

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

DECEMBER 2001

PRICE: Rs 20 00

## Revised Subscriptions

**from August 2001, owing to considerable rise in costs of posting and paper**

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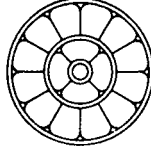
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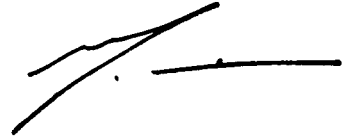


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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Published by HARIKANT C PATEL

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIV

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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## THE VOICE THAT SOON WOULD CEASE

Now it was here in this great golden dawn  
By her still sleeping husband lain she gazed  
Into her past as one about to die  
Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life  
Where he too ran and sported with the rest,  
Lifting his head above the huge dark stream  
Into whose depths he must for ever plunge  
All she had been and done she lived again.  
The whole year in a swift and eddying race  
Of memories swept through her and fled away  
Into the irrecoverable past.  
Then silently she rose and, service done,  
Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved  
By Satyavan upon a forest stone.  
What prayer she breathed her soul and Durga knew.  
Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge  
The infinite Mother watching over her child,  
Perhaps the shrouded Voice spoke some still word  
At last she came to the pale mother queen  
She spoke but with guarded lips and tranquil face  
Lest some stray word or some betraying look  
Should let pass into the mother's unknowing breast,  
Slaying all happiness and need to live,  
A dire foreknowledge of the grief to come.  
Only the needed utterance passage found:  
All else she pressed back into her anguished heart  
And forced upon her speech an outward peace  
"One year that I have lived with Satyavan  
Here on the emerald edge of the vast woods,  
In the iron ring of the enormous peaks  
Under the blue rifts of the forest sky,  
I have not gone into the silences  
Of this great woodland that enringed my thoughts  
With mystery, nor in its green miracles  
Wandered, but this small clearing was my world  
Now has a strong desire seized all my heart  
To go with Satyavan holding his hand  
Into the life that he has loved and touch  
Herbs he has trod and know the forest flowers  
And hear at ease the birds and the scurrying life

That starts and ceases, rich far rustle of boughs  
 And all the mystic whispering of the woods  
 Release me now and let my heart have rest ”  
 She answered: “Do as thy wise mind desires,  
 O calm child-sovereign with the eyes that rule.  
 I hold thee for a strong goddess who has come  
 Pitying our barren days, so dost thou serve  
 Even as a slave might, yet art thou beyond  
 All that thou doest, all our minds conceive,  
 Like the strong sun that serves earth from above ”  
 Then the doomed husband and the woman who knew  
 Went with linked hands into that solemn world  
 Where beauty and grandeur and unspoken dream,  
 Where Nature’s mystic silence could be felt  
 Communing with the secrecy of God.  
 Beside her Satyavan walked full of joy,  
 Because she moved with him through his green haunts  
 He showed her all the forest’s riches, flowers  
 Innumerable of every odour and hue  
 And soft thick clinging creepers red and green  
 And strange rich-plumaged birds, to every cry  
 That haunted sweetly distant boughs, replied  
 With the shrill singer’s name more sweetly called.  
 He spoke of all the things he loved they were  
 His boyhood’s comrades and his playfellows,  
 Coevals and companions of his life  
 Here in this world whose every mood he knew  
 Their thoughts which to the common mind are blank  
 He shared, to every wild emotion felt  
 An answer Deeply she listened, but to hear  
 The voice that soon would cease from tender words  
 And treasure its sweet cadences beloved  
 For lonely memory when none by her walked  
 And the beloved voice could speak no more

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 561-63)

## SOME LETTERS

*(Continued from the issue of November 2001)*

THE crisis you are passing through might be due to your not being ready for an intensive practice of Yoga. On the other hand, a crisis of this kind often happens in the ordinary course of the sadhana. As long as the sadhana is only in the mind, things go on well enough, but as soon as the vital or physical begin to be worked upon directly, all the resistance, inability, obscurity in the adhar rises up and there may be a prolonged period or recurrent periods of darkness.

I would suggest to wait a little longer—say, till the 24th November. If by that time there is no return of the favourable course of the sadhana or if meanwhile you find the resistance too great, you may for a time discontinue.

In any case, the habit you speak of ought to be given up at once and altogether. You must be aware of how injurious it is to the mind, the nervous system and the body, and it can of itself create the most serious obstacle in the way of any sadhana.

5 October 1932

*For two or three months, almost every alternate day I dream of eating and eating. I do not understand how the desire is so inordinate in the subconscious, while in waking hours it does not appear so hideous. What is the way to turn it the right way?*

The first thing to be attained about eating, is to get rid of the greed for food, the attachment and desire,—to take it only as a need of the body, to think little of it and not to allow it to occupy a big place in the life, also to be satisfied with what you get, not to hanker. At the same time sufficient food should be taken, avoiding either deficiency or excess, an excessive coercion or *nigraha* in this respect (as opposed to reasonable control) often brings a reaction. One should go steadily, but not try to get too much done at once.

*How can we be conscious of the vital and physical beings as separate entities?*

The separate existence of the vital and physical comes to be known of itself usually in the progress of the Yoga. So long as one lives mainly in the surface consciousness one can only know them by their results—one can see that this or that is or must be a movement of the vital etc., but the direct concrete experience comes only when one begins to live deeper down in the inner being.

*Can the vital be compelled to surrender to the Truth or the Divine in spite of itself? If it can see the ultimate benefits derived from being moved by the Divine, may it not seize upon the idea for its own selfish ends? What signs can show that the vital and physical have ultimately and really surrendered?*

It is not easy to compel the vital, though it can be done. It is easier by the constant pressure of the mind to persuade and convert it, but it is true that in this mental way of doing it the vital does often attach itself to the spiritual ideal for some gain of its own. The one effective way is to bring the light down always in the vital, exposing it to itself, so that it is obliged to see what is wrong with itself and in the end to wish sincerely for a change. The light can be brought upon it either from within from the psychic or from above through the mind into the vital nature. To call down this light and force from above the mind is one of the chief methods of this Yoga. But whatever way is used, it is always a work of persistent and patient spiritual labour. The vital *can* be converted suddenly, but even after a sudden conversion the effects of it have to be worked out, applied to every part of the vital until the effect is complete and that takes often a long time. As for the physical consciousness, that can only be converted by long spade work, as it were, rapid changes in this or that point can be made; but the whole change means a long and persistent endeavour.

9 October 1932

*Some days back in a dream I saw five big crocodiles in shallow water. What do they signify?*

The crocodile signifies greed, *lobha*, of some kind. It is not clear what the five refer to here.

*I had a letter from my father. I have not written to him for nine months or so. I wish to write to him a casual letter. I depend on your instructions.*

You can write to your father—there is no harm.

*Today after twelve midday, I saw something moving or vibrating rapidly in space on my left side near my left eye; on closing my eyes it assumed some shape, with the colours of the prism in between my eyes and this thing. After ten minutes or so, while dining, on closing my eyes I saw the outline of the face of a lion with a bright blue lining. It kept vibrating like the colours in a prism for some minutes and then disappeared. What can it be? Is it merely due to fatigue after work?*

It is a development of the power of occult sight that is trying to take place.

10 October 1932

*Yesterday I had a bad dream. I entered the compartment of a railway train which was full of women. As I sat down, two women came towards me and tried to sit near me. They were apparently of an undesirable type. I went away in a corner and tried to look outside, but their presence had its physical sexual effect even though the mind attempted to sidetrack it. This may be due to my having*



*recently read a book in which there was a description of an ill-famed house or to my having wandered in such localities in college days*

It is from subconscious impressions left by past mental movements or vital or physical habits (distant past or immediate past) that these things come up. If they are reinforced by new movements or renewal of habits, then of course they get a new force. Otherwise they can get more weak until the seed (*bija* as it is called usually) gets eradicated.

*For some days I have got slight bronchitis or tracheitis, slight pain in the knee-joints and sometimes pain in between eyebrows. These things are not particularly disturbing. But is it necessary to treat them medicinally or dietetically?*

Not unless you want or unless they are too persistent or get worse

12 October 1932

*After a few days of quieting my curiosity about women or girls in the street, the old habit is making an attempt to reappear. Is it a movement of the vital ego?*

It is very obviously a movement of the vital-physical which is full of these small crude, unrefined movements.

*Today, as often before, K found some mistake in my weighing of material. Externally nothing was expressed, but deeper within me there was a feeling of rage at the person who found the mistake and a sullen irritation, as if my ego was hurt severely. Why should the mind not take it as very natural to commit mistakes? Why should it be irritated if corrected? What is the active member in this wrong feeling?*

It is the same as above—petty foolish movements of pride without any rational basis

18 October 1932

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

# TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

SRI AUROBINDO Gandhi's demilitarisation doesn't seem to meet with much success

PURANI Exactly Nana Sahib also spoke against non-violence the other day while presiding over a Conference of young men at Baroda Do you know him?

SRI AUROBINDO Oh, yes. I know him very well He, Madhav Rao and I were the first revolutionary group and wanted to drive out the English

PURANI It's good he protested against demilitarisation

SRI AUROBINDO. Has Gandhi succeeded in disarming the Frontier Pathans?

PURANI. When he went there, he objected to armed volunteers keeping guard over him

SRI AUROBINDO But what should they do in case of attack? Stand simply?

PURANI No, they have to die resisting non-violently

SRI AUROBINDO. This idea of passive resistance I have never been able to fathom I can understand an absolute non-resistance to evil, what the Christians mean when they say, "Resist not Evil" You may die without resisting and accept the consequences as sent by God But to change the opponent's heart by passive resistance is something I don't understand

PURANI I agree with the *Modern Review* that by this method one allows evil to triumph It seems foolish to expect that a *goonda's* heart will melt in that way

SRI AUROBINDO Precisely Gandhi has been trying to apply to ordinary life what belongs to spirituality. Non-violence or *ahimsa* as a spiritual attitude and practice is perfectly intelligible and has a standing of its own You may not accept it *in toto* but it has a basis in Reality To apply it in ordinary life is absurd One then ignores—as the Europeans do in several things—the principle of *adhikārbheda*, the rightful difference of situation

PURANI Gandhi's point is that in either case you die If you die with arms you encourage and perpetuate the killing method

SRI AUROBINDO. And if you die without arms you encourage and perpetuate passive resistance (*Laughter*)

It is certainly a principle which can be applied successfully if practised on a mass-scale, specially by unarmed people like Indians I understand this principle, because you, being unarmed are left with no other choice But even if it succeeds, it is not because you have changed the heart of the enemy but because you have made it impossible for him to rule That is what happened in Ireland Of course, there was armed resistance also, but it would not have succeeded without passive resistance side by side.

What a tremendous generaliser Gandhi is! Passive resistance, Charkha [the spinning wheel] and celibacy for all! One can't be a member of the Congress without

oneself spinning! I wonder what Abanindra Tagore and D would have done

PURANI: Now they have removed the demand. Nobody took spinning seriously

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you expect anyone to take it seriously? If I were asked to spin, I would offer passive resistance myself—complete Satyagraha (*Laughter*) I wonder what Abanindra Tagore and D would have done.

NIROD: It seems Nandalal Bose did spinning

SRI AUROBINDO: Isn't he a man of an ascetic temperament? There was somebody who even wrote that the Chakra [wheel] referred to in the Gita is really the Charkha!

PURANI: There are many ascetically minded enthusiasts whom people look up to as Gurus. About one of them a friend told me, "He can attain the Supermind." I replied "No objection. Let him try."

SRI AUROBINDO: These people will stumble at the very first step to the Supermind. They have to give up all their fixed ideas

*(To be continued)*

*(Nirodbaran Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Vol 1, pp 159-61)*

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

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

न पञ्चभिर्दशभिर्वष्ट्यारभ नासुन्वता सचते पुष्यता चन ॥  
जिनाति वेदमुया हन्ति वा धुनिरा देवयुं भजति गोमति ब्रजे ॥

(Rigveda, 5.34 5)

He (Indra) desires not to ascend by the five and by the ten, he cleaves not to him who gives not the Soma even though he grow and increase, he overcomes him or else he slays in his impetuous movement, he gives to the god-seeker for his enjoyment the pen full of the Cows (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 218)

Not with the five nor with the ten does he desire to ascend, nor does he cleave to the evil one who gives not the wine, even though he flourish and increase, he conquers him or he slays in his impetuous movement and he gives to the seeker of the godheads for his portion the pen full of the luminous herds (Archives and Research, 1:2, p. 50)

वित्वक्षणः समृतौ चक्रमासजोऽसुन्वतो विषुणः सुन्वतो वृधः ।  
इन्द्रो विश्वस्य दमिता विभीषणो यथावश नयति दासमार्यः ॥

(Rigveda, 5.34 6)

Cleaver (of the foe) in the battle-shock, firm holder of the discus (or the wheel), averse from him who gives not the Soma but increaser of the Soma-giver, terrible is Indra and the tamer of all, Aryan, he brings into utter subjection the Dāsa (SABCL, Vol 10, p 218)

Grasping firmly his discus he hews asunder our foe in the shock of the battle, he turns from him who gives not the wine, but its giver he increases, the God-Mind is terrible, he is the tamer of every opponent, he is the Aryan fighter and brings into subjection the Destroyer (Archives and Research, 1 2, p 51)

समी पणेरजति भोजनं मुषे वि दाशुषे भजति सूनरं वसु ।  
दुर्गे चन ध्रियते विश्व आ पुरु जनो यो अस्य तविषीमच्युकुधत् ॥

(Rigveda, 5 34.7)

He comes driving this enjoyment of the Panī, robbing him of it, and he apportions entirely to the giver for his enjoyment the wealth rich in hero-powers (lit. in men, *sūnaram vasu*, *vīrāh* and *nr* being often used synonymously), that man who makes

wroth the strength of Indra is held back manifoldly in a difficult journeying, (*durge cana dhriyate ā puru*). (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 218)

Yea, he drives away the enjoyment of that miser Trafficker, he robs him of it and apportions to the giver of sacrifice that wealth full of powers Every creature who angers the strength of the Puissant is held back by manifold obstacles and his path is painful and rugged. (*Archives and Research*, 1 2, p 51)

सं यज्जनौ सुधनौ विश्वशर्षसाववेदिन्द्रो मघवा गोषु शुभिषु ।  
युजं ह्यन्यमकृत प्रवेपन्युदी गव्यं सृजते सत्वभिर्धुनि ॥

(Rigveda, 5.34.8)

When Maghavan has known in the shining cows the Two who are rich in wealth and have all forces, he growing in knowledge makes a third his helper and rushing impetuously looses upward the multitude of the cows (*gavyam*) by the help of his fighters ” (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 218)

When Two perfected in wealth and universal in force are found by God-Mind, the master of plenitude in the fullness of the luminous herbs, creating light he makes a third his helper and his impetuous movement with his fighters releases upward the luminous multitude. (*Archives and Research*, 1 2, p 51)

सहस्रसामाग्निवेशिं गृणीषे शत्रिमग्न उपमां केतुमर्यः ।  
तस्मा आपः संयतः पीपयन्त तस्मिन् क्षत्रममवत् त्वेषमस्तु ॥

(Rigveda, 5 34 9)

The Aryan (god or man) arriving at the highest knowledge-vision (*upamām ketum aryaḥ*), the waters in their meeting nourishing him and his housing a strong and brilliant force of battle, *kṣatram amavat tvesam* (SABCL, Vol 10, p 218)

O God-Will, I praise the Slayer of the foe, the winner of the thousandfold riches, the son of the Dweller in the flame, let that Aryan fighter obtain the highest vision of the light; for him let the heavenly waters come together and nourish, in him let there dwell a forceful and blazing warrior strength. (*Archives and Research*, 1 2, p. 51)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

## ADHARMA

FROM the rim of the world to the zenith  
Is a chasm-roof of cloud  
(What shape in this gloom-built sepulchre  
Is stretched in a shroud?)

Storm-drift like vampires crowding  
All earth kindred note—  
But different guises of some Silence  
(Is it terror seized their throat?)

Not one star-ship left floating  
And the moon-beacon dowsed.  
Shall the Guardians of earth, so sleep-enchanted,  
Be ever roused?

September 26, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo This is a very fine and suggestive poem—perfect in form.

Arjava. Is any distinguishing effect produced by ‘echoing’ the rhyme from the preceding stanza—shroud, crowding—throat, floating?

Sri Aurobindo A subtle but distinguishable effect is produced—it certainly adds to the music of the rhythm

## THIS CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTIVE FORCES AND THE DESTRUCTIVE FORCES

ONE thing seems obvious, humanity has reached a certain state of general tension—tension in effort, in action, even in daily life—with such an excessive hyperactivity, so widespread a trepidation, that mankind as a whole seems to have come to a point where it must either break through the resistance and emerge into a new consciousness or else fall back into an abyss of darkness and inertia.

This tension is so complete and so widespread that something obviously has to break. It cannot go on in this way. We may take it as a sure sign of the infusion into matter of a new principle of force, consciousness, power, which by its very pressure is producing this acute state. Outwardly, we could expect the old methods used by Nature when she wants to bring about an upheaval, but there is a new characteristic, which of course is only visible in an *élite*, but even this *élite* is fairly widespread—it is not localised at one point, at one place in the world, we find traces of it in all countries, all over the world the will to find a new, higher, progressive solution, an effort to rise towards a vaster, more comprehensive perfection.

Certain ideas of a more general nature, of a wider, perhaps more ‘collective’ kind, are being worked out and are acting in the world. And both things go together—a possibility of a greater and more total destruction, a reckless inventiveness which increases the possibility of catastrophe, a catastrophe which would be on a far greater scale than it has ever been, and, at the same time, the birth or rather the manifestation of much higher and more comprehensive ideas and acts of will which, when they are heard, will bring a wider, vaster, more complete, more perfect remedy than before.

This struggle, this conflict between the constructive forces of the ascending evolution of a more and more perfect and divine realisation, and the more and more destructive, powerfully destructive forces—forces that are mad beyond all control—is more and more obvious, marked, visible, and it is a kind of race or struggle as to which will reach the goal first. It would seem that all the adverse, anti-divine forces, the forces of the vital world, have descended on the earth, are making use of it as their field of action, and that at the same time a new, higher, more powerful spiritual force has also descended on earth to bring it a new life. This makes the struggle more acute, more violent, more visible, but it seems also more definitive, and that is why we can hope to reach an early solution.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the spiritual aspiration of man was turned towards a silent, inactive peace, detached from all worldly things, a flight from life, precisely to avoid battle, to rise above the struggle, escape all effort; it was a spiritual peace in which, along with the cessation of all tension, struggle, effort, there ceased also suffering in all its forms, and this was considered to be the true and only expression of a spiritual and divine life. It was considered to be the divine grace, the divine help, the divine intervention. And even now, in this age of anguish, tension, hypertension, this sovereign peace is the best received aid of all, the most welcome,

the solace people ask and hope for. For many it is still the true sign of a divine intervention, of divine grace

In fact, no matter what one wants to realise, one must begin by establishing this perfect and immutable peace, it is the basis from which one must work, but unless one is dreaming of an exclusive, personal and egoistic liberation, one cannot stop there. There is another aspect of the divine grace, the aspect of progress which will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect which will propel humanity to a new realisation, which will open the doors of a new world and make it possible not only for a chosen few to benefit by the divine realisation but for their influence, their example, their power to bring to the rest of mankind new and better conditions

This opens up roads of realisation into the future, possibilities which are already foreseen, when an entire part of humanity, the one which has opened consciously or unconsciously to the new forces, is lifted up, as it were, into a higher, more harmonious, more perfect life.. Even if individual transformation is not always permissible or possible, there will be a kind of general uplifting, a harmonisation of the whole, which will make it possible for a new order, a new harmony to be established and for the anguish of the present disorder and struggle to disappear and be replaced by an order which will allow a harmonious functioning of the whole.

There will be other consequences which will tend to eliminate in an opposite way what the intervention of the mind in life has created, the perversions, the ugliness, the whole mass of distortions which have increased suffering, misery, moral poverty, an entire area of sordid and repulsive misery which makes a whole part of human life into something so frightful That must disappear This is what makes humanity in so many ways infinitely worse than animal life in its simplicity and the natural spontaneity and harmony that it has in spite of everything Suffering in animals is never so miserable and sordid as it is in an entire section of humanity which has been perverted by the use of a mentality exclusively at the service of egoistic needs.

We must rise above, spring up into Light and Harmony or fall back, down into the simplicity of a healthy unperverted animal life.

When this talk was first published in 1958, Mother added the following note on the "uplifting" of an entire part of humanity by the action of the new forces

But those who cannot be lifted up, those who refuse to progress, will automatically lose the use of the mental consciousness and will fall back to a sub-human level

I shall tell you about an experience I had which will help you to understand better It was shortly after the supramental experience of the third of February, and I was still in the state in which things of the physical world seemed so far off, so absurd A group of visitors had asked permission to come to me and one evening they



came to the Playground. They were rich people, that is, they had more money than they needed to live on. Among them there was a woman in a sari, she was very fat, her sari was arranged so as to hide her body. As she was bending down to receive my blessings, one corner of the sari came open, uncovering a part of her body, a naked belly—an enormous one I felt a real shock. There are corpulent people who have nothing repugnant about them, but I suddenly saw the perversion, the rottenness that this belly concealed, it was like a huge abscess, expressing greed, vice, depraved taste, sordid desire, which finds its satisfaction as no animal would, in grossness and especially in perversity. I saw the perversion of a depraved mind at the service of the lowest appetites. Then, all of a sudden, something sprang up from me, a prayer, like a Veda “O Lord, this is what must disappear!”

One understands very well that physical misery, the unequal distribution of the goods of this world could be changed, one can imagine economic and social solutions which could remedy this, but it is that misery, the mental misery, the vital perversion, it is that which cannot change, doesn't want to change. And those who belong to this type of humanity are condemned in advance to disintegration.

That is the meaning of original sin: the perversion which began with the mind.

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed—it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form, the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt—which must be eliminated—just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith. Those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world—by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol 9, pp 296-301)*

## THE BALLAD OF SAVITRI

*(Continued from the issue of November 2001)*

### PART III

DEATH in his palace holds his court,  
His messengers move to and fro,  
Each of his mission makes report,  
And takes the royal orders,—Lo,  
Some slow before his throne appear  
And humbly in the Presence kneel  
“Why hath the Prince not been brought here?  
The hour is past, nor is appeal  
Allowed against foregone decree,  
There is the mandate with the seal!  
How comes it ye return to me  
Without him? Shame upon your zeal!”

“O King, whom all men fear,—he lies  
Deep in the dark Medhya wood,  
We fled from thence in wild surprise,  
And left him in that solitude  
We dared not touch him, for there sits,  
Beside him, lighting all the place,  
A woman fair, whose brow permits  
In its austerity of grace  
And purity,—no creatures foul  
As we seemed, by her loveliness,  
Or soul of evil, ghost or ghoul,  
To venture close, and far, far less

To stretch a hand, and bear the dead;  
We left her leaning on her hand,  
Thoughtful, no tear-drop had she shed,  
But looked the goddess of the land,  
With her meek air of mild command”—  
“Then on this errand I must go  
Myself, and bear my dreaded brand,  
This duty unto Fate I owe,  
I know the merits of the prince,  
But merit saves not from the doom  
Common to man, his death long since  
Was destined in his beauty’s bloom ”

*(To be continued)*

TORU DUTT

## IMAGINATION, TRUTH AND ACTUALITY\*

It mostly happens in a poem that the expression outruns the poet's experience. Not that there is insincerity and exaggeration—the substance too disproportionate to the imposing structure of the language. What I mean is that the poet always plunges deeper than the normal run of life and, in giving tongue to vision and feeling and thought, he brings into focus some inner or inmost stuff of being that is not always found in experience, at least not immediately and seldom in full force. Through the passing occasion and the peculiar circumstance he reaches beyond to a general abiding rhythm, the living essence of a thing in one aspect or another, by a unique flash of the revelatory light available to the plane on which he works. This essence is no exaggeration of facts nor does it stamp the poet's words with a sense of strain or pretence: on the contrary, it gives an extra clarity and spontaneity to them because it uncovers what the facts dimly, brokenly, fragmentarily represent.

The power of consciousness by which the poet expresses the inner or inmost stuff of being is loosely called Imagination and frequently regarded as a delightful maker of figments. The poet himself, during his creative phase, feels he is touching a mind above his mind, a super-ego with a larger range and keener penetration than his own. No figment-maker is to him that imaginative drive, but rather a seer who gets from any object and any situation its thrilled inside in terms of the mood that has come over the poet on the psychological level at which he functions.

As there can be many levels and diverse moods, the thrilled inside can be a thousand things. There is no one particular "truth" to be laid bare, there is only a delight and beauty to be brought by an intimate immediate grip on whatever may be held as a theme. A poem is not increased or diminished by the belief it unfolds. It can get as rich poetry out of the Ptolemaic view that the sun goes round the earth as out of the Copernican that the universe is heliocentric, it can be as inspired by an atheism *à la* Lucretius as by a Virgilian piety. It suffers diminution solely by lacking the intimate immediate grip, the contact with its theme by some magical quick of awareness behind the author's surface-responses. Though "truth" in the usual connotation is not his sphere, actuality and not figment is what the poet feels to be the content of his work—a seizure of the concrete that is hidden as distinguished from the concrete that is apparent. If the disclosure he makes is branded a tissue of figments, then the disclosure of ordinary experience is from his viewpoint equally insubstantial, equally fictitious—nay, even more, since the surface-responses are to him just a narrow faded projection from the broad and intense realm of vision and feeling and thought that is active behind the scenes of normal life and comes forth in the panoramas of poetry. So, at the same time that he is not bound by "truth" he is not cut away from actuality: when he is imaginative he does not dabble in the imaginary, as those who are locked up in the outermost rigid concretenesses and cannot open doors within accuse him of doing.

\* An unfinished early piece of writing

The term "imagination", to describe his activity, is apt for him in two ways alone. First, it refers to what is not actual to the surface mind and, second, it refers to what exists even for his own "fine frenzy" as an actuality which he does not himself so much possess as conveys, lets through, channels out. When, for instance, Keats wrote

...magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn,

he was not merely writing of things unmentioned in any geography book: he was also writing of what he himself had never directly experienced. Unlike the man who pins his faith only on geography books, he had a vivid sense of the actuality of these things. They impinged on his poetic sensitivity, he knew them to be actual somewhere, but he did not experience them by an occult entry into their world. They got translated into accurate atmospheric words without being his concrete experience. They used him as their medium and took word-form—the medium felt no more than a vague strangeness during the process. While convinced of their reality, the poet had but a faint touch of them, an "imagination", a waking dream, of their concreteness. They were in his experience a shadow from some secret consciousness more piercing and more opulent than his own as a poet, just as the latter was more opulent and piercing than his external day-to-day awareness and life.

It is the same secret consciousness that throws a subjective shadow no less than an objective one, when, instead of making him a medium for projecting "magic casements" into his words, it projects strange states of psychological existence like Keats's

...solitary thinkings such as dodge  
Conception to the very bourn of heaven,  
Then leave the naked brain

Unless the poet is a practising mystic, a yogic explorer of the In-world and the Over-world, such "solitary thinkings" are not his direct possessions. They belong to him merely in the shape of a thrilled imagination. But the whole posture of luminous sight and the whole movement of vital and spontaneous sound in the verse proclaim their actuality in some superhuman domain.

Even when we have a snatch seeming to be from the Nature we know, evocation of scenic mood as in the lines, again from Keats—

No stir of air was there,  
Not so much life as on a summer's day  
Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass,  
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest—

we go past Nature as we experience it by our normal responses. We have here a play of negative perceptions mounting up until they serve to throw into extraordinary relief a perception that is positive. Such surely is not the structure of sense-operations. We have a created, not a reflected, landscape. Nor are the negative perceptions all of the kind we are ordinarily apt to make. The initial—"No stir of air was there"—is within our usual range. But the next—"Not so much life as on a summer's day"—exceeds it. The word "life" in place of "wind" or "breeze" comes in with a touch of animism, a subtle spirit is about us, the air is a secret living presence. And the rest of the line—"as on a summer's day"—suggests that the scenic mood described is not of the sort we may encounter during the summers with which we are familiar. This scenic mood is sought to be clarified and communicated to us by an allusion to the calm weather of a known earthly season. It is not itself a phase of that weather. The third negative perception—"Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass"—links up with the known earthly season yet by linking up also with the aerial "life" it breaks through the familiar summer and grows a glimpse of one mystery caught and drawn to press home a glimpse of another. Again, in being a part of a comparison, it introduces into the still spectacle hinted at by the opening line a component from another dimension of natural reality. A picture is built up at one place by means of strokes from outside it: ostensibly there is no "light seed", there is no "feathered grass" in the landscape concerned, but they haunt it all the same and by their phantasmal absence-presence bring a creative precision to the word-painting. The result is certainly not Nature as experienced by eye and ear normally functioning. And though the last perception, the sole positive one—"But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest"—is, like the initial, within our usual range, yet it belongs by syntactical connections as much to the two perceptions following the first as to the latter itself: it thus becomes a phenomenon affined not only to an animistic cosmos but also to another dimension of natural reality and serves as much as those two perceptions to cast on the very line with whose usual range it joins up an unfamiliar perspective. Imagination, in the sense of conjuring up what is not actual to the surface mind, is once more at genuine work. And, in being so, it gives us, for all the elements gathered from our here and now, a strange somewhere belonging to an actuality conveyed by the poet rather than possessed by him, a seizure more of his imagination than of his experience.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K D SETHNA)

## THE STORY OF *VANDE MATARAM*

THE mantric song *Vande Mataram* came to Bankim Chandra one evening in 1875 in the countryside of Bengal, when he was walking home from the Nahati railway station en route from Calcutta where he had done his day's work. Now the green fields were around him and above was the clouded sky of a rainy day.

As the story goes, on reaching home he immediately wrote down the poem and put it in the drawer of his desk where it remained forgotten until one late evening when the manager of the weekly *Banga Darshan* edited by him rushed in with an urgent demand for some filler for an empty space in the forthcoming issue. The drawer was opened and the piece of paper on which *Vande Mataram* had been written came forth! The manager was happy to see it and found it fitting the space too.

But during the writer's lifetime the value of the song would be recognised only by some. Usually songs are written for the stories of dramas or novels, but Bankim wrote the novel *Ananda Math* for the song *Vande Mataram* which occupies the centre stage in the plot. Yet, although the novel became popular, the song's impact was not felt by the people. It was first sung in public at the Indian National Congress session in December 1896, i.e., almost three years after Bankim's death in April 1894. That time it was sung by Rabindranath Tagore in his masterly voice. It would be sung again in 1901 and since then in the annual sessions of the Congress.

In 1897 Madame Cama would unfurl the national flag of India, with the inscription *Vande Mataram*, at Stuttgart in Germany at a conference of the friends of India. In India Sister Nivedita also would similarly adopt a flag with the *Vande Mataram* inscription.

Rishi Bankim had predicted a wait-period of twenty-five years for the true impact of the song to come about. In fact, the call of *Vande Mataram* would spread like fire in 1905 and the identification of the entire country with Bharat Mata would catch the heart of millions and millions. Rabindranath, Surendranath, Bipin Pal, Aurobindo Ghose—they were the top leaders in Bengal to carry the fire of the national message and movement which was fuelled by the British Viceroy Curzon through his unfortunate plan of the partition of Bengal. Leaders of the Indian renaissance, poets, musicians, the youth, the middle aged, the old—all got electrified by the mantra and were ready for sacrifices in response to the call. If a tyrant is sitting on the mother's chest will her child remain a passive onlooker in the midst of the oppression? That was the question openly and largely put by Aurobindo Ghose to the people and there could be only one answer.

Among journals Sjt. Aurobindo Ghose's *Bande Mataram* paper was the chief vehicle of the mantra. Aurobindo would also put forth the visionary concept of India not as a particular combination of plains and rivers and hills, but as Bharat Mata. The geographical entity was visualised and adored as the physical face of the mother goddess.

In 1886 Tagore had sung at a Congress session *āmrā milechhi āj māyer dākey*

“Here have we gathered today hearing Mother’s call.” But from 1905 the vision was getting clearer, wider and more soul-charged. The song stirred the soul of the people of India. It also stirred the alien rulers, of course negatively. They became allergic to the very words *Vande Mataram* and started banning its pronouncement, enforcing the ban by the use of might and violence. The children of Bharat Mata would then pass under the blows of the lathis and the boots of the police, and go to gaols, and quite often to the gallows, joyously uttering *Vande Mataram*.

This golden period of the national awakening initiated by the mantric song lasted for some years in its glory. Not only was the alien government obliged to abandon the idea of the partition of Bengal, the inextinguishable flame of the spirit of freedom had also been kindled in the hearts of the people.

But in the Congress sessions in the early 1920s the Muslims began to object to the last two stanzas of *Vande Mataram*. They saw in them image worship and also the adoration of the Hindu goddess Durga, and that was not acceptable to them. The objection was being overruled till the Haripura session of the Congress in 1938, when the last two stanzas were not sung. And then Jinnah demanded that the song should not be sung at all.

In the course of a conversation with his attendants on 30 December 1939, when Sri Aurobindo (formerly Sjt. Aurobindo Ghose) was told of the offence the Muslims were taking at the last two stanzas and of the support their demand was getting from some Congressmen, he said: “But it is not a religious song, it is a national song and the Durga spoken of is India as the Mother. Why should not the Muslims accept it? It is an image used in poetry. In the Indian concept of nationality, the Hindu view would naturally be there. If it cannot find a place there, the Hindus may as well be asked to give up their culture.” (A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks*, 3rd series, p. 242)

But the Congress would cling to its vain policy of appeasement of Muslims, and from 1940 it would abandon the singing of *Vande Mataram* in its sessions.

And when the national anthem was to be chosen by free India, the political leaders preferred *Jana Gana Mana*, giving a second place to *Vande Mataram* as a concession. They put forth the unsustainable reason of the musical superiority of the former song and chose not to give due honour to the mantra which had led them to the seats of power after awakening a nation from its slumber and inspiring martyrs and patriots. More importantly, they lost the vision of their country as a physical manifestation of Bharat Mata, of its presiding mother goddess Durga, the goddess of force and love and knowledge.

The political leaders had by then fallen under the charm of the West, of the materialist, worldly, earthly culture of the West. During these fifty-four years of independence India has got further and further away from the spirit of her true civilisation and culture. She has been regarded as a source of material wealth and resources meant to be exploited by the rulers. Naturally, India has been led to travel downhill to the oblivion of her soul.

It must be borne in mind that even after the Congress abandoned the singing of

*Vande Mataram* in 1940, the song remained in the hearts of the people and continued to be sung by others. In free India the last two stanzas gradually faded away from the people's memory with the adoption of the first two stanzas alone by the Constituent Assembly. But now, in the new millennium, the song has been sung in full at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and there is a reseeking for it elsewhere too. The story of *Vande Mataram* is truly the story of India's rebirth. For the rebirth of India, *Vande Mataram* has to be reborn. The struggle for freedom of Bharat's body was against alien rulers. The struggle for freedom of Bharat's soul has to be against ourselves, against the degradation of our national values.

We, the people of India, have to awaken to values based on eternal principles, on the inner dharma.

### VANDE MATARAM

SHYAM SUNDER JHUNJHUNWALA

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## SACRIFICE

WITHOUT death, no birth takes place.  
 The Divine Holocaust began the worlds  
 Each small self must live this law,  
 Sacrifice is the growth principle of living,  
 Self-importance, a denial of grace,  
 An isolation from the luminous Vast,  
 Which opens within through self-giving

We take ourselves for what we are not,  
 For what we can be is a riddle unsolved  
 For most a door that remains unopened,  
 We are the unguessed obstacle and key.  
 One shift of focus, one leap of faith,  
 All life changes with a beat of Truth,  
 A moment's glimpse of eternity!

STUART LANE



## A LETTER APROPOS OF MRINALINI-DEVI

Dear Sri Nirodbaran,

I find myself inclined to write something after reading the two articles of Mangesh Nadkarni in *Mother India* (July and August 2001) about your biography of Mrinalini-Devi. I cannot go far enough in the appreciation of your book because I have not read it but Nadkarni's impressions enhance my reverence for your exploration.

As I read the impressions of your biography I formed a new view of this extraordinary marriage and she appears before me a new Beatrice. Nothing can be more cruel than her separation from Sri Aurobindo. She had loved him as no other person had but, like Ophelia, she went into the bog of influenza. I am fascinated to read her love of heart and soul "I had no other God except my husband. I have seen God's manifestation in him alone." A complete appreciation of Sri Aurobindo is totally impossible without the tragic but extraordinary marriage with Mrinalini-Devi. Her life in Shillong, Deoghar and Ranchi steps out of time and I may quote the words of Mary Queen of Scots. "In my end is my beginning" to peer at her greatness.

As a common reader I feel that she was always at the back of his mind in Pondicherry and Sri Aurobindo reaffirms his love when he is informed of her death as "the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre." Is this not repentance of Sri Aurobindo? To the Father in Heaven belongs "the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory," but life is also human life.

You hold an esteemed position in my heart as a biographer for your insight and wisdom. It is certainly the tribute to a remarkable saint who died at 32.

With regards,

Gratefully,

S K SINHA

# THE COMPOSITION OF *SAVITRI*

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

## The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

### 2

THE opening of *Savitri* plunges the reader at once into the impenetrable darkness of “the hour before the Gods awake”. This passage, as we know it, took shape largely from 1937 to 1944. Is it only a coincidence that this was one of the darkest hours in human history? Certainly the outward events of that period cannot be read into the passage, whose symbolism points to a deeper level of reality. But we may suppose it was the unprecedented spiritual forces pressing for manifestation that incited the upsurge of the diabolical which momentarily threatened the course of human evolution as it drew near a crucial turning-point. If this violent attempt to block the “divine Event” came close to succeeding, it was because it derived its strength from fundamental aspects of the cosmic negation represented in *Savitri* by Night.

Elsewhere in the epic we do find passages written during the same period where the current world-situation is reflected quite explicitly, as in this sentence in “The Descent into Night”

A bull-throat bellowed with its brazen tongue,  
Its hard and shameless clamour filling Space  
And threatening all who dared to listen to truth  
Claimed the monopoly of the battered ear;  
A deafened acquiescence gave its vote,  
And braggart dogmas shouted in the night  
Kept for the fallen soul once deemed a god  
The pride of its abysmal absolute<sup>1</sup>

The first five lines of this can be dated 1942-44, the next two somewhat earlier, while the last line goes back to around 1936. Here, allusions to twentieth-century fascism are combined with the psychology of Milton’s rebel angels and, in the concluding phrase, an Aurobindonian paradox reminiscent of the “abysm of the unbodied Infinite” in one of the opening lines of *Savitri* whose origin we saw in the last instalment. The above passage grew, interestingly enough, out of its final phrase. That is, its philosophical dimension was not added as an afterthought or commentary on the specific contemporary references, rather, the political imagery was added to illustrate the more universal truth of the nature of the fallen consciousness with its pride in “its abysmal absolute”. We have seen this general truth or perversion of truth in Night’s feeling of omnipotence as she tried to stifle “the frail dangerous ray” that was *Savitri*.

She saw in herself the tenebrous Absolute<sup>2</sup>

We have found Night to be a symbol of the Inconscient in such passages, including the opening of the poem as it developed from 1937 onwards. To be more precise, she represents the all-negating aspect of the material inconscience, which obstructs the manifestation of whatever is higher and more luminous than itself.

But the first words introducing Night at the beginning of *Savitri* call for further comment. The facsimile in the previous issue showed Sri Aurobindo's revision of Amal Kiran's typed fair copy of the 1936 version. In the third line, "unslumbering" was altered to "foreboding" before "spirit of Night". To bring the line to its present form, only one change was still to be made.

This change occurred in the next manuscript. Sri Aurobindo wrote "spirit" as before, but cancelled it. He then wrote "mind" and completed the line. The two lines that had been inserted before this line in the typescript were shifted to a later position. Thus, the second sentence of the poem came to read almost as it now stands in the published text, only "immensity" remained to be replaced by "eternity" after two more versions.

Across the path of the divine Event,  
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone  
In her unlit temple of immensity,  
Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge.

The expression "huge foreboding mind" is not entirely explained by what has already been said about the symbolism of Night. If Night here is the Inconscient, how can it have a mind? "Spirit" in the previous version raised the same question. Both of these words seem to imply a consciousness of some kind. Likewise, "foreboding" suggests an activity of consciousness. All this needs to be reconciled with our interpretation of Night as a symbol of the Inconscient.

The substitution of "mind" for "spirit" in this context is highly significant. But the manuscripts show that Sri Aurobindo did not at once decisively reject "spirit". In three successive versions, he first wrote "spirit" in this line, then changed it to "mind". In view of the persistence of "spirit of Night", it may be worthwhile to try to understand what that phrase meant at this stage, before considering the implications of "mind of Night" in the final text.

A passage in the Epilogue provides a clue. When Satyavan first speaks to Savitri after his return to life, he asks her

Where now has passed that formidable Shape  
Which rose against us, the Spirit of the Void,  
Claiming the world for Death and Nothingness,  
Denying God and soul?<sup>3</sup>

The Void is so closely related to Sri Aurobindo's symbolic conception of Night that in the manuscripts of *Savitri* we sometimes find that he changed one of these words to the other as he revised. The phrase "Spirit of the Void" may help us, therefore, to understand precisely what he meant by "spirit" in the similar expression, "spirit of Night".

We have seen that the Night of inconscience and the Void of non-being came about as a consequence of what Sri Aurobindo has called "the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself"<sup>4</sup> If nothing but Sachchidananda exists, then He alone can deny Himself. In that case, the Spirit of the Void who denies God and soul can be none other than God denying His own existence.

In *Savitri*, the name usually given to this self-denying mood of Sachchidananda is Death. He is the "limitless denial of all being",<sup>5</sup> and his "huge denial's all-defeating might" pursues the march of Time.<sup>6</sup> "Death" in this sense is written with a capital "D" and is referred to as "he". "Death" in the sense intended in the third line above is referred to as "it" and may or may not be capitalised.

Death in the former sense is repeatedly said to be a god. He is "the dreadful god" or "the dreadful Lord",<sup>7</sup> a "universal god",<sup>8</sup> "the vague tremendous god".<sup>9</sup> He is "Death, the dire god",<sup>10</sup> "Death the god",<sup>11</sup> or simply "the god".<sup>12</sup> He even claims to be God Himself.

I, Death, am He, there is no other God.<sup>13</sup>

He asserts to the same effect in another place

In me all take refuge, for I, Death, am God.<sup>14</sup>

There is a certain truth in this claim. *Savitri* admits it, with an important qualification:

O Death, thou too art God and yet not He,  
But only his own black shadow on his path  
As leaving the Night he takes the upward Way  
And drags with him its clinging inconscient Force.<sup>15</sup>

Death, then, is the shadow of God. But in this world, only the "dire universal Shadow"<sup>16</sup> can be seen, not the One who casts it. Another name for this Shadow, or for the darkened state of being on which it falls, is Night.

Night and Death sometimes merge together, as when *Savitri* at first refuses to reply to

The voice of Night that knew and Death that thought.<sup>17</sup>

Since only one voice has spoken, Night and Death here must be different names for

the same entity They are likewise fused together in Book Eleven when, after Death's transfiguration, Savitri has the vision of

One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night <sup>18</sup>

Here it is clearly stated that Death and Night were two aspects of one being But usually they are presented as distinct though closely associated entities. Death is the lord of the realm of eternal Night This is evidently the same as the Void, which according to Death is the only thing besides himself that can be eternal

Death only lasts and the inconscient Void <sup>19</sup>

Death who is described as the "Spirit of the Void" is also addressed as if he were the Void itself.

O Void that makest room for all to be....<sup>20</sup>

Since Death who is here identified with the Void is elsewhere said to be the "Spirit of the Void", he who is sometimes identified with Night may very well be what is meant by the "spirit of Night"

Death is "he" and Night is "she" Given the many passages in *Savitri* where "he" and "she" represent various aspects of the Two who "play in many worlds",<sup>21</sup> we may assume these pronouns to be significant The duality of Purusha and Prakriti is found on every plane, short of the ultimate Unity Death and Night, therefore, can be nothing but an opposite reflection of the "deathless Two-in-One".<sup>22</sup> The Inconscient arose out of a fall that was "her giant downward plunge"<sup>23</sup> as well as "God's plunge into the Night".<sup>24</sup>

The phrase "spirit of Night" in the 1937 version of the opening of *Savitri* may be interpreted, then, as referring to the Purusha aspect ("spirit") and Prakriti aspect ("Night") of the same phenomenon I have suggested that the Purusha aspect corresponds to what Sri Aurobindo calls "Death" later in the poem, though he does not use that word in this passage. Night's resistance to the light is supported by a will of denial put forth by the fallen spirit or darkened deity within her This will itself is quite conscious—it must even have behind it some inscrutable purpose in the supreme Consciousness—though its result has been a lapse into the unconsciousness of which Night is the symbol, from which our world began and is still struggling to emerge

Sri Aurobindo's revision of "spirit of Night" to "mind of Night" is consistent with this theory, provided we accept that the spirit sustaining the unconsciousness of the negating Night can take the form of a *manomaya purusa* or mental being This agrees well with the treatment of Death in the later books of the epic He makes his first appearance, in Book Eight, as a "cosmic mind" with "its immense destroying thought" Although he scorns the "subtle marvellous mind of man"<sup>25</sup> because of its

tendency to self-deluding idealism, he is himself a thinker and he is addressed with phrases such as “Death, who reasonest”<sup>26</sup> or “dark-browed sophist of the universe”<sup>27</sup> For mind is the faculty of dividing consciousness. Death, the great divider, is its natural master and the ruling spirit of its oppositions.

To confirm the identification of the “huge foreboding mind of Night” with Savitri’s antagonist, Death, as he is presented later in the poem, the two adjectives “huge” and “foreboding” must be taken into account. The first presents no difficulty. The hugeness of this mind corresponds not only to the general description of Death as “the huge god”,<sup>28</sup> but also to his huge or limitless denial, mentioned earlier. We have already seen the characterisation of his mind and thought as “cosmic” and “immense” in the phrases cited in the preceding paragraph. The second word, “foreboding”, requires a longer discussion. It will be taken up in the next instalment, along with further reflections on the “mind of Night”.

The expressions “cosmic mind” and “immense destroying thought” occur in a twenty-line passage dictated by Sri Aurobindo in the late 1940s for insertion before the last two lines of “The Book of Death”. The dictation of this passage was his most significant revision of the early manuscript used for Book Eight, to which it is said he intended to return. Death is portrayed here as the archetypal nihilist and pessimist. As can be seen from the lines quoted below, his gaze seems to condemn all to futility and unreality, as if the world were swallowed up by the “fathomless zero” evoked in the opening lines of the poem.

A terror and an anguish filled the world,  
As if annihilation’s mystery  
Had taken a sensible form. A cosmic mind  
Looked out on all from formidable eyes.  
It saw in its immense destroying thought  
All things and beings as a pitiful dream,  
As if from a Silence without form or name  
The Shadow of a remote uncaring god  
Doomed to his Nought the illusory universe,  
Cancelling its show of idea and act in Time  
And its imitation of eternity.<sup>29</sup>

*(To be continued)*

RICHARD HARTZ

*References*

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1 <i>Savitri</i> (1993), p 216                  | 16 <i>Ibid</i> , p 668     |
| 2 <i>Ibid</i> , p 585                           | 17 <i>Ibid</i> , p 586     |
| 3 <i>Ibid</i> , p 717                           | 18 <i>Ibid</i> , p 678     |
| 4 <i>The Life Divine</i> , SABCL, Vol 18, p 211 | 19 <i>Ibid</i> , p 592     |
| 5 <i>Savitri</i> , p 574                        | 20 <i>Ibid</i> , p 666     |
| 6 <i>Ibid</i> , p 643                           | 21 <i>Ibid</i> , p 61      |
| 7 <i>Ibid</i> , pp 571, 573, 591                | 22 <i>Ibid</i> , p 295     |
| 8 <i>Ibid</i> , p 574                           | 23 <i>Ibid</i> , p 99      |
| 9 <i>Ibid</i> , p 584                           | 24 <i>Ibid</i> , p 107     |
| 10 <i>Ibid</i> , p 586                          | 25 <i>Ibid</i> , p 607     |
| 11 <i>Ibid</i> , p 633                          | 26 <i>Ibid</i> , p 594     |
| 12 <i>Ibid</i> , pp 576-77, 638-39              | 27 <i>Ibid</i> , p 621     |
| 13 <i>Ibid</i> , p 593                          | 28 <i>Ibid</i> , p 651     |
| 14 <i>Ibid</i> , p 635                          | 29 <i>Ibid</i> , pp 565-66 |
| 15 <i>Ibid</i> , p 656                          |                            |

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**WORLDS**

STRANGE-EYED moths, the flowers of night  
 Aloft on their vivid wings of dream  
 On boughs of a spectral world alight  
 Above the darkly flowing stream

Awake we can but hardly know  
 Those vast untapped peripheries  
 Yet dive in sleep, to realms below,  
 Beyond our mental boundaries.

Worlds on worlds above us rise  
 Inviting us to higher planes  
 To exceed the beauty of our skies  
 And build our lives where the truth-light reigns

Though we still are pulled by the deep abyss  
 Our souls remember the Beloved's kiss

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

# OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

## The Consciousness of the Overman

*The transition from man to supramental being is accomplished through the overman. There may be a few overmen—there are—who will actually make that transition* <sup>1</sup> —The Mother

*The transitional beings are always in an unstable equilibrium* <sup>2</sup> —The Mother

WE have now returned to the point where we started in the previous chapter May 1958, when the Mother reminisced about the moment Sri Aurobindo left his body and transferred to her all the supramental power gathered in it This was when she said to her already badly battered body (for the Integral Yoga ‘is not a joke’) “‘Now you shall set right everything that is out of order and gradually realise this intermediate overmanhood between man and the supramental being—in other words: what I call the ‘overman’. And this is what I have been doing for the last eight years, and even much more during the past two years, since 1956. Now it is the work of each day, each minute.’”

Towards the end of November 1959 and at the beginning of December, the Mother had to go through a severe, life-threatening ordeal, the first of many in the coming years On 26 November she gave her last *Entretien* at the Playground, on 7 December she played her last game of tennis (at the age of 81), on 9 December she stopped leaving the Ashram compound, except on special occasions What was happening? Now that the overman was realised, the Mother took up the supramentalisation of the body, she started building the first supramental body, the archetype of the future supramental species, within her gross material body

The Mother had realised the possibility for overman, the transitional being, to exist physically on the earth she had, as it were, created by the partial transformation of her own *ādhāra* the mould for the overman to appear as an intermediary degree in the evolution of the human and the supramental being Remember what she said in 1958 “‘One may conclude from this that the moment one body [i.e. her own], 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.*’”

This having been accomplished, the Mother began another great phase in her yoga the realisation, through the transformation of her own physicality, of the



archetype of the supramental being. These two realisations, far beyond the horizon of our imagination, were the reason why she stayed on in 1956. They were the reason why Sri Aurobindo decided to descend into death as, according to his own words, the Mother's body was better suited than his to undergo this transformation. The Mother even said that, knowing the severity of what was awaiting her in her new incarnation, she had chosen both her parents especially with this factor in view—the robustness of their bodies. The double Avatar had come to establish the Supermind in the consciousness of the earth. It may be guessed that, through their love for humanity, they have hastened the appearance of the supramental being by hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

### The Mysteries of the Body

The Mother withdrew, but only in certain ways. She remained bodily in her small apartment on the second floor of the central Ashram building in Rue de la Marine, and the work increased gradually to the extent that she hardly had any time for herself. For she went on running the Ashram down to the smallest detail, and she received people who wanted to see her for all possible reasons, on an average forty to fifty a day, but at times up to two hundred. And there was also the inner Work of the Yoga, and there was the inner, invisible crowd that came to her with good intentions as well as bad. "I led a much more busy life than the life I led downstairs."<sup>3</sup>

The phase of the Yoga which involved the transformation of the body was not something totally new. It was the continuation of the transformation we have been following in the previous chapter, but much more radical. From now onwards it was literally the body cells in ever greater numbers—there are 50 trillion of them—that were doing the Yoga. For a number of those cells were now transformed. Can one imagine what this means—cells of the body, tiny living organisms, that have acquired a spiritual consciousness? The Mother must have read the incomprehension in the minds of the people she was talking to, for she said so often something like "It is the experience of *the body*, you understand, physically, materially—the experience of the body!"<sup>4</sup>

The aspiration, the equanimity, the sincerity—all basics of the Integral Yoga—were now to become qualities of the cells, practiced by the cells, acquired by the cells. But above all there was the surrender, "the Alpha and Omega of the Integral Yoga" (Sri Aurobindo). Surrender was the main occupation of the Mother, day and night. Every cell, every part of the cell had to open to the Light in order to become accessible to it. They had to overcome all the subconscious and inconscient obscurity and darkness we carry in us, which in fact is the substance we are made of. And there is the memory of the ages, of the previous stages of evolution, that is still present in the cells, for they were there from the beginning.

Inflicting still its habit on the cells

The phantom of a dark and evil start  
 Ghostlike pursues all that we dream and do<sup>5</sup>

All that had to be pervaded by the transforming Light, according to the Will of the Supreme "*Ce que Tu veux*", said the Mother, the palms of both her hands turned upwards in a gesture of complete submission "What You will". "It is day and night, without interruption: 'What You will, Lord, what You will' .."—"The only solution, at every moment and in all cases, is [gesture of self-giving] 'What you will', that is to say, the abolition of preference and desire, even the preference of not suffering" —"What I told you is the truth, it is the only remedy to exist only for the Divine, to exist only through the Divine, to exist only in the service of the Divine, to exist only by becoming the Divine"<sup>6</sup>

To create the possibility of a higher species taking a body on earth, not only gross Matter had to be refined, but the functioning of the body also had to be refined. Actually, the latter would be a consequence of the former. The functioning of the cells had to be refined, as well as the functioning of the organs. This too Sri Aurobindo foresaw in *The Supramental Manifestation* "There would have to be a change in the operative processes of the material organs themselves and, it may well be, in their very constitution and their importance, they could not be allowed to impose their limitations imperatively on the new physical life. To begin with, they might become more clearly outer ends of the channels of communication and action, more serviceable for the psychological purposes of the inhabitant, less blindly material in their responses, more conscious of the act and aim of the inner movements and powers which use them and which they are wrongly supposed by the material man in us to generate and to use. The brain would be a channel of communication of the form of the thoughts and a battery of their insistence on the body and the outside world where they could then become effective directly. The heart would equally be a direct communicant and medium of interchange for the feelings and emotions .. The will might control the organs that deal with food, safeguard automatically the health, eliminate greed and desire, substitute subtler processes or draw in strength and substance from the universal life-force

" it may well be that the evolutionary urge would proceed to a change of the organs themselves in their material working and use and diminish greatly the need of their instrumentation and even of their existence. The centres in the subtle body .. of which one would become conscious and aware of all going on in it, would pour their energies into material nerve and plexus and tissue and radiate them through the whole material body; all the physical life and its necessary activities in this new existence could be maintained and operated by these higher agencies in a freer and ampler way and by a less burdensome and restricting method. This might go so far that these organs might cease to be indispensable and even be felt as too obstructive. The central force might use them less and less and finally throw aside their use altogether. If that happened they might waste by atrophy, be reduced to an insignificant minimum or

even disappear. The central force might substitute for them subtle organs of a very different character or, if anything material was needed, instruments that would be forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs.”<sup>7</sup>

The language is dense and abstract, but the implications are enormous. A complete change of the body and its organs far beyond our imagination is of course necessary to constitute a supramental, divine being. “If a total transformation of the being is our aim, a transformation of the body must be an indispensable part of it, without that no full divine life on earth is possible.”<sup>8</sup> Otherwise how would one be able “to be here and there at the same time”? How would one be able “to communicate with many people at the same time”? In other words, how would one be able to be godlike in a physical body? Already in the very beginning of *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo, taking the example of “wireless telegraphy”, predicted that “the physical means for the intermediate transmission of the physical force” must eventually disappear. “. . . for when the laws and forces of the supraphysical are studied with the right starting-point, the means will infallibly be found for Mind directly to seize on the physical energy and speed it accurately upon its errand. There, once we bring ourselves to recognise it, lie the gates that open upon the enormous vistas of the future.”<sup>9</sup>

Here now the Mother was studying the laws and forces of the supraphysical with the right starting-point in what she called “microscopic studies”. What was going on in her, however, was enormous, fantastic, flabbergasting. The creation of a new, refined form of Matter in Matter<sup>10</sup>. The change of the material organs into their supramaterial essence while alive? How can a heart be changed while it has to go on beating? And yet, this kind of thing was happening in her!

“All habits are undone”, she said. “And it is like that with all the functions [of the body] with the blood circulation, with the digestion, with the respiration—with all the functions. And at the moment of change [from the normal way of functioning into the new one], it is not so that the one suddenly replaces the other: there is a fluid state in between, and that is difficult. It is only this great Faith, wholly immobile, luminous, constant, immutable—the faith in the real existence of the supreme Lord, in the *sole* real existence of the Supreme—that enables everything to continue being apparently the same.”<sup>11</sup> If ever there was a great adventure, then this metamorphosis was surely it. It was “a battle against a habit that is thousands of years old,” a “catastrophic habit”. Her entire body was “emptied of its habits and its forces, and then slowly, slowly the cells woke up to their new receptivity and opened to the Divine Influence directly.”<sup>12</sup> “The necessities” were bit by bit losing their authority. “All the laws, those laws that were the laws of Nature, have lost what one could call their despotism: it is no longer as it was,”<sup>13</sup> the Mother said in 1967. Yet, she was still far from the complete realisation.

Every part of her body was undergoing or had to undergo “a change of master”, as she put it: a change “from the ordinary automatic functioning to a conscious functioning under the direct guidance and the direct influence of the Supreme.”<sup>14</sup> The

whole material body had to be permeated by the Divine. This was, of course, the supreme *siddhi*, and if it is true that every *siddhi* has an influence, a repercussion on the physical body, then the supreme *siddhi* must have a supreme, absolute influence. The Mother's day to day experiences were baffling and could not have been possible without her avataric Yoga and, yes, the solidity of her physical constitution.

In our experience our body feels like the centre or axis of the material universe, and this feeling is firmly grounded in our ego-sense. Mentally and vitally the Mother had not had an ego for a very long time. But the body, in order to function normally, had naturally continued having its ego-sense. This ego-sense was now being dissolved and replaced by the presence of "the Supreme". How does it feel being in a body when this body is no longer the centre of the material universe? "In the last few days, yesterday and the day before, there was this experience: a kind of consciousness completely decentralised—I am *always* speaking of the physical consciousness, not at all of the higher levels of consciousness—a decentralised consciousness that was here, there, in this body and in that other one. In what people call 'this person' and 'that person', but the notion does not exist very much any more"<sup>15</sup> This line of her Yoga, like all others, will develop further and her body will become the body of the earth.

We have seen (cf *the ship from the supramental world*) that the supramental world was there, ready to permeate the gross material world and take its place. The more the Mother's cells became supramentalised, the more she belonged physically to the supramental world too, which means that for years she belonged physically to two worlds, the gross material and the supramental! How does one do that? How does one live in two worlds at the same time, physically—two worlds that are... worlds apart? This was a serious problem which, at first, she was not able to solve. The transitions from the one world to the other occurred unpredictably and abruptly, with the result that the Mother would faint at the most unexpected moments and in the most inconvenient places. This line too will gradually develop and she will acquire the mastery over these kind of transitions.

However, to those surrounding her the faintings and the other tokens of the ongoing transformation looked like symptoms of illnesses. The disciples had no idea what was going on. The first reports, culled from personal conversations, would be published in the *Bulletin* only from October 1964 onwards, and even then the information provided was so sparse and so totally out of the ordinary that nobody gained any better insight into what was happening, not even the most "advanced" disciples. (And who has understood it even now? For a real understanding, a real knowledge is only possible when one is able to repeat the experience. This is at least as important to Yoga, a matter of Truth, as it is to Science.)

As a consequence the Mother, from the time of her withdrawal in 1959, was thought to be almost continuously ill. It certainly looked like it. "You are surrounded by people who treat you as an ill person, and you know that you are not ill."<sup>16</sup> She stressed vigorously, and in part to counteract the suggestions projected upon her from

all sides, that she was never ill: “These are not illnesses, these are functional disorders,”<sup>17</sup> she said, caused by the process of transformation. And: “I have nothing to do with an illness from which one gets cured I cannot get cured! This is the work of transformation!”<sup>18</sup>

All the same, the Mother was constantly in a state of “unstable equilibrium”, with one organ after the other, and sometimes several at the same time, being transformed, which meant a temporary suspension of its function and afterwards a completely new, unknown way of functioning.. Who could stand that? And all these changes, suspensions and transformations of course caused a considerable upheaval in the physical body—an upheaval making itself felt by pain. On the one hand there was the glory of the transformation, on the other the terror of it—heaven and hell alternating, sometimes in one and the same moment. “Three minutes of splendour for twelve hours of misery.”—“Some seconds of paradise for hours of hell.”—“The marvellous moment lasts for a few minutes and is followed by hours of agony” All these are her words.

She went through these ordeals while carrying out her daily routine, from the age of eighty to ninety-five—a routine that would prove too much for most young and healthy people. At that time the Ashram had some 1300 inmates and 600 students, living and working in numerous buildings. The secretaries and heads of the Ashram departments came for her advice, decisions, signatures and answers to the daily correspondence. The Ashramites met her at least once a year, on their birthday, which was considered by the Mother to be a special day; but many sought to meet her more often when they were in inner or outer difficulty. The children came on their birthday too, and the school was a kind of abiding challenge because the teachers struggled to find ways of applying the Yoga in the education. In addition there were the visitors of every standing and class, presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers of the Indian Union and of the States, kings, princes, gurus, religious leaders, professors, ambassadors, foreigners from all over the world, film actors and other celebrities. And this was only the human crowd.

*(To be continued)*

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### *Notes and References*

- 1 The Mother, *Mother's Agenda*, 15 April 1972
- 2 The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol 11, p 28. The *Notes on the Way* are extracts from Mother's *Agenda* published from October 1964 onwards in the Bulletin of Physical Education of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In this chapter we will quote mostly from this book
- 3 *Ibid*, p 22
- 4 *Ibid*, p 151
- 5 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p 140
- 6 The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, pp 171, 222 and 259

- 7 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, pp 553 ff  
 8 *Ibid*, p 540  
 9 Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp 15-16  
 10 "The necessary forms and instrumentations of Matter must remain since it is in a world of Matter that the divine life has to manifest, but their materiality must be refined, uplifted, ennobled, illumined, since Matter and the world of Matter have increasingly to manifest the indwelling spirit" Sri Aurobindo (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, p 556)  
 11 The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, pp 58-59  
 12 *Ibid*, p 94  
 13 *Ibid*, p 107  
 14 *Ibid*, p 33 The Mother did not like to use the word "God", for she found that word "hollow, but dangerously hollow" (p 78) What is the Divine? "A smiling and luminous immensity" (p 77), "the splendour of the Presence" (p 117)  
 15 The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, p 4  
 16 *Mother's Agenda*, XI, 16 5 1970  
 17 *Ibid*, II, 25 2 1961  
 18 *Ibid*, III, 12 6 1962

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## WAITING

THERE IS a wisdom in the not arriving,  
 A holding back, a deeper retention of the breath,  
 The capacity to breathe longer and not to breathe at all  
 Is discovered. A moveless hovering  
 More delicate than motionless butterfly wings in windless air,  
 An escape from gravity, a suspension in darkness,  
 An emotion too subtle for voice, for impulse, for thought,  
 In a depth of sadness too rich, too old, too true,  
 Forever Forever  
 A forward cry stifled in its womb,  
 Where no surge of anticipation can be  
 Rather, a latent memory revisiting our clime  
 From recollections too ancient or a single life,  
 In that motionlessness arrives tenuously,  
 And touches the heart-strings with gentle fingertips,  
 Draws notes too soundless to be audible when ears are strained  
 There is a fragile senselessness to this experience of breathlessness,  
 An illogic of truth that is too real to dodge  
 A tension in the tenselessness, pervasively present  
 And the waiting, waiting Waiting Never resolved

# THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

Part Two (contd)

## 13. Sight in the Superconscious:

### (A) Introduction:

We have just now referred to the insufficiency of the normal mind of man to be an instrument for the discovery of the Truth:

“Our mind lives far off from the authentic Light

Catching at little fragments of the truth ” (161)

But if mind fails, what else remains? Again, it has been affirmed that “thought nor word can seize eternal Truth”. (276) But, then, if thought proves its impotence, what else can take its place? The answer is: What else? It must be a sight

“Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight ” (276)

Yes, it has to be a sight but surely not the sight of mind it must be a far greater sight:

“His being stretched beyond the sight of thought.” (260)

So we have to advance farther into the domains of the spirit, acquire the Spirit's sight and become a Kavi, Rishi, or Seer.

“The veil is torn, the thinker is no more

Only the spirit sees and all is known ” (571)

Now this Spirit's vision can be had only in the Superconscious. But what is this superconscious? Well, all that we have said so far in this essay as regards the total constitution of our being, viz, the Inconscious, the Subconscious, the subliminal Intraconscious, the subliminal Circumconscious, and the Waking State, does not suffice to give a full account of what we really are. For there is a range of being and consciousness far transcending all these elements of our constitution, which is *superconscious* to all the other provinces of our existence

“Out of the inconscient and the subliminal

Arisen, we live in mind's uncertain light

Above us dwells a superconscious god

Hidden in the mystery of his own light...” (484)

So we now proceed to the delineation of the nature of sight in those superconscious regions of our being.

If and when we pierce the veil of our limiting mind-consciousness and enter into the superconscious field, we find there various worlds of cosmic existence there are

too, be it noted, various corresponding planes of our subjective consciousness Here is a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga* which throws light on the point we have been discussing

“ they are as if a ladder plunging down into Matter and perhaps below it, rising up into the heights of the Spirit, even perhaps to the point at which existence escapes out of cosmic being into ranges of a supra-cosmic Absolute ” (p 438)

It is worth quoting in this connection a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* which makes clear to us the constitution of the superconscient realm:

“... from the point of view of the ascent of consciousness from our mind upwards through a rising series of dynamic powers by which it can sublimate itself, the gradation can be resolved into a stairway of four main ascents, each with its high level of fulfilment. These gradations may be summarily described as a series of sublimations of the consciousness through Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition into Overmind and beyond it, there is a succession of self-transmutations at the summit of which lies the Supermind or Divine Gnosis.” (p 938)

Now the ascending sight of the sadhaka undergoes a progressive transformation as it mounts the ladder of the four-rung “spiritual Mind” series. We now intend to describe in brief outline the nature of the sight in each of the four levels represented by (i) the Higher Mind, (ii) the Illumined Mind, (iii) the Intuitive Mind, and (iv) the Overmind. But before that let us enjoy the *rasa* of a significant passage from *Savitri*.

“A vision came of higher realms than ours,  
A consciousness of brighter fields and skies,  
Of beings less circumscribed than brief-lived men  
And subtler bodies than these passing frames,  
Objects too fine for our material grasp,  
Acts vibrant with a superhuman light . ” (28)

### **(B) Sight in the Spiritual Mind Planes:**

To recapitulate, once we cross the confines of the normal mind of man, we meet on our ascending climb a series of hierarchised luminous planes of consciousness serving as links and bridges between the now normal waking mind of non-spiritual humanity and the native heights of our spiritual being. These planes are in the ascending order

(i) the Higher Mind, (ii) the Illumined Mind, (iii) the Intuitive Mind, (iv) the Overmind, and finally (v) the Supermind or Gnosis, this last being the plane of absolute and everlasting Light, that transcends altogether the *aparārdha* or the lower



hemisphere of existence. Here are some *Savitri* verses referring to these supernal planes.

- (1) "He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights" (76)
- (2) "A vision lightened on the viewless heights" (42)
- (3) "On summit Mind are radiant altitudes  
Exposed to the lustre of Infinity,  
Outskirts and dependencies of the house of Truth,  
Upraised estates of Mind and measureless" (659)

### (B.1) Sight in the Higher Mind:

The *Higher Mind* is the first plane of spiritual mind-consciousness to which the ascent out of our normal mentality takes us. This is a mind of automatic and spontaneous knowledge, knowledge assuming the nature of Truth-Thought. Its most characteristic movement is a mass-ideation, a totality of truth-seeing at a single view. The relation of idea with idea, of truth with truth is not established by logic but emerges already self-seen in the integral whole. Thought in the 'Higher Mind' is not an acquired knowledge but a self-revelation of eternal Wisdom. For, we must not forget, "thought in itself, in its origin on the higher levels of consciousness, is a perception, a powerful but ... secondary result of spiritual vision..." (*The Life Divine*, p. 945)

Now a few *Savitri* verses depicting the sight in the Higher Mind

- (1) "There Mind, a splendid sun of vision's rays,  
Shaped substance by the glory of its thoughts" (327)
- (2) "Ideas rotated symphonies of sight" (301)
- (3) "The immortal's thoughts displaced our bounded view" (529)
- (4) "Illumined by a vision in the thought" (176)
- (5) "A cosmic Thought spreads out its vastitudes" (659)

### (B.2) Sight in the Illumined Mind:

Beyond the plane of the Higher Mind of Truth-Thought lies the plane of the *Illumined Mind* of Truth-Sight, which works primarily by spiritual vision and not by thought: thought is here only a subordinate and secondary movement expressive of sight.

Now some illustrative verses from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

- (1) "An empyrean vision saw and knew" (25)
- (2) "Whence it shoots the arrows of his sight and will" (529)
- (3) "Whose fire burns in the eyes of seer and sage,  
A lightning flash of visionary sight" (627)

- (4) "There dwelling all becomes a blaze of sight,  
A burning head of vision leads the mind,  
Thought trails behind it its long comet tail,  
The heart glows, an illuminate and seer" (660)

### (B.3) Sight in the Intuitive Mind:

Next in the order of ascension is the *Intuitive Mind* whose characteristic power is an intimate and exact truth-perception which arises out of a revealing encounter between the subject and the object, carrying in it as its natural consequence a truth-sight and truth-conception. Thought in the Intuitive Mind is revelatory in character.

Here are some verses from *Savitri* indicating how sight functions in this Intuitive Mind plane.

- (1) "Sight's lightnings leapt into the invisible" (31)  
 (2) "Nothing escaped his vast intuitive sight" (96)  
 (3) "Intuition's lightnings range in a bright pack  
Hunting all hidden truths out of their lairs" (660)  
 (4) "Its fiery edge of seeing absolute  
Cleaves into locked unknown retreats of self,  
Thought there has revelation's sun-bright eyes" (660)

### (B.4) Sight in the Overmind:

Beyond the plane of the Intuitive Mind is a superconscious cosmic Mind which possesses a power of cosmic consciousness, a principle of global knowledge. In the wide cosmic perception of the *Overmind*,

"Ideas are phalanxed like a group of sums,  
Thought crowds in masses seized by one regard,  
All Time is one body, Space a single book  
There is the Godhead's universal gaze  
And there the boundaries of immortal Mind" (660)

In the Overmind "all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one's separate self but in the universal knowledge." (*The Life Divine*, p 950)

Here are some verses from *Savitri* characterising the sight in the Overmind

- (1) "His boundless thought was neighbour to cosmic sight  
A universal light was in his eyes" (79)  
 (2) "eyes of boundless thoughts" (335)

- (3) "All came at once in his single view" (96)
- (4) "It enveloped all Nature in a single glance" (26)
- (5) "It was sight and thought in one all-seeing Mind" (555)
- (6) "Mind was a single immeasurable look" (556)
- (7) "The stretch and blaze of cosmic sight" (661)
- (8) "A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense  
Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form" (662)

### Sight of the Overmental Gods:

- (1) "Immobile, seeing the milleniums pass" (57)
- (2) "They look on our struggle with impartial eyes" (57)
- (3) "The gods who watch the earth with sleepless eyes" (587)
- (4) "Unmoved their timeless wide unchanging gaze" (574)
- (5) "And look impassive on a suffering world,  
Calm they gaze down on the little human scene" (428)

### (B.5) Spiritual Sight:

We have been discussing the nature of sight and vision in the superconscient Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind levels of consciousness. Now all these sights are called "spiritual sights". Here a vague question may perhaps trouble the mind of some readers. Why are we taking care to term the cognitions in the superconscient planes as "sights" and not purely and simply as "knowledge"? The question needs some clarifying answer at this point. Sri Aurobindo himself has discussed this specific point at many places in *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Letters on Yoga*, also in Vol. 17 of his *Collected Works*. We give below the summary of his observations.

A mental figure or conception is not what is called a "realisation" or a "seeing". It is no better than an indirect knowledge, *paroksa*. What is needed is a direct vision of the truth without the need of observation of the object, reasoning, evidence, imagination, memory or any other of the usual faculties of intellect. Now the spiritual vision, *dr̥ṣṭi*, is a sort of light in the soul by which things unseen become as evident and real to it as do things physically seen to the physical eye. "It is only when after long and persistent concentration or by other means the veil of the mind is rent or swept aside, only when a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality... and conception gives place to a knowledge-vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete as a physical object to the physical eye, that we possess in knowledge, for we have *seen* " (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p 291) (italics author's)

This sight or *dr̥ṣṭi* is to the spirit what the eyes are to the physical mind and, Sri Aurobindo emphasises, "one has the sense of having passed through a subtly analogous process" (*Ibid*, p 803)

The ancient sages of India highly valued this power of internal spiritual vision; for only this can make a man a Rishi or a Kavi, a Seer, and no longer a mere thinker

We quote here certain verses from *Savitri* which bring out in clear outline the nature of the (i) ‘‘Seer’s sight’’, (ii) ‘‘spiritual sight’’, and the (iii) ‘‘Spirit’s sight’’.

### Seer’s Sight:

- (1) ‘‘My mind transfigures to a rapturous seer’’ (408)
- (2) ‘‘A Seer was born, a shining guest of Time’’ (25)
- (3) ‘‘It looked into the very self of things;  
Deceived no more by form he saw the soul.’’ (26)
- (4) ‘‘Transmitting gave to prophet and to seer  
The inspired body of the mystic truth.’’ (39)
- (5) ‘‘.. a mystic seer  
Through vision looks at the invisible’’ (398)
- (6) ‘‘A seer, he has entered the forbidden realms ..  
Armed with the golden speech, the diamond eye’’ (681)

### Spiritual Sight:

- (1) ‘‘It needs the power of a spiritual gaze’’ (49)
- (2) ‘‘ forced  
The carved thought-shrouded doors to swing apart,  
Unlocked the avenues of spiritual sight’’ (683)
- (3) ‘‘Unsealed was Nature’s great spiritual eye’’ (382)
- (4) ‘‘His sight, spiritual in embodying orbs,  
Could pierce through the grey phosphorescent haze  
And scan the secrets of the shifting flux’’ (138)
- (5) ‘‘...immediacy of errorless sight’’ (267)
- (6) ‘‘Its vision of some stupendous All’’ (298)
- (7) ‘‘A gaze of the Alone from every face’’ (35)
- (8) ‘‘Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source’’ (501)
- (9) ‘‘Now to the limitless gaze disclosed that sees  
Things barred from human thinking’s earthly lids’’ (572)
- (10) ‘‘Thence gazing with an immeasurable outlook  
One with self’s inlook .’’ (298)
- (11) ‘‘His knowledge an inview caught unfathomable,  
An outview by no brief horizons cut’’ (301)

### Spirit’s Sight:

- (1) ‘‘The Unseen’s eye that looks at the unseen’’ (665)

- (2) "... the spirit's vision can descry  
[not] dimmed by the imperfection of its means" (256, 257)
- (3) "Mystic, ineffable is the Spirit's truth,  
Unspoken, caught only by the spirit's eye." (272)
- (4) "... the silent Being within  
Who sees life's drama pass with unmoved eyes" (470)

*(To be continued)*

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

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## BEAUTY LIES IN...

A TREASURE cave  
Was there always,  
An art gallery  
With fine artistry,  
An antique idol  
With dust of ages,  
A winter corn-field  
Bent with golden smiles,  
A dense jungle was there  
Offering awe and wonder,  
Remained ever-untrodden.

But who was the seer to see,  
Dared to enter the cave,

Made the art gallery unique,  
And dusted the antique idol?  
Talking with a virgin forest  
Who endured rebounds  
Of echoes and silences?  
Who could spare to stare  
At the beauty of mellowed corn,  
And evoke its smiles?

Everything was there intact  
But none cared, none dared,  
None shared nor even heard  
A riddle for ever still it is:  
Where lies eternal Beauty?

ASHALATA DASH

## “REMEMBER WHY THOU CAM’ST”

### Comments on a Passage from *Savitri*

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

Now with this preamble delineating the contours of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, we can turn to the passage from *Savitri* which I read out at the very beginning of this talk. It must be borne in mind that although the aim of this yoga is spelled out in this passage, the sadhana it lays down pertains only to the beginning stages of the yoga. The first aim of all yoga is union with the Divine. But as we have seen, in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga this is only a prerequisite before the yoga of the Supramental can be taken up. The passage begins

Remember why thou cam’st.

“Why did you come here?” Well, this question is addressed to Savitri, but it may also be addressed to each one of us. Savitri in Sri Aurobindo’s poem is the Divine Mother herself. The Divine Mother came down as Aswapati’s daughter because Aswapati had prayed for her intervention on behalf of man. He had prayed to her: “Man has been trying to overcome his numerous limitations, several heroic efforts have been made, and yet he has not succeeded. He is still living a miserable life haunted by desire, incapacity, limitation, strife and death. O Divine Mother, take mercy on mankind and help us to transcend our limitations.” And the Divine Mother came down as Savitri to help mankind to go beyond its present limitations. So as addressed to Savitri, the question implies: “O Savitri, remember who you really are and why you have come down. You came down to help mankind to perfect its life on earth.” And, as I said, the question can refer to you and me also. You and I can ask ourselves, “Why have I come here, why did God send me here?”

.. Remember why thou cam’st  
Find out thy soul,

Before you can really know why God has sent you down on earth, Sri Aurobindo says that the first thing you have to do is to find out your soul. Many people have ideas about what they want to do in life: “Oh, I want to be a businessman, I want to be an artist, I want to be an astronaut,” etc., etc. In the case of a few people this may be the urge of their soul, but for many it is not the voice of the soul, it is just the current fashion in the community where they live and they have been influenced by it. There comes a time when everyone wants to be an MBA because it is trendy to be an MBA. Or it is fashionable to be a computer specialist because that is a profession to which prestige is attached. But you have not asked your soul, “What is your *swabhāva*,

what is your choice, what is it that you want me to do?” This we hardly ever ask because we do not realise that each one of us is a soul that has taken a body, life and mind to gain a certain range of experiences which the soul wishes to acquire. We often hear stories of people who were successful businessmen or senior executives in some bank. They suddenly give up a lucrative career and take up something else; they become painters or musicians or preachers, because they suddenly discover that this is the choice of their soul. And from that point on they live a life of greater fulfilment. So first of all, “Find out thy soul.” The first stage is, we must find out our real soul, not what is called the desire soul. The desire soul is an outer personality which we have borrowed from our society, from our upbringing, from our education. That’s why Sri Aurobindo says:

Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self

There is a hidden self and a surface self in all of us. The surface self we are aware of, but we are totally oblivious of our hidden self. So we must go within, find out our soul, recover our hidden self.

In silence seek God’s meaning in thy depths,

It is only when you reach the depths of your being that you understand God’s meaning in this creation and also your place in it and what you are supposed to do. So as applied to Savitri this means: You will realise you are not just a human princess, Savitri; you are the supreme Divine Mother come down on earth to help mankind. You can’t just sit back and say, “What can I do? Death has taken away my husband and I cannot fight Death any more—nobody has succeeded so far in this struggle.” You have come precisely to conquer Death.

Then mortal nature change to the divine.

Now this, as we have seen, is a typically Aurobindonian agenda. This is an injunction to us to remove all the imperfections of our human nature. All other yogas start with the assumption that there is nothing you can do with your body, since it is bound to decay and die. There is nothing you can do with your mind, the mind will see the truth some of the time, but at other times it will mistake falsehood for truth, besides, it will keep doubting all the time. There is nothing you can do about it, that is the nature of the mind. Your vital nature is full of desires and it lives in the world of duality: happiness followed by sorrow, like by dislike, love by hatred, and it is full of ambition, greed, etc. That is the nature of your vital, you can’t do anything about it; at best you can try to control its furies.

When Ramana Maharshi had a cancerous lump on his arm and a painful surgery had to be performed, the doctor was hesitating to operate because of the excruciating

pain the surgery would cause since the sage had refused to take any anaesthetic. But Ramana Maharshi is supposed to have said, "Go ahead and perform the surgery. I don't mind the pain. I can go beyond it." So some spiritual luminaries like him had the capacity to go beyond physical pain—but they showed no interest in bringing perfection to their body. What Sri Aurobindo is saying is: It should be possible for man to acquire a consciousness that will ensure that the body will not decay, disintegrate and die. The meaning is not that we should live four or five thousand years, it is not that. Sri Aurobindo wants us to make sure that no part of us has any vestige, any stamp of ignorance and inconscience. And also, if I want a rest during my soul's journey, I should be able to choose my exit according to my will. It should be possible to choose when I want to rest.

We are not in that position today. Death comes to us at its sweet will and drags us like a beast of prey into what looks like an abyss of inconscience. The human lot today is pathetic in spite of all our science, technology, scriptures and yogas. It would seem as though we have been saying to God, "Please don't touch my body. I will give you my emotions, my thoughts, my will, and first of all my soul. But my body is the untouchable and it belongs to Death. I don't want you to take it and divinise it while you divinise the rest of my being." And then we complain about Death in the same breath. All this has to change. That's why, "Then mortal nature change to the divine."

Now this possibility of changing human nature is essentially the new thing that Sri Aurobindo has brought into spirituality. We need not take the present human nature as the final stage of human evolution; it is only a transitional stage. It is possible to change human nature, but it cannot be done merely by following health regulations, by improving the quality of the food we take, by taking injections and tablets; this is not the way. The way is to change the consciousness. Change of consciousness is the essential thing. The saints have also said that the change of consciousness is primary, but they haven't done much with this changed, heightened consciousness. Now what Sri Aurobindo says is: If the change of consciousness is sufficiently radical so that that you reach the Supramental Consciousness, it will give you the power to change the outer instruments of the soul—the body, the vital and the mind.

And now we have some more steps required for this conquest of yourself and recovering your hid self. What are they?

Open God's door, enter into his trance

We are all trapped in our humanness. But it is possible for us to open a door and walk into divinity, to change mortal nature to the divine. We can get into the higher regions of our consciousness and become totally divinised. Divinisation of life, that is what Sri Aurobindo stands for: not merely for a spiritual exit from life, but for the divinisation of life, the transformation of life.



Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light

First of all, control your mind. Make your mind free from all thoughts. Your mind has created the world in which you live. Now if you control your mind and cast away your thought, it will lead to mental stillness and you will see the Truth, as he says in the next lines:

In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain  
His vast Truth wake within and know and see

The first thing is to try to control your mind, then to bring quiet and peace into it, and finally to still it, to silence the mind. Now silencing the mind is not merely keeping the mind quiet. Silence of the mind is a tremendous experience, a prelude to the experience of Nirvana. And please remember this: even when Sri Aurobindo does not regard Nirvana as the final aim of his yoga, he does recognise it as a necessary stage in man's inward growth, because until you have completely silenced the mind you do not see what the real world is. The world that we now see is a world created by our mind. I am not saying that our mind has created this table in front of us. But our relationship with this table and what it means to us, this the mind has created. Something is bad, something is good, something is such and such—what determines all this? These relationships are created by the mind.

Now when the mind is completely stilled, there is silence, and it is like the Nirvana experience. In fact Sri Aurobindo says that this experience is very important and he himself went through it after he had had a three-day session of meditation with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. He lived in this experience of Nirvana for six or seven months. But out of that, gradually a new experience came to Sri Aurobindo:

In the enormous emptiness of thy mind  
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,

Now after this Nirvana experience has been completely absorbed, what do you see? In the experience of Nirvana, the world looks like a floating picture without tone, almost unreal. But out of this will come a new experience. You will slowly see that the world is not only real but also that it throbs with God. The world, as we now see it, is inconscient, imperfect and corrupt in many ways. Nevertheless it is a manifestation of God, though at the moment an imperfect one. You will see this vast world as the becoming of God. And therefore Sri Aurobindo says, “Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world”. This world is a manifestation, a material manifestation of the Lord, God's own body. See the world as God's own body and once you do that, what will happen?

Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,

Every voice that you hear, whether it is your own mother's voice or the voice of someone you used to dread or someone you thought was your enemy, in every voice you will hear God's voice

Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,  
In the world's contacts meet his single touch;

Whatever you touch, whatever you see, whatever you hear, you will be inundated by the experience of God. Whether it is cold or hot, sweet or bitter, both for you will be equal, because through both you will be able to experience God. So he says, "In the world's contacts meet his single touch". There was a famous Maharashtrian saint who prayed, "O God, wherever I cast my eyes, make me see your feet. Wherever I put my head let me touch your feet." That is the kind of experience you get when the whole world becomes for you a manifestation of God. There cannot be a more ecstatic, a more blessed state than that.

In the world's contacts meet his single touch,  
All things shall fold thee into his embrace

In every experience of life that you have, you will feel God embracing you through that experience. Through every experience you will experience God.

Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God

Your heart should have no other desire, its will has to be completely merged with God's desire, God's will. That's why we say: "Let Thy will be done. Please don't let me have any other will; let my will completely merge in Thy will." So whatever happens in the world, you are happily facing it because it is God's will. "Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God"—then what will happen?

Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,

You will then be the perfect instrument of the Lord. Our ultimate aim in life is to be perfect instruments of the Lord, as Arjuna became the Lord's instrument in the Mahabharata war. We have a choice to make: either to become instruments of our ego or instruments of the Lord. If you have a total dedication to doing the Lord's will, your Prakriti, which until now has had its own agenda, its own programme, will become a perfect instrument in the hands of the Divine.

Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his word

Of such a person we can say: Whenever he speaks, God speaks through him. His

voice will contain the mightiness, the truth, the invincibility of God’s voice. If a man of that nature utters something, it is bound to happen because it is God’s voice

Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death

This is how, O Savitri, you will contain my force and you will be successful in conquering Death

So there are two levels of application to this commandment given to Savitri. At one level, it is addressed to Savitri, because Savitri is the Divine Mother’s avatar and she has to realise that she is the avatar and fulfil her mission on earth. But it can also be taken as a kind of programme given to us in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, a programme with two important steps. The first step is control your outer nature, the mind, the heart, the senses; then go through the discipline needed to find out your soul and recover your hid self. The second step is don’t run away from the world when you have found your soul and self. Harness God’s power, harness His force and with the help of that force, come back to the world and gradually try to perfect your nature.

So God’s purpose in creating the world will be fulfilled if this programme succeeds. We, each one of us, will be a manifestation of God. God was the formless One and He wanted to become Many. Now we are half way to being perfect manifestations of God in the Many. Only the forms, the images have been made, now the spark of Divinity in the form of the Supermind has to be invoked into them. With this new consciousness will arrive the new race of men, the gnostic beings that Sri Aurobindo has talked about. Only then will God’s agenda be fulfilled, otherwise, if we cut it short at the present stage of our imperfect human species and take the route to Nirvana, take the route to Moksha, two things are going to happen. First, only a few of us will be saved; the rest will continue in ignorance for ever, and secondly, God’s purpose in creating this creation will not be fulfilled. This is what I think this passage says.

*(To be continued)*

MANGESH NADKARNI

## A PANG AND A THROB

YES,  
I remember that Christmas morning,  
On the threshold of the New Millennium,  
There was a thrill in the whole cosmos;  
It seemed as though Time had halted for a while  
Then only I set my foot on this sacred land,  
The place where They had lived in human forms  
And thought and saw and worked together.  
Until that very Christmas  
I had many pangs in my heart—  
Pangs of disappointment and unfulfilment  
Many many pangs had I before.  
But now I have got only one,  
A fathomless remorse,  
The remorse for the folly  
That I never came before.

Vividly I recollect that fateful morning  
When the sky and the sea spoke like one,  
The language of a New Horizon.  
The moment I inhaled their holy air  
Things altered—  
Many a hope and expectation disappeared,  
All puzzling affairs of a zigzag span.  
All those have vanished now.  
Yet I suffer a throb in my heart,  
An intense throb of aspiration:  
Can I follow the path they have shown?  
Can I become worthy of Their grace?  
Surely  
I remember that Christmas morning of the New Millennium.

RANKANATH HOTA

## A TREASURY OF THOUGHTS

If you see something bad in a man, you must not overlook the fact that in this man too His name is manifest.

—*The Baal-Shem*

Those who crusade, not for God in themselves, but against the devil in others, never succeed in making the world better.

—*Aldous Huxley*

To create out of Matter a temple of Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born in the material universe

—*Sri Aurobindo*

Our Lord says to every living soul, "I became man for you. If you do not become God for me, you do me wrong"

—*Meister Eckhart*

As far as the human mind ascends in love, the divine wisdom descends in mercy

—*St. Maximus*

It is a great liberty to be able not to sin; it is the greatest liberty to be unable to sin.

—*St. Augustine*

The eternally constant can only be represented in the changeable; the eternally changeable only in the constant, the whole, the present moment

—*Novalis*

In purely spiritual matters, God grants all desires. Those who have less have asked for less.

—*Simone Weil*

Where is the foolish person who would think it in his power to commit more sins than God could forgive?

—*St. Francis De Sales*

Anyone who suffers is God's representative

—*Vivekananda*

(Presented by Fali Choksi)

## A NOTE ON THE WORD VEDANTAKRIT

THE word *vedāntakṛt* occurs in the fifteenth chapter of the Gita (verse 15) It is significant for two reasons first, it occurs nowhere else in the text except in the above chapter, second, it is used as an epithet of Krishna, the son of Vasudeva (10-37) It is generally rendered as “the author of Vedānta” But the Vedānta (Upanishads) is not considered to be the work of any person (*apauruseya*), human or divine So it raises a very important question: if the Vedānta cannot be attributed to the son of Vasudeva, then in what sense is he said to be its Kṛt?

Attempts have been made by many scholars to answer this question We shall now take into consideration the answers given by the three great teachers—Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva Before we do so we shall make a few observations about the word *vedāntakṛt* There are two ways in which the compound may be split (i) *vedānta + kṛt* and (ii) *veda + antakṛt* The term *vedānta* means the Upanishads which form the concluding portion or the conclusion of the Vedas, the term *veda* means the portion dealing with *yajñas* (*vedaśca yajñāśca*) (17-23), the term *kṛt* is understood in relation to something done by Krishna either through his God-form, *lokamaheśvaram* (10-3), or through his power of self-becoming, *ātmavibhūti* (10-19), and the term *antakṛt* is understood in relation to the result produced (*kṛi*) at the end (*anta*) of the *yajña* performed according to the injunctions of the Vedas. Now we shall go back to the teachers and note what they have to say in answer to the original question

Shankara and Madhva split *vedāntakṛt* into *vedānta + kṛt* Shankara points out that Krishna (his God-form) is responsible for causing (*kṛt*) the teaching of the Upanishads (*vedānta*) to be handed down in regular succession and is, therefore, known by the epithet of *vedāntakṛt* It is a possible explanation, but it is not substantiated through internal or external evidence As for Madhva, Krishna’s *vibhūti*s are manifold and one of them is Vyasa, the author of the Brahma-Sūtras (10-37) As Vyasa has made known (*kṛt*) the conclusions of the Vedas (*vedānta*) through his aphorisms, he is a *vedāntakṛt* Through him Krishna is known by the same title Madhva’s explanation is far more satisfactory than the previous one, because it is supported by both internal and external evidences. However, like Shankara, he has failed to note the context where *vedāntakṛt* is enfolded with the word *veda* on both sides, *vedah sarvah vedyah* on one side and *vedavideva* on the other This strongly suggests that *vedāntakṛt* be divided rather into *veda + antakṛt* than into *vedānta + kṛt* In any textual interpretation context plays a decisive role and it cannot be ignored

Ramanuja, on the other hand, seems to have taken note of the clue mentioned above Therefore he favours the division *veda + antakṛt*. The Vedas speak about *yajñas* And the devotees of the Vedas perform them and abide in the way of the Vedas But it is the great Lord of the world (Krishna’s God-form) who bestows (*kṛt*) upon them the fruits (*anta*) of the Yajnas, *mayyeva vihitān hi tān* (7-22) This explanation is commendable, but not as good as Madhva’s. For the evidence Ramanuja gives from the text is not connected with the Vedas or Yajnas

Apart from these, a fourth interpretation of *vedāntakṛt* is possible. Before we develop it we shall note how the *yajñas* are viewed by the Vedavadins on the one hand and Krishna on the other.

According to the Vedavadins, all *yajñas* are for the worship of the gods, *devas*. The worshippers of the gods go to the gods, *devān devayaja yānti* (7-23). When they reach the world of the gods, they are endowed with the power of celestial enjoyments, *devabhogān* (9-20). The Vedists proclaim that other than this there is no good to be achieved by the Yajnas, *nānyadasitīvādīnah* (2-42). But Krishna points out that those who go to the wide world of Heaven do not conquer the evil of *samsāra*. For on the exhaustion of their merits they are compelled to return to the world of mortals, *mar-tyalokam viśanti* (9-21). As a result, he does not approve of the view of the Vedists, he dismisses them as men devoid of discernment, *avipaścītaḥ* (2-42).

Krishna's conclusion about the *yajñas* is that their ultimate object of worship is not the gods but the eternal Brahman who is beyond them and who is extended everywhere. By worshipping Brahman through *yajñas* the devotees reach the very Brahman, *brahmaiva* (4-24). For them there is no return to the world of mortals, *gacchanti apunarāvṛttim* (5-17) for there is absolute cessation of mortality in Brahman, *labhante brahmanirvānam* (5-25). This is the highest good to be obtained by the wise from *yajñas*.

By teaching that Brahman is the supreme object to be worshipped and realised through *yajñas*, Krishna, the author of the Gita and son of Vasudeva, has revealed (*kṛt*) the king-secret, *rājaguhyam* (9-2), the innermost sense of *yajñas* (*anta*) to the devotees of the Vedas. Hence his insightful declaration "the all-pervading Brahman is established in Yajna, *sarvagatam brahma nityam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam*" (3-15). This is the fourth interpretation of the title Vedantakṛt.

Our interpretation of *vedāntakṛt* surpasses the other three interpretations in three essential respects: (i) it accords perfectly with its context, (ii) the internal evidence given in its support is most appropriate, (iii) it highlights the great service Krishna has rendered to the seekers of the Vedas.

All the four interpretations are agreed that Krishna is surely not the *author* of Vedanta, on the other hand, he is regarded as the *doer* of something connected with the Vedas or the Vedanta. This is the main idea, the substance of our discussion.

N JAYASHANMUGAM

## “I KNOW THAT THY CREATION CANNOT FAIL”

It was the hour of the setting sun. Across the path of the lingering golden rays, the Divine Event took place, an event which the all-witnessing sun never witnessed in its journey of million years. The Lord had descended into the physical. What made this miraculous Event happen?

O Humanity, the seed of this momentous happening was sown on 29 March 1914 when Aditi met the Avatar for the first time and made “a perfect surrender to the last physical cell”

It was—The Hour of God

O Earth, the Avatar, the Red Lotus—the symbol of the manifestation of the Supreme upon earth, and Aditi—the White Lotus—the symbol of the Divine Consciousness, together prepared the earth and created conditions for the descent. The austere Tapasya of hundreds of years by great Rishis of the bygone era brought God down to fulfil their own vow. Joint Tapasya for twelve years by You, O Avatar and O Aditi, brought down the world of the gods for humanity. You attained Siddhi, O Lord, on 24 November 1926—the descent of Krishna—the consciousness of the Overmind was established in the physical

It was—The Divine Event

The sun set on the Western horizon. The day blended with evening twilight *Sandhya*—an auspicious moment—the time for Japa, for remembering the gods, for prayer, meditation and introspection, of earth’s dumb appeal merging with the aspiration of men.

On this day seventy-five years later, may I feel and absorb, may I imbibe and breathe that charged atmosphere, that overflow of divinity. A tiny drop of that nectar would plunge my being in an ecstatic bliss.

That evening—24 November 1926—ushered in the beginning of a mighty spiritual work. The Avatar and Aditi created a haven and a heaven for aspiring men—the Ashram.

It is—Their Creation

The joy, the gratitude, the sense of belonging to Their Creation have no bound. I bow down in all humility and adoration. Let me be worthy of the chance given, let my life be not a failure of the assignment given.

“O my Lord, my sweet Mother,

Let me be Yours, absolutely Yours, perfectly Yours. Your force, Your light and Your love will protect me against all evils”



In this year of the Platinum Jubilee of Their Creation a prayer rises ‘Lord, deliver us from falsehood, make us emerge in Thy Truth pure and worthy of Thy Victory ’’ If we have forgotten our aim, if we have strayed with our ego-bound selves, succour us and guide us back to the sunlit path For

Thou art the Conqueror and the Conquest, the Victor and the Victory!

KRISHNA

## NEW YORK 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

### An E-mail to a Friend in the Ashram

I WAS working about 7 blocks away from the World Trade Center at the time of the attack, and heard and felt the physical impact. Initially, we were all advised to stay in the building. At the point when the first tower collapsed, however, there were shouts of ‘evacuate’ and a number of us were routed out of the building and told to ‘keep walking.’ The street looked like a nuclear winter had descended—the sky dark, a strong wind full of debris making it difficult to see or breathe. There seemed to be no sense of anywhere to go. I felt an inner calm and a kind of quiet trust, but no indication of a direction in which to head. After some minutes of mental paralysis, it seemed that heading back to the building was the only viable option. It turned out that most people had in fact been routed to the basement of the building and that it was a safe place to be. People sat quietly together, listening to radios, praying, fathoming the gravity and magnitude of what was taking place.

By around 1:30 the air had cleared somewhat, the sun was making its way through the smoke and a number of us headed out in the direction of home, on foot, with wet cloths wrapped around our mouths. Everything was covered in an inch of white ash—as if a fine snow had just fallen. There was a feeling of calm throughout the city, a sense of camaraderie, and people who had set up way-stations with juice and water and a phone from which people could call loved ones. Any time I overheard talk of hatred or revenge, it strengthened my aspiration for peace, love and wisdom to prevail.

Don had been uptown in the Bronx and after contemplating the 12-mile hike homeward, made it home by late afternoon when the trains started running again. Throughout the evening and the night we could see from our windows the billows of smoke rising upward from where the twin towers used to be. And the ever-deafening streets of the East Village of Manhattan were silent.

I was aware of the effects of the aftershock playing out in my body and eventually got on on-line to find your e-mails. Fortified by their energy, I sat down quietly and called upon courage and faith and calm for those still alive beneath the rubble hoping to be found, evoked the Mother’s gentle embrace for all the souls in transition who had departed the physical plane so unexpectedly, and wished courage, faith and comfort for those mourning the sudden loss of loved ones. And as I sat and thought of the Mother and thought of you, I began to be filled with an intense aspiration and then a feeling of optimism—that there could be an opening in someone close to President Bush, someone willing and able to be an instrument of wisdom and love, and that somehow the world would learn from this, a greater balance be struck, and a greater unification behind the forces of light be the ultimate result.

We woke up this morning to one of those rare and exquisite New York days—crystalline blue skies with nary a cloud, a fresh cool breeze, and still quiet streets. A

few people ventured out with their children in strollers, or were walking their dogs  
The tragedy only miles away was belied by the glory of the new day

\*

Yesterday (18 September) was the first day back to work. A little reticent to use the subways, I walked down and back. It was a strange feeling—very much like being in a war zone with the scent of the fire in the air, white ash covering streets and buildings, national guard and police arrayed everywhere, pedestrians being channeled through select streets. People still seemed dazed by what happened. Someone had the good grace to bring in a large bunch of the most magnificent, yellow roses to work. I took one and kept it with me all day, attuning myself to the purity of its aspiration, the surety of its love.

\*

Today (19 September) I ventured to ride the subway, the air is clearer and the atmosphere feels just a little lighter.

JAN MASLOW

# CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

## The Weight of Mediaevalism

CORRUPT societies can hardly be creative. Imitative societies can never be taken seriously. None of them can be progressive. In fact sooner than later they will become slaves to more powerful and aggressive societies that breathe a graceful and refined life of the spirit, people who have the magnificence of a heavenward burning flame in them, a bright flame of intense patriotic deeds. Otherwise it is a kind of *tamas* which will dig deeper and deeper till it shall dull and obscure all the faculties of courage, nobility, honour, free thought, sublimity of feeling, of will to be and will to improve and advance, of climbing the mountains or crossing the dangerous seas or launching into the blue depths of starlit spaces. But they are the heroes who can steal the Promethean fire or master the dragon of the dark foundations. We are looking for the adventurers who shall march in the "privileged aristocracy of Truth". It is for them that the Lady of the Lake is holding in her uplifted hand the sword of triumph. Whence shall come such ones?

Although we do not have men "fit for the times", there is the cherished expectation that the soul of the country shall awake and arise. It shall arise like a radiant goddess from the altar-fire of sacrifice of the spiritually great. The genuine hope is only to live in it. The ancient Rishi abode in the emerald depth of the forest, but one-sixth of his *tapasya* automatically went as a state tax for the welfare of the land. Indeed it is that which sustained the excellent moral, cultural, aesthetic, creative values of the society. Long ago Aswapati's effulgent daughter Savitri, who was a *tapasvini*, well-versed in the Yoga of Meditation, told Yama the God of Death that it is by the "Truth the saints lead the sun, by *askesis* the saints uphold the earth, the past, present and future find their refuge in the saints. Noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief." What is needed always is the intense and truthward-moving national *tapasya*. That shall be the true service to the people. In it shall be the meaningful activities to make our life receptive to the greatnesses of the spirit. Our arts, literatures, sciences, our philosophies, our sports, games, all our pursuits shall find in it their appropriate and desirable fulfilment.

Once a young French student wrote "The pyramids have been eroded by the desert wind, the marble broken by earthquakes, and gold stolen by the robbers, while the Veda is recited daily by an unbroken chain of generations." Today we are importing ideas and models from the Western masters. We are adopting the "winner's version" of life and history. We have been unfortunately looking outside India for everything—ideas, opportunities, values, jobs, comforts, looking even for the types of food taken in the 'advanced' countries. That is what is called being anti-orthodox, non-traditional, progressive, *à la mode*. It looks as though we wish to serve

others at our own cost. The socio-political systems we have embraced are not really our own. We need a Mountbatten to solve—or is it to create?—a Kashmir problem! We have mortgaged our thinking as if to please somebody else, other masters. Or else driven by Westernised ideas and manners we deliberately force decisions at the cost of national interests. The immediate gains of an individual are reckoned to be a sign of pragmatism and success and not the values which really uphold us. We are sleeping a tamasic-vitalistic sleep.

It is in this regard that we have to assess the Indian reaction at the time of the breaking up of the Ottoman Empire when the First World War had come to an end. It was seen as a blow to the prestige of Islam. Therefore, whatever be its fault or merit, it became a part of political calculation to oppose the move. Thus was born the quaint and curious Khilafat movement. In the context of the freedom struggle Mahatma Gandhi writes about it as follows: ‘‘To the Musalmans Swaraj means, as it must, India’s ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question.’’ He further adds. ‘‘It is impossible not to sympathise with this attitude. I would gladly ask for postponement of the Swaraj activity if we could advance the interest of the Khilafat.’’ If the imperative in India’s freedom had the divine will and sanction behind it, as was clearly seen by Sri Aurobindo, then regretfully we had such a leadership that discerned priorities in an altogether frustrating if not negative way. In fact it amounted to denying India India’s nationhood,—and it is that attitude which still prevails in all our mental build-up.

During the colonial days there was a set of people who thought that for them there should always be an England in India. Now there is a similar group which thinks that there should be for the neo-professionals and neo-elite an America in India with American banks and American food. No wonder, we lack the spirit of authentic nationalism in us. No wonder we do not have our own programmes and our own priorities. No wonder therefore we have a science that can hardly be called our own. There can be Indian science and Indian literature, Indian life only when India recovers its laudable Indianness, lives according to its *swabhāva* and *swadharmā*.

What is the character of India we see today? Let us have some random glimpses of the kind of life we breathe and the society that we constitute.

About the trial of Maj. Manish Bhatnagar in Chandigarh, as a suspect in the Kargil operation, *The New York Times*, dated 8 July 2001, writes as follows: ‘‘For one of its most controversial courts-martial in 50 years, the Indian Army has chosen a setting that seems like a stage set from the colonial past. Inside the decaying single-story courtroom in the barracks in this sweltering Punjab town, the roof leaks and witnesses’ testimony competes with creaking ceiling fans and parrots chirping in mangrove trees outside. Army tailors pedal past on rusting bicycles, and officers’ wives stroll beneath brightly colored parasols, chatting languidly as they go. Over all, a strict protocol prevails. A general testifying for the prosecution gets a red carpet, a VIP water cooler and snappy salutes from lower-ranking officers serving as judges... The archaisms seem starkly out of step with the modernizing India beyond the

barracks' gates. But the issues at the trial of Maj. Manish Bhatnagar, a 29-year-old paratrooper from Bhopal, in central India, are sharply contemporary, and they go to the heart of India's pride. Like the courtroom itself, the testimony has been rich with Victorian echoes. The prosecution has targeted Major Bhatnagar's character, suggesting that the order to attack at Kargil had found, in the major, that 'all lofty feelings to serve the nation had subsided and become lull.' The court listened solemnly as an army lawyer read a 19th-century poem by 'the great English poet,' Alfred Lord Tennyson, celebrating a doomed attack by British cavalymen in the Crimean War—

Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die

After a pause, the prosecutor drove the point home 'What we find here,' he said, 'is most precisely the reverse.' The court will no doubt arrive at its own decision; but the Victorianism that is prevalent throughout is a big reflection on us, a picture of another India in which there is no hope of greatness, of being straightforward, upright, honest, frank, of seeing in the country the motherhood of our souls to climb the peaks of nobility.

Here is another snap-shot about the indolence in which we pride "Vasco da Gama sailed down the Malabar Coast in 1498 in search of Christians and spices. Goa with 450 years of Portuguese rule today has plenty of both. Actually Goa has plenty of everything nice—beaches, rain, cashews, feni, food, fish, ravishing scenery and loads of fun. A fantastic honeymoon destination—for it is a land of joy and leisure, and not just at carnival time. Panjim looks like Lisbon, say many European visitors—full of small squares and backlanes. An evening cruise on the Mandavi can thrill one with fabulous sunsets. Full-moon cruises are so romantic with backwaters providing peace and quiet."

Let us witness the picture of Punjab at the time of partition of the country in 1947. "Here one of the most fertile and affluent regions of the country had large percentage of Muslims (55%) and Hindus (30%) and a substantial number of India's Sikhs. The Punjab contained all the ingredients for an epic disaster, and with the announcement of the dividing line, only days after independence, the resulting bloodshed was even worse than expected. Huge exchange of population took place as Muslims moved to Pakistan and Hindus to India. For months the greatest exodus in human history took place east and west across the Punjab. Trainloads of Muslims fleeing westward would be held up and slaughtered by Hindu and Sikh mobs. Hindus and Sikhs fleeing to the east would suffer the same fate. By the time the Punjab chaos had run its course, over ten million people had changed sides and even the most conservative estimates calculate that 250,000 people had lost their lives." From this legacy of partition the country has to pull itself out and assert itself in the world of science and culture, a daunting task it indeed is.

Then let us come to the common Indian bird, the sparrow “The town sparrows go in groups to the countryside when corn and fruit are plentiful They chirp without rest and are quarrelsome. A pair of sparrows will have not one or two but a dozen fights each day. When the two of them are busy fighting sparrows gather round and try to stop the fight But the fighters seldom listen Sometimes they fight for fun too ” This is an apt metaphor for us Indians of today And, like sparrows going to countryside for corn and fruit, the Indian professionals migrate to the lands of plenty

Emperor Shahjahan spent crores of rupees in seven years to get his famous throne made It was studded with some of the costliest precious stones such as sapphires, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. A historian describes it as follows “The Peacock Throne was in the form of a bedstead on golden eagles Its roof, emerald inside and covered with jewels outside, was supported on twelve pillars of emerald and surmounted by the figures of two peacocks, ablaze with precious stones Between the peacocks was a tree set with precious stones, three jewelled steps led to the emperor’s seat.” But alas! The Throne is no more there The raider Nadir Shah took it away from Delhi when the Mogul Empire had started crumbling Later it was in the possession of the East India Company which planned to send it to England But the ship carrying it sank and the attempt to recover it proved futile And what about the Taj Mahal? An Iranian architect Ustad Isa designed the tomb which was constructed at a fabulous cost. 20,000 workers toiled for some 22 years and more than one thousand elephants were employed to transport the construction material The labour cost alone by today’s wages thus amounts to at least Rs 2000 crores No doubt what we have is a piece of wonder, enchanting in its lyricism If in the mythological age Apollo’s music created Troy of timeless glory, here is love, uxorious love, that stands as a monument of frozen distinction We admire its beauty, its elaborate artistry, its lyricism, the charm of its symmetry, adoring warm sentiment But then that is how the taxpayers’ money was squandered! The ancient Indian precepts of governance affirmed that the taxes that a king collects from the citizens represent the wages given to him for the duties of protection, maintenance of law and order and Dharma He cannot spend these as he likes Health care, education, building up of civic facilities, promoting science, technology, industry, commerce, generating money through productive activities and not just exploiting the resources of the land should be the concerns of a king People have to blame themselves if they prefer to remain dull and stupid When in the field of human knowledge great strides were being made in Europe, India stood mediaevally blissful and ignorant The days of abundant prosperity were the dismaying days of spiritual and cultural destitution Foolish battles were fought and won for foolish gains The common man had no conception of art, literature, science, technology, industry We were in deep sleep. When the son-in-law of Chengis Khan was shot dead by an unknown arrow there was genocide of 1.75 million innocent people. That was the blood-sucking legacy that had come to India This was to be followed by the spirit-sucking traders turned into conquerors When in the 1757 Battle of Plassey Clive defeated the Nawab of Bengal another dishonour was

inflicted on the psyche of the country. Clive claimed from Mir Jafar 40 million pounds sterling and a personal revenue of 30,000 pounds a year. India has been since then systematically plundered and reduced to a lifeless mass. The land of "rich hurrying streams and bright orchard gleams" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Translations*, SABCL, Vol. 8, p. 309) became a forlorn country as if forsaken by the Goddess of Nobility. "It is a country of inexhaustible riches and one which cannot fail to make its masters the richest corporation in the world." This is what Clive wrote back home after arriving in India. Since then has been the systematic "transfer of poverty" to that country of inexhaustible riches. The last ten centuries were the worst in Indian history.

But what about today? Are we awake? Maybe we are slowly emerging out of the blissful sleep of history. But we have not yet shed the dullness of night still weighing pretty heavily on our souls. We have not recovered our true national identity. We are still slaves of habit that has no business to persist. In every field of our current activity we want to be *à la mode* by following ideas and manners of the industrially advanced societies. We are copyists, twice removed from reality. What comes to us from these advanced societies are photo-manneric concepts which we photocopy and frame to put in our living rooms.

Let us take an example of a successful literary creator. In regard to our creative artists, here is R. K. Narayan who is said to be India's answer to Jane Austen. A critic writes about him as follows. "The gentle wit, the simple sentences, the easy assumption of the inevitabilities of the tolerant Hindu social and philosophical system, the characteristically straightforward plotting were all hallmarks of Narayan's charm and helped make many of his novels and stories interesting and often pleasurable. But I felt that they also pointed to the banality of Narayan's concerns, the narrowness of his vision, the predictability of his prose, and the shallowness of the pool of experience and vocabulary from which he drew. His prose could not elevate those concerns beyond the ordinariness of its subjects. Narayan wrote of, and from, the mindset of the small-town South Indian Brahmin, and did not seem capable of a greater range. His metronomic style was frequently not equal to the demands of his situations. Intense and potentially charged scenes were rendered pathetic by the inadequacy of the language used to describe them. In much of his writing, stories with extraordinary possibilities unfolded in flat, monotonous sentences that frustrated rather than convinced me, and in a tone that ranged from the clichéd to the flippant. At the worst, Narayan's prose was like the bullock-cart—a vehicle that can move only in one gear, is unable to turn, accelerate or reverse, and remains yoked to traditional creatures who have long since been overtaken but know better" (*The Hindu*, 8 July 2001). Maybe Shashi Tharoor has taken an extreme position, but there is considerable merit in what he says. The deeper echoes of life's music are absent in him. Titillating creations can be pleasing but can be hardly artistic to lift us up to the worlds of truth and beauty and joy. In such creations the secularism of the writer leaves no room for the spirit's world of expression. But let us move on.



Our rivers are sacred to us because there is always some god-element present in them “On the peak of Amarkantak Shiva sat in trance for a long time The very beauty of his calm pose, the magnificence of that total immobility, suddenly took a form, that of a sweet damsel She bowed to her father who blessed her saying, ‘you have inspired tenderness (*narma*) in my heart, you are Narmada’ ” In it is also a loud commentary regarding our attitudes towards life when the rivers get harnessed for material beneficence. “If the Indian River is an active principle in the material world of desire and need, it has also been regarded as a symbol of the sannyasin’s path, a symbol of the decision to renounce the world of desire and need In the Indic tradition, the pilgrimage centre is often located on the banks of a river, or at a confluence of rivers ” Now, while the path of self-abnegation, renunciation is not the Aryan path, we want to build dams and disturb the entire ecology,—in the long run only to ruin ourselves

If for a moment we take a most optimistic view of these attitudes and events, culturally these may all be very fine; but where exactly do we stand in the modern world of science and technology making the machinery of civilisation speed on super-highways of genuine modernity? The current Annual Human Development Report (HDR) brought out by the UNDP expresses concern over disparities in the spread of technologies both between and within countries It defines the Human Development Index in terms of the combined measure of longevity, educational attainment and ability to buy basic goods and services India is ranked 115th It is nowhere present in the list of technology leaders, not even potential leaders; it has only a good index as a dynamic adopter The HDR says that India is losing heavily through brain drain “For instance, 100,000 Indian professionals a year are expected to take visas issued by the U S—an estimated resource loss for India of \$2 billion. Many Asian countries are experiencing a crippling brain drain of trained professionals on whom they have spent large amounts of money educating ” The Report is also forthright in saying that the “belief that there is a technological silver bullet that can solve illiteracy, ill-health or economic failure reflects scant understanding of real poverty ” If proper professional opportunities are not available in India, because of which there is the brain drain, then it is simply a harsh and ill-flavoured critique on the total irrelevance of our educational system. In this area there doesn’t seem to be any national thinking which can enliven the spirit of the youth

And yet very paradoxically this is also a period of remarkable cultural reawakening which speaks volumes about the Indian achievements during the last half a dozen decades Be it literature, art, music, science, technology, industry, business or commerce or any other field of activity, what we see in it is a certain degree of recentness that has come to us The *tamas* of the past is unquestionably getting attenuated and dissolved and a new vitality is bringing a vigour that can change our society in a radical manner In other words, while on the one hand we have a hopelessly despicable system governing our collective life, on the other there are individuals who can reach the high peaks of accomplishment Is it not a wonder that out of this ugliness

there should spring up occasional excellences? It may not be quite justifiable to take pride in the Nobel winners that have come from our midst, yet their very appearance is also a sign of something that is trying to express itself. It may happen to be in alien lands, but the sign is that something deep within us is trying to come out and assert. How wonderful if it shall be in true Indianness of the Indians!

The problem of Indian science is therefore essentially the problem of Indian society. The first thing that must happen is that we should shed the unregenerate mediaeval legacy and the despicable slavish mentality that have distorted all that is truly ours. We have to discover our roots, our traditions of nobility, our progressive spirit. The Indian tradition is to create traditions. Assimilating all the gains of the Western world we have to rebuild our own values that will fulfill our deepest longings, our aspirations.

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

AB PURANI has written in the introduction of his *Evening Talks* “After 24 November 1926, the (evening) sittings began to get later and later, till the limit of one o’clock at night was reached. Then the curtain fell Sri Aurobindo retired completely after December 1926...”<sup>1</sup> On 8 February 1927 Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved from 9, Rue de la Marine to 28, Rue François Martin, a house on the north-east corner of the same block as the Rue de la Marine House. Sri Aurobindo never went out of this new residence. For twenty-four years he lived in almost complete seclusion and wholly concentrated on his sadhana—a sadhana done not for himself but “for the earth-consciousness”.<sup>2</sup>

So when Sri Aurobindo decided to retire after the Siddhi, a good number of sadhaks found this a near-calamity. Not only did they express deep concern but they also felt as if they were abandoned. To one of them, who wrote to Sri Aurobindo on this matter, he replied and assured him and others that the restrictions he had imposed upon himself were not meant for an inert and effective state of personal beatitude. “No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy. I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things; It is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it.”<sup>3</sup> The particular stage of his sadhana and the progress he would make in that direction would be in the interest of the disciples. In any case he had no intention of cutting off connections from them. He significantly added: “You consider that the Mother can be of no help to you. If you cannot profit by her help, you would find still less profit in mine. But, in any case, I have no intention of altering the arrangement I have made for all the disciples without exception that they should receive the light and force from her and not directly from me and be guided by her in their spiritual progress. I have made the arrangement not for any temporary purpose but because it is the one way, provided always the disciple is open and receives, that is true and effective (considering what she is and her power)”<sup>4</sup> Also in answer to the queries about the Mother’s spiritual stature, he wrote a memorable exposition which later came to be published in the book *The Mother*. This magnificent little volume, which has run into several editions and has been translated into most of the Indian languages and also into French, remains to this day a standard guide-book in epitome to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. “Its teachings, crisp and lucid, are charged with mantric potency in each line, and breathes a spiritual atmosphere, force and conviction. It deals with the kind of aspiration one should have for the integral sadhana and realisation, the role of the Mother—Adya Shakti, with her four Powers and personalities, who has taken embodiment in our midst here, on earth, to whom the disciple has to surrender all he is and has. It also deals with the power of money which in reality is a Divine Power, but usurped by the anti-divine elements, and the right means

of acquiring it back from the hostile powers and restoring to the Divine Mother ”

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother knew that for the transformation of the earth-nature to be effective it was not sufficient if the Supramental Force descended into them alone. They were convinced that there should be on earth at least a few right men, a small group, as a nucleus, for receiving the Supramental Light and Force when it came down, with this end in view, the Mother began to take more and more inmates so as to extend her spiritual work through them.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is thus a spontaneous growth rather than a deliberate creation. But it is also the realisation of an intention that had long been cherished by the Mother. She once remarked “At the beginning of my present earthly existence I was put into touch with many people who said they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and truer, but were tied down, subjected, slaves of that brutal necessity of earning their living, and that this weighed down upon them so much, took away so much of their time and energy that they could not engage in any other activity, inner or outer. I heard that very often.

“I was very young at that time and always I used to tell myself that if ever I could do it, I would try to create a little world—world, Oh! quite a small one, but still, a small world where people would be able to live without having to be preoccupied by problems of food and lodging and clothing and the imperious necessities of life, to see if all the energies freed by this certainty of an assured material living would spontaneously be turned towards the divine life and inner realisation ”<sup>5</sup>

The conditions of basic material security that the Ashram, as it took shape, provided to an ever increasing number of disciples permitted their spiritual lives to unfold in the light of Sri Aurobindo and under the Mother’s constant daily care.

“A community the size of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram naturally requires a considerable amount of work to keep it going. Most of this is done by members. The primary purpose of the work, however, is not to satisfy any practical or economic need, or to be a means for the self-expression of the members, but to provide a field for their spiritual growth. As Sri Aurobindo once wrote ‘work done in the Ashram’ is done not ‘as a service to humanity’ or even as a service to the sadhaks of the Ashram, but ‘as a service to the Divine and as a field for the inner opening to the Divine, surrender to the Divine alone, rejection of ego and all the ordinary vital movements and the training in a psychic elevation, selflessness, obedience, renunciation of all mental, vital or other self-assertion of the limited personality’ The Mother expressed the same idea succinctly ‘To work for the Divine is to pray with the body ’”<sup>6</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

#### *References*

1 A B Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, p 221

2 *Ibid*

3 *SABCL*, Vol 26, p 153

4 *Ibid* p 456

5 *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram* (2000), pp 38-39

6 *Ibid*. pp 41-42

# KARMA: ELECTABLE, IMMUTABLE AND INEXORABLE

(Continued from the issue of November 2001)

## The Purpose: Insights from Examples

Why this karmic law, what is its purpose? The history of mankind shows a development from subservience to the group, through the growth of the increasingly conscious mental faculty, towards variety and freedom of the individual.<sup>12</sup> In exercising this freedom, the karmic law is an inestimably valuable reference point. The purpose has been succinctly stated by Sri Aurobindo “ it is into the Divine within each man and each people that the man and the nation have to grow, it is not an external idea or rule that has to be imposed on them from without. Therefore the law of a growing inner freedom is that which will be most honoured in the spiritual age of mankind.” Self-knowledge is the prerequisite for this freedom, “since spiritual freedom is not egoistic assertion of our separate mind and life but obedience to the Divine Truth in ourself and our members and in all around us. And as soon as man comes to know his spiritual self, he does by that discovery, often even by the very seeking for it, as ancient thought and religion saw, escape from the outer law and enter into the law of freedom.”<sup>13</sup> Until man achieves that to a significant extent, the compulsions of family, caste, clan, religion, society, nation will inevitably constrict his choice. The lower nature has to be subjected to the guidance of the illumined self and be transformed by it into a state where it naturally obeys the Divine Truth within the self. The eternal design is to allow each aspect of our being to grow freely in accordance with its known nature in order to discover the Divine in itself, not to extinguish it in a grand holocaust.

Let us take an example of this grand design. GLB, an officer in the Indian Army, lost his father when 18 years of age, and had to support his mother and 10 brothers and sisters on provident fund proceeds and whatever he could earn through tuitions while studying in college. As a child, he could recite parts of the Bengali *Mahabharata* by heart. In college, he was profoundly influenced by Christian missionaries and may have turned Christian had it not been for the influence of the lady he chose to wed. She, the youngest of 14 children, was the sole support of her mother and siblings, two of her brothers were associated with revolutionaries, and she was herself strongly based in the Hindu ethos. GLB was contemptuous of ritualistic Hinduism and used to say, laughingly, that he would turn to it only in old age. When 43, he was ambushed, shot, and dragged into East Pakistan, where he had to spend many years in solitary confinement in prison, locked in a cell behind the ward for lunatics, a powerful light always burning above his bed. Here, in the jail library, he discovered a copy of Sri Aurobindo's Bengali introduction to the *Gita*. This booklet changed everything. He was able to procure a copy of the *Gita*, and practised its *sadhana* over the years, simultaneously studying the *Koran* in depth, completely changing his life, ultimately returning sane to his country.<sup>14</sup> While in prison, he refused to ask for mercy

as advised by his own government and instead, single-handed, drafted petitions to the High Court and to the Supreme Court of Pakistan challenging the false evidence brought against him. This created nation-wide sensation in both countries and the military government reduced the sentence from 8 to 4 years

Superficially, here is an instance of unjustified, inexplicable calamity. During the officer's imprisonment, his wife had to bring up two sons with great difficulty, undergoing much humiliation and many travails. GLB got no recognition from the government for his heroism in the face of all odds. Both sons topped the university, obtained degrees from foreign universities on scholarships, and he saw them established in life. GLB used to say that he must have been a *yogabhrashita* [one fallen from the yogic path] in his earlier birth and therefore the Divine had purged him of his impurities through this traumatic experience and virtually threw him into the path of yoga long before he had planned. GLB chose to join the army because his wife-to-be had pointed out that his pay was too little to support a family. By 'accident', at the age of 30, he happened to meet Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, when his wife had gone to Pondicherry. 13 years later the 'accident' occurred in which he was shot and imprisoned.

Thus, the individual makes his choice, but the Divine also intervenes decisively in the person's life. GLB could have chosen not to practise the *sādhana* of the Gita and the Koran and lose his reason in solitary confinement. It is such critical choices that man is faced with in life. Some he elects to make, others he is thrust into. In either case, the consequences inevitably follow. In making the choice, the heritage of the individual, the training to which he has been subjected by family tradition and socialisation, all play parts. But, in the ultimate analysis, it is when the psychic self chooses that the choice becomes one with the Divine intention, and then the soul springs forth to evolve into its glorious plenitude, and thus life progresses towards the Life Divine. GLB's greatest satisfaction was hearing from his wife that, when he fell unconscious with a heart attack, he had called out thrice to the Divine. He felt that in thus invoking God even unawares, caught in the throes of acute physical suffering, he had achieved what he had wanted and thus more than compensated for all the suffering in life.

The lesson of working without craving for the results of one's actions was brought home to Kanak in a telling manner. A government employee, he was disgruntled with being transferred frequently arbitrarily. As the years went by, more and more he was chosen for assignments that had never been handled by an officer of his service in the past. He found himself faced with a task of veritably Herculean proportions, calling for either cleaning up the Augean stables, or creating a new organisation from scratch. The day he had joined service, his boss had told him that he must learn the work of everyone, from that of the office peon to that of the head of the office. He had faithfully done so, rehabilitating thousands of evacuees in the newly created Bangladesh. Years later, he found himself working as typist, computer operator, message carrier, general handyman, janitor-supervisor and simultaneously as

head of the organisation in several assignments in succession. Repeatedly he had to weld into a team officials belonging to different disciplines who were at one another's throats and were avid backbiters. Invariably he found that once the organisation had been cleaned up, a new ambience conducive to disciplined work culture created and ready for take off, he was preemptorily moved out and someone else moved in to enjoy the fruits of his diligent labour. He was asked to take up assignments that no one else was willing to touch either because of the difficulties they posed or for being unglamorous, but was unceremoniously ignored once he had completed the task. He could not understand why this was recurring, time and again, till one day he listened to the three parables being narrated. It dawned upon him that through this repeated exercise he was being taught two things: (i) how to work devotedly just for its own sake, not coveting enjoyment of its fruits, and (ii) the ego needs to be bruised regularly to prevent arrogance building up from success in achieving goals.

After his father's death, Kanak had been sent out of the city on promotion. He had requested that this be reconsidered as his recently widowed aged mother ought not to be left alone. He was passed over and people much junior to him were promoted. He seethed under this injustice, but found his nature would not let him rebel by not doing his best in whatever job he was given. After a couple of years, suddenly he was restored to his proper status, and all the injustice that had been done was removed. He felt that having steady faith in the Divine and doing all work as His instrument had borne its own fruits.

Once these realisations dawned, Kanak found himself strangely peaceful within, and able to smile at his repeated shunting from post to post, free from the anger and hurt he used to suffer from at the lack of recognition of the hard work he had put in and of his integrity.

He was also given the insight into how, at times, the law of karma can be seen to operate within one's lifetime. It is not that unattached diligent labour produces no 'fruit'. When his mother had fallen very seriously ill with infarctions in the brain, Kanak had nursed her day and night. He found himself blessed with her miraculous recovery from inability to read, write, eat and walk to a completely normal life. Once, suddenly, Kanak found himself saddled with an assignment that required his stay in a wonderful building, over 300 years old, with the river flowing by. The peace in the environs enveloped him, healing old wounds. In just a couple of months he found he had completed a quantum of work which would have taken a year. The incessant, tireless flow of energy was astounding. When he left this post, he understood he had been shown the fruition of his own capabilities. Looking back, he found that this assignment had been given to him exactly when his children had come for holidays from abroad, so that they could be with him in this wonderful place. *Nishkama karma* produces its own resultant 'reward' even in this life. One has to cultivate the sensitivity to perceive it.

The question arises: when I take up a piece of work in return for payment, how can I perform that action without expectation of receiving that return? Doing a job for

payment is not an instance of the principle of *nishkāma karma*. This is a contract between two parties, one part of which is carrying out the assigned task and the other is receiving payment as the value of the work done. The principle the Gita enunciates is a spiritual one: you put your best into the effort, without craving that you must get recognised thereby, that it must get published/accepted/praised. In other words, it is work as worship, an offering of your best to the Divine. When one makes an offering truly, one does not entertain the desire for getting a return. That is the businessman's prayer, and is fraught with danger—remember the Kalpataru—it will give what you crave, but with its opposite in double measure. The Grand Secret is not to crave, but do one's best as an instrument of divine energy working through oneself. When this succeeds even a little bit, the Divine showers unexpected joy. Proof of this is plentiful. A young teacher, thrown out by a new principal wanting to accommodate someone of his community, found herself bumping into her students throughout the holiday season, one and all of whom were effusive in their expressions of how much they missed her teaching. Quite stunned at this unexpected bounty, she thought back to her teaching experience and recalled the spirit in which she had done it—payment was expected, as a contract; but she had never craved for adulation from students or admiration from colleagues. She had striven to give of her best, even getting books from abroad at her own expense for that purpose. Some months later, quite unexpectedly, she landed a job precisely of the type she had wanted.

It is strange how the Divine shows us precisely what the principle is all about, but our minds confuse the issue. Hence, the need is to feel with the heart, instead of allowing the mind to get caught up in the gymnastics of logic.

In the midst of unprecedented floods, Kanak was engaged in doing little bits of facilitation like ensuring supplies of rice, kerosene oil, roof and floor covering for the homeless. He made the arrangements and everything went through smoothly, but his superiors never acknowledged his contribution. It pinched him, undoubtedly, because within there was surely expectation of being recognised. Perhaps, that is precisely why recognition did not come. But there was a bonus: heads of the affected districts suddenly called up to express gratitude for the help he had provided. It gladdened his heart, all the more so as it was unexpected. Then he realised that what he had done had been without any expectation of receiving such gratitude in return, he had done it because it needed to be done. And so the doctrine of karma showed itself in action by sending the 'results', the 'fruit' of the action.

So the secret is: do the work with all your heart and soul, so that it is a perfect production. *That* is the result. What one has to be detached from is craving for *personal rewards* from that work, not to be confused with the objective that the work is supposed to achieve. For instance, Kanak did his best to rehabilitate evacuees in Bangladesh so that the objective of rehabilitation was achieved. That happened. What could he have craved—some recognition for what he did? He did not even dream of this. He had immersed himself in getting the job done to the best of his ability, happy with the pat on the back he received from his District Magistrate. There was an unex-



pected bonus unknown to him, all the photographs of Bangladesh relief work he had sent to his training institution were put up as an exhibition and displayed before the President of India. No one informed Kanak at that time. He got to know much later. Repeatedly he found himself coming into the limelight and, just when he was about to bask in the glory, the Unseen Hand shunted him into obscurity, saving him from a bloated ego and losing his foothold on the path.

However, life is not all that crystal clear. Perceiving the law of Karma in action becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, in many cases. Take, for instance, the case of NM. Educated only till class 4, she was a sophisticated beauty gifted with outstanding qualities of hand and heart who was married off at the age of 14 to one whose personality and appearance were at the other extreme of the spectrum. She lived the life of the ideal housewife, devoted to the family despite all the insults and neglect she faced, taught herself English, kept her intellectual life alive. Both her sons committed suicide. Her husband predeceased her. She could find no answer in yoga and meditation to the inexplicable misery she had to undergo throughout her life, and died with this unsolved mystery haunting her consciousness. Or the example of Subala Devi, mother of 14 children, who, as a widow, spearheaded women's education in Allahabad, got her widowed daughter trained so that she could become a teacher, took up a teacher's job herself to support the children, wrote poetry and primers, was profoundly respected by the theosophists and had considerable spiritual realizations. Two sons were associated with the revolutionary movement for independence. She sold her jewellery to smuggle one to the USA to escape the British police. The other was imprisoned in the Kakori bomb case and disappeared mysteriously. None of the sons earned a living. Everyone depended upon her and the earnings of the youngest daughter. When this daughter asked her why, with all her spiritual attainments, her sons had been so useless, her answer provides a clue to the enigma: "Everyone has good and bad within oneself. They are the fruits of what must have been bad in me." The most fascinating point is that her children never heard her complain about all the privations she suffered throughout her life. When her youngest daughter once complained to an acquaintance about her mother's travails, he responded, "You are complaining that she has suffered so much, but have you ever heard Mata-ji complain? She is at peace. These matters do not affect her." Till her last breath she chose to stay on her own, never dependent on her children, even though she lost the use of her legs.

Some questions will always remain unanswered

(Concluded)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

#### References

- 12 *SABCL*, Vol 15, p 273  
 13 *Ibid*, pp 242-43  
 14 Lt Col G L Bhattacharya, *Krishna of the Gita* (Writers Workshop, Calcutta), Shyam Kumari, *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo & The Mother*, Vol 3 (Pondicherry)

## IN THE SCHOOL COURTYARD

### I

#### *Aśvamedha*

THIS play in Sanskrit, staged on 7 July 2001, starts with Emperor Yudhishtira lamenting for his sins after the great war of Kurukshetra where many of his near and dear ones including his grandfather Bhishma and teacher Dronacharya, were killed. Lord Krishna scolded him for being under the godly spell, *Vaisnavī-māyā*, and advised him to call and listen to Veda Vyasa. When Vyasa advised him to perform *aśvamedha* [the horse-sacrifice] he said he was not in a position to bear the huge expenses involved in such a *yajña*. Then Vyasa assured him of the necessary gold kept in the caves of Himalayas by King Marutta, and that Yudhishtira could get as much gold as needed after worshipping Mahadeva and getting His blessings and approval. Then on Yudhishtira's inquiry about King Marutta and his *aśvamedha* Vyasa starts narrating the story that unfolds the great effort and heroic character of Marutta. Narada advised Marutta to approach Brihaspati to take the responsibility of the *aśvamedha* as the chief priest. When Brihaspati declined, Narada advised Marutta to approach Samvarta, the younger brother of Brihaspati. Samvarta accepted the offer on condition that even if Brihaspati later came to Marutta, he would reject him. As anticipated by Samvarta, Brihaspati at the behest of Indra approached Marutta expressing his willingness to take the charge of the sacrifice—of course with an intention to spoil it. But Marutta, to keep his promise to Samvarta, rejected the offer of Brihaspati. The play is adapted from the Mahabharata—“the pivot on which the history of Sanskrit literature and incidentally the history of Aryan civilization in India, must perforce turn”—and is in simple Sanskrit. Even though the original *ślokas* from the Mahabharata were retained as far as possible, the language of the whole play was probably understood by the audience who appeared to enjoy it till the end. Of course some scenes might have appeared coarse and unrefined but those characters were from unrefined classes of the society. And when the Mother says “Sanskrit ought to be the national language of India,” then it must fit into all mouths and must be simple Sanskrit—shouldn't it?

### II

#### *Sudhu Koy Paa . Oto!*

THIS playlet in Bengali staged on 8 July 2001, being played by small children, *amrtam bālabhāsitam* (a child's utterance is like nectar), seems to be symbolic. The high soaring ideas of simple and candid hearts, when guided by *ānanda*, ultimately

reach the goal I was reminded of Sri Aurobindo's gem of a line heard so many times in the Mother's voice:

A step, and all is sky and God.

### III

#### *Padma-Chetana*

This garland of dances—though not in proper order and though it might have extended a few seconds more than the ideal ending at the right moment—was the result of the inner experience of a teacher when she saw some lotuses in the lake in our Lake Estate. The dances depicted the various incarnations of the Divine, ending with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (As we all know, the red lotus is the symbol of Sri Aurobindo and the white lotus is of the Mother ) Their beauty and sweetness got a nectarial touch with Sanskrit in the form of narrations and songs Such programmes will surely inspire others to make the Sanskrit language living and popular.

SATADAL

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

### AN INDISPENSABLE COMPANION TO *THE LIFE DIVINE*

**Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine—A Brief Outline** by G N Sarma Ultra Publications, Bangalore, 2001 Pages 163 Price Rs 200.

SRI AUROBINDO always insisted that he was a poet first and a poet till the very end His biographers have noted that he shied away from being called a philosopher However, his major work, *The Life Divine*, escapes the fate of being one more philosophical treatise Rather it is widely acclaimed as one of the most outstanding philosophical works of the twentieth century It is also treated as a sacred text created by the Master's vision of the golden world—the supramental plane of consciousness

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo elucidates his thesis of terrestrial evolution He focuses on all problems of existence and penetrates deep into them to provide meaningful solutions. He unveils the mystery of evolution by saying that the divine consciousness, separated from its origin, hid itself in inconscient matter Due to the rigours of the supreme consciousness, poised above, matter is forced to evolve progressively into life and then into mind Man has to evolve still further from the level of the intellect and reach the higher planes of self-perfection Sri Aurobindo charts out the various stages of consciousness—the higher mind, the illumined mind, the intuitive mind, the overmind—which have to be traversed to reach the portals of the supermind The Master's vision of the supramental world and its descent on earth forms the acme of *The Life Divine*

This volume of over one thousand pages promises to be a challenging voyage for the seeker. He can get help from the Mother's suggestions about the method of reading this text. She advises the seeker to achieve perfect silence in the mind so that the force released by the words of this magnum opus penetrates deep into his spirit

However, for the general reader/intellectual professional, who finds this book difficult to grapple with, there is good news An aid or beacon to the study of *The Life Divine* will encourage an even broader category of readers (namely university students/research scholars) to approach this philosophical work more readily.

G.N. Sarma, ex-professor of political science in Marathwada University, Aurangabad had felt the need for such a companion to the study of *The Life Divine* and wrote this book under review here—*Sri Aurobindo The Life Divine—A Brief Outline*. In this book the magnum opus has been summarized chapter by chapter The summary of each chapter has been done brilliantly since the original flavour is retained This book focuses on the seminal ideas discussed and explained by Sri Aurobindo

The style of Prof Sarma's book is concise and jargon-free Therefore the experience of reading it becomes a pleasurable one It is indeed an indispensable companion to *The Life Divine*

It is a great misfortune that Prof. Sarma passed away on 12 May 2001, only a couple of months after the release of his book May he be in the Mother's protection

RITA NATH KESHARI