening schools, more than fifty years ago, in villages near Santiniketan'' (The extracts are from Amartya Sen's acceptance speech for Le Prix Nobel 1998 in Economics)

We may conclude this rapid celebration of Indians abroad with Amartya Sen's note on Rabindranath Tagore, the first Indian Nobel winner 'In contrast, in the rest of the world, especially in Europe and America, the excitement that Tagore's writings created in the early years of this century has largely vanished The enthusiasm with

which his work was once greeted was quite remarkable. *Gitanjali*, a selection of his poetry for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913, was published in English translation in London in March of that year and had been reprinted ten times by November, when the award was announced. But he is not much read now in the West, and already by 1937, Graham Greene was able to say: 'As for Rabindranath Tagore, I cannot believe that anyone but Mr Yeats can still take his poems very seriously.' Graham Greene had, in fact, gone on to explain that he associated Tagore with what Chesterton calls the bright pebbly eyes of the Theosophists. Certainly, an air of mysticism played some part in the 'selling' of Rabindranath Tagore to the West by Yeats, Pound, and his other early champions. Even Anna Akhmatova, one of Tagore's few later admirers (who translated his poems into Russian in the mid-1960s), talks of 'that mighty flow of poetry which takes its strength from Hinduism as from the Ganges, and is called Rabindranath Tagore.'''

It is important to ponder why the early enthusiasm for Tagore vanished later and that these days his poems are not taken "very seriously". We may have to again go deeper into the spiritual and cultural roots of the country to discover ourselves in the present milieu, be that of poetry or mysticism or science.

In the over-all context we yet feel the Indian character in our activities and occupations missing. We are sparrows flying to yonder fields for grain. We are careerists waiting for Western recognition and adulation. We are putting our every talent and capability in the service of alien masters. We have not discovered ourselves yet. It is pertinent to recall here what Sri Aurobindo wrote more than four score years ago. It seems that at a particular stage of growth and development there is a desirable necessity for imitating others who have made progress in a certain manner. When a culture that "has fallen into a state of comparative inactivity, sleep, contraction. . . finds thrown upon it novel and successful powers and functionings. . . it is impelled by the very instinct of life to take over these ideas and forms. . . But if there is only a mechanical imitation. . . it is swallowed up by the invading leviathan. . . I do not suppose that anyone seriously thinks of renouncing or exiling these modern additions to our life. . . But the question is what we do with them and whether we can bring them to be instruments. . . of our own spirit. . . What I mean. . . is that we. . . must go back to whatever corresponds to it, illumines its sense, justifies its highest purport in our own spiritual conception of life and existence, and in that light work out its extent, degree, form, relation to other ideas, application. . . to live in one's self, determining one's self-expression from one's centre of being in accordance with one's own law of being, swadharma, is the first necessity'' (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 387-91)

This is the sole criterion we have to apply to our celebrities—professionals and Nobels—while evaluating the Indianness we are looking for in their meritorious achievements.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 2001)

SOON after the Siddhi day outwardly too there was a great change Sri Aurobindo announced that he would go into complete seclusion to concentrate on his yoga. Henceforward the Mother would take the direct charge of the community of the Sadhaks and their inner sadhana as well as of the outer organization. That is why 24 November 1926 is regarded as the day when the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was founded.

The Mother's endeavour at that time was for a new creation, the creation here of a new inner world. She had brought down the higher forces, the godheads into the earth atmosphere, into our inner being and consciousness. In one of her talks in later years she said "Sri Aurobindo had given me charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness and he had announced to the few people who were there that he was entrusting to me the work of helping and guiding them, that I would remain in contact with him, naturally, and that through me he would do the work. Suddenly, immediately, things took a certain shape—a very brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary detail, with marvellous experiences, contacts with divine beings, and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous. Experiences followed one upon another, and, well, in an extremely interesting way.

"One day, I went as usual to relate to Sri Aurobindo what had been happening—we had come to something really very interesting, and perhaps I showed a little enthusiasm in my account of what had taken place—then Sri Aurobindo looked at me and said: 'Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world, you will be able to turn all events on earth topsy-turvy, indeed...' and then he smiled and said 'It will be a *great* success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not success that we want, we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality.'

"With my inner consciousness I understood immediately. a few hours later the creation was gone...and from that moment we started anew on other bases."

Sri Aurobindo had retired from the physical atmosphere in order to bring about the descent of what he called the Supermind. "By the Supermind is meant the full Truth-Consciousness of the Divine Nature in which there can be no place for the principle of division and ignorance, it is always a full light and knowledge superior to all mental substance or mental movement. Between the supermind and the human mind are a number of ranges, planes or layers of consciousness—one can regard it in various ways—in which the element or substance of mind and consequently its movements also become more and more illumined and powerful and wide. The overmind is the highest of these ranges; it is full of lights and powers; but from the

point of view of what is above it, it is the line of the soul's turning away from the complete and indivisible knowledge and its descent towards the Ignorance. For although it draws from the Truth, it is here that begins the separation of aspects of the Truth, the forces and their working out as if they were independent truths and this is a process that ends, as one descends to ordinary Mind, Life and Matter, in a complete division, fragmentation, separation from the indivisible Truth above. There is no longer the essential, total, perfectly harmonising and unifying knowledge, or rather knowledge for ever harmonious because for ever one, which is the character of supermind''<sup>2</sup>

Though Sri Aurobindo withdrew after the Siddhi day, it was not really a "withdrawal", nor was it a setback for the Ashram. As Barin wrote later in *Khulnabari* "The yogic power of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo opened wide the doors of the unostentatious Ashram, so long in the grip of want and difficulty, to the steady inflow of sufficiency and prosperity. Spontaneous offerings came from disciples and admirers. The most ordinary men found in themselves an outflowing of the poetic power, a wonderful talent for painting, a capacity for meditation, occult vision and skilfulness of work. Day by day the Pondicherry Ashram grew into a Yogic place of pilgrimage for the entire world. An aspirant had a vision, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were inside a golden tabernacle on the top of a luminous hill, and men from different climes from all directions thronged to the place in endless streams. Today his vision has materialized. It has indeed''<sup>3</sup>

It is safe to assume that Sri Aurobindo would not have troubled himself to form the Ashram as it entailed a tremendous labour. He would have hardly found time to attend to it as the Mother did. In one of his finest poems *A God's Labour*, written in 1935, Sri Aurobindo has given us a glimpse of the unprecedented tapasya he was doing for mankind. Here are a few stanzas from the poem.

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

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

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!  
 Dig deeper, deeper yet  
 Till thou reach the grim foundation stone  
 And knock at the keyless gate''

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep  
 At the very root of things  
 Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep  
 On the Dragon's outspread wings

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart  
 And heard her black mass' bell  
 I have seen the source whence her agonies part  
 And the inner reason of hell.

A little more and the new life's doors  
 Shall be carved in silver light  
 With its aureate roof and mosaic floors  
 In a great world bare and bright

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,  
 For in a raiment of gold and blue  
 There shall move on the earth embodied and fair  
 The living truth of you<sup>4</sup>

The Mother made a sacrifice and undertook with whole-hearted devotion the responsibility of the Ashram, neither flinching from difficulty nor withdrawing from dangers and disappointments that are inherently present in work of this kind, especially in dealing with the unregenerate lower nature of the sadhaks.

It is written, "Mother was doing Yoga before she knew or met Sri Aurobindo; but their lines of Sadhana independently followed the same course. When they met, they helped each other in perfecting the Sadhana. What is known as Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the joint creation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, they are now completely identified—the Sadhana in the Ashram and all arrangement is done directly by the Mother, Sri Aurobindo supports her from behind. All who come here for practising Yoga have to surrender themselves to the Mother who helps them always and builds up their spiritual life."<sup>5</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

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# KARMA: ELECTABLE, IMMUTABLE AND INEXORABLE

(Continued from the issue of October 2001)

## The Pure Mind

THE question is, how to perceive the law and to make the right choice? Man, by definition, is *manav*, a mental being. The primacy of the intellect and of intelligence is stressed in the account Vyasa provides to his pupils of how creation occurred.<sup>10</sup>

Having created Brahma, Narayana directed him to create, but Brahma pleaded that he lacked the necessary *prajna*, wisdom. Thereupon, Narayana thought of *buddhi*, intelligence, which appeared. Infusing her with yogic power, he commanded her to enter Brahma, who was now able to create. Subsequently, the Vedas, which symbolize wisdom and knowledge, were spirited away by two demons, Madhu created from *tamasic* ignorance and Kaitava, born of passionate *rajas*. Brahma was now unable to create, being bereft of the Vedas. Narayana, who retrieved the Vedas from the depths in his Hayagriva *avatara* and slew the two demons, re-established the supremacy of *Sattva* essential for creation.

But, if the mind's mirror is itself overlaid with dust, how will it reflect the light of pure intelligence, of unsullied discrimination? Hence the need for wiping the mind's mirror clean through the practice of *chitta shuddhi*, so that the choice made is based upon perception that is not clouded by the passion of *rajas* and the ignorance of *tamas*. It is to such a mind that the law of karma makes sense as a beacon light to choose the right path for *lokasamgraha*, preserving the peoples, which is the call of *dharma*. For, at the back of our minds we need to hear, ever, the warning Krishna voiced:

*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah, dharmo hanti hatah*

“Dharma, protected, protects. Dharma, violated, destroys.”

## Determination and Free will

The whole point of comprehending this doctrine lies in perceiving that the much-vexed controversy over determination and free will is resolved if seen in perspective. Let us, once again, take recourse to a story to understand this complicated issue.<sup>11</sup>

Two friends, Shyam and Yadu, lived in a village. Shyam was an ambitious go-getter, and Yadu a happy-go-lucky ne'er do well. Keen to know the future, they approached a hermit who lived apart in the forest. After much persuasion, he



agreed to look into the future and tell them their fates. After a year, he said, Shyam would become a king, while Yadu would die. Returning to the village, the shocked Yadu turned to prayer and began leading an exemplary life. Shyam, immediately on reaching the village, started throwing his weight about, grabbing whatever he fancied from others, threatening anyone who dared to protest, vociferously announcing that soon he would be their king.

A year passed by. Shyam sought out his friend and asked him to help pick the site for his palace. As they walked along the river bank, Shyam stumbled over something and fell. Picking himself up, he found the mouth of a jar protruding from the sand. Digging it up, he found it full of golden coins. Hearing his shouts of celebration at finding such treasure, a robber ran up and tried to snatch the jar. Yadu rushed to Shyam's help and clutched on desperately to the robber's leg. Unable to tackle the joint resistance of both friends, the infuriated robber stabbed Yadu on his arm and ran off.

Days passed. Yadu did not die, Shyam found himself still no king. So they went off to the forest and hunted out the hermit. Confronting him, they demanded an explanation for the failure of his prophecy. The hermit went into meditation and then explained the conduct of each of them had altered what was fated. Yadu's austerity and prayers had reduced the mortal blow into a stab injury. Shyam's tyrannical conduct had reduced the king's crown to a jar of gold coins.

Fate, therefore, is altered by the individual's choice of the path. Those that have eyes can see, those that have ears can hear. To develop this intuitive sense one has to dive deep, beyond the superficial sensory perception to the *manas* and cultivate living in that peace within which is the treasure beyond compare.

*(To be concluded)*

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

#### *References*

10 *Shanti Parva*, 349 22-26

11 Related by Prof. Manoj Das in an address at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Calcutta, in 2000

## EINSTEIN'S 'LOVE-HATE' LETTERS GO ON SALE

New York, Nov 22

FIRST he could not live without her Then he could not live with her and wanted a divorce so badly that he even offered her his Nobel Prize money—should he get any

Call it Albert Einstein's law of personal relativity, the full details of which go on sale next week when Christie's New York auctions off his 'love and hate' letters to his first wife, Mileva Marie, along with a scientific manuscript on a development in his General Theory of Relativity

With newspapers having a field day describing the letters as showing Einstein's "dark side" or at least a "relatively unpleasant" one, the auctioneers expect they will sell for up to three million dollars in the Monday auction

They hope a single buyer will step forward, buy the whole lot and donate them to a museum or a research centre where people can go and discover that one of the world's great thinkers had the same sort of problems as ordinary mortals, provided they can read Einstein's cramped German penmanship But they are fully prepared to sell each lot separately

Although some experts claim the letters shed—dare one say it—relatively little light on the unhappiness of Einstein's first marriage, the general public may be surprised at the details or at the depth of his old-fashioned male chauvinism.

Einstein met Marie when he was 17 and they were both at the Zurich Polytechnic Institute in 1896 He fell in love with the Serbian woman four years older than himself and in his first letters to her he calls her 'kitten' and declares, "without the thought of you, I would no longer want to live among this sorry herd of humans."

By 1901, he and Marie had a daughter out of wedlock Her fate is not known but it is believed that Marie gave her up for adoption and that Einstein never saw her, although in the 1930s he employed private detectives in an effort to find her

The couple were married in 1903 but by 1913 their union, which produced two sons, was on the rocks, and Einstein wrote his cousin, Elsa, who later became his second wife, that he treated Marie, "like an employee who I cannot fire I have my own bedroom and avoid being alone with her In this form I can endure the 'living together' quite well "

By 1914, Einstein was setting down rules for Marie if she expected to stay with him

"A You will see to it (1) that my clothes and linen are kept in order, (2) that I am served three regular meals a day in my room, (3) that my bedroom and study are always kept in good order and my desk is not touched by anyone other than me."

"B You will renounce all personal relations with me, except when they are required to keep up social appearances. In particular you will not request (1) that I sit with you at home, (2) that I go out with you or travel with you."

"C You will promise explicitly to observe the following points in contact with me (1) you will expect no affection from me and you will not reproach me for this,

(2) you must answer at once when I speak to you, (3) you must leave my bedroom or study at once without protesting when I ask you to go ”

“D You will promise not to denigrate me in the eyes of the children, either by word or deed ”

Einstein’s carefully thought-out rules of personal relationship worked as well as the flat earth theory and soon he was pressing for divorce, wondering which would take longer, the first world war or the courts He promised Marie his Nobel Prize money—and gave it to her when he finally won the prize in 1922, three years after the divorce

As the years passed, Einstein and Marie began to exchange friendly and concerned letters, but after he fled to the U S in 1933, driven out of Europe by the Nazis, he never saw her again. Their first son, Eduard, suffered from mental illness and died in an institution. Their second son, Hans Albert, moved to the United States and became a professor of mechanical engineering The letters are being sold at auction as part of an agreement between warring heirs to his estate —Reuter

(Courtesy *The Hindu*)

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Christalis: A Saga of the Future** by *Georgette Coty*, 2000 258 pages Price Rs 200.

You need a rare strength of mind to dream. The sort of strength that has been achieved by sheer survival on this planet in the twentieth century, a vicious century that has been brilliantly capsuled by Georgette Coty in the opening pages of *Christalis*:

The onslaughts were without number, the results were largely the same. The flower of manhood went away, marched off in the yoke of wars. Driven on by a hell-machine in motion, never to return to their loved ones who awaited them in vain, and lived out their lonely lives without them. Some did come back, but they were not the same as when they had left. Maimed in body or in spirit, tired out, their light of joy was dimmed.

The little feel for life that man still possessed was spent in worshipping technology. God Machine took over in the guise of a self-degrading consumerism. The veil of fear closed upon human lives. Certainly, this has been "the hour before the gods awake". But then, this is also the time to dream. They say dreams that rise at this pre-dawn hour do come true. A dream that leads us back to the glory and good of nature, of which Wordsworth sang:

One impulse from the vernal wood  
Can teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and moral good  
Than all the sages can.

Coty gives such a dream and a purpose for us in *Christalis*. "There is a new life ahead! New life everywhere!.. The Light said so. It is the message of the Light."

The big question that confronts us as we look at the evolutionary graph is, "after Mind, what?" Mind has achieved wonders and also reprehensible follies. We have to go in for a consciousness that would shed the evil in mental consciousness. The Supermind, of course. But the Supermind has innumerable steps of ascension and the very thought of ascension makes us afraid, hopeless. However, even he who aims to reach the top of Everest, must begin with a first step placed outside his door. The Mind of Light can be reckoned as the first step in our adventure of consciousness. The Mind of Light does not snap its linkage with the Beginnings, with Nature. *Christalis* evokes with astonishing accuracy an image of Mother Nature and her son Christalis. We have a dream-vision parallel in them for the narrator Lillian and her son Christopher.

The message of this vision comes in clear accents. The sorrows of the past are best forgotten. We belong to the noons of the future! However, the manifestation of

Christalis does not take away the need for responsibility on the part of the human being. Each individual must make a personal effort to thrust aside the evils within and without (indicated by the gnarled anti-the-light person) that lead one astray by a word of flattery, or by a sense of pride, a firm faith that makes one constantly conscious of the Saviour Name will certainly keep one on the right path. The God-light kept flaming in us is the unfailing weapon and shield to face the enemy. That way one sees God face to face, as Sri Aurobindo indicated in his letter to Mrinalini Devi.

Religion these days means repeating the name of God at any odd hour, praying in public, showing off how pious one is. I want nothing of this. If God exists, there must be some way to experience His existence, to meet Him face to face. However arduous this path is, I have made up my mind to follow it. The Hindu religion declares that the way lies in one's own body, in one's own mind. It has laid down the rules for following the way, and I have begun to observe them. Within a month I have realized that what the Hindu religion says is not false.

Georgette has constructed an icon in this book which is more like a prose-poem. Within it swirl motherly affection, a child's love, the smiling assurance of angelic creatures that are around us all the time. Almost as if we were gazing on the celebrated paintings of the Madonna and the Child surrounded by winged angels. Often there is a welcome play on words reminding one of Lewis Carroll: Praying Mantis, Mantilla, Flower Helio. There are those memorable moments of drama when all the children of the Centre in the care of Lillian Orley bathe in the rains spreading an electrical happiness around. The Aurobindonian philosophy comes across like the mild rays of the morning sun peeping into a child's room through a silken curtain. Ecology too gains by the book as when the Mantis tells Lillian that his tribe has dwindled alarmingly. "Did I not know well enough that the poison in the air and the soil killed most of the insect world?"

Christalis himself is born in the lotus, like the first of the Tamil Alwars, Poykai whose devotional poesy gave rise to the Bhakti Movement that transformed the religious and spiritual spaces of the subcontinent. The Auropolis experience is the Mother's divine dream of Auroville and we conclude with Georgette's vision of the Rāsa dance suggested in Sri Aurobindo's *Ahana* that would transform earthlife into one of unparalleled Ananda by the Descent.

With hands joined—a garland of souls dedicated to a high purpose, we stood  
The force of grace in answer to our call came pouring down in waves, making  
us a unit of its Will—these two of heaven—I, of earth

Georgette's *Christalis* is one of the rare occurrences where the same book can be handled by the child and the grown-up with equal felicity. Like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, I am sure, the volume will be read and re-read by generations of children and adults for whom the dream, let us hope, would become a reality as well.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

**Nagin-bhai Tells Me** by R. Y. Deshpande. Publisher M/S Aurosoorya Pp. 82. Price Rs 60.

This book is primarily the record of spiritual experiences of Nagin Doshi, a sadhak and an Ashramite who passed away in May 1997. After the very interesting introduction the book is divided into two parts. The first 53 pages give us the record—documented by R. Y. Deshpande as narrated by Nagin from 1994 to 1997

The second part has six sections. The first two are related to the Supramental Manifestation and have two poems by Nagin preceded by an explanatory ‘Prelude’. This is followed by a reproduction of a painting by P. K. Chatterjee depicting a visionary experience. The next two sections tell us about Nagin the person and the sadhak. This consists of two recollections by fellow sadhaks who knew Nagin well, Kailash and Esha, and an obituary by Amal Kiran. The last two sections have excerpts from Nagin’s correspondence with Sri Aurobindo on Avatarhood and an excerpt from his book *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo* about ‘The Mother’s Force and its Action’.

The introduction gives us the background. In 1994 Nagin told Deshpande that he wished to ask him some questions and also, I quote, “confide in me something very important and consult me about certain things that were to some extent crucial to him at that time.” First there were some questions about *The Life Divine* and this dialogue gave Nagin mental support and clarified some of his experiences. Later Nagin started telling Deshpande “the important aspects of his sadhana as it was progressing in those days.” These meetings continued regularly for the first three years or so and later less often; the last meeting was in February 1997. I now reproduce the last paragraph of the introduction fully as it well explains the whole matter:

“I have put down in the following his experiences as faithfully as I could. I used to make the records the same day and therefore they are generally true to what he had told me. While I can say that these are mostly reproduced in his own words, they had to be redrafted at places for the sake of clarity of written expression. But I must also admit that he had never seen these records. However, I am pretty certain he must have thought that I would be recording them in my notebooks. Perhaps he wanted these to be left behind although of it he never gave any hint to me.”

It would have been interesting if R. Y. Deshpande had also explained more clearly as to why he is giving us access to these records.\* I feel that they are interesting particularly to spiritual sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga. For an ordinary reader these records, together with the complementary second part, might give a

\* The answer is simple. The intention is essentially to bring home the fact that the Mother and the Master continue to do their work in us if only we are receptive to them, if we become willing instruments in their hands. Nagin-bhai’s experiences described in this book are but one example, assuring us that they are actively present here to help us in the sadhana. It is this aspect which is more pertinent to us than what is perhaps presented in the book. I could have mentioned this obvious fact in my introduction to the book to make it explicit but left it unsaid for the discerning reader.—R. Y. D.

motivation to start on a spiritual quest.

The reader may be also motivated to read Nagin's correspondence with Sri Aurobindo especially after reading on page 67 Amal Kiran saying "Nagin's correspondence (with Sri Aurobindo) has been published, and is of great importance, for certain aspects of the Integral Yoga are brought forward there more strikingly than anywhere else."

The front cover has a lovely photograph of a smiling Nagin-bhai, which surely will attract many readers I enjoyed reading this book.

DINKAR D PALANDE

**Sri Aurobindo and World Literature** by *Goutam Ghosal* Published by Sri Mira Trust Pondicherry Pp 138 Price. Rs 70

Dr Goutam Ghosal's latest book on Sri Aurobindo is a pleasure to read for its originality of approach and insightful commentary on Sri Aurobindo's literature and philosophy It is a responsible piece of criticism where two different styles of criticism—the scholarly and the intuitive—are fused together. As for the scholars the book will appeal as a genuine piece of comparative criticism.

In the *Introduction* Ghosal offers us Sri Aurobindo in a manner that will interest the scholar and the layman alike in the philosophy and literature of the great Indian Rishi. By defining the meaning of the word 'Rishi', Ghosal goes on clarifying the global vision of Sri Aurobindo and the synthetic approach of his philosophy which are the basic reasons behind his popularity in the West and his acceptability among scholars. In a lucid style the author explains why Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can be effectively compared with those of the Western masters By quoting Sri Aurobindo's famous diagnosis of D H Lawrence's crisis, Ghosal brings into focus the real distinction of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy which is not limited to the analysis of metaphysical problems, but also is relevant in giving invaluable insight on mundane, material things In a word, the *Introduction* satisfies the intellectual curiosity of the modern readers who are in search of proper guidance to the complex world of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and literature.

The second chapter entitled *Indo-Anglian Poetry—Sri Aurobindo and Aurobindonians* starts with the time-worn controversy regarding Sri Aurobindo's usage of English and then shows how Sri Aurobindo's idiom harmonises Indian thought with the English language and has become a model worthy of emulation among a galaxy of Indo-Anglian poets Ghosal has however admirably presented the greatness of Sri Aurobindo's rhetoric, which is not merely an echo of the traditional English but a combination of both English and Sanskrit and which is necessary for a poet of Yoga to express his vision otherwise inexpressible In the *Introduction*, the author has remarked that Sri Aurobindo initially was a product of the West, that he

read Indian literature only after having widely read Western literature and philosophy. In this chapter Ghosal shows how through the poetry of a large number of Indo-Anglian poets Sri Aurobindo's message reaches the Western readers. The poetic excerpts from Sethna, Deshpande, Nirodbaran and Harindranath are representative of their common allegiance and show how these poets, even being widely different in style and substance, carry to the Western readers Sri Aurobindo's poetic theory and the essentials of his practice. Poetry of mantra or incantation, of which Sri Aurobindo was the pioneer among Indians writing in English, reaches the global readers through the writings of these poets. The admirers of Sri Aurobindo will be delighted to find the exposure that the author makes of the malicious and mostly irrelevant attacks on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and poetry made by a handful of Indo-Anglian critics.

The author applies the Aurobindonian technique of consciousness approach in dealing with Dickens's magnum opus *A Tale of Two Cities*. Finding in Dickens's novel the obvious clues of a better humanity, Ghosal proceeds to show how the hero Sydney Carton becomes in the end a superman, a messenger of divine humanity on earth.

The appraisal shows the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy even to the analysis of well-known texts of English literature. The very next chapter supplements and strengthens the author's argument in the former. Here Ghosal attempts a brief comparative study of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and Hemingway's *For whom the Bell Tolls* by using Sri Aurobindo's celebrated definition of tragedy and epic as his yardstick. "Poets make much of death and external afflictions, but the only tragedies are the soul's failures and the only epic man's triumphant ascent towards godhead." Judged by this, *A Tale* attains to the stature of an epic by virtue of Sidney Carton's success in becoming a superman, a delegate to eternity through a gradual evolution from the animal man, whereas *For Whom* fails to become an epic and turns out to be a tragedy because of Robert Jordan's failure to come to terms with his wife Maria and his rejection of home in favour of politics and violence. The entire study, though brief, is full of brilliant critical insights.

In the next chapter entitled *Death and Honour in Antony and Cleopatra—An Aurobindonian Approach* the author applies once again the consciousness approach to analyse how the motives of death and honour guide the protagonists in the play. In the light of Sri Aurobindo's aphorism, "Evolution of speech leads to the evolution of action," Ghosal analyses how the animal man in Antony gains a superior status at the end through superior speech-acts which are followed by high action. Ghosal's criticism of Cleopatra's character that she has no middle gear and that in her scheme of things there is no place for morality, is both Aurobindonian and traditional. Critics have time and again pointed out the absence of moral plane in Cleopatra's ideology of love which is either sensual or spiritual. In a balanced piece of judgement the author draws our attention to the basic motive behind Shakespeare's characterisation of his protagonists. "What he wishes to show is the growth of love in the sensual man. Honour or love shapes itself in a unique way in the midst of filth and mire."



In the next chapter Ghosal attempts a comparative analysis between Sri Aurobindo's poetic masterpiece *Savitri* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. He quotes Sri Aurobindo's comment on Shelley's failure to develop his spiritual ideas to their full potential and shows how Shelley's Asia foreshadows Sri Aurobindo's conception of Savitri, both characters being the incarnations of the Mother's forces. With acute insight Ghosal shows how Asia remains only a half developed heroine, whereas Savitri becomes a living reality embodying the forces of the supramental.

In his analysis of Hemingway's epic novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ghosal is quite original and combines his intuition with the traditional scholarly approach. Taking another clue from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's philosophy, that is the art of retaining lost youth, Ghosal shows how Hemingway's hero Santiago becomes a symbol of youth, a man who does not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future. In spite of physical debilitation, Santiago undergoes renewal of consciousness that gives him perfection and the ability to survive. The entire struggle of Santiago is seen in this light which certainly opens for the readers a new avenue for criticising this immortal epic.

In the chapter entitled *Whitman and Sri Aurobindo*, Ghosal makes an appraisal of Whitman's poetic technique in the light of Sri Aurobindo's criticism and shows how Sri Aurobindo succeeds in accomplishing a perfect blending of substance and rhythm whereas the former fails. The author shows how Sri Aurobindo, while not denying Whitman his glory, advances his poetic technique to a supreme perfection. With equal balance Ghosal judges Baudelaire, highlighting his success and failure simultaneously from the perspective of both Aurobindonian and traditional criticism. It is heartening to see that Ghosal shows how Baudelaire's "perverted imagination" (Sri Aurobindo's phraseology) gave him an inkling of the mysteries of the world.

In the comparative study of *Baji Prabhau* and *The Red Badge of Courage*, Ghosal shows the similarity of theme and symbol between these two texts. Although it is not certain whether Sri Aurobindo had actually read Crane's text, there is no doubt that he was thinking in the same line as Crane and in fact made further advancement on the theme of the American writer.

The chapter entitled *Blake and Sri Aurobindo* is particularly fascinating in the sense that Ghosal has here compared two of the greatest mystic poets and shown the similarity as well as the difference between their themes, styles and qualities of experience. Nolini Kanta Gupta's criticism on Blake, to which Ghosal refers, is a remarkable appraisal of 'the greatest mystic poet of Europe' (Sri Aurobindo's phraseology). By incorporating relevant passages of Sri Aurobindo's criticism on Blake, and also quoting frequently from Sri Aurobindo's poetry, Ghosal shows where and how the former improves upon the latter and why they remain qualitatively two different types as mystic poets.

The chapter on *Scholar* draws parallels between Emerson and Sri Aurobindo's views on the subject and shows how they both ideologically envisaged the same type of scholar—silent, withdrawn, contemplating but not a bookworm type. In the end of

the chapter Ghosal claims that Sri Aurobindo himself is the “culmination of the scholar image that Emerson had tried to sketch in *The Ancient Scholar*” As a whole Ghosal assimilates and supports some of the bold and radical views of the two writers on the image of the scholar. The chapter on Poe and Sri Aurobindo focuses on the difference of views of these two writers but also shows how at places Poe defines poetry in terms similar to those used by Sri Aurobindo. Poetry and truth do not harmonise in Poe’s principle whereas for Sri Aurobindo beauty and truth are inseparable in great poetry But at places, especially where Poe refers to poetry as a kind of struggle, he comes nearer to Sri Aurobindo’s suggestion that poetry like yoga is a conscious art of self-finding

The chapter on Keats, like the one on Blake, is particularly rewarding because here Ghosal compares the two poets who had, though in varying degrees, thought about the concept of spiritual evolution Keats, basically a poet of the senses, had glimpsed the face of the Ideal Beauty only in moments of heightened awareness. Sri Aurobindo, a spiritual romantic, had an exact idea of the divine beauty and spiritual evolution Although Sri Aurobindo hinted at Keats’s failure as a spiritual poet, the latter had at places (notably in *Hyperion* and *Terror of Death*) foreshadowed Sri Aurobindo’s message In the following chapter entitled *Sri Aurobindo and English Poetry*, Ghosal explains and clarifies Sri Aurobindo’s views on the English poets from Chaucer down to Yeats of his own time Sri Aurobindo’s view that poetry written in the English language has undergone stages of evolution and that the poets of the modern era like Whitman, Yeats, Carpenter and A E express the evolution of the new spirit and consciousness that dawned with the Romantics has been endorsed by Ghosal Like Sri Aurobindo, Ghosal also foresees the birth of mantric poetry in English in the future, the beginning of which has already been marked in the poetry of K D Sethna, R Y. Deshpande, Damodar Reddy and Themis

The chapter on Wilde is one of real excellence because here Ghosal detects underlying ethical principles in Oscar Wilde’s tales like *The Happy Prince*, *The Nightingale and the Rose* and *The Selfish Giant* Ghosal observes that Sri Aurobindo’s principle of motiveless and ego-free love constitutes the leitmotif of these tales in which Wilde is certainly thinking of love that ends in self-giving and self-annihilation The purity and authenticity of emotion embodied in these tales runs parallel to Sri Aurobindo’s concept of love in *Savitri* and other poems. The choice of quotations from Wilde and Sri Aurobindo showing their basic similarity deserves to be highly praised

The next chapter is devoted to the philosophical aspect of Sri Aurobindo’s writing and the context of discussion is Aldous Huxley’s famous book *The Perennial Philosophy* Here Ghosal compares Huxley’s book with the major works of Sri Aurobindo and shows the fundamental similarities and differences in their thinking. Huxley, though aware of the perennial philosophic stuff, did not have much knowledge of the evolutionary character of man and the art of transforming the body consciousness of which Sri Aurobindo knew The comparison between Eliot and Sri

Aurobindo as theorists of poetry demands greater critical attention from the scholar because *Tradition and Individual Talent* and *The Future Poetry* were published almost at the same time and in themselves they proved quite influential. While calling Eliot's excessive dependence on intellect, memory and reading a stumbling block to the creation of sublimest poetry, Ghosal adds that Sri Aurobindo's opposition to precisely these qualities enabled him to write so fluently and with so much authenticity about the highest kind of experiences.

In the concluding chapter of the book Ghosal compares Petrarch's love sonnets with those of Sri Aurobindo and shows how they are similar in many respects while being different in some. Petrarch's neo-Platonism and his new attitude to women were also the features of Sri Aurobindo's love poetry. But then the Indian poet had shown greater suggestiveness than Petrarch in his early immature poetry.

What Ghosal's book has done so remarkably well is to highlight Sri Aurobindo's critical credo, observations and poetic practices in comparison with the great masters of Europe and America which few had ventured to do in the past. His book deserves a special position among the wealth of critical literature on Sri Aurobindo produced every year and should initiate fresh research on the subject. The addition of Sri Aurobindo's comments on the major Romantic and Victorian poets in the Appendix is a special feature. The unmistakable charm of Goutam Ghosal's prose is another hallmark of this short book.

DEEPANJAN CHAKRABARTY