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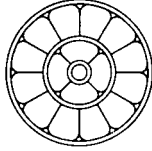
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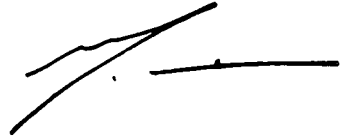
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIV

No. 2

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## QUIET COUNTRY OF FIXED MIND

HERE was a quiet country of fixed mind  
Into a firm and settled space she came  
Where all was still and all things kept their place .  
There one stood forth who bore authority  
His sentences savoured the oracle  
“Traveller or pilgrim of the inner world,  
Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air  
Flaming with thought’s supreme finality.  
O aspirant to the perfect way of life,  
Here find it, rest from search and live at peace....  
Here burns the diamond of flawless bliss  
A favourite of Heaven and Nature live ”  
But to the too satisfied and confident sage  
Savitri replied casting into his world  
Sight’s deep release, the heart’s questioning inner voice...  
“Happy are they who in this chaos of things,  
This coming and going of the feet of Time,  
Can find the single Truth, the eternal Law ..  
But I must pass leaving the ended search  
Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul ”  
None answered in that bright contented world .  
But some murmured, passers-by from kindred spheres·  
Each by his credo judged the thought she spoke.  
“Who then is this who knows not that the soul  
Is a least gland or a secretion’s fault  
Who would prolong his brief unhappy term  
Or cling to living in a sea of death?”  
But others, “Nay, it is her spirit she seeks  
A splendid shadow of the name of God,  
A formless lustre from the Ideal’s realm,  
The Spirit is the Holy Ghost of Mind,  
But none has touched its limits or seen its face  
Each soul is the great Father’s crucified Son,  
Mind is that soul’s one parent, its conscious cause  
Our minds have made the world in which we live ”  
Another with mystic and unsatisfied eyes  
Who loved his slain belief and mourned its death  
“Is there one left who seeks for a Beyond?  
Can still the path be found, opened the gate?”  
So she fared on across her silent self

To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd  
 Who sped brilliant, fire-footed, sunlight-eyed  
 Into dim spiritual somnolence they break  
 Or shed wide wonder on our waking self,  
 Ideas that haunt us with their radiant tread,  
 Dreams that are hints of unborn Reality  
 And Savitri mingling in that glorious crowd,  
 Yearning to the spiritual light they bore,  
 Longed once to hasten like them to save God's world,  
 But she reined back the high passion in her heart  
 She knew that first she must discover her soul  
 "O happy company of luminous gods,  
 Reveal, who know, the road that I must tread,—  
 For surely that bright quarter is your home,—  
 To find the birthplace of the occult Fire  
 And the deep mansion of my secret soul "

One answered pointing to a silence dim  
 On a remote extremity of sleep  
 In some far background of the inner world  
 "O Savitri, from thy hidden soul we come  
 We are the messengers, the occult gods  
 Who help men's drab and heavy ignorant lives  
 To wake to beauty and the wonder of things  
 Touching them with glory and divinity,  
 In evil we light the deathless flame of good  
 And hold the torch of knowledge on ignorant roads,  
 We are thy will and all men's will towards Light  
 O human copy and disguise of God  
 Follow the world's winding highway to its source  
 There in the silence few have ever reached,  
 Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare stone  
 And the deep cavern of thy secret soul "

Then Savitri following the great winding road  
 Came where it dwindled into a narrow path  
 Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim-feet  
 A few bright forms emerged from unknown depths  
 And looked at her with calm immortal eyes  
 There was no sound to break the brooding hush,  
 One felt the silent nearness of the soul

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 498-502)

## SRI AUROBINDO'S SPEECH ON NATIONAL EDUCATION IN BOMBAY ON 15 JANUARY 1908

NATIONAL EDUCATION is a very vast subject. When I was told about the topic I did not in the beginning quite realise its implications. But as I started thinking about it, I immediately understood its importance. The sort of difficulties about the idea of National Education that are encountered here do not present themselves in Bengal. Here in the Bombay Province it is not clear to many, or it is not understood properly by them, as to what exactly does National Education mean. The term 'National Education' with a specific connotation is suspected and men of wisdom dismiss it. On the other hand, in Bengal the necessity to explain the concept of National Education does not arise at all. There may be people in favour of it or against it, but National Education is something that is taken by them as an actual fact, something that has been experienced by them. There is no necessity in Bengal to explain it or discuss it to convince people about the sense it carries. But in your Bombay Province it has, at present, only a verbal implication. It has not yet gone beyond mere talk. That is also perhaps the reason why people are suspect of it.

I am surprised that certain persons here ask me about National Education, about what exactly it means. There are those who wonder if there can be anything like a national education at all, particularly in the context of teaching, say, mathematics. They are at a loss to see in what manner it could be called 'National'. Honourable Gokhale does not state that he does not understand the meaning of the term 'National Education', yet it is obvious that he has not really grasped its significance. At the National Congress, which was held in Calcutta, a Resolution about National Education was passed. But unfortunately as the Surat Congress did not take place, it could not be introduced there. However, Hon. Gokhale made certain modifications in the Resolution about National Education passed in Calcutta. In his consideration these modifications are of least importance. But my opinion is exactly opposed to his. Perhaps Hon. Gokhale is not fully aware of the factual situation in Bengal vis-à-vis National Education. The word 'National' appears in this Resolution three times and there is no doubt that this has been done with a certain intention. The alteration suggested by Hon. Gokhale does not speak of National Education, instead it introduces terms such as 'Independent System of Education'. This has a different association and it does not really convey what we intend through the phrase 'National Education'. The Subjects Committee at Calcutta introduced the word 'National' three times. It was not for nothing that this was done. National Education should be imparted in a national spirit. This was the Resolution passed at Calcutta. Not even a single word of it can be altered or dropped.

National Education must be on national lines and must be under national control. Why have we to qualify this education by specifying it as 'National'? Such a question may well be asked by many. These people maintain that, firstly, we are not a nation at



all, therefore there cannot be the question of education being national. According to their thinking, what we call a nation is an imaginary thing, it is not a reality. In India, they say, there are thousands of castes and sub-castes, innumerable sects and sub-sects, any number of religious creeds with differences of opinion and practice. In that case the use of 'National' in the Indian situation becomes meaningless. But these people do not understand what exactly is meant by a nation. They try to suggest that only when these castes and creeds are abolished can a nation come into existence. But this line of argument, that all people in the country should have one religion and there should be only one caste, is fallacious.

Religion and caste cannot be the distinctive characteristics of a nation. If you look at the geographical map of India, it certainly appears to be a big country, but it cannot be called a 'nation'—this is what these people maintain. But we view it differently. To us, from the very geography of the country, it appears to be quite distinct from other countries and that itself gives to it a certain national character. Italy stands out in the same manner, separate from her surroundings, and in 30 years it became an independent nation. The inner and outer constitution of India, the customs and culture of its people, its religion, etc., etc., have an independent character different from the rest of the world. It has its foundations in the ancient past.

Those who object to this concept keep on saying that India was never a nation. It is therefore imperative for us to understand what exactly is meant by the word 'Nation'. When we propose that National Education should be imparted, it is implied that we need not throw away the traditional background and introduce brand-new ideas and idealism. If we see the history of the country it is obvious that we did have a system of National Education. Look at our philosophy: what is in the individual is also in the universal. Of course a nation is a living entity, full of consciousness. It is never a thing made up, something fabricated. A living nation always grows; it must grow. It must attain higher and loftier heights. It may happen after a thousand years or it may happen in the next 20 years, but happen it must.

Our personality, our constitution is made up of three parts. We have three types of body,—gross, subtle-physical, and causal. In a similar way the nation has three bodies. According to our philosophy it is not just the outward appearance, the gross body, that makes the complete man. All the three bodies have to be taken into account, only then can we get some understanding about him. As in the case of man, so in the case of a nation. To think about our nation is first to think about our motherland. Stretching from the Himalayas in the North to Kanyakumari in the South, its boundaries are formed by the seas in the East and the West. Ganga, Jamuna, Narmada, Krishna, Godavari flow here unceasingly, here we have ancient cities, tall and imposing temples, as well as artistically constructed palatial houses. Such is the part of this earth, known as India. It is that picture, that figure which comes in front of us when we talk about our nation. This is the gross body of our nation. Bankim-chandra's song *Bande Mataram* (see pp 92-94) describes this aspect very beautifully,—33 crores of people living on this land with their happinesses and afflictions,

with their good and bad desires. All these are a part of its subtle-physical. These are the aspects which though they may undergo changes in the course of time yet always remain in the body, in the seed state, as permanent as the atom. They are present there and, being the origin, it is out of them that the future takes shape. This is the causal body of the nation. But that is not enough. According to our scriptures when we think of man, we not only think of the present but also of the past and the future. The same is applicable to a country. When we speak of rivers, mountains, cities, etc. of our country we do not keep in mind solely the present, not at all. What we speak of is the history of 5000 years. Does not the figure of Emperor Akbar stand in front of us when we utter the names of our cities Delhi and Agra? That is why we must, while speaking about the nation, also recollect the great achievements of our ancient people.

In this way Shivaji, Ashoka and Akbar at once become an integral part of our nationhood. This is taken for granted. In the same way, we immediately remember the Rishis of very ancient times who lived in this land. When we look at Japan we recognise that its people never forget their ancestors. They offer their lives as a sacrifice for the sake of their country. This sense of sacrifice is always present in the Japanese blood. When a warrior fights for his country he recalls those sacrifices. This is something we must learn from Japan. We must learn how to honour the ancestors and keep their memories. In that awareness is always present in them their nationhood. Whatever you will do today, you are not going to do it for your sake. It will be to pay the debt you owe to them. This we must never forget. Not only our ancestors, the generations to come are also an organic part of the country. If we have to envision an Indian nation, it is in that sense that we should proceed. We should not be carried away by the Western advancements, get subdued by their achievements. When we think of our nation and our national character on such a global and universal level, then we truly dedicate ourselves to the cause. Surely there shall arise great thinkers, great statesmen, heroic warriors, mighty army chieftains to lift up the country. This may not happen immediately, today, but it shall certainly happen. The term 'Nation' is full of such a meaning, full of such a significance, it is not simply a convenient political word.

In Bengal, while formulating the concept of National Education, we keep in front of us this grand idea of nationhood. We can now appreciate how, in consonance with this lofty and noble concept, the details have been worked out. We shall take the simplest subject of geography as an illustration. Just imagine the way this subject has been taught presently in government and private schools! The students are told about such and such country with such and such set of districts, with offices of those districts; this is the kind of information imparted in geography classes. What is its use? But according to the ideas of National Education when we teach geography, we teach it in a different way. The first thing we tell the children is that India is our Motherland. In this way we first make them aware of the gross body of the nation. We tell them about our rivers Ganga, Jamuna, Narmada, as what these rivers are, and not just where they flow. In these schools in Bengal, while describing the Avatarhood

of Shivaji in Maharashtra, we explain to them what this Maharashtra is. Speaking about Punjab we tell the children about the Punjab of Ranajit Singh. Speaking about the geography of the Himalayas we in our National Schools teach how the land of Himalayas has become holy because of its Rishis. We also teach the geography of other nations, but what we impart to them is its importance in the context of our country. Similarly, like geography, the history of the country is taught to the students of Bengal in the national context. The teaching of history cannot just be when and how a certain king was crowned and how long he ruled over his kingdom, or when was the Battle of Plassey fought. Such are not the aspects on which we lay emphasis. In what manner in ancient days did the Aryans form the nation, or how today's Marathas became Marathas, or the Bengalis became Bengalis, or the Punjabis became Punjabis,—such are the things we teach in history. In the process it will not matter much if a student fails to tell when the Battle of Plassey was fought. In short, we consider that true history is not really taught by the present-day governmental methods of teaching. Similarly, as in the case of geography and history, in Bengal's National Schools we teach philosophy differently also. We explain to the students in our National Colleges in what way our philosophy is greater and more comprehensive as compared to other philosophies of the world. In governmental schools the degree holders know what Schopenhauer has to say, but they have the least knowledge about the spiritual foundations of our thought. It should also be recognised that whatever philosophy the students will learn in colleges, they must try to put it into practice.

Not that the programme of National Education which we have started is altogether new. It was initiated and practised long ago by our forefathers. Thus Shivaji's greatness had its foundation in National Education itself. Based on that were the achievements, and fame, of Ashoka or Akbar. It is that which will ever ring in our ears throughout. The majesty and grandeur of ancient Rishis will be made known the world over. From the National Education programmes nothing that is useful or worthwhile or consequential is discarded.

This kind of National teaching is not provided in government schools. In those schools the load of great European thinkers is put on the tender minds of our students. But European thought and the European way of life are quite different from our thought and our way of life. At the same time it is true that, while considering ancient as well as modern thought, the present progressive European thought should not be kept aside from our purview. In our reformations we should certainly introduce them, whatever is acceptable in them can also be adapted suitably. What is most important is that, in the process, our roots do not get affected. Like Japan we must make use of Western science. But while implementing these ideas, we should not be blind to the achievements of our forefathers. As an example, in government medical colleges the students remain unaware of our Ayurvedic science. There are many occult and valuable truths behind it. But the Western system has no access to them. Yet this is not to assert that whatever is ours is always the best.

As far as political aspects are concerned there are many, many things that we

have to learn from the West Democratic governance is one which we must learn from Europe While providing National Education we do not keep the students away from the political aspects Not only that, the system of People's Rule is what we observe and impart to the students Simply taking care of industry or commerce is not enough, is not proper, and this is exactly what we tell them. Merely on the basis of trade and commerce no country can really rise to its loftiness This is not what we learn from history No country survives for too long wholly on the basis of these commercial operations Europe pays special attention in formulating its policies towards the development and growth of its industry and commerce What kind of industry and commerce should be proposed is always kept in mind by it While imparting National Education to our students we bring to their attention these several factual aspects. That is why our students learn what the Arts and Sciences are They do not just know something about them Many vocational subjects such as carpentry, and smithy are also taught to them The result is that when a student comes out from our schools he does not find it difficult to make a monthly earning of Rs 25-30 While imparting such a National Education in a National way, the special emphasis is on creating a future Hindi Rashtra In this regard we have to bear in mind several systems of education Principal Paranjape may speak of mathematics alone, but certainly that is not enough. The one thought that impels us to provide National Education is as to when this Hindi Rashtra will occupy a place in the company of other nations, will be great among other nations in the world Our learned and accomplished people must be great as people in other countries and this is always borne in our mind

In our schools we give education up to the 5th Standard in the mother tongue of the students, teaching the children through English is dangerous Very often it is said that in our mother tongues we do not have an adequate vocabulary for teaching different subjects But our answer is simple first experience it The 7th Standard in our National Schools is equivalent to the Intermediate Courses conducted by the Universities In our colleges we conduct a four-year educational course A college student generally studies one single subject and for that purpose special emphasis is given to the use of the English language In spite of that English is not given primary importance in our system of National Education, it has the status of a second language A student must be able to stand on his own, that somebody will carry him on his shoulder is never the objective of National Education Each one should support oneself and not helplessly look at others Self-reliance is the basic principle we keenly endeavour to establish in a student This is the line of approach we follow in Bengal We have absolutely no expectation of help from the government On the contrary, with government support the idea of National Education is likely to get weakened

Perhaps Hon Gokhale may now understand and appreciate what exactly we mean by National Education This may also make it clear why we intended to put a specific Resolution about National Education in the National Congress Committee at Surat I have put before you what has been done in Bengal If you are keen to

know more about it, I suggest you visit us Those who have doubts in their minds that National Education is an impossibility, for them we throw a challenge that they should witness its accomplishments in Bengal Let them come and confirm it for themselves National Education in a National way and under National supervision is what we have initiated in Bengal In this respect three Zamindars have helped us in a great way Raja S C. Malik donated a lakh of rupees, the Maharaja of Mymensingh three lakhs and a Zamindar from Gorakhpur five lakhs When they offered these donations, they put a condition that they would take back the entire sum if we should accept even a single paisa from the government The reason is that, when the government spends money on education, it does so with the specific intention of creating a certain kind of attitude in the minds of the students That attitude is nothing but an implied faithfulness to the government Generally the government has the intention of introducing public reforms primarily to make the functioning of the government smooth

[N.B. During his hectic political days Sri Aurobindo visited different parts of Maharashtra and delivered lectures. Six of them were recorded and compiled in Marathi by Hari Raghunath Bhagawat, an editor and publisher from Pune The book entitled *Sryut Aravind Ghose Yānchi Mahārāshtrāul Vyākhyāne* was printed in Mumbai's Jagadishwar Press in 1908, priced Annas 3 It also presents a brief biography of Sri Aurobindo up to that time The original English text of the lectures is not available and it appears that Bhagawat has presented only their thematic contents The speech delivered by Sri Aurobindo in Bombay explains the ideal of National Education as propounded by him which has a certain pertinence even in the present context Its rendering made here is from Bhagawat's account ]

## BANDE MATARAM

वन्दे मातरम् ।

सुजला सुफला मलयज-शीतलाम्

शस्य-श्यामला मारतम् ॥

शुभ्र-ज्योत्सना-पुलकित-यामिनीम्

फुल्ल-कुसुमित-द्रुमदल-शोभिनीम्,

सुहासिनी सुमधुर-भाषिणीम्,

सुखदा वरदां मातरम् ॥

सप्तकोटि-कण्ठ-कलकल-निनाद-कराले,

द्विसप्तकोटि-भुजैर्धृत-खरकरवाले,

अबला केन मा एत बले ।

बहुबल-धारिणी नमामि तारिणीम्  
रिपुदल-वारिणी मातरम् ॥

तुमि विद्या तुमि धर्म,  
तुमि हृदि तुमि मर्म,  
त्वं हि प्राणाः शरीरे ।  
बाहुते तुमि मा शक्ति,  
हृदये तुमि मा भक्ति,  
तोमारइ प्रतिमा गडि मन्दिरे मन्दिरे ।

त्वं हि दुर्गा दशप्रहरण-धारिणी  
कमला कमल-दल विहारिणी  
वाणी विद्यादायिनी नमामि त्वाम्  
नमामि कमलाम् अमलाम् अतुलाम्  
सुजला सुफला मातरम्,  
वन्दे मातरम् ।  
श्यामलां सरलां सुस्मिता भूषिताम्  
धरणी भरणी मातरम् ॥

Bankimchandra Chatterjee

### HYMN TO THE MOTHER

Mother, I bow to thee!  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
Cool with thy winds of delight,  
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,  
Mother free

Glory of moonlight dreams  
Over thy branches and lordly streams,—  
Clad in thy blossoming trees,  
Mother, giver of ease,  
Laughing low and sweet!  
Mother, I kiss thy feet,  
Speaker sweet and low!  
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,  
 When the swords flash out in seventy million hands  
 And seventy million voices roar  
 Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?  
 With many strengths who art mighty and stored,  
 To thee I call, Mother and Lord!

Thou who savest, arise and save!  
 To her I cry who ever her foemen drave  
 Back from plain and sea  
 And shook herself free

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
 Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
 Thou the love divine, the awe  
 In our hearts that conquers death  
 Thine the strength that nerves the arm,  
 Thine the beauty, thine the charm  
 Every image made divine  
 In our temples is but thine

Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,  
 With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,  
 Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,  
 And the Muse a hundred-toned  
 Pure and perfect without peer,  
 Mother, lend thine ear  
 Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
 Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
 Dark of hue, O candid-fair  
 In thy soul, with jewelled hair  
 And thy glorious smile divine,  
 Loveliest of all earthly lands,  
 Showering wealth from well-stored hands!  
 Mother, mother mine!  
 Mother sweet, I bow to thee  
 Mother great and free!

Sri Aurobindo

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

(Continued from the issue of January 2001)

वीळु चिद् दळ्हा पितरो न उक्थैरद्रि रुजन्नङ्गिरसो रवेण ।  
चक्रुर्दिवो बृहतो गातुमस्मे अह स्वर्विविदुः केतुमुत्सा ॥

(Rigveda, 1 71 2)

Our fathers broke open the firm and strong places by their words, yea, the Angirasas broke open the hill by their cry, they made in us the path to the great heaven, they found the Day and Swar and vision and the luminous Cows (SABCL, Vol 10, p 191)

Our fathers by their words broke the strong and stubborn places, the Angiras seers shattered the mountain rock with their cry, they made in us a path to the Great Heaven, they discovered the Day and the sun-world and the intuitive ray and the shining herds (SABCL, Vol 11, p 59)

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

(Rigveda, 1 72 9)

they who entered into all things that bear right fruit formed a path towards the immortality, earth stood wide for them by the greatness and by the Great Ones, the mother Aditi with her sons came (or, manifested herself) for the upholding (SABCL, Vol 10, p 191)

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

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

दधन्नृत धनयन्नस्य धीतिमादिर्यो दिधिष्वोः विभृत्रा ।  
अतृष्यन्तीरपसो यन्त्यच्छा देवाञ्जन्म प्रयसा वर्धयन्ती ॥

(Rigveda, 1 71 3)

They held the truth, they enriched its thought; then indeed, aspiring souls (aryah), they, holding it in thought, bore it diffused in all their being (SABCL, Vol 10, p 192)



They held the Truth, they enriched the thought of this human being, then, indeed, had they mastery and understanding bearing wide the Flame, the powers at work go towards the gods making the Birth to grow by delight (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 59)

आदित् ते विश्वे क्रतु जुषन्त शुष्काद् यद् देव जीवो जनिष्ठा ।  
भजन्त विश्वे देवत्व नाम ऋत सपन्तो अमृतमेवै ॥

(Rigveda, 1 68 2)

Then indeed all accept and cleave to the Will (or the Work) when, O godhead, thou art born a living soul from the dryness (i e from the material being, the desert, as it is called, unwatered by the streams of the Truth), all enjoy godhead attaining to the truth and the immortality by their movements (*SABCL*, Vol 10, pp 192-93)

All cleave to thy will of works when, O God, thou art born a living being from dry matter All enjoy the Name, the Godhead, by thy movements they touch Truth and Immortality (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 55)

ऋतस्य हि धेनवो वावशाना स्मदूध्नी पीपयन्त युभक्ता ।  
परावत् सुमतिं भिक्षमाणा वि सिन्धव समया सखुरद्रिम् ॥

(Rigveda, 1 73 6)

The fostering cows of the Truth (*dhenavah*, an image applied to the rivers, while *gāvah* or *usrāh* expresses the luminous cows of the Sun) nourished him, lowing, with happy udders, enjoyed in heaven, obtaining right thinking as a boon from the supreme (plane) the rivers flowed wide and evenly over the hill (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 193)

The milch-cows of the Truth, enjoyed in heaven, full-uddered, desiring us, have fed us with their milk praying for right-thinking from the Beyond the Rivers flowed wide over the Mountain (*SABCL*, Vol 11, pp. 64-65)

स्वाध्यो दिव आ सप्त यद्ही रायो दुरो व्युतज्ञा अजानन् ।  
विदद् गव्य सरमा दृळ्हामूर्ध येना नु कं मानुषी भोजते विद् ॥

(Rigveda, 1 72 8)

The seven mighty ones of heaven, placing aright the thought, knowing the Truth, discerned in knowledge the doors of felicity, Sarama found the fastness, the wideness of the luminous cows, thereby the human creature enjoys the bliss (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 193)

The seven mighty Rivers from Heaven, deep-thinking, knowers of the Truth, knew the doors of the treasure, Sarama discovered the mass of the Ray-Cow, the strong

place, the wideness, and now by that the human creature enjoys bliss (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 63)

*(To be continued)*

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

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## VISION-CHANGE

I HAVE undergone a vision-change  
 And things once known are new again,  
 All within my mortal range  
 Transforms to view from a higher plane

Acts I abhorred as coarse and mean  
 Were gross impurities in me  
 But now by Her grace is dimly seen  
 In all the masked divinity.

All my human attitudes  
 Opinions and desirings  
 Before the stellar plenitudes  
 Of light Sri Aurobindo brings

Dissolve as salt in monsoon rain  
 As His peace descends into our being  
 A greater wideness we attain  
 And through Him reach that deeper seeing

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

Amal's comment: I think it is a fine poem, feelingly conveying to us the new way your eyes look at the world and at yourself

# LOVE FOR THE DIVINE

1 October 1969

About Mother's talk of 26 August 1953 on Love

*Mother, this power of Love that comes—it comes at times, one feels, one loves truly—but why is one not able to keep it constantly?*

ONE must have the power to keep it!

*I too think one must, but one is not able to keep it*

My child it is here constantly, constantly, whatever the body may be doing—whether seeing people or being busy with itself or sleeping—it is always, always there, conscious, vibrant I say, ‘It is possible’, it is a fact Only, what is needed ..what prevents it generally is that the physical consciousness in most men is very obscure; it is made only of the most material needs, desires, reactions But what is needed is to awaken in the cells the love for the Divine, it is always so, all the time, and it does not change, does not change any more It is even *much more* constant than any mental or vital movement, it is like this (*Mother closes both her fists*), it does not move The cells are all the while like this, in a state of love for the Divine What is most remarkable in the physical is that once it has learnt a thing it never forgets it The cells, once they have learnt it, this self-giving, this offering to the Divine, this *need* of self-offering, have learnt it for good, it does not flicker any more It is constant, twenty-four hours out of twenty-four, without stop and day after day, and there is no change Even if there be something that is not all right (either a pain or something else), the first movement, yes, it is that, it is to offer itself, give itself—spontaneously The higher consciousness does not intervene It is spontaneous, it is the consciousness contained in the cells It is the vital and the mental that are unstable in that way (*gesture of zigzagging*) Particularly, particularly it is the vital that is interested in all sorts of things Naturally, the two are interdependent

The ego must be abolished, the *rule* of the ego must be abolished But generally people believe that it is not possible to abolish the physical ego, not only is it possible, it has been *done* And the body continues, continues to walk about, it is not gone (there was a little difficult moment—but just a little)

Now the cells are wondering how it is at all possible to continue to exist without this movement of adoration They are like that (*gesture of intense aspiration*), everywhere, everywhere It is very interesting

All these difficulties that one has with the inner development when one is dealing with the vital and the mental, the revivals of old things and all that, now here (in the body) are gone, it is not like that

(Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol 11, pp 189-90)

## THE AUROBINDONIAN POET

THERE IS nobody who writes poems, however tentatively, but is guided by a vision of what the poet should truly do. What would be the conviction of the singer who has turned mystic and come under the influence of the greatest Master of mysticism to-day, Sri Aurobindo, and consecrated himself to "the One whom the sages call by a hundred names"?

In all poetry the function of the highest sound is to instil in the listener a deep silence full of mysterious meanings and enchantments. The Aurobindonian practitioner of song seeks to leave his listener rapt, spellbound, dazzled into the sudden blissful awareness of a wondrous Beauty which eludes normal perception, a high-uptifted Beauty sustaining magically the cosmic process and expressing itself in it by degrees. His poetry is the unfolding of what he feels to be the enraptured Knowledge which corresponds to that Beauty in its adventure in the cosmos. It is written as if by a fiery pencil of rays from an occult Consciousness which has intended Matter, Life and Mind to arrive, through the hidden Soul in things, at an evolutionary expression of that Truth of themselves which is already existent in a defici Supermind as a perfect harmony of ideal realities constituting the Beauty of which they are vague prefigurations.

Even an agnostic poet cannot doubt that the poetic impulse in him is the shadow thrown before its time by a great illumination awaiting the groping drive of Nature, so that, fully conscious, she may—in Hardyian phrase—"fashion all things fair". But to believe that this illumination will be the display of what Nature always is in her covert being is the essence of the Aurobindonian poet's faith. To him, the procession of events has, perpetually, the vast and flawless background of a creative aesthetic Sense—a background of divine dreams of which the surface of reality becomes aware in artistic personalities like his own but which is none the less real behind everything. For, he is only a brilliant concentration of the Power which manifests everywhere, a child of the one universal Mother, inwardly inseparable, as his most passionate experience tells him, from the rest of Her family. His soul burns in him like a spark thrown up by the same divine Fire which is at work in the universe and which the Vedic initiates hymned as Agni the Conscious Force of the Infinite, the Lord of the Flame labouring through many physical births to image in them the empyrean of His original being. From that empyrean He looks down eternally, on His own progressive manifestation, as Surya the Sun of Bliss in which the traffic of this lower status puts on the gold of its supernal destiny.

Hence the Aurobindonian poet recognises within himself the Lord of the Flame into whose creative beatitude he incessantly steepes his imagination by surrendering his conscious being to the spontaneities of mystical love and by contacting through the intuition of the aesthetic unity of the world a common spiritual foundation, to himself and his environment, of a multiple yet unified glory presiding over the inferior phenomenon of the Spirit's hide-and-seek with Itself. The perception grows

in him of the various phases of the earth-play. There is an involution and coiling up of the divinity in the crude energy of Matter; then a partial unveiling in the nervous groping of Life after the sense of its own enthusiasms of organic formation, later a clearer emergence in the reasoned activities and refined aspirations of Mind, and lastly a culmination in the leap of that mysterious something we call Soul towards the Ideal which it glimpses as the significance and purpose of all this graded evolution. By an unwearied response of worship to the touch, from behind everything, of an immortal Beloved, the Aurobindonian poet awakens more and more to the reaches of the luminous Seer-Will which moves him to oracular ecstasy, and learns that It carries Itself on the breath of Its own omnipotent zest through innumerable voluntary obscurations and anomalies in order only to lay bare the transcendent grandeurs of Its being in the terms of a greatest initial imperfection.

Instinct with that sublime aim, he practises a constant rapport or Yoga with this Holy of Holies till the Truth-Consciousness one day will suffuse his self and nature and build in him a world of revelatory language with the mystical experience of the ultimate concourse of events as its guiding in-tone. He is in direct hieratic line with the Vedic bards who kindled of old the esoteric track to "the Sun-heaven of Day and Vision and the Herds of Radiance." But he knows that they did not completely accomplish their ideal of manifesting the supramental in the earth-life, and that just this magnificent failure was responsible for the later intransigent note in Indian spirituality: this spirituality, seeing the difficulty of transmuting Matter into Spirit-stuff, insisted on finally relinquishing the body and escaping "through the gates of the Sun to where the eternal Being wastes not nor perishes." A pilgrim of perfection, he belongs "not to the dawns of the past but to the noons of the future" and seeks to bring down a far more comprehensive truth than has yet been realised by the physical consciousness. He is a striver after the *incarnation*, both in life and in Art, of the Word that was in the Beginning—that is to say, he seeks for the conversion even of the body into an echoing form and instrument of its own counterpart of supramental Truth in that Divine Substance, of which Matter is the last aspect in the hierarchy of manifestation.

In this connection, his most penetrating intuition is that, if the supramental is the plane of the Truth-harmony, then surely in that perfect play of the One in the Many and the Many in the One, which alone can be the ideal reality of this unity-in-diversity that is our cosmos, there must be a centre, as it were, round which the motifs of the whole play are organised, a centre which gives it its fulness of many-sided yet single purpose and the distinct incarnation of which would be the Divine made flesh in a superlative sense. That superlative sense strikes him as in fact the meaning of Krishna and Radha in the Indian devotional religions to which he is irresistibly drawn not only by the heart's need, prophetic of a divinised mankind of the future, to contemplate the Eternal *sub specie humanitatis*, but also as if by the memory of a past life in the woods of Vrindavan where the archetypal play was first given an earthly symbolism. Krishna and Radha represent to him the *buene* nature of all divinity—the

Being and Power of Becoming—which would be figured in the economy of earth-evolution as Male and Female, so that, corresponding to the Lord or God-Self and the Infinite Mother or God-Energy, there would always be side by side with the Lord incarnate His creative aspect, the incarnate Mother His fundamentally spiritual imagination leads the Aurobindonian poet to believe in a special series of human vehicles prepared through the ages by the Divine for the progressive dual incarnation of Its own central motif over and above the others meant to embody the various ancillary movements of the original harmony

But, since even in the sacred idyll of Vrindavun the body was not totally transformed, his aspiration looks forward to a still greater efflorescence of what Krishna and Radha descended to show as far as Yogic conditions made possible then He cannot, therefore, but turn in these days towards Pondicherry where for the first time the body-transformation is being consciously attempted as the *grand finale* of what Sri Aurobindo has called the Integral Yoga This Yoga embraces all life and work in order to make everything the mould for a faultless expression of the highest Seer-Will, the dynamism of a supreme Consciousness beyond the mind

Thus the Aurobindonian poet will be not merely an unworthy leaf tossed about by celestial winds, nor will his poetry be an instrument of forces which will work through him by passing inspirations It will be a commentary on the consistent sainthood of his personality, on the divine way he will carry himself, the godlike way he will repose, the inexpressible way he will be silent It will represent the rhythm of an inner life by which the meaning of the universe will be unfolded in the individual, and be the record of a psychic process by which, to put it mystically, Darkness will behold itself as Light divinely self-concealed for the perilous joy of being humanly self-discovered

AMAL KIRAN  
(K D SETHNA)

Originally written 11 5 1930

Revised 14 8 1965

## WHAT WE MUST DO NOW

We must try to

- 1 Do our work as properly and as perfectly as we can
2. Develop our mind, life and body, with proper culture and study, to the maximum of their possibilities
- 3 Keep a constant contact with our psychic being by Japa, prayer, meditation or simply by remembering
- 4 Keep ourselves open upward so that when the higher forces come down, they can enter into us and do their work
- 5 Remain quietly happy all the time

As learnt from Mother

18.10 2000

PRANAB KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

## OVERMIND AESTHESIS

WHEN in the 1940s Sri Aurobindo was extensively revising *Savitri* and giving to it the final shape, he also took some time off for writing detailed letters or notes to explain the various criticisms that were levelled on certain aspects of his poetry, particularly his *magnum opus*. During this period some texts were sent to Amal Kiran at his request when, at that time, he was staying in Bombay. He used to raise several literary or technical points and seek elucidation from the Master. About this correspondence between them Nirodbaran writes as follows. Sri Aurobindo's "long answers and illuminating self-commentary on his own poetry dictated at this time, consumed much of our time but we could see from the reply how Sri Aurobindo welcomed such remarks from Amal whom he had prepared in the art of poetry. No one except Amal, or perhaps Arjava had he lived, could have talked with Sri Aurobindo almost as equals on English poetry and drawn out many intricate movements on rhythm, overhead poetry, etc., which are now a permanent treasure in English literature." We should indeed be quite thankful to Amal Kiran for these invaluable letters most of which now form the *Letters* section of *Savitri*. After completing *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo actually intended to write a long introduction to it but it never happened. These letters with their tone of informality, at the same time possessing an inspired professional tightness, serve that purpose of the introduction well. In this mode the writer can, dispossessing pedantism, present his point of view in a more intuitive way to the perceptive reader who has also the necessary background to understand and appreciate its nuances and subtleties. The correspondence is undoubtedly of rare literary eminence forming "a great poet's informal self-commentary."<sup>2</sup>

About the overhead note in poetry and particularly the nature of overmind aesthesis we have a number of expressive revelations made by Sri Aurobindo in his 1946 letter written to Amal Kiran. We shall first briefly summarise these in the following. One significant character of overmind poetry is that there is something behind it which comes from the cosmic self that puts us also in direct contact with that greater consciousness. There is a wide and happy globality in it which luminously comprehends the play of multiplicity in the creative delight of the one in its relationship with all. A language that has its joy of the beautifully true has also the power to express that true beautifully. "there is always an unusual quality in the rhythm often in the very building and constantly in the intonation and the association of sounds linked together by a sort of inevitable felicity. There is also an inspired selection or an unusual bringing together of words which has the power to force a deeper sense on the mind." The second characteristic is that the overmind "thinks in a mass, its thought, feeling, vision is high or deep or wide or all these things together it goes vast on its way to bring the divine riches, and it has a corresponding language and rhythm."<sup>3</sup>

Maintaining that the aesthesis is the very soul and essence of poetry, Sri



Aurobindo writes that it brings us a Rasa not only “of word and sound but also of the idea and, through the idea, of the things expressed by the word and sound and thought, a mental or vital or sometimes the spiritual image of their form, quality, impact upon us or even, if the poet is strong enough, of their world-essence, their cosmic reality, the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things”<sup>6</sup> In the overmental aesthesis Rasa and its enjoyment can get linked up with the Ananda that creates everything in this world

As the growing aesthetic enjoyment enters in, he further adds, in “the overhead planes the ordinary aesthesis turns into a pure delight and becomes capable of a high, a large or deep abiding ecstasy The ground is a spiritual ease and happiness upon which the special tones of the aesthetic consciousness come out or from which they arise . In the overmind we have a first firm foundation of experience of a universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight This universal aesthesis of beauty and delight draws a Rasa from them and with that comes the enjoyment, Bhoga, and the touch or the mass of the Ananda”<sup>7</sup> There is a completeness of the expression and of the sense of beauty, the truth of things and the underlying harmony become natural in that delight of creation

In another letter Sri Aurobindo writes “Overmind in all its dealings puts truth first, it brings out the essential truth (and truths) in things and also its infinite possibilities When it speaks through poetry, this remains its first essential quality”<sup>8</sup> These considerations demand a certain kind of readiness on the part of the writer in order to receive that overhead inspiration It is not that he should be a spiritual person but perhaps that can extend to him the possibility of receiving such inspiration on a sustained basis There is also a sufficiently important demand as far as the recipient or the reader is concerned He too has to be quite alert to the moods and manners of that aesthesis

When the overmind word finds its natural expression we have the supreme Mantra with the power to speak the Truth and give to that Truth the means to assert itself in life In the transmission of that word there has to be no distortion, no mutilation, no discordant element to take away its executive harmonies When received thus its metrical movement can set into motion newer worlds “In the system of the Mystics the Word is a power, the Word creates” We should also recognise that “the sacred mantras as symbolic of the rhythms in which the universal movement of things is cast”<sup>9</sup> are an ancient Vedic knowledge based on spiritual experience Indeed, the Sanskrit word Brahma also means the creative Word, the sacred and mystic syllable Om In its manifestive-expressive sense it connotes the Gayatri Mantra Thus it is in the dynamic breath of Gayatri as Chhanda-Devata, Goddess of the Metre, that the universe grows more and more in Light This transcendental Gayatri, the radiant Spouse of Brahma,<sup>10</sup> in Truth-movement the Force of the Supreme, comes to the evolutionary world and takes the name of Savitri, the Daughter of the Sun, she becomes the incarnate Word <sup>11</sup> It is she who upon the earth sets those ever-widening movements of Light into truth-rhythms The Symbol Dawn with which

Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* opens is actually the hour before the gods awake, the early dawn, *brahmaratra*, in which the manifestation is about to take place, a new creation is soon to begin, to get going. It will happen by the double action of Yajna and Mantra which recover the lost Sun of the Veda,<sup>12</sup> it will happen by the holy sacrifice and the affirmative will in creation, by Aswapati's Brahmic tapasya and Savitri's assertive Truth-dynamism.

In his exposition of the poetry of the future Sri Aurobindo writes about the Mantra as follows. It is "a direct and most heightened, an intensest and most divinely burdened rhythmic word which embodies an intuitive and revelatory inspiration and ensouls the mind with the sight and the presence of the very self, the inmost reality of things and with its truth and with the divine soul-forms of it, the Godheads which are born from the living Truth. Or, let us say, it is a supreme rhythmic language which seizes hold upon all that is finite and brings into each the light and voice of its own infinite."<sup>13</sup>

This is precisely what we have in *Savitri*. There is no doubt that it is by entering into that Mantra that we shall spiritually profit from it in the completest manner conceivable. Indeed "Savitri is a Song of Joy, the Spirit of Delight itself borne by the might of the Calm. It is the Mantra of the Real in whose body of Silence is enshrined the soul of Rapture, Ananda Rasa flowing in the ocean of Shanta Rasa."<sup>14</sup> In it is present "all that is needed to realise the Divine",<sup>15</sup>—the Divine not only in the radiant world, *divyaloka*, but also in the mortal world, *mrityuloka*. Thus when the truest and the widest sense of the overmind aesthesis arrives at this *satyamantra*, the Mantra of the Real, the Word of Truth-Revelation, then in the evolutionary everlast- ingness is also achieved at once the highest possible realisation.

R Y DESHPANDE

### References

- 1 *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, pp 190-91, see also the Mother's Talk to Mona Sarkar, *Perspectives of Savitri*, p 80
- 2 Note in the 1954 edition of *Savitri*, p 817
- 3 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 802-16, see also *Perspectives of Savitri*, pp 28-43
- 4 *Perspectives of Savitri*, pp 30-31
- 5 *Ibid*, p 32
- 6 *Ibid*, p 35
- 7 *Ibid*, pp 36-37
- 8 *Savitri*, p 743
- 9 *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10, p 258. See also *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, pp 366-70, 503, 510-11
- 10 *Savitri*, p 525
- 11 *Ibid*, pp 175, 693
- 12 *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol 10, p 147
- 13 *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, p 200
- 14 R Y Deshpande, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium*, p 178
- 15 *Perspectives of Savitri*, pp 45-46

# THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of January 2001)

## The House of the Spirit and the New Creation

*Savitri* looks towards the future, though its story is set in the distant past. It is concerned with the destiny of all mankind, though it has a small cast of characters and its main events seem to take place in remote isolation from the human world. But the cosmic scope of Sri Aurobindo's conception emerged gradually. It was only after 1926 that this poem began to occupy the central place among his works as the vehicle of his highest realisations and most prophetic visions.

"The House of the Spirit and the New Creation" is among the most important cantos in this respect. Here the Yoga of Aswapati ceases altogether to be an individual Sadhana and becomes a quest for the manifestation of a new world. The middle sections of this canto began to take shape in the late 1920s. Along with other revision of what grew into the present Book Three, these passages gave a more far-reaching significance to Savitri's birth and mission in fulfilment of the Divine Mother's boon to Aswapati. This change would be reflected in Sri Aurobindo's rewriting of the later books of the epic when he eventually returned to them in the 1940s.

After Aswapati has the vision of the Divine Mother "as in a thunder-flash of God"<sup>1</sup> (Book Three, Canto Two), he undergoes a "last and mightiest transformation"<sup>2</sup> in the first section of the next canto. His sense of separate being is abolished, even his physical consciousness is universalised and he is prepared to experience the supramental consciousness.

In the third and fourth sections of Book Three, Canto Three, Sri Aurobindo describes what we can understand to be the future supramental creation. It is called "a world to be",<sup>3</sup> indicating that from a temporal standpoint, it is in the future. In another sense we must take it to be already in existence, "eternal in unrealised Time",<sup>4</sup> otherwise Sri Aurobindo as Aswapati could not have participated in its tremendous movements which are evoked with such an overwhelming sense of reality. Neither the word "supermind" nor its equivalent "gnosis" occurs in Book Three, though a "vast Truth-Consciousness"<sup>5</sup> is referred to. But nothing short of the supramental can be meant by lines such as these:

Incalculable outflowing infinitudes  
Laughing out an unmeasured happiness  
Lived their innumerable unity<sup>6</sup>

According to Sri Aurobindo, infinity is the very stuff of the supramental consciousness, whose nature is an inalienable unity expressed in illimitable diversity.

Thus it differs in a subtle but important way from overmind,

for the overmind knows the One as the support, essence, fundamental power of all things, but in the dynamic play proper to it it lays emphasis on its divisional power of multiplicity <sup>7</sup>

Close parallels can be found if one compares passages about the supermind in Sri Aurobindo's later writings with lines depicting the "new and marvellous creation" in Book Three, Canto Three of *Savitri*

In the penultimate chapter of *The Life Divine*, for instance, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the inseparable relation in the supermind between what to the mind are pairs of opposites, such as oneness and diversity

Our mental rendering of oneness brings into it the rule of sameness, but the greatest richness of diversity in the self-expression of oneness would be the law of the gnostic life <sup>8</sup>

Evidently, it is to this characteristic of the supramental or gnostic existence that Sri Aurobindo refers in these lines in *Savitri*

There Oneness was not tied to monotone,  
It showed a thousand aspects of itself <sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the supramental relation between the individual being and the totality is captured in a concise formula in *Savitri*:

Each soleness inexpressibly held the whole <sup>10</sup>

Sri Aurobindo elaborates on this in *The Life Divine*

The gnostic existence and delight of existence is a universal and total being and delight, and there will be the presence of that totality and universality in each separate movement. In each there will be, not a partial experience of self or a fractional bit of its joy, but the sense of the whole movement of an integral being and the presence of its entire and integral bliss of being, Ananda <sup>11</sup>

The "sense of the whole movement of an integral being" in each apparently separate person is expressed in the same passage in *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo says that "all were being's secret integers" <sup>12</sup> and that each

Recognised in himself the universe <sup>13</sup>

The presence of an ‘entire and integral bliss of being’ in every individual is likewise conveyed in the most vivid possible terms

A splendid centre of infinity’s whirl  
 Pushed to its zenith’s height, its last expanse,  
 Felt the divinity of its own self-bliss  
 Repeated in its numberless other selves <sup>14</sup>

In the final version of *Savitri*, this description of the supramental consciousness and supramental creation, including mind, life and matter in their supramentalised forms, is the culmination of Aswapati’s ascent through the planes of being. However, this passage began to appear in the manuscripts of the poem at a stage when there was almost no hint of what is now ‘The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds’. Though ‘The Book of the Divine Mother’ is the shortest book in Part One, it is the most essential of the first three books both for the story and for the deeper meaning of the epic. The passages that constitute it were among the first to receive Sri Aurobindo’s concentrated attention when he came back to *Savitri* after 1926 and began to express through it some glimpses, at least, of the highest knowledge he had attained, so far as that was possible through the medium of human speech.

The facsimile shows a page of the second version of ‘The Book of Birth’. It was in the manuscript preceding this one that Sri Aurobindo, some time in the late 1920s, substituted ‘The Book of Birth’ for ‘Quest’ as the title of the first book and shifted the last section of ‘Quest’ to the beginning of the second book, ‘The Book of Love’. The version of ‘The Book of Birth’ seen here occupies thirty-five pages in a notebook with thirty-four ruled lines on a page. Thus its length was a little less than 1200 lines, before revision. Sri Aurobindo himself counted the lines and wrote ‘1171’ at the end. He used the front sides of the pages for this version and the back sides for his next version.

The first five pages of this version correspond to ‘The Symbol Dawn’ and ‘The Issue’ in the finished poem. Then come three pages that would grow ultimately into ‘The Yoga of the King’ (Book One, Cantos Three and Five). At the end of this passage are a few lines on the Overmind that are now found on the last page of Book Two. The next thirteen pages are an early form of what we know as ‘The Book of the Divine Mother’, passages corresponding to ‘The Vision and the Boon’, now the last canto of Book Three, account for nine of these pages. The remaining fourteen pages of the manuscript deal with the subject matter of the first three cantos of the printed Book Four, justifying the title, ‘The Book of Birth’.

The page reproduced in this issue is the last page before the beginning of what corresponds to ‘The Vision and the Boon’. In fact, some lines related to the opening of that canto are found at the bottom of the large manuscript page. They have been omitted from the facsimile to avoid the need for further reduction from the actual size. The figures ‘364-399’ in the upper left corner of the page are Sri Aurobindo’s

364-399

(10) A <sup>metaphor of the</sup> ~~small~~ <sup>small</sup> ~~entity~~ <sup>entity</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~embrace~~ <sup>embrace</sup> ~~change,~~  
 A <sup>step</sup> ~~step~~ <sup>two</sup> ~~two~~ <sup>branches</sup> ~~branches~~ <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>its</sup> ~~its~~ <sup>play</sup> ~~play <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>space</sup> ~~space~~  
 (11) A <sup>small</sup> ~~small~~ <sup>entity</sup> ~~entity~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>no</sup> ~~no <sup>boundaries</sup> ~~boundaries~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>unconcerned</sup> ~~unconcerned <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>time.</sup> ~~time.~~  
 But the <sup>vision</sup> ~~vision~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>left</sup> ~~left <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the <sup>world</sup> ~~world~~~~~~~~~~~~

(3) All things were held back in their formless seed;  
 Its motion was around him or within;  
 (4) The world was silent for a cyclic hour

Its heart lay somewhere conscious and alone  
 In the illumined tracts of trance  
 Immovable with excess of changeless will  
 It lay like a dumb soundless oratory

Extinction could not quench that lonely fire  
 The close was satisfied with quietude  
 This only knew there was a fault beyond  
 It shined with the intensity of a bliss

In which some white tranquility is the key  
 It passed through life's huge emptiness  
 It looked for the footsteps of its hopes  
 Returning through the void immensities  
 It waited for the feet of the Word

That comes through our still self from the Supreme

25

Spot in the tail station he had  
 The world was silent for a cyclic hour  
 Its heart lay somewhere conscious and alone  
 In the illumined tracts of trance  
 Immovable with excess of changeless will  
 It lay like a dumb soundless oratory  
 Extinction could not quench that lonely fire  
 The close was satisfied with quietude  
 This only knew there was a fault beyond  
 It shined with the intensity of a bliss  
 In which some white tranquility is the key  
 It passed through life's huge emptiness  
 It looked for the footsteps of its hopes  
 Returning through the void immensities  
 It waited for the feet of the Word  
 That comes through our still self from the Supreme

metaphor of the  
 small entity  
 step two branches  
 small entity with no boundaries  
 vision is left in the world  
 motion was around him or within  
 world was silent for a cyclic hour  
 heart lay somewhere conscious and alone  
 illumined tracts of trance  
 immovable with excess of changeless will  
 lay like a dumb soundless oratory  
 extinction could not quench that lonely fire  
 the close was satisfied with quietude  
 this only knew there was a fault beyond  
 shined with the intensity of a bliss  
 in which some white tranquility is the key  
 passed through life's huge emptiness  
 looked for the footsteps of its hopes  
 returning through the void immensities  
 waited for the feet of the Word  
 comes through our still self from the Supreme

Thought ideal, its immensity  
 with the rest with quietude  
 It was the only point  
 The world was silent for a cyclic hour

count of the lines, which did not include most of what he inserted between the lines and in the margins

At the top of the page is the end of a passage depicting Aswapati's attainment of a state of supracosmic liberation in which he experiences the immutable peace and limitless oneness of the Spirit. But this realisation, however great and necessary, could not in itself be the consummation he was seeking. An individual liberation, leaving the world to its fate, was not his aim. The aspiration of his heart remains unfulfilled and persists until its call is answered.

Even before Sri Aurobindo began to revise this page, it already expressed a central aspect of his Yoga in lines of exceptional beauty, a number of which remain in the same or almost the same form in the finished poem. What is most significant is that the persistence of the heart's call after the spiritual release is not represented as a mere tie to the lower nature or a remnant of ignorance. On the contrary, the heart can point to a dynamic Truth which even the enlightened and liberated mind may miss.

All else was satisfied with quietude,  
This only knew there was a Truth beyond

These lines, whose wording has not changed in the final text, are found two-thirds of the way down the page in the facsimile. Below them Sri Aurobindo inserted in the margin

Thought dead, its changeless faith remained and grew

Later he would alter "faith remained" to "force abode". Three more lines, written in the margin below this, evoke the sense of urgency the purified heart can contribute to the spiritual aspiration, hastening the divine advent.

The rest could wait through the uncounted years  
The coming it had prayed for man and earth,  
This was the ardent point that called her now

By the mid-1940s this sentence had been amplified to its present form, with "ardent" strengthened to "fiery" in the last line.

All other parts were dumb in centred sleep  
Consenting to the slow deliberate Power  
Which tolerates the world's error and its grief,  
Consenting to the cosmic long delay,  
Timelessly waiting through the patient years  
Her coming they had asked for earth and men,  
This was the fiery point that called her now<sup>15</sup>

The passage on Aswapati's heart existed in a less developed form even in manuscripts written before 1920. There the image of the oratory, with its "consecrated argent floor" lit by a single ray, is already found. But the intensity this passage acquired by the late 1920s seems to reflect Sri Aurobindo's discovery, announced in *The Mother*, that the transformation he envisaged could be effected only by the conjunction of "a fixed and unflinching aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers"<sup>16</sup>. Put in another way, this passage brings out eloquently the role of the psychicised heart, whose "moved tranquillity"<sup>17</sup> is needed in the integral Yoga as much as the wideness and height of the spiritualised mind.

For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the Siddhi<sup>18</sup>.

But the page seen in the facsimile is of the greatest interest mainly for another reason. Two lines inserted near the top of the page mark the introduction of a radically new element, making this page a turning-point in the composition of *Savitri*. These lines would develop eventually into the sections that give the third canto of Book Three its title, "The House of the Spirit and the New Creation".

The new creation did not break forth all at once in its full glory, but took some twenty years to manifest its perfection in the pages of *Savitri*. Only the beginning of this process will be shown here. Before Sri Aurobindo began his revision of the page in question, the lines at the bottom of the previous page and the top of this page were written as follows:

He felt the extinction of the long world-pain,  
 He joined the sessions of Infinity  
 Companioned only by the all-seeing One,  
 He abode defended in his shoreless spirit,  
 Mind without borders unconvinced of Time  
 All things were held back in their formless seed,  
 No motion was around him or within,  
 The world was silent for a cyclic hour

Originally, Sri Aurobindo juxtaposed this spiritual liberation directly with the psychic flame, proceeding at once to the heart whose fire "extinction could not quench".

Yet in this abolition and release  
 There still was left a tie, a distant breath,  
 All had not ceased in the unbounded hush  
 Far down below him like a lamp in night  
 His heart lay somewhere conscious and alone



In the illimitable tracts of trance  
 Immobile with excess of changeless will,  
 It lay like a dim soundless oratory  
 Lit by a single and unflickering ray,  
 And an invisible presence knelt in prayer

The beginning of this passage was revised in several stages, whose sequence we need not attempt to reconstruct here in detail. The first line, "Yet in this abolition and release", was deleted Sri Aurobindo wrote it again in two or three forms below the line that had followed it, but these, too, were cancelled. Meanwhile, he had begun to use the right margin of the manuscript to draft a pair of new lines. There are two rejected, though uncanceled, versions of the one that was probably written first

But even so he was joined to multitudes

and

A will that linked him to life's multitudes ..

The word "multitudes" brought in an important idea and modified the image of the solitary heart appealing to the silent Spirit, but need not by itself have led to any momentous change. The words "joined" and "linked" suggest some kind of unity with these multitudes, but the nature of this connection or unity was not made clear.

It is near the top of the right margin of the page that the signs of a breakthrough are found. There Sri Aurobindo initially wrote

Then something in the oneness opened itself

He revised this in two or three steps to

But now the Oneness opened at its core

below which he wrote the other line in its final form

And joined him to unnumbered multitudes

Finally, these two lines were copied below "The world was silent for a cyclic hour"

The full significance of the insertion of these lines begins to become apparent only after further development of the passage in subsequent manuscripts. But in this manuscript itself, it is relevant to note Sri Aurobindo's insertion of a line near the bottom of the previous page after "He joined the sessions of Infinity"

There he awaited his supernal change

This line has not remained in the final text, but its insertion in this manuscript is of interest in connection with the lines added on the next page. For in the passage that follows, all is silent and motionless until the Oneness opens at its core and joins Aswapati to numberless multitudes. It is evidently this that is meant by a "supernal change." In the terminology of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, this phrase would apply most naturally to the supramental change.

At first, there seems to be no question of a new creation. There is only a new awareness of the old creation, bringing an inner unity with its beings as parts of a single all-embracing Oneness. The consciousness that can dynamically relate the One to the Many and the Many to the One is the supermind. Bringing in this consciousness at the moment when Aswapati's gaze turns back towards the earth, Sri Aurobindo explains how, after the consciousness of the One has been achieved, there can be a return to the consciousness of the Many without a relapse into ignorance and bondage.

Since the supermind can manifest an infinite multiplicity without losing hold of the infinite oneness, the fundamental problem of world-existence is solved in principle by this discovery. The inevitable consequence is the possibility of a Truth-creation which, according to Sri Aurobindo, can and must descend into and transform the present creation in the Ignorance. There remains the question of how this can be brought about. This is the subject of the next canto, "The Vision and the Boon", and is worked out in more detail in the rest of *Savitri*.

The vision of the new creation begins to emerge clearly in the manuscripts of the poem after two or three more versions of "The Book of Birth." We find an initial expression of it in these lines:

Then suddenly there was a downward gaze,  
 And like a sea exploring its own depths  
 The living Oneness opened at its core  
 And joined him to unnumbered multitudes  
 Another more sublime creation rose  
 Worlds where the being is unchained and wide,  
 Ineffably revealed their timeless course,  
 Tread of the unlocked eternal energies,  
 Rapture of the beatific ecstasy  
 Unrolled their cosmic measures without flaw,  
 In the indivisible vision that unites  
 He felt the rhythms of a sorrowless Will  
 And movements of interminable delight,  
 The bliss of a myriad myriads who are one

(*To be continued*)

*References*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>Savitri</i> (1993), p 315                   | 10 <i>Ibid</i>                            |
| 2 <i>Ibid</i> , p 318                            | 11 <i>The Life Divine</i> , p 977         |
| 3 <i>Ibid</i> , p 330                            | 12 <i>Savitri</i> , p 324                 |
| 4 <i>Ibid</i> , p 46                             | 13 <i>Ibid</i> , p 323                    |
| 5 <i>Ibid</i> , p 326                            | 14 <i>Ibid</i>                            |
| 6 <i>Ibid</i> , p 323                            | 15 <i>Ibid</i> , p 332                    |
| 7 <i>Letters on Yoga</i> , SABCL, Vol 22, p 244  | 16 <i>The Mother</i> , SABCL, Vol 25, p 1 |
| 8 <i>The Life Divine</i> , SABCL, Vol 19, p 1010 | 17 <i>Savitri</i> , p 332                 |
| 9 <i>Savitri</i> , p 324                         | 18 <i>The Mother</i> , p 141              |

**I AM ONE OF THEM**

I SEE them moving forward,  
 Many they are,  
 Some walk with difficulty,  
 Some limp,  
 Others sit on wheel-chairs,  
 Others and others,—  
 I am one of them  
 Defined ‘‘handicapped’’,  
 Sometimes without any hope, so said,  
 Just the death  
 Oh small human mind!  
 Moulded by an unknown hand  
 Assigned to marvellous and joyful work  
 Of Infinite Love,  
 Like blossoms  
 Waiting to spring up  
 Through the long and hard work  
 We keep on doing  
 Nothing restrains us  
 The discovery of great worlds,  
 Joy and Love  
 Oh our guide  
 Towards Perfection!

SUSMITA (Maddalena)

## FEBRUARY 21ST

ON the above date in 1878 the earth received in its bosom the female child that was destined to become the manifestation and embodiment of the Divine Shakti. The power, creatrix, Sri Aurobindo's companion who, sacrificing the heavens for a mortal birth, came that she might ensure the fulfilment of his Supreme Endeavour, the supramentalisation of the earth nature. She was destined in the earth drama of evolution to play the role of Prakriti with him as Purusha. She who is the mediator between his light and the human consciousness bringing the Force to the disciple who in the early stages of the sadhana at least could not bear Its light or power. And as the seeker enters more and more into the divine awareness it is she who protects him on the path, she who leads him to the feet of the Master, her wisdom and sweetness that guide him in his action, her Charm and Ananda that call him ever on the path towards the Light.

Her ways and movements are as sunlight playing upon rippling waters, her moods impossible for the mind of man to follow, yet she has chosen to approach us on this earth as a mortal, and bound herself to the laws of ignorance. If our beloved Master had to make, through the supreme gesture, the last sacrifice for humanity—yet it was to leave with her the divine assurance that his sacrifice would not be in vain. If it had to be that only he could pay the price for the ignorant suffering and weakness of humanity, then he made sure that she would remain a physical contact to bear the rest of the world's burden for us on earth, leaving him free to work for a different orientation. For she is that other part of himself that can attend in detail to the earthly difficulties that still obstruct the full passage of the divine Light, and it is she who by her own Light and Power will take away these difficulties from the earth consciousness.

It is the Birthday of this individuality of the Mother that we honour today—may the whole world, through us who have been fortunate to have come near her, offer up to the Divine our infinite gratitude, for as he says in His epic *Savitri*

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,  
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil,  
Nature shall overleap her mortal step,  
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will

(*Savitri*, Book III, Canto IV, p. 346)

Sri Aurobindo has said

Her embodiment is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible. Afterwards there will be a further transformation by the Supramental, but the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised—there will be

first a new race representing the Supermind, as man represents the mind

13 8 1933

(*Mother India*, February 1960, p 1)

SRI Aurobindo's reply to a question by a disciple runs as follows

*Q Two days back I had felt a vast working all around preparing us to receive the great thing expected to descend on 21st February What is then the descent intended for the Mother's Birthday?*

*A Let the descent come when it can, 20th or 22nd or any other day of the month or year On the 21st only offer yourself to the Divine Mother and consecrate everything.*

17 2 1936

(*Mother India*, February 1958, p 1)

SRI Aurobindo has explained about the Darshan on February 21st, the Mother's Birthday

The best way for Darshan is to keep oneself very collected and quiet and open to receive whatever the Mother gives

12 2 1937

“The One whom we adore as the Mother is the Divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence ”

Such then is the Divine Creatrix, the Supreme Mother of All, who in the words of the Vedic Seers commences and pervades all the worlds, extends herself far beyond the Heavens and far beneath the Earth, permeates and possesses the manifold Existence She by whose sole Power all breathes and lives, She whose origin is in the Waters of the Inner Ocean (*antahsamudra*), the profounds of the infinite '

To the Yogin who seeks to realise the truth of existence, to fulfil in himself the divine purpose in manifestation, as in this Yoga, it is incumbent that he awakens to Her and learns to open and surrender himself to the workings of Her Force for the accomplishment of what is indeed a superhuman task

SRI Aurobindo declares that it is the Divine Mother who renders possible this perfection in the human personality She has manifested Herself in four of her outstanding Personalities which are active in the Creation for the organisation, development and perfection of these very powers of the Cosmic Godhead These are the great Names —Maheshwari, the Goddess of Imperial Wisdom to whose trail open out splendours of Knowledge; Mahakali whose is the Strength that brooks no obstacle and whose is the Will that effectuates the Truth of Knowledge; Mahalakshmi, She from whom flow spontanieties of Beauty, Joy and Harmony, and, lastly, Mahasara-

swati, who presides over the detail of execution and the labour of perfection These are the Powers of the Divine Mother which are manifest in the cosmic field and which could be made immediately active and living in the person or individual in the measure of his self-opening and receptivity to Her Workings

### A BIRTHDAY MEDITATION BY THE MOTHER

Each day, each moment, must be an occasion for a new and completer consecration, and not one of those enthusiastic and trepidant consecrations, over-active, full of the illusion of the work, but a profound and silent consecration which need not be apparent, but which penetrates and transfigures every action Our mind, solitary and at peace, must rest always in Thee, and from this pure summit it must have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality, behind unstable and fugitive appearances

O Lord, my heart is purified from trouble and anguish, it is firm and calm, and it sees Thee in everything, and whatever the outer actions, whatever the circumstances the future has in store for us, I know that Thou alone livest, that Thou alone art real in Thy immutable permanence, and it is in Thee that we live

May there be peace upon all the earth

February 21, 1914

NILIMA DAS

### *Reference*

1 *Rig Veda*, X 125

## A LETTER FROM VILNIUS

DEAR NIROD-DA,

I have got a message from Mr Deshpande in which he informed me that you are well. I hope that my letters are not too great a burden to you. For me the very possibility to write to you is very important. I've gone through a very crucial stage in my life. This summer I've spent a month in a beautiful place near the lake. I was contemplating wonders of nature, reading many books and making an account of my past 10 years. I've seen in detail what—and why—has happened to me. After this I was able to say to myself: "It is already the past. Let's forget it and live now, with a new consciousness." As soon as I realised the facts, they seemed to vanish. Even more, some fundamental change took place in my inner being. I am sure of some kind of inner realisation, because the world around me is the same, but my response has changed dramatically. I feel no more depression in my heart in spite of seemingly tough circumstances. Nothing can touch the inner calm which has been established, I don't know in what miraculous way. All reactions to the outside world remain behind some invisible wall, they are like waves on a surface. My heart is immovable. The past with its childish longings, wanting security, depending psychologically on others, injured emotions and broken hopes has died to me. I don't know how exactly it happened, but it is the truth. I understood that the time had come at last to be courageous enough *to be what I really am*, that means to live according to the inner truth. From my childhood I was open and had glimpses of self-awareness. But it was too unusual to show it to others. I was too shy, I had to hide it under the stupid curtain of young age, the girl being like a toy in the hands of loving parents and teachers. I realise now that I was not at all a small child in my inner being. At the class meetings recently our teacher showed us the writings we used to do at school. Those of mine do not differ much from the articles I am publishing now. My hard task was to remove the influences which had an imprint on my character, behaviour, etc. All this is, I must regret, the work of karma. We have to struggle for a long time in order to get rid of what was put on us by birth. Curiously enough, I feel in myself a warrior waking up. No more naiveness, it says, no more waste of time, no more self-deceiving. In short, with an indifferent and slightly humourous eye I went through my unhappy relations with my close people. It must have been a great joke of some higher reality which pushed me towards my relatives. In fact, it all embodied that merciless fate which methodically, step by step, crushed all my illusions, many times doing the opposite to what I was expecting. Very clever way, I must say. Some think I was worthy of the brilliant life, some consider it was a mistake. But I know it was done on purpose. I don't rationalise, I know that some part of myself, something lingering in me participated in that experiment. Now it is over after almost 20 years.

To begin to see the reality as it is—isn't that a wonderful adventure?

By saying I had "glimpses of self-awareness", I mean only that I had the feeling of an inner light which is present in all of us. Now I became truly aware of it.

Everything can become conscious of it. What matter if it is a drop or a cup? In essence it is the same. It is like sculpture hidden in a stone. It is only a matter of mastery to chip off the unnecessary! Then why not take a tool which is given by the divine grace and become a successful sculptor?

I wish my path would be more straight than before. I must repeat that the very value of my experience lies in the *total disillusionment with worldly life*. The feeling of *vairāgya* I've always had in respect of rivalry, jealousy, etc. Now it is accompanied by growing understanding and compassion. My own imperfections, including the worst of them, *i.e.*, rigid attitudes regarding what is good and what is bad, and incapacity to understand their futility, are under the same torch-light. For me "good and bad" have changed into "true and false". That is, only by detached seeing I feel I can see what is true, and that seeing does not end in appreciating or disapproving. The *only* reality which has a meaning for me is the Reality hidden from me. Then why must I pretend it is not?

Dear Nirod-da, I hope you are not exhausted by reading my long letter. I want to tell you about a more evident experience I had somewhere towards the end of July. At that time I used to meditate late at night. Once I was sitting in the darkness with my eyes shut. As soon as I opened them, in the dark room near the window in the air appeared one small sparkling point. In a moment it split and formed itself into a flash of blue colour; it flashed across the whole room in a perfect straight line and disappeared near the opposite wall, right in the middle of it, under the portrait of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It took an instant, but as I was with my eyes open, I could see it easily. It moved about one metre in front of me. At first I thought it could be lightning—it could be so during that season. I stood up and looked through the window. No rain, no bolts, no storm, no thunder. After that I kept silent and proceeded meditating. It happened about midnight. From 12 to 3 a.m. I was sitting, the time had stopped. I thought I was sitting for 15 minutes.

I don't know what it was, that had visited me. But I was not too happy about such experiences, the next morning I came to know about my friend's death the previous night.

But the experience was too tangible, I still can see it.

Dear Nirod-da, I am finishing my letter. I gave you a cheerful picture of my inner development. But there is much hard work left to be done in the subconscious, many things to be cleared up. I still don't know *how to deal with* those unpleasant imprints, I can't control them. They still work on vital and physical planes. To clean the past from the mental plane is not enough. I can see the inner peace established in the centre of my being, in the heart, but it is surrounded by the vast sea of subconscious obscurity as well as what is coming from outside. The only thing to do is to watch indifferently what is happening to me, without any thought or judgment. But it would be much easier to push the movement if only I knew what it was and how it worked. The accumulation from the past is still here, and work is going on behind the veil. I suppose it must be a long and arduous task. So, the main achievement



meantime is intellectual transformation of attitude, which affects tremendously the behaviour and reactions and feelings towards *what is happening now* What still remains from the past, which is too complex to vanish in an instant, lies hidden somewhere, it is actually the “now” that matters as I do not fear to face what is coming to me But I must learn to let pass away the deeds of Maya Right now I believe that silent mind, *completely* silent mind is a transforming force in itself I have to make it permanent

Dear Nirod-da, what do you think about all that? I wish to hear from you  
 Congratulations on your birthday, Mama, I pray to God to keep you healthy  
 With much love and affection

DAIVA

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## OH, WHAT TO DO?

My boat lies still,  
 The wind has failed,  
 An empty sail my will

Far shines the shore,  
 The sun sinks fast—  
 I must get home before

The dark with all  
 Its drifting stars  
 May on my sailboat fall

Oh, what to do?  
 I call on You,  
 O Lord Reveal Your will!

My boat became thin silver,  
 The sail a veil of gold,  
 Blown by a wind from elsewhere  
 ‘This is My will, behold!’

On bottomless wild waters,  
 I, speeded by Your will,  
 To the shining shore that calls me  
 Now sail with all my skill

And should a storm assault me  
 To break my boat before  
 I step on Your land of glory,  
 I’ll swim to reach the shore

RUTH

(From the late poetess’s *Winged Words*, her last composition)

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## AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XII

### BIHARI-DA

I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you nobody, too?  
How dreary to be somebody!  
How public like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog!

EMILY DICKINSON

LONG I nurtured the thought of writing on Bihari-da I had in mind just his silent and simple way of life, and a chance hearing of a comment made by the Mother and lastly a second-hand appreciation of his Bengali poems (some of them rendered into song) I say 'second-hand' for I cannot read Bengali, so cannot comment on anyone's writing in that language But some Bengali friends assured me that they (poems) were of a very high order What really nagged me was the Mother's comment She said "He (Bihari) is one who has *never* troubled me!" It would seem, at first hearing, an innocent and a common enough remark But its echo, and a wee bit deeper thinking should stun us by the mountain of meaning it carries How many of us can claim this remark from Her? Moreover he never claimed it She showered it on him So, I thought that there must be some beauty of a butterfly wrapped in that cocoon of simplicity and silence It was at first difficult to unwrap this cocoon Not many knew much more about Bihari-da than I did, i.e. the outer wrapping Even his close associates said "*Bihari-da to nijer shambandhe kichchu baleyi ni*" (Bihari-da never talked about himself.) Only when I met Vishwajit, his friend, neighbour and "tormentor", did I glean a little something Then I came across a diary of his (Bihari-da's) That was a great windfall—or so I thought

I will try to do justice to this old friend—as far as I can—and leave the rest for each reader to find out for her/himself as to who Bihari-da was How far had he gone? where is he now? With these questions in mind I will quote later some pages from his diary (without corrections even in the spellings or constructions)

Now to get on with the story of Bihari-da I begin at the beginning.

Beharilal Barua was born into, it would seem, a poorish family in Chittagong (Chottogram—now in Bangladesh) in a town called Mukutnait on 29th of March 1909 (It is interesting that on the same date a few years later the Mother met Sri Aurobindo for the first time)

Bihari-da in his early youth was not very spiritually inclined nor did he know about Sri Aurobindo He was somewhat mixed up with a revolutionary group of young people He did not take a very active part The group was led by Manmohan

Dutta They were some of those involved in the famous ‘‘Chittagong Armoury Raid’’ (Bihari-da had already reached Pondy when the raid took place) Manmohan Dutta’s brother was Bihari-da’s teacher It was he who introduced Bihari-da to Sri Aurobindo He would take Bihari-da home and show him some books, talk about Sri Aurobindo. The seeds were sown To get to the study circle that had some books by Sri Aurobindo, Bihari-da had sometimes to foot it over two hills (wooded) to reach it and then walk back after dark

Bihari-da was in touch with the Ashram from the age of 16 He wrote to Sri Aurobindo and received the replies through Barin-da (Sri Aurobindo’s brother) But soon enough he felt the urge to leave everything (friends, family, etc) and come to Pondy. This was around the year 1929. The Mother had by now taken charge of the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo had retired (1926), and Nolini-da was the secretary Bihari-da wrote to the Mother about his intention of leaving home and family and seeking permission to join the Ashram. He was told through Nolini-da that he should take the consent of his guardian and then only come here Bihari-da on the pretext of going to Calcutta for a few days to seek a job (that’s what he told his parents) boarded a train straight for Pondicherry as destination and destiny. He did not even wait for the permission

Bihari-da arrived on 31st of July 1929, early morning, at the Pondicherry Railway station—15 days ahead of the August Darshan There was none to receive him He looked around and saw a strange-looking contraption on 4 wheels He discovered it was a ‘‘pousse-pousse’’ (French for ‘‘push-push’’), a local version of a rickshaw It was shaped more or less like a rickshaw—a bit more commodious The two front wheels were smaller than the two behind The axle of the front two swivelled by means of a long curved handle held by the passenger The motive force was a man behind the body of the vehicle, who just leaned his weight against a thick bar (often a beautiful brass one) The man could take it easy, close his eyes and leave to the passenger the bother of manoeuvring and safely reaching the address These, alas, are things of the past (There were hardly any faster vehicles to be met with—even bicycles were a rarity Only bullock carts were a threat, I suppose) In the late 40s there were still 4 or 5 pousse-pousses around, mostly owned by the well-to-do Then came the ‘‘front-wheel-drive’’ version (man as motive force) which pushed out of existence the ‘‘push-push’’, that was itself pushed out by the cycle-rickshaw now in turn threatened by the ‘‘auto-rickshaw’’ The craze for speed, a fast life-style, advancing technology seem to be the causes of all these extinctions. Now to come back to Bihari-da He talked to the pousse-pousse-walla—who talked to Bihari-da who understood nothing, but sat in the vehicle and took the ‘‘Danda’’ (as he recounted) into his hand The vehicle moved forward and Bihari-da was on his way. I don’t know who directed the carriage to its destination—Ashram—but Bihari-da did arrive

Bihari-da met Jotin-da—another native of Chittagong—who took him in, gave him a meal and took him to Barin-da Jotin-da was then (and till his last days)

incharge of the Garden Service Barin-da arranged for Bihari-da to meet the Mother

What did Bihari-da feel or experience when he saw the Mother for the first time? When asked, he was silent for a while, seemed to hesitate. Then he said that his mind was transported very high, very deep. His eyes were flooded by Her beauty—a Beauty he never imagined existed in this world. He had a similar experience when he met Sri Aurobindo (15th August 1929). I say “*met*” for, those fortunate 50-60 sadhaks were allowed, in those early days, to approach Him, to touch His feet. He would bless them too, placing His hand on the head. They could drown themselves in the flood of love and grace for an eternity of 3-4 minutes! Bhagirath must have done so in the days of yore when Ganga flowed down the matted locks of Shiva.

Bihari-da was given work in the garden under Jotin-da. He was later transferred to the kitchen under Dyuman-bhai. The kitchen was situated where the “Cold Room” is now (near Prosperity). The food was cooked by a maid. Bihari-da put the food into dishes and brought them to the “Dining Room” which was a tiled-roof shanty. It stood where the Samadhi is now. The sadhaks then ate here. The Mother moved about, unaccompanied, seeing to this or that other work or to see one of the sadhaks. She walked amongst them even when the Dining Room was shifted to its present premises.

I first saw Bihari-da, as did most others, in the Dining Room, getting ready to wash bananas on the verandah (eastern side of the front garden). Bihari-da looked very much like a character out of an old Bengali film, a common working villager. He was of an average height, well built, somewhat of a dark complexion. The features were neatly fashioned—rather a handsome man I would opine. He sported a well-trimmed thick moustache and never a bristly chin. The hair was worn in a neat-cut-bob, always well-oiled and combed down—remarkable was its glossy blackness. The grey hairs,—a few grew so much later—I saw only in a photograph. More remarkable were the eyes—soft and kind, they lent a glow to his face. They seemed to gaze far away, or was it at a deep calm within him!—it is hard to say. Maybe it is all the same—looking far away or deep within. The man never seemed to change!—his body, face, his moods, his age, and, come to think of it, even his dress. The route to and from his work and the work itself were as unchanging as he. He could be seen with unfailing regularity walking down to the Dining Room every morning at 3.45 a.m. He was the first to arrive, come rain come storm. He was for a time Ravindraji’s boss—if Bihari-da could ever be called a “boss”—and reproached him (Ravindraji) for coming only 15 minutes before the appointed time! His work was ‘for ever’ washing bananas and for a while serving at the counter. His dress was for ever a white dhoti worn high (like Bula-da—a working type) topped by an Albert-da haute-couture sleeved banian. The only change was for working purposes—i.e. a pair of oversized dark blue drawers pulled over the dhoti during banana cleaning, a blue beret-like cap and apron while serving. These were necessary—especially the cap—which I believe was a compulsory item for all cooks, bakers and servers—more compulsory for those with long hair. I believe too that this simple rule was enforced by the Mother for

purely hygienic reasons. It would seem no such enforcement or Force exists nowadays—or has taken a back seat (I hope fickle fashion has not taken the front seat). Washing bananas was no mean or easy job. He did it for 50 or more years. Nothing deterred him—cold, rain even illness (we may note that nothing deterred the consumers). The work was demanding. In the mid 70s Mahesh Sharma joined him as a helper. He considered it a great privilege and honour. Also it was for him an invaluable introduction to and a salubrious lesson for life here. The work meant simply keeping ready on any given day, 15,000 bananas for a rotation of 3 days, i.e. for a consumption of 5,000/day! The bananas had to be cut from the bunches, cleaned, counted and arranged in trays. The trays had to be lifted on to shelves. They would then be “fired”—a smoky fire was lit in the closed room, and the warm smoke helped the fruit to ripen. Bihari-da was the boss—with a difference. He believed that the Mother did appoint an “in-charge” but not a “superior”. He (in-charge) had his work chalked out—to organise, arrange the day’s work and report to Her the progress, and any matter pertaining to the work. He also said that the Mother had given a great “freedom” to the workers and She never wanted them to feel they were walking a tight-rope. Bihari-da never asked his helpers about their absence (or sense or even nonsense). If none turned up he carried on alone. Mahesh, all admiration for him, avows, “we of half his years, were no match for him in endurance or output and performance. His body was like a spring. He was so palpably dedicated, conscious and so calm—he commanded our respect.” He added with a rueful smile that lifted his moustache an inch or so “Gone Bihari-da, so gone are good bananas!” As he warmed up to the subject he said with feeling and conviction “You name a good quality and Bihari-da had it!”

Bihari-da had a very puzzling bit of routine that he enacted every evening. He never joined our Physical Education, but at about 7.15 p.m. he would come to the Playground and hunker down, leaning his back against a pillar of the old verandah (it does not exist any more. It was demolished to make place for our New Gym.). He talked to no one—just kept looking in front. When the Group H dispersed after the concentration, he would get up and walk away. He didn’t seem to be interested in the “Old Men’s Marching”. So, what brought him there? I can only guess, at this distant date (for I never asked him then), that he saw something that I and most others around didn’t or couldn’t. Or, at least he was filled with a “feeling”. I would take a short diversion in this connection. Sisir-da, our late Headmaster, did the same. He too came and spent the H-Group “Marching time” in the Playground. Like Bihari-da he too was not very interested in physical activities. Unlike Bihari-da he had old comrades with whom he could, and did, indulge in some conversation. I asked why he came. He replied “*Nolinibabu bolechhen āshṭe*” (Nolini-babu has told me to come.) That was reason enough for him, and now, for me too. This may help explain Bihari-da’s puzzling behaviour.

Let us now approach Vishwajit for what he has to say about Bihari-da. They were great friends though of different eras—but sages don’t worry about ages

Vishwajit's opening remark was "Oh! Bihari-da ek bodo jogi chhilo, ar pondito chhilo" (Bihari-da was a great yogi and also a pundit) Many knew that Bihari-da was a poet He had written hundreds of poems in Bengali But I was surprised to learn that he had translated Sri Aurobindo's poem *Jivanmukta* into Bengali way back in 1934! (see pp 126-27) Sri Aurobindo's poem was published in 1934 in a book titled *Six Poems of Sri Aurobindo*. He also knew Sanskrit and picked up some Urdu from his friend Prashanto.

Vishwajit tried his level best to ruffle Bihari-da's calm or rouse his ire—all to no avail—except once when he fed him a well cooked dish of pork, camouflaged with plenty of masala Both Bihari-da and his ever-close friend Prashanto (a Muslim by birth—decreed never to touch pork) ate it The feast over, when the real nature of the dish was revealed, Bihari-da was a bit upset, but not so Prashanto, who took it in his stride or more appropriately into his stomach He even teased Bihari-da, pouring salt into the fresh wound

Bihari-da hardly ever fell ill, had no use for medicines If he did feel out of sorts, he would fast himself back to health and/or consciously work on the illness to get rid of it (Only once did I know him to submit himself to a doctor's attention—he was operated on for a cataract at JIPMER ) Maybe his regular habits, simple living, and more importantly, a clean, sound mind uncluttered by negative thoughts, all helped keep him in good health He does mention in his diary about a chest pain He did not attribute it to a heart condition, but to some subtler or higher reasons

Bihari-da's life, it would seem to all appearances, was most ordinary and simple—no ups and downs, no bright and colourful happy times alternating with sad dreary days One might even conclude that it was quite uninteresting or, at best, the most interesting facet to be the very simplicity and drabness and commonness But, behind this façade or under this surface ran a much more meaningful adventurous, even extraordinary current of life His mind and spirit seemed to be ever trying, experimenting and moving on untrodden ways to discover greater possibilities in this life of yoga It is difficult for me without much such experience, to analyse, comment and or criticise and judge what Bihari-da achieved or attained. Normally we believe only what we want to Each one judges according to one's own capacity (of mind) I dare suggest that each one's judgement of others could be his/her yardstick to measure oneself So—I choose rather to quote from Bihari-da's diary and let each reader's mind take over. He himself never spoke to others about these, his inner deeper thoughts He probably kept these notes and records for his own benefit or use

*(To be concluded)*

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

## JIVANMUKTA

THERE IS a silence greater than any known  
 To earth's dumb spirit, motionless in the soul  
     That has become Eternity's foothold,  
     Touched by the infinitudes for ever.

A Splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,  
 That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye,  
     Revealed it wakens when God's stillness  
     Heaven the ocean of moveless Nature

A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,  
 Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,  
     A single might of luminous quiet  
     Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages

A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,  
 An absolute high-seated immortal rapture  
     Possesses, sealing love to oneness  
     In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills  
 Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,  
     Unrolls the form and sign of being,  
     Seated above in the omniscient Silence

Although consenting here to a mortal body,  
 He is the Undying, limit and bond he knows not,  
     For him the aeons are a playground,  
     Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,  
 To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour  
     And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,  
     Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,

He acts and lives Vain things are mind's smaller motives  
 To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession  
     Infinity and the sempiternal  
     All is his guide and beloved and refuge

### জীবন-মুক্ত

আছে এক নীববতা—ধবণীৰ মুক এ চেতনা  
নাহি পায় তল তাৰ—অবিকম্প বিবাজে সতত  
সে-আত্মাৰ মৰ্মকোষে, শাশ্বতৰ পুণ্য পাদপীঠ  
হয়েছে যে, লভি নিত্য অনন্তেৰ অনন্ত পবশ।

হেথা আছে দিব্যজ্যোতিঃ—মৰ্ত্যদিঠি নাহি হেবে তাৰে,  
প্লাবিছে সে গুট কোন অৰ্চ্চিঘেবা সৰ্বদৰ্শী আঁখি;  
জাগি উঠে উদ্ভাসিয়া, ভাগবত সমাহিতি যবে  
ছেযে বহে নভসম স্পন্দহীন প্রকৃতি সাগৰ।

নেমে আসে মহশক্তি, জিনিতে কি আলোডিতে তাৰে  
অক্ষয় নিযতি, গিবি হতে স্থিৰ, উদাৰ—উদ্বেল  
অম্বুবাশি হতে, দীপ্ত প্রশান্তিৰ অখণ্ড বিক্রম,  
শ্রান্তিহীন আছে ধৰি লোকসঙ্ঘে, যুগযুগান্তবে।

আছে ভূমানন্দ ঘিবি চাৰিদিগ অফুবন্ত সুখে,  
উদ্ধাসীন মৃত্যুহীন তীৰ্হ হৰ্ষ কৰে আত্মসাৎ,  
গ্রথে বজ্রপ্ৰেমবন্ধ, অভিন্ন অচ্ছেদ্য একাকাৰ,  
বিশ্ববল্লভেৰ সৰ্বসুন্দৰেৰ দুৰ্ধাৰ আশ্লেষে।

কালেৰ মম্বৰ গতি উত্তবিয়া পুলকে শিহৰে  
অনন্তেৰ বক্ষলীন সেই জন নিশ্চিত্ত নির্ধাক—  
নিশ্চুন্ত কবিয়া চলে সৰ্বান্তিৰ কপ ও কপক,  
উৰ্দ্ধে বহি অধিষ্ঠিত জ্ঞানময় নৈঃশব্দ্যমাঝাবে।

মবতেৰ দেহ হেথা যদি বা কবিল অঙ্গীকাৰ  
শাশ্বত সে অবিনাশী, নাহি জানে সীমা কি বন্ধন;  
কল্প কল্পান্তৰ তাৰি নিবন্তৰ ক্ৰীড়াৰ প্ৰাঙ্গণ,  
জীবন, জীবন ভবি কৰ্ম যত, তাৰ দীপ্ত ছায়া।

বহি আনে উৰ্দ্ধশক্তি প্ৰত্যাশিনী পৃথিবীৰ তৰে,  
বিপুল শান্তিৰ স্পর্শে তাৰ ক্লিষ্ট ব্যথিত প্ৰয়াসে  
হয় সে সহায়, কৰে দূৰ যুগ-সঙ্কিত বেদনা  
আনন্দেৰ ঢলে—ঢালে আলোধাৰা নিশ্চেতন ঘোৰে।

তাইত জীবন তাৰ, কৰ্ম তাই—মিথ্যা তাৰ কাছে  
মানস-সঙ্কল্প যত স্বল্প-তুট্ট ক্ষুদ্ৰ-অনুবাগী,—  
সমুচ্চৈৰ অধিকাৰী, অনন্তেৰে সে কৰে ববণ,  
দিশাৰী শবণ্য প্ৰিয় সনাতন বিশ্বদেব তাৰ।



## SLOW DANCE

HAVE you ever watched kids  
On a merry-go-round?  
Or listened to the rain  
Slapping on the ground?  
Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight?  
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?  
You better slow down.  
Don't dance so fast.  
Time is short  
The music won't last

Do you run through each day  
On the fly?  
When you ask "How are you?"  
Do you hear the reply?  
When the day is done  
Do you lie in your bed  
With the next hundred chores  
Running through your head?  
You'd better slow down  
Don't dance so fast  
Time is short  
The music won't last

Ever told your child,  
We'll do it tomorrow?  
And in your haste,  
Not see his sorrow?  
Ever lost touch,  
Let a good friendship die,  
'cause you never had time  
To call and say "Hi"?'  
You'd better slow down  
Don't dance so fast  
Time is short  
The music won't last

When you run so fast to get somewhere  
You miss half the fun of getting there  
When you worry and hurry through your day,

It is like an unopened gift  
Thrown away  
Life is not a race  
Do take it slower,  
Hear the music  
Before the song is over

ANONYMOUS

[The poem is by a very young girl suffering from incurable cancer. She is braving the inevitable calmly and the pathos "The music won't last" is also her great lyrical hope. For details the readers may contact the following address:

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— R Y D ]

## INTIMACY WITH THE DIVINE

THE subject ‘Intimacy with the Divine’ sounds to some people a bit difficult if not a bit high-handed. But why? Why should we not aspire for or think of intimacy with the Divine? Intimacy with the Sweet Mother, intimacy with the Lord Sri Aurobindo—Oh, what a wonderful possibility! Human beings that we are, what else should we like to have? Some yogic powers, say to walk on water? Sri Ramakrishna says it is worth a paisa only. Or to become a *crorepati*? But then one will be engrossed in a restless vital life. Or Nirvana to get out of the manifestation? On the other hand, intimacy with the Divine is a marvellous state to be aspired for.

Then you may say that it is not easy to achieve the intimacy. Yes, it is not easy, but why should it be easy? If a game is very easy, will you enjoy it? You will be bored in less than five minutes. Only when the game is tough there is a joy in playing it, a joy in winning it. ‘‘All life is Yoga,’’ says Sri Aurobindo. In fact all life is Yoga to achieve integral intimacy with the Divine, union with the Divine, so that Matter can reveal the Spirit’s face. From the day we shall take life with this understanding, it will become very interesting and different.

Intimacy is an inner quality, it pertains to our inner nature. The word intimacy is derived from an old Latin word ‘interus’, meaning inward or within. In the later Latin it meant inmost, innermost, deep-seated. So to find intimacy with the Divine, which is deep-seated, one has to go deep within, it is an inmost acquaintance. This is the first thing. Then each one has an exclusive direct and unique relation with the Divine. The third thing is that there can be no relation without love. So let us define intimacy with the Divine in these words:

Intimacy with the Divine is a close personal, inner and deep-seated loving relation or connection with the Divine, which brings *a total nearness* to the Divine.

Would you not like to achieve this state, however difficult it may be? What qualities are needed in us to develop this relation with the Divine? Let us spell out three most important conditions for this, three keys to open the lock of the dark cave.

Faith is the foundation of any relation. If we want to develop integral intimacy with the Divine, the first thing necessary is an integral faith in Him. If there is no faith, there can never be any intimacy. If faith is established, 75% of our work is over, for we are then very close to the Divine, at the threshold of His house. The only thing that remains to be done is to put the head down and lovingly surrender to Him, we have simply to open ourselves to Him. We must have absolute certitude in the Lord’s omnipotence and His sole reality. This certitude, this faith, is already there in us, deep within.

There is a story of a man of faith. His faith was so solid that even in critical moments he could be at ease, he could relax. He was a farmer. Once some robbers

entered his house and there was shooting from both sides, in which he got two bullets in his body. However, the thieves fled away and the farmer was quickly taken to the hospital for an emergency operation. While the doctors were attending to him on the operation table, a nurse asked him whether he was allergic to anything. "Yes," came the reply. All eyebrows were raised and hands stopped working to know his answer. He replied "I am allergic to bullets!" There was a big burst of laughter in the operation theatre. When he was swinging between life and death, he could cut a joke! It is only possible when one has a full trust in the Divine, in the Divine's working.

Sri Aurobindo says "An indiscriminateness of mental belief is not the teaching of spirituality or of yoga, the faith of which it speaks is not a crude mental belief but the fidelity of the soul to the guiding light within it, a fidelity which has to remain till the light leads it into knowledge." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 22, p 172)

Know that the Lord leads each one to his divine goal by the shortest way. This he does in spite of our ignorance and misunderstandings, in spite of the ego and its protests. So faith is the first and foremost requirement to establish intimacy with the Divine.

Now let us come to the second requisite for an integral intimacy with the Divine. Shall we take the help of a story? It is from one of the joyous periods of history, when the Lord himself was on the earth in a physical body. Some five thousand years ago Gopas and Gopis had a merry time when Sri Krishna was in Vrindavan.

One day some Gopis prepared a few delicious dishes, sweet dishes, to offer them to Sri Krishna at his lunch. These Gopis lived on the opposite bank of the river Yamuna, but there was always a ferry service. The whole day a boatman carried people to and fro in his boat. However, on that particular day when the Gopis reached the Ghat, there was no boat nor the boatman. They were at a loss, a bit distressed; but then they saw a sage coming towards the same Ghat. Hopes arose. They felt that he would somehow manage to take them to the opposite bank. When he arrived there and as it was lunch time, the Gopis offered him sweets and other food. The sage relished every bit of the preparation. The Gopis were naturally happy, for it is a matter of great joy to feed such people, isn't it?

The Gopis then requested the sage to do something so that they could cross the river. The sage went near the water and spoke loudly: "O Yamuna Mayi! If I have not eaten anything from this morning, let the inflow of fresh water to the river stop for a while, so that we can cross the river."

The Gopis were dumbstruck, this fellow after eating so much told such a lie! They looked at each other, some of them were quite broken down. But in no time the flow of incoming water stopped, the water in the river passed away and all of them could walk over the riverbed to reach the opposite bank.

On reaching the place, the Gopis thronged round Sri Krishna with questions. See how Sri Krishna explained. He said "For a yogi, for a sage, the meaning of the word 'eating' is 'taking in'. On the other hand, when one becomes selfish one devours

When you think yourself as a separate 'I', separate person, you start eating. In short, when one becomes egoistic, one eats. Giving food to the body does not mean, in the psychological sense, 'eating'. The food which the sage took was necessary for the body, for its maintenance, it was given to the body, and the body acknowledged it with joy, thus expressing its gratitude." This made the Gopis happy. One can also say that the food was offered by the sage to Brahman in him and he did not eat anything himself. So the sage did not really tell a lie. But then why should the water stop flowing at his command?

Sri Krishna explained it thus: "From the morning the sage had no thought of his separate 'I', separate self, so he was one with the universal Self, one with the universal forces, one with the force called 'Yamuna Mayi'. So at his wish that force stopped acting and fresh water did not arrive at the place. When the Spirit rises and commands, the gods are ready to obey."

Coming back to our subject, let us see the second requirement. So long as there is a feeling of self, of the ego, the person, I, you cannot have any real intimacy with anybody. Ego is the greatest obstacle on the way to union with the Divine, intimacy with the Divine. In fact it is the greatest enemy of any progress towards unity, harmony, love. Ego makes us love ourselves and ourselves only. Then how can intimacy with the Divine come? So 'freedom from the ego' is the second requirement.

Now we come to the third point which is the most important condition for intimacy with the Divine. Do you know how the Mother has described this marvellous state of integral intimacy with the Divine? She experienced that the "entire being no longer vibrates except with the Divine's touch." This demands a complete consecration to the Divine, to the point that one is not able to distinguish oneself from the Divine any longer. One acts only at the Divine's command, absolutely without any personal reaction. That is why the Mother said "Complete surrender to the Divine and total receptivity to His influence are the conditions of this intimacy." (*Flowers and Their Messages*)

Radha is the best example of this. Listen to what she says to the Divine in her prayer:

O Thou whom at first sight I knew for the Lord of my being and my God,  
receive my offering

Thine are all my thoughts, all my emotions, all the sentiments of my heart, all my sensations, all the movements of my life, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood. I am absolutely and altogether Thine, Thine without reserve. What Thou wilt of me, that I shall be. Whether Thou chooseth for me life or death, happiness or sorrow, pleasure or suffering, all that comes to me from Thee will be welcome. Each one of Thy gifts will be always for me a gift divine bringing with it the supreme Felicity. (*CWM*, Vol 15, p 224)

The Mother has explicitly stated "it is not just a feeling or impression or

sensation, it is a total experience that the more you give yourself to the Divine the more He is with you, totally, constantly, at every minute, in all your thoughts, all your needs and you have the sense of a complete, constant intimacy, of a total nearness. It is as though the Divine were all the time with you, you walk and He walks with you, you sleep and He sleeps with you, you eat and He eats with you, you think and He thinks with you, you love and He is the love you have” (CWM, Vol 7, p 247) *This is real intimacy*. So the third important key is Complete surrender to the Divine and total receptivity to His influence.

Now why do we fail to achieve this marvellous state and what is the remedy?

To the question why we fail, the Mother answers “ you don’t belong to Him, because you belong to hundreds of other things and people, in your thought, your action, your feelings, impulses there are millions of things which you do not give Him, and that is why you don’t feel Him always with you, because all these things are so many screens and walls between Him and you” (CWM, Vol 7, p 247)

To the question what is the remedy, Sri Aurobindo has given the solution to this malady by drawing our attention to the last, the closing supreme word of the Gita spoken in two brief direct and simple shlokas. The first shloka is

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मा नमस्कुरु ।  
मामेवैष्यसि सत्य ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

Become My-minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me, to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me (SABCL, Vol 13, p 536)

Become “My-minded” means remember Him always, talk with Him, think of Him, concentrate on Him, and remain open to Him. The next shloka is

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।  
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Abandon all Dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve (*Ibid*)

“Abandon all Dharmas” needs an explanation.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that there are always many and large reservations in us, intellectual convictions, opinions, ideas “even if one is not conscious of them, they are there” (SABCL, Vol 23, p 909) What are these reservations he speaks of? “You have certain ways of understanding,” says the Mother, “certain ways of reacting, certain ways of feeling, almost certain ways of progressing, and above all, a special way of looking at life and expecting from it certain things—well, it is this you

must surrender . it is your whole way of being you must offer—offer by opening it ” (CWM, Vol 4, p 373) These “certain ways of reacting, certain ways of feeling”, etc., are all reservations

At another place she has said “ you have some fixed rules, ideas or principles to which you attribute an absolute importance, most often it is an adherence to certain moral principles or precepts, such as the commandment ‘Honour thy father and mother’ or ‘Thou shalt not kill’ and the rest Each man has some fad or one preferred shibboleth or another . An attachment to a rule of the mind is an indication of a blindness still hiding somewhere ” (CWM, Vol 3, p 53) These are all examples of reservations which we have to surrender

So the remedy is: Be My-minded and abandon all Dharmas, take refuge in Me alone There should be nothing, nothing considered as your own; just put your head and heart and body in His lap, and give yourself completely to the Divine, open yourself to Him It is perhaps easy to say this, *but* it is also easy to do it We are not able to do it because we love our ego and therefore we are more interested in a thousand-and-one other things and we do not have *true* faith Our true progress lies in growing in it.

K C ANAND

## BLEEDING PARADISE AND THE ROARING LION\*

O FLUMMOXED local leaders,  
And international Peace-brokers!  
While the mountain-peaks glisten,  
Would you just care to listen  
To the sobbings of all peace-lovers,  
The tearful whisperings of worshippers  
Of eternal Beauty, and Nature-lovers?

The earthly Paradise, with scenic majesty,  
The enchanting and haunting Kashmir-valley,  
Is no more the land of breath-taking Beauty,  
With fabulous bulbuls, damsels, so pretty,  
Called 'Nightingales of Peace' and prosperity,  
Now gory Death, with sanguinary face, terribly ugly,  
Stalks the cursed land, with its youth turning wily

Amar Ganga, the gurgling hill-stream,  
Rushing from Amarnath-Glacier to Pahalgam,  
Like the descending Gujjar dancing-girls,  
Appears to be drying and getting bogged in snarls,  
The perennial flow of pure, sparkling water,  
Is getting lost slowly in the dreadful gutter  
Of the Valley of Death, and its abysmal crater

The green trees, exquisite Chinar blossoms,  
The blooming orchids and flaming rhododendrons,  
All seem to have become ghoulish monsters,  
After the ghastly massacre and demoniac bath,  
With the blood of hundreds of Amarnath-pilgrims,  
For devout Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims,  
Humanism, betrayed, bedraggled, fell into stinking pools

Perhaps it's the pregnant lull before a deadly storm,  
Lord Amarnath is waiting in the holy ice-*Lingam*  
To spring up, with His thundering cry, and crush all bedlam,

\* Once the Divine Mother drew everybody's attention to the topmost portion of the map of undivided India and declared that the shape of Kashmir looked like a "roaring lion" This remark has been reported by Abani Sinha, vide *Mother India*, January 2001



'Rudra Tāndav' will banish hypocrisy and harbinger *Shivam*,  
 The all-merciful and beautiful God, *Sundaram*,  
 Prepares new History by effacing false division,  
 As the entire sub-continent aspires for a lasting Union

SURESH DEY

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### ANIMA-DI—A TRIBUTE

I WAS informed about Anima-di's departure. The following is an expression of my salutation to her. She considered Dilip (Captain) her "ready-made" (as she put it) beloved son. Her memory and thoughts of her will always be part of my being.

I am very sad to know that I will miss her company and yet I am happy for her as I know she is now in the arms of Sri Aurobindo. Anima-di's life was a saga of God's Blessings in everyday life. All existence is He and all doings are His play; this was demonstrated through Anima-di. Rasalila was the essence of her life and those of us who were fortunate to come in contact with her were blessed to experience the joy of life and the play of the divine will with her. Her laughter echoed the expression of unabated sterling childlike joy and resonated with the delight of heavenly gods. She is now with all of us. She is on her journey of the serene and subtle pathway to the abode where she belongs. My prayer and affection for her will always remain deep, transcending the limits of time and space. She affectionately regarded me as her younger brother. In the silent solitude of self I offer my salutations and homage to the wonderful and unique Anima-di.

ARUN VAIDYA

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of January 2001)

THE Upanishads describe the phenomenon of happiness as the Bliss of *Brahman*, manifested in the *antahkarana* (the internal organ, *i.e.*, the human mind) due to contacts with objects mundane, whereas the unsurpassable or Absolute Happiness is *Brahman* Itself. Now the question that naturally arises is what kind of refinement of human spirit or *ātma-samskriti* is required to achieve that highest Bliss or Absolute Happiness? In the Eastern tradition, the Sanskrit words that correspond to the words 'Science' and 'Art', are *Shāstra*, *Vidyā*, *Vijñāna* and *Kalā*. According to the Hindu scriptures there are fourteen *Vidyās* and sixty-four *Kalās* with which human beings are connected. Generally speaking, *Vidyā* is primarily the knowledge of God and by implication it also means various branches of knowledge leading to this highest goal. On the other hand, *Kalā* encompasses almost all other branches of knowledge, such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, History, Geography, Archery and the Fine Arts. It is worth noting here that Music is included under both *Vidyās* and *Kalās*, as *Gāndharva Vidyā* and *Sangeet Kalā*. Therefore, it may be inferred that according to the Eastern conception of Music, it has two main aspects, *viz.*, one spiritual and the other aesthetic. But we have seen that in the history of development of Music, the latter aspect has been in a way subsidiary to the former. The ultimate function and objective of Music has been to help the votary (the artist as well as the listener) towards the highest goal of Self-realisation or God-realisation.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Hindu traditions, the popular demarcation between *Vidyā* and *Kalā* is somewhat arbitrary and over-simplified inasmuch as all knowledge must ultimately lead to the highest realisation by way of unravelling or unveiling the great mystery of God, man, other lesser creatures and the Universe. When our scriptures speak of *Parā Vidyā* and *Aparā Vidyā*, they speak of *Vidyās* all the same. In almost all branches of knowledge, we come across this duality, the direct and the indirect, the inductive and the deductive, the rational and the intuitional, and so on. Ultimate realisation cannot depend on one path only. Science and Art, in their ultimate phases of seeking, or at their zenith, achieve the same or almost similar objectives, but their methods are quite different, and in some respects almost "antithetic". Science and Art, as understood in modern times, have distinctive connotations which can be compared and contrasted. Science, being essentially related to intellect and mind, and Art to emotion and intuition, it would appear as if they have nothing in common. Science is based on intellectual analysis, while Art is essentially related to emotion and is "synthetic" in its outlook. Science lays emphasis on definition, but artistic experience escapes definition, in fact it belongs to a deeper aspect and the mysterious realm of human nature which evades definition. The field of science is generally objective, but it is subjective experience that is the prime factor in Art. "Science is impersonal while Art is essentially personal with ample scope for improvisation and originality."<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Science there may be a purely theoretical side having no bearing on the life-situation or actual phenomenon,—as for example, the various Geometries which are essentially some logical systems of design only,—but in Art a theory which has no bearing on practice or the practical applications, has no place at all. In spite of these differences they lead to the same goal. From various observations, and after making a number of experiments, the scientist reaches some generalisation and deduces fundamental laws, but the artist leads us from the known to the Unknown, from the seeming to the Being, and helps us to get a glimpse of the Great Thought or Idea behind the phenomena which are nothing but material expressions of that Great Thought, Idea or the Supreme Reality. But all the same, science is science and art is art; their methods and approaches are different though one can help or supplement the other by giving a balanced picture or integrated background. Music is essentially an Art though it utilises the method and facilities of Science for the purpose of codification, preservation, amplification, etc. What is called the science of Music is only its grammar and its technical aspects, that too in a limited sense. When Bharata Muni named his *Nātyashāstra* (i.e., the science of *Nāṭya*), he must have had only some such idea. No number of books, however eminent their authors may be, can give pure delight to human ears (and the lower creatures as well) or move human hearts (sometimes even the hearts of Gods and Goddesses) as a sweet song or *Rāga*-music rendered through a traditional instrument, like *Veenā* or *Sitār*.<sup>3</sup>

Vibrations work through the chord of sympathy existing between man and his surroundings and reveal past, present and future conditions, this explains (generally, though there may be variations or exceptions) why the repeated howling of dogs in a very sad tone foretells death, and the peculiar (also repeated) neighing of horses the approach of some danger. Not only do animals show this tendency but even plants, in times of sorrow, begin to die, and flowers begin to fade, while during times of happiness they grow, blossom and flourish. The reason why plants and animals can perceive the subtle vibrations and know of the coming events, while man remains ignorant of them, is because he has blinded himself with egotism.

The influence of vibrations is left tangibly on the chair on which one sits, in the bed where one sleeps, in the house where one lives, in the clothes one wears, in the food one eats and even on the street where one walks. It is the state of vibrations to which man is tuned that accounts for his soul's note.<sup>4</sup> The supernal *ākāsha* is the imperishable source and perpetual basis of sonorous rhythms that issue from the great heights to form the planes and build the world and also to function by casting harmonic spells for their sustenance. It is this Vedic idea and spirit that exults in the utterance of the Upanishad wherein the Rishi prays to Indradeva the Lord of *Swar*, the Divine Power of the luminous Heaven, whose vibrations of rhythms proceed from that world of the luminous Gods, whose abode is the self-same Ether, *Parama Vyoma*.<sup>5</sup>

(To be continued)

SURESH DEY

*References*

- 1 *Facets of Indian Culture* by R Srinivasan, p 3
- 2 *Ibid* , p 3
- 3 *Ibid* , pp 4-5
- 4 *The Mysticism of Music, Sound and Word*, Vol II, by Hazrat Inayat Khan, p 17
- 5 *Lights on the Ancients* by T V Kapali Shastry, p 64

## THE CONCEPT OF DEVA SANGHA

IN a letter to his younger brother Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo writes about Deva Sangha as follows

What I am aiming at is not a society like the present rooted in division. What I have in view is a *Sangha* (community) founded in the spirit and in the image of its oneness. It is with this idea that the name *Deva Sangha* has been given—the commune of those who want the divine life is the Deva Sangha. Such a Sangha will have to be established in one place at first and then spread all over the country. But if any shadow of egoism falls over this endeavour, then the Sangha will change into a sect. The idea may very naturally creep in that such and such a body is the one true Deva Sangha of the future, the one and only centre, that all else must be its circumferences, and that those outside its limits are not of the fold or even if they are, have gone astray, because they think differently.

You may say, what need is there of a Sangha? Let me be free and live in every vessel, let all become one without form and let whatever must be happen in the midst of that vast formlessness. There is a truth there, but only one side of the truth. Our business is not with the formless spirit alone, we have also to direct the movement of life. And there can be no effective movement of life without form. It is the Formless that has taken form and that assumption of name and form is not a caprice of Maya. Form is there because it is indispensable. We do not want to rule out any activity of the world as beyond our province. Politics, industry, society, poetry, literature, art will all remain, but we must give them a new soul and a new form.

We can mix with all, but in order to draw all into the true path, keeping intact the spirit and form of our ideal. If we do not do that we shall lose our direction and the real work will not be done. If we remain individually everywhere, something will be done indeed, but if we remain everywhere as parts of a Sangha, a hundred times more will be done. *And yet that time has not come* (italics added). If we try to give a form hastily, it may not be the exact thing we want. The Sangha will at first be in unconcentrated form. Those who have the ideal will be united but work in different places. Afterwards, they will form something like a spiritual commune and make a compact Sangha. They will then give all their work a shape according to the demand of the spirit and the need of the age—not a bound and rigid form, not an *achalayātana*, a prison, a place where everything is regimented down to the last detail, but a free form which will spread out like the sea, mould itself into many waves and surround a thing here, overflow a thing there and finally take all into itself. As we go on doing this there will be established a spiritual community. This is my present idea. As yet it has not been fully developed. All is in God's hands, whatever He makes us do, that we shall do (*Agenda*, Vol 3, pp 272-273, translated from the original Bengali, *SABCL*, Vol 4, p 327).

### **Addada Centre is the Birth-place of Deva Sangha**

In February 1993, I went to Addada district, in Andhra Pradesh, to help in the construction of the Centre. I lived there from February 1993 to July 1993. During these six months I was the second important worker, the first being K. Somaiah. We literally started the construction of the school-building right from the foundation. I was there till the inauguration of the hostel. I used to be there always with the labour, all through, under the burning sun. I enjoyed almost a yogic sleep and, toward the end of my stay, got the inspiration to write an 8-page booklet entitled *Aurobharati Movement*. It was printed and distributed. That was the beginning of Deva Sangha.

From 1993 to 1996 I was busy with work of some of the Centres in our State. I was throughout interested in the application of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy to political and economic problems of the country. Bhoodan Movement of Vinoba Bhave got initiated from our family in 1952 when acres of land were donated for it. Besides this, the first communist movement started in our Nalgonda District. By nature I am not academic-oriented. I have been a worker all through these years and I want to be like that. My aim is to be a spiritual communist. I am a futurist, as all Aurobindonians are. The present-day politics is in the hands of very ordinary men. Then comes the question: how can these ordinary people build the Dream-India of the Divine Mother? To build an ideal India, we require ideal and sincere people. How to get them? The problem is still teasing us.

### **The Respective Contributions of the East and the West**

If the East is the birth-place of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, the West is the birth-place of modern political and economic philosophies. It is due to the persistent Herculean effort of the political philosophers from Plato to Harold Laski that the present world is enjoying the parliamentary democratic rights. Surely the East has also contributed towards political and economic sciences. There were proper philosophies of the spirit in the West. Broadly speaking, if the East represents the Spirit, the West represents Matter. When we study the history of the political philosophy of the West, the evolution of democracy had to pass through several critical phases. Charles I of England, King Louis XVI of France were executed to bring democracy to the common man. If philosophy proper is the main theorem, political philosophy is its corollary. Politics, economics and social sciences are intimately connected with one another. These three aspects determine the practical make-up of the society at any time. If the main philosophy undergoes a change, then we find a corresponding change in politics and economics. Hegel is one of the greatest philosophers of the West. In his philosophy the individual was given a subordinate place. This was copied in an inverted way by Karl Marx, but Marx's philosophy is detrimental to the freedom of the individual.

We are highly indebted to the West for its two greatest contributions: the

evolution of the democratic institutions and the scientific and technological innovations. At present, after the decolonisation of Africa, South America and Asia, all the liberated countries have accepted the Western type of parliamentary democracy. Prior to colonisation there were autocratic kings, feudal lords, tribal chiefs. All these are now replaced by a uniform pattern of parliamentary democratic government.

### **The Two Great Revolutions: The French and the Russian**

From the political and economic point of view, these two revolutions are world-shaking events. More than religions, these two revolutions have completely altered the foundations of the world. The essence of the French Revolution is liberty, equality and fraternity. These principles are not ordinary political slogans. If 'I am He' and 'Thou art That' are the essence of the Vedic and the Upanishadic thought, these three mantras of the French Revolution constitute the essence of the Western political and economic thought. In 'I am He' and 'Thou art That', I and Thou stand for the individual and He and That stand for the Divine. However, in spite of the various religious teachings by hundreds of saints and sages, on a collective level we could not attain the goal put before us by the two Vedic-Upanishadic mantras. But in Sri Aurobindo's supramental approach all the four components of man—physical, vital, mental and psychic—find their integrated fulfilment. Only then, 'I' gets total identification with 'Thou'. Similarly, when we examine the French mantra of liberty-equality-fraternity, we see that we have yet to realise its true significance. Take, for instance, the aspect of liberty. We are free to do anything we may like to do, but in it other man's freedom should not get endangered. Essentially, this mantra is the attribute of the soul itself. The Russian Revolution gave us the concept of economic equality but, in practice, the present-day Russia has become an economically backward country. No doubt, the Western countries are enjoying liberty, but it has degraded into licence. It is being misused, rather over-used. Instead of elevating man, the present kind of liberty is degrading him to the level of the animal. To take up the case of political equality each person has the right to vote. But this voting power is a hollow one. There is no real freedom anywhere. We can exercise equal franchise. That is all. We have the freedom to vote, but we have no freedom to make our voting right meaningful. It becomes meaningful only when the voter has a substantial share in the material wealth of the nation. So, what is the conclusion? Both the mantras of liberty and equality have become infructuous. The French and the Russian revolutions have not delivered the goods in transforming our outlook towards collective life.

### **The American Revolution**

Before going to the third part of the French mantra—fraternity—we shall try to know the importance of the American Revolution. Most of the early emigrant Americans were from England. People from other European countries too went and settled in

America No doubt, the American nation is a new nation and bubbling with life In the collective organisation its contribution to the developing countries is immense The parent country, England, wanted to control the Britons who had migrated to America But after the war of American Independence America became an independent country. It is just about 200 years old now but, by and large, psychologically, its mental make-up is similar to that of Europe All the European nations were once imperialists

### **The Predicament of Religions**

In general religions are conservative and move in a closed circuit Unquestionably, religions are the first boon of the Divine to humanity At the start they were invigorating, inspiring and several martyrs laid down their lives for the spread of their respective faiths There are three great world religions—Buddhism, Christianity and Islam Even after their becoming world religions, we still see conversions going on Conversions become anachronistic, especially at this point of time in history, when we are about to enter the next millennium All religions have become spent forces Instead of shedding some of the fossilised customs and traditions, they are going backward and are not ready to shed their antihuman stances So, there is no hope of future leadership from retrogressive religion of whatever kind they be

### **The Advent of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother**

Sri Aurobindo says. “My yoga begins where the old yoga ends” At present, all human efforts to solve the religious, political and economic crises have been fruitless According to Sri Aurobindo, the present man is a transitional being Evolution is still going on We cannot say whether the biological evolution as envisaged by Darwin has future possibilities But man’s psychological content is far more weighty than his outer surface content There is infinite scope for the psychological development of man Sri Aurobindo says that man has not yet reached the perfect perfection Many higher levels of consciousness are telescoped in man’s psychological personality Man potentially is a god The present man is a mental man, the principle of mind is reigning supreme in the present world Always it leaves scars of division on its products Mind is basically an instrument of division That is its forte It can analyse, divide and fragment things. The author of the present civilisation is the mind proper Now for the first time in the history of the earth Sri Aurobindo, the Divine incarnate, prescribes an unparalleled solution—the solution of heightening our individual and collective consciousness The present man is unable to integrate and harmonise the discordant diversities whether of religions, economics or political systems Man should begin his upward spiritual journey till he reaches the apex realisation known as the supramental. Until man becomes a gnostic being, the vexed and chronic problems of the world will remain unsolved The Western civilisation is extremely atomistic



and highly individualistic. Even wife and husband have their own independent worlds. No doubt, commercial production on a mass scale is done, but there is no proper distribution. At present, the family is the unit of Eastern society. Even in India, the so-called God's country, the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. In fact, all material wealth belongs to the Divine. At present, it is in the hands of the vital and anti-Divine forces. Money is not being utilised for constructive purposes. Only India can take up the responsibility of practising fraternity under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

*(To be concluded)*

V MANMOHAN REDDY

## THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

*(Continued from the issue of January 2001)*

THE history of mind is the history of philosophy, every philosopher worth his name advocated a definite concept of mind or at least followed a definite school of thought. The mind has been considered in two ways: a) as obtaining a relation between the mind and the body of an individual, b) as a metaphysical entity pervading all minds. The individual mind is described in terms such as a subject that perceives, conceives, judges, wills, etc. The mind that has been considered generically is a mind that underlies all individual minds, it is something that is contrasted with material substance. To avoid an endless list of names perhaps it is beneficial to name only some of the important doctrines about mind. All the doctrines are based on relationship, either a union of body and mind called monistic or a distinction between them known as dualistic. There are again various trends in monism: i) Classical. The mind a bodily function as advanced by Aristotle has a vast and divergent adherents in Hobbes, Hegel, Behaviourists and others. ii) Idealism. Those who see body as mental appearance, the idealists, are Berkeley, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer and others. iii) Double Aspect Theory. Spinoza proposed what is known as the double aspect theory, according to which mental and physical aspects are themselves two elements of something that is neither mental nor physical, and both these instead of contradicting complement the underlying substance of man. Various philosophers have taken interest in it—Fechner, Strawson, etc., find it a very stimulating theory since the underlying third aspect can be bent from theistic delineation to the atheistic. iv) Neutral Monism. As science took hold of the 20th century one could not think of explaining the world through anything else than the atom; the body and mind were different, not because they were really different but because their construction from the basic elements was different. Philosophers, particularly the positivists and the linguists, went for a neutral element (atom, particles, sensations) that form both body and mind depending on a certain 'bundle' (Hume) of perceptions or 'logical constructs' (Russell) or 'neutral stuff' (William James) or 'sensations' (Mach) or 'sense contents' (Ayer).

Dualistic theories are also as diverse as monistic ones and have a great number of adherents both from philosophy and from natural sciences: i) Interactionism. The Cartesian body-mind theory is known as interactionism advocating that there are two substances in the world, corporeal and non-corporeal, and they interact with each other. John Locke and others continued this trend by further suggesting the causal relationship. ii) Occasionalism which rejects causal relationship between body and mind and declares God to be the intermediary between the two. iii) Parallelism. There is a regularity in the relation of body and mind, however there is no causality, it is known as psycho-physical parallelism (For instance, the analogy of two synchronized clocks in Leibnitz.) iv) Epiphenomenalism. It is a one-way causal theory from body

to mind, not vice versa as in interactionism

Diverse as may be the doctrines, yet they have given rise to certain natural sciences. 1) Neuro-psychology. Neurologists and biologists have taken an exclusive right over the process of the mind, they experiment with brain material, measuring their results on complex and sophisticated machines to note energy movements, formation of proteins, etc 11) Parapsychology The theory, which seems to be gathering momentum, that mental events can have both mental and physical effects on others. Telepathy, psychokinesis, extrasensory perception and the like, dismembered existence, i.e., that mental life continues even after the death of the body 111) Cybernetics: Finally, in our technologically advanced world mind-body problems may be solved through formalised systems, with perfect computations one could make the machines 'behave'

### The Indian Concept of Consciousness

Consciousness—*chitta*<sup>1</sup> or psyche, the Indian and Western terms respectively—distinguishes the animate world from the inanimate one. Consciousness goes beyond the faculty of reason. on the physical side it amounts to awareness which is present in rational beings, animals, the vegetative world and the realms of lesser biological life, and on the spiritual side it includes psychological awareness, mental deliberations and the spiritual experiences of a higher plane, e.g., the mystical experience, awareness of God, visions and so forth

The Indian sages cultivated consciousness on a supernatural level to nurture the religious aspects leading to the attainment of *mukti* or liberation, whereas the Western philosophers analysed the psychic functions of perception or sensation, thought and judgment. The Indian approach has been a spiritual approach, holistic in nature, intuitive in its description, whereas the Western approach has been a scientific one based on the Cartesian method, the body-mind duality, the mechanistic way of division according to the functions performed. Although the idealist schools have tried for unity of body and soul, it has been at best at the expense of the body. The Indian classical thought which provides for a dual—*dvaita*—and a non-dual—*advaita*—system of philosophy, must be considered as merely the initial method in which the unitary trend is unmistakable, whereas the Western system of thought is from its inception atomistic, mechanical, explainable or predictable since it is based on positive or material evidence. Greek philosophy laid the foundations for an inquiry into man's self or soul or mind, the speculation is still going on, many hypotheses are conceived and innumerable theories are propounded, yet it has been difficult to unravel what makes a human mind conscious.

At first it may appear that the study of the concept of consciousness representing

1 *Sat, Chit, Ananda*,—Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, the *summum bonum* according to classical Indian philosophy, the three put together as *Sachchidananda* is the one reality that has been stressed by Sri Aurobindo in the doctrine of consciousness

the Eastern spiritual point of view has little in common with the scientific findings of the West. Psychology is an advanced science and in so far as consciousness is concerned, it has been well classified, categorised and critically examined in various schools of psychology including rational or philosophical, psychoanalytic, behaviourist, Gestalt and other highly specialised fields of mental and psychological sciences. Contemporary studies in neurology, physiology and biology hold a great promise in understanding the formation and functioning of the human mind. The natural sciences set out from the hypothesis that the brain is an organ with an immensely complex function; research shows how little we know about this most important organ. At times it is an uncharitable charge against these scientists that they do not believe in anything except that our mental life is at best a complex and highly cultivated behaviour of our cells, genes and the chemicals involved. Scientists are convinced that there is something more to our psychological processes than merely the bundling of various functions of the mind. However, that is yet to be established and, therefore, this science still continues. If the scientists had been satisfied with the answers that they already had, it would have been a complete science. But there is no one who admits that we know enough about our minds and about our consciousness. The Eastern philosophical studies look with cynicism at the scientific advances and sneer at the findings, as if to say, 'You are like the musk deer that runs around crazily sniffing for the perfume, while in reality it is on itself.' It is gamless to hunt for consciousness when it is there for all to experience within oneself, it is an intuitive faculty. The Eastern views are looked upon by the West, at best, as deserving to be categorized as para-psychic, extra-sensory-perception, mystical experiences, tantric and yogic experiences all of which are of little help in establishing rigorous, empirical, scientific truth. It has been, at worst condescendingly or at best patronisingly, held that Eastern and Western philosophical trends are the two faces of the same coin, two opposite aspects of one and the same reality, but it is questionable whether there was any agreement on the same coin and the same reality. The coin or reality of the Indian concept of consciousness, most arguably, is quite different from that of a Western one!

*(To be concluded)*

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

## ETCHING SONNETS ON THE BODY OF ETERNITY

(Continued from the issue of January 2001)

SRI AUROBINDO had a horse-cart, known in those days as a Victoria. Dinendra Kumar Roy, a novelist who loved humour, was appointed Sri Aurobindo's Bengali teacher. He commented that the horse was very big but its speed was slower than a donkey's. Even whipping could not induce it to run faster. No one could say how old was the cart or the horse. All things were strange about Sri Aurobindo, he remarked. Once in the year 1893 when Sri Aurobindo was going from Camp Road towards the city in his Victoria, he became aware of an impending accident at the crossing of roads in front of the public garden. As he wished to come out of it, there appeared a 'Being of Light' out of him and helped to avert the accident. The experience remained with him. Long afterwards the poet reproduced on 13 September 1939 his experience in a sonnet titled, *The Godhead*. It begins like this:

I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves  
In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,  
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,  
In me, enveloping me the body of Him<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo with K. G. Deshpande and others visited Chandod a few times. We come to know from a letter by one Ranadhır Upadhyaya, dated 10 November 1974, that some 300 years ago one Sri Somvargiriji, a Mahant of Niranjani Akhada, took to Sri Chakra Upasana at Karnali. He had some siddhi in his Tantra Sadhana. He had established a small temple and installed inside it a three-foot high Kali idol of stone with a wooden tiger as her mount, near the Yagna-Kund. The Kali of Karnali, not a very famous temple, had been worshipped by Niranjani sadhus. The letter further states that Sri Aurobindo had visited the temple with Deshpande and Lele in 1906.<sup>2</sup> But according to records Sri Aurobindo met Lele for the first time in January 1908. However, there is no doubt that he had visited the temple around the time he had remained in Baroda. He made brief references to such visits while clarifying events about himself. The realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-Suleman in Kashmir, the living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada, the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay, etc.<sup>3</sup>

At the time when he visited the temple, he was not attracted to image worship, rather he was averse to it. But when he went inside the temple, the black image of the Goddess became living. He realised the truth of image-worship.

On the same day he wrote another sonnet, *The Stone Goddess*, immortalising his experience about Kali.

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,  
 From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,—  
 A living Presence deathless and divine,  
 A form that harboured all infinity <sup>4</sup>

In May 1903 Sri Aurobindo accompanied the Maharaja to Kashmir as his Secretary. While on tour he visited the Takht-i-Suleman or Hill of Shankaracharya. There in a very tangible way he suddenly experienced the vacant infinite. The result was that he wrote the sonnet *Adwaita*.

Around me was a formless solitude  
 All had become One strange Unnamable,  
 An unborn sole Reality world-nude,  
 Topless and fathomless, for ever still <sup>5</sup>

Sri Aurobindo, after the Surat Congress, visited Baroda in December 1907. We take it to be the extended Baroda period of his life. In January 1908 he as a nationalist leader delivered lectures at a number of places. He had an experience of Nirvana while he was in Bombay. During one of the evening talks on 13.4.1923, he said.

When I was in Bombay, from the balcony of a friend's house, I saw the whole busy movement of Bombay city as a picture in a cinema show—all unreal, shadowy. That was a Vedantic experience. Ever since I have maintained that peace of mind, never losing it even in the midst of difficulties <sup>6</sup>

We may say that it was a phase of his Nirvanic experiences under the influence of Lele, who had the power to transmit yogic experience to others, Sri Aurobindo himself mentioned this.

The effect of these experiences had never left him. We find that he had different incompatible experiences, even contrary to his belief at a particular point of time. In the light of his later realisations he made a synthesis and reviewed the validity of each experience in his life. We may say that such experiences occurred to help him realise the wholeness of the things with different facets. He never forgot them. From time to time he referred to them as examples, during the '30s he put them in his sonnets.

Talking about Nirvana he said "Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale. And then it slowly grew into something not less but greater than its first self."<sup>7</sup>

In a letter he not only referred to his experiences, he beautifully explained their significances as follows

A philosophic statement about the Atman is a mental formula, not knowledge, not experience, yet sometimes the Divine takes it as a channel of touch, strangely, a barrier in the mind breaks down, something is seen, a profound change operated in some inner part, there enters into the ground of the nature something calm, equal, ineffable. One stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless Vast in Nature, then suddenly there comes the touch, a revelation, a flooding, the mental loses itself in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite. Or you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what?—a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother. Similarly touches can come through art, music, poetry. All things in the Lila can turn into windows that open on the hidden reality. Still so long as one is satisfied with looking through windows, the gain is only initial, one day one will have to take up the pilgrim's staff and start out to journey there where the Reality is for ever manifest and present.<sup>8</sup>

On a visit to Baroda recently, I visited the public park, in front of which the roads have crossed and where now stands the big statue of the late Sayaji Rao Gaekwar. It was the place where Sri Aurobindo's Victoria was going to meet with an accident. The place is busier now. I took a few photos. I have also seen the big Jhula or swing on which both Lele and Sri Aurobindo sat for meditation in January 1908. The Jhula is kept permanently in a room used by Sri Aurobindo, in what was then Khase Rao Jadav's bungalow, which has since become Sri Aurobindo Nivas, a national memorial.

I also went to Chandod, sixty kms away from Baroda. Chandod is on a bank of the Narmada, the sacred river, which flows in the east-west direction there. Karnali and Ganganath, both about four kms away from Chandod—the former to the west and the latter to the east of the town—are the places Sri Aurobindo visited quite a few times. I hired a sail-boat and moved with the boatman over the water. At Karnali, there are two temples. In one there are the idols of Gita-Mata, Ram-Sita and Shiva-Parvati in separate rooms. All are idols made of white marble. The temple is almost new, completely renovated and repainted recently. Opposite to this temple is the Gayatri-Mata temple.

At Ganganath we saw the Shiva temple and a big marble statue of Yogi Brahmananda. The muddy path to Karnali rises steeply from the bank of the river. One has to climb with difficulty, particularly during the summer and rainy seasons. At Ganganath there are steps constructed from the bank of the river.

A little away from Karnali is the famous Kubereshwar temple, again rising high from the river bank. While going to Karnali one has to cross Triveni Sangam, the confluence of three rivers. While two rivers, Narmada and Orsang, are visible, the third is Gupta-Saraswati, that is, it flows at a lower level, unseen, as they explained.

Saraswati is one of the oldest rivers of India. But now it has dried almost in all the places.

While the busy roads before the public park in Baroda have become more busy, the river Narmada still flows on its course. Villages and towns on both of its banks have undergone changes, perhaps polluting the river; the idols have been replaced by new ones, made with costlier materials. Though there is a marble-statue of the sage Brahmananda, his Math is no longer there. The temple is a modern one.

As we know from his memoir, Charu Chandra Dutt, I C S, had visited the spot for the purpose of executing Sri Aurobindo's Bhawani Mandir project. He met Keshavananda-ji, the disciple of Brahmananda, who was in-charge of the National Ganganath School founded by Sri Aurobindo, K. G. Deshpande and Barindra Kumar Ghose. Dutt also met Sakharia Baba of Chharodi Math, with a request from Sri Aurobindo to remain at the Bhawani Mandir when it would be established. Though Sakharia Baba had agreed to remain there for three months in a year, the Bhawani Mandir project was finally abandoned.

While all such things of the past, including Sri Aurobindo's spiritual experiences, have almost become forgotten stories, of which the public park, the roads, the swing, the balcony of a house and the mute river are the only witnesses, the poet never forgot them. He etched the sonnets on the body of eternity to commemorate his experiences.

(Concluded)

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

#### References

- 1 SABCL, Vol 5, p 138
  - 2 *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993, pp 150-151
  - 3 SABCL, Vol 26, p 50
  - 4 SABCL, Vol 5, p 139
  - 5 *Ibid*, p 153
  - 6 *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (1995), by A, B Purani, p 303
  - 7 SABCL, Vol 26, p 102
  - 8 SABCL, Vol 22, p 199
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## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The Supreme Wisdom of the Upanishads: An Introduction.** *Klaus G Witz* Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 1998, Pages xxv + 558, Price Rs 700

UPANISHADIC studies presented from a scholarly point of view have an understandable acceptance in the Western pursuit. Dara Shikoh's project in 1657 of getting these Sanskrit scriptures translated into Persian had, we must say, fairly wide implications in terms of cultural interactions between two vastly different worlds. Through Persian they found their way into Latin and later into other European languages. Speaking about the Upanishadic study we have the famous statement of Schopenhauer "It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death." In fact he placed the Upanishads far above the wisdom philosophies belonging to the Greek and Christian traditions. Reason and Faith howsoever lofty these be cannot ultimately satisfy the deeper urges of a seeker unless in them is the touch of the living spirit in its dynamism of experienced truths. To a ready soul, wherever it be, an immediate appeal is made and a new path opened out. That is their enduring contribution and we should profit from it.

Indologists of the last century have in their own way brought forth to the wider world the sacred treasures of the past. They might have made mistakes or grossly misinterpreted the knowledge so alien to our times and to other cultures. Nevertheless, the quest is something that must be admired, from the dark and tamasic ages they started coming to light with a new vigour and with new possible openings. It is likely that Max Muller was essentially prompted by a kind of Macaulayan paid mission to undertake these studies, but for whatever value it be a scholarly and modern analytical approach in looking at them is something that emerged from these undertakings.

It is basically in this category that we have now with us *The Supreme Wisdom of the Upanishads* by Klaus Witz. The suggestion of the spiritual may not be direct in it, but the reward is a collation of diverse texts that brings to us another set of insights. In his preface the author says that "there must be scholarly consideration of inner, deeper aspects of the Upanishadic teachings similar to the consideration of biblical passages in Christian or Islamic theology and mysticism." But is that enough? Is that the right way?

All we can say regarding it is that such considerations have their own value but they do not go very far. If perceptions of poetry, recognition of sensibilities of another age and culture, and deeper knowledge of esoteric truths could have been added to this the gain would have been enduring and immense. If in a study there is a lack of these then it has the effect of making it discursive and dry and therefore it shall always remain to our inner sense unsatisfying and incomplete.

Prof. Klaus presents along erudite lines a very comprehensive introduction to the Upanishadic literature and moves on to certain specific aspects in our understanding

of the divinity in things Through the Hymn of Sacrifice of the Primordial Being, Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, and its elaborative interpretation in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we ponderously “walk the path to that Incomprehensible” which is variously described as Reality or Atman or Brahman The dilemma of describing the Ineffable is always there, but that is the only way of getting an idea about that ineffability and there are disciplines also to follow the path But there are many paths and each one has to find one’s own But ultimately it is the inner guide who has to come forward and lead the aspirant

Thus if the Qualityless assuming qualities is the theme propounded in the Vedic saga of creation, then we begin to see the spiritual intuition behind our social or secular organisations also The four powers of the World-Soul that have stood in their functional dynamism have, as it were, imaged themselves in the four parts of this great Cosmic Being or the Veda Purusha His Head is the Brahmin, Arms the Kshatriya, Heart the Vaishya, and Feet the Shudra Psychologically we have Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, and Perfection as His attributes This *chaturvarna* is universal and has been operating at all times and in all places We have lost this knowledge of the Revelation and instead in our gross and corrupting ignorance brought it down to the unhealthy mundane. This is perhaps one instance where a proper or inspired study of the scriptures should have helped us It is unfortunate that the present author has missed it, as did all the traditional commentators The action of these soul-forces is indeed the real basis of the eternal law, *sanātana dharma*, which makes an individual grow in freedom according to his nature

It is in this context we regret that the learned author has as if deliberately ignored the writings of Sri Aurobindo Unfortunately the secret of the Vedas given to us by him has yet remained unnoticed and unacknowledged Had this vast scholarship been combined with intimate enlightenment we would have had a more appealing and enduring work. Thus when the author says that “modern Indian students of the Upanishads and spiritual teachers agree that the *vidyās* are the heart of the Upanishads and that any true entrance into the higher Upanishadic teachings must be through the *vidyās*”, then we have to reconsider the entire tradition of knowledge that has come down from the Upanishads

Take an example, that of Varuni Vidya we have in the Taittiriya Upanishad Essentially the revelation is: Bliss is all, all is Bliss, Bliss is in all It is also the originator of all Knowledge To quote a line from *Savitri*, the self-existent and all-pervasive Brahman-Delight is the basis of this entire vast creation “He knew Bliss for the Eternal” (page 453) But the foundation of Bliss can be fully known only by entering into the Supermind or Vijnan consciousness This was the knowledge the seeker Bhrigu had received before he came to the last discovery of the Vidya In this connection Prof. Witz writes as follows “The first and most important point is that it is *ānanda* or bliss which arises when there is *vijñāna* and some knowledge of oneself as *vijñāna-maya*... *ānanda-maya* is to be realised after there is some *vijñāna* and knowledge that one is *vijñāna-maya*” (page 394) We do not know what “some

knowledge” or “some *vijñāna*” means

The Truth of Truth or *satyasya satyam* is a deeper pursuit and one has to have a kind of initiation through an expert into its domains. In that process preparatory background, or what the Upanishads call *Apara Vidya*, has a definite place also. In that respect the author’s claim that his work will provide “a deep introduction to the Upanishadic Wisdom” is very well maintainable. In fact, a systematic study of Prof Witz’s book can certainly enrich our understanding of the occult worlds we encounter in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. The Book of Yoga in *Savitri* is the New Knowledge or *Rupantara Vidya* dealing with the conquest of death and physical transformation. It is believed that its relationship with the past lore can prove to be of immense if not of seminal value.

R.Y. DESHPANDE

**Sri Aravindar: Kanda Alwargal** (The Alvars as Sri Aurobindo saw them) Compiled by Sri N. K. Krishnamurthy. Publishers: Kavitha Publications, 15, Masilamani Street, T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017. Price Rs. 20.

This is a wonderful book which should be read by Sri Aurobindo’s Tamil-speaking devotees. It brings to light the little known fact that Sri Aurobindo had studied the Tamil language even when he was in Calcutta and also that he was interested in the lives and works of the saints of Tamil Nadu—especially the Alvars.

There are indeed, many devotional songs on Shiva, Shakti, Ganesha and Krishna in Sanskrit and other languages. But those which sing the praise of Narayana, even in the temples of North India, are in Tamil only, the songs sung by the twelve Alvars.

It is understandable that Sri Aurobindo took interest in them, as they are all songs of Divine Experience. With the help of poet Subramania Bharathi he had enjoyed them and had translated them into English and published them in the *Arya*.

Like the Bhagavadgita, the Thirukkural is sacred to the Tamil people. Sri Aurobindo had studied the Thirukkural written by Sri Thiruvalluvar and had translated ten verses of the invocation.

So the devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Tamil-speaking people, rather Tamilians, should thank N. K. Krishnamurthy for bringing to light these wonderful facts from the Archives. The original text in Tamil with Sri Aurobindo’s rendering in English thus becomes available to a wider readership.

S. S. SETHU