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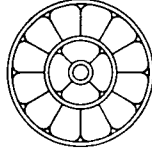
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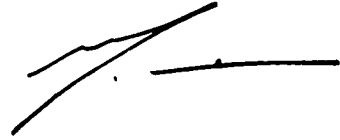


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 3

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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SAVITRI'S ASSURANCES TO THE SOUL-FORCES

ACCEPTING the universe as her body of woe,
The Mother of the seven sorrows bore
The seven stabs that pierced her bleeding heart...
In soft sweet training words slowly she spoke:
"O Savitri, I am thy secret soul
To share the suffering of the world I came..
Mine is the prayer that climbs in vain from earth. .
I have borne the calm indifference of Heaven,
Watched Nature's cruelty to suffering things
While God passed silent by nor turned to help.
Within me a blind faith and mercy dwell,
I carry the fire that never can be quenched
And the compassion that supports the suns
I am the hope that looks towards my God,
My God who never came to me till now;
His voice I hear that ever says 'I come':
I know that one day he shall come at last."
And Savitri heard the Voice, the echo heard
And turning to her being of pity spoke:
"Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world...
One day I will return, a bringer of strength,
And make thee drink from the Eternal's cup...
The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast, ..
There shall be peace and joy for ever more "

On passed she in her spirit's upward route
A Woman sat in gold and purple sheen ..
The Mother of Might looked down on passing things. .
A charm restoring hope in failing hearts
Aspired the harmony of her puissant voice:
"O Savitri, I am thy secret soul
I have come down into the human world
And the movement watched by an unsleeping Eye.
I am Durga, goddess of the proud and strong,
And Lakshmi, queen of the fair and fortunate;
I wear the face of Kali when I kill,
I trample the corpses of the demon hordes
I am charged by God to do his mighty work,

Uncaring I serve his will who sent me forth,
 Reckless of peril and earthly consequence. .
 I guide man to the path of the Divine
 And guard him from the red Wolf and the Snake...
 . my heart I have hardened and I do my work
 Slowly the light grows greater in the East,
 Slowly the world progresses on God's road
 His seal is on my task, it cannot fail:
 I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates
 When God comes out to meet the soul of the world ''
 And Savitri heard the voice, the warped echo heard
 And turning to her being of power she spoke:
 "Madonna of might, Mother of works and force,
 Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
 To help mankind and help the travail of Time. .
 One day I will return, a bringer of light
 Thy wisdom shall be vast as vast thy power .
 All shall be might and bliss and happy force ''

Ascending still her spirit's upward route
 She came into a high and happy space
 A Woman sat in clear and crystal light
 A low music heard became her floating voice:
 "O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
 I have come down to the wounded desolate earth
 To heal her pangs and lull her heart to rest...
 I show to her the figures of bright Gods
 And bring strength and solace to her struggling life .
 Then Love shall at last unwounded tread earth's soil,
 Man's mind shall admit the sovereignty of Truth
 And body bear the immense descent of God."'
 And Savitri heard the voice, the warped answer heard
 And turning to her being of light she spoke
 "Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace,
 Thou art a portion of my self put forth
 To raise the spirit to its forgotten heights
 And wake the soul by touches of the heavens. .
 One day I shall return, His hand in mine,
 And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute .
 There shall be light and peace in all the worlds ''

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 503-21)

TO MY COUNTRYMEN

Two decisive incidents have happened which make it compulsory on the Nationalist Party to abandon their attitude of reserve and expectancy and once more assume their legitimate place in the struggle for Indian liberties. The Reforms, so long trumpeted as the beginning of a new era of constitutional progress in India, have been thoroughly revealed to the public intelligence by the publication of the Councils' Regulations and the results of the elections showing the inevitable nature and composition of the new Councils. The negotiations for the union of Moderates and Nationalists in an United Congress have failed owing to the insistence of the former on the Nationalists subscribing to a Moderate profession of faith.

The survival of Moderate politics in India depended on two factors, the genuineness and success of the promised Reforms and the use made by the Conventionists of the opportunity given them by the practical suppression of Nationalist public activity. The field was clear for them to establish the effectiveness of the moderate policy and the living force of the Moderate Party. Had the Reforms been a genuine initiation of constitutional progress, the Moderate tactics might have received some justification from events. Or had the Moderates given proof of the power of carrying on a robust and vigorous agitation for popular rights, their strength and vitality as a political force might have been established, even if their effectiveness had been disproved. The Reforms have shown that nothing can be expected from persistence in Moderate politics except retrogression, disappointment and humiliation. The experience of the last year has shown that, without the Nationalists at their back, the Moderates are impotent for opposition and robust agitation. The political life of India in their hands has languished and fallen silent.

By the incontrovertible logic of events it has appeared that the success and vigour of the great movement inaugurated in 1905 was due to the union of Moderate and Nationalist on the platform of self-help and passive resistance. It was in order to provide an opportunity for the re-establishment of this union, broken at Surat, that the Nationalists gathered in force at Hughly in order to secure some basis and means of negotiation which might lead to united effort. The hand which we held out, has been rejected. The policy of Lord Morley has been to rally the Moderates and coerce the Nationalists; the policy of the Moderate Party led by Mr. Gokhale and Sir Pherozshah Mehta has been to play into the hands of that policy and give it free course and a chance of success. This alliance has failed of its object; the beggarly reward the Moderates have received, has been confined to the smallest and least popular elements in their party. But the rejection of the alliance with their own countrymen by the insistence on creed and constitution shows that the Moderates mean to persist in their course even when all motive and political justification for it have disappeared. Discomfited and humiliated by the Government, they can still find no way to retrieve their position nor any clear and rational course to suggest to the Indian people whom they misled into a misunderstanding of the very limited promises held out by Lord Morley.

Separated from the great volume of Nationalist feeling in the country, wilfully shutting its doors to popularity and strength by the formation of electorates as close and limited as those of the Reformed Councils, self-doomed to persistence in a policy which has led to signal disaster, the Convention is destined to perish of inanition and popular indifference, dislike and opposition. If the Nationalists stand back any longer, either the national movement will disappear or the void created will be filled by a sinister and violent activity. Neither result can be tolerated by men desirous of their country's development and freedom.

The period of waiting is over. We have two things made clear to us, first, that the future of the nation is in our hands, and, secondly, that from the Moderate Party we can expect no cordial co-operation in building it. Whatever we do, we must do ourselves, in our own strength and courage. Let us then take up the work God has given us, like courageous, steadfast and patriotic men willing to sacrifice greatly and venture greatly because the mission also is great. If there are any unnerved by the fear of repression, let them stand aside. If there are any who think that by flattering Anglo-India or coquetting with English Liberalism they can dispense with the need of effort and the inevitability of peril, let them stand aside. If there are any who are ready to be satisfied with mean gains or unsubstantial concessions, let them stand aside. But all who deserve the name of Nationalists, must now come forward and take up their burden.

The fear of the law is for those who break the law. Our aims are great and honourable, free from stain or reproach, our methods are peaceful, though resolute and strenuous. We shall not break the law and, therefore, we need not fear the law. But if a corrupt police, unscrupulous officials or a partial judiciary make use of the honourable publicity of our political methods to harass the men who stand in front by illegal ukases, suborned and perjured evidence or unjust decisions, shall we shrink from the toll that we have to pay on our march to freedom? Shall we cower behind a petty secrecy or a dishonourable inactivity? We must have our associations, our organisations, our means of propaganda, and, if these are suppressed by arbitrary proclamations, we shall have done our duty by our motherland and not on us will rest any responsibility for the madness which crushes down open and lawful political activity in order to give a desperate and sullen nation into the hands of those fiercely enthusiastic and unscrupulous forces that have arisen among us inside and outside India. So long as any loophole is left for peaceful effort, we will not renounce the struggle. If the conditions are made difficult and almost impossible, can they be worse than those our countrymen have to contend against in the Transvaal? Or shall we, the flower of Indian culture and education, show less capacity and self-devotion than the coolies and shopkeepers who are there rejoicing to suffer for the honour of their nation and the welfare of their community?

What is it for which we strive? The perfect self-fulfilment of India and the independence which is the condition of self-fulfilment are our ultimate goal. In the meanwhile such imperfect self-development and such incomplete self-government as

are possible in less favourable circumstances, must be attained as a preliminary to the more distant realisation. What we seek is to evolve self-government either through our own institutions or through those provided for us by the law of the land. No such evolution is possible by the latter means without some measure of administrative control. We demand, therefore, not the monstrous and misbegotten scheme which has just been brought into being, but a measure of reform based upon those democratic principles which are ignored in Lord Morley's Reforms,—a literate electorate without distinction of creed, nationality or caste, freedom of election unhampered by exclusory clauses, an effective voice in legislation and finance and some check upon an arbitrary executive. We demand also the gradual devolution of executive government out of the hands of the bureaucracy into those of the people. Until these demands are granted, we shall use the pressure of that refusal of co-operation which is termed passive resistance. We shall exercise that pressure within the limits allowed us by the law, but apart from that limitation the extent to which we shall use it, depends on expediency and the amount of resistance we have to overcome.

On our own side we have great and pressing problems to solve. National education languishes for want of moral stimulus, financial support, and emancipated brains keen and bold enough to grapple with the difficulties that hamper its organisation and progress. The movement of arbitration, successful in its inception, has been dropped as a result of repression. The Swadeshi-Boycott movement still moves by its own impetus, but its forward march has no longer the rapidity and organised irresistibility of forceful purpose which once swept it forward. Social problems are pressing upon us which we can no longer ignore. We must take up the organisation of knowledge in our country, neglected throughout the last century. We must free our social and economic development from the incubus of the litigious resort to the ruinously expensive British Courts. We must once more seek to push forward the movement toward economic self-sufficiency, industrial independence.

These are the objects for which we have to organise the national strength of India. On us falls the burden, in us alone there is the moral ardour, faith and readiness for sacrifice which we attempt and go far to accomplish the task. But the first requisite is the organisation of the Nationalist Party. I invite that party in all the great centres of the country to take up the work and assist the leaders who will shortly meet to consider steps for the initiation of Nationalist activity. It is desirable to establish a Nationalist Council and hold a meeting of the body in March or April of the next year. It is necessary also to establish Nationalist Associations throughout the country. When we have done this, we shall be able to formulate our programme and assume our proper place in the political life of India.

AUROBINDO GHOSE

(*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol 2, pp 324-28)

THE TRAINING OF THE SENSES

THERE are SIX senses which minister to knowledge, sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, mind, and all of these except the last look outward and gather the material of thought from outside through the physical nerves and their end-organs, eye, ear, nose, skin, palate. The perfection of the senses as ministers to thought must be one of the first cares of the teacher. The two things that are needed of the senses are accuracy and sensitiveness. We must first understand what are the obstacles to the accuracy and sensitiveness of the senses, in order that we may take the best steps to remove them. The cause of imperfection must be understood by those who desire to bring about perfection.

The senses depend for their accuracy and sensitiveness on the unobstructed activity of the nerves which are the channels of their information and the passive acceptance of the mind which is the recipient. In themselves the organs do their work perfectly. The eye gives the right form, the ear the correct sound, the palate the right taste, the skin the right touch, the nose the right smell. This can easily be understood if we study the action of the eye as a crucial example. A correct image is reproduced automatically on the retina, if there is any error in appreciating it, it is not the fault of the organ, but of something else.

The fault may be with the nerve currents. The nerves are nothing but channels, they have no power in themselves to alter the information given by the organs. But a channel may be obstructed and the obstruction may interfere either with the fullness or the accuracy of the information, not as it reaches the organ where it is necessarily and automatically perfect, but as it reaches the mind. The only exception is in case of a physical defect in the organ as an instrument. That is not a matter for the educationist, but for the physician.

If the obstruction is such as to stop the information reaching the mind at all, the result is an insufficient sensitiveness of the senses. The defects of sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, anaesthesia in its various degrees, are curable when not the effect of physical injury or defect in the organ itself. The obstructions can be removed and the sensitiveness remedied by the purification of the nerve system. The remedy is a simple one which is now becoming more and more popular in Europe for different reasons and objects, the regulation of the breathing. This process inevitably restores the perfect and unobstructed activity of the channels and, if well and thoroughly done, leads to a high activity of the senses. The process is called in Yogic discipline *nāḍī-śuddhi* or nerve-purification.

The obstruction in the channel may be such as not absolutely to stop in however small a degree, but to distort the information. A familiar instance of this is the effect of fear or alarm on the sense action. The startled horse takes the sack on the road for a dangerous living thing, the startled man takes a rope for a snake, a waving curtain for a ghostly form. All distortions due to actions in the nervous system can be traced to some kind of emotional disturbance acting in the nerve channels. The only remedy

for them is the habit of calm, the habitual steadiness of the nerves. This also can be brought about by *nāḍī-śuddhi* or nerve-purification, which quiets the system, gives a deliberate calmness to all the internal processes and prepares the purification of the mind.

If the nerve channels are quiet and clear, the only possible disturbance of the information is from or through the mind. Now the *manas* or sixth sense is in itself a channel like the nerves, a channel for communication with the *buddhi* or brain-force. Disturbance may happen either from above or from below. The information outside is first photographed on the end organ, then reproduced at the other end of the nerve system in the *citta* or passive memory. All the images of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste are deposited there and the *manas* reports them to the *buddhi*. The *manas* is both a sense organ and a channel. As a sense organ it is as automatically perfect as the others, as a channel it is subject to disturbance resulting either in obstruction or distortion.

As a sense organ the mind receives direct thought impressions from outside and from within. These impressions are in themselves perfectly correct, but in their report to the intellect they may either not reach the intellect at all or may reach it so distorted as to make a false or partially false impression. The disturbance may affect the impression which attends the information of eye, ear, nose, skin or palate, but it is very slightly powerful here. In its effect on the direct impressions of the mind, it is extremely powerful and the chief source of error. The mind takes direct impressions primarily of thought, but also of form, sound, indeed of all the things for which it usually prefers to depend on the sense organs. The full development of this sensitiveness of the mind is called in our Yogic discipline *sūkṣmadṛṣṭi* or subtle reception of images. Telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, presentiment, thought-reading, character-reading and many other modern discoveries are very ancient powers of the mind which have been left undeveloped, and they all belong to the *manas*. The development of the sixth sense has never formed part of human training. In a future age it will undoubtedly take a place in the necessary preliminary training of the human instrument. Meanwhile there is no reason why the mind should not be trained to give a correct report to the intellect so that our thought may start with absolutely correct if not with full impressions.

The first obstacle, the nervous emotional, we may suppose to be removed by the purification of the nervous system. The second obstacle is that of the emotions themselves warping the impression as it comes. Love may do this, hatred may do this, any emotion or desire according to its power and intensity may distort the impression as it travels. This difficulty can only be removed by the discipline of the emotions, the purifying of the moral habits. This is a part of moral training and its consideration may be postponed for the moment. The next difficulty is the interference of previous associations formed or ingrained in the *citta* or passive memory. We have a habitual way of looking at things and the conservative inertia in our nature disposes us to give every new experience the shape and semblance of those to which we are accustomed.

It is only more developed minds which can receive first impressions without an unconscious bias against the novelty of novel experience. For instance, if we get a true impression of what is happening—and we habitually act on such impressions true or false—if it differs from what we are accustomed to expect, the old association meets it in the *citta* and sends a changed report to the intellect in which either the new impression is overlaid and concealed by the old or mingled with it. To go farther into this subject would be to involve ourselves too deeply into the details of psychology. This typical instance will suffice. To get rid of this obstacle is impossible without *cittaśuddhi* or purification of the mental and moral habits formed in the *citta*. This is a preliminary process of Yoga and was effected in our ancient system by various means, but would be considered out of place in a modern system of education.

It is clear, therefore, that unless we revert to our old Indian system in some of its principles, we must be content to allow this source of disturbance to remain. A really national system of education would not allow itself to be controlled by European ideas in this all-important matter. And there is a process so simple and momentous that it can easily be made a part of our system.

It consists in bringing about passivity of the restless flood of thought sensations rising of its own momentum from the passive memory independent of our will and control. This passivity liberates the intellect from the siege of old associations and false impressions. It gives it power to select only what is wanted from the storehouse of the passive memory, automatically brings about the habit of getting right impressions and enables the intellect to dictate to the *citta* what *samskāras* or associations shall be formed or rejected. This is the real office of the intellect,—to discriminate, choose, select, arrange. But so long as there is not *cittaśuddhi*, instead of doing this office perfectly, it itself remains imperfect and corrupt and adds to the confusion in the mind channel by false judgment, false imagination, false memory, false observation, false comparison, contrast and analogy, false deduction, induction and inference. The purification of the *citta* is essential for the liberation, purification and perfect action of the intellect.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol 17, pp 216-19)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of February 2001)

स तू नो अग्निर्नयतु प्रजानन्नच्छा रत्नं देवभक्तं यदस्य ।
धिया यद् विश्वे अमृता अकृण्वन् द्यौष्पिता जनिता सत्यमुक्षन् ॥

(Rigveda, 4. 1 10)

May this Agni lead us in his knowledge towards that bliss of him which is enjoyed by the gods, that which by the thought all the immortals created and Dyauspita the father out-pouring the Truth (SABCL, Vol 10, p 195)

Let this Fire taking knowledge of all things lead us towards the ecstasy That is enjoyed by the Gods, which all the immortals created by the thought, and Father Heaven was its begetter raining the truth (SABCL, Vol. 11, p 163)

स जायत प्रथमः पस्त्यासु महो बुध्ने रजसो अस्य योनौ ।
अपादशीर्षा गुहमानो अन्तायोयुवानो वृषभस्य नीले ॥

(Rigveda, 4. 1.11)

He was born, the first, in the waters, in the foundation of the vast world (Swar), in its womb, (i e its seat and birthplace, its original home); without head and feet, concealing his two extremities, setting himself to his work in the lair of the Bull. (SABCL, Vol 10, pp 195-96)

He was born first and supreme in the Rivers, in the foundation of the vast mid-world, in his native seat, without head, without feet, concealing his two ends he joins them in the lair of the Bull (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 164)

प्र शर्ध आर्तं प्रथमं विपन्या ऋतस्य योना वृषभस्य नीले ।
स्पर्हो युवा वपुष्यो विभावा सप्त प्रियासोऽजनयन्त वृष्णे ॥

(Rigveda, 4 1.12)

He went forward by illumined knowledge as the first force, in the seat of the Truth, in the lair of the Bull, desirable, young, full in body, shining wide, the seven Beloved bore him to the Lord. (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 196)

He came forth with a vibrancy of light, the first and supreme force, in the native seat of Truth, in the lair of the Bull, desirable and young and beautiful of body and wide in lustre; the seven Beloved brought him to birth for the Bull (SABCL, Vol 11, p 164)

अस्माकमत्र पितरो मनुष्या अभि प्र सेदुर्ऋतमाशुषाणा ।
अश्वव्रजा सुदुघा वव्रे अन्तरुदुस्त्रा आजनुषसो हुवाना ॥

(Rigveda, 4 1 13)

Here our human fathers seeking possession of the Truth went forward to it; the bright cows in their covering prison, the good milkers whose pen is in the rock they drove upward (to the Truth), the Dawns answered their call (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 196)

Here, our human fathers went forward on their way towards the Truth desiring to possess it, they drove upwards the luminous ones, the good milk-cows in their stone (rocky) pen within the hiding cave, calling to the Dawns. (SABCL, Vol 11, p 164)

ते मर्मुजत दद्व्वासो अद्रि तदेषामन्ये अभितो वि वोचन् ।
पश्वयन्त्रासो अभि कारमर्चन् विदन्त ज्योतिश्चकृपन्त धीभि ॥

(Rigveda, 4 1 14)

They rent the hill asunder and made them bright, others all around them declared wide this (Truth) of theirs, drivers of the herds they sang the hymn to the doer of works (Agni), they found the light, they shone in their thoughts (or, they accomplished the work by their thoughts) (SABCL, Vol 10, p 196)

They rent the hill, they made themselves bright and pure, others around them proclaimed that work of theirs, drivers of the herd, they sang the chant of illumination to the Doer of the work, they found the Light, they shone with their thoughts (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 164)

ते गव्यता मनसा दृध्रमुब्धं गा येमानं परि षन्तमद्रिम् ।
दृळ्हं नरो वचसा दैव्येन व्रजं गोमन्तमुशिजो वि ववु ॥

(Rigveda, 4. 1. 15)

They with the mind that seeks the light (the cows, *gavyatā manasā*) rent the firm and compact hill that environed the luminous cows; the souls that desire opened by the divine word, *vacasā daivvena*, the firm pen full of the kine (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 196)

By a mind seeking the Rays they rent the firm massed hill which encircled and repressed the shining herds; men desiring laid open the strong pen full of the Ray-Cows by the divine word. (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 165)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

BALCONY DARSHAN—MARCH PAST— CONCENTRATION

Sweet Mother, every day we go for the Balcony Darshan, and here at the Playground we come for the March Past and the Concentration¹ What should be our approach to each one of these things?

THE most indispensable thing in every case is receptivity.

At the Balcony, for example. When I come on the Balcony I make a special concentration, you notice that I look at everybody, don't you? I look, see, pass my eyes over every one, I know all who are there, and where they are, and I give each one exactly what he needs, I see his condition and give him what is necessary. It can go fast, because otherwise I would keep you there for half an hour, but I do it, that's what I do. That's the only reason why I come out, because otherwise I carry you in my consciousness. I carry you in my consciousness always, without seeing you, I do what is necessary. But here it is a moment when I can do it by touching the physical directly, you see; otherwise it is through the mind that it acts, the mind or the vital. But here I touch the physical directly through the sight, the contact of sight, and that's what I do—each time.

So if each one who comes, comes with a kind of trust, of inner opening, and is ready to receive what is given, and naturally is not dispersed there are people there who pass their time looking at what is happening, what the others are doing, and in this way they don't have much chance to receive anything very much..but if one comes concentrated on what he can receive and is as quiet as possible, and as though he were open to receive something, as though he were opening his consciousness, like this (*gesture*) to receive something—if one has a particular difficulty or problem, one can put it in an aspiration, but it is not very necessary, because usually between what people think about themselves and the condition in which they are, there is always a little difference, in the sense that it's not quite the thing; their way of feeling or seeing the thing creates a little deformation, so I am obliged to cross over their deformation; whereas if they don't think about anything, if they are simply like this (*gesture*), open and awaiting the Force—I go straight in and what has to be done I do. And that's the moment when I know exactly, you see, I do this (*gesture*), quite slowly—from above I see *very well, very well*—exactly the condition in which each one is. That's the morning's work.

The "Concentration" is something absolutely different. I try, first, to make the atmosphere as calm, quiet, unified as possible, as though I were spreading the consciousness out wide, like this (*gesture*); and then from far above I bring down the Force as much as I can and put it upon you as strongly as I can. So this depends

¹ In this period [1955] the Mother used to give Darshan every morning from her balcony. This was known as Balcony Darshan. In the evening She was present in the Playground to receive the salute at the March Past and conduct the Concentration at the end of the Marching.

exclusively on whether one is quite tranquil and well concentrated, here one must be concentrated, one must not be dispersed, one must be concentrated, but very . how to put it? plain, very horizontal Like this (*gesture*) Then the Force puts a pressure And it's above all for unifying, penetrating the whole and, endeavouring to make of it something cohesive which can express collectively the Force from above

In the morning it is an individual work, in the evening it is a collective work But naturally, within that, each one can feel individually, but you see, it is a work of unification which I do in the evening. Each one receives according to his receptivity and the state in which he is

And during the March Past, Sweet Mother?

That, the March Past, it is it is more a physical action—preparing oneself for the physical action It is more a way of opening oneself to the energy, the universal energy, to prepare for the action It is a contact with the energy, the universal energy which is there, it is to help the body to participate in the work At that moment it is something very physical This is truly the basis of physical culture, to prepare the body for the action and the receptivity of energies to accomplish the work. And also the Marching, even when I am not there But the March Past is for stimulating the receptivity of the body to the energies for realisation It is based upon something which is expressed in all kinds of ways, but it is a kind of admiration how to put it? a spontaneous and also charming admiration for heroism, which is in the most material physical consciousness.

And this is a tremendous power for overcoming *tamas* and physical inertia Besides it is upon this that all the fighting capacities of armies in the wars are founded. If human beings did not have this, well, one could never make them go to fight one another, stupidly, for things which they don't even know And it is because this is there in the being that these great masses of men can be utilised, employed and put in motion

There were examples of this, absolutely marvellous ones, in the First World War, which was much harder for the individual than the Second It was a terrible war, because men had dug trenches and were obliged to lie sunk in the earth like worms, under the perpetual danger of a bombardment against which they could do nothing but protect themselves as well as possible, and they remained at times shut in there for days Sometimes it happened that they were shut in for more than fifteen days in one trench, for there was no means of changing them, that is, it was a mole's life under a perpetual danger, and with nothing to do about it Of all things it was the most horrible It was a horrible war Well, there were troops which had been left like that, for nothing more could be done because of the bombardments and all that, they could not be relieved any more It was called "relieving", relieving the troops, bringing new troops and taking away the others to give them rest There were some who remained in this way for days There were some who remained ten days, twelve

days. There was cause enough to go mad, for anyone at all. Well, among these people there were some who related their life, related what happened.

I have read books about this, not novels, reports noted from day to day of what was happening. There is one—by the way it is a great writer who wrote his memories of the War, and he related that they had held on like that under the bombardment for ten days (Naturally there were many who were finished off there.) And then they were made to come back behind and were replaced by others, new ones arrived, the old ones returned. And naturally when they returned—you see, they had eaten poorly, had slept badly, had lived in dark holes, indeed it was a dreadful life—when they had come back, some of them could not even take off their shoes any more because the feet were so swollen inside that they couldn't pull them off. These are unthinkable physical horrors. Well, these people (you see, at that time mechanical transports were not as common as in this last war), so they came back on foot, like that, broken, half-dead.

They had stuck.

That was one of the most beautiful things in the war from the point of view of courage: because they had held on, the enemy could not take the trenches and was not able to advance. Naturally the news spread and then they came to a village and all the people of the village came out to receive them and lined the road with flowers and shouts of enthusiasm. All those men who could no longer even drag themselves along, you see, who were like this (*gesture of collapse*), suddenly all of them were seen drawing themselves up erect, holding up their heads, filled with energy, and all together they began to sing and went through the whole village singing. It seemed like a resurrection.

Well, it is about this kind of thing I am speaking. It is something so beautiful, which is in the most material physical consciousness! You see, all of a sudden, they had the feeling that they were heroes, that they had done something heroic, and so they didn't want to look like people completely flattened out, no longer good for anything. "We are ready to go back to the fight if necessary!" Like that. And they went by in this way. It seems it was marvellous, I am sure of it, that it was marvellous.¹

Well, that's what you are developing with the March Past now.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers*, CWM, Vol 7, pp 257-61)

¹ In continuation of this talk, while leaving the Playground, the Mother remarked to Pavitra "It is the cellular response to the enthusiasm of the vital."

THREE LETTERS

I HAVE been asked “Is there a difference between being an instrument of the Mother and being her channel?” To my mind one who is her instrument may not be entirely at her disposal. She works a good deal through him, but his personality keeps the right to put its own colour on the action. The channel has yielded itself completely. Of course its own shape lends a personal touch to the action but the touch is not deliberately given—it just happens by a fact of Nature. Even so, in course of time, the shape itself can undergo a change, because there is goodwill in the channel and there is no insistence on its own shape. The shape itself is not absolutely fixed. The very act of spontaneous self-giving renders it plastic and the more the Mother’s force flows through it the more does it get modified according to the will implicit in that force.

While I have been attending to this difference, the inner being has opened to a creative urge which I recognise as having waited for its hour and a poem has taken shape which seems to have no direct relation to this difference I have noted—except that I have served as a channel for the Mother in her avatar as the Muse. Here are the lines

The hushful moment ere
 Bird-babbles dart,—
A mystery brims up
 In the vigilant heart—
The fullness of a flower
 Which holds in coloured calm
The flawless hidden hour
 Before the primal sleep
Swirled into star on star
 That reverie was the deep
Whence near and far
 The unutterable glory
Glimmered to call
 Out of star-splintered night
The One who is the All

17 9 1995

*

You incline to make Yoga too strenuous an exercise. If, in the act of realising Sri Aurobindo’s vision “All life is Yoga”, you have to achieve a feat of reverse evolution, it is better to cry halt to Yoga if not to put a stop to life! Yoga has to be a labour of love. In its being “revelatory” it must not forget that this exalted epithet in-

cludes—even starts with—the word ‘revel’. This word throws my mind back to the last stanza of my poem *Singers of the Spirit*

Our tones of fathomless joy instil
 A taste of the Ineffable—
 Ours is the mystic urge
 Of mighty mobile shining seas
 Mirroring sky-eternities
 In the revel of their surge

Your heart-heave, like those shining seas, must be joyous Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have cut out all strenuousness from Yoga No doubt, a steady will is necessary, but tight-lipped rigorousness is not encouraged—it would be too much like the proverbial *rigor mortis* which doctors are fated so often to witness Too much self-analysis is also not favoured Instead of sitting in sackcloth and ashes because of some slip from ‘sanctity’ we are advised to inwardly surrender the slip to the Divine and march on with a smile reflecting a bright future ahead Further, all adverse karmas can be wiped off the moment one resolves not to repeat them this is our Mother’s teaching The life of an Aurobindonian enjoys ample chance to be sunny

*

You have asked me to advise you in sadhana. There are two requests here One is about the psychic being, the other, how to silence the mind Sri Aurobindo has mentioned three ways for the latter. One is the old way of standing apart from one’s thoughts and watching them without any involvement until the stream of mental formations dwindles for lack of support The second way is to throw all thoughts out of one as if they had been coming from outside and can be pushed away. I personally favour this treatment of them—except that instead of merely pushing them off I push towards the Mother like offerings from me This brings the heart into play along with the mind I may add that at the same time that one is doing the offering-*cum*-rejecting, a sense of something standing back may be had At least I feel a somewhat detached background to the activity of the push towards the Mother The third way is to invoke the pre-existent peace from above the brain-mind There is a vast of spiritual silence overhead waiting to descend One is not always able to appeal to it and draw it down That is why other methods are necessary as substitutes or supplements. Try to feel your mind as open to an infinity all around, have the sense of a wide withdrawal of the being into a poise behind the usual movements of your consciousness, and hold constantly the attitude of remembering the Mother and offering to her whatever you think or do If these three gestures can be practised more or less together, there will come in the course of time a distinct emergence of the psychic presence and then in the midst of all happenings you will be always bathed in bliss

You have spoken of “death for a better life, for better service” How can you be sure of a better future in your next incarnation? A better future is assured only if one has made the best use of whatever circumstances have occurred in the present life I know that your circumstances have been pretty hard and I admire the courage and patience with which you have carried on and I am sure you have the inner resources to continue. Be as much in touch with our Divine Mother as you can and pray to her to guide you. Sometimes just stop planning. Give the problem to her and wait. Inspiration will come

16 2 90

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

EARTH'S SECRET

INWARD, ever inward to that sacred point, the soul
The ancient journey wends into the light of day.
Now concretised the matrix womb of matter's realm,
Time's temple pulse here beacons those who seek the Way

Conscious time-strands guide the pilgrim's steady tread,
Perfectly aligned and centred in the present's lucid scene,
Transported onward by a future/past's relentless urge,
I am a willing slave to time's eternal play

That yearning ache from search in aeons serpentine,
Attuned at last to Godhead's absolute poise,
Draws me to that magic state of total sight.
Billowing waves of oneness inundate till now

Immersed in cooling concentrated air of vibrant peace,
Weighted lightness anchoring the being's throbbing joy,
Beholding in wide-eyed wonder Mystery's ultimate vault,
I share Earth's secret in the core of Matter's sleep

ARYAMAN

THE SAMADHI

SOMETIME back a friend from the U.S.A. wrote to me asking for the dimensions of the Samadhi. She explained that she was making a painting of the Ashram Courtyard and she wanted to get the Samadhi in it in its right proportions. So I asked our Drawing Office for a print of their drawing of the Samadhi and sent this to her. But, recently, thinking back on the blueprint that I had sent to my friend it occurred to me that the drawing we have of the Samadhi is of what we see only on the top. There is no record of the construction below, and so I suggested that such a drawing be now made. There is no record of this anywhere but in my memory and so I gave whatever details I could remember to the Drawing Office and they have now made a drawing of the two chambers below the ground in which lie the bodies of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Now it has occurred to me that I should give also the whole story of the Samadhi so that there is a record of this. I will attempt to do so in this present article. But I feel it necessary to go back to what I consider to be the beginning of it all and so I give first the story of things that have already been published but which may bear republishing now. I start with the Passing of Sri Aurobindo on the morning of the 5th December 1950.

The Mother had given me the great privilege of making all the furniture in Sri Aurobindo's room and then the work of polishing this furniture. So I had access to His room and could go there at any time. But, nevertheless I would not normally have been at His bedside in His last hours but for the oxygen He needed. Dr. Sanyal who was looking after Sri Aurobindo had asked for oxygen during the last days and the Mother had asked me to arrange for it and learn how to manipulate the controls. This is why I was present there, at the last moments of His life. Sri Aurobindo was, it seemed, in a comatose condition, or so it seemed by medical standards, and He was lying on His bed with the oxygen tube in His nostrils and I was close by, at the cylinder, controlling it and giving more or less oxygen as desired by Dr. Sanyal by the signs he gave. Then, at 1 00 a m on the morning of the 5th December, from His so-called coma, Sri Aurobindo spoke in a firm and clear voice and asked Nirod what the time was. It was really a great surprise to hear His clear voice and even Nirod was shaken and he replied that it was "one o'clock". Sri Aurobindo said: "Oh, I see" and went back into His coma which was surely His very conscious state of meditation. Then His breathing began to get much slower with longer gaps between the breaths and at 1 15 a m He took His last breath. Dr. Sanyal then gave me the sign to close down the oxygen and I did this and stepped right back into the room. I knew that I was at a very important moment in the history of the world and made an effort to remain calm and watch it all as objectively as possible.

There were several persons in the room but I do not remember all of them as some were a bit withdrawn. I just remember Dr. Sanyal, the doctor in charge, who was right up beside Sri Aurobindo and Champaklal who was massaging His feet and

Nirod and Satyendra When Dr Sanyal felt that the end was drawing near he asked that The Mother be called and She came at once and stood beside Dr Sanyal and was truly a rock of strength and calm It was wonderful to see Her, so straight and erect, like a statue of a goddess in white marble Even after Sri Aurobindo took His last breath those around were not fully aware that His life had left Him It was only when Dr Sanyal began to withdraw the oxygen tube that Champaklal became aware that it was over and he became hysterical and started weeping and asking The Mother what had happened The others also were in a state of shock Dr Sanyal looked around at all of them and then saw me right there behind, just watching, and he said to The Mother "Mother, it seems that Udar is the only calm person in the room and so I feel that he should be given charge of it all" The Mother turned to me and said "Udar, you take charge and come to me for instructions" She then left the room

When I went to the Mother, She gave me full instructions about where to bury Sri Aurobindo and asked me to go down to a depth of eight feet There was already a construction of sorts on which flower pots were kept and all that had to be broken down and the pit dug up. Some roots of the tree over the place had to be cut and Mother gave precise instructions about this The whole thing had to be finished in one day as we did not know, at the time, that His body would not decompose and so we had to work very fast and very hard

About the digging, which was the most difficult work, I remember two persons who worked very well and very hard One was a visitor, a Jew, one Dr H P Kaplan, who was staying at Golconde at the time He worked like four men It was wonderful to see how well and quickly he worked The other was our dear Biren, the boxer He also worked wonderfully So many of our Sadhaks and Sadhikas worked and even the children. We needed many persons as we did all the work ourselves and did not bring in our paid workers Besides the digging, the soil had to be taken away and the hollow blocks of cement concrete had to be brought from the Coco Garden and also the preset re-inforced concrete slabs, to form the cover of the pit We dug down to eight feet below the ground level and there we rammed down the earth and laid a layer of about six inches of solid, dense concrete as the base, and this was plastered over to make a good clean floor Then the four side walls were built, using the concrete hollow blocks from Coco Garden, with the hollows vertical and these hollows were then filled with concrete so that the walls were of solid cement concrete, eight inches thick We went up about four and a half feet and then levelled off to lay the cover, which was to be of the precast slabs from Coco Garden, about 1½ inches thick of well-re-inforced cement concrete Then the walls were also plastered and the room made ready for the body of the Lord All this was done in one day, on the 5th December 1950

But the body of Sri Aurobindo did not decompose, it lay on His bed, with a royal and calm look and with a great and wonderful golden light all around Him The golden light was really marvellous His body lay in this state till the morning of the 9th December when the Mother gave Her order to put Him into the coffin we had

prepared and to lay Him in the room we had made ready. Although Dr Sanyal said that decomposition had set in, I was not convinced that it had, as there was no smell at all of decomposition, a very unmistakable smell. But Mother said that as the golden light had withdrawn and a greyness was coming on His face, that was the sign She had received for the burial to take place. But, She allowed me to keep my belief which is that His body will not decompose for thousands of years but will remain, grey in colour and much thinned down by the loss of liquid and with all the features quite intact. I had seen, in my youth, the body of Saint Francis Xavier in Goa and had noted the greyness of the colour of the skin and the shrinkage of the flesh, but that all the features were quite intact, even the eyelashes. That is my belief and the Mother did not discourage it. So I had prepared a very, very solid coffin, lined with silver sheet and with a thick and solid cover and a rubber gasket all around and with so many screws that even small bacteria would not be able to enter from outside. I did not want that things from outside should attack His body.

When I lifted His body to place it into the coffin the whole body was lying in the liquid that had come out of it. Normally such liquids have a very foul smell but in this case the liquid had a celestial perfume that was really wonderful. My whole body, my clothes and all, were soaked with this liquid and it was so good that I did not change my clothes or even bathe for some days, to keep all that wonderful perfume on me.

After His body was laid in the room we had made ready for Him, the concrete slab cover was put on and fully sealed and plastered to make the floor of the room to be built above it. This room was built a bit later, in the same way as the lower one, to a height of about four and a half feet and when it reached its top, it was about two feet above the ground level.

Regarding the second room when the Mother had asked me to build it I protested as I believed that this room was meant for Herself and I did not want to participate in anything that anticipated Her leaving us. But the Mother was adamant and said to me what She had never said before, "I order you to do it!" After that there was nothing but to obey.

The portion above the ground level, to a height of about 2½ feet, was built with an added piece to the west, to conform to the original structure which had the flower pots on it. This is the present form of the Samadhi as seen above the ground level. The surface of this was at first just finished with cement plaster and grey-washed, to match the rest of the Ashram buildings. The Mother did not want anything elaborate. But, with the constant stream of persons coming to the Samadhi, this surface soon became quite soiled and, before each Darshan, the whole of it had to be scrubbed and washed and repainted grey. This went on for many years and it was only in the mid sixties that the Mother agreed to the marble cladding of the surfaces.

The second room, over the one where Sri Aurobindo was lying, was not kept empty. We brought some good river sand, had it washed several times and sieved to get only the fine sand and this clean sand was put into the room before the covering slabs were laid. This sand remained there, over the body of the Lord and was

impregnated with all the great vibrations that emanated from Him, for 23 years from 1950 to 1973. When the Mother left Her body and we had to lay Her in this top room, the sand was emptied carefully and stored safely. This sand is now made into small packets and given to those who ask for it. The "Samadhı Sand" carries the power of blessings and protection and, in specific cases and for specific persons, the packets, when further blessed at the chairs etc., of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, have added value and are even curative.

When the Samadhı was first built, the Mother gave Her Message in French and in English and these were engraved on small marble slabs and fixed on the sides of the Samadhı. Later when the marbling was done these messages were kept as they were, a little embedded, and they are now in that way on the Samadhı.

When the Mother decided to have the whole of the top cladded in marble She asked Navajata to get the money for this. He asked Shyam Sunder to ask Dwıj (Tarachand Barjatya) for the money but Shyam Sunder offered to pay it himself. We sent two of our boys, then working at Coco Garden, Niranjana and Suresh, to get the marble from Rajasthan, all cut to size according to a list I gave. But they could not get this done there and returned to Madras where they could get the marble pieces from one Joshi & Co.

In all, 54 pieces of marble were brought and with these the cladding was done and completed on the evening of the 3rd April 1967, on the eve of the 4th April which is the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's arrival at Pondicherry. When the cladding was finished, one small piece was left over and I took this to the Mother for Her to keep but She asked me to give this to Shyam Sunder who has kept it as a very valuable object to be revered. When the Mother left Her body, the top slab had to be lifted off and for this some of the marble had to be chipped off and replaced by some pieces which we had kept. This second cladding was finished in the night of the 23rd November 1973, the eve of the 24th November, the Siddhi Day.

The Samadhı, as it now is, has a shallow basin of about three inches and this is filled with sand which is changed often as it carries all the flowers, etc., which are put on the Samadhı daily and which do stain this sand. This is not the "Samadhı Sand". The "Samadhı Sand" as already stated, is the sand which was in the top chamber, lying above the body of Sri Aurobindo for 23 years and this is a clean and fine sand, full of His Light and Love and Force.

UDAR

(Courtesy *Sri Aurobindo's Action*, July 1992)

LET THY SILVER SILENCE POUR

A Poem by Nirodbaran with
Sri Aurobindo's Corrections and Comments

(Original form)

Let thy silver silence pour
Wonder-rays of the moon
On my lonely sand-grey shore
*Not clear, what is strewn
with or on what?* *Suddenly jewel-strewn.*
(Hill and valley strewn)

Many foam-washed shells there bring
Traces of the high
Lustrous where,
(Tidal) sea (which) ring on ring,
Breaks
(Weaves) a mystery
*A sea can't "weave"
anything Some other verb
would be more effective*

All my prayer and bleeding quest
For thy sky-winged Flame
Led me to the dark-veiled west
Where thy secret Name

Like a dream-orbed twilight shone
In the shadowy deep,
Path-ways of the amethyst dawn
*An "amethyst" dawn
which has an "ivory"
sleep is not convincing—
so I alter "its"* *in*
Linked (its) ivory sleep

With the snow-white vigilance
Of an endless Light
Timeless rapture of thy trance—
Oceaned Infinite.

17 2 38

Q: Guru, an attempt at trochee, but God knows what it is about

A That doesn't matter Whatever it may be about, it is very beautiful—the whole of it—but the last three stanzas especially

Q This poem has been lying here for a long time, requiring some corrections. You say that the 2nd line is not clear Why? Can't it mean—on my lonely sand grey, hill and valley-strewn shore?

A. It would then have to be written Hill-and-valley-strewn Moreover "sand-grey shore" can only mean a sandy beach and that is not the place for strewing hills and valleys

Q. Will any of these do

Desert memory strewn

With a memory strewn

On a desert strewn

With a barrenness strewn?

A Good Lord, no! One doesn't strew a shore with these things

The only thing I can think of is "Suddenly jewel-strewn"—the rays creating as if sparkling jewels on the sand

7 8 38

(Revised Form)

Let thy silver silence pour
 Wonder-rays of the moon
 On my lonely sand-grey shore
 Suddenly jewel-strewn

Many foam-washed shells there bring
 Traces of the high
 Lustrous sea where, ring on ring,
 Breaks a mystery

All my prayer and bleeding quest
 For thy sky-winged Flame
 Led me to the dark-veiled west
 Where thy secret Name

Like a dream-orbed twilight shone
 In the shadowy deep;
 Path-ways of the amethyst dawn
 Linked in ivory sleep

With the snow-white vigilance
 Of an endless Light
 Timeless rapture of thy trance—
 Oceaned Infinite

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of February 2001)

The Vision and the Boon

1

IN BOOK THREE, Canto Three of *Savitri*, Aswapati has experienced the supramental world whose descent must one day transform life on earth. But the actualities of the material world contrast starkly with the Truth-creation that has to manifest here. There is a hiatus between the two, a gulf between what is and what must be, that seems unbridgeable. Only the heart's faith can persist in believing that this darkened world could change into an image of that luminous one in the not too distant future.

In the next canto, the Being whom Aswapati has glimpsed on the spiritual summits as the universal Mother appears and speaks in the chambers of his heart. She asks him to go on helping the world with his "great lonely days" and to live for "the slow-paced omniscient purpose".¹ But she seems to discourage, at least initially, the hope of an early victory of the Spirit over the opposing forces. It is only in response to Aswapati's impassioned plea that she consents to incarnate her force for an action that will "change all future time".²

This final canto of Book Three is central to the plan of the epic and crucial for understanding its significance. It grew out of a brief passage on the second page of the first draft of the poem. There Sri Aurobindo gave a mystical turn to the account found in the Mahabharata of Aswapati's vision of the goddess *Sāvitri* and her granting of a radiant daughter instead of the many sons she was asked to bestow. Vyasa's goddess, "rising from the sacrificial flames in her splendid form",³ became "immortal Savitri" in Sri Aurobindo's draft,

The goddess born of sacrificial fire
Who rises voiceful from an unseen Sun.

The second line of this description of the goddess *Sāvitri* suggests the derivation of her name. It is the feminine counterpart of *Savitṛ*, who in the Veda is the Sun-God, Master of the Truth, in his creative aspect, "he who brings forth from the unmanifest Divine the truth of a divine universe".⁴ *Sāvitri* represents especially the power of the illumined Word. This is indicated by "voiceful", which Sri Aurobindo revised in the same manuscript to "chanting".

In subsequent versions, he dropped the too limiting identification of the Goddess seen by Aswapati with a particular Vedic deity. But her connection with the Sun of supramental Truth, the Word and the process of creation, remains where Aswapati addresses the Divine Mother.

O Truth defended in thy secret sun,
 Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens
 On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,
 O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
 Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride .⁵

In the first draft, Aswapati asked the goddess to grant him "children beautiful and bold",

Eyed like the dawn and rapid like the seas,
 Wise as the Flame that broods within the world.

These would later become the "sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn", the "Forerunners of a divine multitude" whose "tread one day shall change the suffering earth".⁶ But the goddess replied to Aswapati

"I give thee in exchange for all thou askst
 What heaven permits, one daughter, only one,
 Worth many brilliant sons The ages deep
 Intended long her fiery birth. Receive
 Myself made human "

These lines have been transcribed from the first draft as it stood before it was revised. In the margin to the left of the last line Sri Aurobindo wrote the date "August 8th 9th", and below this the year "1916". He probably dated the manuscript when he revised the passage on the second day. At this time, he altered the last words to "All heaven made human". Both phrases, "Myself made human" and "All heaven made human", point to the difference between Sri Aurobindo's conception and that found in the Mahabharata, which in some respects he was still following rather closely at this stage. The Mahabharata merely says, a few verses later on, that when the child was born she was called Savitri, since she had been given by the goddess of that name. There is no explicit idea of a divine incarnation and the story as narrated in the Sanskrit epic does not seem to imply such an idea, even if it was present in the Vedic origins of the myth.

Between 1916 and 1920, a passage took shape containing much of the substance of the four sections of the present Book Three, Canto Four. The passage grew to nearly one third the length of the canto as we know it, though only half of these lines were similar or identical to lines in the final text.

The facsimile shows a version from the later part of this period. It is the first of two complete typescripts—and another that is incomplete—of "Book I: Quest". Presumably typed by Sri Aurobindo himself, these versions are exceptions to his normal practice of writing *Savitri* by hand, though he was then using a typewriter for

Holds her, the hand of the ^{triple} ~~internal~~ face. //

Filling by pure flame utterances hymned
And ~~the~~ ^{her}

Beneath the supreme Thinker's inward eye

The sessions of the immobile Ray she keeps,

And terries shrined in brivacies of fire.

heart of Truth's mighty risings in shut heavens

On things withdrawn within their luminous depths.

The

An architect of immense spiritual day

^{Howed} ~~Syring~~ ^{has} ~~chanting~~ ~~from~~ ~~an~~ ~~unseen~~ ~~eight~~ ~~fold~~ ~~sun~~,

Immaculate from her home eternity,

Heard in the listening spaces of the soul,

The white ideal revelation-cold

Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,

High on her throne of many-crested hues,

Inspired creatrix, trailing warnings come.

Flame-wise, ethereal-tressed a mighty face

Appeared, the lips curved with immortal words,

The vast world's rhythms veiled the ineffable limbs,

Lids, wisdom's shields, drooped over rapture's orbs

A marble monument of ponderings shone

A forehead, sight's crypt, and large like ocean's gaze

the *Arya*. He may have thought that at least the first book of *Savitri* was nearing its final form. Each of the two complete typescripts of "Quest" continues into "Love", which was then the second book, but both of the typed versions of "Love" are incomplete. Sri Aurobindo did not again type *Savitri* himself. In 1936-37 he revised copies typed by Amal Kiran. In the late 1940s, he dictated to Nirodbaran the revision of typed copies prepared by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

Some lines on the page of the typescript preceding the one seen in the facsimile describe the response of Aswapati's being to the goddess' approach

His heart as in a hidden meeting-place
 Assailed turned trembling to a longed-for voice,
 Till all its unplumbed dun subconscious caves
 Stirred and were filled with shadows of light and sound
 And bore the splendour of some limitless sun
 And answeringly felt near and mutely knew
 The godhead of the unbarriered sight to come
 Who makes the silent mind her crystal door

The second, third and fourth lines of this are related to three lines that now occur on the first page of the last canto of Book Three

Alight, the dun unplumbed subconscious caves
 Thrilled with the prescience of her longed-for tread
 And filled with flickering crests and praying tongues ⁷

The lines about the "godhead of the unbarriered sight to come" were later omitted. It may be supposed that these lines, like some of those that follow, associated the manifestation of the goddess too specifically with a plane of mystical consciousness that was not exactly what was wanted as the passage developed.

The sentence at the top of the page reproduced in the facsimile, including the last line on the previous page, reads as revised

A triple seat's untrodden sanctuary
 Holds her, the temple of the ineffable Seer,
 And ever by pure flame utterances hymned
 Beneath the supreme Thinker's inward eye
 The sessions of the immobile Ray she keeps,
 And tarries shrined in privacies of fire

None of these lines remain in the final version. But it is worth noting that the last phrase, "in privacies of fire", which was deleted in the late 1920s, reappeared some ten years later in what has become Book One, Canto Four

We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire ⁸

The next few lines in the typescript include some that were eventually shifted to the end of the speech addressed by Aswapati to the Divine Mother. The first two lines were expanded into three lines ("O Truth .") which have already been quoted. The sixth line, "Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue," comes a little after these in the same context. Only the fourth line, "Heard in the listening spaces of the soul," remains in the opening of "The Vision and the Boon", where it is now the fifth line

Heart of Truth's mighty musings in shut heavens
On things withdrawn within their luminous depths,
Immaculate from her home eternity,
Heard in the listening spaces of the soul,
The white ideal revelation-clad
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
High on her throne of many-crested hues,
The architect of immense spiritual day
Inspired creatrix, trailing mornings came.

The remainder of this page of the typescript, along with the continuation on the next page, resembles the final description of Aswapati's vision, though there are differences in several of the lines and the third has been dropped:

Flame-wise, ethereal-tressed a mighty face
Appeared, the lips curved with immortal words,
The vast world's rhythms veiled ineffable limbs,
Lids, wisdom's shields, drooped over rapture's orbs
A marble monument of ponderings shone
A forehead, sight's crypt, and large like ocean's gaze
Towards heaven two equal eyes of limitless thought
Looked into man's, that saw the God to come
A shape was seen on threshold mind, a voice
Mystic and wise in silent chambers spoke

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

- 1 *Savitri* (1993), pp 335-36 2 *Ibid* , p 345
3 Translation by R Y Deshpande, *Vyasa's Savitri A Verse-by-Verse Rendering and Some Perspectives*, p 4
4 *The Secret of the Veda* (1998), p 517 5 *Savitri*, p 345
6 *Ibid* , pp 343-44 7 *Ibid* , p 334 8 *Ibid* , p 48

TWO POEMS

IF POETRY THERE BE

If poetry there be to rend
The bonds of time-bound soul in me
Then let it flow and cataracts
Come cleansing down and swiftly free
The hidden god's felicity.
Let the mask be torn, dissolved
By falling rain of potent grace
That washes all the past's debris
And clears the eyes to view a face
That I in former births and lives
Have grown to love and recognize
As guide and mentor, treasury
Of deepest truth, inspirer
To a vision spirit sole can see,
Earth reconciled to divinity

THE EMERGING FACE OF DIVINITY

All beautiful is what Thy Hand has wrought
Among the stars and galaxies,
In every form there may be caught
Thy miracled infinities

The plants' perfection and élan
Counsels me to know the stone
But as the leap from ape to man
The key resides in Thee alone

And in this age a full descent
Of the Lord of Life in human birth,
The promised hour of divine advent
Begins the Life Divine on earth

Our vaunted knowledge flying goes
Upon the winds of uncertainty
For mind cannot know the soul of the rose
Or the emerging face of divinity

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

Amal's comment: Again, a fine expression—especially the last stanza—of the change within you visioning a changed world divinity-revealing everywhere

OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature ¹ —Sri Aurobindo

SRI AUROBINDO and the Mother's whole effort was focussed on the descent of the Supermind into the earth-consciousness, the crucial and basic event that would found the future and that they wanted to effect as soon as possible. To that end Sri Aurobindo withdrew into his apartment after the Siddhi Day of 1926, never to leave it again. To that end the Mother, now in charge of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, worked tirelessly in the steadily growing number of disciples, in order to prepare humanity and the Earth they represented. And in 1935 Sri Aurobindo announced, in his delightful correspondence with Nirodbaran, that he had good hope to bring "the supramental Whale" down soon ²

But the Hostiles were vigilant. When in 1938 Sri Aurobindo and the Mother seemed convinced that the Great Event would take place before the end of the year, Sri Aurobindo was the object of a direct attack and broke his right thigh, the short-term expectation came to nothing, for the work towards the chief aim had to be interrupted. Then the Second World War erupted and needed all of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's attention and even their occult interventions to make sure that the descent would remain possible, that the anti-evolutionary forces would not carry the day and postpone the advent of the New World for centuries if not for millennia.

After the War the global situation remained critical, according to Sri Aurobindo even more dangerous than during the worldwide conflagration. Commenting on the war in Korea, Sri Aurobindo judged "the situation as grave as it can be". He seems, moreover, to have been confronted with a central obstacle in the Inconscient. He wrote already in 1947 that the Yoga had "come down against the bed-rock of Inconscience" ³. From the same year are the following words: ". at the present stage the progressive supramentalisation of the Overmind is the first immediate preoccupation and a second is the lightening of *the heavy resistance of the Inconscient** and the support it gives to human ignorance which is always the main obstacle in any attempt to change the world or even to change oneself" ⁴. One may remember the account of his efforts that is "A God's Labour". To those we add a few lines from *Savitri*

Into the abysmal secrecy he came
Where darkness peers from her mattress, grey and nude,
And stood on the last locked subconscious's floor
Where Being slept unconscious of its thoughts
And built the world not knowing what it built.

* N B Emphasis added by the author in this and the following quotations

There waiting its hour the future lay unknown,
 There is the record of the vanished stars
 There in the slumber of the cosmic Will
 He saw the secret key of Nature's change ' 5

Nobody knows what that secret key was, but taking possession of it was certainly a deed only the Avatar himself could accomplish by means of a unique yogic master-act. a conscious descent into that "abysmal secrecy"—into death. The Mother knew about the problem, of course, and proposed to deal with it herself. But Sri Aurobindo forbade her, saying that her body was better than his to bear the ordeal of transformation, of supramentalisation that was awaiting later on. Their Yoga being an adventure into the unknown, they could not foresee everything, but they had reached a stature where the big lines of development had become perceptible to them.

Such was the situation in the last months of Sri Aurobindo's life, when the Mother asked him to write a message for the *Bulletin of Physical Education*. We know that she had founded a school during the war years, for many relatives of Ashramites, especially Bengalis, had descended on the Ashram in Pondicherry to seek shelter from the threatening Japanese. The children of those families had to be kept occupied—the serious inmates of the Ashram, concentrated on their *tapasya*, were far from happy with the children's presence¹—and the Mother, as always, knew how to read a sign when she saw one. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was already notorious for harbouring and treating men and women on an equal footing, now the Force supporting it seemed to be sufficiently developed to include children also into its body. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was after all to be "a world in miniature", the fitting field for the work of transformation that was the aim of the integral Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo, intensely occupied with completing *Savitri* (and with carrying out his avatic task on levels and in places we have not even an inkling of) did not write essayistic prose any more, perhaps because for this kind of literary work his consciousness had to descend again to the ordinary human level. Besides, his eyesight had gone bad and he had to dictate everything, poetry as well as prose, to Nirodbaran, his amanuensis. But he could not refuse a request from the Mother. He wrote eight articles for the *Bulletin* between 30 December 1948 and the time he left his body, on 5 December 1950. The first article is the actual required message. Did he then write the other seven articles because he saw an opportunity or the necessity to make known a new development in the integral Yoga? An editor of his *Collected Works* writes that "the series [of articles] was left unfinished". It certainly gives that impression. Yet, the contents of the articles as written is of immense importance, especially at the present time—which is what we will try to show.

"A new humanity"

"I take the opportunity of the publication of this issue of the 'Bulletin d'Éducation

Physique' of the Ashram", Sri Aurobindo began his message, "to give my blessings to the Journal and the Association—J S A S.A. (Jeunesse Sportive de l' Ashram de Sri Aurobindo) In doing so I would like to dwell for a while on the deeper *raison d'être* of such Associations and especially the need and utility for the nation [i.e., the then newly independent India] of a widespread organisation of them and such sports or physical exercises as are practised here"⁶ The Ashram not only represented, in miniature, the world, it also irradiated its acquisitions back into the world This is an important aspect without which the Mother's work cannot be fully appreciated

Sri Aurobindo continues. "In our own time these sports, games and athletics have assumed a place and command a general interest such as was seen only in earlier times in countries like Greece, Greece where all sides of human activity were equally developed and the gymnasium, chariot-racing and other sports and athletics had the same importance on the physical side as on the mental side the Arts and poetry and the drama, and were especially stimulated and attended to by the civic authorities of the city state. It was Greece that made an institution of the Olympiad and the recent re-establishment of the Olympiad as an international institution is a significant sign of the revival of the ancient spirit."⁷

In his *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, Nirodbaran reminisces: "When the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* was launched, the Mother wanted to initiate it with an article from Sri Aurobindo. Some days passed. She asked him if he had started it. He answered with a smile, 'No' After a few days, she reminded him of the urgency. Then he began dictating on the value of sports and physical gymnastics . . . As he was dictating, I marvelled at so much knowledge of Ancient Greece and Ancient India stored up somewhere in his superconscious memory and now pouring down at his command in a smooth flow. No notes were consulted, no books were needed, yet after a lapse of so many decades everything was fresh, spontaneous and recalled in vivid detail!"⁸

The second article is entitled *Perfection of the Body*. "A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.... The transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit, it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit though now a form which conceals and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods, it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect."⁹

In this second article, Sri Aurobindo again writes about the physical perfection

that was the classical ideal, but then he suddenly takes a turn towards a perfection far beyond the physical: the supramental transformation of the body "In the past the body has been regarded by spiritual seekers rather as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and discarded than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change. Even in its fullest strength and force and greatest glory of beauty, it is still a flower of the material inconscience; the inconscient is the soil from which it has grown and at every point opposes a narrow boundary to the extension of its powers and to any effort of radical self-exceeding. But if a divine life is possible on earth, then this self-exceeding must also be possible."¹⁰

The body is after all "the material basis the instrument we have to use", it is "the means of fulfilment of dharma",¹¹ also when dharma is changing into higher gear, into a totally new mode, when evolution itself begins evolving. "If we could draw down this power [of the Supermind] into the material world, our age-long dreams of human perfectibility, individual perfection, the perfectibility of the race, of society, inner mastery over self and a complete mastery, governance and utilisation of the forces of Nature could see at long last a prospect of total achievement."¹² The age-long dream of a truly Golden Age the Mother spoke of would become reality (Gold is the colour of the Supermind)

In the third article Sri Aurobindo briefly writes as follows "It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truth-consciousness, and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit."¹³

And then comes the new development, not only in this series of articles but in the totality of the huge body of literature Sri Aurobindo had produced until then. "It might be that a psychological change, a mastery of the nature by the soul, a transformation of the mind into a principle of light, of the life-force into power and purity would be the first approach, the first attempt to solve the problem, to escape beyond the merely human formula and establish something that could be called a divine life upon earth, *a first sketch of supermanhood, of a supramental living in the circumstances of the earth-nature*"¹⁴ By this is not meant what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother up to then consistently called "superman". ".it would not be the total transformation, the fullness of a divine life in a divine body. *There would be a body still human and indeed animal in its origin and fundamental character* and this would impose its own inevitable limitations on the higher parts of the embodied being"¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo then expands on those possibilities: "It might be also that the transformation *might take place by stages*, there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light and power of the Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be *the*

natural evolutionary course” (What those “powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region” are we will see in the next section.) Sri Aurobindo stresses once more that by this he does not mean “superman” “Still these levels might become *stages of the ascent..*”¹⁶

The gap, the quantum jump between the human and the supramental being is enormous and practically not feasible or bridgeable. In the following pages will be quoted several passages from *The Life Divine* pointing in the direction of the necessity of a transitional being or several kinds of transitional beings. That Sri Aurobindo here almost prudently presents a new development in the Yoga of Transformation, probably when already having taken the decision to descend voluntarily into death, is a most remarkable and significant fact indeed. As it will turn out, what he puts forward as a possibility was already partially realised in his own body.

In the fifth article of the series he returns to this theme “But Supermind alone has the truth-consciousness in full and, if this comes down and intervenes, mind, life and body too can attain to the full power of the truth in them and their full possibility of perfection. This, no doubt, would not take place at once, but *an evolutionary progress towards it could begin* and grow with increasing rapidity towards its fullness. All men might not reach that fullness till a later time, but still the human mind could come to stand perfected in the Light and *a new humanity* take its place as part of the new order.

“This is the possibility we have to examine. If it is destined to fulfil itself, if man is not doomed to remain always as a vassal of the Ignorance, the disabilities of the human mind on which we have dwelt are not such as must remain irredeemably in possession and binding for ever. It could develop higher means and instrumentalities, pass over the last borders of the Ignorance into a higher knowledge, grow too strong to be held back by the animal nature. *There would be a liberated mind escaping from ignorance into light, aware of its affiliation to Supermind, a natural agent of Supermind and capable of bringing down the supramental influence into the lower reaches of being, a creator in the light, a discoverer in the depths, an illuminant in the darkness, helping perhaps to penetrate even the Inconscient with the rays of a secret Superconscience. There would be a new mental being* not only capable of standing enlightened in the radiance of the Supermind but able to climb consciously towards it and into it, training life and body to reflect and hold something of the supramental light, power and bliss, aspiring to release the secret divinity into self-finding and self-fulfilment and self-poise, aspiring towards the ascension to the divine consciousness, able to receive and bear the descent of the divine light and power, fitting itself to be a vessel of the divine Life.”¹⁷

The last sentence clearly describes the transitional being, “able to receive and bear the descent of the divine light and power”, that is necessary between the human and the supramental being to make the advent of the latter possible.

“A new humanity would then be a race of mental beings on the earth and in the earthly body,” reads the beginning of the sixth article, “but delivered from its present

conditions in the reign of the cosmic Ignorance so far as to be possessed of a perfected mind, *a mind of light which could even be a subordinate action of the supermind or Truth-consciousness*, and in any case capable of the full possibilities of mind acting as a recipient of that truth and at least a secondary action of it in thought and life. It could even be a part of what could be described as a divine life upon earth and at least the beginnings of an evolution in the Knowledge and no longer entirely or predominantly in the Ignorance’’¹⁸ Thus begins the sixth article

In the seventh article, entitled *The Mind of Light*, Sri Aurobindo returns straight away to the same central theme of the series: ‘‘A new humanity means for us the appearance, the development of a type or race of mental beings whose principle of mentality would be no longer a mind in the Ignorance seeking for knowledge but even in its knowledge bound to the Ignorance, a seeker after Light but not its natural possessor, open to the Light but not an inhabitant of the Light, not yet a perfected instrument, truth-conscious and delivered out of the Ignorance. Instead, it would be possessed already of what could be called *a mind of Light, a mind capable of living in the truth, capable of being truth-conscious and manifesting in its life a direct in place of an indirect knowledge*

‘‘Its mentality would be an instrument of the Light and no longer of the Ignorance. At its highest it would be capable of passing into the supermind *and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings* who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature. Even, the highest manifestations of a mind of Light would be an instrumentality of the supermind, a part of it or a projection from it, a stepping beyond humanity into the superhumanity of the supramental principle. Above all, its possession would enable the human being to rise beyond the normalities of his present thinking, feeling and being into those highest powers of the mind in its self-exceedings which intervene between our mentality and supermind and can be regarded as steps leading towards the greater and more luminous principle [i.e., Supermind]’’¹⁹

The highest ‘‘powers of the mind’’ in the last sentence ‘‘are the same as the aforementioned ‘‘powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality’’, they will be introduced presently ‘‘In this *inevitable* ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage,’’ writes Sri Aurobindo ‘‘As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve *a new type of human being*, this development must carry in it *an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity* which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life.’’²⁰ Be it noted that Sri Aurobindo no longer uses the conditional mode in his presentation of ‘‘a new type of human being’’, but that he repeats the word ‘‘inevitable’’, one of his keywords when discoursing on the continuation of the earthly evolution and the apparition of a supramental being on the Earth. In the course of this series of articles the language has gradually become more and more affirmative

He goes on to say that the embodiment of the Mind of Light will proceed in two stages. "In each of these stages it will define its own grades and manifest the order of its beings who will embody it and give to it a realised life. Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living; then there will be, by the illumination of this Mind of Light in the greater realisation of what may be called a gnostic mentality, *in a transformation of the human being, even before the supermind is reached, even in the earth-consciousness and in a humanity transformed, an illumined divine life*"²¹

Supermind and Mind of Light is the title of the last article, it was published in the *Bulletin* of November 1950 and must have been written one or two months previously. Here we get the full definition of the Mind of Light: "The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it... In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover. For this too is a truth-consciousness and a self-power of knowledge. This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate."

"What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same: there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place. It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge; we have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-conscious into ignorance"²²

On 5 December Sri Aurobindo left his body as the consequence of a strange uraemic coma from which, visibly by an act of highest yogic mastery, he time and again rose up and regained full waking consciousness. He was entering death consciously because the cosmic arrangement, the Law the Creator had imposed upon Himself, demanded this unprecedented "strategic" sacrifice. The yogic master-act was possible because the Avatar, complete this time, double-poled, had incarnated in two bodies. The Mother remained, as had been decided. What her acceptance of staying in the body meant can be (partly) comprehended from the conversations that constitute *Mother's Agenda*.

There she stood then, the Mother, when the doctors had declared Sri Aurobindo's "death." "She stood there, near the feet of Sri Aurobindo. Her hair had been undressed and was flowing about her shoulders," Dr Prabhat Sanyal remembered. "With a piercing gaze she stood there,"²³ for a long, long time. This was when the Mother received the Mind of Light from Sri Aurobindo into the cells of her body. "As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he has called the Mind of Light got realised in me," the Mother afterwards told K. D. Sethna. "The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—into the mind and even into the vital [of Sri Aurobindo and herself], it was working in the physical also but indirectly through

those intermediaries. The question was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light: the physical mind was the instrument for direct action upon the most material. This physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light.²⁴

These words of the Mother need some explanation that will be given further on. They are quoted here because they contribute to highlighting the significance of that moment—and because they confirm, as mooted above, that in his last series of articles Sri Aurobindo made known something that he first had experienced and realised himself. The import of the series of dictated articles, later on published under the title *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, cannot be overestimated. And overestimated it has not been: in the Aurobindonian literature it has hardly been taken note of.

(To be continued)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

(NB This series of articles is from the author's book being prepared for publication—R Y D)

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- 2 Nirodbaran *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 321
- 3 Sri Aurobindo *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 169
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 170
- 5 Sri Aurobindo *Savitri*, p. 231
- 6 CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 517
- 7 *Ibid*
- 8 Nirodbaran *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 247-48
- 9 CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 521-22
- 10 *Ibid*, p. 523
- 11 *Ibid*, p. 521
- 12 *Ibid*, p. 534
- 13 *Ibid*, p. 536
- 14 *Ibid*. K. D. Sethna rightly called this series of articles, afterwards published as *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, "in many senses a sequel to *The Life Divine*." See his *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 106.
- 15 *Ibid*, p. 537
- 16 *Ibid*, pp. 537-38
- 17 *Ibid*, p. 577
- 18 *Ibid*, p. 578
- 19 *Ibid*, p. 585
- 20 *Ibid*, p. 587
- 21 *Ibid*
- 22 *Ibid*, pp. 588-89
- 23 Prabhat Sanyal *A Call from Pondicherry*
- 24 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 63-64

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

It is often said that science transcends all national boundaries. To speak of English or French, or German, American, Russian, Japanese or Indian science will then amount to another kind of religious sectarianism which indeed is absent in the objective world. The properties of water or of oxygen or electron or the tiny quark will certainly remain the same wherever these are measured in a scientific way. There is nothing like an Indian neutron or American or Russian neutron. The sun, the moon, the stars are not going to alter their intrinsic physical character whether observed from the earth or from any other point in space. In fact in the well-ordered domain of Matter there is no Christian or Islamic or Vedic science. Observational data are the entire basis for any interpretative understanding of nature. That truly becomes a secure foundation on which the theoretical edifice of science is solidly built.

If this is what constitutes the objectivity of the material world then that world will also make sure that its criteria are recognised. We have here an in-built measure or guideline to make progress in a guaranteed manner. No wonder physics has proved so meritorious in its methodology in bringing to us in a secular way the fruits of understanding nature. This implies that boundaries and parameters of a country need not enter into any discussion at all. It is likely that the quality of observation may differ from place to place, or it may improve with the passage of time, but the approach to looking at the data ought to remain the same. This trait of science based on observation has an acceptable validity.

In ancient Babylon and Egypt observations of heavenly objects were made from temple towers. Ptolemy had his observatory built in Alexandria. Once Baghdad and Damascus were centres of great learning. Stjerneborg, Oxford, Cambridge, Heidelberg, Padua, Crimea, Palomar, Kavalur or Ooty may mark in relatively recent times several stages of notable developments in astronomy. But in all these growing endeavours what we essentially notice is the improvement on an enormous scale that has occurred in the field. Yet in its progress science has throughout remained science, the aspect of acquiring more and more data with enhanced precision and in greater detail never introduced deviation in its method. With the advancement of technology and instrumentation, and the associated infrastructural growth, we have now an explosion of facts that have almost become intractable. But the expectation is that scientific reasoning will also provide the necessary understanding. To study nature our tools of comprehension have to match the skills that are now in our possession. Thought must go hand in hand with proficiency.

Objectivity based on observation and rational thinking is thus taken for granted as the fundamental character of science. Yet the idea of a national science need not necessarily be a rhetorical assertion, nor a misplaced enthusiasm for things our own. At the same time we need not rush immediately to say that Indian science should be chiefly concerned with spirituality, the living breath that has sustained its creativity in all walks of life over long and even dreary centuries. It is understandable that the

application of reason, even the highest reason, should be antithetical to the study of revelatory works such as the Vedas, if so then bringing subjective elements in the study of rational science may sound rather absurd. However, for the exploration of the physical world certain characteristic national features could yet provide another approach.

Before we take up the concept of Indian science let us first see two extreme examples, the ancient Greek approach and the modern science of recent decades. Thus we already have Greek rationalism, beginning with 600 B C or so, which drew itself out of the mythology of the earlier past. Science based on it possessed the basic conviction that "nature would play fair"; she would not be capricious and change the course of events mid-stream. This immediately suggested that we could put questions to her and, in the process of finding answers, come to know about her secrets. There is a kind of superior logic behind her thinking and our concern should be to discover that logic governing things. She would not talk in a language of probabilistic behaviour. Perhaps this is exactly what Einstein meant when he said "God may be subtle, but He is not malicious." This is a very definite and unmistakable statement and it rules out unpredictability of any kind in the mind of the creator. What is implied is that natural laws are discoverable and can be understood by us. We always cherish their legitimacy and efficacy—and perhaps more so in the moment of crisis when fail all other means. Causes leading to the final cause in the Aristotelian sense,—that becomes its triumph-march. In that way the little lamp of science does dispel the confusing darkness that is so much around us.

We witness in this methodology the fact that reason and observation can come together in the confidence of a fair play of nature. All that has then to be done is to work out the systematics which indeed provide a recognisable rationale behind well-conducted data.

The birth of ancient Greek science is generally credited to Thales of Miletus (624-546 B C) who worked in the branches of science, mathematics, and philosophy. Herodotus tells us about his predicting a solar eclipse during that time. When it did occur "it frightened the Medes and Lydians, who were on the point of advancing into battle, and convinced them of the beauties of peace. They signed a treaty and the armies returned home." This puts the date of 28 May 585 B C for the aborted battle. It is likely that Thales learned this science from the Babylonians who had long before him studied the occurrence of lunar eclipses. He was perhaps the first to have measured the height of an Egyptian pyramid. He measured the ratio of lengths of the shadow of the pyramid and that of the stick in his hand, from that he estimated the height by knowing the length of the stick. In fact, he went much farther than just comparing the shadows and asked the most fundamental question about the universe. He certainly was keen to know about its constituents, without introducing supernatural factors such as gods or demons.

There is a story narrated by Plato about him "While walking along and studying the stars he fell into a well. An old woman coming in response to his cries helped him

out, but said with contempt, 'Here is a man who would study the stars and cannot see what lies at his feet' ' ' The irony is multifold

In contrast to this, Pythagoras (582-507 B C) founded a school in Crotona which was more esoteric in character than philosophic-rational. Mystical in character and marked by secrecy, it taught the doctrine of transmigration of souls. But the significant contribution to science that can be attributed to Pythagoras is the theory that numbers constitute the true nature of things. He saw a certain relationship behind the musical notes and related it to the harmony of the spheres. "He found that the strings of musical instruments delivered sound of higher pitch as they were made shorter, the relationship of pitch could be simply correlated with length. For instance, if one string was twice the length of another, the sound it emitted was just an octave lower. If the ratio of the strings was three to two, the musical interval called a fifth was produced, and if it was four to three, the interval called a fourth was produced. Increasing the tension of the strings also raised the pitch. This study may have led Pythagoras to the belief that the whole universe rested on numbers and their relationship." This was perhaps the first scientific study of sound. The theorem in geometry that goes by his name is indeed a remarkable contribution of his. Besides these Pythagoras made a number of important observations in astronomy: he recognised that the morning star and the evening star were in fact one star, the planet we now call Venus, he also noted that the orbit of the moon is inclined at an angle with respect to the plane of the earth's equator; he taught that Earth was spherical.

"Nature's Hallmark of Intelligibility,"—that is the conceptual framework that has come to us from these Greek scientists-philosophers. To quote Prof. Fred L. Wilson of Rochester Institute of Technology: "The Ionian philosophers, the Pythagorean mystics, and sober geometers had at least one thing in common. They all claimed for their particular approach to nature the exclusive hallmark of intelligibility. Entirely similar was the case with that most influential concept of early Greek science, the atom. The notion of atoms was offered as the bedrock of understanding, and its properties seemed to symbolize the supposedly ultimate form of reasonable questions that could be raised about the universe. The trust Democritus put in his atoms seems to have been limitless. Truly, if there was a lesson to draw from the atomistic approach to nature, Democritus himself had formulated it with shocking directness. One must learn by this rule that Man is severed from reality. Man himself, as an individual was also to lose his footing in the whirl of atoms. With the cosmos—the ordered correlation of things—gone, man's meaning in the universe went too. Of course when Galen noted the pessimism such views had generated, the heyday of atomism had been a thing of the past for almost half a millennium. But in its stage of fresh fascination the atomism of Democritus, which really did not explain any observational phenomena, could not fail to have an overriding impact. Hand in hand with sophism it contributed heavily to a thorough upheaval of the whole set of traditional, humanistic values in pre-Socratic Athens."¹

Let us leap over 25 centuries and come to the happenings during World War II

On 12 April 1945 President Franklin Roosevelt died and Harry Truman took his place. When the first atomic bomb was tested successfully on 16 July 1945 Truman was in Potsdam at a conference with Churchill and Stalin. He had received a secret message that the test had "exceeded expectations" (18 July 1945). His diary entry dated 25 July puts the event in its stark proportions: "We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark." He writes to his wife: "Anyway we 'think' we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the New Mexican desert was startling—to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused the complete disintegration of a steel tower 60 feet high, erected a crater 6 feet deep and 1,200 feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower 1/2 mile away and knocked men down 10,000 yards away. The explosion was visible for more than 200 miles and audible for 40 miles and more. The weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th." Later, on 6 August, he writes: "The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold." He further says: "If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth." On 9 August 1945, after dropping the second bomb, now on Nagasaki, President Truman makes a public statement:

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost.

Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.

He adds: "I know that Japan is a terribly cruel and uncivilized nation in warfare but I can't bring myself to believe that, because they are beasts, we should ourselves act in the same manner. For myself, I certainly regret the necessity of wiping out whole populations because of the 'pigheadedness' of the leaders of a nation and, for your information, I am not going to do it until it is absolutely necessary. My object is to save as many American lives as possible but I also have a humane feeling for the women and children in Japan."

The bomb that was dropped in the morning of 6 August 1945 on Hiroshima was code-named The Little Boy and the one, at the same hour but of 9 August 1945, on

Nagasaki, The Fat Man. The Little Boy was Uranium- and the Fat Man Plutonium-based. We need not describe the horror these caused, but the result was immediate. The End of War. The unconditional surrender of Japan also marked, in the tortuous passage of time, the end of the use of such weapons for war purposes. America with the life of its soldiers in danger and with all its national prestige at stake could not exercise the nuclear option during the Vietnam war. The path to national security does not necessarily pass through Pokhran.

We may here well remember what the Mother had said about the discovery of the atom bomb. "The atom bomb is in itself the most wonderful achievement and the sign of a growing power of man over material nature. But what is to be regretted is that this material progress and mastery is not the result of and in keeping with a spiritual progress and mastery which alone has the power to contradict and counteract the terrible danger coming from these discoveries. We cannot and must not stop progress, but we must achieve it in an equilibrium between the inside and the outside" (30 August 1945). Regarding the way this progress was achieved let us quickly run through the Manhattan Project to get an idea as to how science and technology were organised to produce a war-worthy weapon.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

References

- 1 *Science and Human Values: Pre-Socratic Philosophers*
- 2 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol 15, pp 48-49

THE COWHERD EPISODE

AT a distance of 5 km from the Ambaji temple in Gujarat there is a hill named Gabbar. It is believed that it is frequented by Ambaji for rest and recreation. There she sits on a swing and enjoys listening to songs. Once a cowherd boy entered all on a sudden and asked wages for tending her cow along with his own. He said that as it got mixed with his cows unnoticed he tended it for days. Out of compassion for the innocent boy the Goddess gave him barley instead of coins. The disappointed urchin threw it away in utter despair on coming out of the portal. When later he examined one of the grains that had stuck to the cloth in which he had received the gift, he found that it was made of gold. Anon he ran to collect those scattered grains, but could find none. Nor was the supreme Goddess who had given him the gift there.

K K MOORTHY

(Courtesy *The Abode of Gods I*, Message Publication, Tirupati)

WILLIAM, MY TEACHER...

HEXAMETER

WILLIAM, my teacher, my friend! dear William and dear Dorothea!
Smooth out the folds of my letter, and place it on desk or on table;
Place it on table or desk, and your right hands loosely half-closing,
Gently sustain them in air, and extending the digit didactic,
Rest it a moment on each of the forks of the five-forkèd left hand,
Twice on the breadth of the thumb, and once on the tip of each finger,
Read with a nod of the head in a humouring recitativo,
And, as I live, you will see my hexameters hopping before you
This is a galloping measure, a hop, and a trot, and a gallop!

All my hexameters fly, like stags pursued by the staghounds,
Breathless and panting, and ready to drop, yet flying still onwards,
I would full fain pull in my hard-mouthed runaway hunter,
But our English Spondeans are clumsy yet impotent curb-reins;
And so to make him go slowly, no way left have I but to lame him

William, my head and my heart! dear Poet that feelest and thinkest!
Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate sister!
Many a mile, O! many a wearisome mile are ye distant,
Long, long, comfortless roads, with no one eye that doth know us.
O! it is all too far to send to you mockeries idle
Yea, and I feel it not right! But O! my friends, my beloved!
Feverish and wakeful I lie,—I am weary of feeling and thinking
Every thought is worn *down*,—I am weary, yet cannot be vacant
Five long hours have I tossed, rheumatic heats, dry and flushing,
Gnawing behind in my head, and wandering and throbbing about me,
Busy and tiresome, my friends, as the beat of the boding night-spider ..

Now unwillingly closed, now open and aching with darkness.
O! what a life is the eye! what a strange and inscrutable essence!
Him that is utterly blind, nor glimpses the fire that warms him;
Him that never beheld the swelling breast of his mother;
Him that smiled in his gladness as a babe that smiles in its slumber,
Even for him it exists, it moves and stirs in its prison,
Lives with a separate life, and 'Is it a Spirit?' he murmurs:
'Sure, it has thoughts of its own, and to see is only a language.'

*There was a great deal more, which I have forgotten ..The last line which I wrote,
I remember, and write it for the truth of the sentiment*

William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear Dorothea!
You have all in each other, but I am lonely, and want you!

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

[*Italic sentences are STC's*]

FESTIVAL OF WOMEN 2000

IMAGINE a thousand women, about a third of them in historical costumes, walking a large labyrinth in front of the Old Opera House in Frankfurt. They are walking to the beat of a drum, swaying gently, in harmony with each other and united by the task they have set themselves to – to honour women whose contributions to society cannot be found in history books. These women ranged from fertility goddesses, to witches, to the first Lufthansa stewardess, from saints to freedom fighters to social reformers. I represented Mirra Alfassa, the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, founder of Auroville, the international township south of Chennai. When I was looking for a woman to represent a friend told me “Why don’t you represent the Mother? You often speak about her ” I felt that I could not represent the Mother, she was an embodiment of the Divine. I did not feel worthy .. then my friend Roswitha told me that she was representing Theresa of Avila, a Spanish saint, and at first had had the same feelings I felt reassured “In a sense,” Roswitha said, “the Mother found you!”

Clad in a white salwar and kamis and a scarf tied around my forehead, I was trying to open myself to the Mother’s energy as I walked on the meandering path with my sisters in spirit. The labyrinth was made of stones that were imprinted with the names of the women represented, dates of birth, death, and the predominant quality the woman stood for (the Mother’s being “Transformation”) and the name of the woman who represented her. The stones were covered with scarves in the colours of the chakras, the energy centres of the body. When the music stopped, groups of women bent down, unveiled “their” stones and waved their scarves triumphantly, before continuing their rhythmic walk that nearly resembled a dance.

The crowd on the plaza had been waiting patiently for over an hour, until the women emerged from the Old Opera House, ready to walk the labyrinth. Somewhere in the audience was my husband, videotaping the event. The day had brought conversations, lectures, dances and festive meals. Trying to absorb the colourful costumes, read and ponder over 300 names while walking out of the now unveiled labyrinth and holding the energy of the women represented, was a daunting task. I came to realise the significance of the whole event when I returned to the US and watched the video. While participating, my whole being was on “absorbing”; only later, when I was able to reflect, I felt the impact of this day. I had purchased the book that contained the stories of the women represented on the stones. Pondering their fates and courageous deeds left me with the feeling of belonging to a sisterhood of outstanding, brave, unacknowledged women, whose lives we finally celebrated! I had intense dreams about patriarchy – saw myself throwing a canister of gas at a man, who, in my mind, stood for patriarchy, and seeing him go up in flames – was I getting rid of my own patriarchy, finally? The end of the day saw us lighting a thousand candles on the labyrinth. The geometric pattern glowed mysteriously among the illuminated high buildings of the inner city of Frankfurt, a symbol of empowerment.

People were talking to each other, fuelled by the labyrinth and the names on the stones, long into the night. A night watch was held to safeguard the stones of the labyrinth. The labyrinth stayed for several days in Frankfurt and then travelled to the World Expo in Hannover. This labyrinth is a growing, living entity—600 stones are still waiting to be purchased and given names. Any European city can request the labyrinth, as long as a group of women is willing to watch over it day and night.

PS Labyrinths are ancient geometrical patterns that have been lying dormant for centuries. Only during the last 20 years or so have they been rediscovered, they serve as a tool for transformation in modern society. If one walks a labyrinth in a mindful way, it can become a metaphor for life and speak to us, connect us with our own wisdom.

ANNEMARIE RAWLINSON

MOTHER, WHERE ARE YOU?

DEAR Mom,
 Having brought me on the earth
 You hid yourself from me somewhere.—
 Like God himself!
 Where have I not searched for you since?
 I have tried to discover you
 In every aspect of Woman.
 I can disregard none,
 Since I want to find you in them,
 Nor can I love any
 As I do not find you there
 You were utterly self-less, they say,
 Then why,
 Why did you escape to a heavenly abode,
 Snatching away my own Heaven?
 I have heard it said
 You get what you desire in heaven,
 Maybe The gods desired you over there!
 But then don't you ever desire me with you?

MANOHAR DESAI

(Translated from a Gujarati prose-poem *Māné* by Madhukar Upadhyay)

THIRTY YEARS LATER: REMEMBERING AN UNKNOWN INDIAN

It was in 1970, I had crossed half of Asia via the land route and was already facing some health trouble on the way. When I arrived in Pondicherry, I was rather thin. It was April, my body was simply overwhelmed by the heat and other circumstances, although inwardly I was quite happy. I had many interesting experiences during my first visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and saw the Mother sometime in May.

Occasionally I met a well-known Sadhak of the Ashram whom I will call “Chetan” here. When after two or three months my health became very weak, he advised me to get myself admitted to the General Hospital. I didn’t like the idea at all, but realized it was inevitable, since no doctor in town was ready to treat me any more.

So one morning I found myself in a very large hall, divided into several wards. Through window panes I could observe what was going on at other places. There seemed to be only very serious cases in my ward, all of them elderly men lying in a dazed state, some of them receiving infusions from bottles fixed to their beds. There was one bed to the left, facing the window, and I was quite amazed to discover on it a young, strong and muscular Tamilian who was apparently in perfect health. Unlike all the other patients, he sat there relaxed on his bed in khaki shorts. Wasn’t this exactly the dress of the hospital worker? What was he doing here?

At the end of the day I knew he was only there to help me. “Chetan must have arranged this for me,” I thought. “He knows many people in Pondicherry, also doctors.” The next few days the Tamilian did whatever was in his power to make me happy. He saw to it that I ate properly, and sometimes gave me a little share from his bread when I got sudden bursts of hunger at night, without having anything left in my box (although the quantities of food given were quite sufficient). Whenever I fell into depression, immediately he was there entertaining me with a card game or making fun (he spoke a few words of English). I still remember today how one afternoon he carefully cut my nails, giving me a professional type of manicure. At other times, when he saw I was in a meditative state, he withdrew and read newspapers on his bed.

As I recovered a little and became more conscious of my surroundings, I started thinking who this “patient” to my left might really be. I never saw him receiving any specific treatment, although he also got some medication when the nurses distributed pills in the morning. When the doctors came for their check-up, I watched them very closely. They felt his pulse for a few seconds—that was all. It was impossible to make out any indication of physical problems troubling him, except that perhaps he looked slightly pale at times. But I wasn’t sure even about that.

Then one day the doctors decided to give me vitamin shots to speed up my recovery. Somehow I did not want them, but was urged to accept the therapy as

advised After the second shot in the upper arm I developed some terrible, inexplicable pain Hiding underneath the blanket, I placed my hand on the affected area and tried to relax it But the pain became worse and worse Would the doctors or nurses believe me that a simple vitamin injection caused such trouble to me? The problem was getting very urgent now and so I called for help inwardly, with great intensity.

After one or two minutes a telephone somewhere in the centre of the hall started ringing. I instantly sat up and looked at the phone In my subjective experience it was Chetan calling, trying to arrange help for me But no nurse was there to receive the call Anxiously I kept staring at the phone as if it would mean salvation for me Then suddenly the Tamilian jumped from his bed and rushed to the phone I was greatly relieved as I heard him saying, "Yes, yes, all right". "Chetan is instructing him what he has to do now," I told myself in my imagination. Then the pseudo-patient came to my bed and gave a quick massage to my right upper arm, just on the right spot It was incredible, within no time all the pain was gone, and I hadn't told him a single word about it! Thereafter, I managed to get the injections stopped.

Recovering very fast now, I got bored lying in the bed and kept freely moving about in the hospital compound. The Tamilian was also less and less seen on his bed "Naturally," I thought, "because I don't require much help any more. So he's back to his job in the hospital." At the end of my two-weeks' stay he appeared only when food was served or when doctors came in the morning During one of their last check-ups, I again watched the doctors most attentively. I was sure by now that they were all doing a show for me, since this strong young man had certainly no health problem justifying his stay in this ward of patients with critical disorders I looked at their faces, trying to discover a quick hidden smile on their lips as they felt his pulse But there was none of it They did their job in a serious professional manner.

Two days before I left the hospital, the Tamilian disappeared entirely and I never saw him again. His bed remained unoccupied until the day of my departure. Later on I never felt like making enquiries with my rational mind So I shall never know who this kind man was, providing me with perfect company and support at a time when I most needed it. Clearly, I had experienced some sort of miracle for two weeks, it was imagination and reality mysteriously intertwined

WILFRIED HUCHZERMEYER
(www.edition-sawitri.de)

TOWARDS GLOBAL UNITY

THE signs towards the formation of a kind of united world are not wanting in history. Nature in her own way has been experimenting by various means to arrive at it. It is supposed that the formation of the great Roman Empire is one of the patterns of Nature's experiment by which she tried to shape a supranational unity. Nature's way of action does not proceed in a straight line. She takes up a particular method, shows a considerable progress and then throws much of her accomplished work into the background and follows an altogether new line. She cannot be satisfied and rest till a perfect unity according to the inherent divine will and plan in the world is reached. Unity in diversity is the secret of the Supreme's Will and the scheme of Nature's work. In a real unity there will remain ample scope for the play of a full-fledged diversity. The unity constructed by crushing different soul-principles is not a thing worthy of the name. For, in that case, the spirit of man dwindles and what remains is a stony structure of a united body with a number of iron laws and rules as its limbs.

But that can never be. That is why the Roman Empire had to perish. The large British Empire has been forced under pressure of circumstances to withdraw from its imperialistic sway over other countries and to remain satisfied with what is essentially her own. Nazism and Fascism, which once became a terror in their Asuric ambition to dominate the world, are no more. Should we consider that in them also the unifying urge of Nature was secretly working? However this might be, it is apparent that they were wrong steps taken by Nature. Wrong or right, it is also a fact that Nature's work is not in vain. The question is to rightly realise the purpose behind the working of Nature. These upsurges must have their meaning and purpose. Among other things, they have at least proved by their failure that such are not the ways to bring into being a united world.

The resurgence of India and other Asiatic countries promises, no doubt, a greater, nobler, a secure united future of the world. In this connection it will be worthwhile to concentrate on the following lines from Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses:

“Asia is the original seat from which all the faiths of the world have emanated. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. Not only do we believe in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the refugees and the persecuted of all the religions and all the nations of the earth. India cannot be killed. Deathless she stands, and will stand, so long as her old spirit remains as the background, so long as her people do not give up the God of India, so long as her people do not believe in materialism so long as they do not abandon spirituality.”
(Vivekananda, *Collected Works*, Vol 1, p 3)

Here are a few lines from Sri Aurobindo's Uttarpara Speech: “When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatan Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them

freedom for the service of the world It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, Saints and Avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations ” (SABCL, Vol 2, p 8)

In recent times, however, a kind of conscious attempt has been made towards the formation of a united world organisation The League of Nations formed after World War I was a new development with a promising prospect But it was not without its defects and had, therefore, to end in failure World War II broke out and when it ended gave birth to the United Nations Organisation. The utility and importance of these organisations cannot be overestimated. Surely they can be treated as stepping-stones leading to a greater future, but cannot be taken as anything complete in themselves International feeling and understanding have found full play in the modern consciousness

Scientific study, research and achievement have helped a great deal to make globalisation possible The gifts of science have helped to bring the different parts of the world closer to such an extent that the physical sense, that we are members of one world, has been sufficiently proved in spite of ourselves Moreover, the recent exploration of space and the discovery in the near future of the means of going to other planets will perhaps create a more tangible feeling that we are of one earth as against beings of other planets, if of course there are found any developed ones. But, as has been already stated, this sense of unity, though initially helpful, is in the long run insufficient from a deeper and integral point of view,—insufficient because it is superficial and outer and based on selfish and fragmentary motives. Perhaps it will not be out of place to quote here one or two remarks made on the subject of space research by Max Born, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1954, and this we shall do without denying the fact that space research will contribute a great deal to the fund of astronomical and geophysical knowledge of the world He refers to “the power rivalry between the two political giants, the United States and U S S R , for whom success in space is a highly efficient means of propaganda and self-praise.” He states again “However, the real purpose of these artificial satellites is not of scientific, but of commercial and military nature ” Lastly, “by now it [space research] appears to me an inevitable process which together with the development of nuclear arms or chemical and biological destructive means, must lead on to the self-destruction of our civilisation.”

The nature of national ideas, motives and interests should undergo a thorough change before anything better can be expected. The inner spirit and soul of a nation should be discovered and the relation between nation and nation should be mainly and essentially spiritual and psychological and not merely political and economic or even cultural Unity brought about by this spiritual relation will mean a real awakening of the world How emphatically Sri Aurobindo states the importance of such a change in order that the world may be reborn into the Spirit and grow and live according to the supreme law of the truth! “Unity of the human race by an inner oneness and not only

by an external association of interests, the resurgence of man out of the merely animal or economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence, the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supramanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the spirit '' (*Mahayogi*, by R. R. Diwakar, p. 99)

Needless to say that the above statement should not be taken only as a noble and glorious idea. He who has made the statement is the very incarnation of the Truth itself, destined to open for humanity the path towards unity and transcendence. His mystical life and unprecedented sadhana have been dedicated and directed all through to achieve the divine fulfilment of man and earth. The supreme scientist who is at the same time a seer and a poet writes

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

(*Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 99)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XII

BIHARI-DA

(Continued from the issue of February 2001)

Bihari-da's Diary

1 Day by day the working of the Divine Shakti in this body-transformation is becoming clear. Actually it is a journey through an untrodden path, most dangerous and unaccountable, most uncertain and bewildering, but a journey towards a fulfillment of Mother Nature.

First I was bewildered (maybe in 1942) when I was going through physical agony (stomach and heart pain) but could not find the cause of the ailment. I was sure it was the action of the Divine Shakti in her working of transformation of the cells of the body. It was the first sign of the awakening of the cells.

2 When one comes in contact with the Divine Power, one at once can start thinking that he is an Avatar or Messiah. The human vital rushes up to capture the Divine by his vital, mental and physical power instead of giving oneself completely to that Divine Power—he wants to possess the Divine with his Asuric ego. This is the case of many seekers who have fallen from the Divine path. They become the instrument of the dark power that dominates the world.

They might have good wishes for the world, for the suffering of humanity, but they do not take the way of the Divine and bring the world to Truth.

They preach the Divine but in their admixture of falsehood and truth, they make the Divine in their own image.

3. A new society where every individual is given fullest freedom of action and expression is possible only when every *unit* of the society has transcended the present rules and ways and means of the society that have held together all the individuals. The laws of morality and compulsory rules will have no place in that society. The individual and collective life of that new society will be based on a totally transformed outlook. The spirit that is one and all will manifest itself outwardly and inwardly—even the feeling, seeing, dealing, etc. that every human being possesses will be changed completely. A society free from all imperfection mental, vital and physical in which all human beings will embody the Truth of the One, individual and universal and transcendental.

4. Hostile Maya is difficult to surmount. Careful not to be dazzled by anything that imitates the Divine. Our surrender must be one-pointed to the inner guide and the Divine Mother.

I must not be disturbed by the victory of the hostile but wait for the Divine Mother's intervention. I must be empowered by Her Force, Knowledge and Love and surrender completely to Her. I must remember that the work bestowed upon me is not

mine but Hers and nothing like attachment or personal desire for greatness can touch my being I have offered myself to Her and I must remain true and nothing must come between me and Her

5. The Maya of the ego is difficult to surmount It appears with new dazzles when you think you are killing or surpassing it Many yogis fell and many seekers broke their journey midway

It is the Divine alone who can lead us without committing mistakes So we must surrender ourselves unreservedly to Him alone and reject all desire and ego A little sincerity in you is enough in the beginning and He will take advantage of it and lead you correctly

6. In my life I have received the severest attack not from any expected sources, not from anyone from whom it is natural but from very unexpected sources on which I relied entirely, in whom I had perfect faith

But at the same time the victory over these formidable sources was also the greatest and most complete No doubt I suffered untold suffering but that suffering was nothing in comparison with the victory and conquest.

I know it was my test whether I would submit to the falsehood or fight for the truth. The attack became the cause of an ultimate victory that surpassed the suffering The suffering was momentary and the victory was eternal

7 Those who have never seen the sun, they want to show the sun by the lamp-light They are followers of falsehood Those who have not seen the Truth, they want to show the Truth by outward human speech, that is a caricature of truth. Truth is self-evident and even a flash from it can change a human being because a momentary flash of the Sun of Truth can make a man conscious of a superior light

To be a guru, to do yogic sadhana for power and position, to show to the world what one really is not, what one should be in spiritual Truth, is dangerous for the seeker, and these things can never be profitable to those with whom he has relations By one's vital one manifests only the vital world and not the true spirituality,—because it contaminates the pure fire of the soul that wants nothing but the Divine

8 In the noisy world those who can raise their voice over others' are heard, and they are thought to be the greater In this way the world is becoming more and more noisy.

But is there none whose voice is eternally superior to any voice of man and world?

It is the supreme Truth, the Divine, who speaks through silence and sinks all other noise in the infinite

Man of ordinary mind thinks he can be great by making noise and makes noise in the name of the Truth, the Divine, but when he has found the Truth Divine he shrinks from the ordinary way of thinking and no more makes noise He speaks through silence and the Truth becomes revealed once more to mankind, and humanity turns away from the noise of Falsehood

9 In India there was the conception of four distinct forms of individuality

—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra Each man has got one or more of these inner rather than outer personalities These forms consist of three Gunas, divided according to the Gunas .

In the West, people are considered to possess all these Gunas living together and each individuality is entitled to develop all these personalities together, for that there is ample opportunity But in actuality these working Gunas in the individual create chaos and people do not find any inner contact in their external life and workings The result is that they remain always externalised, having nothing to do with any inner consciousness.

Interesting it is that even in the most externalised social organisation of the West there is a class system The fourfold class system (the four forms of the Indian system) has also roots in the society of the West There are Brahmins who are thinkers, scientists and technologists, there are Kshatriyas who are engaged in the military sphere; there are Vaisyas who are traders and industrialists, and there are Sudras who are engaged in all these spheres and help the growth of the four professions by their labour. But it is to be noted that, although people choose the professions of the four, they hardly represent the inner dharma, or , or soul-desire. Many choose one or other profession because they have to make their livelihood out of the work they were forced to do by necessity.

10. In the future there will be no suppression of the individual as I have been suppressed by circumstances I was never a free man outwardly—because for me the obstacles were insurmountable I had nothing in the world to be able to stand on my own feet, free from others' domination Family, country, politics, society, pecuniary conditions, the community, religion and all the modes of life were against me There was moreover the second World War

Because of the Mother I could grow in my quest for Truth Her general protection and Her taking of me into Her family of many children was solely responsible for my spiritual progress Otherwise it would have been impossible

She has passed away but She has given us a world where we can stand freely, spiritually and psychically Although India is not ready as yet, it is a certainty that spiritual India is emerging and true personalities are coming forward with Divine Truth. None will be able to hinder the work that is destined

11 Ultimately I found the truth that to argue with the mind, to discuss a matter with it and try to teach others by mental reasoning is not the right way,—because the mind cannot bring out the underlying spiritual idea

I have noted many times while arguing with friends or others, that either they do not understand my point or I do not understand their stand While I drive my point home even in favour of their idea, they do not understand and think I oppose them

Unless two minds are on the same level, this sort of disharmony is bound to take place

The only remedy is that we have to go beyond mental reasoning, through silence of the Spirit we can really help others.

12 Two kinds of Beauty—Masculine and Feminine Shiva represents the Masculine and Krishna represents the Feminine.

One Beauty manifesting in two forms

Silent and grandiose, static and wide, a figure with the adornment of Nature's ornament, having no artificiality and softness, Shiva represents the Eternal Purusha

Attractive, changing, dynamic, mild, bewildering in behaviour and adorned with rare riches and artistic garments, Krishna represents the feminine side of the Eternal Beauty

13 Wings of a bird cover the whole world They spread and spread till they will cover the whole Universe. They will unify, they will bring down the oneness of the One into the ignorance of the Inconscient

First a few will know it, then they will come together—they are the elite of the Future

Others will follow

They will follow through the vicissitudes of Nature's action, through war and peace, love and hatred, ups and downs .

With the above quotes from Bihari-da's diary, and having read a few more, I tried to review my acquaintance with him Was I any closer or wiser? To be honest I was neither For, to tread where he did, one felt a bit "out-of-bounds" and, at the same time, maybe a feeling of "distance" from the Bihari-da we knew gnawed at me somewhere within. I rather retraced my steps for now, to cherish that Bihari-da we met in the Dining Room or the one sneaking away to eat an ice-cream with Prashanto, leaving to the Future or some others to read the "Other" Bihari-da

Is the sky high? "No," say some, "Yes," assert others The "nays" look eye-level, straight ahead and around The "ayes" look up above. Both, I suppose, are right on their own levels of perception

We know that Bihari-da hardly ever spoke about himself yet some pressed him and managed to wheedle out some interesting telling comments and even strong views of his

Question You are one of the early comers here When you came here what did you expect from this place?

Answer (quite strongly voiced) *Nothing, Nothing* Once I decided to come and give myself to this life—that was all—take whatever the Guru gave—no demand of any kind If he gives a slap take it with joy It is not ours to decide—just go on doing what you have to If you fail, it does not matter If you succeed, it is alright Those who come expecting something are *failures—one and all*

Question What difference do you find between now after the passing away of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and before?

Answer I think, when an Avatar takes birth on earth, He can never leave it Do you think Sri Krishna is gone and finished with?

Srī Aurobindo is still here, as the Mother has said. Now it is for the individual to find and feel. If you try with sincerity Their help is always there. You are young, you have energy. You have to be heroes, doing heroic work. It is needed.

Bihari-da then recounted a story—a true one—in a lighter vein (depending on how one looks at it). In the olden days, when the Ashram had just a few sadhaks, no departments, no playground, no children etc., etc., it was naturally a very silent place, with no movement or change. Some people came from outside for a visit (probably from Bengal). They went back and friends there asked them “How was that place—the Pondicherry Ashram?” They replied—“Mrityu, Mrityu!” (Dead, Dead!)

But when bluntly asked about what experience(s) he had—especially when he saw Srī Aurobindo—he simply exclaimed in ecstasy: “*Ah, apurbō—ki sného—Oh—bola jayena—express kora ashambhab!*” (Ah—wonderful—what love, affection—beyond expression and speech!). Then? there was nothing more coming. When gently needed for more, he as gently but with finality said “*Aar ki, eyi, ār bola jayena. Bola ucht na Bollé-o ki bujhbé—Bhul bujhté-o pāro*” (What more, that’s all—can’t say any more and shouldn’t say any more. Even if I say, what will you understand? Maybe you will wrongly understand!)

Bihari-da was known not to go often for “Darshan.” Someone reported the matter to the Mother. She replied “Bihari is always with me, I am always with him.”

When someone broached the subject of the time when many could not accept the Mother, when Srī Aurobindo retired in 1926, Bihari-da countered with a query “Who has known the Mother? Knowing Her—not as a machine or some nice person who gives us things—She is beyond all knowing. ‘Knowing’ is to *become the Mother!*”

Bihari-da used to say that *maybe* he could quite easily live a hundred years, meaning that his body’s sadhana would enable it to live that long doing its work. But at a certain period of his life, when he was about 80 years old, he said to Vishwajit “*Na—ār eyi shorir niyé hobéna!*” (No, it is not possible to continue with this body.) When asked why, he did not clarify or elaborate—he just said “Not this time, next time.”

Vishwajit asked Bihari-da just before leaving for Calcutta “O Bihari, I am leaving, I hope you won’t leave in my absence.” Bihari-da replied “No no, not yet. You can go without that worry.” Vishwajit went and returned, Bihari-da was there, no problems. Hale and hearty as usual. He was about 84 now. A few days went by—all normal. One evening Vishwajit, as was his habit, was going out to the Ashram. Bihari-da called out “Vishwajit, where are you going—how long will you be gone?” Vishwajit told him he wouldn’t be long, just a short visit and back. He went and returned, and there was Mohini-da (he was Tinkori-da’s student in Bengal, looked after him till his death and was now looking after Bihari-da) very troubled, calling Vishwajit—“*Shugri ésho Bihari-dar kichhu hoyéchhé*” (Come quick—something is wrong with Bihari-da). Vishwajit entered Bihari-da’s room. Bihari-da

was lying quietly on the floor—no moaning, shaking or tossing about—just lying there Vishwajit and Mohini-da managed to lift him onto the cot and sent for the doctor (Dr Dutta). Bihari-da in the meanwhile opened his eyes, gave Vishwajit a beatific smile and again closed his eyes. The doctor came, but Bihari-da was already beyond the doctor's or anyone's reach or help. It would seem as if he had just willed himself to go, to prepare himself for the next coming. For us it may be more true to say "he put *us* to sleep and quietly shut the door and slipped away!" This was on the 5th of April 1993.

Years before he left he had told Vishwajit that he would leave no bondages with this world when he left for the next. He said this when Vishwajit quipped with him saying "Bihari, whatever you do, when you die, don't haunt this place!" Bihari-da replied "*Na, ami shob mukti korieyi jabo*" (No, I will liberate [myself] from all this and then go.) Maybe it is as a sequel to this pronouncement that Vishwajit found nothing in Bihari-da's room as regards correspondence with the Mother or Sri Aurobindo, or even with others. So it is a lucky stroke, and an unusual lapse in Bihari-da's "bond-breaking" job, that I got a glimpse of his diary.

Bihari-da was a man who never strove for an identity. Except for some of our vague and unimportant memories—he is lost to us. But is he really lost? Whatever the case—ours is not to bemoan his departure. Rather "Triumph-March" him into the realms he so much dreamt of and prepared himself for—the Realms of his Divine Mother. He is lost—if 'lost' is the mingling of a drop with the ocean—a merging of one with THE ONE who is ALL.

(Concluded)

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of February 2001)

ACCORDING to the Sufi saints, the note of a human being's soul consists of the vibrations to which the man is tuned naturally and spontaneously. In the mundane activity of all beings and in all things the pitch is recognised by the seer, as a musician knows very well the key and scale in which any particular music is composed. Man's living atmosphere and his lifestyle tell of the grade of activity of his inner vibrations. If all these vibratory activities are properly controlled man may experience the all-pervading joy of life, without being enslaved by the adverse forces. The saints and sages spread their inner light of peace and joy not only in and around the place where they sit for meditation, but even in the neighbourhood where they dwell. Generally, the town or countryside or the forest area where they live remains at peace, in accordance with the power of the vibrations they send out from their souls. Thought-vibrations of the sages work out their own destiny (or shape day to day events) according to their spiritual strength, power and purity of mind. They always try to remain perfectly composed and cheerful, for such great souls music is nothing but joy and all music is only the "sound of His laughter", as described by Sri Aurobindo

All music is only the sound of His laughter,
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss¹

The description regarding Vak given by T. V. Kapali Shastri in his book, *Lights of the Ancients* is quite relevant in connection with the vibratory power of Music (*nāda*). The Supernal *ākāśa* is the imperishable source and perpetual basis of sonorous rhythms that issue from the 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 bristles in the utterance of the Upanishad wherein the *Rishi* prays to Indra, Lord of Svar, the Divine Power of the Luminous Heaven, whose vibrations of rhythms proceed from the World of the luminous Gods, whose abode is the self-same Ether, *paramam vyoma*.

The first and the supreme source of Word Power—the primordial Para Vak is Beyond, it is unmanifest, but turned towards the manifestation, it is the causal *mahā kāraṇa* and as such its centre is at the bottom of the spinal column that supports the human nervous system. This is the *mulādhāra*, the root-centre of the physical being. Next is the Pashyanti Vak, the word that perceives, and this is the causal energy located in the navel centre, then is the Madhyama Vak, the middle, the Word in the intermediate subtle region between the navel and throat which is the region for the

express speech or utterance called Vaikhari Vak. Instances are numerous in the life of human beings where the Word signifies a secret utterance, akin to what we call in modern language a “code word” by which the God who is adored, *Agni* who is awakened and wakeful, recognises the adorer and looks to his needs, both material and spiritual

(To be continued)

SURESH DEY

Reference

- 1 *Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol 5, p 40*
-

IT'S ENOUGH

It's enough, Mother,
 More than enough
 To contain
 Your all-showering Grace
 In the small vessel
 Of my burning heart

Like a non-stop rain
 In the hot summer
 You pour Your Love
 That my parched heart
 Swallows and soaks up
 At once yet with
 Further yearnings
 And sincere awaitings

ASHALATA DASH

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of January 2001)

QUITE a number of notable personalities came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo during the years 1920 to 1925. Among them were K G Deshpande, Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge friend who was running an Ashram near Andheri and C R Das who came to ask for Sri Aurobindo's blessings for the new Swaraj Party he was starting. As Mr Das could not leave politics in order to devote himself to spiritual life exclusively, Sri Aurobindo advised him to combine both as far as possible. Sri Aurobindo also gave his support to the formation of the Swaraj Party. Sri Aurobindo's sister Sarojini paid a visit to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo gave her the publishing rights of his book *War and Self-Determination* as a financial help to her.

“But those who knew him during the days of the national awakening—from 1900 to 1910—could not have these doubts. And even these initial misunderstandings and false notions of others began to evaporate with the growth of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram from 1927 onwards.”¹ On 5th June 1923, Das visited Pondicherry during his South India tour, saw Sri Aurobindo and discussed the new Party's future course of action. Reminiscing about the meeting more than fifteen years later, Sri Aurobindo is reported to have said:

“He was the last of the old group. He came here and wanted to be a disciple. I said he wouldn't be able to go through in yoga as long as he was in the political movement. Besides, his health was shattered.”²

“This period of outer retirement was one of intense sadhana and of intellectual activity—it was also one during which he acted on external events—though he was not dedicated outwardly to a public cause. About his own retirement Sri Aurobindo writes:

“But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he (Sri Aurobindo) had retired into some highest spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in life. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all life and all world-activity into the scope of this Spiritual Consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action, for it is a part of the experience of those who have advanced in yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic Power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in spiritual consciousness—though all do not care to possess, or possessing to use it, and this Power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force

which he used at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world Force ”’

Mr G. V. Subba Rao has left his impression of his meeting with Sri Aurobindo

“It was in October, 1923, that I first saw Sri Aurobindo in his Ashram at Pondicherry. He was seated on a small chair in a rather narrow verandah on the first floor of his house. There were about a dozen chairs in the room and a small table in front, with papers, flowers and a few books on it. There was a small time-piece to indicate the progress of time, because everything here must be done according to precision and order. Sri Aurobindo was dazzling bright in colour—it was said that, in his earlier years, he was more dark than brown and had a long, rather thin beard which was well-dressed with streaks of white strewn here and there. The figure was slender and not much taller than Gandhiji’s but a bit more fleshy. The eyes were big and elongated to a point and their looks were keen and piercing like shells. He was dressed in fine cotton—not khaddar evidently. He had only two clothes on, one a dhoti and the other an upper cloth worn in the traditional fashion of an *upaveetam*, i.e., right arm and shoulder exposed. The lower part of the legs was slender, feminine and the feet were hidden in two small slippers.

The Interview

“His voice was low, but quite audible, quick and musical. He was fast in his flow of speech, clear like a crystal and analytical to a degree. In a fifteen minute talk, he gave me his philosophy in a nutshell. He was simple and courteous, outspoken and free in his interrogations. It seemed as though he could know a man by a sweep of his eyes, and read men’s minds from a survey of their photographs. He appeared as one highly cognizant of the value of time, and at the end of the appointed fifteen-minutes, he stood up looking at the clock, as if intimating that I should retire. He was kind throughout, as to a child, but I could discern enough in his demeanour to conclude that he could be stern and imperious when required. To his disciples, he was loving like a Guru, but demanded absolute spiritual surrender before one could be admitted to his heart’s domain.

Yoga Sadhana

“Sri Aurobindo had long been absorbed in a *Sadhana* for *Yoga Siddhi*, which, he believed, was destined to form a new order of life in the world. He had always seen it, though less clearly and dynamically at first, that a higher spiritual power was necessary to solve the moral, material, social and even political problems of the world. Just as Gandhiji believed in an inner, moral power or soul-force as essential for the redemption of the world, similarly Sri Aurobindo believed that a higher spiritual power was absolutely necessary and must be brought down on earth to help the regeneration of this world.

His Yoga

“The position Sri Aurobindo realised as early as 1907-1908, but necessarily, his realisation was yet vague and incomplete, the nature, conditions and circumstances of that higher power had to be explored, and the basis, knowledge, and methods to bring it down on to this earth had to be determined. For this purpose, a complete withdrawal from all external activity was necessary, at least for a time.

“Sri Aurobindo’s letters dealing with Yoga—especially his instructions to his disciples in this early period—reveal him as the master-doctor diagnosing in an instant the spiritual nature and conditions of the spiritual disease in men and things even through photographs. This man, he says of one, is a born Yogi. In another case, he says: This man possesses a too keen psychic sensitiveness, as such, he ought not to go on with psychic experiments at once. In a case of psychic disorder, he wrote to his brother Barindra: ‘You are inexperienced. You do not know how to deal with him. He needs an absolutely quiet and careful treatment. I am too far off here, but he is writing to me often.’ When once there was a delay in communication, he fell upon his brother like an avalanche and wrote: ‘This sort of evening instructions won’t do with me. In my supramental state, everything must be done in order and with precision.’ The great care with which he was attending to the distant invalid was quite remarkable. On one occasion, he was recommending an ordinary medical treatment, on another a change of place or cessation of psychic exercises etc. Now he was writing letters, now sending telegrams, now angry with his brother, now suggesting a change of treatment—but ever anxious about the distant invalid, as if he were a very near relative. He sent a telegram to one place, but not being sure that it would reach the addressee properly, he was not satisfied till he sent another to a second address, to make sure of its reaching. Speaking about some visions, he says that these things are of common occurrence. ‘Mira had them a hundred times.’ This Mira seems to be an extraordinary lady, and even in 1923, she was said to be the best of his disciples and was consulted by Sri Aurobindo on many affairs, including Yoga. No wonder, therefore, that she has been for a long time the acknowledged Mother of the Ashram.

Unique Yoga

“A word now about his Yoga which is claimed as unique in the world. It is said that it has never been practised before. It is different from the ordinary yogas of Bhakti, Jnana and Karma. It goes beyond the mind to what he calls the ‘Supermind’ and the forces of the ‘Supermind’, according to him, must be brought down to transform the mind, life and body of man—our familiar Manomaya, Pranamaya and Annamaya Kosas. It is based not on an ascetic renunciation of life and the good things of this earth, but on its acceptance and complete transformation into the divine. It is a difficult process, and accepts nothing but complete self-surrender, *ātma samarpana*. The Supermind, which I am tempted to translate as the *Brahman*, has to be

brought down, and the mind, prana and body have to be gradually thrown open to receive it. For doing this, it needs great strength for the *ādhāra* to support its mighty *śakti*. There must be complete faith and infinite strength.

“Sri Aurobindo’s life has been a unique and glorious one. It is unrivalled. His literary and intellectual output alone reaches the highest Himalayan peaks of the world. His retirement, in bliss and solitude, for over forty years in one and the same place surpasses the record of any *Muni*, here or elsewhere. And the peace, wisdom, serenity and loyal and devoted following acquired in the Ashram are a new wonder in the world.

“What is the future of such a glorious mission and achievement going to be? It is a plausible question, but hardly possible to speculate upon.

“One thing, however, may be safely said. The future of the Aurobindonian Mission will depend largely, if not solely, upon the wise, devoted and persistent efforts of the Ashramites. And, as in the case of the Ramakrishna Mission, one Vivekananda among the large group of his devoted disciples might help to complete the task of ‘transforming the earth’ ”⁴

(From a lecture delivered by the author before the Eswara Library, *Kakinada*)
(*Sunday Times*, May 6, 1951)

A few selections from the *Evening Talks* by A. B. Purani are given below.

By going through the passages we learn about Sri Aurobindo’s outer retirement which was needed for intense sadhana and intellectual activity.

“Twice he found it necessary to go out of his way to make public pronouncements on important world-issues, which shows distinctly that renunciation of life is not a part of his Yoga. The first was in relation to the Second World War. At the beginning he did not actively concern himself with it, but when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism dominate the world, he began to intervene.

“The second was with regard to Sir Stafford Cripps’ proposal for the transfer of power to India.

“He was absorbed in many-sided activities during that period such as writing work and rendering spiritual help to the world during his apparent retirement and there were plenty of other activities of which the outside world has no knowledge. Many prominent as well as less known persons sought and obtained interviews with him during these years. Thus, among well-known persons may be mentioned C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarala Devi, Dr. Munja, Khasirao Jadhava, Tagore, Sylvan Levy. The great national poet of Tamil Nadu, S. Subramanya Bharati, was in contact with Sri Aurobindo for some years during his stay at Pondicherry, so was V. V. S. Iyar. The famous V. Ramaswami Aiyangar, V. S. Rao of Tamil literature—stayed with Sri Aurobindo for nearly three years and was influenced by him.”⁵

“1920 (Nov or Dec.?)

Interview with Sarala Devi Chowdhurani

“Sarala Devi came to Pondicherry to meet Sri Aurobindo. It was evident she wanted to ascertain his future programme and his views on current politics. She met him for two days.

“As she came up to meet him at the fixed time, 4-30 p m , Sri Aurobindo got up from his chair to greet her. Both greeted each other with folded hands. After formal exchanges Sarala Devi began:

“Is it true that you are against the non-cooperation movement?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: I am not against it; the train has arrived, it must be allowed to run its own course. The only thing I feel is that there is great need of solidifying the national will for freedom into stern action.

“*Sarala Devi*: Non-cooperation has declared war against imperialism

“*Sri Aurobindo*: Yes, it has, but I am afraid it is done without proper ammunition, and mobilisation and organisation of the available forces.

“*Sarala Devi*. Why don't you come out and try to run your own train?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: I must first prepare the rails and lay them down, then only can I get the train to arrive.

“*Sarala Devi*: But you must do something, should you not?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: As for myself, I have a personal programme. But if I had been in politics, even then I would have taken another stand. I would first be sure of my ground before I fought the government

“*Sarala Devi*: Don't you think that sufficient work has been done in the country to start the fight?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: Until now only waves of emotion and a certain all round awakening have come. But the force which could stand the strain when the government would put forth its force in full vigour is still not there.

“What is needed is more organisation of the national will. It is no use emotional waves rising and spreading, then going down. Our leaders need not go on lecturing. What we should do is to organise local committees of action throughout the country to carry out any mandate of the central organisation. These local leaders must stay among the people.”

*

“11-4-1923

An interview with a Sadhak

“Sri Aurobindo today met X from Madras. X asked him to give him the Yoga.

“*Sri Aurobindo*: This is a very difficult path and therefore demands complete surrender and one-pointed concentration. One must be after the Truth alone. One has

to be prepared to leave ideals of altruism, patriotism and even the aspiration for personal liberation and follow the Yoga for the sake of the Divine alone. Aspiration must be firm but it must not be only an intellectual aspiration, it must be of the inmost soul. It, then, means a call from Above. One has to take an irrevocable decision before he begins the Yoga. Such a decision may take time to arrive but it is better to wait till then.

“*Disciple*: I have decided to take up the yoga.

“*Sri Aurobindo*: There are so many difficulties in this path—the Yoga is not meant for all. At one time I had the idea that this yoga is for humanity, but now the idea is changed. This Yoga is for the Divine, for God. Man has first to attain the Truth-Consciousness and leave the salvation of mankind to that consciousness. This does not mean that one has to abandon Life in this Yoga. My mission in life is to bring down the Supermind into Mind, Life and Body. Formerly I did not care if the sadhaka accepted other influences, but now I have decided to take only those who will admit the influence of this Yoga exclusively.

“*Disciple*: What should be the Sadhaka’s attitude with regard to physical illness?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: He must first of all remain completely detached in the vital being and in the mind. The illness is the result of the working of the forces of Nature. He must use his will to reject the illness and one’s will must be used as a representative of the Divine Will. When the Divine Will descends into the Adhara then it works no longer indirectly through the Sadhak’s will but directly and removes the illness. When the psychic being awakens then it is able to perceive the influence of the disease even before it enters the body. Not only does one perceive it, but one knows which organ is going to be attacked and one can keep off the attack with the help of the Higher Power.”

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“28-4-1923

A Sadhak’s interview.

“Sri Aurobindo generally used to see his disciples and visitors from outside, who came with the express purpose of seeing him, between 9 and 11 in the morning. He used to glance at the daily paper—*The Hindu*—and then grant interviews. These were very informal and often intimate in the sense that the disciple would relate his experiences and difficulties, and visitors from outside generally sought his advice on spiritual matters of individual guidance in some public activity.

“One such interview is given here to illustrate how he dealt with the questions of Sādhanā,—spiritual practice.”

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“*Disciple*: I have, at present a very strong impulse to realise the infinite Transcendent Shakti. I want to know whether it is safer to leave the Sādhana to the Universal or to the Divine?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: The Transcendent and the Universal Powers are not always exclusive of each other; they are almost mutual; when the Transcendent is realised in Mind it is the Universal One has to have that realisation also.

“*Disciple*. What is the distinction between the two?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*. The Universal is full of all sorts of things,—true as well as false, good as well as bad, both divine and undivine One has to get the knowledge and distinguish between them. It is not safe to open oneself to the Universal before one has the power of discrimination, because all kinds of ideas, forces, impulses, even Rākshasic and Paishāchic rush into him There are schools of Yoga that consider this condition as ‘freedom’ or Mukti and they also take pleasure in the ‘Universal manifestation’, as they call it But that is not perfection Perfection only comes when the Transcendental Power manifests itself in human life, when the Infinite manifests itself in the finite.

“*Disciple* Cannot those who attain the Universal manifest perfection?”

“*Sri Aurobindo* Generally, these are men who want to escape into the Universal—that is, into the Infinite,—Satchidananda,—on the mental plane The Universal, as I told you, is full of all kinds of things, good and bad. The Sādhaks, who enter into it and look upon it as their goal, accept whatever comes from it and, sometimes, behave in life with supreme indifference to morality. But their being is not transformed. Among our known Sādhaks—K opened himself to the Universal, could not distinguish, or rather refused to distinguish and at the end went mad Or take the case of L, an outsider, who was trying to remain in the Universal consciousness with the vital being full of all kinds of impurities. That is not perfection.

“When the Divine Power—the Supramental Shakti—works She establishes harmony between the various instruments of nature and also harmony in the whole of our life. R and people like him feel that such a harmonisation of the being is a limitation But it is not a limitation—because that action is in keeping with the truth of our being and our becoming

“*Disciple* Is the Transcendent Power the same as the Supramental Power?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*. Yes, when that Power awakens, one knows not only the truth of being but also that of manifestation There is inherent harmony on that plane between Truth-knowledge and Truth-action.

“*Disciple*: Manifestation may mean limitation, is that so?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: No human manifestation can be illimitable or unlimited But the manifestation in the limited should reflect the Transcendent Power Human manifestation has a truth behind it and the Supermind shows the truth to be manifested It is, really speaking, the clue to perfection

“*Disciple*: I feel a sense of pressure when the Power descends, particularly in the head

“*Sri Aurobindo* One must get rid of the sense of pressure. The head indicates the seat of mind and gradually the Power should be made to descend below. When it descends below then it is not felt as pressure but as power which nothing can destroy. The whole being, down to the cells of the body, has to be prepared to receive the Power when it descends ”

*

“8-8-1923

Interview with V:

“V. I am going back to my place and will try to practise the yoga there. I want to know whether I ought to cut myself away from all public activity.

“*Sri Aurobindo* There is no general rule that all who practise yoga should give up all external work. Do you think that the work would stop if you gave it up?”

“V There are one or two friends and co-workers to whom I can entrust the work; but even then it would require two or three hours of my attention.

“*Sri Aurobindo*: Well, there are two or three considerations. First of all the necessity of giving up work depends on the demand from within. In the process of Sadhana there comes a stage when even two hours’ attention is felt as a disturbance, then that work has to be given up. Or, if one finds that it is not the work that one has to do, then one has to give it up. So long as such an intense state of Sadhana does not come there is no harm in continuing the work.

“V: I have started an organisation for the spread of our literature in my part of the country. What is your advice with regard to it?”

“*Sri Aurobindo*: I am neither for it nor against it in the intellectual sense. In this yoga, external action is not to be abandoned. Sometimes action has to be done.

“But ordinarily, we have not to do philanthropic work from the same motives. Philanthropy has an egoistic motive, however high it may be. We have to look beyond. For instance, we need not start schools for the Depressed Classes in order to serve humanity. We have to work as a sacrifice to God and we have therefore to go beyond mental ideals and constructions. When men begin work with these mental or ethical motives, they find them to be true and therefore they are not willing to leave them behind and go beyond. We have to take up the work from the yogic point of view. For example, it is necessary to spread our literature because it spreads the new thought. Some men may receive it correctly and some incorrectly. A movement is set up in the universal mental plane. So also in social work the whole frame is shaken by the new thought and inasmuch as it moves men out of the old groove it is useful. But we have to act from the inner motives.”

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“9-8-1923

Interview with G:

“G: How to do action without desire? How can one be free from action and egoism?”

“*Sri Aurobindo* The word ‘egoism’ is used in a very limited sense in English,—it means anything for the self. That which is not done for the self is regarded as unegoistic. But that is not so in yoga. One can do all unselfish actions and have full egoism in him. He will have the egoism of the doer. ‘Nishkam Karma’ means first desirelessness. You have to first establish that condition in which good or bad desires are absent. You must realise that it is the power of God—his Shakti—that does the work in reality. All work, good and bad, in you and in the world is her work.

“G: If a man takes up that attitude he may go on indiscriminately doing good or bad action and say that God is doing them.”⁶

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

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- 2 *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran. Published in 1966, p. 48
- 3 *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, by A. B. Purani. First Series, p. 3
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 4
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K. D. SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

Sethna and Nolini Kanta Gupta—Two Styles

SISIRKUMAR Ghose learnt his art from Nolini Kanta Gupta, but he became new because he fused the paradoxical maxims with a snappy journalistic prose. Nolini was seldom flashy; it was against his temperament. He wrote for the supra-cultured reader wishing him to see through his cool expositions

With man came also the sense of what is beyond man, the superman, the divine man, the Divine. That is the true meaning of his appearance, that is the characteristic turn of consciousness which he brought with him. This self-consciousness, an inner perception and aspiration that he is to be something else, something other and greater than what he is, means the emergence of a spiritual soul in the world of matter. This prophetic or forward-looking consciousness is absent in the sub-human creation, although, as I have said, a secret blind unknown forward urge has always been there as the original motive of all functioning in things and creatures upon earth

(*The Evolutionary Imperative*, Collected Works, Vol 7, p 315)

The passage is an explanatory note to Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution. Nolini seems to have been satisfied with this clarificatory note. He does not wish to use any scintillating sentence, which will distract the mind of a reader listening to a new theory. He is a Vyasan writer in English. Like Vyasa, his art is singularly disinterested, *niskāma*. His sentence is a colourless wonder.

Both Sethna and Nolini have perfected their forms with great commitment. Unlike Nolini, Sethna is a deliberate literary artist. The interesting thing about Nolini is his dispassionate labour. There are times when he is too careless about quotations and bibliographical details. Sethna is never careless about his references and one is amazed by his labour and memory. He has more time than Nolini as a whole-time artist. Nolini seems to have been busier in making his life a beautiful piece of art and there is just one word for his cool voice, authenticity. This is not to degrade the status of Sethna, who loves to expose all the details in detail, the subtleties of history, art and philosophy. If Nolini's is an ideal case of disinterested art, Sethna's is an ideal type of expository prose. For Nolini, the substance counts for everything and the form limits itself to its proper work of expressing with precision and power the substance. The tone is even quieter than Sri Aurobindo's letters on yoga. Sethna is always experimenting with his syntax, often trying to speak the same thing in many ways, and sometimes searching for a colourful metaphor to support his powerful logic. Even though he has a very strong hold over the *sententia*, he seldom uses the compressed mode. Quite often, Sethna's thoughtful expositions verge on a typical Aurobindonian style of criticism, where tension is an unfailing quality. This tension is created partly

by the gesture of saying something new and partly by a strong *refutatio*, which is a very characteristic manner of Sethna

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* employs constantly and in the highest degree a style presenting spiritual vision and experience in all their concreteness. Even in the moments where a thought-form is prominent, spiritual vision and experience have moulded thought to their own luminous truths instead of thought essaying to capture them in a mental cast or intelligible communication. The style of *Savitri* thus is different from that of *Paradise Lost* in very temper and texture. We should commit a psychological mistake to term it Miltonic. Miltonic it is in so far as it organises a stupendous energy with a stupendous control and in so far as Milton has always a spaciousness of utterance. But to dub it Miltonic all round as most reviews of *Savitri* have done, is to skim the mere surface of style-quality.

(*The Inspiration of Paradise Lost*)

What is most striking in Sethna is this *refutatio*, which is quite often a gesture of defending his Master with an inspired logic. Nolini seldom refutes. Even when he defends his Master, he is free of that critical tension, which has kept Sethna awake throughout his life in Pondicherry. Sethna's genius is unmistakable; anybody can see that. Nolini is a deceptive prose writer, he conceals his own light. Nolini and Sethna are two different kinds of lamps lit by the same sun.

GAUTAM GHOSAL

END OF THE JOURNEY

Part I

How did I come to our Ashram? Do I know the answer? I doubt it! My parents brought me here That's true But to stop at that is to evade the issue Was it my fate that compelled them to take the decision? Or was it my stars or was it the hand of a greater power than fate or stars—a hand that is unseen yet concrete—that guided me to this sanctuary? Neither is it wise nor safe to hazard guesses of determinisms that can be perceived but faintly through a haze of multi-coloured mist of Truth and imaginations, of conjectures and realities. Instead what I *can* say is not how I came to the Ashram but, after having arrived, why I couldn't *leave* the Ashram With this I think I could be more cogent as well as truthful since there is no haze of imagination or any mist of conjecture to cloud my thinking. I can see the whole thing so well, indeed as though it occurred just the other day... I can see it clearly just round the corner. Ah! But that makes a neat little chapter of my days of yore It all started on the pavement of Elgin Road of Calcutta when I could not have been a kid of more than eight or nine years .

It was evening twilight I think the sun had set leaving as its parting gift a purple hue to the western sky. The street lamps were not yet lit and I was walking towards the west with Dad at my side, his face aglow with the colour of the sky I was making a count of the bats that were faintly visible in the gloaming when a church clock struck its chime and I said.

“Father, that's the clock of my school?”

“Yes,” said he, without looking at me, his face still bright with the ruddy light from the west He added “If you can get a standing in your class this year in the final exam, I will give you a flying model of an aircraft with twin engines That is to say you must stand either first or second or third ”

A twin-engined aeroplane that would actually fly? And I would operate it? Which boy can resist the temptation of a new cricket bat or an engined aeromodel? Elgin Road looked so elegant and the western sky was touched with a deeper crimson hue!

The model aircraft was a windfall no doubt. But the real reason for my bliss was not the prospect of getting the aircraft My ecstasy had another dimension to it If Dad, the Alpha and Omega of all persons, was willing to give me the model aircraft—the Alpha of all material possessions to a child—for making a high rank in the exam , how ethereal, how wonderful in itself must that standing be! I was sure that this academic success was inherently beautiful, a bud of some heavenly flower that would bloom to its full beauty and fragrance the moment I would step on the pedestal of the scholastic achievement

No, it was not merely that the dusk took on a glorious hue of crimson, it was all starlight, and floodlight of gold and moving jasper and twinkling emerald

I can't recall how I went about the business of preparing for the exam ; to be with my books more often, most probably I cut down my quota of daily fights with my friends, also my ration of cricket and football was minimised I must have flown my kites less My tops and marbles perhaps saw less of me

Neither do I remember anything of the actual examination What I remember is the last day of school, the day of distribution of the progress report books. The events of that day are indelibly burnt into my mind

I was a bit late that morning. As I walked from the main gate to my building not a soul was in sight. The whole campus was empty I knew all had taken their seats in their classes Not a face poked out of the window, no wolf-whistle, no shout, no yell No one ran, no one spoke. How could they? Weren't the hearts of all six hundred thumping with expectation and fear as did mine? This was the day of judgment My hope of making a stand shrank with remarkable rapidity as I approached my building.

The teacher hadn't yet entered the class. Some of my colleagues pressed close and I sat amidst them None spoke. Like me they only hoped One boy prayed Another had an outright frightened look Finally the second bell rang It was now seconds before the head teacher would enter the class with the fateful progress papers piled high on her hand Tension mounted Some sat with mouth open, some with eyes closed. This was agony, to say the least My model aircraft was a far cry and my emeralds and starlights misty. Those who agree with Byron that our youthful days are the days of our glory should rethink The tension was anything but glorious.

Shortly came the inevitable clop clop .clop of the high heels as our head teacher entered, and our heartbeats mounted With quick, short steps she walked down the aisle, and took her seat We stood up in a body, and then, in a body, sat down—all a perfect machine She was a no-nonsense woman, smart and restrained in speech Without wasting a word or a gesture she went straight to the point

“Subir Chatterjee, you have stood first,” she said looking at him with a smile

The effect of this was electric on Subir To start with, he took some time to stand up. Then began the ten-year-old-VIP's march towards the desk of the teacher, his eyes unblinking, his body stiff from head to foot, hands held rigidly to the sides On reaching the desk he pushed his hands forward as though about to get a hot potato On receiving the progress report, however, his dignity failed him He thumped it on his chest, threw back his head, looked at the ceiling and let out a scream of such might that even the dignified teacher was a bit shaken Then, still yelling he whirled round, dashed for the door and vanished

Our teacher took a long breather

Then, “Tarun Banerjee,” she let out the bomb-shell looking down at the progress reports, “you have come second ”

Tarun Banerjee! Did I hear right? I couldn't believe my ears But she was looking at me with a smile of assurance

My goodness! I told myself, I have done it, my hour of starlight, of jasper, of gold. Quickly I looked round. But where...where was my gold and silver? The windows were dabbed with the same dull green, shutters thickly covered with dust. I looked at the benches, at the partition walls. They were the same old greasy brown. I looked at the ceiling, at the floor, I looked around...oh...everything was as dull as a clod. My heart sank. I was disillusioned most when most successful.

But hope burns eternal in man's heart for easy success. "The starlight will surely shine forth when I hold the progress reports in my hand," I told myself. I left my seat, went to the desk of the teacher, took the progress report respectfully, and looked around. But oh, the same haunting dullness stared at me and my heart continued to sink. I was too young then to analyse that I was looking for the freedom of my spirit and too young indeed to grasp the fact that the secret way to that freedom was not the dusty road of academic success.

When I reached home Dad was out. Mum too was out. I had still a lingering hope that if Dad saw the report my secret bud would bloom with an ethereal glow. That was my desperate straw, the straw of the drowning kid. I had to put it somewhere so that Dad's attention would be drawn to it inevitably. The dinner table seemed to be ideal. Then my eyes fell on the glass cupboard in which mother kept all her cutlery and crystal bowls and if anybody as little as touched it she would wail her head off. But today? Hien! Wouldn't I get away all unscathed with seven murders? I opened it noisily, took out some spoons, placed the Holy Scripture at the centre of the table and placed four of mother's "dearies" on each corner of it. I took a good and a last look at the Magna Carta and left the house.

As I sauntered along the streets of Calcutta I didn't have any destination; I didn't care to have any, disappointed that I was. But I had a hope, a faint hope flickering within my breast. "By now Dad must have reached home and must be looking at my...," I told myself. I looked at the sky. It was the same foggy blue of Calcutta evenings. I looked at the trees. A thin layer of dust coated their leaves and they looked the same dull green. I looked at the men, women and even children; why, they looked almost hollow-eyed, their dresses smudged, their feet bare. The houses were the sombre sentinels from the past, soulless, lifeless. The ricksaws were colourless black and the buses and the cars...oh...the honking automatons! My goodness! So broad, so big were the streets of Calcutta, so narrow, so stifling! I turned back for home.

The car was in, so Dad was in too. At the main gate Makhan, the male head servant, chided me with a wry smile:

"Chota Shahib," he said looking at my muddy toes, "is it good that you should loiter in the street bare-footed? Won't people gossip?"

I didn't care to answer, let alone defend myself. Would foot-wear replenish my hope? To hell with family honour!

The dining room was fairly full. My father was having a drink as he was going through my score book and my brother sitting close to his right was leaning forward

to have a better look at the precious document. In front was seated my mother, her face dark as the summer clouds with pent-up anger. On one side stood the butler and on the other stood our Burmese maid-servant. In fact except for uncle and myself the room was full. On seeing me mother screamed at no one in particular but so loudly that it seemed she was enacting a piece of drama in front of an audience one thousand strong.

“There, there returns the hero.” (Here I must point out that whenever mother wanted to dramatise she would address us in the third person.) Seeking Dad’s support she continued to fire off, “Ask him! Ask him! Since your noble son has stood second, has he discovered a fifth leg of an elephant or something?”

Getting no response from father she continued her soliloquy, undaunted

“One hundred of my spoons scattered all over the house! Who gave him the permission? I would just like to know Who? Who?”

On seeing however that father was about to draw my attention to the progress report she stopped, her face heavy with disappointment because she could not carry on with the Act I, Sc. II of her latest dramatic composition.

“You see, my son,” father told me, “why second?” He pointed to some numbers on the mark sheet and continued, “You could have easily stood first if you had been a little more attentive. I was expecting you to score 100 in maths. And look at your Bengali, you have not even crossed 60.”

For a moment the thought crossed my mind that maybe the secret lay there, that if I scored a 100 and crossed 60 the world around would smile at me. But it was only for a moment. It fled so quickly I could see through the rod and the line of academic endeavour. I wouldn’t fall for it any more. The model aircraft as much as the books looked too ridiculous to work with.

As I sat at Dad’s side something was brought to me. I remember how wonderful it looked on that shining metal tray—yet to me how grey, wonderful was its taste—yet how stale!

I left the chair and, for no reason at all, opened the fridge and managed to break some ice cubes all by myself and kept them on a dish and watched them keenly. At first the cubes smoked. But I held on, that is to say I kept on looking at the cubes. They looked hard, their edges sharp, their corners pointed. But I held on, kept my unblinking gaze at them until in the electric lights of that sombre evening the cubes winked at me. Their hard surfaces looked softer, their edges less sharp, their pointed corners rounding off. They shrank and shrank and shrank. O me, me! how little did I know then that my disillusionment too would soon shrink as I would travel a thousand miles away from this grey, dull city to enter into ‘a happier sphere’

(To be concluded)

TARUN BANERJEE

THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

(Continued from the issue of February 2001) .

The Concept of Consciousness in Sri Aurobindo

THE concept of consciousness as proposed by Sri Aurobindo gives us an opportunity to overcome the dualism between mind and body that has tortured Western thought ever since its birth more than two thousand years ago. Sri Aurobindo strongly believes in the physical evolution of the earth and its species, the body is as important as the soul and given the evolutionary process he makes enough room for further development of human beings into super-human beings, a prospect that the West, particularly its theological speculation, has rejected.

Alfred North Whitehead, like his colleague Bertrand Russell who excelled in every branch of philosophy, viewed that "religion must face change in the same spirit as science," explaining its principles in "continual development"¹ Sri Aurobindo, although deeply involved in the practice of yoga, an exercise including physical discipline and intense spiritual aspiration, yet by the prolific output of his doctrine could be rightly called a philosopher. He became increasingly aware of scientific developments, particularly the theory of evolution, and their hold on mankind. He was a spiritual thinker, one who showed through his own life that transcendental life is achievable and describable (to a certain extent), rather than a religious one who would adhere to dogma, devotion and ritual. He negated, therefore, a certain Hindu belief that the world is an illusion or *maya*, further, he gave to it a different interpretation, namely "wide extension in consciousness"² and "delineated the evolutionary process as centering on the progressive manifestation of the spirit"³ Sri Aurobindo expounded his doctrine in his celebrated work *The Life Divine* by an examination of human consciousness; he found that it was neither explained adequately by natural science nor by religious exposition. He rejected the classical Indian doctrine advocated by Adi Shankaracharya that Brahman, the Absolute, is the sole reality and the cosmos an illusion created by ignorance. Sri Aurobindo held that the material world is real and it develops through evolution and that the thus-far highest evolved form is that of *Homo Sapiens* who, among other things that the lower organisms possess, e.g., organic body, reproductive system and senses, also has the faculty of consciousness. It is not the end of evolution with the arrival of *Homo Sapiens*; evolution will continue and the next species will be that of superman, equally characterised by an appropriate form of consciousness. Consciousness is not an exclusive characteristic of human beings, it is shared by the animal world too, however to a much lesser degree; the superman will have a far greater degree of consciousness than man possesses at present.

Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of consciousness sets itself the task of knowing one's own self and then further transcends itself to know a greater self, the Divine Self as oneself. It is a kind of depth psychology and soteriology at the same time.

In the Western philosophical system when we mention the term 'consciousness' at once we get bogged down in a very narrow field called 'mental process' and, however one might try to extricate oneself from it, it is impossible to free oneself. Thus our mental states or mental processes are brought under the rigorous "scientific" scrutiny of, for instance, psycho-analysis where one probes into the subconscious; behaviourism where one approaches the subject with hammer and tongs called "stimulus and response", neuro-physiology goes strictly (by animal instincts) dissecting and bisecting, studying the chiasmic relations, measuring the movements, electrical currents, etc., as accurately as possible, Gestalt psychology studies effects of e.g., perception, in a coherent pattern as affecting the psyche. Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, has a broader understanding of consciousness where mental consciousness is not the sole consciousness. Just as human sight cannot exhaust all that is visible and the sense of hearing hear all that is audible, so too the "range of (mental) consciousness" cannot exhaust all the "gradations" of consciousness. He goes on further, stating as a matter of fact something which would shock a Western psychologist into utter disbelief. There is a consciousness also in the plant, in the metal, in the atom, in electricity, in everything that belongs to physical nature, keen, though less evolved towards the surface.

Sri Aurobindo advocates a theory of consciousness based on force that might interest the most materialistic philosopher or psychologist or scientist. "All phenomenal existence resolves itself into force, into a movement of energy that assumes more or less material, more or less gross or subtle forms for self-presentation to its own experience"⁴ This is a thesis that cannot be easily ignored, for it tantamounts to putting into words the dogma of the modern physicist's $E = mc^2$. He sets out from the most obvious observation "Matter is the presentation of force which is most easily intelligible to our intelligence, moulded as it is by contacts in Matter to which a mind involved in material brain gives the response."⁵ He further observes that this force is characterised by "vibrations", as for instance vibrations of sound. The evolution of this primitive force is in stages⁶. There is an "interplay" of vibrations at the ethereal level, "an impinging of force upon force" which creates "fixed relations" and "mutual effects", which takes it to the "aerial level" (air), giving rise to material relations. However, these are not real forms, these are reached at a third stage where the primitive force is modified into fire ("light, electricity"), the fourth and fifth modifications of the force are liquid (water) and solid (earth). The world is a combination of these five basic elements of force. All our sensory perceptions are caused by the vibrations of these elements: "All is essentially response to vibratory contacts between force and force"⁷

Conclusion

Above I have merely stated the concept of consciousness in general, i.e., as found both in Western and Eastern traditions I have not attempted to delineate the concept of consciousness in Sri Aurobindo but merely put it into a perspective of the history of philosophy Those who are in the know of Sri Aurobindo's works would agree that his entire life was spent in the discovery of consciousness or as an expository book's title suggests *The Adventure of Consciousness*. This discovery or adventure will continue in the ages to come in the efforts of scholars and the sadhana of Yogis and the tapasya of those who would like to follow Sri Aurobindo.

(Concluded)

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

Notes and References

- 1 Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and Modern World* (1925), 12
- 2 "God created the world in Himself and through Maya, but the Vedic meaning of Maya is not illusion, it is wisdom, knowledge, capacity, wide extension in consciousness"—Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human with Thoughts and Aphorisms* (1994), p 132
- 3 Ninian Smart, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London, 1967) in "Aurobindo Ghose" (Vols 1 & 2), pp 208-9
- 4 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, p 80
- 5 *Ibid*
- 6 Two analytical systems of philosophy, namely *Sankhya* and *Vatseshika* have an elaborate doctrine on evolution (and destruction), it has also been adopted by Yoga philosophy, Sri Aurobindo's avowed doctrine
- 7 *The Life Divine*, p 81

THE CONCEPT OF DEVA SANGHA

(Continued from the issue of February 2001)

The Greatest of all Revolutions is the Fraternity Revolution

To practise fraternity we require each and every type of spirituality, in fact integral spirituality. Fraternity is the bridge between religion and the welfare of society. As real welfare cannot be obtained without bringing in the concept of spirituality, fraternity is applied spirituality.

We may say Nature is producing untold wealth with the co-operation of the five elements and millions of workers and labourers. Nature's one aim is perhaps to bring the benefits of material wealth to the poorest of the poor and create a congenial and favourable atmosphere, so that the individual may turn towards the Divine. Nature's saying is "Material wealth and spiritual riches are made for each other." They are not two isolated phenomena. She is taking pains to make the poor comfortable. At present only a limited number of people are enjoying comforts and an atmosphere is created to make them turn towards the Divine. Nature is interested in enlarging the percentage of the favoured group. But man at present is primarily selfish, he is interested in the material progress of his own family. This has to go, yielding to a new order.

Nature's Present Great Adventure

So Nature is ready to create a New Race, a god-race, her Master-Plan of making spirituality the basis of life. But to practise the Mantra of Fraternity is not so easy. The wisdom of Eastern religions and the practice of Western political thought are implied in the above Mantra. But the West could give to it only the outer form, the verbal form. Western civilisation has no capacity to induct economic content into the Mantra—fraternity. Social justice and the welfare state are its maximum achievements and ideals. Civilisation has become so complicated that the West has fabricated new subjects, such as management philosophy, to bring maximum efficiency into the domain of management. But it is not serious about bringing seminal change in the very psychological pattern of its thinking. Perhaps, the guiding spirit has entrusted the West only to look after the external organisation. In fact, political philosophy and economic philosophy are the manifestations of the main foundational philosophy on the societal level. There is a great wedge between the teachings of Christianity and the Western politico-economic pattern. In an ideal society, both should go hand in hand. That is the reason why Western civilisation, in spite of affluence, is unable to utilise the untold wealth of Nature for constructive purposes. Instead of investing wealth in nuclear bomb-production, the West could have adopted a developing country. On the contrary, it is fomenting quarrels among the developing countries so

that they can sell their armaments to them. This has to disappear and the true nature of fraternity realised

The entire progress of the East and the West is capsuled or telescoped in one single Mantra,—Fraternity. The aim of religions, political philosophies, economic philosophies will be realised if this one Mantra is truly practised. What is the meaning of this Mantra? The literal meaning of fraternity is spiritual brotherhood. All the religions and spiritual philosophies have accepted that each of us is an emanation of the Divine. There is a divine spark hidden in the depths of our being. There is no qualitative difference between the fire and a single spark. Spirituality does not discriminate between a spark and a fire. A spark can light fire. Quality is a term of spirituality but quantity is of material philosophy. Intrinsically and essentially, we are the sons of the same Almighty Divine. But when we come to the pragmatic level, we find several conflicts. We have social conflicts, economic conflicts and racial conflicts. In fact, the world abounds in conflicts and conflagrations. Why should one son of the Divine exploit another son of the same Divine? The exploiter has more intelligence than the exploited. That is all. But intelligence is a gift of the Divine. We raise colossal monuments to honour the Divine, we build imposing temples and churches for the Divine and yet we are not ready to share our wealth with the poor. For this we need no scriptures, no moral codes, no legal formulas, no institutional rights. Love is the most important content of the Divine. If this one sovereign virtue—love—is practised, then all legal, moral and constitutional rights will be unnecessary. But can we practise love? It is not so easy. At present, man with all his intellectual equipment is not ready. The present world is a product of the mind. And we know that mind is a dividing agent. Its business in this context is to create division between the rich and the poor. Unless the mind is replaced by a still higher consciousness, division won't go. Unless radical changes come in the thinking of the world, scars of division cannot be healed or obliterated. This is possible only when we understand and implicitly follow the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Bourgeois Society X-rayed

Seventy percent of India's population consists of people who belong to the bourgeois society. They go to the famous pilgrim centres, do the pujas and return again to loot the poor. Customs, rituals, going to shrines are social virtues, but not moral and spiritual virtues. Real religious life begins when a devotee practises at least one quality of the Divine.

Truthfulness, sincerity, tolerance, fellow-feeling, etc., are some of the cardinal virtues. Most of us although belonging to one or other religion are not at all true followers of religion. We habitually observe a few social customs. We love material wealth more than higher values. According to the meaning of fraternity the more evolved and affectionate alone can take up the care of the poor. We have to share our fortunes with our own soul-mates. All men are our soul-mates.

When will Fraternity be Practised?

The golden occasion, the supreme opportunity, has come to us to practise fraternity. Our supreme master and Lord has placed before us the goal of heavenisation of the earth. We are the cream of creation. We can think and we have the power of discriminating good from bad. Sri Aurobindo is bound by the covenant which he has made with each of us—the promise of ultimately supramentalising all aspirants. When he has placed such a lofty and sublime goal before us, then we should not hesitate to place all our possessions, our talents, our merits at his disposal. All wealth belongs to the Divine. Its right use is for the increasing commerce of Harmony. We have to earn material wealth and place it at the disposal of the Divine. And in turn He will utilise it for the benefit of all. We love the Divine, but we hesitate to offer our material wealth to our own soul-mates. Present human beings cannot undertake such an utopian adventure, one in a million alone can venture it. If one sincere, faithful and honest devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is ready to undertake such an adventure, the gain yet will be his. Unlike traditional spirituality, Sri Aurobindo's is multi-dimensional and integral. Present traditional spirituality is of a low profile, is of a low voltage. It can light a candle of spirituality and keep it flickering but it has no capacity to re-structure society. Spirituality down the ages has been keeping its flickering light just burning. That is all. Fraternity can be effectively practised only when we become the most sincere devotees of integral philosophy. Man's time of exit is nearing and the gnostic period is ringing in. He is going to be transformed into a universal being, into a god. Aspirants armed with the higher consciousness can alone start Deva Sanghas and be pioneers of the future gnostic civilisation. India will be the guru of the world.

Deva Sanghas or Fraternity Enclaves

Urbanisation is the bane of modern civilisation. Man has lost contact with soothing and sylvan Nature. The touch of Nature is invigorating whereas urbanisation pollutes our purity and renders us insensitive. The present milieu is highly urban-dominated. Each year millions are migrating to cities from the rural areas to get jobs. The present mode of life should be re-structured and re-oriented. If one Deva Sangha comes up in each district in the rural areas, it will be enough for the time being. We can start a school, a degree college, a departmental store, a stationery shop, a cloth shop, etc., in the centre. If twelve sincere devotees are ready, then we can start a fraternity circle. Preference will be given to *vanaprasthis* and celibates. The population of a Deva Sangha should not be more than 2000 to 3000. India has 500 districts. So, in the first phase, 500 Deva Sanghas should come up, essentially in rural areas. When such an Auro-complex starts working, we require at least 50 paid workers, both men and women. Their sons and daughters will be educated free of cost in the centre's schools and colleges. There will be a common dining hall for all and residences will be of a

different model. There will be no distinction between the devotees and the workers in matters of food. Such a Deva Sangha will be the primary and basic unit of the future of gnostic civilisation. India will be the pioneer and trend-setter of the new civilisation. Each Deva Sangha will be a miniature India. Members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies will be elected from these Deva Sanghas. After their 5-year term, they will come back to their Deva Sanghas. In general, they will prefer to be the inmates of the Deva Sanghas than to be MPs and MLAs. We shall have a Lok Adalat, a sports board, a Lalit Kala Academy and cater to the needs of the district. The present parliamentary democracy is not suited to the genius of India. Until a new polity is evolved, the present parliamentary set-up will continue. To begin with we can start Deva Sanghas in our own houses and then later on expand at the district levels

Conclusion

The Western world is looking to the spiritual guidance of India. But the old traditional and existing spirituality of India is of a low voltage. The spiritual light is flickering. It cannot transform society. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have come to push the present mental being to the next stage of evolution. They have promised to transform aspiring humanity into a race of gnostic beings. Such a race will be armed with the universal consciousness. Such a gnostic India alone will be the guru of the world. Deva Sanghas could be the beginning of collective life established in the truth of the spirit. That will be its unique contribution to man and society in the fulfilment of the objective Nature and God have for this creation

(Concluded)

V MANMOHAN REDDY

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