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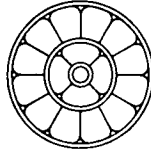
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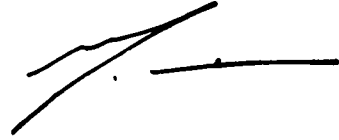
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIV

No. 4

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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SAVITRI FINDS HER SOUL

ONWARD she passed seeking the soul's mystic cave.
At first she stepped into a night of God .
Crossing a fathomless impersonal Night,
Silent she moved, empty and absolute...
At last a change approached, the emptiness broke...
She recognised in her prophetic mind
The imperishable lustre of that sky,
The tremulous sweetness of that happy air
And, covered from mind's view and life's approach,
The mystic cavern in the sacred hill
And knew the dwelling of her secret soul .
A marvellous brooding twilight met the eyes
And a holy stillness held that voiceless space.
An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors
Carved in the massive stone of Matter's trance.
Two golden serpents round the lintel curled,
Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength,
Looked out with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes.
An eagle covered it with wide conquering wings:
Flames of self-lost immobile reverie,
Doves crowded the grey musing cornices
Like sculptured postures of white-bosomed peace
Across the threshold's sleep she entered in
And found herself amid great figures of gods
Conscious in stone and living without breath,
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,
Executive figures of the cosmic self,
World-symbols of immutable potency.
On the walls covered with significant shapes
Looked at her the life-scene of man and beast
And the high meaning of the life of gods,
The power and necessity of these numberless worlds,
And faces of beings and stretches of world-space
Spoke the succinct and inexhaustible
Hieratic message of the climbing planes
A light not born of sun or moon or fire,
A light that dwelt within and saw within
Shedding an intimate visibility
Made secrecy more revealing than the word. .
As thus she passed in that mysterious place

Through room and room, through door and rock-hewn door,
 She felt herself made one with all she saw.
 A sealed identity within her woke,
 She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme.
 These Gods and Goddesses were he and she.
 The Mother was she of Beauty and Delight,
 The Word in Brahma's vast creating clasp,
 The World-Puissance on almighty Shiva's lap,—
 The Master and the Mother of all lives
 Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,
 And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,
 The Adorer and Adored self-lost and one
 In the last chamber on a golden seat
 One sat whose shape no vision could define;
 Only one felt the world's unattainable fount,
 A Power of which she was a straying Force,
 An invisible Beauty, goal of the world's desire,
 A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
 A Greatness without whom no life could be.
 Thence all departed into silent self,
 And all became formless and pure and bare
 Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock
 She came out where there shone a deathless sun
 A house was there all made of flame and light
 And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
 There suddenly she met her secret soul.
 A being stood immortal in transience...
 Observer of the silent steps of the hours,
 Eternity upheld the minute's acts
 And the passing scenes of the Everlasting's play.
 All things she saw as a masquerade of Truth...
 All she could front with the strong spirit's peace...
 Here in this chamber of flame and light they met,
 They looked upon each other, knew themselves,
 The secret deity and its human part,
 The calm immortal and the struggling soul.
 Then with a magic transformation's speed
 They rushed into each other and grew one

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 522-27)

NATIONALIST WORK IN ENGLAND

WE publish in this issue an article by S. J. Bepin Chandra Pal in which he suggests the necessity of a Nationalist agency or bureau in England, and states the reasoning which has led him to modify the views formerly held by the whole party on the inutility of work in England under the present political conditions. Bepin Babu has been busy, ever since his departure from India, in work of this kind and it goes without saying that he would not have engaged in it or persisted in it under discouraging circumstances, if it had not been borne in on him that it was advisable and necessary. At the same time, rightly or wrongly, the majority of our party still believe in the concentration of work into the effort to elicit and organise the latent strength of the nation, and cannot believe that work in England at present is anything but hopeless and a waste of money and energy. We freely admit that under certain circumstances an agency in England might become indispensable. That would certainly be the case if an elective body with substantial but limited powers were established in India and serious differences of opinion were to arise between the Government and the popular representatives. But such a state of things is yet remote, and the reformed councils will certainly not be such a body. At present, what will such a bureau or agency do for the country? Bepin Babu suggests that it may supply the British public with correct information so as to stem the tide of unscrupulous or prejudiced misinformation pouring into England through Reuter and other Anglo-Indian sources, and that, if the British public get correct information, they will at once put a stop to the policy of repression. We confess, our impression is the reverse,—that however correct the information we supply, the British public as a whole—we do not speak of just and open-minded individuals,—will still prefer to put confidence in the mis-statements of their own countrymen rather than in the true statements of what they believe to be an inferior race indebted to them for any element of civilisation it may now possess. Our impression is that even a correct idea of the facts would not necessarily lead to a correct appreciation and policy based on those facts;—many political and psychological factors would interfere.

If we are to change our opinion, it must be either as the result of new experience showing the effect of agitation in England or of new reasoning correcting the imperfections of our old premises and conclusions. The only fact that seems to be in favour of a readjustment of our views, is the energetic campaign in parliament of Mr Mackarness and his friends for the release of the deportees. It is alleged that, but for the untoward incident of the Curzon-Wyllie murder, some if not all the deportees would by this time have been released. We have our doubts about this conclusion. Sir Henry Cotton and some of his colleagues were always ever-hopeful about the effect of their pressure, and their expectations were more than once disappointed. No ministerial pronouncement ever lent any colour to their idea that the release was imminent when the assassination happened. All that the Government had promised, was to consider the question of the deportees' farther detention, in the usual course,

on the presentation of the six-monthly report, a consideration usual without any Parliamentary agitation. The discomfort of the questions was, no doubt, great and the long-established sentiment of many Liberals and not a few Conservatives was offended by the long detention of public men without a trial. But this in itself, though it strewn the path of the deporters with thorns instead of its being, as they would have liked, strewn with roses, would not, by itself, have secured the release of the deportees. Even if it had, the release of one or two or more of the deportees would not have removed the policy of repression. Only the repeal of the Act could have done that, and it must have been followed by the eradication of executive illegalities and police harassment as well as of the readiness of Government to pass repressive legislation, before the real obstacles in the way of peaceful progress could be removed. Would an agency in England seriously help towards such a consummation,—that is the question. It means the diversion of money and effort, and we must see a reasonable chance of a return before we embark on it.

Bepin Babu urges that it will, and bases his conception on a certain reading of the British character and policy which we hesitate to endorse in its entirety. It is quite true that we have heard of certain irresponsible Englishmen longing for violent outbreak on the part of the people, which would give them an excuse for equally violent measures to crush Indian aspirations for ever. But we do not believe for a moment, that some of the responsible officials,—and that we believe is all Bepin Babu implies,—cherished the same idea. We think that all Government officials have regarded the outbreak of Terrorism, small though it was, with alarm and the utmost anxiety to get rid of it, and indeed we believe the institution of organised repression to have been the result of an ignorant and unreasoning alarm which hugely exaggerated the dimensions and meaning of the outbreak, as well as wholly misunderstood the drift of the Nationalist movement. We take exception also to Bepin Babu's suggestion of the bully in the British character being responsible for the repressions, as if it were something peculiar to the British race. What Bepin Babu wishes to indicate by this phrase, the readiness to use repression and what are erroneously called strong measures, to intimidate a popular movement, is a tendency which belongs not to British character especially but to human nature, and should be considered the result not of character but of the position. The Government in India favour repression because it seems the only way of getting over what they regard as a dangerous movement, without concessions which mean the immediate or gradual cessation of their absolute paramountcy. It is a case of incompatible interests, and until both parties can be brought to a *modus vivendi*, such it will remain. How is that incompatibility to be surmounted, for, at first sight, it seems to be an insurmountable obstacle. Bepin Babu relies on the enlightened self-interest of the British people and to a certain extent on their civilised conscience. We think we may as well leave the civilised conscience out of the reckoning for the present. The civilised conscience is a remarkably queer and capricious quantity, on which, frankly, we place no reliance whatever. It is very sensitive to breaches of principle by others and very indignant

when the same breaches of principle are questioned in its own conduct. It sees the mote in other eyes; it is obstinately unaware of the beam in its own. It is always criticising other nations, but it ignores or is furious at criticism of its own. It has fits of sensitiveness in which it makes large resolutions, but it can never be trusted to persist in them contrary to its own interests. This civilised conscience is not peculiar to the British people, but belongs in a greater or less degree to every European nation with the possible exception of Russia. We prefer infinitely to rely, if we have to rely on anything, on the sense of enlightened self-interest. Here also we differ from Bepin Babu. He argues as if the British were a thoughtful and clear-minded people, and only needed the data to be correctly placed before them in order to understand their interests correctly. This is far from the truth about British character. The English are, or were, a people with a rough practical common sense and business-like regularity and efficiency which, coupled with a mighty thigh and sinew and a bulldog tenacity and courage, have carried them through all dangers and difficulties and made them one of the first peoples of the globe. They have had men of unsurpassed thought-power and clearness of view and purpose, but the race is not thoughtful and clear-minded; on the contrary on all questions requiring thought, intelligence and sympathy they are amazingly muddle-headed and can only learn by knocking their shins against hard and rough facts. When this first happens, they swear profusely, rub their shins and try to kick the obstacle out of the way. If it consents to be kicked out of the path, they go on their way rejoicing, otherwise, after hurting their shins repeatedly they begin to respect the obstacle, stop swearing and kicking, and negotiate with it. In this process, familiar to all who have to do with Englishmen from the point of view of conflicting interests, there is much rough practical sense but little thought and intelligence. It is on this conception of the British character that the Nationalist party has hitherto proceeded. The hard fact of a continued and increasing boycott, an indomitable national movement, a steady passive resistance, have been the obstacles they have sought to present to the British desire for an absolute lordship. We must prevent these obstacles from being kicked out of the way by repression, but the way to achieve that end is to show a tenacity and courage and a power of efficiency rivalling the British, and not to make an appeal to the conscience and clear common sense of the British public. We could only imagine such an appeal having an effect in the as yet improbable circumstance of a Liberal Government with a small majority dependent for its existence on a powerful Socialist and Independent Labour Party. Even if this should be the result of the approaching general elections, the appeal could not have effect unless the hard facts were there in strong evidence in India itself. Our whole effort should be devoted to establishing these hard facts in a much more efficient and thorough way than we have hitherto done, and the only way is for the Nationalist party to establish its separate existence, clear from the drag of Moderatism on the one side and disturbance by ill-instructed outbreaks of Terrorism on the other, and erect itself into a living, compact and working force in India.

One day the Government in India will be obliged to come to the Nationalist

Party, which it is now trying to destroy, for help in bringing about a satisfactory settlement of the quarrel between the bureaucracy and the people. But that will not be till they have exhausted their hopes of achieving the same end on their own terms by playing on the weaknesses of the Moderate Party. If the country were to follow the Moderate lead and content itself with the paltry and undesirable measure of reform now proposed, the progress of India towards self-government would be indefinitely postponed. The Nationalist Party therefore, while showing all willingness to coalesce with the Moderates in the Congress on reasonable terms, must jealously guard their separate individuality and existence and decline to enter the Congress on terms which would make them an inoperative force and perpetuate the misbegotten creature of the Allahabad Convention Committee under the name of the Congress. Nor should they be drawn into experiments in England which are, at present, of doubtful value or none

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol 2, pp 233-37)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

ते मन्वत प्रथमं नाम धेनोस्त्रिः सप्त मातुः परमाणि विन्दन् ।
तज्जानतीरभ्यनूषत ब्रा आविर्भुवदरुणीर्यशसा गोः ॥

(Rigveda, 4 1.16)

They conceived in mind the first name of the fostering cows, they found the thrice seven supreme (seats) of the Mother, the females of the herd knew that and they followed after it; the ruddy one was manifested by the victorious attainment (or, the splendour) of the cow of Light. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 196)

They meditated on the first name of the Milk-cow, they discovered the thrice seven supreme planes of the mother; That knowing the herds lowed towards it, the ruddy Dawn became manifest by the glory of the Cow of Light (SABCL, Vol 11, p. 165)

नेशत् तमो दुधित रोचत द्यौरुद् देव्या उषसो भानुरर्त ।
आ सूर्यो बृहतस्तिष्ठदज्रौ ऋजु मर्तेषु वृजिना च पश्यन् ॥

(Rigveda, 4 1 17)

Vanished the darkness, shaken in its foundation, Heaven shone out (*rocata dyauh*, implying the manifestation of the three luminous worlds of *Swar*, *divo rocanāni*), upward rose the light of the divine Dawn; the Sun entered the vast fields (of the Truth) beholding the straight things and the crooked in mortals (SABCL, Vol 10, p 197)

The darkness was wounded and vanished, Heaven shone out, up arose the light of the divine Dawn, the Sun entered into the fields of the Vast, looking on the straight and crooked things in mortals. (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 165)

आदित् पश्चा बुबुधाना व्यख्यन्नादिद् रत्नं धारयन्त द्युभक्तम् ।
विश्वे विश्वासु दुर्यासु देवा मित्र धिये वरुण सत्यमस्तु ॥

(Rigveda, 4. 1.18)

Thereafter indeed they awoke and saw utterly (by the sun's separation of the straight from the crooked, the truth from the falsehood), then indeed they held in them the bliss that is enjoyed in heaven, *ratnam dhārayanta dyubhaktam* Let all the gods be in all our homes, let there be the truth for our thought, O Mitra, O Varuna (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 197)

Then, indeed, they awoke and saw all behind and wide around them, then, indeed, they held the ecstasy that is enjoyed in heaven. In all gated houses were all the gods. O Mitra, O Varuna, let there be the Truth for the Thought. (SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 165)

अच्छा वोचेय शुशुचानमग्निं होतारं विश्वभरसं यजिष्ठम् ।
शुच्युधो अतृणन्न गवामन्धो न पूत परिषिक्तमशोः ॥

(Rigveda, 4 1 19)

May I speak the word towards Agni shining pure, the priest of the offering, greatest in sacrifice who brings to us the all, may he press out both the pure udder of the Cows of Light and the purified food of the plant of delight (the Soma) poured out everywhere. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 198)

May my speech be towards the upblazing Fire, the Priest of the call, the bringer of all things, strong to sacrifice It is as if one drank from the pure udder of the cows of light, the purified juice of the Plant of Delight poured on all sides (SABCL, Vol. 11, pp. 165-66)

विश्वेषामदितिर्यज्ञियानां विश्वेषामतिथिर्मानुषाणाम् ।
अग्निर्देवानामव आवृणान. सुमृळीको भवतु जातवेदाः ॥

(Rigveda, 4. 1.20)

He is the infinite being of all the lords of sacrifice (the gods) and the guest of all human beings; may Agni, accepting into himself the increasing manifestation of the gods, knower of the births, be a giver of happiness (SABCL, Vol 10, p 198)

The indivisibility of all the gods, the guest of all human beings, may the Fire draw to us the protection of the gods and be blissful to us, the knower of all things born. (SABCL, Vol. 11, p 166)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

LIFE—DEATH—IMMORTALITY

88—This world was built by Death that he might live. Wilt thou abolish death? Then life too will perish. Thou canst not abolish death, but thou mayst transform it into a greater living.

89—This world was built by Cruelty that she might love. Wilt thou abolish cruelty? Then love too will perish. Thou canst not abolish cruelty, but thou mayst transfigure it into its opposite, into a fierce Love and Delightfulness.

90—This world was built by Ignorance and Error that they might know. Wilt thou abolish ignorance and error? Then knowledge too will perish. Thou canst not abolish ignorance and error, but thou mayst transmute them into the utter and effulgent exceeding of reason.

91—If Life alone were and not death, there could be no immortality, if love were alone and not cruelty, joy would be only a tepid and ephemeral rapture; if reason were alone and not ignorance, our highest attainment would not exceed a limited rationality and worldly wisdom.

92—Death transformed becomes Life that is Immortality; Cruelty transfigured becomes Love that is intolerable ecstasy; Ignorance transmuted becomes Light that leaps beyond wisdom and knowledge

It is the same idea, that is, opposition and contraries are a stimulus to progress. Because to say that without cruelty Love would be tepid. . The principle of Love as it exists beyond the Manifested and the Non-Manifested has nothing to do with either tepidness or cruelty. Only, Sri Aurobindo's idea would seem to be that opposites are the quickest and most effective means of shaping Matter so that it can intensify its manifestation

As an experience, this is absolutely certain, in the sense that, first of all, when one comes into contact with eternal Love, the supreme Love, one immediately has—how to put it?—a perception, a sensation—it is not an understanding, it is something very concrete. even the most illumined material consciousness, however much it has been moulded and prepared, is *incapable* of manifesting That. The first thing one feels is this kind of incapacity. Then comes an experience: something which manifests a form of—one cannot call it exactly “cruelty”, because it is not cruelty as we know it—but within the totality of circumstances, a vibration appears and, with a certain intensity, refuses love as it is manifested here. It is precisely this: something in the material world which refuses the manifestation of love as it exists at present. I am not speaking of the ordinary world, I am speaking of the present consciousness at its highest. It is an experience, I am speaking of something that has happened. So the part of the consciousness which has been struck by this opposition makes a direct appeal to the origin of Love, *with an intensity which it would not have without the*

experience of this refusal. Limits are broken and a flood pours down which *could not* have manifested before, and something is expressed which was not expressed before

When one sees this, there is obviously a similar experience from the point of view of what we call life and death. It is this kind of constant “brooding” or presence of Death and the possibility of death, as it is said in *Savitri* we have a constant companion throughout the journey from cradle to grave, we are constantly accompanied by this threat or presence of Death. Well, along with this, in the cells, there is a call for a Power of Eternity, with an intensity which would not be there except for this constant threat. Then one understands, one begins to feel quite concretely that all these things are only ways of intensifying the manifestation, of making it progress, of making it more perfect. And if the means are crude, it is because the manifestation itself is very crude. And as it becomes more perfect and fit to manifest that which is *eternally progressive*, the very crude means will give way to subtler ones and the world will progress without any need for such brutal opposition. This is simply because the world is still in its infancy and human consciousness is still entirely in its infancy.

This is a very concrete experience

It follows that when the earth no longer needs to die in order to progress, there will be no more death. When the earth no longer needs to suffer in order to progress, there will be no more suffering. And when the earth no longer needs to hate in order to love, there will be no more hatred.

(*Silence*)

This is the quickest and most effective means to bring creation out of its inertia and lead it towards its fulfilment.

(*Long silence*)

There is a certain aspect of creation—which may be a very modern one—it is the need to escape from disorder and confusion, from disharmony and confusion. A confusion, a disorder which takes every possible form, which becomes struggle, useless effort, wastage. It depends on the domain you are in, but in the material world, in action, it means useless complications, waste of energy and material, waste of time, incomprehension, misunderstanding, confusion, disorder. This is what used to be called *crookedness* in the Vedas—I do not know the equivalent of this word, it is something twisted, which instead of going straight to the mark makes sharp, unnecessary zigzags. This is one of the things that is most opposed to the harmony of a purely divine action which has a simplicity that seems childlike. Direct—direct, instead of making absurd and completely useless circumvolutions. Well, it is obviously the same thing. Disorder is a way of stimulating the need for the pure divine simplicity.

The body feels very strongly, very strongly that everything could be simple, so simple!

And so that the being—this kind of individual agglomerate—can be transformed, it needs precisely to become more simple, simple, simple. All these complications of Nature, which they are now beginning to understand and study, which are so intricate for the slightest thing—the smallest of our functions is the result of a system so complicated that it is almost unthinkable; certainly it would be impossible for human thought to plan and put together all these things—now science is discovering them, and one can see very clearly that if the functioning is to be divine, that is, if it is to escape this disorder and confusion, it must be simplified, simplified, simplified.

(Long silence)

That is to say, Nature, or rather Nature in her attempt at self-expression, was obliged to resort to an unbelievable and almost infinite complication in order to reproduce the primal Simplicity.

And we come back to the same thing. From this excess of complication arises the possibility of a simplicity which would not be empty but full—a full simplicity, a simplicity that contains everything, whereas without these complications, simplicity is empty.

Now they are making discoveries like that. In anatomy, for example, they are discovering surgical treatments which are unbelievably complicated! It is like their classification of the elements of Matter—what frightful complexity! And all this is for the purpose of . in an effort to express Unity, the one Simplicity—the divine state

(Silence)

Perhaps it will go quickly. . But the question comes to this—an aspiration that is *sufficient*, intense and effective enough, to attract That which can transform complication into Simplicity, cruelty into Love, and so on.

And it is no use complaining and saying that it is a pity, because it is like that. Why is it like that? Probably, when it is no longer like that, we shall know. We could put it another way: if we knew, it would no longer be like that

So, to speculate: “It would have been better if it had not been like that, etc.”—all that is unpractical, it is no use at all, it is useless.

We must hurry up and do what is needed to put an end to it, that is all, it is the only practical thing.

For the body it is very interesting. But it is a mountain, a mountain of experiences that seem very small, but because of their multiplicity, they have their place¹

15 May 1963

THE MOTHER

(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM, Vol 10, pp 166-170)

¹ When this talk was first published, Mother remarked, “The scientists will deny it, they will say that I am talking nonsense, but it is because I do not use their terms, it is just a matter of vocabulary.”

SRI AUROBINDO UNIVERSITY CENTRE

[On 24 April 1951 an All-India Convention was held in the Ashram to establish the International University Centre as a fitting tribute to Sri Aurobindo. The Mother, while opening the Convention, said that "Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre." The Centre named later as *Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* is presently entering into its golden jubilee year with the "purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals." We reproduce in this issue of *Mother India* four articles related to it. The first two give the vision-picture as a background note for proposing the Convention. The next two are from the 5 May 1951 issue of *Mother India* when it was a fortnightly published from Bombay, with K. D. Sethna as the Editor and S. R. Albless as the Associate Editor. Extracts of speeches of participants in the Convention will be given in the next issue. —R. Y. D.]

"ONE of the most recent forms under which Sri Aurobindo conceived of the development of his work was to establish at Pondicherry an International University centre open to students from all over the world.

"It is considered that the most fitting memorial to his name would be to found this University now so as to give concrete expression of the fact that his work continues with unabated vigour." In view of this, a Sri Aurobindo Memorial Fund is going to be raised with the object of giving immediate effect to this proposal.

The instruction given will be primarily based on Sri Aurobindo's own teachings and along the lines indicated by him. In accordance with his wishes the education at this Centre will be given entirely free. Another unique feature of this University will be that the students coming from different parts of the world will be taught in their own language. Letters from France, America, England, Germany, Egypt, Africa, Japan and other places, both from students and teachers, have already been received, asking for permission to come and join the new University.

Boys and girls of all ages will be admitted, from the Kindergarten to the Graduate classes. As can be seen from the architectural plans given here, provision has been made to give instruction in all departments of knowledge. This is in keeping with Sri Aurobindo's catholic outlook on life and his integral spiritual vision. The building shown on the plans is the central block of the University, it is only one of a group of buildings which will be erected later as the number of students increases. For the present, only this block is going to be constructed, other structures will be built later around it, where the Language and Literature Sections will be shifted. This will facilitate the expansion of the Philosophy and Art Sections. "Hostel Type" residential buildings will be also erected for the students and teachers; as far as possible, people belonging to the same country and having the same nationality will be grouped together—there will be an American Section, a French Section, an

English Section and a German Section; this arrangement will help the foreigners to feel more at home and have a social life of their own within the larger framework of the communal life of the University Centre. Another interesting feature of this educational scheme is a large Library with a Public Hall to seat two thousand to two thousand five hundred people. All these buildings will be so grouped around the central block as to form parts of an organic whole. Needless to say, all the most modern methods will be used for lighting, ventilation and acoustical treatment, as well as for the structural work, and the latest type of equipment will be provided.

As shown on the plans, the central building is open on all four sides. Natural lighting being the best form of lighting, large internal open spaces are also provided—a Children's Lawn 90'x30' and a Lawn for elders 80'x55'. The Children's Lawn is not a playground—separate playgrounds for games, athletics and gymnastics are situated only a little distance away from this building—but a space for open air teaching for the Kindergarten students. On the ground floor about 750 boys and girls will be accommodated—300 Juniors and the rest Seniors. Classes for Domestic Science, Handicrafts and Music—a sound-proof room for the last—are kept on the ground floor. Three Language classes, a Reading Room, a Common Room for senior students, and a Teachers' Room are also located here. A fully equipped Laboratory, with classes in Physics, Chemistry, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics next to it, occupy almost a whole wing of the building on this floor.

Accommodation for 700 to 750 students is provided on the first floor, where the three important Sections, the Philosophy and Yoga Section, the Literature Section, and the Art Section are placed. A big Studio with north lighting, and classes for Drawing, Painting, Modelling, Architecture and Engineering comprise the Art Section. Next to a Hall for debates, lantern-lectures and elocution competitions, Literature classes are placed—Poetry, philosophical Prose, Essays and Belles Lettres. In the central portion of the building between the open spaces, the Mother's classes, elementary and advanced classes in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, classes on Psychology, Logic, Social and Political Philosophy, and those in Comparative Philosophy, Religion and Mysticism are located. The remaining wing has classes in Metaphysics, Ethics and Axiology, Culturology and Anthropology, and History and the philosophy of History. This is, of course, a tentative arrangement as the plans prepared are still in the preliminary stage. A few changes may have to be made in the final drawings, but the general arrangement of the rooms will not be radically altered. From the Kindergarten to the Graduate classes regular academic education will be given to the students; the higher teaching and yogic knowledge will be imparted only to the post-graduate students—those who have an aspiration to practise the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, and who are selected for their aptitude and yogic capacity. This brings us to the final question. What will be the nature of this higher teaching, in the field of knowledge, what does this University have to offer which the most modern educational centres of Europe and America are not in a position to? This is a question which will come into the minds of many, especially those who are not familiar with

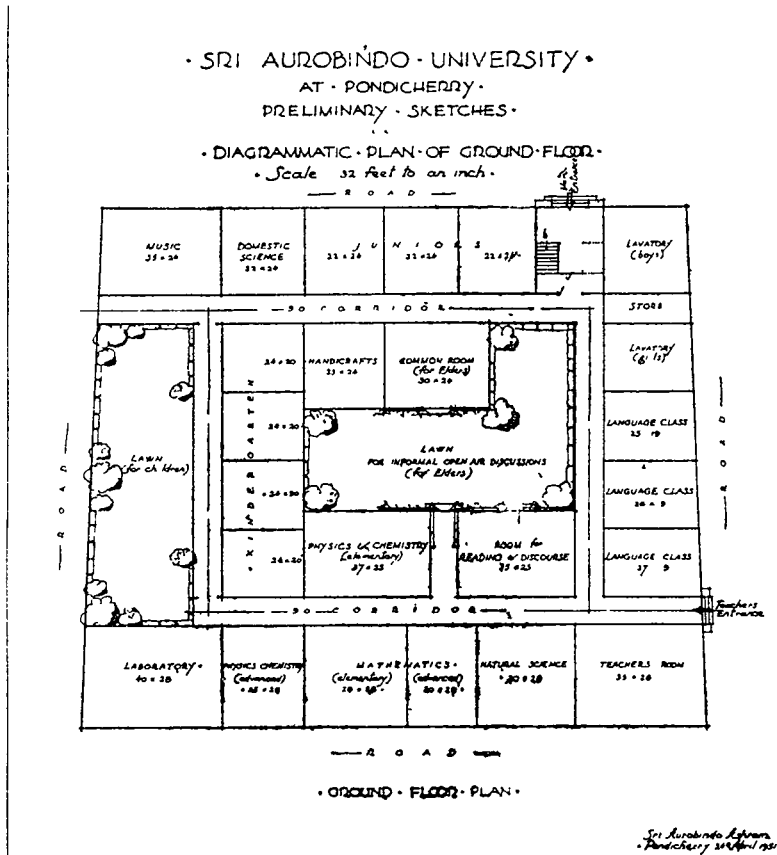
Sri Aurobindo's teachings. It is not within the scope of this little booklet to give even in outline the basic principles of his Yoga and Spiritual Metaphysics, but an extract from his writings is given here which indicates his attitude towards the problem of knowledge. Suitable quotations from his writings reflecting his views on Philosophy, Religion, Art and Science, and on the education of the mind and its various faculties, are also given here in order to help the reader to have an understanding of his ideas regarding the education of the complete and integrated man. At the end some extracts are given from the Mother's essay *The Science of Living*. A few sentences have been strung together to give the reader an idea of what she thinks a person should do who seeks perfection.

Sri Aurobindo writes: "There are two kinds of knowledge, that which seeks to understand the apparent phenomenon of existence externally, by an approach from outside, through the intellect,—this is the lower knowledge, the knowledge of the apparent world, secondly, the knowledge which seeks to know the truth of existence from within, in its source and reality, by spiritual realisation. Ordinarily, a sharp distinction is drawn between the two, and it is supposed that when we get to the higher knowledge, the God-knowledge, then the rest, the world-knowledge, becomes of no concern to us; but in reality they are two sides of one seeking. All knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of God, through himself, through Nature, through her works. Mankind has first to seek this knowledge through the external life; for until its mentality is sufficiently developed, spiritual knowledge is not really possible, and in proportion as it is developed, the possibilities of spiritual knowledge become richer and fuller.

Science, art, philosophy, ethics, psychology, the knowledge of man and his past, action itself are means by which we arrive at the knowledge of the workings of God through Nature and through life. At first it is the workings of life and forms of Nature which occupy us, but as we go deeper and deeper and get a completer view and experience, each of these lines brings us face to face with God. Science at its limits, even physical Science, is compelled to perceive in the end the infinite, the universal, the spirit, the divine intelligence and will in the material universe. Still more easily must this be the end with the psychic sciences which deal with the operations of higher and subtler planes and powers of our being and come into contact with the beings and the phenomena of the worlds behind which are unseen, not sensible by our physical organs, but ascertainable by the subtle mind and senses. Art leads to the same end, the aesthetic human being intensely preoccupied with Nature through aesthetic emotion must in the end arrive at spiritual emotion and perceive not only the infinite life, but the infinite presence within her; preoccupied with beauty in the life of man he must in the end come to see the divine, the universal, the spiritual in humanity. Philosophy dealing with the principles of things must come to perceive the Principle of all these principles and investigate its nature, attributes and essential workings. So ethics must eventually perceive that the law of good which it seeks is the law of God and depends on the being and nature of the Master of the law. Psychology leads from the study of mind and the soul in living beings to the percep-

tion of the one soul and one mind in all things and beings The history and study of man like the history and study of Nature lead towards the perception of the eternal and universal Power and Being whose thought and will work out through the cosmic and human evolution Action itself forces us into contact with the divine Power which works through, uses, overrules our actions The intellect begins to perceive and understand, the emotions to feel and desire and revere, the will to turn itself to the service of the Divine without whom Nature and man cannot exist or move and by conscious knowledge of whom alone we can arrive at our highest possibilities.”

Therefore, the students joining this University will be candidates for both the lower and the higher knowledge, their aspiration, will, and yogic capacity determining the limit of their psycho-spiritual development The student who will reach a higher level of being and possess a more enlightened consciousness than the average man, will attain the lower as well as the higher knowledge—in the words of Sri Aurobindo: “The lower knowledge has been the step from which he has risen to the higher the higher illumines for him the lower and makes it part of itself, even if only its lower fringe and most external radiation ”



SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

EXTRACTS TAKEN FROM HIS WRITINGS

The Education of the Child

“FORMERLY, education was merely a mechanical forcing of the child’s nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts, his character into the mould fixed for them by the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideals of the teachers and parents. The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child’s own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system, but it still fell short because it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as ‘the leader of the march set in our front,’ will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical being behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.”

The Cultivation of the Mind

“Those systems of education which start from an insufficient knowledge of man, think they have provided a satisfactory foundation when they have supplied the student with a large or well-selected mass of information on the various subjects which comprise the best part of human culture at the time. The school gives the materials, it is for the student to use them,—this is the formula. But the error here is fundamental. Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence, it can only be part

of the material out of which the knower builds knowledge, the starting-point, the nucleus of fresh discovery and enlarged creation. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge, is no education. The various faculties of memory, judgment, imagination, perception, reasoning, which build the edifice of thought and knowledge for the knower, must not only be equipped with their fit and sufficient tools and materials, but trained to bring fresh materials and use more skilfully those of which they are in possession ”

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“The activity of human thought divides itself broadly into two groups of functions, those of the right hand, contemplation, creation, imagination, the centres that see the truth, and those of the left hand, criticism, reasoning, discrimination, inquiry, the centres that judge the truth when it is seen. In education the latter are fostered by scientific and manual training, but the only quality of the right hand that this education fosters is observation. For this reason a purely scientific education tends to make thought keen and clear-sighted within certain limits, but narrow, hard and cold. Even in his own sphere the man without any training of the right hand can only progress in a settled groove, he cannot broaden the base of human culture or enlarge the bounds of science. Tennyson describes him as an eye well practised in Nature, a spirit bounded and poor, and the description is just. But a cultivated eye without a cultivated spirit makes by no means the highest type of man. It is precisely the cultivation of the spirit that is the object of what is well called a liberal education, and the pursuits best calculated to cultivate the growth of the spirit are language, literature, the Arts, music, painting, sculpture or the study of these, philosophy, religion, history, the study and understanding of man through his works and of Nature and man through the interpretative as well as through the analytic faculties ”

Music, Art and Poetry

“Plato in his Republic has dwelt with extraordinary emphasis on the importance of music in education, as is the music to which a people is accustomed, so, he says in effect, is the character of that people. The importance of painting and sculpture is hardly less. The mind is profoundly influenced by what it sees and, if the eye is trained from the days of childhood to the contemplation and understanding of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in line and colour, the tastes, habits and character will be insensibly trained to follow a similar law of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in the life of the adult man.... A similar result is produced on the emotions by the study of beautiful or noble art. We have spoken of the purification of the heart, the *chuttashuddhi*,* which Aristotle assigned as the essential office of poetry. Painting

* “Aristotle assigns a high value to tragedy because of its purifying force. He describes its effect as *katharsis*, a sacramental word of the Greek mysteries, which, in the secret discipline of the ancient Greek *Tantrics*, answered precisely to our *chuttashuddhi*, the purification of the *chitta* or mass of established ideas, feelings and actional habits in a man ”

and sculpture work in the same direction by different means Art sometimes uses the same means as poetry but cannot do it to the same extent because it has not the movement of poetry; it is fixed, still, it expresses only a given moment, a given point in space and cannot move freely through time and region But it is precisely this stillness, this calm, this fixity which gives its separate value to Art Poetry raises the emotions and gives each its separate delight Art stills the emotions and teaches them the delight of a restrained and limited satisfaction,—this indeed was the characteristic that the Greeks, a nation of artists far more artistic than poetic, tried to bring into their poetry. Music deepens the emotions and harmonises them with each other Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilising forces ”

Art as a Means for the Training of the Intellect

“The value of art in the training of intellectual faculty is also an important part of its utility. We have already indicated the double character of intellectual activity, divided between the imaginative, creative and sympathetic or comprehensive intellectual centres on the one side and the critical, analytic and penetrative on the other. The latter are best trained by science, criticism and observation, the former by art, poetry, music, literature and the sympathetic study of man and his creations These make the mind quick to grasp at a glance, subtle to distinguish shades, deep to reject shallow self-sufficiency, mobile, delicate, swift, intuitive Art assists in this training by raising images in the mind which it has to understand not by analysis, but by self-identification with other minds; it is a powerful stimulator of sympathetic insight Art is subtle and delicate, and it makes the mind also in its movements subtle and delicate. It is suggestive, and the intellect habituated to the appreciation of art is quick to catch suggestions, mastering not only, as the scientific mind does, that which is positive and on the surface, but that which leads to ever fresh widening and subtilising of knowledge and opens a door into the deeper secrets of inner nature where the positive instruments of science cannot take the depth or measure. This supreme intellectual value of Art has never been sufficiently recognised. Men have made language, poetry, history, philosophy agents for the training of this side of intellectuality, necessary parts of a liberal education, but the immense educative force of music, painting and sculpture has not been duly recognised They have been thought to be by-paths of the human mind, beautiful and interesting, but not necessary, therefore intended for the few. Yet the universal impulse to enjoy the beauty and attractiveness of sound, to look at and live among pictures, colours, forms ought to have warned mankind of the superficiality and ignorance of such a view of these eternal and important occupations

of human mind. The impulse, denied proper training and self-purification, has spent itself on the trivial, gaudy, sensuous, cheap or vulgar instead of helping men upward by its powerful aid in the evocation of what is best and highest in intellect as well as in character, emotion and the aesthetic enjoyment and regulation of life and manners.”

The Service of Art to Spirituality

“But beyond and above this intellectual utility of Art, there is a higher use, the noblest of all, its service to the growth of spirituality in the race.... Spirituality is a wider thing than formal religion and it is in the service of spirituality that Art reaches its highest self-expression. Spirituality is a single word expressive of three lines of human aspiration towards divine knowledge, divine love and joy, divine strength, and that will be the highest and most perfect Art which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine force and energy in phenomenal creation ”

The Three Elements that Create Art

“Just as technique is not all, so even Beauty is not all in Art. Art is not only technique or form of Beauty, not only the discovery or the expression of Beauty—it is a self-expression of Consciousness under the conditions of aesthetic vision and a perfect execution. Or, to put it otherwise, there are not only aesthetic values, but life values, mind values, soul values that enter into Art. The artist puts out into form not only the powers of his own consciousness, but the powers of the Consciousness that has made the worlds and their objects.”

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“If we take these three elements as making the whole of Art, perfection of expressive form, discovery of beauty, revelation of the soul and essence of things and the powers of creative consciousness and Ananda of which they are the vehicles, then we shall get perhaps a solution which includes the two sides of the controversy and reconciles their difference. Art for Art’s sake certainly, Art as a perfect form and discovery of Beauty, but also Art for the soul’s sake, the spirit’s sake and the expression of all that the soul, the spirit wants to seize through the medium of beauty. In that self-expression there are grades and hierarchies, widenings and steps that lead to the summits. And not only to enlarge Art towards the widest wideness but to

ascend with it to the heights climbing towards the Highest is and must be part both of our aesthetic and our spiritual endeavour.”

Philosophy and Religion

“Philosophy and religious thought based on spiritual experience must be the beginning and the foundation for they alone go behind appearances and processes to the truth of things. The attempt to get rid of their supremacy must always be vain. Man will always think and generalise and try to penetrate behind the apparent fact, for that is the imperative law of his awakened consciousness, man will always turn his generalisations into a religion, even though it be only a religion of positivism or of material Law. Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. They are essential to each other; a religion that is not the expression of philosophic truth, degenerates into superstition and obscurantism, and a philosophy which does not dynamise itself with the religious spirit is a barren light, for it cannot get itself practised. But again neither of these get their supreme value unless raised into the spirit and cast into life.”

Science

“It is true that the first tendencies of science have been materialistic and its indubitable triumphs have been confined to the knowledge of the physical universe and the body and the physical life. But this materialism is a very different thing from the old identification of the self with the body. Whatever its apparent tendencies, it has been really an assertion of man the mental being and of the supremacy of intelligence. Science in its very nature is knowledge, is intellectuality, and its whole work has been that of the Mind turning its gaze upon its vital and physical frame and environment to know and conquer and dominate Life and Matter. The scientist is Man the thinker mastering the forces of material Nature by knowing them. Life and Matter are after all our standing ground, our lower basis and to know their processes and their own proper possibilities and the opportunities they give to the human being is part of the knowledge necessary for transcending them. Life and the body have to be exceeded, but they have also to be utilised and perfected. Neither the laws nor the possibilities of physical Nature can be entirely known unless we know also the laws and possibilities of supraphysical Nature; therefore the development of new and the recovery of old mental and psychic sciences have to follow upon the perfection of our physical knowledge, and that new era is already beginning to open upon us. But the perfection of the physical sciences was a prior necessity and had to be the first field for the training of the mind of man in his new endeavour to know Nature and possess his world.”

“Science itself is in its own way an occultism, for it brings to light the formulas which Nature has hidden and it uses its knowledge to set free operations of her energies which she has not included in her ordinary operations and to organise and place at the service of man her occult powers and processes, a vast system of physical magic,—for there is and can be no other magic than the utilisation of secret truths of being, secret powers and processes of Nature. It may even be found that a supra-physical knowledge is necessary for the completion of physical knowledge, because the processes of physical Nature have behind them a supraphysical factor, a power and action mental, vital or spiritual which is not tangible to any outer means of knowledge.

All insistence on the sole or the fundamental validity of the objective real takes its stand on the sense of the basic reality of Matter. But it is now evident that Matter is by no means fundamentally real, it is a structure of Energy—it is becoming even a little doubtful whether the acts and creations of this Energy itself are explicable except as the motions of power of a secret Mind or Consciousness of which its processes and steps of structure are the formulas. It is therefore no longer possible to take Matter as the sole reality. The material interpretation of existence was the result of an exclusive concentration, a preoccupation with one movement of Existence, and such an exclusive concentration has its utility and is therefore permissible, in recent times it has justified itself by the many immense and the innumerable minute discoveries of physical Science. But a solution of the whole problem of existence cannot be based on an exclusive one-sided knowledge, we must know not only what Matter is and what are its processes, but what mind and life are and what are their processes, and one must know also spirit and soul and all that is behind the material surface only then can we have a knowledge sufficiently integral for a solution of the problem.”

Ethics

“The rational man has tried to reduce the ethical life like all the rest to a matter of reason, to determine its nature, its law, its practical action by some principle of reason, by some law of reason. He has never really succeeded and he never can really succeed. his appearances of success are mere pretences of the intellect building elegant and empty constructions with words and ideas, mere conventions of logic and vamped-up synthesis, in sum, pretentious failures which break down at the first strenuous touch of reality. Such was that extraordinary system of utilitarian ethics discovered in the nineteenth century—the great century of science and reason and utility—by one of its most positive and systematic minds and now deservedly discredited..

Good, not utility, must be the principle and standard of good; otherwise we fall into the hands of that dangerous pretender expediency, whose whole method is alien to the ethical. the law of nature of the ethical being is the pursuit of good, it can never be the pursuit of utility.

Neither is its law the pursuit of pleasure high or base, nor self-satisfaction of any kind, however subtle or even spiritual. .. The action of the ethical man is not motivated by even an inner pleasure, but by a call of his being, the necessity of an ideal, the figure of an absolute standard, a law of the Divine. His relations with others and his relations with himself are both of them the occasions of his ethical growth; but that which determines his ethical being is his relations with God .. He obeys an inner ideal, not an outer standard; he answers to a divine law in his being, not to a social claim or a collective necessity. The ethical imperative comes not from around, but from within him and above him.... If man's conscience is a creation of his evolving nature, if his conceptions of ethical law are mutable and depend on his stage of evolution, yet at the root of them there is something constant in all their mutations which lies at the very roots of his own nature and of world-nature. And if Nature in man and the world is in its beginnings infra-ethical as well as infrarational, as it is at its summit supra-ethical as well as suprarational, yet in that infra-ethical there is something which becomes in the human plane of being the ethical, and that supra-ethical is itself a consummation of the ethical and cannot be reached by any who have not trod the long ethical road. Below hides that secret of good in all things which the human being approaches and tries to deliver partially through ethical instinct and ethical idea, above is hidden the eternal Good which exceeds our partial and fragmentary ethical conceptions...

In fact ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in the action or a laboured effort to be blameless according to the standards of the world,—those are only crude appearances,—it is an attempt to grow into the divine nature. Its parts of purity are an aspiration towards the inalienable purity of God's being, its parts of truth and right are a seeking after conscious unity with the law of the divine knowledge and will, its parts of sympathy and charity are a movement towards the infinity and universality of the divine love; its parts of strength and manhood are an edification* of the divine strength and power. That is the heart of its meaning. Its high fulfilment comes when the being of the man undergoes this transfiguration; then it is not his actions that standardise his nature but his nature that gives value to his actions; then he is no longer laboriously virtuous, artificially moral, but naturally divine.''

Education in a Spiritualised Society

“Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised, would make the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure. As it was to some extent in the ancient Vedic times with the cultural education of the higher classes, so it would be then with all education. It would embrace all knowledge in its scope, but would make the whole trend and aim and the

* Mark the word ‘edification’ in the sense of ‘building’ —Amal Kiran

permeating spirit not mere worldly efficiency, but this self-developing and self-finding. It would pursue physical and psychical science not in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends, but to know through and in and under and over all things the Divine in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them. It would make it the aim of ethics not to establish a rule of action whether supplementary to the social law or partially corrective of it, the social law that is after all only the rule, often clumsy and ignorant, of the biped pack, the human herd, but to develop the divine nature in the human being. It would make it the aim of Art not merely to present images of the subjective and objective world, but to see them with the significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to reveal the Truth and Beauty of which things visible to us and invisible are the forms, the mask or the symbols and significant figures.’’

The Ultimates of Human Life are Spiritual

‘‘In spirituality then would lie our ultimate, our only hope for the perfection whether of the individual or of the communal man, not the spirit which for its separate satisfaction turns away from the earth and her works, but that greater spirit which surpasses and yet accepts and fulfils them. A spirituality that would take up into itself man’s rationalism, aestheticism, ethicism, vitalism, corporeality, his aspiration towards knowledge, his attraction towards beauty, his need of love, his urge towards perfection, his demand for power and fullness of life and being, a spirituality that would reveal to these ill-accorded forces their divine sense and the conditions of their godhead, reconcile them all to each other, illumine to the vision of each the way which they now tread in half-lights and shadows, in blindness or with a deflected sight, is a power which even man’s too self-sufficient reason can accept or may at least be brought one day to accept as sovereign and to see in it its own supreme light, its own infinite source. For that reveals itself surely in the end as the logical ultimate process, the inevitable development and consummation of all for which man is individually and socially striving’’

THE ALL-INDIA CONVENTION FOR THE SRI AUROBINDO UNIVERSITY CENTRE

APRIL 24 is one of those dates that are history at its most significant. It used to be, when Sri Aurobindo was in the body, a *darshan* day on which hundreds from all parts of the world gathered before him and his spiritual associate, the Mother. And it was chosen to be a *darshan* day because it marked the coming of the Mother to Pondicherry for permanent stay by the side of Sri Aurobindo. It is still a *darshan* day—the disciples and the admirers trooping through Sri Aurobindo's room and then receiving the Mother's benedictory smile. But a further significance has been added to it this year by the Convention which met on the Ashram grounds to deliberate on concerted measures for establishing an International University Centre as the fittest memorial of the Master.

Brilliant figures from diverse walks of life—men with a forward vision from every province of India as well as from abroad—collected on this occasion before the Mother and started the proceedings in a *pandal* on the margin of the majestic waters that beat upon Pondicherry and whose many voices mingled with the various speeches of the distinguished delegates. Most suggestively charged with profundity came the sea's splendid base to accompany the words spoken by the Mother in opening the Convention. She said

“Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life

“In his name I open to-day this Convention meeting here with the purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals.”

These were words with which the Mother put into intelligible sound the very power of Sri Aurobindo, and as she uttered them her whole body seemed a glowing door through which the ideal future drew close to us and her face wore the look of one who was but working to transfer to the visible and the material a mighty structure of Spirit-substance that stood forever in a hidden world of harmonious Truth. Her message was like a *mantra* vibrantly moving to capture in earth-terms what the inner eye had caught of some symbol-habitation of that luminous universality that is Sri Aurobindo.

Luminous universality—this is precisely the essence of the proposed University. International and integral is the education aimed at—a wide sweep missing nothing of the world's manifoldness, a force fanning out to gather everything into a pattern that combines and unifies all. But there is more here than the fruitful co-ordination of all the faculties and activities of man the seeker of knowledge. It is not the mere mind

that is intended to be ultimately the co-ordinator. The mere mind is obviously no luminous agency: it is bright in patches and dark in patches, with the entire general upshot of the interplay of bright and dark an eager yet baffled grey. The universality which the new centre of learning is meant to manifest is, in its final form, the world-expression of a supreme Shakti of which the mind is a diminished figure. Sri Aurobindo it is who has projected the idea of this centre of learning, and Sri Aurobindo is fundamentally the Master of an all-round spiritual realisation leading the intellectual and the nation-builder in him. This must not be mistaken to be a movement of narrow revivalism, of obscurantist religiosity. Sri Aurobindo does not stand for any of the sectarian creeds—he does not stand for even a new sect or creed—he brings the illumination of what he has termed the Supermind, the Truth behind man's evolutionary endeavour, the complete perfection which man's mental, vital and physical aspirations travail, directly or indirectly, to bring forth here and now. And the Supermind he stands for will not be a dogma hammered into people's heads. It will be the unfolding as of a golden flower within them in response to an almost invisible touch, a flower whose aroma will suffuse the whole consciousness and permeate all branches of knowledge and automatically reveal the wisdom that man's common knowledge mostly blurs.

A spontaneous acceptance of an influence from beyond the ordinary range of experience came into play during the entire proceedings of the Convention which began with a number of songs by the inimitable Dilip Kumar Roy. From the start the President, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, who was proposed to the chair by Mr. K. C. Dutt and seconded by Mr. S. N. Jauhar, struck the right note. He spoke not only with genuine appreciation of the personality of Sri Aurobindo but also with a reverent instinct of the Mother's status. There was a most admirable fund of good will in him to serve the presence of Sri Aurobindo that seemed to shape the ends of the Convention, and so both in the words that came from him and in the way he conducted the proceedings he took care that those ends were as little rough-hewn as possible and that everything should be plastic in the hands of the secret Shaper. Speaking under the great picture of Sri Aurobindo that hung at the back of the dais, he brought to his famous oratory a keen sense of the unique momentousness of the occasion. "I am sure," he said, concluding his address on the first day, "the proposed University will symbolise the world's urge for a new spiritual rebirth, it will stand out as an oasis amidst the barren tracts that breed jealousies, suspicions and party conflicts." In the course of his speech on the second day he expressed the satisfaction which he felt after seeing the Ashram in its many aspects of activity and development, and made the memorable declaration: "The work that is about to be undertaken is a mighty one. No doubt, there will be support throughout the world. Let us not minimise the difficulties and complexities of the task. We propose to work this University for imparting training to men and women in accordance with the highest standards for the purpose of participating in the great task of reconstruction of humanity. Institutions of this type are bound to fail unless we can gather men and women who will not only

feel on the lines that Sri Aurobindo lived, but also act upon them. This place has already within its resources such men and women who will be able to undertake this gigantic responsibility. It is our hope that men and women from all parts of the world will be attracted by the ideal which this institution will represent. We need not pay attention to the quantitative aspect of the problem, because we have many Universities where thousands of students pass out and we do not want to see any replica of such institutions. . The policy of our Government should be to encourage experiments of the type being made here so that the work may be carried on without hindrance or difficulty . We have not the least doubt that as long as the Mother is here this institution will grow from strength to strength and will be the pride not only of India but of the entire civilised world ”

Mr. Nolini Kanta Gupta, Secretary of the Ashram, made two short statements, one on the first and the other on the second day. A simple directness was his, which yet held deep riches of meaning. He mentioned that the University Centre which was sought to be formed was nothing less than the founding of a new mankind upon earth. And he added “The promise has been given that the thing can be done and will be done. And She is in our midst who will make good the promise ” The plain but vision-packed sentences went home to the mind of the audience, for there was behind them a mind quick with the Master’s and the Mother’s presence and trained by long discipleship to be brief not by the skimming of a subject but by a concentrated glimpse of the heart of a situation. The same direct though sparing touch was felt by the hearers on the next day when Mr. Gupta thanked the President for his extreme affableness and also all the others from far and near who too, he hoped, would come again to spend a few days now and then in the midst of the Ashram. These words were no stock formula of civility—they continued the sense he had given of the creative future ahead when he had said “We are now at the end of our deliberations—a happy and successful end, you will admit, which, however, is the beginning of a still happier and greater end ”

After Mr. Gupta’s statement on the first day a number of messages showing how wide-spread was the interest in the novel venture of Sri Aurobindo’s genius and of the Mother’s creativity were read out by Mr. M. P. Pandit. They were headed by a few pregnant sentences from the well-known thinker, littérateur, ex-diplomat and present professor of Spanish Studies at Oxford, Senor Salvador de Madariaga “Unable to attend your Convention, I send you my best wishes for its success. The analytical age is coming to its close. It fulfilled its purpose. But now something else is needed. The age of synthesis is about to begin. And how could it begin if no high centre of perspective were provided for all the parts to fall in into harmony?”

The messages hailed from various representative men, among them being Hon. Mr. K. M. Munshi, Hon. Mr. Kanungo, Hon. Mr. M. Bhaktavatsalam, Raja Maharaj Singh, Dr. Amarnath Jha, Dr. D. R. Bhattacharya (Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University), Prof. P. S. Naidu (Head of the Dept. of Philosophy, Allahabad University), Dr. K. C. Varadachari (Head of the Dept. of Philosophy, Venkateshwara

Institute, Tirupati), Dr. R. K. Yajnik (Director of Education, Saurashtra), Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, Mr. K. G. Mashruwala, Mr. N. V. Rajkumar, Kaka Kalelkar and Mr. Radhakrishna Bajaj. There were messages also from Malaya, East Africa, France and the American Academy for Asian Studies (San Francisco).

After the reading was over, Mr. S. R. Albless who had been entrusted with the responsibility of giving a broad sketch of the new University's character from several standpoints—architectural, organisational, academic, psychological and philosophical—rose to address the Convention.* He brought to his task a thorough comprehension of the Aurobindonian ideal and explained how an inevitable expression of it would be the International University. The genuine philosophical intellect was here, at the same time profound and lucid, ranging over a wide field with an effortless force, making not only a mental picture of the University spring up in its significant spaciousness but also the complex unity of it shine out in the living lines of its detailed functioning. With phrases clear in thought not by a facile command of the surface but by a constant perception of truths that alone can really illuminate things from within and above them, he satisfied the eager curiosity of the audience to have, as it were, a subjective as well as an objective blue-print of this vast scheme of Sri Aurobindo's, which would make the East and the West join their lights in a boundless day of the Spirit's self-revelation. He pointed out that Sri Aurobindo's education in England led him "to recognise the value of the social and political ideals of the West and the importance of science and technology and the organisation of man's physical existence; but he saw too their basic insufficiency—their incapacity to solve the fundamental problems of existence and create for men a better life." The extraordinary nature of the Aurobindonian vision as expounded in the Master's own books was underlined by Mr. Albless in words carrying a fine intellectual edge throughout their inwardly inspired eloquence: "A complete philosophy of life created out of direct and immediate knowledge of the Divine Reality in all its aspects, a philosophy that gives a real solution for the problems of human existence and reveals God's purpose in the world and the destiny of man in the universe, is definitely a great contribution to the world of thought and culture—a world which in spite of its scientific and materialistic progress is ignorant of ends and purposes. This University will be instrumental in disseminating the ideas expounded by these treatises as well as in making them dynamic in the life of men."

At the conclusion of Mr. Albless's address a booklet published by the Ashram and entitled *Sri Aurobindo University Centre, Pondicherry* was distributed to the delegates. It contained a small-scale reproduction of the actual architectural plans as well as an outline of the educational project, with apt quotations from Sri Aurobindo giving his ideas on education and with striking extracts from an article by the Mother which had appeared in the Ashram's *Bulletin of Physical Education* (November, 1950) under the caption. *The Science of Living*.

* The full text of the Address is published as the next article

Then several other delegates and organisers gave their speeches. On the first day Professor S. Maitra of Calcutta University and Dr. Tan Yun Shan, Founder-Director of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, voiced their happy response to the call of the great idea let loose by Sri Aurobindo. The day's proceedings closed with a pointed speech by Mr. Keshavdev Poddar, the dynamic Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Circle of Bombay and one of the moving spirits of the all-India interest in the Convention. What he said breathed the very attitude to which, on the organisational side, the Convention owed its exceptional success. He asked whether this Convention was going to be one of those events which for all their *éclat* prove to be nothing more than a hum of words and a series of dramatic gestures, or, on the contrary, the meaningful overture of a sustained harmony of action which would not rest until it called into being the actual University with the help of increasing funds and of more and more educational workers. There was no doubt in his mind that the enthusiasm and the understanding which marked all the participants in the gathering before him could lead to a really practical and fruitful development of the thoughts and purposes born on the occasion. His appeal was for loyal and unremitting service of the Aurobindo-ian ideal.

Those who spoke on the second day made also a deep impression. Dr. Bernard Phillips (Chairman of the Philosophy Department of Delaware University, U.S.A.), Mr. Justice Bhagwati (Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University), Mr. Hemendra Prasad Ghose (one of India's veteran journalists, a colleague of Sri Aurobindo's on the latter's famous journal during his political days, *Bandemataram*), Dr. Kalidas Nag (renowned for his varied cultural activities in India and abroad), Mr. Justice B. N. Rai of Patna, Mr. Chatterjee (Editor of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta), Mr. Suren Mohan Ghose, Dr. Vaidyanathaswami—all these in one way or another expressed their awareness of the stupendous character of the work on whose threshold they had met.

Before the day's programme terminated with these speeches and Mr. Gupta's words of thanks, Dr. Mukherjee had moved a set of resolutions which were unanimously adopted. The unanimity was a most notable phenomenon in view of the diversity of minds collected under the President. And it was due mainly to the admiration evoked in one and all by the inspired organisation and the fine living out of ideals that they had witnessed in the Ashram. The scheme of development which the proposed University stood for struck them as having been already initiated in the Ashram, and even the first academic phases of the new education was in evidence in the classes conducted there. And, more than any existing formulation in terms of Ashram-life, what carried all minds and hearts together, was their sense of the Mother's greatness, the confidence somehow born in them that she who had taken up the grand responsibility of Sri Aurobindo's International University Centre would give perfect shape to it and make it grow to its fullest dimensions.

Indeed, in the truest connotation of the phrase, she is the *Alma Mater* of the integral education planned by Sri Aurobindo. From her gracious and creative perso-

nality flows the inspiration of a Golden Age to come, a Golden Age that Sri Aurobindo prophesied and promised and for whose advent he laboured and gave his life, entrusting the luminous power of its multifoliate life-expression to her who was his associate and co-worker and behind whom his deathless presence remains for ever—the radiant Mother of man's new-birth into complete supermanhood

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

THOU BLESSED DREAM

IF THINGS go ill or well—
If joy rebounding spreads the face,
Or sea of sorrows swells—
It is a dream, a play

A play—we each have a part
Each one to weep or laugh as may,
Each one his dress to don—
Alternate shine or rain.

Thou dream, O blessed dream! •
Spread far and near thy veil of haze,
Tone down the lines so sharp,
Make smooth what roughness seems

No magic but in thee!
Thy touch makes desert bloom to life,
Harsh thunder, sweetest song,
Fell death, the sweet release

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE

ITS CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE

[The full text of the Address to the delegates attending the All-India Convention for the University Centre to be established in Pondicherry as a memorial to Sri Aurobindo.]

BEFORE we start the discussion on the University I would like to thank Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee and all those who have so kindly come here for the Convention

We shall first try to see what is the general character of this University, and then its real significance. You all know that the education given will be based primarily on Sri Aurobindo's own teachings and that it will be entirely free I would like to add that this is in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's own wishes One of the interesting features of this University will be that the students coming from different parts of the world will be taught in their own languages Letters from France, America, England, Germany, Egypt, Africa, Japan and other places, both from students and teachers, have already been received, asking for permission to come and join the new University

Boys and girls of all ages will be admitted, from the Kindergarten to the Graduate classes As can be seen from the architectural plans given here, provision has been made to give instruction in all departments of knowledge. This is in keeping with Sri Aurobindo's catholic outlook on life and his integral spiritual vision The building shown on the plans is the central block of the University; it is only one of a group of buildings which will be erected later as the number of students increases For the present, only this block is going to be constructed; other structures will be built later around it. "Hostel Type" residential buildings will be also erected for the students and teachers, as far as possible, people belonging to the same country and having the same nationality will be grouped together—there will be an American Section, a French Section, an English Section and a German Section; this arrangement will help the foreigners to feel more at home and have a social life of their own within the larger framework of the communal life of the University Centre. Another interesting feature of this educational scheme is a large Library with a Public Hall to seat two thousand to two thousand five hundred people All these buildings will be so grouped around the central block as to form parts of an organic whole Needless to say, all the most modern methods will be used for lighting, ventilation and acoustical treatment, as well as for the structural work, and the latest type of equipment will be provided

On the ground floor about 750 boys and girls will be accommodated—300 Juniors and the rest Seniors. Classes for Domestic Science, Handicrafts and Music are kept on the ground floor. Three Language classes, a Reading Room, a Common

Room for senior students, and a Teachers' Room are also located here. A fully equipped Laboratory, with classes in Physics, Chemistry, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics next to it, occupies almost a whole wing of the building on this floor.

Accommodation for 700 to 750 students is provided on the first floor, where the three important Sections, the Philosophy and Yoga Section, the Literature Section, and the Art Section are placed. A big Studio with north lighting, and classes for Drawing, Painting, Modelling, Architecture and Engineering comprise the Art Section. Next to a Hall for debates, lantern-lectures and elocution competitions, Literature classes are placed—Poetry, Philosophical Prose, Essays and Belles Lettres. In the central portion of the building between the open spaces, the Mother's classes, elementary and advanced classes in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, classes in Psychology, Logic, Social and Political Philosophy, and those in Comparative Philosophy, Religion and Mysticism are located. The remaining wing has classes in Metaphysics, Ethics and Axiology, Culturology and Anthropology, and History and the Philosophy of History. This is, of course, a tentative arrangement as the plans prepared are still in the preliminary stage. A few changes may have to be made in the final drawings, but the general arrangement of the rooms will not be radically altered. From the Kindergarten to the Graduate classes regular academic education will be given to the students, the higher teaching and yogic knowledge will be imparted only to the post-graduate students—those who have an aspiration to practise the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, and who are selected for their aptitude and yogic capacity. This brings us to the next question: what will be the nature of this higher teaching; in the field of knowledge, what does this University have to offer which the most modern educational centres of Europe and America are not in a position to? This is a question which will come into the minds of many, especially those who are not familiar with Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

It can be said at the outset that Sri Aurobindo classifies knowledge into two categories. the lower knowledge and the higher knowledge. The first is the indirect knowledge—knowledge of apparent phenomena of existence. Its approach is external, through the intellect; it examines the surfaces of things. The other is knowledge gained through spiritual means, through direct experience and realisation, it seeks to understand truths of existence from within, in their inner source and reality. Actually these are two sides of the same seeking. All knowledge through whatever way it is pursued, is ultimately the knowledge of the One Reality, the Divine Being, either attained directly through union with Him or gained indirectly through Nature and its workings.

According to Sri Aurobindo science, art, philosophy, ethics, psychology, the knowledge of man and his past, action itself, are means by which man attains knowledge of the works of God through Nature and through life. At first he concerns himself with the externalities of life and the forms of Nature, and tries to fathom their secrets through scientific means, but when he learns to go deeper within himself and awakens to the inner reality of his being, and begins to correlate it with God, he

understands that all his previous efforts were imperfect gropings which ultimately led to the Divine, in whose Being alone can the absolutes of knowledge, beauty and goodness have their existence. Consequently, the students joining this University will be candidates for both the lower and the higher knowledge, their aspiration, will, and yogic capacity determining the limit of their psycho-spiritual development. The student who will reach a higher level of being and possess a more enlightened consciousness than the average man, will attain the lower as well as the higher knowledge—in the words of Sri Aurobindo “The lower knowledge has been the step from which he has risen to the higher: the higher illumines for him the lower and makes it part of itself, even if only its lower fringe and most external radiation ”

Now the last question is, what is the exact significance of this University—its intellectual, cultural and spiritual significance? First we shall see its intellectual and cultural significance

Educated in England when the current philosophy of life was positivistic and materialistic, Sri Aurobindo grew to recognise the value of the great social and political ideals of the West and the importance of science and technology and the organisation of man’s physical existence, but he saw too their basic insufficiency—their incapacity to solve the fundamental problems of existence and create for men a better life. He first imbibed from Western culture its finest elements and then turned towards the spiritual treasures of his own country. After attaining the realisations described in her ancient scriptures, he ascended the ladder of Being to the gnostic heights of the Spirit to have his great realisation of the Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness of the Divine—the sovran Light and Power that alone can radically transform and divinise human life in its entirety.

The benefits of this realisation he gave to the world by creating a complete philosophy of life, a new spiritual world-view, in his five major works, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Human Cycle*, and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. The intellectual and cultural value of these metaphysical, psychological, spiritual-ethical, and socio-political treatises is not difficult to assess. A complete philosophy of life created out of direct and immediate knowledge of the Divine Reality in all its aspects, a philosophy that gives a real solution for the problems of human existence and reveals God’s purpose in the world and the destiny of man in the universe, is definitely a great contribution to the world of thought and culture—a world which in spite of its great scientific and materialistic progress is ignorant of ends and purposes. This University will be instrumental in disseminating the ideas expounded in these treatises as well as in making them dynamic in the life of men. As Sri Aurobindo’s appeal is very wide and his idealistic and spiritual outlook on life attracts seekers from almost every country in the world, it is expected that this educational Centre will gradually evolve into a world Culture Centre.

But what is of even greater importance is its spiritual significance in the Aurobindonian scheme of things; this cannot be understood without knowing its relation to Sri Aurobindo’s work in the world and the goal he set before himself—the

complete manifestation of the Divine Truth, Power and Bliss in earth-existence, resulting in the divinisation of man and the creation of human unity on a basis of spiritual oneness.

The most difficult and important part of this work has already been done by him. His intense yogic action on terrestrial life he brought to a success by a cataclysmic manoeuvre which entailed the deliberate discarding of his most material sheath. By sacrificing his body, he attained for the earth in a short period an evolutionary gain which it would have taken her centuries to attain in the normal course of events. He brought down the essential nucleus of the Supramental Light into the deepest layers of the earth-consciousness. The condition of his body, which remained aglow and intact for four and a half days, was symptomatic of this spiritual victory. The very cells of his body were charged with a high concentration of Supramental Light, making it quite clear that even the most material part of a human being can pass through a modification and hold the highest Divine Light. Therefore, in the series of events which mark the various stages of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's spiritual work, this event is a step just prior to the final transformation. The Light brought down by Sri Aurobindo has now to spread out and infiltrate into all the subconscious layers of human life before a fuller descent of the Supermind can be made possible. It is the work of spreading this Light into the lower strata of the earth that Sri Aurobindo is doing at present, it is absolutely necessary to purify to a large extent these nether regions and establish control over the adverse forces that operate there before the complete descent can take place and make the transformation of the entire being possible, for it is in these inconscient regions of terrestrial existence that the roots of all human limitations, difficulties and suffering lie. Sri Aurobindo thus carries on the work—though now out of his material body—which he started forty years ago.

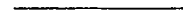
Now, the Supramental Light has not only to penetrate, as it descends, the subconscious and inconscient layers of man's being, but has to grip his mind, life and body as well, with the object of transforming them. The body has to become a pliant and obedient instrument of the Divine Will, the life-being has to become a pure and perfect channel of the Divine Force, the soul has to contain and irradiate the Divine Bliss, and the mind has to manifest the Divine Truth. But before it can do so, it has to undergo a modification—the rational mind has to be transformed into the "mind of light", and then gradually into the "gnostic mind". In this work of the transformation of man's being, especially his mental being, this University, which under the Mother's direction and guidance will impart Sri Aurobindo's teachings and spread his influence, has to play a major part.

Therefore, this educational Centre will not be like the Memorials that are usually erected to perpetuate the memory of someone who has passed away from the world, but will be a field of action for a being who is still in the earth atmosphere and powerfully influencing it. Has not the Mother, who is in constant union with him, said in her message "Lord, this morning thou hast given me the assurance that Thou

wouldst stay with us until Thy work is achieved, not only as a consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action In unmistakable terms Thou hast promised that all of Thyself would remain here and not leave the earth atmosphere until earth is transformed ”

Consequently, the real significance of this Centre is that it will serve as a link between the spiritual nucleus formed at Pondicherry and the outside world, and become one of the vehicles through which the Aurobindonian Light will manifest—a Light which is none other than that of the Divine Truth. After taking into consideration all these facts it will be safe to predict that this University will reflect the intellectual and spiritual greatness of the Rishi in whose honour it is going to be created, and under the illumined guidance of the Mother become the most unique educational Centre of all times

S R ALBLESS



DIPTYCH:
I HAVE LOOKED ON IMAGES
SHE WHO DWELLS WITHIN US

I HAVE looked on images of Her Softly She walks on white-clad feet

That blind our human eyes In the garden of our consciousness.
With a brilliance from another Are the flowers of aspiration meet
World of crystal skies. As gifts to grace Her loveliness?

The eternal godhead here descended She enters the cavern of the soul
From its gold infinity Lighting the inexhaustible fire
Signals us the night is ended Matter's beacon, the body's goal
Of our dark obscurity Aerial she lifts us higher.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

A LETTER

It is reported that in Her recorded conversations the Mother has talked at length about death and the subtle body, etc. and I have been asked about what the Mother said to me.

First I'll write about the body of St. Francis Xavier. St. Francis Xavier had worked a great deal in Goa and had expressed a wish that when he died he should be buried in that place. But he was sent on to China and he died and was buried there. Several years later, knowing of his wish, a team went out to bring his body to Goa and when they opened his grave in China they found his body still intact and not decomposed. While they were bringing his body to Goa they were attacked by bandits, so they buried it again and escaped. Later, another team was sent to bring the body to Goa and again they found the body intact. When the body reached Goa it was placed in a splendid casket and kept under a glass case bound with gold. The body was still intact, so it was dressed in full ceremonial garb and laid in the casket. Then once a year it would be exposed to the view of the public who thronged in thousands to see it. Later the exposition was only once in ten years. What is the present position I do not know.

I had been, as a young man, with the rest of our family, to one of these ten-yearly expositions and as the Bishop of the Cathedral where the body was kept—"The Bom Jesu", I think,—was a friend, we were taken privately to see the body. One could see the face and hands under the glass case but the casket having been pushed a bit, one could kiss the feet. Really it was a rare thing to see. The face was fine, almost living, only the colour was rather a dark blue—not the white skin of a European, and the whole body—what was visible—seemed to have shrunk a great deal, as though all the water had left it. But, frankly, I was a bit sceptical and felt that the whole thing might be a fraud and the body a wax image. So, when I got a chance, I surreptitiously put my hand in and gave the leg a poke with my finger and found that it was real flesh and bone and not wax.

I told the Mother all this in full detail and She scolded me for what I had done. She explained that the fact that the body had not perished indicated that the subtle physical was still present with the physical body and as it was quite conscious it would not be pleased at my poking the leg. Then the Mother further explained that normally the subtle physical remains with the physical body after death for six to twelve days but in special cases, particularly of great saints and spiritually enlightened persons like Rishis, Yogis, etc., the subtle physical may continue to remain with the physical body for a long time after death. Hence, in India, such persons are not cremated but buried. Cremation gives a great shock to the subtle body.

Now we come to Sri Aurobindo and His leaving His body. When this happened I was one of the persons present and was watching all that happened very closely and calmly. But the others present were greatly shocked when He took His last breath. Dr Sanyal who was the presiding physician looked around and when he saw me quite

calm he said, "Udar, you are the only calm person here, so I feel you should take charge of everything." Then the Mother also looked at me and said, "Udar, you take charge of everything." And so it was that I was put in charge.

The Mother gave me detailed instructions for all that had to be done, the coffin, the Samadhi, etc. But when She asked me to build two chambers in the Samadhi, one over the other, I protested vehemently till finally She had to become stern and say, "I order you to do it," and so I had to do it. This upper chamber was filled with clean-washed and well-sieved sand and when later the Mother was placed in this top chamber, the sand was collected and has been carefully stored for distribution in small packets to those who ask for it. It has lain over Sri Aurobindo's chamber for 23 years.

The coffin for Sri Aurobindo was made out of the best rose-wood available and then lined with a silver sheet and then with silk. When a body is buried it can perish from decomposition from within but also from microbes, insects and worms from outside; I felt that at least all the outside attacks could be prevented, and so this solid impregnable coffin. Then the body was covered with camphor, etc., and the lid hermetically sealed with a rubber ring and screwed down with many screws. But why all this?

As everyone knows, Sri Aurobindo's body did not begin to decompose as most bodies do in India within 24 hours. He died at 1.20 a.m. on the 5th December, 1950, and the body showed no signs of decomposition till the 9th when the doctors who were constantly examining His body declared that decomposition had set in. They based their decision on the fact that blisters began to form on the body and water exuded from them. I am a layman and have a high regard for doctors and their knowledge and competence, but I know also that there are limits and especially when dealing with beings like Sri Aurobindo many of their norms could be upset and so I could not accept their decision. I have dealt with dead bodies before and know that with decomposition there comes a horrible bad smell which is unmistakable and very powerful. In the case of Sri Aurobindo's body there was no such smell. Rather there was a wonderful and unearthly perfume that came from His body. So I protested vehemently and told even the Mother that as She had put me in charge I would refuse to allow anyone to take His body for burial and would even physically prevent it. When the Mother saw how adamant I was, She called me aside and explained that it was not the doctors' verdict that counted with Her but Sri Aurobindo's own sign to Her. After His death there was a golden light that was coming out of His body. The Mother asked me if I could see that light now. I had to admit that it had gone and that a dark bluish tinge had begun to appear. The Mother said that this was His sign to Her, and so I had to accept but, as I explained to the Mother later, I am fully convinced that His body has not perished, even to this day. I remembered that the body of St. Francis Xavier had that same dark bluish tinge and had also lost all the water in it. Similarly a lot of water had come out of Sri Aurobindo's body. When I lifted His body with my hands to place it in the coffin I was fully wetted with this

water which had that wonderful heavenly perfume. Normally I take bath twice a day but after getting fully covered with His perfume I did not bathe for two days, as I did not want to lose it

Now, as I have said, I am convinced, that His body has not perished even though, before it was placed in the coffin, the Mother had stood over it for some time and drew out His subtle physical, as She explained to me later

Now we come to the Mother I was not with Her when She died and was not in charge but just had to make Her coffin and bury Her in the top chamber of the Samadhī. So I can say very little from personal experience but I have been told that the Mother had said that if it appeared that She had died, Her body should not be touched. So I verified this with some of those who were in charge at the time and I have been informed that though the Mother may have said what is stated, yet to those in charge of Her She had made the injunction conditional and said that Her body should not be put into the coffin and into the Samadhī unless decomposition had set in. The Mother did not say to them not to touch the body, but just not to bury it in a hurry. Some of those in charge emphatically state that decomposition did set in, in a large way, and so She had to be buried at once after it had set in. I cannot comment on this except to state that when I helped to lift Her body to put it in the coffin there was no water as in the case of Sri Aurobindo's body, but also I did not smell any decomposition: I smelled only perfume—not quite a heavenly one but what She normally used. I have been told that Her body was well doused with Her perfume and so I did not smell the decomposition

UDAR

(Courtesy *Sri Aurobindo's Action*, March 1980)

OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

The Levels above the Rational Mind (1)

“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 [and] a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be *the natural evolutionary course*”* When these words of Sri Aurobindo were quoted earlier, we promised to clarify them to some extent. For they refer to an important range of gradations of being that is but little known because it has barely been explored in former times. Now that the effort was on for the descent of Supermind and for the realisation of one or more kinds of intermediary beings between the human and the supramental being, this range of tiers of existence became the focus of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Both of them had become thoroughly knowledgeable about those higher, spiritual realms during their yogic explorations and experiments. All related data indicate that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother realised the supramentalisation of the Mind around 1920 and of the Vital soon afterwards (This was the time their physical aspects changed so much, as recorded in the testimonies, that everybody marvelled at the fact and some who had met them a few years beforehand did not even recognise them.) Sri Aurobindo more than once underlines that all gradations are closely connected; therefore, if they personally had realised the Supermind on those levels, they must have realised the intermediate gradations too.

The apparent gap between the human and the supramental being, between the human mind and the Supermind, is enormous. It is this apparent gap that is the cause of “the error... to make an unbridgeable gulf between God and man, Brahman and the world”²⁵ This error resulted in the various conceptions of a supracosmic God, separated from His manifestation or creation. The gap seems to be there because to the human being, and therefore to the earthly evolution up to now, rational mind is the ceiling of the upward capacities. But the scale of the gradations of being runs all the way from the Pure Absolute down to the Inconscient, and back up “For the whole of being is a connected totality and there is in it no abrupt passage from the principle of Truth and Light into their opposite.... the depths are linked to the heights and the Law of the one Truth creates and works everywhere.”²⁶ This is the same as saying that there is no gap, hiatus, discontinuity or lacuna anywhere, and that the supposed gap between mind and Supermind is nothing but the consequence of a lack of human spiritual experience.

* The italics here and in the other quotations are the author's

Let us recall, for clarity's sake, the main rungs of the ladder of being, covering the whole of existence. In the "upper hemisphere" there is Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss, and Supermind, in the "lower hemisphere" there is Mind, Life and Matter. Supermind is the manifesting aspect of the Absolute. It is a Truth-Consciousness, a Unity-Consciousness, it is the Brahman with attributes that are usually ascribed to God. We never forget that every consciousness is also a being and a being of beings. Supermind contains and manifests the Absolute in its plenitude. And everything manifested, in the upper as well as in the lower hemisphere, is the Absolute and could not exist if it were not directly, in its essence, supported by Supermind which is omnipotent and therefore also possesses the power of self-limitation.

The upper and the lower hemispheres are separated by "a golden lid", in some Traditions called "the Gate of the Sun", through which no ordinary mortal can pass with the hope of returning. It is on this dividing line or rather in this dividing zone above Mind and below Supermind, that we find the four "spiritual" levels which play such an important part in the subject that concerns us. They are, in descending order and as named by Sri Aurobindo, Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind and Higher Mind. Together they make up a transitional being(s) whom Sri Aurobindo called "the new humanity".

Overmind (which is the level of the worlds of the Gods), Intuition, Illumined Mind and Higher Mind still exist in the Light of the Supermind, they are, in that order, its increasingly diluted extensions, so to say. "...there is an increasing self-limitation [of Supermind] which begins even with Overmind. Overmind is separated by only a luminous border from the full light and power of the supramental Truth and it still commands direct access to all that Supermind can give it." Every overmental Being, or God, represents the Supreme and therefore all the other Gods. "There is further limitation or change of characteristic action at each step downwards from Overmind to Intuition, from Intuition to Illumined Mind, from Illumined Mind to what I have called the Higher Mind", writes Sri Aurobindo.²⁷

The Absolute is Light, the Inconscient is Darkness. Light and Darkness in this case are much more than poetic epithets, they are realities. The substance of the Absolute, and therefore of the upper hemisphere, consists of Light in all its modulations, variations and powers. The substance of the Inconscient, and therefore of the lower hemisphere, consists of darkness—which is what we see when we close our eyes. When we are even slightly able to reach in our consciousness above reason, above our ordinary mind, don't we say that we "see the light"?

Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind and Higher Mind are still modulations of the Light of the upper hemisphere, while actually belonging to the lower hemisphere. "Thus there is a succession of ranges of consciousness which we can speak of as Mind but which belongs practically to the higher hemisphere, although in their ontological station they are within the domain of the lower hemisphere."²⁸ A metaphor may make clear what many a reader may find confusing. If the Supermind is

symbolised by the sun and the lower hemisphere by an ocean, then the rays of the sun penetrate the surface of the ocean and illumine its highest layers till the water gradually becomes darker and finally completely dark. According to Sri Aurobindo the highest levels of the lower hemisphere, the layers above the mind, still receive the light of the supramental Sun although they actually belong to the ocean of fragmentation and darkness that is the lower hemisphere.

The following quotation from Sri Aurobindo gives a hint of the importance of these transitional levels. "In the transformation by the Higher Mind the spiritual sage and thinker would find his total and dynamic fulfilment, in the transformation by the Illumined Mind there would be a similar fulfilment for the seer, the illumined mystic, those in whom the soul lives in vision and in a direct sense and experience. For it is from these higher sources that they receive their light and to rise into that light and live there would be their ascension to their native empire"²⁹ In other words, the lowest two of these four ranges represent the highest ranges of consciousness humanity had access to up to now. "Intuition" here means something very different from the mostly untrustworthy, because deformed, intuitive flashes that sometimes visit us. It is a direct though not complete revelation of the Supermind. And Overmind, as noted, is the level of the Gods, of the Cosmic Forces.

Mind

To gain a clearer insight into the role and significance of the spiritual levels,³⁰ we will take a brief look at Mind itself, as described by Sri Aurobindo. It is no exaggeration to assert that Mind is the main instrument as well as the object of thinking in the West. A real understanding of Mind should be part of a real understanding of the human being as a whole, but one does not have to delve deeply into Western philosophy to find out that confusion on this topic, as on so many others, is rife. The greatest authorities contradict each other with the greatest authority. The point is that as long as the West will keep exploring the surfaces of existence, it will not find the ground of things. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's view of this thing represents the findings of old, in-depth and patiently researched traditions, perfected by their own experience that went beyond all former experience. It is therefore of importance at least to go through the exercise of rethinking things according to their findings.

Their writings and sayings on the subject of Mind are extensive. The following quotes from *The Life Divine* may give a first notion.

- "Its [Mind's] function is to cut out something vaguely from the unknown Thing in itself and call this measurement or delimitation of it the whole, and again to analyse the whole into its parts which it regards as separate mental objects. It is only the parts and accidents that the Mind can see definitely and, after its own fashion, know. Of the whole its only definite idea is an assemblage of parts or a totality of properties and accidents. The whole not seen as a part of something else or in its own parts, properties and accidents is to the mind no more than a vague perception, only when it

is analysed and put by itself as a separate constituted object, a totality in a larger totality, can Mind say to itself, 'This now I know' And really it does not know. It knows only its own analysis of the object and the idea it has formed of it by a synthesis of the separate parts and properties that it has seen. There its characteristic power, its sure function ceases, and if we would have a greater, a profounder and a real knowledge,—a knowledge and not an intense but formless sentiment such as comes sometimes to certain deep but inarticulate parts of our mentality,—Mind has to make room for another consciousness which will fulfil Mind by transcending it or reverse and so rectify its operations after leaping beyond it the summit of mental knowledge is only a vaulting-board from which that leap can be taken. The utmost mission of Mind is to train our obscure consciousness which has emerged out of the dark prison of Matter, to enlighten its blind instincts, random intuitions, vague perceptions till it shall become capable of this greater light and this higher ascension. Mind is a passage, not a culmination."³¹

- "Mind can conceive with precision divisions as real; it can conceive a synthetic totality or the finite extending itself indefinitely, it can grasp aggregates of divided things and the samenesses underlying them, but the ultimate unity and absolute infinity are to its conscience of things abstract notions and unseizable quantities, not something that is real to its grasp, much less something that is alone real. Here is therefore the very opposite term to the unitarian consciousness."³²

- "...Mind is not a faculty of knowledge nor an instrument of omniscience; it is a faculty for the seeking of knowledge, for expressing as much as it can gain of it in certain forms of a relative thought and for using it towards certain capacities of action. Even when it finds, it does not possess, it only keeps a certain fund of current coin of Truth—not Truth itself—in the bank of Memory to draw upon according to its needs. For Mind is that which does not know, which tries to know and which never knows except as in a glass darkly. It is the power which interprets truth of universal existence for the practical uses of a certain order of things, it is not the power which knows and guides that existence and therefore it cannot be the power which created or manifested it."³³

- "But if we suppose an infinite Mind which would be free from our limitations, that at least might well be the creator of the universe? But such a Mind would be something quite different from the definition of mind as we know it. It would be something beyond mentality, it would be the supramental Truth. An infinite Mind constituted in the terms of mentality as we know it could only create an infinite chaos, a vast clash of chance, accident, vicissitude wandering towards an indeterminate end after which it would be always tentatively groping and aspiring. An infinite, omniscient, omnipotent Mind would not be mind at all, but supramental knowledge."³⁴

In the series of articles Sri Aurobindo wrote for the *Bulletin*, he also characterises Mind: "... mind is not a power of whole knowledge and only when it begins to pass beyond itself a power of direct knowledge. It receives rays from the truth but does not live in the sun, it sees as through glasses and its knowledge is coloured by its

instruments, it cannot see with the naked eye or look straight at the sun . It is a power for creation, but either tentative and uncertain and succeeding by good chance or the favour of circumstance or else, if assured by some force of practical ability or genius, subject to flaw or pent within unescapable limits Its highest knowledge is often abstract, lacking in a concrete grasp, it has to use expedients and unsure means of arrival, to rely upon reasoning, argumentation and debate, inferences, divinations, set methods of inductive or deductive logic, succeeding only if it is given correct and complete data and even then liable to reach on the same data different results and varying consequences...’’³⁵

There is, however, another aspect of Mind, which puts it in a much more positive light. ‘‘For mind is not in its very nature an inventor of errors, a father of lies bound down to a capacity of falsehood, wedded to its own mistakes and the leader of a stumbling life as it too largely is at present owing to our human shortcomings’ *it is in its origin a principle of light, an instrument put forth from the Supermind* and, though set to work within limits and even set to create limits, yet the limits are luminous borders for a special working, voluntary and purposive bounds, a surface of the finite ever extending itself under the eye of infinity’’³⁶

The clue to the understanding of Mind, therefore, is that in the descending or involutive order it is the lowest range of Supermind, dependent on and connected with Supermind. But ‘‘it is used by the Supermind principally for the work of differentiation which is necessary if there is to be a creation and a universe’’—if there are to be separate, (apparently) independently existing beings and things ‘‘In the Supermind itself, in all its creation there is this differentiating power, the manifestation of the One in the Many and the Many in the One, but the One is never forgotten or lost in its multiplicity which always consciously depends upon and never takes precedence over the eternal oneness In the mind, on the contrary, the differentiation, the multiplicity does take precedence and the conscious sense of the universal oneness is lost and the separated unit seems to exist for itself and by itself as a sufficient self-conscious integer or in inanimate objects as the inconscient integer.’’³⁷

This means that Mind has been made into the instrument of a practical (apparent) division of the One and its Oneness In the descending order this lowest gradation of the Light had to plunge into the darkness of the Inconscient, and rise out of it in the ascending order for its characteristic embodiment in our species of human beings Mind is an evolutively darkened substance of Light, necessary in the scheme of things to make the existence of ‘‘the inconscient or self-conscious integers’’ possible Always vaguely remembering the fundamental Unity at its base, it cannot but persistently try to recover that Unity, which is the clouded Sun behind all human strivings It is that Sun, that Unity, the Supermind that upholds all existing things, even when they *apparently* seem to be separated or self-existent. For all exists in That, all is the Brahman

(To be continued)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

Notes and References

- 25 Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol 18, p 131
 26 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol 13, p 591 One is here reminded of the basic hermetic principle that Above is as Below
 27 *Ibid*, pp 589-90
 28 *Ibid*, p 591
 29 Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol 19, p 946
 30 Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind and Higher Mind are of course supra-mental But to avoid confusion with Supermind, which is also named "the Supramental" and which is designated by the adjective "supramental", we will call them, in agreement with Sri Aurobindo's terminology, "spiritual"
 31 Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol 18, pp 127-128
 32 *Ibid*, pp 126-127
 33 *Ibid*, p 118
 34 *Ibid*
 35 Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol 13, p 575
 36 *Ibid*, pp 571-72
 37 *Ibid*, pp 572-73

OUT OF THE BLUE HE CAME

SOMEONE came as I lay
 Tormented in every nerve and cell,
 Eyes closed I could tell
 My charming Lord was there that day

Out of the blue He found me,
 A blue boy so tender and sweet,
 And one by one He ran to meet
 The wailing souls around me

With eyes closed I could see
 The azure light up inside the hall,
 Hundreds of coils in ecstasy call
 And roses and jasmine burst happily

Out of the blue He came to me,
 My laughing Lord, a God of charm,
 My heartbeats sang sweet and warm
 Throbbing a joy that'll ever be.

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

The Vision and the Boon

2

THE DIVINE Mother's first speech to Aswapati, which now occupies almost half of Book Three, Canto Four, began as three words in the draft of the opening passage written and revised by Sri Aurobindo on 8-9 August 1916 " 'Ask' she cried 'a boon' " This was a literal translation of *varam vr̥ṇīsva* in the Mahabharata, omitting the remainder of the two Sanskrit verses where the goddess Savitri told the king how pleased she was with his purity, self-discipline and devotion

Sri Aurobindo cancelled these words in the draft itself and rewrote them on the facing page, adding a line which suggests a deeper idea

"Ask my boon" she cried
"For earth, since all the infinite rest is thine "

Here, we glimpse already the state of the Yogi who has nothing more to gain for himself, but hears the command to turn back to the earth and bring to its ignorant and suffering life something of the heavens he has won

By 1920, the speech had grown to forty lines or so. The Goddess now promises to be with Aswapati inwardly, but does not invite him to ask for any other boon Sri Aurobindo had seen, evidently, that the prayer that would bring a new force into the world must come from the free initiative of the human spirit and must voice an aspiration strong and pure enough to compel a divine response

In Sri Aurobindo's symbolic interpretation of the legend of Savitri and Satyavan, the boon given to Aswapati comes to represent the direct intervention of the supramental Force to accelerate the advent of a divine life on earth But this can be granted only when the psychic presence in the human heart can invoke it with a sincerity and intensity which show that the time has come for a higher working to begin

Sri Aurobindo's early typescript of "Book I Quest", a page of which was reproduced in the last instalment, shows how the Goddess' speech took shape during the period up to 1920 There it began

"O son of Fire who climbst to me from Time,
Armed with my light return to being's fields
And bear desire the troubled seed of things

The first line later became

“O Son of Strength who climbst creation’s peaks,

while the idea of the second line has been preserved near the end of the speech.

My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force

The line about desire has also been shifted to the conclusion of the speech, but with a significant change to the past tense which was made when Sri Aurobindo inserted, a few pages earlier, the lines:

Then lest a human cry should spoil her Truth,
He plucked desire up from its tortured roots
And offered to the Gods the vacant place.

Aswapati is now ready for an untroubled desireless action under a divine impulse. His spirit when it came into the world had “housed desire, the troubled seed of things”, since this was an inevitable consequence of accepting a human body. But the Karmayogi finally transcends the need for desire as a motive-force. Aswapati is asked to exemplify this higher possibility when he returns to action in the world.

The longest part of the Goddess’ speech was already, in the early typescript, a commentary on man’s enigmatic position and challenging role in the immensity of an unconscious universe. Eventually this passage would grow to several pages. In its present form it leads up to the prospect of the splendid destiny that awaits our afflicted humanity. But it also dwells strongly on the factors responsible for the slow pace at which the hidden purpose in things is worked out.

Before beginning to expand this passage in the late 1920s, Sri Aurobindo first trimmed it to two-thirds the length it had already reached. He rejected a number of lines found in the typescript, including these on the beginnings of evolution:

Of old earth swung into the seas of space,
And lying there upon the bed of birth
The omnipotent mother of life’s myriad forms
Her endless travail bore

A long sentence on man began in the typed version with three lines that would be omitted in the late 1920s.

The interpreter of an unfinished design
Aflame with glimpses of ideal will,
Missioned man moves in the material realm....

In the continuation of this sentence, the second and sixth of the following lines in the

typescript also disappeared in the next stage. Most of the rest of the lines have been changed slightly, the second to the last line comes two pages after the others in the final text:

And mid the tread of many infinities
 Through the unwall'd expanse of ages drawn
 A traveller housed in his still-changing home,
 He pitches a tent of God in desert Space,
 A hunter of the unknown and beautiful Powers,
 A journeyer behind the feet of hope
 Illumining breath to think and clay to know,
 A nomad of the far mysterious light

The Goddess' speech, as typed by Sri Aurobindo in the early period, ended in a manner foreshadowing its present conclusion, although the additions, omissions and alterations have been substantial. The first two and the last of the lines below are not found at all in the final version, while the fifth was transferred to Aswapati's reply.

Retire from the inviolable Spirit!
 Not yet is conquest for the Kings of peace
 Return into my parley with the Night
 Assent to thy high self, create, endure,
 Till all is done for which this scene was made,
 Cease not from knowledge, let the toil be vast,
 To God be large, for man be mighty and free.

Of the concluding lines of the speech in the typescript, only the last two were eventually retained, with minor alterations, though the third and fourth lines appear in several subsequent versions:

O chosen protagonist, O king of powers,
 O soul of prophecy and sacrifice,
 The longing voices of imprisoned gods
 Are many murmuring whispers in thy bosom
 To earth's deliverance turn the unresting mind
 And selfless like the masters of the world,
 Only one strength, to greaten thy spirit demand,
 Only one boon, to raise thy kind desire "

The facsimile in this issue shows a page of a manuscript written in the late 1920s, when Sri Aurobindo had resumed work on *Savitri* with the heightened inspiration and experience given by his silent Sadhana from 1921 to 1926. The fifth version of Book I from that period, it is the second to the last version entitled "Quest". After one

An erect soul and a summoner's force
 Have made a world estranged from ~~life~~^{life} and thought;
 The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps
 Inalterable the ~~line~~^{line} of Chance and Death;
 Her dreadful paws upon ~~the~~^{the} ~~swallowing~~^{swallowing} sands,
 The gray Sphinx ~~spots~~^{spots} with the soul-slaying word;
 Across his path sits the unconquered Night
 (1) { ^{Because he came, unclipped and unclipped}
 the Earth-mother put her forces in his hands
 And painfully he guards ~~his~~^{the} heavy trust;
 His mind is the torch-bearer of their roads.
 (2) { Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven : :
 And labouring with his slow and sceptic brain,
 He illumines breath to think and clay to know.
 (3) { His spirit and his nature are at war :
 His heights break off too low to reach the skies,
 His man is buried in the animal guise
 + ^{No form attracts him with her ~~soft~~^{soft} ~~face~~^{face}, 'lucent mask,}
 But he has ~~words~~^{words} of revealing ~~force~~^{force}; ^{shut down his eyes}
 Rare inspirations lift his stumbling speech ^{the true (hidden), a}
 To a moment's kinship with the eternal Word; ^{shall ~~be~~^{be} ~~the~~^{the} ~~word~~^{word} ~~and~~^{and} ~~love~~^{love}}
 Love passes through his heart a wandering guest,
 And in a stillness of his breast he hears
 The longing voices of imprisoned Gods :

A manuscript of "Book I Quest" (late 1920s)

further manuscript of “Quest”, the title of the first book would be changed to “The Book of Birth”.

The version seen here is found in the second half of a notebook that also contains a slightly earlier version, from which a page was reproduced in the instalment of January 2001. Two versions of “Quest” in other notebooks intervene between these two in the chronological sequence of the manuscripts. While the other draft in this notebook was left incomplete, the present 44-page draft is a complete version of what was then the first book, ending with the line that concludes the description of Savitri’s quest now found in the last canto of Book Four.

The spring-winds failed, the sky was set like bronze

The Goddess’ speech occupies three pages in this manuscript, with 22 lines on each page before revision. The speech ends with the tremendous assurance:

All things shall change in God’s transfiguring hour.

However, the concluding passage is preceded by an account of the forbidding obstacles to the fulfilment of man’s divine potential. Most of this had been introduced since 1926. On the page after the one shown in the facsimile, we read

But the fierce Kings have seized the living earth
In which the messenger of Light must dwell,
Assailed its ignorant and crooked will,
And sown his dreams with a disastrous flame
This is the unrest of the tormented globe.
A vision passions in the sombre night,
A fire is in the heartbeats of the years,
A chant of anguished seeking rings through Time.
Bearing her bitter load of adverse fate,
The Mother chained upon her stony bed
Awaits the advent of a greater race

This impressive passage somehow did not find a place in the speech as it developed. On the other hand, almost all the lines on the previous page, seen in the facsimile, found their way into the final version in some form. Only the last two lines did not remain. These are also almost the only lines on this page whose origin can be traced back to 1920 or earlier. Virtually all the rest belong to the period that began when Sri Aurobindo resumed literary work at some point not long after his Siddhi on 24 November 1926.

The first sentence, which had appeared in the manuscript immediately preceding this one, is of particular interest and importance in the story of the development of *Savitri*. Its relation to an entry in Sri Aurobindo’s *Record of Yoga* and to other

passages in *Savitri* will be discussed in the next instalment. In the manuscript seen here, the sentence summarises in this way the cosmic powers that determine the conditions of our existence:

An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force
 Have made a world estranged from life and thought;
 The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps
 Inalterable the law of Chance and Death;
 Her dreadful paws upon Doom's swallowing sands,
 The grey Sphinx waits with the soul-slaying word,
 Across his path sits the unconquered Night.

After this comes a passage describing the contradictions in man's nature and the dilemmas of his situation in the world. These lines were transposed, by means of numbers in the left margin of the manuscript, to the following order:

His spirit and his nature are at war.
 His heights break off too low to reach the skies,
 His mass is buried in the animal mire
 Descended here unhappy and sublime
 A link between the demigod and the beast,
 Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven
 And labouring with his slow and sceptic brain,
 He illumines breath to think and clay to know
 The Earth-mother put her forces in his hands
 And painfully he guards the heavy trust.
 His mind is the torch-bearer of her roads.

The rest of the page refers to the frustrated aspirations or ephemeral fulfilments which seem to be all that humanity has been able to achieve up to the present.

Wisdom attracts him with her lucent mask,
 But never has he seen the face behind,
 Hints of a deathless sweetness lure and leave
 And he has visits of revealing joy,
 Rare inspirations lift his stumbling speech
 To a moment's kinship with the eternal Word;
 Love passes through his heart a wandering guest,
 And in a stillness of his breast he hears
 The longing voices of imprisoned gods

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

Part One

Prolegomenon

Section I. Introduction

WHILE studying with attention Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri* we come across two highly striking verses occurring at two different places almost a hundred pages apart. The first one is: "Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight" (276)¹ while the second one is: "A progress leap from sight to greater sight" (177)

I said "striking" because, in the consideration of the intellectuals, thought is a far greater power than mere sight. Our sight is often erroneous in its reporting and misleading in its transcription. Not only that the visual sense can only give us the superficial image of things and it needs the aid of thought to "fill and inform" the image. As Sri Aurobindo himself has pointed out

"The intellect does not consider that it knows a thing until it has reduced its awareness of it to the terms of thought, not, that is to say, until it has put it into a system of representative mental concepts... It is true that the mind gets its knowledge primarily by various kinds of impressions. but these are taken by the developed intelligence only as data and seem to it uncertain and vague in themselves until they have been forced to yield up all their content to the thought and have taken their place in some intellectual relation or in an ordered thought sequence." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 801)²

If so, the question arises, why are we asked by Sri Aurobindo to give up the human privilege of thought and take recourse to the seemingly inferior and uncertain faculty of sight?

Now about his second prescription of "a progress leap from sight to greater sight." We may conveniently couple it with the other explanatory statement of Sri Aurobindo. "If a further extension of knowledge is required, [one] can come at it by *new seeing* without the slower thought processes that are the staff of support of the mental search." (*Ibid.*, p. 803) (Author's emphasis)

We wonder whether there can be sights and sights, any sight more authentic than the well-known physical sight which is, as we know, directly or indirectly dependent on the employment of physical sense organs

Of course, it may be readily granted that apart from the well-known physical

1 A single number placed after any quotation from *Savitri* refers to the page of the Centenary Edition of the Epic

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all the editions of Sri Aurobindo's books referred to are those included in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library

sight there may be other occasions or situations in which another sort of visualisation is quite possible and feasible. Leaving aside the dream phenomenon three of these other enabling circumstances are:

1. the act of imagination;
2. the ingestion of psychedelic drugs; and
3. hallucinations induced during hypnotic 'sleep'.

Let us discuss in the barest outline these three alternative causative factors giving rise to non-physical visualisation outside the field of the evidence furnished by the physical sense organs

1. *Imagination*: Every human being is endowed with the remarkable faculty of imagination more or less developed depending on the particular individual. We can easily enough imagine a tall green tree with thick foliage or a gurgling brook with boats sailing on it or a high-rise building with shining white walls and so on and so forth. But it is obvious that these visualisations, however vivid and detailed in content, are nothing but subjective constructions terminable at will. In no way do they measure up to any objective reality existent in some objective space. It goes without saying that these imaginative exercises in visualisation do not fall into the category of Sri Aurobindo's "greater sight".

Now, let us consider the second source of non-physical vision, the ingestion of a potent psychedelic drug possessing the capacity of temporarily altering the state of the consciousness of the viewer.

2. *Psychedelic Drugs*: The well-known novelist and writer Aldous Huxley did some personal experiments on the effect of the drug mescaline, and claimed in his book *The Doors of Perception* that in suitable doses this drug "changes the quality of consciousness very profoundly". Huxley took his pill of mescaline sitting in his study and facing a vase of flowers. After half an hour, he claimed, these flowers became transfigured and gave him mystical vision. Huxley's attention was then drawn to a wooden chair in the room, which also "shone with inner light". Here are some pertinent words of Huxley:

"The Beatific Vision, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Being-Awareness-Bliss for the first time I understood, not on the verbal level, not by inchoate hints or at a distance, but precisely and completely what these prodigious syllables referred to"

Was this then a new kind of vision conforming to the specification of Sri Aurobindo's "greater sight"? Alas, the answer is NO. For R.C. Zaehner, after having gone through Aldous Huxley's book took mescaline himself and wanted to verify whether in his case too Huxley's supraphysical mystical visions would be reproduced, thus validating their subjective-objectivity. But the results were almost opposite to those in Huxley's case. Zaehner's damaging conclusion was that the experiences produced by mescaline were simply trivial, though they seemed hilariously funny.

Thus the visions appearing in the altered state of consciousness produced by psychedelic drugs are all hallucinations and subjective fancies and formations not corresponding to anything objectively real (Vide Geoffrey Parrinder, *Mysticism in*

the World's Religions: 1976, p 179.) Let us now prove the case of hypnotic visions

3 *Hypnosis and Hallucinations* Investigators over the centuries have discovered one great truth about the functioning of human mind. This may be formulated in the words of Leslie D. Weatherhead as follows: "If the mind really accepts an idea as true, and if the idea is reasonable, it tends, by means of unconscious processes, to actualise itself or come true" (*Psychology, Religion and Healing*, 1952, p 117)

Well, the whole phenomenon of hypnosis is based on this. Dr Liebault has described seven stages of hypnosis. In the fifth stage illusions can be successfully suggested to the patient. Dr Weatherhead conducted extensive investigation on a young woman called Ethel and here is a passage from his writing relevant to the topic under discussion.

"Ethel could also be induced to have hallucinations. When told by me that a lovely black cat was asleep in the couch near her knees, she sat up, described *it* (!) and went through the movements of stroking *it*. On another occasion, on being given a blank postcard and told it was a photograph of the Prince of Wales, she admired *it* and described *it*, going into details about *his* uniform and staring all the time at a blank card." (*Ibid*, p 123)

Dr. Weatherhead's experiments convincingly demonstrated that although the visions appeared to the subject to be absolutely real and concrete, they did not correspond to anything really 'real' and existent in any objective space.

Our short discussion of the three possible situations of imagination, ingestion of consciousness-altering drugs and hypnosis may lead us to doubt the objective validity of any and every kind of supraphysical vision. And in fact most of the skeptical thinkers hastily conclude that all the cases of so-claimed inner sights and visions are nothing but subjective fancies and formations: there can be but one true sight and that is the objective physical sight occasioned by the physical sense-organ.

Does then Sri Aurobindo's affirmation of "from sight to greater sight" lose all meaning? Surely not. We shall come to the discussion of this very important point with precision and thoroughness a little later in the course of our essay. For the present let us bear in mind a very significant characteristic of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo has not only affirmed the necessity of "a progress leap from sight to greater sight", but a close study of his epochal epic *Savitri* reveals to our delightful surprise that the entire composition is shot through and through with a panoramic depiction of the "progression of sight" from plane to plane of the evolving consciousness of an individual being, also from world to world of the hierarchically arranged fields of cosmic manifestation, starting from the blind sight of the "sightless Inconscient" up to the "all-seeing closed eyes" of the supreme Superconscient. But an uninformed reader may perhaps unwarily think that all this magnificent depiction of sights and visions in *Savitri* is the imaginative product of the creative genius of a supremely gifted poet.

But we should never forget that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have categorically affirmed on many occasions that the whole of *Savitri* is a very precise

and authentic transcription of their spiritual-vision experiences: not a single line has been introduced in the body of this epic simply to satisfy the exigencies of a sublime and superb poetical creation. There is everywhere in the Poem "a spiritual objectivity, an intense psycho-physical concreteness" (*Savitri*, Cent Ed, p 750)

As the point is of crucial importance and as all doubts and misgivings in this regard had better be dispelled at the very outset, we crave the indulgence of our readers to quote *in extenso* a few passages from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings where they speak unambiguously about the nature of the composition of *Savitri*. The whole of Section II which follows is entirely devoted to the reproduction of their observations vis-à-vis the issue under discussion

(*To be continued*)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

SARASWATI

(*Vasanta Panchami*)

THE DIVINE Shakti as Inspiration of Truth is Saraswati. She is the one who streams from the highest source of Truth-Knowledge, Vijnāna, and floods the being with the pure vibrations of the Word which reveals the Truth and creates the right forms to express the knowledge. She inundates with the plenty of truths she carries in her Consciousness. Saraswati it is to whom the Vedic Seer prays:

"May purifying Saraswati with all the plenitude of her forms of plenty, rich in substance by the thought, desire our sacrifice.

She, the impeller to happy truths, the awakener in consciousness to right mentalisings, Saraswati, upholds the sacrifice

Saraswati by the perception awakens in consciousness the great flood (the vast movement of the Ritam) and illumines entirely all the thoughts"¹

She is Shruti

ANONYMOUS

1 *The Secret of the Veda*, CWSA, Vol 15, p 90

SURYA NAMASKAR

The programme of the Physical Demonstration on 2 December 2000 in the Ashram's Sportsground began with Surya Namaskar. An introduction to it was given as follows

We welcome all by performing the Surya Namaskar; it is accompanied by the recitation of verses to Surya as spoken by Shiva

“Glowing like the red passion-flower, born of the Supreme Light, Lo, the Mighty Splendour!

“He dispels darkness, he slays all ills, I bow to the Creator of the Day.”

In India from the most ancient times, the sun god has been worshipped as a symbol of health and immortal life. The Rig Veda declares that “Surya is the Soul, both of the moving and unmoving beings”. The Sun Salutation originated as a series of prostrations to the sun. Traditionally, it is performed at dawn, facing the rising sun. In time, each of the twelve positions came to have its own mantra, celebrating aspects of the sun's divinity.

Verses to Surya (As Spoken by Shiva)

सूर्यनमस्कारः

जवाकुसुमसङ्काश काश्यपेय महाद्युतिम् ।
ध्वान्तारि सर्वपापघ्न प्रणतोऽस्मि दिवाकरम् ॥

आदिदेव नमस्तुभ्यं प्रसीद मम भास्कर ।
दिवाकर नमस्तुभ्य प्रभाकर नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

त्रैगुण्य च महाशूरं ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वरम् ।
महापापहर देव तं सूर्यं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

बन्धूकपुष्पसङ्काशं हारकुण्डलभूषितम् ।
एकचक्रधरं देव तं सूर्यं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

सप्ताश्वरथमारूढ प्रचण्डं काश्यपात्मजम् ।
श्वेतपद्मधरं देव तं सूर्यं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

बृहिल तेजःपुञ्ज च वायुमाकाशमेव च ।
प्रभुं च सर्वलोकानां तं सूर्यं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

तं सूर्यं जगत्कर्तारं महातेजः प्रदीपनम् ।
महापापहर देवं तं सूर्यं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

Following is the rendering of these verses in English:

O Original Godhead, Salutations to thee / Be gracious to me, O maker of Light
Creator of Day, salutations to thee / O radiant Sun, salutations to thee

He who rides in a chariot with seven steeds, intense, the son of Kashyapa, the god
who holds a white lotus—to him, to Surya I bow down

The great warrior, he who contains the three modes of Nature, who is Brahma and
Vishnu and Shiva, the god who destroys the great evil—to him, to Surya I bow down.

He, who increased, is a mass of flame and who is air and ether and is the lord of all
the worlds—to him, to Surya I bow down

He who has the hue of a bandhuka* flower and is adorned with necklaces and
earrings, the god whose chariot has a single wheel—to him, to Surya I bow down

He who is the Sun and the creator of the worlds, the kindler of the great flame, the
god who destroys the great evil—to him, to Surya I bow down

* The significance of this flower given by the Mother is *vigilance* The Indian name is Dupahara

AN ARROW LEAVES ITS STRING

THERE IS another country waiting for us,
This one is left behind
Another dawn is breaking,
The night peeled off like rind

Within the sun are pulsings
That draw us like a tide,
And we with souls in rhythm
Reach for that other side

Then from serenest heart-leap
An arrow leaves its string
To fly into the future
The plucked bow starts to sing

The song ignites all nature,
A flower flares into the skies
It opens on a murmur
Aummmmmm
A mantra starts to rise.

Aummmmmm
The song of our cells' surrender,
Aum Namō Bhagavate,
Aum Namō Bhagavate,
No human tongue can render
Aum Namō Bhagavate,
Aum Namō Bhagavate

Aummmmmm

MAGGI

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

THE discovery of the atomic nucleus was a momentous event in the history of science. It also turned out to be more momentous in the history of the world. Nuclear fission and the possibility of using its secret for war purposes were a very definite eventuality. Hitler's Germany had already initiated a programme to tap this power for producing a weapon that could prove to be the most decisive. France as early as 1940 had succumbed and the future of the human race and human civilisation was at stake. Winston Churchill in his House of Commons speech on 18 June 1940 said: "What General Weygand has called the Battle of France is over. The Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour'."

Churchill was speaking about the "broad sunlit uplands" more as an inspired visionary made to speak so by an unknown power. He was certainly not aware of it, though he lent himself commendably to it. That indeed marked well the "finest hour" in the history of recent times. But perhaps he was speaking of the Dark Age essentially in the context of the British Empire. There were, however, larger issues involved, issues pertaining to the march of the evolutionary time and destiny had to take cognisance of them. Positive participation of America, thanks particularly to the Pearl Harbor incident, was one such work of the unknown destiny.

The story of development and use of the atom bomb in World War II marks the beginning of another age in many ways. Sinister it may look from a certain point of view, but perhaps the old order had to yield place to the new in the holocaust of all that was retrograde or what had come to be a spent force of the era.

When on 2 August 1939 Einstein wrote to President Roosevelt, urging him to initiate work on the development of the atomic bomb, little did he realise the implications of the social changes it would bring about. His plea was basically in terms of getting ready to prepare an offensive weapon for use in the war. The discovery of nuclear fission and the possibility of sustaining a chain reaction as a precursor for producing a powerful bomb were pointed out. The news of the progress made by Germany in this area was brought to the United States by Niels Bohr and the

experiments carried out in just a week's time confirmed the results. Had the German scientists forged ahead with this discovery and put it into the war programme, the consequences for mankind would have been disastrous. In fact they were well on their way to building a heavy water plant and a nuclear reactor in 1942. Einstein was quick to realise the situation even at the early stage and lent his entire weight to promote American initiative. He mentioned in his letter to the President that this "phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable—though much less certain—that an extremely powerful type of bomb, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory." Eventually in 1945 modified 46B-29 bomber aircraft carried the atomic weapons.

Scientists differed regarding the merit of nuclear applications outside the laboratory for any commercial or military purposes. The findings were thought to be of the nature of a scientist's curiosity without relevance to other issues. Thus Ernest Rutherford, the father of nuclear physics, maintained. "Any one who says that with the means at present at our disposal and with our present knowledge we can utilise atomic energy is talking moonshine." But soon the moonshine was dispelled and science moved from laboratory to the world of large-scale operations. Here was the breaking of new grounds with destiny asserting its dynamic nature. Far-reaching implications were taking shape.

We may at this juncture look at the avowals of a few of the leading participants in the wartime atomic project. Here are some of the statements. Eugene Wigner: "As for my participation in making the bomb, there was no choice. The original discovery that made it possible was made in Germany, and we had believed that the German scientists were ahead of us in the development of a nuclear weapon. I shudder to think what would have happened if Germany had been first to acquire the weapon." Leo Szilard: "During 1943 and part of 1944 our greatest worry was the possibility that Germany would perfect an atomic bomb before the invasion of Europe. . . In 1945, when we ceased worrying about what the Germans might do to us, we began to worry about what the government of the United States might do to other countries." Joseph O. Hirschfelder: "At Los Alamos during World War II there was no moral issue with respect to working on the atomic bomb. Everyone was agreed on the necessity of stopping Hitler and the Japanese from destroying the free world. It was not an academic question. Our friends and relatives were being killed and we, ourselves, were desperately afraid." Edward McMillan: "My feeling was something like, 'Well, it worked!' There's no great emotion to that, except that it worked. I think it was later that I and many others began to think about the consequences, about what could be done with such a powerful device." Philip Morrison: "We saw the unbelievably brilliant flash. That was not the most impressive thing. We knew it was going to be blinding. We wore welder's glasses. The thing that got me was not the flash but the blinding heat of a bright day on your face in the cold desert morning. It was like opening a hot oven with the sun coming out like a sunrise." Brig Gen Thomas

Farrell "The effects could well be called unprecedented, magnificent, beautiful, stupendous, and terrifying. No man-made phenomenon of such tremendous power had ever occurred before. The lighting effects beggared description. The whole country was lighted with the intensity many times that of the midday sun." George B. Kistiakowsky: "At Los Alamos we had some conversations on the subject and I must admit that my own position was that the atom bomb is no worse than the fire raids which our B-29s were doing daily in Japan, and anything to end the war quickly was the thing to do."

Some of the opinions of the participating professionals we have in the aftermath of the bomb's use are as follows. Luis W. Alvarez. "We had the means to end the war quickly, with a great saving of human life. I believed it was the sensible thing to do, and I still do." Victor Weisskopf: "We were afraid that Hitler had the bomb first, and we made this bomb, which shortened the war and saved a lot of American and Japanese lives in the Japanese war." Albert Einstein. "If I had known that the Germans would not succeed in constructing the atom bomb, I would have never lifted a finger." Hans Bethe: "I think it was necessary to drop one, but the second one could have easily been avoided. I think Japan would have capitulated anyway." J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist who looked after the day-to-day activities of the project: "I believe it was an error that Truman did not ask Stalin to carry on further talks with Japan, and also that the warning to Japan was completely inadequate."

Before we go into the details of the project under which the objective was fulfilled, let us first get an idea about the total effort involved in it. The project was planned and created with a twofold objective: to carry out research in the related fields and set up a production system that would bring about a usable atomic bomb. It was named after the Manhattan Engineer District (MED) of the US Army Corps of Engineers, for the reason that a lot of early work was done in New York. In 1942 General Leslie Groves was chosen to lead the project. He bought a site at Oak Ridge where were set up facilities to separate the fissile uranium-235 from natural uranium-238. Robert Oppenheimer looked after the daily running of the project. The team of scientists who worked on the atom bomb worked 6 days a week and often 18 hours a day.

"By 1945 the project had nearly 40 laboratories and factories which employed 200,000 people. That was more than the total amount of people employed in the US automobile industry in 1945. The total cost of the Manhattan project was \$2 billion which is about the equivalent of \$26 billion today." \$2 billion may seem a frightening figure to create a weapon of mass destruction; but the "total cost to the United States for World War II was approximately \$333 billion" (1942-1945 value). The details of the atomic devices/bombs produced and detonated are as follows: the first experimental bomb as a trial gadget exploded on 16 July 1945 at Alamogordo, The Little Boy dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, The Fat Man on Nagasaki on 9 August 1945, bomb number 4 remained unused. The total cost of all bombs, mines and grenades was \$31.5 billion, making an average cost per atomic device/ bomb as \$5 billion. After witnessing the awe-inspiring Alamogordo atomic blast Oppenheimer

quoted Sanskrit verses from the Gita's 11th chapter, he compared it with a thousand suns that at once blazed in the sky Suddenly some dreadful multiple godhead in his gold-red form appeared in the brightness of these suns on the new horizon.

In this context we should well remember and understand what, remote from weapon factories and battlefields, Sri Aurobindo saw about the vast destructive power of the atom At the time when the World War II had just started, he forebode in his sonnet *A Dream of Surreal Science* dated 25 September 1939 the following:

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
 At the Mermaid, capture immortality,
 A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
 Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey

A thyroid, meditating almost nude
 Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
 And, rising from its mighty solitude,
 Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven
 Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,
 From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven
 Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with atoms and blew out
 The universe before God had time to shout

Again in 1942, long before Alamogordo, he wrote about something brighter than a thousand suns, about "the riven invisible atom's omnipotent force" (*Savitri*, p 255) We wonder how he had arrived at this truth altogether beyond the reach of reason We cannot even realise the implications it portends Is there another science which can be learned and pursued in terms of its deeper possibilities? Perhaps there is But let us go back to the world of man and atom.

We have a very readable account of the Manhattan Project from Peter Hales with a sensitivity which puts the weapon effort in the social perspective. He writes "America, sprawling and diverse, came to draw upon its peculiar resources, physical, social and human, to create this superweapon and win the last good war the scientific and military achievements of the Manhattan Project This is the myth of the Manhattan Project, a powerful narrative, drawing the American past into a global future And it offers itself for analysis, for unmasking and disentangling the threads that might comprise such a cultural history as I have written This is a story about the birth of America's atomic spaces, their creation by military fiat and necessity, their occupation by people, buildings, and social networks, their consolidation into a new type of cultural environment, penetrating work, leisure, environment, language, and belief, and present even today as a significant, if surreptitious, strain of American

culture. This is the history of that atomic culture.”

This needed a combination of two vastly different features, features associated with academic institutions and military establishments. Hales continues. “These impulses toward utopian planning had to meld with the military planning models. General Groves, shadowy director of the MED, had made his career by studying, and building, military bases, environments that were simultaneously Spartan grids of self-sacrifice to the will of the state and profoundly intrusive spaces of individual and social management and regulation. Groves’ last construction project was a different kind of extension of the modern social landscape, the largest ever undertaken by the military—a giant multi-sided model of a bureaucracy-as-fortress—the Pentagon. His influence on the Pentagon had been to ruthlessly enforce efficiencies of scale and mass-regulation to keep the project on time and budget. Its influence on him had been to provide a paradigm for imagining military bureaucracy mapped out as space and symbol.

“To do this required people, brought from outside the fences and the particular environment of the atomic spaces—atomic scientists, pipe fitters, concrete pourers, housewives, musicians, writers, engineers, social workers, men, women and children.

“The Manhattan Engineer District created a new form of American cultural landscape with one Herculean goal in mind: the manufacture of a new form of atomic superweapon in time to use it on the Japanese. The goal was achieved, and the explosion of consequence from that achievement has still not finished washing its forces over us.”

But there are “large and uneasy issues. They lie underneath the everyday circumstances that make up the atomic culture. For this is a story of lands, sacred lands, taken and altered. It is a story of men and women, buildings, work, pleasure, punishment, language, food, bodies—and out of all of these, consequences.”

The social transformation that we witness today had its exterior roots in these remarkable developments. Today we live in the American era with all its glorious possibilities—and all its degrading pitfalls.

During the active phase of the Project there was a refugee German physicist, Klaus Fuchs, who worked on the theory of gaseous diffusion cascades. His contributions in the field were significant. But being a member of the Communist Party, he turned out to be the famous “Atom Spy” who transferred to the Soviet Union “virtually everything he knew about atomic weapons.” The immediate consequence in 1951 was the ordering of development of the deadly hydrogen bomb by President Truman,—only four days after Fuchs’s arrest. Fuchs served a 9-year term in prison. After he was released, he became a lecturer in physics in East Germany.

However, it will be profitable to examine the rich multidimensional benefactions that came about in the wake of the war effort. This examination may also indicate to us the new character of science and technology that we now possess. The stamp of another free and vigorous nationhood may be discernible on it.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

GURU, THE MANIFEST GOD

A Rendering of Some Vedic Prayers

THERE is a very interesting and revealing explanation of the meaning of the term “guru” in a Sanskrit verse. It says that the syllable “gu” means darkness (of Ignorance) and “ru” its dispeller. The word thus etymologically means a spiritual guide who dispels or removes the darkness of Ignorance and brings Light

To be born a human being is rare; having attained human birth, it is rarer still to be endowed with an intense yearning to know God and, finally, to seek refuge in the sanctuary of a Guru or a mighty spiritual personality is among the rarest of boons. The combination of these three rare gifts is possible only through the grace of God. This is the import of Verse 3 in Acharya Shankara’s *Viveka Chudamani*.

To find a Guru is never easy or quick. It is said that the Lord, pleased with the exclusive devotion and ritual worship carried on by the devotee over hundreds of his lives, physically appears before the devotee as his Guru to instruct him about and guide him to the supreme Truth and thus liberates him from the ocean of transmigration. The Guru therefore is none other than God Himself manifest in human form.

How does the Guru effect the liberation of the disciple who surrenders to him? This he does by gifting to the disciple the fire of his own Self-Knowledge, which, fuelled by the disciple’s intense aspiration, sadhana and surrender, in due course grows into a blazing fire that burns away all the Karmic consequences accumulated by the disciple over the span of his innumerable life-cycles. (This is what a verse in “Guru-Gita” of *Skanda Purana* says)

No wonder that the Guru is extolled as not only the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, but beyond them as verily the Supreme Lord. Salutations to Him.

B G PATTEGAR

OUR CHAMPAKLAL

ONCE there was a problem regarding the publication of a book. The author was unhappy with the cover and rejected it. Several other specimens were made and shown to the Mother. She liked two of them and said that She would show them to the author and get his approval before the final printing.

Champaklal who was always in the room had witnessed many dramas. He had seen the author's unhappy reaction over the printing of this particular book. He rushed forward from his corner and begged the Mother

“Please Mother, please, Mother please. Don't talk to him. He will once again become very angry. He will make you very unhappy.”

He was pleading with folded hands and an agony in his heart

The Mother looked at him. First, there was a stern firmness in the face. Then the ever-loving smile just peeped in, very subtly.

Champaklal fell at Her feet, bowing very low his head, throwing his whole self before Her, he uttered: “Pardon me, forgive me, I am sorry, Mother I am very sorry.”

The Mother allowed the faint smile to bloom out fully like the Aditi-lotus. She was. She bent down, stroked Champaklal's head with love pouring from all Her fingers, Her eyes, Her smile.

The room was full of the Agony and the Ecstasy.

SUNANDA

AWAKENING

IGNIS Filius woke up with a start,
He started crying and nothing would soothe him,
He didn't want the bitter milk,
And coaxing and the toys were of no avail.
So the nursemaid took him to the mother,
Who caressed and suckled the now smiling child,
In the temple atop the Palatine hill.
Then sent him down with his nurse
To play at hide-and-seek and blindman's-buff,
To grow in peace and strength and light and love
And be the master of his nature and his fate

VIJAY RAM

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

THE period 1926 to 1950 was the period of outer retirement of Sri Aurobindo and was one of intense sadhana and of intellectual activity. During this period he also acted upon external events; he writes.

“But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he [Sri Aurobindo] had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. 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. ”¹

In those days the inmates of the Ashram and visitors used to sit around Sri Aurobindo in the evenings and hold discussions on a variety of topics, some in a light vein and some serious. Group meditation was also held daily, but this was often discontinued, restarted and again discontinued when Sri Aurobindo began to withdraw more and more into himself due to the pressure of his Sadhana. To those few disciples of that period (whom Sri Aurobindo considered as more his companions or associates than disciples) these evening talks were, as one of them has put it, what the Aranyakas were to the ancient seekers. Seeking the Light they came to the dwelling place of their Guru and made it their spiritual home—the home of their parents, for the Mother had already come to collaborate in Sri Aurobindo’s great mission. If the talks were not confined to purely spiritual matters as in the ancient times, it is because the times have changed and man’s problems too have become more complex, and it has become man’s duty to seek a spiritual solution for these problems and to apply it to his every-day life.

Purani who was present during the sittings has narrated

“After Sri Aurobindo had come to Pondicherry from Chandranagore he entered upon an intense period of spiritual sadhana and for a few months he refused to receive anyone. After a time he used to sit down to talk in the evening and on some days tried automatic writing. *Yogic Sadhana*—a small book—was the result. In 1913 Sri Aurobindo removed to rue François Martin No. 41 where he used to receive persons at fixed times. This was generally in the morning between 9 and 10.30.

“But, over and above newcomers, some local people and the few inmates of the house used to have informal talk with Sri Aurobindo in the evening. In the beginning the inmates used to go out for playing foot-ball, and during their absence known local individuals would come in and wait for Sri Aurobindo. Afterwards regular meditation began at about 4 p.m. in which practically all the inmates participated. After the meditation all of the members and those who were permitted shared in the evening

sitting. This was a very informal gathering depending entirely upon Sri Aurobindo's leisure.

“When Sri Aurobindo and the Mother removed to No 9 rue de la Marine in 1922 the same routine of informal evening sittings after meditation continued. I came to Pondicherry for Sadhana in the beginning of 1923 I kept notes of the important talks I had with the four or five disciples who were already there. Besides, I used to take detailed notes of the evening-talks which we all had with the Master. They were not intended by him to be noted down. I took them down because of the importance I felt about everything connected with him, no matter how insignificant to the outer view. I also felt that everything he did would acquire for those who would come to know his mission a very great significance

“As years passed the evening sittings went on changing their time and often those disciples who came from outside for a temporary stay for Sadhana were allowed to join them. And, as the number of Sadhaks practising the yoga increased, the evening sittings also became more full, the small verandah upstairs in the main building was found insufficient. Members of the household would gather every day at the fixed time with some sense of expectancy and start chatting in low tones. Sri Aurobindo used to come last and it was after his coming that the session would really commence.

“He came dressed as usual in Dhoti, part of which was used by him to cover the upper part of his body. Very rarely he came out with Chaddar or Shawl and then it was ‘in deference to the climate’ as he sometimes put it. At times for minutes he would be gazing at the sky from a small opening at the top or the grass-curtains that covered the verandah of the upstairs in No. 9 rue de la Marine. How much were these sittings dependent on him may be gathered from the fact that there were days when more than three-fourths of the time passed in complete silence without any outer suggestion from him, or there was only an abrupt “Yes” or “No” to all attempts at drawing him out in conversation. And even when he participated in the talk one always felt that his voice was that of one who does not let his whole being flow into his words; there was a reserve and what was left unsaid was perhaps more than what was spoken. What was spoken was what he felt necessary to speak

“Very often some news-item in the daily newspaper, town-gossip, or some interesting letter received either by him or by a disciple, or a question from one of the gathering, occasionally some remarks or query from himself would set the ball rolling for the talk. The whole thing was so informal that one could never predict the turn the conversation would take. The whole house therefore was in a mood to enjoy the freshness and the delight of meeting the unexpected. There were peals of laughter and light talk, jokes and criticism which might be called personal,—there was seriousness and earnestness in abundance

“These sittings, in fact, furnished Sri Aurobindo with an occasion to admit and feel the outer atmosphere and that of the group living with him. It brought to him the much-needed direct contact of the mental and vital make-up of the disciples, enabling

him to act on the atmosphere in general and on the individual in particular. He could thus help to remould their mental make-up by removing the limitations of their minds and opinions, and correct temperamental tendencies and formations. Thus, these sittings contributed at least partly to the creation of an atmosphere amenable to the working of the Higher Consciousness. Far more important than the actual talk and its content was the personal contact, the influence of the Master, and the divine atmosphere he emanated; for through his outer personality it was the Divine Consciousness that he allowed to act. All along behind the outer manifestation that appeared human, there was the influence and presence of the Divine.

“What was talked in the small group informally was not intended by Sri Aurobindo to be the independent expression of his views on the subjects, events or the persons discussed. Very often what he said was in answer to the spiritual need of the individual or of the collective atmosphere. It was like a spiritual remedy meant to produce certain spiritual results, not a philosophical or metaphysical pronouncement on questions, events or movements. The net result of some talks very often was to point out to the disciple the inherent incapacity of the human intellect and its secondary place in the search for the ultimate Reality.

“But there were occasions when he did give his independently personal views on some problems, on events and other subjects. Even then it was never an authoritarian pronouncement. Most often it appeared to be a logically worked out and almost inevitable conclusion expressed quite impersonally though with firm and sincere conviction. This impersonality was such a prominent trait of his personality! Even in such matters as dispatching a letter or a telegram it would not be a command from him to a disciple to carry out the task. Most often during his usual passage to the dining room he would stop on the way, drop in on the company of four or five disciples and, holding out the letter or the telegram, would say in the most amiable and yet the most impersonal way: ‘I suppose this has to be sent.’ And it would be for some one in the group instantly to volunteer and take it. The expression very often he used was ‘It was done’, ‘It happened’ not ‘I did.’”

“There were two places where these sittings took place. At the third place there was no sitting but informal talk to a small number of disciples who were attending on him after the accident in November 1938.

“From 1918 to 1922 we gathered at No. 41 rue François Martin called the Guest House, upstairs, on a broad verandah into which four rooms opened and whose main piece of furniture was a small table 3' x 1½', covered with a blue cotton cloth. That is where Sri Aurobindo used to sit in a hard wooden chair behind the table with a few chairs in front for the visitors or for the disciples.

“From 1922 to 1926 No. 9 rue de la Marine, where he and the Mother had shifted, was the place where the sittings were held. There, also upstairs, was a less broad verandah than at the Guest House, a little bigger table in front of the central door out of three, and a broad Japanese chair—the table covered with a better cloth than the one in the Guest House, a small flower vase, an ash-tray, a block calendar

indicating the date and an ordinary time-piece, a number of chairs in front in a line. The evening sittings used to be after meditation at 4 or 4-30 p.m. After November 24, 1926, the sitting began to get later and later, till the limit of 1 o'clock at night was reached. Then the curtain fell. Sri Aurobindo retired completely after December 1926 and the evening sittings came to a close.'²

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram* (1985), p. 22
- 2 *Evening Talks* by A. B. Purani—3rd series (1966), Introduction—pp. x, xi, xii, xiii

K. D. SETHNA: THE PROSE WRITER

Sethna's Letters: the Whole Timer

“WRITING is a whole-time job, although a few hours in the day are spent in writing” —said Hemingway in an interview with George Plimpton. For Sethna, there is no outdoor life like Hemingway. Physically handicapped to a degree, he can go out to feel Nature only on a wheelchair. Hence he can devote more time to writing than any physically fit author. The letters on life, poetry and yoga, which have been published in three volumes, speak of the whole-time business. A priest of high seriousness, Sethna's letters combine the personal and the universal commitment. Sometimes an unusual Sethna comes out with the simple idiom of the Mother coloured by his poetry:

Our central joy is that we are deeply and inalienably related to her. Whether we always experience the relation or not is a secondary matter. The primary truth of our lives is that the Mother has accepted us and that, sooner or later, we shall know her living presence in us at all times. Ask for guidance with intense faith and wait quietly for the answer. I am sure that you will not only gain inner peace—and, in consequence, better health—but also come into touch with the right parties. Keep an eye open for them and do whatever you can with those you already know—the people immediately involved in paving the way towards your pension and gratuity.

(Life-Poetry-Yoga, Vol I, p 1)

Experience and a simple emotional quality have contributed to the unusual charm of this passage. Even the two directive verbs “Ask” and “Keep” are supported by a faith born through experience, the faith being obvious in his “I am sure” gesture.

It is in the letters that we see an overt preaching style, a practical guidance for those on the track, a guidance which is definitely strengthened by the guide's personal experience.

People with ideas very different from ours and eager to change our outlook and mode of life—people who are immersed in the ordinary life of the senses and carry an atmosphere full of worldly desires—places that have marked old-world religious associations or are charged with the presence of a spiritual figure whose Sadhana diverges very forcefully from the Aurobindonian Yoga—all those are to be avoided. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish such people and places. Then we have to use our own inner feeling. If you are left in peace, after contact with people and places, you may be sure that your protective zone has not been pierced. If you become aware of subtle uncertainties about your usual attitudes and movements, it may be better to cut down the contact or strengthen your own powers of resistance.

(Ibid, p 2)

Curiously enough, this is not the style of the Mother, as Sethna is using here the Aurobindonian do-it-and-see manner. This is a style which suggests, the Mother's style is primarily based on the directives. Sri Aurobindo rarely uses this directive style. Whereas, the Mother rarely uses that dispassionate suggestive style. She is always directly involved in the crisis of her disciple. Hence she is direct in her guidance. In any case, Sethna offering spiritual guidance is a very interesting case. This reminds me of Jugal Kishore Mukherjee's observation that we tend to see Sethna's artistic side ignoring his status as a spiritual practitioner. (See his *The Wonder That is K D Sethna*)

The high-serious observations are not switched off in these personal letters, not at all. Rather, very important issues of theme and style are raised and often elaborated in majestic prose. There is a passage on Sri Aurobindo's prose style, which compels me to brood over the fact that this man has not written a full-length study of Sri Aurobindo's prose style.

The *Synthesis* is most helpful if we can feel that Sri Aurobindo is not merely describing states of the Spirit: he is letting these states communicate themselves in a mode of expression proper to prose-writing. Prose has to be true to the gods of clarity and order so that the thinking mind may be able to grasp things and discern a system in them, but it has also to convey something of the beauty of whatever it holds forth as truth. Prose and not only poetry is an art, and the sense of perfect form is to be kindled by it. This is what Sri Aurobindo does to an extreme degree and in doing so with an "overhead" afflatus he brings to the intellect simultaneously a moving series of lucid concepts and a call to the imagination to prepare an inner silence in which these concepts may serve as shining shadows of realities beyond the intellect's ken, realities waiting to become life on earth.

(*Ibid* , p 58)

The long last sentence of the passage is characterised by "sincerity" and "balance". These are the two words K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar had used to characterise the inspired expositions of Sri Aurobindo in the 1945 edition of the Master's one volume biography. Iyengar had also told me in a private conversation that Sethna had learnt something of that rhythmic sweep so frequent in Sri Aurobindo's major prose works. A close look at Sethna's passage will reveal the solid argumentative texture, which is unhampered by his poetry and inspiration.

END OF THE JOURNEY

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

Part II

CHRISTMAS, 1953 Time? The same, that is to say evening twilight when the setting sun at Elgin Road had left a pink and crimson glow on the western sky Company? The same—Dad by my side with Mum and brother added. But with a difference. First it was not the Elgin Road of Calcutta. It was Villupuram, twenty-five miles from the Holy City. Next, I was not looking at the bats in the gloaming; I was too charged with expectations to deal with trivials I didn't know yet that I was coming home, that my days in exile were rapidly ending.

In December, evenings come quickly and when we boarded the train at Villupuram it was quite dark.

Hardly do we know why some moments of our life get so deeply stamped into our being and continue to stay with us as fresh as when first experienced; so much so that sometimes some of these moments continue to grow in their significance and shed greater warmth each time we recall them One such moment is my first sight of the station at Pondicherry.

All the way from Villupuram it was raining fairly hard Then came Dad's announcement from the open doorway "We have almost arrived". I pushed up a window and put my head out and there...there was my first sight of the platform; it approached us slowly, not we approaching it. It was a small ordinary platform like the inconspicuous countryside ones with a few orange-yellow bulbs flickering here and there. Not a soul moved on it; I saw no porter At its centre stood only one man—my grandfather. With his umbrella unfurled he stood alone. His face was bright, his dress was bright, his silver beard was bright. As was his body so was his stance, a rocklike stability the very definition of poise and nobility that radiated the assurance that we were welcome, that we had arrived, that our journey had ended.

Brevity in speech was my grandfather's characteristic. When the train stopped he came close to our compartment with a benignant smile and without a word of greeting came to the point:

"We shall go home, change, then go to the Playground. Mother has arrived, Christmas distribution must have started by now."

Mother? Playground? Many a time I had heard these words from my parents but then...they were mere words. But were they going to be realities now? Really? Strange, strange indeed!

Today as I sit at my typewriter in a recollecting mood of gratitude I am moved to tell how privileged I felt.

From thence everything that happened is sheer nostalgia, a wistful longing for the moments that are lost for ever

At Calcutta every morning in the first two weeks of October Dad used to take us to Dakshineswar, the abode of Sri Ramakrishna. I remember how often he would turn the steering wheel fast as we broke off from Barackpore high-road to the narrow Dakshineswar lane. When at Dakshineswar we would bathe, often swim in the broad and holy Ganges before entering the room of Sri Ramakrishna. How cool I used to feel, how refreshed as the cool breeze blew over our heads from the River of Eternity when we sat in his room.

And on this night of Christmas when I boarded the rickshaw at the station the rain had abated to a drizzle but enough to soak me through and through; this time it was not the holy water of the Ganges I bathed in but in the 'gentle rain that droppeth from heaven' of the Holy City. Once more how cool, how refreshing it all seemed to me. I had the feeling that Dad had turned once more the steering wheel and we had entered the lane to the abode of Peace, the dream Ashram of yore, and that I was once more on a sacred journey. It seemed I had lived that moment many times before.

Pondicherry of those days was not the Pondicherry of today. The streets were neither as broad nor as brightly lighted—a few bulbs cast some orange glow—a far cry from today's vapour lamps. And yet, yes, yet, how befitting! A "mystic voyage of self-discovery" through a mystically lighted pathway. A gentle rain soaked my shoes and as our rickety rickshaws moved on jungling their battered music, clink-clank...clink-clank...clink-clank... I had the constant sense of a sacred journey.

As planned we first entered grandfather's room and I felt strongly that this entry was a continuation of my sacred journey. For the room was filled with peace. Later I came to know that Sri Aurobindo had lived in this room on His first arrival at Pondichery and later it was He again who had asked the organisers to make this room available for my grandfather and his sister to stay in.

Playground. Due to rain the Christmas tree was deserted. It stood forlornly in the middle of the Playground, the snow-cottons washed out, the trinkets dripping miserably, the gift bags removed in a hurry. Did I say forlorn? Ah! yes, I did. But that was only for the Christmas tree, not for the Playground itself. For indeed the Playground was a fountain-head of happiness.

The Green group children were filing in a side room and the Red group members were awaiting their turn. A cool and watery gust of wind blew across the field and a girl in the 'B' group file, wet through and through, shivered. She held her hands tightly to her sides and hopped on her toes looking down at her feet watching keenly the hole she was making in the muddy sand. A boy standing next to her wielded an imaginary cricket bat as he jumped forward to execute a perfect cover drive. Another removed a small harmonica from his pocket and blew at it with gusto gathering a small group of admirers around him.

But I in the very act of soaking this happiness in was pensive. "How can *everyone* be happy?" I asked myself. "Surely *everyone* cannot have stood first, second or third in the school exam." I knew and knew it for certain that not an academic success nor any worldly possession like a model aircraft or a cricket bat was the

source of this overflowing gaiety “What is it, what is it?” I asked myself again and again, “that is filling them and filling me as well with this plenitude, with this deep satisfaction, with this joyous serenity?” I didn’t know then that I was a few minutes away from the Source of this delight and the answer to my enigma.

The wind renewed its gusts and renewed was the height the girl achieved in her hope and bigger became the muddy spot The boy jumped back this time achieving a delightful late-cut And the mouth-organ? No doubt it sounded louder A boy, drenched from head to toe, was running with a name-sake umbrella and was being chased by another who wanted to see just how it felt standing below an umbrella that had no top But the Chinese puzzle of happiness? Who would solve it for me?

There was a kind of cavity at the northern side of the Playground, an empty space between the old Dortoir at the western end and the old gymnasium at the eastern end. All the cultural activities would be held in the Playground and this cavity would be used for putting up a small temporary stage. On this occasion too a small stage was put up. But due to the rain, I was told later, the electricians refused to supply electricity and the play or the drama had to be called off I was only a five-minute-old visitor, a tiny little soul totally innocent of the wrath the electricians had roused in the lady who had organised the play Curiously I parted the screen to see what was going on inside. Good heavens. The lady was sitting there! Cherry-red in anger. With whom was she angry? The elements, the electricians or the human kind as a whole? And that in the midst of such happiness? I quickly let go the screen

A classroom was adjacent to the Mother’s room but is no more now. It had desks fixed to their benches and was a classroom for the Mother to work on French translation twice a week with Her senior students. On this occasion all these desks were pushed close together and I could see through the open door the prize bags—in those days they were made of crepe paper of various colours—neatly arranged upon them. First the group members and then the Ashramites filed into the room from the right of the door and made their exit by its left, each holding a colourful bag in his hand. Some, the children in particular, opened their bags before they were out of the room and peered into them with eager eyes and fished out their magic possessions Others showed greater dignity and held their curiosity in check I was a visitor and I had to follow the queue after the Ashramites.

As we were getting closer to the classroom I was becoming aware, at first tentatively then absolutely, that She was in there The atmosphere was becoming fragrant, the noise quieter; the light took a brighter orange hue for those who had the inner eye to see The more I approached the more I was forced to imagine what She would look like I imagined She would be seated at the centre of the room, Indian style, on a velvet carpet. Her eyes, I imagined, would be serenely closed, Her body immobile and rock-like, immovable and radiating light like a massive chunk of shining gold On entering the room therefore I first looked at the centre. To my surprise she was not there For a moment or two I stood still at the doorway taking a quick topography of the situation I noticed that the file was going round the whole

room along its walls. Thinking that She would be at the end of the line I leaned forward and looked left. Once more She was not there. In the meantime my brother who was in front of me had jumped down from the doorway inside the room and turned right. Before I followed suit I quickly let my eyes follow the queue backward, clockwise. She was not to be seen anywhere. My brother in the meantime had disappeared to the right. So I jumped down on to the floor of the room and quickly turned right and. Oh, there was She, my Divine Mother!

It is not what She was but the impact She created on me, it is not what I saw of Her but what remained unseen—wasn't that the crux? I wonder... A simple mind might assume that She who was at the centre of this delight, the hub of this radiance would Herself be a *similar* joyous person. Not so. Indeed, not so. On the other hand a sophisticated mind could assume Her to be a serenely poised meditating centre—physically immobile yet effecting mobility by Her radiance alone. Again, not so, indeed, not so. The sun which upholds all life and energy is neither itself life as we understand life to be nor energy as we understand energy to be. The radiant Alchemy is and is not all that, at the same time.

She was sitting at the north-west corner. Indian style? No. On a chair. Eyes closed? No. Eyes open. Her body immobile? No. How could that be? She was distributing gifts. Her body radiating golden light? No. There was no gold that I saw around Her. And yet.. how to put it? The impact She created upon me far exceeded my anticipation. I wanted to be impressed and from my experience of Ma Anandamayee I thought She would be impressive *only* if She held postures like Ma Anandamayee—Indian pose with eyes closed, total immobility of the body, and a radiance. My little mind therefore was overpowered, almost overwhelmed when it experienced a greater intensity of impact from a totally different physical stance. At that sight suddenly a heavy stone was lifted from my chest. I became lighter and in that lightness I saw all around me what I was vainly looking for in the classroom and the streets of Calcutta—the freedom of my spirit, not in the dusty road of academic success but in a translucence in which all things bathed in happiness, me not the least. At last was my moment of fulfilment.

I have said that we being visitors had to join the queue at the end with the senior men. But Mother knew Her rules. As soon as my brother reached Her She stopped short the distribution and asked someone standing by Her side to give Her two bigger bags, the ones that were meant for children. She took both the bags together and kept them on Her lap. I thought She waited for a moment, just a moment before lifting one bag from Her lap to give to my brother. Then came my turn. Again She waited, I thought for a fraction longer. Then, slowly, very slowly, She raised Her hand with the second gift bag and held it on top of my open palms. Then? That's all. The Hand that held the bag didn't come down—She had gone into a trance.

Indeed that was the Christmas night—birth of the new light.

Didn't I want to see Her immobile? Here She was—the very essence of immobility. Didn't I want to see Her with eyes shut? Here was She with vision in-

drawn—the very essence of shut eyes. Didn't I want to see a radiance around Her body? Here was She enveloping me in Her aura of bliss—the very essence of radiance.

My journey had ended. She didn't speak, I knew I had arrived

That night or perhaps a few nights later I opened my Bata shoes, I opened my tailored trousers, I opened my Poplin shirt, put them in a Britannia biscuit tin and told my parents to take them back to Calcutta. I had seen everyone using Prosperity-given simple shorts and shirts and easy sandals so . I had no writer in me then or else I would have held the biscuit tin in front of them and would have perhaps blurted out *tucchyaam, ati tucchyaam* (useless, so useless. .)

Today, decades after my first sight of that Hand of power and that invisible radiance I can say in confidence and confidently that when I thought my journey had ended I hadn't the least idea that “The Mother is the goal, everything is in her, if she is attained, all is attained. If you dwell in her consciousness, everything else unfolds of itself.”¹

(Concluded)

TARUN BANERJEE

1 From Sri Aurobindo's Bengali Letter, *SABCL*, Vol 4, p 365

মা-ই গন্তব্যস্থান, তাঁর মধ্যে সবই আছে—তাকে পেলে সব পাওয়া যায় তাঁর চেতনার মধ্যে বাস করলে আর সব আপনিই ফুটে যায়।

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A REVIEW-ARTICLE

India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding by *Wilhelm Halbfass*, Suny Press, 1988; Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1990.

SUDDENLY during the recent years a plethora of literature has appeared paying serious attention to the phenomenon of “Neo-Hinduism” in India, and by and large relating it to fascist possibilities. This postcolonial literature, swelling the shelves over the last five years, has piggybacked onto a larger more international body of postmodern writing on nationalism and its dangers, that has been growing in stridency ever since the pseudo-religion of Nazism made its alarming bid to subject the world to its national racist ideology. Nationalism has become particularly prominent as an academic object of derisive attention since the wave of post-structuralism initiated by a number of modern thinkers, such as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and the like, has swept the ideological landscape since the 1960s. This intellectual trend has worked to expose the complicit relationship between epistemological structures and political subjugation—the power of intellectual reductionisms to invent mythologies which are then utilized by mechanisms of power to sort out and organize reality in keeping with political designs. In terms of colonial studies, this discourse has been very powerfully applied by thinkers such as Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1968) and Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*). Said has highlighted the power of 19th century western orientalist thinking in “othering” the orient, rendering it stereotypical, ahistorical, exotic, spiritual and therefore, incapable of historical transformations. In this version, developed bitingly in its Indian implications by Ronald Inden, colonized territories are reduced to tourist preserves, where domesticated natives cater to the escapist fantasies of a capitalist west. Nationalism in colonized territories is shown by these writers to follow in the wake of Orientalism, by internalizing the discourse of identity initiated by the latter, and rejecting western cultural, economic and political domination after accepting the Orientalist stereotypes. Thus in spite of (and perhaps because of) its political decolonization, the “third world” eminently fulfils the western Enlightenment dream of a rationally organized earth, demarcated into distinct ethnographic regions, hierarchically arranged to suit the cultural, economic and political centrality of Euro-America

But to describe the phenomenon of nationalism in these terms only is to leave indistinct its most pernicious and potent aspect, that of its teleology. The roots of modern Nationalism may be found in the European Enlightenment of the 17th century. The Enlightenment replaced the religious teleology of a Christianized world with a new technological teleology—a world organized by the powers of reason, rendered rationally transparent and thereby fulfilling the highest capacity of Man, the measure of all things. Latent in this ideology was the sense of an evolution from

darkness to light, but light conceived as the power of Reason. Man, the measure, was of course European Man, armed with the omnipotent machinery of Science, bringing civilization to the darker continents. There is a latent ambiguity here—in that, though reason was supposed to be the universal possession of all human beings, clearly western man could be credited with its most systematic and full-blown use. Thus Asians, Africans, South Americans and other “natives” world-wide, patristically liberated through subjection to colonization, needed to be accounted for in their “otherness” to the west. Were these “humans” the same as westerners, capable of the same manifestation of rational divinity or were they somehow never up to the mark, always xenologically inferior to the civilized standards of western man? This ambiguity was to find a number of remarkable expressions in the 18th century, in which racism and cultural ethnocentrism became the dominating narratives in the divvying up of the world-pie. Undoubtedly the most seminal of these narratives was that provided by GWF Hegel, in his all-encompassing Philosophy of History. In Hegel, the teleological bases of Christianity and the Enlightenment come together and find relational fulfilment in a historicized world-scheme. According to Hegel, the basis of unbridgeable racial differences across the world was spiritual. The human species expressed through its history the progressive manifestation of Spirit, evolving inexorably towards perfect rational embodiment. In this evolution, the world was seen as inhabited by different races, involved in manifesting historically partial evolutionary experiments, expressing Spirit in its temporal embodiment as *Zeitgeist* or “spirit of the age”. Such historical developments were however structurally predictable, entirely conditioned by a dialectic relating to a form of consciousness, which was specific to each race. These forms of consciousness could be arranged hierarchically in a classification which led from brute matter to the perfect embodiment of spirit. In Hegel’s view, the non-European peoples of the world represented races which had been involved in earlier phases of the Spirit’s evolution, which had reached its culmination in German rational Protestantism of his time.

Thus the notions of racial essences, of unchanging cultures and nations based on these, which our late 20th century finds itself obsessively engaged with, received their clearest philosophical articulation in a grand totalizing narrative by Hegel. Moreover, this teleological narrative, prioritizing rational and Christian Europe, took into its purview all aspects of human culture, spanning the world spatially and temporally and classifying these in a singular structure. Thus, in Heidegger’s phrase, Hegel can be seen as the initiator of the modern “Age of the World-Picture”, though his real achievement lies in articulating within an integrated edifice the totalizing epistemological assumptions already implicit in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Further, germane to our present consideration, his relational history of world cultures presents an evolutionary view of the cultural expression of different “nations”, including that of India. India merits consideration in Hegel’s evolutionary scheme by dint of exactly what he considers its primordial ahistoricity, its non-evolutionary imperviousness to political change through its permanent and eternal subjection to

religious structures such as the *varnashrama* and the normative pressure of a world-negating *moksha*. Hegel classes this as the pre-historical and Symbolic stage of world-culture, spirit as disembodied imagination, static and incapable of finding any adequate material expression.

It is not difficult to extrapolate a strident German nationalism from the Hegelian historical teleology. Since the *Zeitgeist* had supposedly found its culmination in Hegel's Germany, the political alignment of Germany with a world-dominating stance was but a step away. In the Indian context, Ronald Inden and others have shown how the eternal, apolitical and spiritual India of Hegel found its way into the Orientalist myth and therefrom into the self-imaging of early Indian nationalism. What is not so clearly worked out by these thinkers are the theoretical consequences of the politicization of the apolitical that this implies. What form of nationalism would arise from this marriage of contraries? What manner of power would it exert over the ideological terrain of world politics? Inden and others were more concerned with the denial of democratic self-determination that the Hegelian structure and its Orientalist descendants have imposed on India's self-imaging. However, with the rise of Hindu politics in modern India, attention has been focussed with greater intensity on the phenomenon of Neo-Hinduism and its political consequences, particularly as it formulated itself at its inception in early Indian nationalism.

A plethora of publications have appeared in the last decade from the western academe, expressing alarm at the Hinduizing of Indian politics. A variety of foci have arisen from this attention, relating the congruence of a national identity with Hinduism as an Orientalist-Nationalist construction of the 19th century. A number of 19th century ideological inventions are seen as the fruits of this labor, with its localized concentration among the *bhadralok* intelligentsia of Bengal. Among the more extreme of these views is the consideration of "Hinduism" as an unitary religious phenomenon itself as a 19th century invention, specifically reified for nationalistic purposes. Undoubtedly, a number of revisionary crystallizations developed in late 19th/early 20th century Bengal, spurred by the catalytic insertion of alien colonial cultural, economic and political factors, but not all of these were explicitly nationalistic in intent nor can they all (or even mostly) be unequivocally considered "inventions". Nevertheless, the complex east-west idea-forces availing in late 19th/early 20th century India in their mutual trajectories and entanglements would have been brought under scrutiny as never before and the implications of modern Hinduism in its political effects begun to be positioned in an expanding field. In this burgeoning discourse, one of the most influential books to appear in recent years is Wilhelm Halbfass' *India and Europe*.

India and Europe is not explicitly a book about nationalism or politics. It is about the philosophical and cultural implications of the 18th/19th century east-west encounter, particularly as it concerns the appearance of what Halbfass calls "Neo-Hinduism". Halbfass studies the hermeneutical difficulties involved in translating from one body of cultural and philosophical ideas to another and the revisions,

refractions and transformations that ensue as a result. Apart from its specific content and conclusions, the work is an example of what Halbfass following Gadamer calls the “hermeneutics of dialogue”, where entry into a foreign terrain is tested carefully for its underlying contextual connotations in their underpinnings in civilizational unities. I’m not sure that Halbfass is entirely successful in this endeavour, but the effort is laudable and opens up a new methodological approach in Indology, conducive to a better understanding of India in its similarity and difference *vis-à-vis* the west.

The present essay is not meant to be a systematic review of “India and Europe”, but a consideration of some of its keynotes. Of course, the term “Hindu” is of relatively recent mint (Delhi Sultanate times), but the real question at issue concerning its “invention” or otherwise is whether a sense of a unified religious tradition existed in pre-modern times and, if so, what was its nature. Halbfass points out that even the term “Sanatana Dharma” does not find its modern sense as *philosophia perennis* in earlier and traditional uses, as evidenced in the Mahabharata, Manusmṛiti and Puranic literature, where the term makes its appearance. He considers its modern usage to be an example of Neo-Hindu translation, influenced by and in response to western ideas of religion and philosophy. Nevertheless, he disagrees with the followers of Said who believe that the notion of a Hindu “tradition” was a 19th century Orientalist construct, a reification internalized by Indian Hindus for nationalistic reasons. For him, this (mis)understanding reveals an inadequate study of the history of self-identification in India. Although Halbfass rejects the notion of Hinduism as an ahistorical essence, he nevertheless affirms a continuous tradition or “cluster of traditions” which share(s) an identity that has persisted through historical transformations. Referring to *India and Europe* in a later essay, he says, “I have tried to record and understand how people who called themselves *arya* and identified themselves as guardians of the Veda and legitimate residents of *bharata* (or, earlier, *arya-varta*) responded to others, outsiders, both within “South Asia” and abroad, how this ancient sense of identity and otherness was transformed and yet reaffirmed through the vast array of intersecting traditions which we call Hinduism, and how it lives on even in the radical reinterpretations of modern Hindu thought.” (Halbfass, 1997:153)

The first half of Halbfass’ book has to do with European perceptions of India, while the second half is about India’s transformative self-identification in modern times. It is this second half I am more concerned with here, as it studies critically the phenomenon of “Neo-Hinduism” and sees its roots in what has been called the “Bengal Renaissance”, in which figures such as Rammohun Roy, Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo find a prominent place. Another two figures, though outside of the Bengal Renaissance who merit consideration by Halbfass along with the above personalities are Radhakrishnan and to a lesser extent, M.K. Gandhi. Even at first sight, the clubbing of these figures together poses a problem, which is symptomatic of all intellectual procedures—that of reductionism. Though these personalities have all evidently contributed to modern India’s understanding of itself,

vastly different versions of what "India" means have emanated from these figures, with different historical sources, philosophical priorities and consequent future trajectories. Undoubtedly, a sense of mismatched bedfellows is not absent from Halbfass' considerations, but also an attempt is clearly made to arrive at fundamental transformative issues and commonalities and differences in answering these.

In identifying these fundamental issues, Halbfass explicitly draws on another modern German thinker, Paul Hacker. Much of the second half of *India and Europe* bears the stamp, in fact, of an invisible conversation with Hacker. Halbfass clearly does not agree with the latter on many points, but has to acknowledge their importance as discursive counters in the ongoing hermeneutical dialogue between India and Europe. With respect to Neo-Hinduism, one major issue dealt with is that of the idea of *dharma*. Halbfass follows Hacker in pointing out that *dharma* had distinctly casteist meanings before Rammohun Roy, Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda gave it a modern meaning, related to the intrinsic property of an individual. The stanzas from the Bhagavad Gita quoted by Hacker and Halbfass to fix a casteist interpretation on *dharma* are more ambiguous than they make it seem and can certainly be read as "intrinsic property". Halbfass admits that from the early Upanishads and Brahmanas, meanings alternate to that circumscribed by *varnashrama* have also been attributed to the term *dharma*. Moreover, he points out that the Bhagavad Gita itself clearly transcends all credal definitions of *dharma* in its theistic soteriology. However, he also affirms that the specific expansion of context that occurs for this term from the 19th century in the writings of Bankimchandra (*Dharmatattva*) or Vivekananda evidence an acknowledgement of the need for the universalistic inclusion of "others" (*mlecchas*) into the semantic scope of *dharma*, influenced by western liberal humanist ideas. This is certainly true of Bankimchandra, who prioritizes *Manavadharma*, the *dharma* of humanism, over all limiting definitions based in the *varnashrama*. It is also true of Brahmo revisions of the term introduced by Rammohun Roy. With Vivekananda, we begin treading more tricky ground. Whereas I believe it is certainly true that liberal humanistic ideas have had their part to play in the formulation of a "practical Vedanta" and the emphasis paid to the service of the downtrodden in Vivekananda's thinking, the notion of *dharma*, in Vivekananda, takes on a more individualistic turn, based on a personal intrinsic aptitude. Regarding Vivekananda's "practical Vedanta" and his social uplift programs, Halbfass correctly points out that this is not in keeping with traditional Advaita Vedanta nor with the views of Sri Ramakrishna, who felt such "worldly" concerns to be merely distractions to the central task of God-realisation. Halbfass does not explore the connotations of *dharma* in its usage by Sri Aurobindo, but here, in the affiliation of the *varnas* with the four aspects of the Mahashakti, we find a full-blown affirmation of *dharma* related to *varna*, but stripped of its hereditary basis and emerging from soul-quality, *swabhava*. *Swadhharma* as a personal way of works to soteriological attainment becomes, in this interpretation, the sense in which the Gita uses this concept. Of course, for a full appreciation of this usage, an explication of Sri

Aurobindo's teleology of worldly fulfilment is also necessary, also barely touched upon by Halbfass.

In excavating the bases for a hermeneutical dialogue between Europe and India, another major area related to *dharma* is, of course, the complex composed of *karma*, *moksha* and *punarjanman* (Causation, Liberation and Rebirth) This complex forms one of the central pillars of Indic civilisational thought and accounts for the difficulty in the easy digestion of Judeo-Christian religious philosophies into its doxographies. However, Halbfass does not give any explicit consideration to this complex, its transformations within alternatives within Indic thought as well as in modern times. This omission robs *India and Europe*, I feel, of an essential and important muscle.

However, perhaps the greatest strength of the book lies in its identification of the concepts of "experience" and "inclusivism" as forming two of the most important transformational building-blocks of the modern discourse of Neo-Hinduism Both in its emphasis on the *darshana* aspect of Indian philosophies as well as the identification of the primary goal of all Indic thought as "experience", Neo-Hinduism according to Halbfass carves a distinguishing niche for itself in the field of world-thought Halbfass considers here, apart from modern thinkers, the lives of such figures as Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi as exemplifications of the primacy of "experience" He brings in Sri Aurobindo as an unique case of an original "thinker" who bases all his "thought" on experience Of course, followers of Sri Aurobindo may contend here that there is no "thought" in Sri Aurobindo, only statement of experience, but such statement is made in a logically discursive mode, which does not negate the instrument of "thinking" and so, from this point of view, Halbfass' characterisation may stand However, he goes on to consider if the primacy of experience, not merely as a soteriological goal, but as a primary basis of philosophy, was indeed a traditional norm, as claimed by modern Indian thinkers such as Vivekananda or Radhakrishnan For this, he looks to Shankara and shows that Shankara does not make reference to his own or to others' "experiences" in the development of his philosophical arguments. Instead, he rests ultimately on the primary truth of the Veda, which he considers to be authorless Undoubtedly, Halbfass agrees that the goal of Shankara's philosophy is the experience of the One Reality, but this is a bodiless "experience", where even the distinction of experiencer and experienced disappears, so that the term "experience" per se as a translation of this state runs into difficulties. He also draws attention to several Buddhist thinkers who explicitly warn against reliance on personal experience without guidance from *guru* or *shastra* as conducive to error In Halbfass' delineation, the neo-Hindu emphasis on "experience" as the basis of Indian philosophy is an innovation, an "internal" correlate of the western "external" scientific empiricism based on experiment and observation. He also points to William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* as a source for the prominence of the term "experience" in Neo-Hindu thought. It is true that both Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo present comparisons between yoga and science, particularly in the understanding of their processes and the universal repro-

ducibility of their results, arrived at through experiment and observation. Also, particularly in Sri Aurobindo (as also in Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi) there is a trust in the self-evident nature of Truth and the power of experience to illuminate *shastra* and not vice versa. But Halbfass' exclusive selection of Shankara and a few Buddhist thinkers (all examples of an excessive dependence on logic) to make his point of the absence of "experience" as a basis of thinking in Indian philosophy is a gross over-simplification that caricatures the rich and complex field of traditional Indian thought. Though Halbfass draws attention to Bengal Vaishnavism in a footnote when dealing with Debendranath Tagore's deviation from Rammohun Roy in trusting to the primacy of his experience, we find no mention of either Vaishnava, Tantric or Shaivite sources in his discussion of "experience" in Indian tradition. Why this prioritisation of Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism? Unmethodical inconsistencies of this kind mar *India and Europe* at several places

An idea which Halbfass borrows from Paul Hacker to characterise Neo-Hindu thinking is that of "inclusivism". Halbfass points to the way in which this idea develops in Hacker's own writings on India, starting as a concept related to "religious tolerance", more appropriate in a variety of Indian contexts and ending, in his last writings, as the essential Indian alternate to "tolerance", categorically opposed to the latter and exclusive to India. The nationalistic resonance of "inclusivism" is also immediately evident when we consider that what we normally consider as dangerous in nationalism is its "exclusivism" and its "expansionism". But, whereas expansionistic dynasties, races, religions, ideologies have gone abroad in the multitudes, invading their surroundings with the exclusive reality of the truth they represent, India presents the image of the infinite receptacle, into which the exclusive expanders enter and become included. Hacker makes the case that this image of India is not just an invention of the 19th century, a form of self-imaging deliberately constructed to counter the western idea of exclusivistic national identities. Undoubtedly, it becomes articulate in this form in modern times, but according to Hacker, it has been the characteristic response of India to "outsiders" from time immemorial. Moreover, and more importantly, by appearing as the opposite of "exclusivism", "inclusivism" has not thereby per se neutralized the natural danger of nationalism, but holds other and unique forms of danger that have manifested in the past and hold the promise of future manifestation.

In his discussion of inclusivism, Halbfass points to the discursive tendency of traditional sectarian Indian thought to develop doxographies in which "others" are neutralised through inclusion and subordination. In this, he divides the strategy of inclusivism into two major types, based on images developed within the Indic tradition. The two images are: (1) that of the ocean into which rivers merge, discharging their waters and losing their names, but remaining preserved in essence and substance; (2) that of the elephant's footstep, which includes though exceeding the footsteps of other animals, covering larger terrain than any of them individually and erasing or obliterating them in the process. Halbfass characterises these strategies as

hierarchy and perspectivism respectively, and sees examples of the first in Advaita Vedanta and the second in Jain doxographies. Halbfass considers several textual instances of either type, exposing their inclusive strategies in the process. As may be clear from such an understanding of inclusivism, it is certainly not the same as "religious tolerance" as claimed by modern thinkers, mainly of an Advaita Vedanta bent, such as Vivekananda or Radhakrishnan. The Advaita Vedanta doxographies are shown to include other systems of thought and practice as stages leading to partial results, in an ascending scale at whose apex is the nameless and formless transcendental sole Reality, which is the goal of the Advaita soteriology. However, Halbfass also points out that such strategic inclusivism is not exclusive to India. Indeed, does it not ring a striking resonance from the Hegelian world-scheme?

The difference, of course, is to be sought in that other self-characterization of Neo-Hinduism, "experience". The truth claimed for Advaita doxographies in modern times rests on an appeal to reproducible experience. Vivekananda bolsters his case by drawing attention to the experience of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna's personal life may be seen as a compendium of the experiences of different Indic as well as non-Indic (Islamic, Christian) religious soteriologies. But is this a case of hierarchy or perspectivism? Sri Ramakrishna's own statements on the matter are ambiguous. Whereas there is often the statement that all paths lead to the same goal or that the One Goal is called differently, we also come across the statement that the sky appears blue from a distance but colorless when one enters it. Vivekananda selectively prioritizes the second statement equating the "apparent blueness" of the sky to the "experience" of theistic paths and its "real colorlessness" to that of Advaita. But Sri Ramakrishna was a mystic, not a thinker and did not feel the necessity to be logically consistent. This leaves us with a dilemma. How does one philosophically reconcile Advaita hierarchy with perspectivism or relativism? If, as per Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna affirms the Advaita hierarchy, he more characteristically echoes Ramprasad and other advocates of theism in his statement "I want to eat sugar, not become it". Halbfass does not explicitly raise this question, but I would call this a mystic refusal to pass hierarchic judgement on the nature of Reality, affirming its ultimate mysteriousness. This is a basis for religious tolerance, which we also find variously in the Indian tradition. Another such basis is the concept of *adhikaravada*, which Halbfass explores somewhat, without making the explicit connection with tolerance. *Adhikaravada* can work in the favor of any sectarian doxography while keeping a tolerant attitude towards "others" on the ground of the privilege or failure of inborn spiritual capacity. On the whole, however, Halbfass does, indeed, draw attention to the existence of religious tolerance in the Indian tradition, in opposition to Hacker's more exclusive claim for inclusivism, but he nevertheless heightens the traditional importance of inclusivism and its nationalistic espousal in modern neo-Hinduism.

If the mystic can claim immunity from hierarchic judgement, the problem for philosophy remains. Doctrinal debates, never fully resolved, have dogged the evolu-

tion of Indian thought, sectarian differences remaining intact with their relative prioritisations to this day. The Advaitin sees the Nameless and Formless Transcendental as the supreme reality and all theistic adoration of form as inferior. The Gaudiya Vaishnav sees the formless aspect of the One Reality to be merely the aura of the Supreme Person, whose Transcendental Form is the supreme reality. The Shaivites see the soteriological goal of service to and adoration of the supreme Person as advocated by Vaishnavism to be inferior to its own goal of liberation in and complete identification with Shiva. The Tantrics prioritise the feminine principle as the Goddess or Mother with her boons of worldly power and enjoyment over the sole emphasis on transcendental liberation or service to the Divine. One of the failures of *India and Europe* is Halbfass' inability to make these distinctions. There is clearly a heavier leaning towards Advaita Vedanta for drawing his examples and making his conclusions. What is under-stated by this is the hegemonic role played by Advaita Vedanta in Indian philosophical historiography, particularly in the formulations of Neo-Hinduism and Halbfass' participation in this history. An acknowledgement of this on the part of Halbfass would have enabled him to sort out the thinkers he has so often indiscriminately clubbed together. Indeed, Advaitin hierarchism is clearly at work in Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan and more recently, Chinmayananda, figures that can be classed as the transmitters of mainstream Neo-Hinduism, and more centrally related to Halbfass' consideration. Others such as Rammohun Roy, Debendranath and Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, etc. make only fuzzy contributions to his categorisations and are not granted the full attention they deserve in their alternate philosophical stances.

In his characterisation of Sri Aurobindo, Halbfass does acknowledge the radical nature of his contribution. He echoes Hacker in calling him "the most original" Neo-Hindu thinker. He notes that Sri Aurobindo does not, unlike the others in his consideration, feel that the Hindu tradition has said its last word, or that his own "philosophy" is an apologetic re-statement of some or all sectarian interests of the past. However, he considers Sri Aurobindo's explorations of the ranges of mentality transcending human capacity and leading to the Supermind as speculative and does not have much to say about Sri Aurobindo's philosophical solutions. Unlike Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo does not shy away from philosophising. Moreover, in Halbfass' own characterisation, Sri Aurobindo "clearly exceeds [Vivekananda] in intellectual and visionary power". What then is Sri Aurobindo's attitude to other sectarian soteriologies? Is it inclusivistic? And if so, does it embody the image of the ocean or that of the elephant's foot?

In his letters and talks regarding his personal experiences, in his writings on yoga (*The Synthesis of Yoga*) and in his major philosophical work (*The Life Divine*), Sri Aurobindo makes ample reference to both Indic and non-Indic soteriological systems of theory and practice. He does not prioritize Advaita over the theistic schools—in fact, if one were to consider the evolution of his own spiritual experience, the opposite would appear to be the case. On the other hand, it would be

difficult to call his yoga or philosophy theistic. No pre-eminent place is given to any of the traditional deities in his teaching. But is Sri Aurobindo's Integral Advaitism, as the name itself suggests, a form of inclusivism? And if so, what form?

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo points out that the Formless Transcendentalism of Advaita, the Theistic Universalism of Vishishtadvaita and the Devotional Relativism of Dvaita, each consider themselves to be the highest Truth, with the others as subordinate. He provides a reason for this in the limitation of Mind. Calling attention to what he calls the Triple Status of the Supermind, he shows how these three Truths coexist as necessary aspects of a Supramental Truth, a simultaneity of Real-Existences which Mind cannot comprehend in its totality, due to the limitation of its capacity to experience more than one Reality at a time. Thus he attributes the hierarchic inclusivisms of these schools to their phenomenal bondage to the limitations of Mind. A tranquilised mind, reflecting the Transcendental Truth of the Supermind, asserts the primacy of Advaita, the same reflecting the Universal Truth of Supermind asserts the primacy of Vishishtadvaita, reflecting the Individualised Truth of the Supermind, it asserts the primacy of Dvaita. A change of experiencing consciousness from Mind to Supermind enables the possibility of the simultaneous, non-hierarchic assertion of these Truths. Does this mean that in Supermind one sees that all spiritual paths are equal aspects of the One Reality? And if Sri Aurobindo is claiming that this One Reality is the Supramental, then is his philosophy not hierarchism and perspectivism rolled into one, the One Truth which subsumes all others, while at the same time rendering them redundant?

All spiritual paths are not indiscriminately equal aspects of the One Reality according to Sri Aurobindo. In Supermind, a change of consciousness allows a totalism of experience, which positions all manner of truths related to spiritual soteriologies in a multi-dimensional supramental space, whose topology, if expressed in Mind's language, necessarily renders false its reality. We are reminded of Arjuna's experience of the Vishwarupa, where multitudinous hierarchised forms coexist with formlessness (a mass of radiance with no beginning, middle or end) in a single indescribable Form. As for inclusivism, if we accept to view things from the domain of this term, the reasoning mind, then the Supermind, as Sri Aurobindo develops it, is certainly inclusivistic, in a grander sense than Advaita or the various theistic schools. It is the ocean and the elephant's foot at once, with the difference that neither do the rivers disappear into it, nor are the smaller feet obliterated, each remains intact with a simultaneity of distinctness, a mental impossibility. And if, in spite of the apparent mismatch of modalities, we insist on stretching this analogy further, is this a form of tolerance or is it a totalitarianism, a subjection of all "lesser" truths to the supremacy of the Supermind? Indeed, for Sri Aurobindo, the Supermind is the One Reality, the One as the One, the One as the All and the One as the Each. But Sri Aurobindo is not interested in convincing everyone or anyone, for that matter, of the superiority of this Truth. He upholds the characteristic Indic value of *adhikāravāda*, the spiritual capacity of an individual, which determines the scope of his or her experience.

But at the same time, let us not forget, that of all Indic soteriologies, Sri Aurobindo's is the only one which has an universal teleology associated with it, the inevitable evolution of consciousness from Ignorance to Knowledge, Matter to Supermind and beyond. Does this not remind us of Hegel and is there not the same political danger associated with it? Sri Aurobindo makes it amply clear that the Supermind is not the property or possession of any race, nation or culture. No religion can lay hold of it and yet, in his view, it is the ultimate goal of history. How then will it come about, if not by human agency, by praxis, as all teleologies project for themselves? Here we come to Sri Aurobindo's master idea, the crux of his message. This does not lie in philosophy, religion or politics. It lies in a change of human consciousness through the power of yoga. Moreover, in this the activation of the Supermind in the terrestrial consciousness, hitherto unrealized, is a necessity. Such an activation would make possible the conditions, primarily inner, but as trigger and consequence, outer also, for an universal change of consciousness, leading to an accelerated and infallibly guided evolution to the Supermind. The disciples of Sri Aurobindo believe that he and the Mother have brought about such an activation of the Supermind through their yoga, that the world has entered into a new age, the Age of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, with the result, that all human beings living on the planet today, are, whether they are aware of it or not, within the force-field of the supramental yoga, their lives experiencing its pressure towards a change of consciousness. No wonder, from the standpoint of Halbfass' *adhikāra*, though he acknowledges the "intellectual and visionary power" of Sri Aurobindo, he sees so much speculation in him. In the meantime, the agents for this change must bring it about in themselves, their faith the consequence of their *adhikāra*, their inner intuition of the reality of its Truth, and of the emergence from latency of the faculties experiencing its certitude.

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