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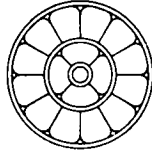
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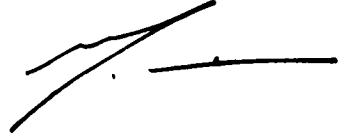


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIV

No. 6

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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#### A CORRECTION

*Mother India* May 2001, page 390 please read “made for” instead of  
“made by” in lines 3 and 5

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## THE SUN BEFORE THE NIGHT

A CALM slow sun looked down from tranquil heavens  
A routed sullen rearguard of retreat,  
The last rains had fled murmuring across the woods  
Or failed, a sibilant whisper mid the leaves,  
And the great blue enchantment of the sky  
Recovered the deep rapture of its smile  
Its mellow splendour unstressed by storm-licked heats  
Found room for a luxury of warm mild days,  
The night's gold treasure of autumnal moons  
Came floating shipped through ripples of faery air  
And Savitri's life was glad, fulfilled like earth's,  
She had found herself, she knew her being's aim  
Although her kingdom of marvellous change within  
Remained unspoken in her secret breast,  
All that lived round her felt its magic's charm  
The trees' rustling voices told it to the winds,  
Flowers spoke in ardent hues an unknown joy,  
The birds' carolling became a canticle,  
The beasts forgot their strife and lived at ease  
Absorbed in wide communion with the Unseen  
The mild ascetics of the wood received  
A sudden greatening of their lonely muse  
This bright perfection of her inner state  
Poured overflowing into her outward scene,  
Made beautiful dull common natural things  
And action wonderful and time divine.  
Even the smallest meanest work became  
A sweet or glad and glorious sacrament,  
An offering to the self of the great world  
Or a service to the One in each and all  
A light invaded all from her being's light,  
Her heart-beats' dance communicated bliss  
Happiness grew happier, shared with her, by her touch  
And grief some solace found when she drew near  
Above the cherished head of Satyavan  
She saw not now Fate's dark and lethal orb,  
A golden circle round a mystic sun  
Disclosed to her new-born predicting sight  
The cyclic rondure of a sovereign life  
In her visions and deep-etched veridical dreams,

In brief shiftings of the future's heavy screen,  
 He lay not by a dolorous decree  
 A victim in the dismal antre of death  
 Or borne to blissful regions far from her  
 Forgetting the sweetness of earth's warm delight,  
 Forgetting the passionate oneness of love's clasp,  
 Absolved in the self-rapt immortal's bliss  
 Always he was with her, a living soul  
 That met her eyes with close enamoured eyes,  
 A living body near to her body's joy.  
 But now no longer in these great wild woods  
 In kinship with the days of bird and beast  
 And levelled to the bareness of earth's brown breast,  
 But mid the thinking high-built lives of men  
 In tapestried chambers and on crystal floors,  
 In armoured town or gardened pleasure-walks,  
 Even in distance closer than her thoughts,  
 Body to body near, soul near to soul,  
 Moving as if by a common breath and will  
 They were tied in the single circling of their days  
 Together by love's unseen atmosphere,  
 Inseparable like the earth and sky  
 Thus for a while she trod the Golden Path,  
 This was the sun before abysmal Night

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 532-33)

## THE TRUTH TO BE REALISED NOW\*

THE cardinal defect, that which has been always standing in the way and is now isolated in an extreme prominence is seated or at least is at present concentrated in the lower vital being I mean that part of the vital-physical nature with its petty and obstinate egoism which actuates the external human personality,—that which supports its surface thoughts and dominates its habitual ways of feeling, character and action I am not concerned here with the other parts of the being and I do not speak of anything in the higher mind, the psychic self or the higher and larger vital nature, for, when the lower vital rises, these are pushed into the background, if not covered over for the time, by this lower vital being and this external personality Whatever there may be in these higher parts, aspiration to the Truth, devotion or will to conquer the obstacles and the hostile forces, it cannot become integral, it cannot remain unmixed or unspoilt or continue to be effective so long as the lower vital and the external personality have not accepted the Light and consented to change

It was inevitable that in the course of the sadhana these inferior parts of the nature should be brought forward in order that like the rest of the being they may make the crucial choice and either accept or refuse transformation My whole work depends upon this movement, it is the decisive ordeal of this yoga For the physical consciousness and the material life cannot change if this does not change Nothing that may have been done before, no inner illumination, experience, power or Ananda is of any eventual value, if this is not done If the little external personality is to persist in retaining its obscure and limited, its petty and ignoble, its selfish and false and stupid human consciousness, this amounts to a flat negation of the work and the sadhana I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco, a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature If, then, any sadhak refuses in practice to admit this change or if he refuses even to admit the necessity for any change of his lower vital being and his habitual external personality, I am entitled to conclude that whatever his professions, he has not accepted either myself or my yoga

I am well aware that this change is not easy, the dynamic will towards it does not come at once and is difficult to fix, and, even afterwards, the sadhak often feels helpless against the force of habit Knowing this, the Mother and myself have shown and are still showing sufficient patience in giving time for the true spirit to come up and form and act effectively in the external being of those around us But if in anyone this part not only becomes obstinate, self-assertive or aggressive, but is supported and justified by the mind and will and tries to spread itself in the atmosphere, then it is a different and very serious matter

The difficulty in the lower vital being is that it is still wedded to its old self and in revolt against the Light, it has not only not surrendered either to a greater Truth or

\* This title for Sri Aurobindo's letter was chosen by the Mother

to myself and the Mother, but it has up to now no such will and hardly any idea even of what true surrender is. When the lower vital assumes this attitude, it takes its stand upon a constant affirmation of the old personality and the past forms of the lower nature. Every time they are discouraged, it supports and brings them back and asserts its right to freedom,—the freedom to affirm and follow its own crude and egoistic ideas, desires, fancies, impulses or convenience whenever it chooses. It claims secretly or in so many words the right to follow its nature,—its human unregenerate nature, the right to be itself,—its natural original unchanged self with all the falsehood, ignorance and incoherence proper to this part of the being. And it claims or, if it does not claim in theory, it asserts in practice the right to express all this impure and inferior stuff in speech and act and behaviour. It defends, glosses over, paints in specious colours and tries to prolong indefinitely the past habitual ways of thinking, speaking and feeling and to eternise what is distorted and misformed in the character. This it does sometimes by open self-assertion and revolt, branding all that is done or said against it as error or oppression or injustice, sometimes behind a cover of self-deception or a mask of dissimulation, professing one thing and practising another. Often it tries to persuade itself and to convince others that these things are the only right reason and right way of acting for itself or for all or even that they are part of the true movement of the yoga.

When this lower vital being is allowed to influence the action, as happens when the sadhak in any way endorses its suggestions, its attitude, whether masked to himself or coming to the surface, dictates a considerable part of his speech and action and against it he makes no serious resistance. If he is frank with himself and straightforward to the Mother, he will begin to recognise the source and nature of the obstacle and will soon be on the direct road to correct and change it. But this, when under the adverse influence, he persistently refuses to be, he prefers to hide up these movements under any kind of concealment, denial, justification or excuse or other shelter.

In the nature the resistance takes certain characteristic forms which add to the confusion and to the difficulty of transformation. It is necessary to outline some of these forms because they are sufficiently common, in some in a less, in others in a greater degree, to demand a strong and clear exposure.

1) A certain vanity and arrogance and self-assertive rajasic vehemence which in this smaller vital being are, for those who have a pronounced strength in these parts, the deformation of the vital force and habit of leading and domination that certain qualities in the higher vital gave them. This is accompanied by an excessive *amour-propre* which creates the necessity of making a figure, maintaining by any means position and prestige, even of posturing before others, influencing, controlling or “helping” them, claiming the part of a superior sadhak, one with greater knowledge and with occult powers. The larger vital being itself has to give up its powers and capacities to the Divine Shakti from whom they come and must use them only as the Mother’s instrument and according to her directions, if it intervenes with the claim of



its ego and puts itself between her and the work or between her and other sadhaks, then whatever its natural power, it deviates from the true way, spoils the work, brings in adverse forces and wrong movements, and does harm to those whom it imagines it is helping. When these things are transferred to the smallness of the lower vital nature and the external personality and take lower and pettier forms, they become still more false to the truth, incongruous, grotesque, and at the same time can be viciously harmful, though in a smaller groove. There is no better way of calling in hostile forces into the general work or of vitiating and exposing to their influence one's own sadhana. On a smaller scale these defects of vanity, arrogance and rajasic violence are present in most human natures. They take other forms, but are then also a great obstacle to any true spiritual change.

2) Disobedience and indiscipline. This lower part of the being is always random, wayward, self-assertive and unwilling to accept the imposition on it of any order and discipline other than its own idea or impulse. Its defects even from the beginning stand in the way of the efforts of the higher vital to impose on the nature a truly regenerating tapasya. This habit of disobedience and disregard of discipline is so strong that it does not always need to be deliberate, the response to it seems to be immediate, irresistible and instinctive. Thus obedience to the Mother is repeatedly promised or professed, but the action done or the course followed is frequently the very opposite of the profession or promise. This constant indiscipline is a radical obstacle to the sadhana and the worst possible example to others.

3) Dissimulation and falsity of speech. This is an exceedingly injurious habit of the lower nature. Those who are not straightforward cannot profit by the Mother's help, for they themselves turn it away. Unless they change, they cannot hope for the descent of the supramental Light and Truth into the lower vital and physical nature, they remain stuck in their own self-created mud and cannot progress. Often it is not mere exaggeration or a false use of the imagination embroidering on the actual truth that is marked in the sadhak, but also a positive denial and distortion as well as a falsifying concealment of facts. This he does sometimes to cover up his disobedience or wrong or doubtful course of action, sometimes to keep up his position, at others to get his own way or indulge his preferred habits and desires. Very often, when one has this kind of vital habit, he clouds his own consciousness and does not altogether realise the falsity of what he is saying or doing, but in much that he says and does, it is quite impossible to extend to him even this inadequate excuse.

4) A dangerous habit of constant self-justification. When this becomes strong in the sadhak, it is impossible to turn him in this part of his being to the right consciousness and action because at each step his whole preoccupation is to justify himself. His mind rushes at once to maintain his own idea, his own position or his own course of action. This he is ready to do by any kind of argument, sometimes the most clumsy and foolish or inconsistent with what he has been protesting the moment before, by any kind of mis-statement or any kind of device. This is a common misuse, but none the less a misuse of the thinking mind, but it takes in him exaggerated proportions.

and so long as he keeps to it, it will be impossible for him to see or live the Truth

Whatever the difficulties of the nature, however long and painful the process of dealing with them, they cannot stand to the end against the Truth, if there is or if there comes in these parts the true spirit, attitude and endeavour. But if a sadhak continues out of self-esteem and self-will or out of tamasic inertia to shut his eyes or harden his heart against the Light, so long as he does that, no one can help him. The consent of all the being is necessary for the divine change, and it is the completeness and fulness of the consent that constitutes the integral surrender. But the consent of the lower vital must not be only a mental profession or a passing emotional adhesion, it must translate itself into an abiding attitude and a persistent and consistent action.

This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity, the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature. It cannot be done if you insist on identifying these lowest things of the Ignorance with the divine Truth or even the lesser truth permissible on the way. It cannot be done if you cling to your past self and its old mental, vital and physical formations and habits, one has continually to leave behind his past selves and to see, act and live from an always higher and higher conscious level. It cannot be done if you insist on "freedom" for your human mind and vital ego. All the parts of the human being are entitled to express and satisfy themselves in their own way at their own risk and peril, if he so chooses, as long as he leads the ordinary life. But to enter into a path of yoga whose whole object is to substitute for these human things the law and power of a greater Truth and the whole heart of whose method is surrender to the Divine Shakti, and yet to go on claiming this so-called freedom, which is no more than a subjection to certain ignorant cosmic Forces, is to indulge in a blind contradiction and to claim the right to lead a double life.

Least of all can this yoga be done if those who profess to be its sadhaks, continue always to make themselves centres, instruments or spokesmen of the forces of the Ignorance which oppose, deny and ridicule its very principle and object. On one side there is the supramental realisation, the overshadowing and descending power of the supramental Divine, the light and force of a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth, something therefore beyond what the little human mind and its logic regard as the only permanent realities, something whose nature and way and process of development here it cannot conceive or perceive by its own inadequate instruments or judge by its puerile standards, in spite of all opposition this is pressing down for manifestation in the physical consciousness and the material life. On the other side is this lower vital nature with all its pretentious arrogance, ignorance,

obscurity, dullness or incompetent turbulence, standing for its own prolongation, standing against the descent, refusing to believe in any real reality or real possibility of a supramental or superhuman consciousness and creation, or, still more absurd, demanding, if it exists at all, that it should conform to its own little standards, seizing greedily upon everything that seems to disprove it, denying the presence of the Divine,—for it knows that without that presence the work is impossible,—affirming loudly its own thoughts, judgments, desires, instincts, and, if these are contradicted, avenging itself by casting abroad doubt, denial, disparaging criticism, revolt and disorder. These are the two things now in presence between which every one will have to choose.

For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Every one must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower Ignorance, it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

(A letter of November 1928)

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**The Spiritual Significance of Flowers** (ISBN 81-7058-609-7)

**La Signification Spirituelle des Fleurs** (ISBN 81-7058-610-0)

**Die Spirituelle Bedeutung der Blumen** (ISBN 81-7058-611-9)

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

(Continued from the issue of May 2001)

सुकर्माणं सुरुचो देवयन्तोऽयो न देवा जनिमा धमन्तः ।  
शुचन्तो अग्निं ववृधन्त इन्द्रमूर्ध्वं गव्यं परिषदन्तो अग्मन् ॥

(Rigveda, 4 2 17)

Perfected in works and in light, seeking the godheads, gods, forging the Births like iron (or, forging the divine births like iron), making Agni a pure flame, increasing Indra, they attained and reached the wideness of the Light (of the Cows, *gavyam ūrvam*) (SABCL, Vol 10, p 200)

Perfect in action, perfect in lustre, desiring the godhead, becoming gods, they smelted and forged the Births as one forges iron, flaming with light they made the Fire to grow, surrounding Indra they reached the wide mass of the Ray-Cows (SABCL, Vol 11, pp 169-70)

आ यूथेव क्षुमति पशो अख्यद् देवाना यनिमान्त्युग्र ।  
मर्ताना चिदुर्वशीकृपन् वृधे चिदयं उपरस्यायो ॥

(Rigveda, 4 2 18)

As if herds of the Cow in the field of riches, that was manifested to vision which is the Births of the Gods within, O puissant One, they both accomplished the wide enjoyments (or, longings) of mortals and worked as aspirers for the increase of the higher being (SABCL, Vol 10, p 200)

There was seen as if herds of the Cows in an opulent place, that which, seen near, was the birth of the gods, O Forceful Fire, they both illumined the widenesses of mortals and were aspirants for the growth of the higher being (SABCL, Vol 11, p 170)

अकर्म ते स्वपसो अभूम ऋतमवस्त्रनुषसो विभाती ।  
अनूनमग्निं पुरुधा सुश्रन्द देवस्य मर्मजतश्चारु चक्षु ॥

(Rigveda, 4 2 19)

We have done the work for thee, we have become perfect in works, the wide-shining Dawns have taken up their home in the Truth (or, have robed themselves with the Truth), in the fullness of Agni and his manifold delight, in the shining eye of the god in all his brightness (SABCL, Vol 10, p 200)

For thee we worked and became perfect in our works, the Dawn shone out and

illumined the Truth, we lit the unstinted Fire in the multitude of its kinds, in the fulness of his delight, brightening the beautiful eye of the Godhead (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 170)

ऋतेन ऋत नियतमीळ आ गोरामा सचा मधुमत् पक्वमग्ने ।  
कृष्णा सती रूशता धासिनैषा जामर्येण पयसा पीपाय ॥

(Rigveda, 4 3 9)

The Truth controlled by the Truth I desire (i e the human by the divine), together the unripe things of the Cow and her ripe and honeyed yield (again the imperfect human and the perfect and blissful divine fruits of the universal consciousness and existence), she (the cow) being black (the dark and divided existence, Diti) is nourished by the shining water of the foundation, the water of the companion streams (*jāmaryeṇa payasā*) (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 201)

I ask for the truth governed by the Truth, together the unripe things of the Cow of light and that of her which is sweet and ripe, O Fire Even black of hue, she nourishes with a luminous supporting, with a kindred milk (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 172)

तेन हि ष्मा वृषभश्चिदक्त पुमा अग्नि. पयसा पृष्ठयेन ।  
अस्पन्दमानो अचरद् वयोधा वृषा शुक्र दुदुहे पृश्निरूध ॥

(Rigveda, 4 3 10)

By the Truth Agni the Bull, the Male, sprinkled with the water of its levels, ranges unquivering, establishing wideness (wide space or manifestation), the dappled Bull milks the pure shining teat (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 201)

For the Fire the Bull, the Male, is inundated with the Truth, with milk of the heights unstirred he ranges abroad establishing the wideness, the dappled Bull has milked out the bright udder (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 173)

ऋतेनादि व्यसन् भिदन्त समङ्गिरसो नवन्त गोभि ।  
शुन नर परि षदुनुषासमावि स्वरभवज्जाते अग्नौ ॥

(Rigveda, 4 3 11)

By the Truth the Angirasas broke open and hurled asunder the hill and came to union with the Cows, human souls, they took up their dwelling in the blissful Dawn, Swar became manifest when Agni was born (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p 201-202)

By the Truth the Angiras-seers broke the hill, they parted it asunder, they moved together with the Ray-Cows, men sat happily around Dawn, the Sun-world was manifested when the Fire was born (*SABCL*, Vol 11, p 173)

ऋतेन देवीरमृता अमृक्ता अर्णोभिरापो मधुमद्भिर्ग्ने ।  
वाजी न सर्गेषु प्रस्तुमान प्र सदमित् स्रवितवे दधन्युः ॥

(Rigveda, 4 3 12)

By Truth the divine immortal waters, unoppressed, with their honeyed floods, O Agni, like a horse breasting forward in its galloping ran in an eternal flowing (SABCL, Vol 10, p 202)

By the Truth, divine, immortal and inviolate, the Waters with their honied floods, Fire, like a steed of swiftness pressing forward in its galloping, raced ever on to their flow (SABCL, Vol 11, p. 173)

एता विश्वा विदुषे तुभ्य वेधो नीथान्यग्ने निण्या वचासि ।  
निवचना कवये काव्यान्यशसिष मतिभिर्विप्र उक्थे ॥

(Rigveda, 4 3 16)

All these are secret words that I have uttered to thee who knowest, O Agni, O Disposer, words of leading, words of seer-knowledge that express their meaning to the seer,—I have spoken them illumined in my words and my thinkings (SABCL, Vol 10, p 202)

Thus have I, an illumined sage, by my thoughts and utterances spoken to thee, who knowest, O Fire, O creator, secret words of guidance, seer-wisdoms that speak out their sense to the seer. (SABCL, Vol 11, p 174)

*(To be continued)*

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

## CONSTANCY

If setting suns were quenched for aye,  
Or gales could blow the stars away,  
Then scant unmindfulness of you  
Could prove my living thought untrue

As soon the bee forget the hive  
At heathward flight or blossom-dive,  
As one his nectar-load not guide  
Again to your imagined side

May compass needle turn awry  
Or flame no longer scale the sky,  
Ere gratefulnesses cease to wend,—  
Mine their heartway, you their end

May 9, 1935

ARJAVA

On stanza 1 Arjava wrote The above were all I was able to write last night Does there seem any promise of something worthwhile coming out of it if they are continued? Is 'scant' wrongly used here? Does it ever mean only 'scanty, short,' or is there always an implication of 'insufficient', 'less than there ought to be'?

Sri Aurobindo's answer. The lines are very good and call for a development The point about 'scant' is rather perplexing I cannot recall having seen it used in this sense, and yet it seems to me that such a phrase as 'scant penury and niggard avarice' ought not to be impossible But perhaps in most attempts to use it so the ordinary significance would present itself to the reader's mind and perplex him

## WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY SPIRITUAL THINGS?

### A Talk by the Mother to the Teachers on 5 April 1967

(*Mother writes a note*) It is an answer to a question Do you know what I told the teachers of the school? I have been asked another question Here is the beginning of my reply

“The division between ‘ordinary life’ and ‘spiritual life’ is an outdated antiquity ”

Did you read his question? Read it again to me

*“We discussed the future It seemed to me that nearly all the teachers were eager to do something so that the children could become more conscious of why they are here At that point I said that in my opinion, to speak to the children of spiritual things often has the opposite result, and that these words lose all their value ”*

“Spiritual things”—what does he mean by spiritual things?

*Obviously, if the teachers recite them like a story*

Spiritual things They are taught history *or* spiritual things, they are taught science *or* spiritual things That is the stupidity In history, the Spirit is there, in science, the Spirit is there—the Truth is everywhere And what is needed is not to teach it in a false way, but to teach it in a true way They cannot get that into their heads

*He adds “I have suggested that it might be better to meet and listen to Mother’s voice,<sup>1</sup> for even if we don’t understand everything, your voice would accomplish its own inner work, which we are not in a position to evaluate About this, I would like to know what is the best way of bringing the child into relation with you For all the suggestions, including mine, seemed arbitrary to me and without any real value*

*“Mother, wouldn’t it be better if the teachers were to concentrate solely on the subjects they are teaching, for you are taking care of the spiritual life?”*

I shall give him this reply There is no “spiritual life”! It is still the old idea, still the old idea of the sage, the sannyasin, the who represents spiritual life, while all the others represent ordinary life—and it is not true, it is not true, it is not true at all

If they still need an opposition between two things—for the poor mind doesn’t

1 Tape-recording of Mother’s classes during the 1950s



work if you don't give it an opposition—if they need an opposition, let them take the opposition between Truth and Falsehood, it is a little better; I don't say it is perfect, but it is a little better. So, in all things, Falsehood and Truth are mixed everywhere: in the so-called "spiritual life", in sannyasins, in swamis, in those who think they represent the life divine on earth, all that—there also, there is a mixture of Falsehood and Truth.

It would be better not to make any division.

(Silence)

For the children, precisely because they are children, it would be best to instil in them the will to conquer the future, the will to always look ahead and to want to move on as swiftly as they can towards what will be—but they should not drag with them the burden, the millstone of the whole oppressive weight of the past. It is only when we are very high in consciousness and knowledge that it is good to look behind to find the points where this future begins to show itself. When we can look at the whole picture, when we have a very global vision, it becomes interesting to know that what will be realised later on has already been announced beforehand, in the same way that Sri Aurobindo said that the divine life will manifest on earth, because it is *already* involved in the depths of Matter, from this standpoint it is interesting to look back or to look down below—not to know what happened, or to know what men have known: that is quite useless.

The children should be told. There are wonderful things to be manifested, prepare yourself to receive them. Then if they want something a little more concrete and easier to understand, you can tell them. Sri Aurobindo came to announce these things; when you are able to read him, you will understand. So this awakens the interest, the desire to learn.

*I see very clearly the difficulty he is referring to. most people—and in all the things that are written, or in the lectures they give—use inflated speech, without any truth of personal experience, which has no effect, or rather a negative effect. That is what he is referring to*

Yes, that is why they should do as I have said.

Ah! But not so long ago, most of the teachers were saying, "Oh! But we must do this, because it is done everywhere." (Smiling) They have already come a little distance. But there is much more to be covered.

But above all, what is most important is to eliminate these divisions. And every one of them, all of them have it in their minds, the division between leading a spiritual life and leading an ordinary life, having a spiritual consciousness and having an ordinary consciousness—there is only one consciousness.

In most people it is three-quarters asleep and distorted, in many it is still

completely distorted. But what is needed, very simply, is not to leap from one consciousness into another, but to open one's consciousness (*upward gesture*) and to fill it with vibrations of Truth, to bring it in harmony with what must be here—there it exists from all eternity—but here, what must be here the “tomorrow” of the earth. If you weigh yourself down with a whole burden that you have to drag behind you, if you drag behind you everything that you must abandon, you will not be able to advance very fast.

Mind you, to know things from the earth's past can be very interesting and very useful, but it must not be something that binds you or ties you to the past. If it is used as a spring-board, it is all right. But really, it is quite secondary.

(*Silence*)

It would be interesting to formulate or to elaborate a new method of teaching for children, to take them very young. It is easy when they are very young. We need people—oh! we would need remarkable teachers—who have, first, an ample enough documentation of what is known so as to be able to answer every question, and at the same time, at least the knowledge, if not the experience—the experience would be better—of the true intuitive intellectual attitude, and—naturally the capacity would be still more preferable—at least the knowledge that the true way of knowing is mental silence, an attentive silence turned towards the truer Consciousness, and the capacity to receive what comes from there. The best would be to have this capacity, at least, it should be explained that it is the true thing—a sort of demonstration—and that it works not only from the point of view of what must be learned, of the whole domain of knowledge, but also of the whole domain of what should be done: the capacity to receive the exact indication of *how* to do it, and as you go on, it changes into a very clear perception of what must be done, and a precise indication of when it must be done. At least the children, as soon as they have the capacity to think—it starts at the age of seven, but at about fourteen or fifteen it is very clear—the children should be given little indications at the age of seven, a complete explanation at fourteen, of how to do it, and that it is the only way to be in relation with the deeper truth of things, and that all the rest is a more or less clumsy mental approximation to something that can be known directly.

The conclusion is that the teachers themselves should at least have a sincere beginning of discipline and experience, that it is not a question of accumulating books and retelling them like this. One can't be a teacher in this way, let the outside world be like that if it likes. We are not propagandists, we simply want to show what can be done and try to prove that it *must* be done.

When you take the children very young, it is wonderful. There is so little to do it is enough to *be*.

Never make a mistake  
 Never lose your temper  
 Always understand

And to know and see clearly why there has been this movement, why there has been this impulse, what is the inner constitution of the child, what is the thing to be strengthened and brought forward—this is the only thing to do, and to leave them, to leave them free to blossom, simply to give them the opportunity to see many things, to touch many things, to do as many things as possible. It is great fun. And above all, not to try to impose on them what you think you know.

Never scold them. Always understand, and if the child is ready, explain, if he is not ready for an explanation—if you are ready yourself—replace the false vibration by a true one. But this ..this is to demand from the teachers a perfection which they rarely have.

But it would be very interesting to make a programme for the teachers and the true programme of study, from the very bottom—which is so plastic and which receives impressions so deeply. If they were given a few drops of truth when they are very young, they would blossom quite naturally as the being grows. It would be beautiful work.

*(On Education, CWM, Vol 12, pp 405-07)*

## A LETTER

THE wisdom of the Upanishads has laid down “When the knot of the heart-strings is rent asunder, then the mortal, even in this body, enjoys immortality ”

In the ancient Indian idea, the mortal is not simply one who undergoes mortality, the death of the body, nor is the immortal merely he who survives the body’s dissolution. Ancient India always knew that something survived when the body dissolved. This something underwent a series of bodily births and deaths. Repeated birth and death constituted mortality. To be immortal meant reaching a state of consciousness which was free from this cycle—a state beyond both birth and death, no matter if one were still in a body subject to them.

What made one subject to mortality was “the knot of the heart-strings.” The image used here is meant to suggest the many ways in which desires and attachments and preferences keep one tied within the bounds of the human earthly life. When these are given up, when one is cut off from them, one rises above the need of birth and the consequent subjection to death. One lives in a wide serene freedom of consciousness. This freedom was the “immortality” of the Upanishadic seers.

The way to it is of two kinds. To get out of the complexity of circumstances in which one is caught, one can draw deep within to the true soul in us, what Sri Aurobindo calls “the psychic being” which is a spark of the Divine come down into the cycle of birth and death in order to grow to its full potential of divinity on earth through varied experience—physical, vital, emotional, mental—and divinise also these instruments of experience. To realise the psychic being all the time is to be in a condition of ever-aspiring happiness, a constant flow of deep yet calm feeling from a smiling depth, as it were, within our heart towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There is also a relationship—vibrantly peaceful, sympathetically wide-poised—with our fellow-beings, silently upraising them towards our Gurus’ presence.

The other kind of passage to the Upanishad’s “immortality” is *via* a move towards the “Atman” which they speak of. Here is the infinite Self of selves intrinsically uninvolved, unbound, a vast of consciousness which is a background to all beings and things, a non-participant in the cosmic drama, in some respects

An awful silence watching tragic time,  
and

A wide unshaken look on Time’s unrest

but in other respects a stretcher of healing hands which work to bring a cessation of the tangles and turmoils of common existence. This office they perform not by way of direct guidance in one direction or another. All they do is to disperse the swirling mists that obscure or distract the day-to-day consciousness and, by such dispersal, they liberate that consciousness to see for itself avenues of vision and action unexplored before.

I feel a reflection of the Self of selves and that helps greatly the equanimity I try to practise. My more intimate experience is as if the psychic being were held forward by invisible arms stretched from an immense background. A touch, as it were, of that background is carried by the psychic being, so that the latter's natural intensity seems to go forward in a sort of fanning out of brightness rather than as a straight shining line from heart to heart. In the light of its happy spontaneous seeking by the God within for the God without, all the parts of one's nature which the God within appears to permeate, their diverse interwoven elements learn to stop vibrating in an individualistic manner and form a concord such that the purely human interests take a back-seat and the egoistic tendencies grow weak and, in place of personal aims and the involvements of ordinary living, a large devotion towards the Divine refines and subtilises all movements. Then one may well find the old egoistic agitations of the heart-strings swept aside and a constant and concerted cry for the Divine come into play. In Tennysonian terms we may state the Upanishadic situation with those lines from *Locksley Hall*

Love took up the harp of life and smote on all the chords with might,  
Smote the chord of self that, trembling, passed in music out of sight

23 5 1995

AMAL KIRAN  
(K D SETHNA)

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## BEING WEARY OF THE WORLD

BEING weary of the world  
I withdrew into myself  
Built a fortress of silence  
In my ascetic loneliness, I faced  
Those heart-afflicting woes,  
And thought I mastered those foes

But something I missed, a grace,  
As of the first rain drops  
That wet arid land, I longed  
In my loneliness to master my heart's throb  
I silenced those varied songs  
To grasp the skies, I lost my earth  
Spurning human love, God spurned me

K N VIJU

## A TALK\*

How difficult it is to be perfectly sincere!

I shall try my best to be exact but what I shall tell you is only the broad outline of the great voyage I shall not be able to convey to you all the steps in thought, the ups and downs of feelings, or even the experiences, inner or outer

I do not know if you have seen a film on the war, the first World War You have seen some on the second, and perhaps you know the main difference ..at least in practice for those who were engaged in the fighting In the first War a considerable part of the four years that it lasted consisted of what is called 'trench warfare', that is, the two armies faced each other in trenches They had dug trenches and shelters, and lived day after day, night after night in conditions often difficult, sometimes dangerous though not always, with cold and rain as enemies, and of course, sometimes shells, bullets, illness and boredom

Well! I was at that time a young officer. I was only twenty in 1914. I had finished I am obliged to speak of myself because you have asked me to speak of myself (*laughs*). I had finished my science education I was at the Polytechnic school, I had done a year at the Polytechnic, and like all young men there I had undergone military training even before I joined that school, so, in 1914, when the war was declared in the month of August I had to go for training like a private soldier in an artillery regiment after a year of school where we were doing mostly Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry

The War had been declared just on the eve of the day on which I was to leave to rejoin my regiment I rejoined the regiment, but the conditions were different and we were immediately put under pressure. That is to say, we had to do riding for four or five hours a day That was considered the best training for the war There was theoretical instruction anyway, it was rather severe and at the end of some months, because of this military training we had undergone, we were appointed sub-lieutenants...sub-lieutenants in the Artillery, and in the month of October, that is, in three months, end October . let us say, four months after the declaration of the War, we left for the front. I was in the Artillery, junior officer, in a battery of 105 which the English call a four inch gun. It was a new quick-firing weapon of which France was very proud, and interesting

Well! at that time, I shall not keep from you, I was a young man who had exactly the preoccupations of an ordinary young man of his age I was like all my companions. I had the same preoccupations and the same interests as of those around me. I liked studies in general I liked what I did because I preferred to like it than to dislike it—it is better that way (*laughs*), is it not? it goes better in life—but truly I had not, when I look back on the past I cannot say that I had spiritual aspirations I had been brought up in the Catholic religion, it had not interested me particularly Truly

\* Given to the students and teachers of the Centre of Education on 18 August 1964

speaking, I had not put any questions to myself. Well, during the war we had at times what are called 'hard knocks', difficult moments, but also, from time to time, a lot of leisure which it was necessary to fill up.

I do not know how—it was probably the hand of destiny—I started reading some books on what are called psychic phenomena, that is, the phenomena which the science of that time, of that age, did not study at all, pushed aside, considered it outside its domain, extra-scientific.

There were all sorts of things there were telepathy, clairvoyance, all the mediumistic phenomena—I do not know if you have heard of them—all those things, even, the pendulum, the divination—all that which is a little on the borderline of science. I approached it with a scientific spirit, only to know, telling myself "Look, here is a whole domain that science does not study." Why? Nobody knows. I have never tried. I was never interested in the actual experience of a medium in the future. In all that. That did not interest me, it was the possibility of these phenomena, their existence. Do they exist? Are they true? Are they false? Why does science not study them? It was not that I wanted to acquire them, or to know the future, or anything concerning myself, no!

Then, little by little, from book to book, I was led to read what are called in Europe, books on occultism. They included many things. I will not quote the names of the authors anyway, I read all that one could read on the subject that which is called magic—not witchcraft, that did not interest me—but magic, precisely the possibility of handling certain forces, of proving their existence, and then, going on to the Middle Ages—because naturally, when one studies occultism one must go back to the times when occultism flourished—the Kabbala, the secret societies, initiating bodies, the Hebrew tradition, alchemy, the alchemists—in the spiritual sense, that is to say, of transformation of nature—then, afterwards, the modern occultists, the door to India.

I must say that it was theosophy which opened for me the door to India, and for that I am extremely obliged to it. For one thing, in Europe there was not much else, especially in those days; it was theosophy which translated many sacred books of India, and which put within reach, one can almost say brought into vogue,—it wasn't a question of vogue really—which put within reach of the Western intellect, reincarnation, karma, perfection on earth, the ideal of *jivanmukta*—that exist in theosophy.

Well. Talking of myself, as far as I remember, when I learnt of reincarnation and of karma, that seemed to me completely axiomatic. One need not there is no need to discuss. Never for a second, since the time I came across these ideas of reincarnation and of karma, never have I argued about them. I accepted them as part of myself. They seemed evident to me. I knew moreover that one could not prove them, consequently, there was no point in discussing them either one admits them, or one does not.

So, with these ideas of India, I entered a new phase, it was of what shall I say? of the aspiration for spiritual perfection. No? there are two ways of studying

the religions of India; one is the external—as the Westerners, the French, generally follow—without participating in them, without living them, then they study India as they study—really!—a colony of bees or ants. One gives an account of what they think, what they do.

But the other way, and the only one which interested me, was, well, it was to live it—to understand it first and then to live it. This was the ideal of perfection, realisable by man in time and through successive lives, which really satisfied me, seemed to me true and worthy to be lived.

Meanwhile the War continued. For two years I was at what is called 'the front', moving from one place to another, always in the artillery, in the 4-inch battery. And then for another two years or so I was at an Army Headquarters. In that position, as an officer of artillery intelligence where I had a job, almost like office work but which was very interesting because it meant compiling all the information we had, and giving it to the artillery. An army comprised of a varying number of army corps, each army corps consisted of two or three divisions, each division consisted of two brigades, and each brigade consisted of a certain number of regiments, therefore some thousands of men, so that the army corps represented, roughly, one or two hundred thousand men at the front with a considerable quantity of artillery and twelve or fifteen flying squadrons. It involved study, compilation, scrutiny, sifting all that one could gather by way of intelligence. And at the same time I had the humane job to keep contact with the units—that is, the units on the front, the visitors and strangers, because after a time we had the Americans in large numbers, and the English also.

But I can say that all the free time I had—there was not much, we were very busy—I devoted it to study, often till late into the night. And, more and more these ideas took possession of me, that is to say, I gave myself up to them, devoted myself to them. And in a few years I can say that from 1917, that is in two years, my point of view changed completely. I was, I cannot say, materialistic, because I did not have any opinion on the subject, I was, as I told you, a young man who had received a scientific education, logical, strict, but who had never asked himself questions on these subjects, and once they occupied my thoughts and feelings, well, I gave myself to them completely.

In 1918, an epidemic which at the time was called the Spanish fever or influenza, occurred in France. An epidemic which lasted sufficiently long, and which in all the world caused the death of 20 million people. I have seen recently a book on the subject. Well! I had the flu exactly at the time of the armistice, that is, in November 1918. I was at the front, we had just pierced through the German lines and marched on Germany. It was in the German lines that I caught this influenza, but it was not an epidemic peculiar to Germany, all the world had it, all the countries.

Well, that moment, I can say, was the decisive date in my life. In the country hospital, that is to say, on the front, under the tents where I was, the sick died. Every morning there were three or four dead. I remember this very strong idea which removed for me all fear of death. It is the surrender, the giving of myself so that



destiny, my spiritual destiny fulfils itself, whatever it be, with the offering of my life if I must die—truly, sincerely. And if I must live—well, consecration to the Divine

I was 24 at that time, or a little over 24. After that I was demobilised soon enough, and it was necessary to take up my studies again. I did that to finish something which I had begun, without much enthusiasm, but in any case, I did not have anything else to do.

So I finished the Polytechnic School, the School of Bridges and Highways, and I was appointed a junior engineer in Paris. And, there, the very strong feeling that I could not live that life seized me. It was, (was it not?) it was a life of—in itself it had nothing which may have made me recoil. It was a life of the engineer, with no lack of interesting jobs—a whole section of the Seine, particularly Paris, was under my jurisdiction, including all which required new construction, repair work, and all that,—but, how shall I put it?—I was completely submerged by work, it did not interest me. I did it because it had to be done but my mind was no longer there.

And then, in 1920, I took the decision to leave that life and to devote myself to the search for my spiritual teacher, my guru. I knew. I knew at last, it was for me a certitude, that my life was to be a life of spiritual realisation, that nothing else counted for me, and that somewhere on earth, on EARTH, he must exist who would give me, lead me to the light.

*(To be concluded)*

PAVITRA

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## BOAT

BOAT, Oh Boat! where do you go,  
Marooning me on this sandy shore,  
Amidst this bustling uncaring crowd?

When I see you afloat among waves  
My sullen heart longs and craves  
Surging with unbounded pleasure  
And this for long in my heart I treasure  
Reliving it again, in my lonesome leisure

G SIVARAMAN

## WHEN AND HOW THE MOTHER DREW THE MAP OF INDIA ON THE PLAYGROUND WALL

I WAS among one of those few who were fortunate to see the Mother drawing the map of India on the Playground wall I was only a visitor at that time staying in Golconde for a few months—from August to the earlier part of December 1950 I joined the daily PED group activities in the evening at the Playground with the Mother's permission

As far as I can remember, it was sometime after the November Darshan that the incident took place I was in my group uniform in the afternoon, going for a walk to the seaside when I found the rear gate of the Playground a little ajar while the front gate was closed Out of sheer curiosity I entered the Playground

I found the Mother drawing something on the wall with only a few sadhaks and sadhikas looking on I went nearer and saw Her drawing the map with something in Her hand but without the help of any instrument She only consulted an atlas map Her hand was moving along the outer border of Kashmir—the Northern part To draw the topmost portion She had to stand on Her toes so as to reach it

Coming down from Kashmir, Her hand moved further towards the East, drawing the Northern border of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan Somebody remarked "Tibet is left out"

Thereafter I left the Playground for my regular walk by the seaside, thus missing the rare opportunity of seeing the Mother draw the entire map—fool that I was!

One should remember, however, that the present map is composed according to the Mother's draft Now, one thing is very clear—it was under a divine decree that the Mother felt inspired to draw that map and that divine decree is bound to be fulfilled today or tomorrow or the day after No human being or even a league of nations has the ultimate power to change that decree For politicians may come and politicians may go, but the Truth prevails in the end, as the adage goes *satyameva jayate*

The contours of the Indian subcontinent have been determined by the supreme Will and no human ego, single or collective, has the power to alter it When freedom with partition was accepted by all the then politicians of India, only a lone Voice spoke differently and did not accept this fact to be settled for ever That was Sri Aurobindo's

ABANI SINHA

## THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM AND ITS ADMINISTRATION

[During the past few years, several articles critical of the Ashram have appeared in newspapers and journals. These reports contain much incorrect, distorted and exaggerated information, conveying a wrong impression of the Ashram. The following statement is an attempt to answer some of the points raised in the articles and, more generally, to explain the aim, character and functioning of the Ashram as it has evolved since its founding in 1926.]

### Aim of the Ashram

THE Sri Aurobindo Ashram was not conceived as a cloister for the recluse. It was not meant to be a place for the exclusive pursuit of the Absolute, divorced from the activities of life. It was, on the contrary, intended to be a centre of life with the Divine as its base and growth in the divine consciousness as its aim. It has a creative purpose, many-sided and complex, which is part of the evolutionary unfolding of the higher possibilities in man and Nature.

This conception is born of Sri Aurobindo's view of human existence and its destiny. According to him, man is a transitional being caught in the knot of body, life and mind, yet he has the possibility of coming out of his limitations because there is a spirit within him which has the power to change life into its own image. In the past, individuals have often tried to achieve self-realisation by withdrawing from worldly activities, but now the time is ripe to make this endeavour without withdrawing from the world, using spiritual means to effect a dynamic solution of the increasingly complex problems of life.

The Ashram is not a planned project, but an adventure of consciousness with innumerable possibilities and dimensions. Such an intricate and difficult path, with its goal of transformation, creates its own difficulties for the common man's understanding. This has been the main reason why some people have not appreciated the life in the Ashram with its seemingly *laissez-faire* attitude in certain respects. But according to Sri Aurobindo, any worthwhile unfolding of the inner life must have as its base a large freedom.

### Growth of the Ashram

The Ashram came into existence at the end of 1926. At the beginning it consisted of hardly two dozen members, some of whom had been associated with Sri Aurobindo earlier in Calcutta and joined him after he came to Pondicherry in 1910. The whole emphasis initially was on spiritual progress, the opening of the inner being and purification of the nature to receive the creative Shakti that was being invoked and coming down in response.

Later, in the 1940s, when children were admitted to the Ashram and a school was started, the Ashram became more broadbased and was organised into a well-knit institution with different departments and services. There was greater freedom of movement and seemingly less pressure of the spiritual Force. Over the years, this system of organisation has grown larger and become more complex. A full-fledged International Centre of Education, which is part of the Ashram, has also come into being with various activities and experiments. It is not unnatural that a community of over two thousand should have to face from time to time its own share of problems, considering all the resistances and impurities of people coming from many different backgrounds and levels of inner development.

### **Membership of the Ashram**

In the early period, up to the 1950s, someone who wished to join the Ashram had only to approach the Mother, and if she permitted it the person became a member of the Ashram. There were no formalities, no initiation to be gone through by the newcomer. The Mother's approval was the essential thing, both for one's living conditions and spiritual guidance. However, the person was clearly informed about a written set of rules laying down a few basic conditions to be observed, the most important were no intoxicating drinks, no drugs, no sex-life and no politics. These restrictions on one's outer life had to be observed.

It was also understood and expected that if the Ashram provided the newcomer with all the necessities and conveniences of life, he should in turn give his all, including wealth and property, to the Ashram. Although this was not made a condition, it was considered a kind of spiritual obligation. While many people came almost empty-handed, there were others who were well off and yet they gave everything. But in no case was a member made to feel that his material contribution determined the treatment and benefits he received.

It was also an aspect of the spiritual process that all had to do some physical work as their contribution to the common organised life of the community. The work assigned to each member was determined by the Mother in the beginning, later it was decided by those she had trained, on the basis of the perceived needs of the situation. The work assigned had to be taken as a part of one's sadhana or spiritual effort.

### **The Ashram Trustees**

Till 1950, the Ashram was Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's estate by virtue of their being its joint spiritual heads. The Ashram was their property in the traditional sense of the word "Ashram" – the Master's house and establishment. The seekers who came to the Master (the Guru) had no claims and they lived in the Ashram by the consent and grace of the Master. It was not an association, trust or legally constituted body.

A few years after Sri Aurobindo left his body in December 1950, the Mother

decided to constitute the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust to administer and manage the affairs of the Ashram. She got it registered as a Public Charitable Trust in October 1955 in order to conform to the law of the land, and she formally set forth its central work and goal and objectives in a seminal way, without elaborating them, in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust Deed Under the Trust Deed, a five-member Board of Trustees was responsible for the administration of the Ashram, the Mother remained its President and final authority

After the Mother left her body in November 1973, the administration of the Ashram by the Board of Trustees has continued, with one of the Trustees being designated the Managing Trustee by a resolution of the Trust Board Trusteeship is a responsibility and the work assigned has to be executed with the collaboration of all, it is not a position conferred on anybody as an honour. None of the Trustees has any declared spiritual status or claim The spiritual authority of the Ashram rests entirely with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother We firmly believe that their guidance and spiritual presence are ever here for all who need it and look for it. This has been the basis of work and organisation in the Ashram since the Mother withdrew from her body in 1973.

When a Trustee passes away or resigns, another is appointed in due course It has been the practice from the beginning that responsible persons associated with the Ashram's working are chosen as Trustees As and when a vacancy arises, the choice of the person to fill the vacancy is a joint decision of the remaining Trustees, taken with the consent of the person so chosen

### **Functioning of the Ashram**

Work—physical work as well as intellectual, artistic and other kinds of work—has an important place in the life of the Ashram All members take up some work as a useful contribution to the community and as part of their spiritual life Beyond this, the practice of spiritual discipline is left to the choice and inclination of the individual and there is no imposition of any kind, direct or indirect There is perfect freedom for one to meditate, pray, study or work, depending on one's inclination, aspiration and understanding of the aims of the Integral Yoga as explained by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their writings Each one has to find his or her own mode of approach to the Divine. But the one all-important factor is the palpable presence of the guiding light and power of protection that pervade the very atmosphere of the Ashram, this light and power are due to the subtle presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Although there is great freedom in the Ashram, it should be obvious that there can be no stable and healthy organisation unless the Trustees, who are the managers of the organisation, have the right to take corrective action when there is some errant behaviour on the part of a sadhak This is true for the smooth functioning of any collective organisation, particularly in the area of work

### **Ashram Finances**

The Ashram is run largely on the donations and offerings of disciples, devotees and admirers. An attempt to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency was made at the beginning with the starting of a couple of agricultural farms and industries. More recently some small enterprises managed by disciples and members of the Ashram have also come up. These enterprises provide financial support to the Ashram and its activities by donating their profits to the Ashram under Section 35(1)(ii) of the Income Tax Act.

Due to the rising costs of housing, commodities and services in order to maintain a reasonable standard of living, the Ashram's expenditure has been rising constantly. In earlier years the inmates lived in rented houses, which usually accommodated six or eight persons in a house. Gradually these rented houses had to be given up because the rents increased sharply. As a result, the Ashram was obliged to build large residential complexes in the space available on the lands in its possession. The costs of construction have run into many lakhs of rupees, but the work had to be done as there was no alternative available to the Ashram for accommodating its members.

The financing of the Ashram is not on budgetary lines, apart from recurring expenses, it is essentially need-based, depending upon the necessity and importance of the work and the availability of funds. Any surplus is invested in approved banks and financial institutions. Annual audited accounts are filed with the Government authorities and the Income Tax Department in strict accordance with the law. Tax exemptions to donors are available under Sections 80G and 35(1)(ii).

### **Ashram Property**

It has been reported that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram has property worth 500 or 600 crores of rupees. We have no idea who has estimated this improbable figure or what their method of reckoning was. But whatever be the figure, it does not mean anything to the life of the Ashram. The value of real estate has certainly escalated over the years and the process still continues. For example, a house purchased in Pondicherry for Rs. 25,000 some forty or fifty years back may now be worth Rs. 25 lakhs in market value, a rise of 100 times. But so long as the owner of the property does not indulge in speculative trading, this appreciation in value is only nominal and does not add in any way to its utility value to the owner. The houses belonging to the Ashram do not accommodate more members simply because the price of the properties has risen nor do its agricultural lands produce several times more crops than they used to do years back just because their monetary value has appreciated many times over. This fact is generally lost sight of by people who advance arguments against the Ashram.

### **Educational and Cultural Life**

It was Sri Aurobindo's wish to see the Ashram grow as a spiritual centre in its fullest sense, embracing every aspect of life. Encouraged and supported by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a distinct aesthetic and cultural ambience has grown in the Ashram. Writers, poets, painters, dramatists, musicians, dancers and others proficient in arts, crafts and skills of various kinds have blossomed and continue to do so. This cultural aspect of the Ashram has a special purpose and intention in the overall view of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Self-expression in various artistic forms is a training of the mind and the creative faculties of the being. To achieve power and beauty of expression is one of the great objects of education and culture. This aspect of life acquires a deeper meaning in a spiritual context, where the aim is communion with a higher Reality and an expression of its content.

### **Sex and Spiritual Life**

The problem of sex and spirituality has been discussed through the ages. It is necessary to be clear-headed about it. Sex is neither a sin nor a perversion, it is a process of Nature, a biological necessity in animals and animal-man. However, it is inconsistent with true spiritual life because the sexual desire and act bring down the consciousness, whereas spirituality is an attempt to raise the consciousness and keep it stationed above the promptings of the lower nature. For the generality of men, this process of raising the consciousness is not simple or easy or even understandable. Even for the most ardent aspirants to the spiritual life, there are innumerable difficulties. During the process of the seeker's sadhana, it is not unusual for him to have upsurges of sexual desire, which have to be progressively controlled, sublimated and transcended. This is the way in which a seeker of spiritual light and knowledge progresses, the ordinary man, on the other hand, lives within the ambit of his animal consciousness, tempered by social, moral and cultural constraints.

A seeker should not be shocked when this sexual urge surfaces and invades his consciousness. There is hardly any saint or sage who has not suffered from it at some time or other in his life before he attained spiritual enlightenment. Sri Ramakrishna, when he first became aware of it, wanted to kill himself if Mother Kali did not remove it from his nature.

Sri Aurobindo has dealt with the subject of sexual desire in many of his letters to disciples when they complained of its disturbance. He always said that this force of Nature, so deeply rooted in man, should first be seen as coming from outside, then controlled and ultimately transcended and transformed. Sex-energy becomes a creative power when it is purified and transformed. This creative energy has to be made a part of our life and not suppressed out of fear.

Sex need not be made a bugbear of spiritual life. It is only one part of the obstinate resistance of the lower nature. If there are falls in the course of one's

spiritual effort, if there are lapses in the process of self-purification, they have to be viewed with understanding and sympathy so long as the seeker realises his failings and does not try to justify them. Often for a long time, spiritual aspiration and the pull of the lower nature go side by side

In the Ashram there is no attempt to hide instances of sexual lapses by individuals or to cover them up. At the same time, it is not necessary to publicise them or make a public confession of them for the gratification of the curious and the lovers of scandal, much less to fabricate stories which have no basis

Having admitted children into the Ashram and taken charge of them, the problems arising from their attaining puberty cannot be ignored. Every boy and girl, the moment he or she reaches the age of puberty, becomes aware of the insistence of this force of Nature. It is a part of the problem that life has set before us to solve with love and patience towards the young. Spiritual life is not imposed on the children growing up here. It is for them to decide the course of their life when they are ready to take a decision on their own. Spiritual life can never be imposed on anyone. It is a call of the soul in its endeavour to conquer the lower nature

In our Centre of Education, boys and girls study together, play games together and develop their physical and intellectual capacities in full freedom. Romantic ideas are not encouraged, but there is no segregation of men and women in cloisters, rather, a sense of responsibility for their behaviour is allowed to grow in them. If there is risk in this arrangement, the risk is taken with the full awareness and knowledge that men and women have to live together in life as well as in spiritual endeavour. This equality of men and women is being admitted in most countries and accepted even in spiritual pursuits. In our school, as in our Ashram, men and women are treated equally in all respects—in education, in work, in opportunities to progress

### **Conclusion**

The Ashram is an organisation which provides the needed atmosphere and facilities for those who seek to pursue the goal of our human existence as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The primary aim, as stated innumerable times by them, is for the individual to seek the Divine and come constantly nearer to Him. In this seeking, no social or political objectives come into play. The realisation of the Divine is the one ultimate objective and if this is not achieved, nothing is gained by the individual or the community. The facilities created in the Ashram are for this purpose only. If any individual finds that the facilities created by the Mother help him, he avails himself of them and follows the goal he has set for himself. If he does not find them agreeable, he has to find conditions suitable to him elsewhere.

All enjoy equally the facilities provided by the Ashram. There is no deliberate inequality of treatment of members, no intentional social inequality, a privileged class has not grown up here. It can be said without exaggeration that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is one of the best-organised communities in the country in terms of living



conditions housing, nourishment, education, health-care, care of the old and infirm, and cultural avenues for growth and recreation The Ashram provides an atmosphere with ample comfort, security and freedom of life This is not to claim that the community and its working are perfect A society made up of diverse human types from many cultures and backgrounds, having different degrees of growth, understanding and aspiration, is bound at times to exhibit prejudices and imperfections, but it is in such a mixed milieu that life has to exist, flourish and find its fulfilment to whatever degree it can

If there are problems in the administration of the Ashram as an institution, solutions to them can only be found by people who have travelled the spiritual path shown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and these people must have understanding and benevolence and sympathy for evolving humanity There are no short-cuts on the path of transformation, but a combined effort does help Problems of disharmony must find harmonious solutions by the parties concerned, if possible free from unnecessary controversies and their distorted display in the news media The press is not the best place to discuss the trials and tribulations of spiritual life, exaggerated and misleading reports about our difficulties will not provide enlightened solutions to them

It should be recognised that no democratic assembly, no commission of inquiry, not even a competent judiciary can fairly sit in judgment on matters spiritual The truth of spiritual reality has first to be perceived and then realised by the individual in life No outside agency can help the individual other than his spiritual master and guide In our case, we turn to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for help in solving our problems We believe that their guidance, support and protection will always be with us if we sincerely try to follow the ideal they have set before us What is most important is that we always remember the spiritual objective that is the aim of our life in the Ashram

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

(NB The article was found among the papers of the late author and has been touched up here and there for publication )

# THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of May 2001)

## The Vision and the Boon

### 4

IF ONE were to search for a single line that sums up the meaning of *Savitri*, a possible choice might be a line in Book Three, Canto Two, where Sri Aurobindo uses one of those “symbols more veridical than fact”<sup>1</sup> in which *Savitri* abounds—the dragon we have encountered in the last instalment

Alone her hands can change Time’s dragon base<sup>2</sup>

The inner significance of Savitri’s victory over Death is the descent of the supramental Force into Matter to transform the Inconscient and give “a secured basis for a continuous divine or gnostic evolution”,<sup>3</sup> the consummation foreshadowed in Book Eleven. From 1926 onwards, Sri Aurobindo strongly emphasised the role of an incarnation of the divine Shakti in bringing this about. The fact that Savitri could be represented as such an incarnation partly explains why a poem that had been a relatively minor work up to 1920 was growing by the 1930s into his *magnum opus*.

Sri Aurobindo first inserted the above line in the late 1920s or early 1930s in his fifth version of what was then “The Book of Birth”. The words “dragon base” relate it unmistakably to two lines in the sentence in Book Three, Canto Four, whose origin at a slightly earlier stage in the composition of *Savitri* we have already discussed. In the final text, these lines read

The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps  
Unalterable the law of Chance and Death<sup>4</sup>

We have seen the connection between these lines and a phrase in an entry in Sri Aurobindo’s *Record of Yoga* on 27 January 1927: “the Dragon of the nether foundations who preserves the old Law intact till the will of the Supreme is manifested.”<sup>5</sup> Another sentence in the same entry sheds light on what is meant by the Sphinx, Dragon, Rock and Night, mentioning the “four Powers that resisted” in that order without employing the symbols.

The attack of obscurity, resistance of the universal inconscience, refusal of the universal inertia, obstruction and conservatism of the material negation are beginning to lessen and even where they persist and intervene, cannot resist the progress. The past effects may still continue for a time, the future is not theirs.<sup>6</sup>

But in spite of his certainty that the forces of darkness could not prevail against the growing light, Sri Aurobindo's struggle with these forces was far from over. Indeed, it would intensify when he began to cross the line between overmind and supermind.

For the integral power of the supermind could not be content with a circumscribed spiritual creation in a world left otherwise to its ignorance and misery. The very basis of material existence had to be transformed—the “dragon base” of the inconscience. Sri Aurobindo found himself before long in the situation he described in 1936:

No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy. I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things, it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it.<sup>7</sup>

The Dragon and the Sphinx are two of the ominous creatures of the Abyss that start to appear in various passages of *Savitri* during this period. The record of Sri Aurobindo's contact with the lower extreme of the spectrum of consciousness is no less significant than the revelation of the supernal planes he had reached in the ascending movement of his Yoga. For the nature of his work on earth left him little leisure for basking in the glory of the supramental Sun. Aswapati and Savitri alike must descend into Night and journey into the black Void for the accomplishment of their mission.

The “Dragon of the dark foundations” is evidently the Vedic Vritra, “the personification of the Inconscient.”<sup>8</sup> In *The Life Divine*, in a passage not found in the *Arya* but added by Sri Aurobindo when he revised the book for the first edition published in 1939-40, we come across the image of the dragon in a passage that speaks of the Inconscient as the apparent foundation of mind, life and matter:

All these three lower powers of being build upon the Inconscient and seem to be originated and supported by it. The black dragon of the Inconscience sustains with its vast wings and its back of darkness the whole structure of the material universe, its energies unroll the flux of things, its obscure intimations seem to be the starting-point of consciousness itself and the source of all life-impulse.<sup>9</sup>

In *Savitri* as well, in lines that make their first appearance in the late 1930s, it is said clearly enough that the dragon is a symbol of the Inconscient:

Opponent of that glory of escape,  
The black Inconscient swung its dragon tail  
Lashing a slumbrous Infinite by its force  
Into the deep obscurities of form.<sup>10</sup>

In the last two lines, the “inert Soul” and “somnambulist Force” that are mentioned along with the Dragon in Book Three, Canto Four, appear as a “slumbrous Infinite” and a creative force of the Inconscient such as is described in *The Life Divine*, whose blind energies “unroll the flux of things”

Earlier in this series,<sup>11</sup> we have seen that in 1946 Sri Aurobindo introduced the dragon at the end of the opening section of Book Ten. This passage shows the persistence of the Inconscient as a disturbing background even after the realm of eternal Night, partially conquered by the light of mind and spirit, has made room for the “dream twilight of the ideal”. The final version runs

But on a failing edge of dumb lost space  
Still a great dragon body sullenly loomed,  
Adversary of the slow struggling Dawn  
Defending its ground of tortured mystery,  
It trailed its coils through the dead martyred air  
And curving fled down a grey slope of Time.<sup>12</sup>

The sullenness of the dragon and its “tortured mystery” suggest not only a negation of consciousness, but a perversion of the intrinsic delight of being. Since consciousness and bliss are inseparable aspects of Sachchidananda, we may conjecture that the black dragon of the Inconscient is also the inverse of

The white-fire dragon-bird of endless bliss<sup>13</sup>

who is Savitri’s “playmate in the sempiternal spheres”. Its role as the guardian of “the law of Chance and Death” may be explained on this hypothesis as due to a tamasic *rasa* in the mindless repetition of the established habits of world-force. Perhaps this also gives a clue to what we can expect “Time’s dragon base” to be changed into, when the transfiguring touch of the Divine Mother’s hands restores it to its true and original nature and Time becomes

The quivering of the spirit’s endless bliss<sup>14</sup>

But the comparatively few explicit mentions of the dragon in *Savitri* give only a faint idea of how the idea so symbolised grew in importance as Sri Aurobindo continued to work on the poem from the late 1920s onwards. In the early manuscripts up to 1920, despite the vividness of the canto or book called “Night” and the power of many passages in Savitri’s debate with Death, there was as yet no mention of “the Inconscient”, only as an adjective did the word “inconscient” occur a few times. In the final text of the epic, on the other hand, there are several dozen references to “the Inconscient”.

In a letter of 1946, Sri Aurobindo commented on such repetition of “key ideas,

key images and symbols, key words or phrases”,<sup>15</sup> defending it as part of the technique of mystic poetry in general and *Savitri* in particular. Admitting that to the ordinary mind the Inconscient and the Ignorance “may be mere empty abstractions” and acknowledging that these terms “can be dismissed as irrelevant jargon if one has not come into collision with them or plunged into their dark and bottomless reality”, Sri Aurobindo pointed out that to him these things were “realities, concrete powers whose resistance is present everywhere and at all times in its tremendous and boundless mass”<sup>16</sup>

This being his constant experience, it is not surprising that by the early 1940s we find it expressed in unambiguous terms in *Savitri*. The following lines are all found in the 1944 manuscript of Part One. In the last three lines, which were introduced a little later than the others, Sri Aurobindo does not speak of Aswapati but shifts to the first person. Here one feels the appalling difficulty of the task he had undertaken. The coils of the dragon seem to sprawl interminably, as if darkly imitating the infinitude of the divine Consciousness itself.

In the texture of our bound humanity  
He felt the stark resistance huge and dumb  
Of our inconscient and unseeing base,  
For the Inconscient too is infinite,  
The more its abysses we insist to sound,  
The more it stretches, stretches endlessly<sup>17</sup>

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

#### Notes and References

- 1 *Savitri* (1993), p. 30
- 2 *Ibid*, p. 314
- 3 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 19, p. 954
- 4 *Savitri*, p. 336
- 5 *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1994, pp. 149-50
- 6 *Ibid*, p. 149
- 7 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 153
- 8 *The Secret of the Veda* (1998), p. 322
- 9 *The Life Divine*, pp. 665-66
- 10 *Savitri*, p. 79
- 11 *Mother India*, October 2000, pp. 797-99
- 12 *Savitri*, p. 601
- 13 *Ibid*, p. 16. This line originally appeared in a somewhat different form in a version of ‘Book I Quest’ that seems to have been the first to be written after November 1926. This is the earliest known occurrence of the word “dragon” in the manuscripts of *Savitri*.
- 14 *Ibid*, p. 684
- 15 *Ibid*, p. 742
- 16 *Ibid*, p. 737
- 17 *Ibid*, pp. 317-18

# OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of May 2001)

## The necessity of transitional beings

THE announcement in *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* of the creation of “a new humanity”, of beings or kinds of beings in between the human and the supramental species, was a new development in the supramental Yoga, in the enormously concentrated effort of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to give a totally new turn to the evolution within the span of a single lifetime. But was such a development completely unforeseen? The gap between Mind and Supermind being so large, how could it reasonably be supposed that it could be bridged without something in between? “For the gulf between Mind and Supermind has to be bridged, the closed passages opened and roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence”,<sup>51</sup> wrote Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya*, some 30 years before his articles were composed for the *Bulletin*. To put the progress of the Yoga from the *Arya* articles onward into perspective, we shall simply quote some relevant paragraphs from his early writings.

● “If a spiritual unfolding on earth is the hidden truth of our birth into Matter, if it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has been taking place in Nature, then man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution. He is too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, Mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation, Mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being. If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and Supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. *But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at Supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the spirit manifesting in Nature*”<sup>52</sup>

● “Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own, the evolutionary oestrus is there in his parts of mind and life, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him. He has become conscious of a soul, discovered the Self and Spirit. In him, then, the substitution of a conscious for a subconscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour in him is a sure sign of Nature’s will for a higher way to fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status”<sup>53</sup>

● “When the gnosis is gained, it can then be turned on the whole nature to divinise the human being. It is impossible to rise into it at once, if that could be done, it would mean a sudden and violent overshooting, a breaking or slipping through the gates of the Sun, *sūryasya dvārā*, without near possibility of return. *We have to form*

*as a link or bridge an intuitive or illumined mind, which is not the direct gnosis, but in which a first derivative body of the gnosis can form* This illumined mind will first be a mixed power which we shall have to purify of all its mental dependence and mental forms so as to convert all willing and thinking into thought-sight and truth-seeing will by an illumined discrimination, intuition, inspiration, revelation That will be the final purification of the intelligence and the preparation for the Siddhi of the gnosis.”<sup>54</sup>

- “*Even before the gnostic change there can be a beginning of this fundamental ecstasy of being translated into a manifold beauty and delight* In the mind, it translates into a calm of intense delight of spiritual perception and vision and knowledge, in the heart into a wide or deep or passionate delight of universal union and love and sympathy and the joy of beings and the joy of things In the will and vital parts it is felt as the energy of delight of a divine life-power in action or a beatitude of the senses perceiving and meeting the One everywhere, perceiving as their normal aesthesis of things a universal beauty and a secret harmony of creation of which our mind can catch only imperfect glimpses or a rare supernormal sense In the body it reveals itself as an ecstasy pouring into it from the heights of the Spirit and the peace and bliss of a pure and spiritualised physical existence”<sup>55</sup>

- “*In the untransformed part of humanity itself there might well arise a new and greater order of mental human beings, for the directly intuitive or partly intuitivised but not yet gnostic mental being, the directly or partly illumined mental being, the mental being in direct or part communion with the higher-thought plane would emerge* these would become more and more numerous, more and more evolved and secure in their type, and might even exist as a formed race of higher humanity leading upwards the less evolved in a true fraternity born of the sense of the manifestation of the One Divine in all beings”<sup>56</sup> These words may also be applicable to the levels of humanity, overhumanity and superhumanity that are likely to exist simultaneously in the future (See part two of this book)

- “*Therefore the individuals who will most help the future of humanity in the new age will be those who will recognise a spiritual evolution as the destiny and therefore the great need of the human being* Even as the animal man has been largely converted into a mentalised and at the top a highly mentalised humanity, so too now or in the future an evolution or conversion—it does not greatly matter which figure we use or what theory we adopt to support it—of the present type of humanity into a spiritualised humanity is the need of the race and surely the intention of Nature, that evolution or conversion will be their ideal and endeavour They will be comparatively indifferent to particular belief and form and leave men to resort to the beliefs and forms to which they are naturally drawn They will only hold as essential the faith in this spiritual conversion, the attempt to live it out and whatever knowledge—the form of opinion into which it is thrown does not so much matter—can be converted into this living They will especially not make the mistake of thinking that this change can be effected by machinery and outward institutions, they will know and never forget

that it has to be lived out by each man inwardly or it can never be made a reality for the kind They will adopt in its heart of meaning the inward view of the East which bids man seek the secret of his destiny and salvation within, but also they will accept, though with a different turn given to it, the importance which the West rightly attaches to life and to the making the best we know and can attain the general rule of all life.”<sup>57</sup>

This selection of quotations is far from exhaustive Yet it shows so convincingly the enormous will of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to change humanity into something better and higher The spiritual was never left out of their view and the material was always used as their stepping stone There is no greater epic than the story of their lives; but its episodes worked for the most part unseen, not “in front of the curtain”, and they remain for the most part unknown

### **The Mind of Light**

Our ordinary human mind is a mind of confusion and darkness, a look into this morning’s newspaper will confirm this right away In the last months of his life Sri Aurobindo announced the coming of a kind of being that would possess a mind of clarity and light. Let us then at this point of our exposition recall how he defined that Mind of Light in the last of his articles for the *Bulletin* <sup>58</sup> (All emphases are added )

- “The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it ” (p 588)

- “In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover for this too is a truth-consciousness and a self-power of knowledge *This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate* What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed *the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself* by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same. there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge, we have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-consciousness into ignorance ” (p 589) It should be noted that Sri Aurobindo locates the Mind of Light in the descending order of the spiritual levels as “the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness” just where the border of the truth-consciousness into the ignorance, our main human characteristic, is not yet crossed In the inverse order the Mind of Light will be (or is already) the first acquisition by some advanced human beings of the Truth-Consciousness or Supermind in its most “diluted” aspect

- “There is a further limitation or change of characteristic action [of the supramental consciousness] at each step downwards from Overmind to Intuition, from Intuition to Illumined Mind, from Illumined Mind to what I have called the Higher Mind the Mind of Light is a transitional passage by which we can pass from



supermind and superhumanity to an illumined humanity For the new humanity will be capable of at least a *partly divinised way of seeing and living* because it will live in the light and in knowledge and not in the obscurity of the ignorance ” (p 590) Again Sri Aurobindo is locating “the new humanity” in the descending order From this passage one might conclude that the character, intensity or degree of the Mind of Light may vary to some degree and that it belongs, generally speaking, to the levels of either Higher or Illumined Mind We already know that these two levels are the highest attained by mankind until the present in its thinkers, poets,<sup>59</sup> sages, mystics, seers and saints Now the acquisition of the Mind of Light (1) would no longer be a personal feat but an evolutionary step forward of humankind in many individuals, preparing the advent of the supramental species, (2) it would cause and even require bodily changes necessary to allow for “a partly divinised way of seeing and living”

### A normal evolutionary process

Sri Aurobindo wrote as early as in *The Life Divine* “In a future transformation the character of the evolution, the principle of evolutionary process, although modified, will not fundamentally change but, on a vaster scale and in a liberated movement, royally continue ”<sup>60</sup> Paleontology tells us that there have been intermediary, transitional beings between the primates and *homo sapiens* The appearance of a “new humanity” of transitional beings would therefore be the normal and necessary preamble to the realisation of the supramental being on the Earth “The advance [i.e. the coming of a new, higher species beyond humanity], however it comes about, will indeed be of the nature of a miracle, as are all such profound changes and immense developments, for they have the appearance of a kind of realised impossibility But God works all his miracles by an evolution of secret possibilities which have been long prepared, at least in their elements, and in the end by a rapid bringing of all to a head, a throwing together of the elements so that in their fusion they produce a new form and name of things and reveal a new spirit Often the decisive turn is preceded by an apparent emphasising and raising to their extreme of things which seem the very denial, the most uncompromising opposite of the new principle and the new creation ”<sup>61</sup>

“All the facts show that a type can vary within its own specification of nature,” wrote Sri Aurobindo, “but there is nothing to show that it can go beyond it It has not yet been really established that ape-kind developed into man, for it would rather seem that a type resembling the ape, but always characteristic of itself and not of apehood, developed within its own tendencies of nature and became what we know as man, the present human being ” This, written around 1920 in the *Arya*, seems to be in agreement with the latest conclusions of evolutionary biology “It is not even established that inferior races of man developed out of themselves the superior races; those of an inferior organisation and capacity perished, but it has not been shown that they left behind the human races of today as their descendants but still such a development within the type is imaginable ”<sup>62</sup>

In the same chapter, Sri Aurobindo returned to the subject “If the appearance in animal being of a type similar in some respects to the ape-kind but already from the beginning endowed with the elements of humanity was the method of the human evolution, the appearance in the human being of a spiritual type resembling mental-animal humanity but already with the stamp of the spiritual aspiration on it would be the obvious method of Nature for the evolutionary production of the spiritual and supramental being”<sup>63</sup> Towards the end of his life he discovered or communicated the knowledge for the first time that “a spiritual type resembling mental-animal humanity” was to become an evolutionary fact, but in place of a “spiritual aspiration” it would be endowed with the first lights of the Supermind

One of the main problems of the avataric effort was that the foundations of the future had to be secured within the span of a human lifetime. This meant that a new evolutionary turn and acceleration, which normally takes thousands and more often millions of years, had to be initiated within less than a century.

“My difficulty is,” wrote Sri Aurobindo to a disciple in 1933, “that you all seem to expect a kind of miraculous fairy-tale change and do not realise that it is a rapid and concentrated evolution which is the aim of my Sadhana [and the Mother’s] and that there must be a process for it, a working of the higher in the lower and a dealing with all the necessary intervals—not a sudden feat of creation by which everything is done on a given date. It is a supramental but not an irrational process. What is to be done will happen—perhaps with a rush even—but in a workmanlike way and not according to Faerie”<sup>64</sup> And he wrote to another disciple “But in its nature the Descent [of the Supermind] is not something arbitrary and miraculous but a rapid evolutionary process compressed into a few years which proceeds by taking up the present nature into its Light and pouring its Truth into the inferior planes. That cannot be done in the whole world at a time, but it is done like all such processes, first through selected Adharas and then on a wider scale. We have to do it through ourselves [Sri Aurobindo meant himself and the Mother] first and through the circle of Sadhaks gathered around us in the terrestrial consciousness as typified here. If a few open, that is sufficient for the process to be possible”<sup>65</sup> At the time this last passage was written, the expectation was still of a direct Descent of the Supermind to be concretised by an appearance on earth of the supramental being. But now, at this point in our story, it became obvious that a transitional kind of being in the evolutionary scale was required.

*(To be continued)*

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

## A CLARIFICATION

“Overman”, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is a being born like all human beings but having acquired a Mind of Light—as will be made clear in the

following sequels of the present series. Sri Aurobindo did not give this being a name, but the Mother did. She called it *surhomme*, of which the literal translation is “overman” It should be stated explicitly that “overman” is not a correlate of “overmind”, just as in French *surhomme* is not a correlate of *surmental* The concept of overman (and overwoman) is extremely important, for it indicates the stage the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is in at present, before the appearance of the supramental being As to my knowledge this is the first time due attention is given to this stage of the Yoga, I deem it important that in the present exposition the literal translation of the Mother’s usually mistranslated French term be kept, even in spite of its gender specificity. —G V V

### *Notes and References*

- 51 Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, p 891
- 52 *Ibid* , pp 846-847 (emphasis added)
- 53 *Ibid* , p 843
- 54 Sri Aurobindo *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p 646 (emphasis added)
- 55 Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, p 991 (emphasis added)
- 56 *Ibid* , pp 1012-1013
- 57 Sri Aurobindo *The Human Cycle*, pp 250-251 (emphasis added)
- 58 The two authors who have been most aware of the importance of the Mind of Light are K D Sethna, e g in his *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, and R Y Deshpande, e g in *Sri Aurobindo and the New Millennium*
- 59 Sri Aurobindo encouraged the writing of poetry (as well as the practice of other art forms) because his concentration—the striving for inspiration—brings the poet into contact with the spiritual levels above the mind Several of his disciples were talented poets who sought the guidance and critical appreciation of their Master The ease with which Sri Aurobindo traced many of their lines to the various spiritual or “overhead” planes from where they originated, is remarkable and a true innovation in the poetic literature See K D Sethna’s *Overhead Poetry Poems with Sri Aurobindo’s Comments*, and Nirodbaran’s *Fifty Poems with Sri Aurobindo’s Comments*
- 60 Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, pp 726-727
- 61 Sri Aurobindo *The Human Cycle*, p 172
- 62 Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine*, p 829
- 63 *Ibid* , p 842
- 64 Sri Aurobindo *On Himself*, p 147
- 65 *Ibid* , p 471

# THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of May 2001)

## Section IV. Elements involved in the act of "seeing"

THERE IS much that we are going to say in the present Section and in the two or three Sections hereafter which may meet with derisive cynicism in the minds of those who have been brought up in the atmosphere of contemporary rational-scientific education. We make no attempt to convince these sceptics about the validity of the affirmations we are going to make in the course of our discussion. For the present essay is not a polemical one: it does not want to indulge in any sterile debate in its rather limited span. All that we are going to say is meant solely for those amongst our readers who want to know the truth in this matter with an open mind and unbiased disposition. We cannot but recall in this connection the witty prayer uttered by the ancients and quoted in the title page of Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead's book *Psychology, Religion and Healing*:

From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth,  
From the laziness that is content with half-truths,  
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,  
O God of Truth, deliver us

Before we commence our discussion on the complex issue of the possibility of having different kinds of visions all valid and objectively real, we may very well cite a portion of a relevant letter of Sri Aurobindo addressed to the rather doubting mind of one of his beloved disciples:

"all this is not fancy or delusion, it is part of an occult science [and is] not merely auto-suggestive or hallucinatory in its results, but, if one can get the key, veridical and verifiable. Your scepticism may be natural in a 'modern' man: natural but not justifiable, because very obviously inadequate to the facts observed, but once you have seen, the first thing you should do is to throw all this vapid pseudo-science behind you, this vain attempt to stick physical explanations on supraphysical things, and take the only rational course. Develop the power, get more and more experience, develop the consciousness by which these things come, as the consciousness develops, you will begin to understand and get the intuition of the significance." (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 938)

Enough for the prelude: let us now come to the discussion proper of our present thesis which affirms the almost infinite variability of supraphysical visions depending on the changes effected in the composition of the eight essential elements involved in any process of "seeing". These elements, as we have mentioned in Section III, are in brief: (1) the object, (2) the space, (3) the illuminating light, (4) any obstruction;

(5) the sense organ, (6) sense action, (7) sense mind, and (8) the receiving consciousness. Now, none of these constitutive elements are at all simple belying the facile assumption of most men. Each of these eight constituents admits of many possible variations giving rise to many a kind of sights and visions through the mere permutation and combination of the widely varying constitutive elements. Element by element, we are now going to mention in brief a few possible alternative variations in each case.

### **First element: Object viewed:**

The points to note here are

1. A physical object placed in the physical space is not the only object possible.
2. Apart from the well-known physical world, there are in fact many other supra-physical worlds of reality. Each of them contains its corresponding beings, objects and functioning forces. All these beings, objects and forces can very well present themselves as objects of vision to faculties suited to their reception and, what is more notable, all these different types of faculties of vision are accessible to the consciousness of man if he cares for their development.

3. Even a physical object does not exhaust the possibility of its reality with only its physical aspect. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "There is a physical aspect of things and there is an occult supraphysical aspect—one need not get in the way of the other. All physical things are the expression of the supraphysical." (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 938)

Thus every physical object has associated with it many other "layers" and "dimensions" of aspects which are not at all purely and solely derivations of the physical. So, the same physical object is apt to reveal different "sights" to the viewer depending on the latter's capacity of how far and to which depth of the object his "eye" can penetrate. Also, the vision will vary depending on which aspect of the object the viewer decides to concentrate upon to the exclusion of other aspects.

4. What is striking to note is the occult fact that not merely sensible physical objects but everything else also in the complex cosmos of manifestation, – thoughts, feelings, desires, hopes, fears, ideas, forces, etc., etc., – has a substance of its own, and therefore a corresponding form, and hence can be viewed as an object. In fact, Sri Aurobindo has gone so far as to assert that "there is nothing that it [the inner sense] cannot image or visualise or turn into sensory formations." (*The Life Divine*, p. 536)

Here is an experience of the Mother illustrative of how one can have concurrently two visions of the same object:

"When you look at a person physically, there is the complexion, the features, the expression, at the same moment, if you see this face in the subtle physical, you suddenly notice that one part of the face is one colour, another part another colour, that in the eyes there is an expression and a kind of light which were not at all visible, and that the whole has quite a different appearance and, above all, gives a very different feeling, which to our physical eyes would seem rather extravagant, but which

to the subtle vision is very expressive and revealing of the character, or even of the influences acting on this person. What I say here is the record of an experience that I had again a few days ago." (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol 10, pp 127-28)

The Mother's experience testifies to the fact referred to by Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine* that our consciousness has the power to live in more than one status at a time, one the outer and the surface one, the other being an inner status. (p 659)

Before closing our discussion on the first element, "Object", we may draw the attention of our readers to another striking fact which is that the things *inside* can present themselves as suitable *objects* of vision. Here are two relevant passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

"Things inside can be seen as distinctly as outward things, whether in an image by the subtle vision or in their essence by a still more subtle and powerful way of seeing." (*Letters on Yoga*, p 944)

"you have the vision of the truth of things behind their appearances. Instead of seeing things in the usual way, that is, from outside, you see things from within outwards, and the outer existence becomes an expression, more or less deformed, of what you see within. you are aware of the inner existence of beings and their form; their outer existence is only a more or less deformed expression of this inner truth. And it is because of this that I say that the basic equilibrium is completely changed. Instead of being outside the world and seeing it as something outside you, you are inside the world and see outer forms expressing in a more or less clumsy fashion what is within, which for you is the Truth." (*CWM*, Vol 4, pp 20-21)

## Second Element: Space in which the object is placed:

One almost universally accepted assumption is that there can be only one type of space, the physical space, and a physical object can be placed only in that physical space and viewed there. But this is not true according to the well-attested discoveries of occult science. There are many more spaces than this gross physical space, *sthūlākāśa*. Indian mystical tradition has named them as *cittākāśa*, *cidākāśa*, *vyoma*, etc. We cannot but recall in this connection Sri Aurobindo's magnificent description of the 'soul space' in Book II Canto 14 of *Savitri*. Here are a few striking lines from that description.

All there was soul or made of sheer soul-stuff  
 A sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground  
 There was a strange spiritual scenery,  
 A loveliness of lakes and streams and hills,  
 A flow, a fixity in a soul-space,  
 And plains and valleys, stretches of soul-joy,  
 And gardens that were flower-tracts of the spirit,  
 Its meditations of tinged reverie

There all was beautiful by its own right  
 And needed not the splendour of a robe  
 All objects were like bodies of the Gods (291-93)

We have been speaking of the existence of different spaces. Now the interesting fact is that every object of vision, even a physical object—yes, we insist, even a physical object—exists at the same time in all these different spaces with, of course, inevitably attendant changes. Now if you try to look at an object against the background of a particular space you will have a different kind of sight depending on the space selected. Here is a pertinent passage from what the Mother said to one of her disciples on 27 February 1962:

“The world we live in is a world of images. It is not the thing itself in its essence, it is the reflection of the thing. One could say that we are, in our material existence, only a reflection, an image of what we are in our essential reality. And the modalities of these reflections bring in every error and falsification—what you see in the essence is perfectly true and pure and exists from all eternity, the images are essentially variable. One could say that every circumstance, every event, every thing has a pure existence, which is the true existence, and a considerable number of impure or distorted existences, which are the existence of the same thing in the various domains of being.” (CWM, Vol 10, pp 126-27)

We feel tempted to quote in this connection a few verses from *Savitri* which demonstrate pointedly how our familiar world of physical space with its physical objects appears differently to the penetrating Eye of someone who knows how to see behind. Satyavan is describing his visions to Savitri on the occasion of their first meeting:

Earth could not hide from me the powers she veils  
 Even though moving mid an earthly scene  
 And the common surfaces of terrestrial things,  
 My vision saw unblinded by her forms,  
 The Godhead looked at me from familiar scenes  
 The day and dusk revealed to me hidden shapes,  
 Figures have come to me from secret shores  
 And happy faces looked from ray and flame.  
 I caught for some eternal eye the sudden  
 Kingfisher flashing to a darkling pool  
 Pranked butterflies, the conscious flowers of air  
 And wandering wings nearing from infinity  
 Lived on the tablets of my inner sight;  
 Mountains and trees stood there like thoughts from God (pp 401, 405)

(To be continued)

## CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of May 2001)

### A New Road after Manhattan

WHEN the Soviet Union launched the first Sputnik on 4 October 1957 there was in the United States a sense of hurt pride and also concern for national security. Those were the days of Cold War and the grim race of world leadership was at stake. Understandably, corrective action by taking drastic steps was necessary. In fact “this had a ‘Pearl Harbor’ effect on American public opinion, creating an illusion of a technological gap” which, at the same time, “provided the impetus for increased spending for aerospace endeavors, technical and scientific educational programs, and the chartering of new federal agencies to manage air and space research and development.” Atomic weapons in the hands of a nation having control over space, like controlling the seas in the past, posed a great danger of survival of the rival powers in the world. At that time the War hero Dwight D. Eisenhower himself was the President of the United States and he was quick to bring measures to counter the risk. On 1 October 1958 an Act was passed to initiate a programme for the exploration of outer space.

Thus was born the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This was perhaps more in terms related to national defence rather than so much to ideological-social issues. Space race had begun. Cold War became another engine to drive science, technology and industry on another path that didn't, like the World War II, seem to terminate anywhere.

The result was the launching of the first Earth satellite on 31 January 1958 by the United States Explorer 1 was in space and it documented in detail the radiation zone called the Van Allen Belt. Soon there was a series of scientific missions leading to the landing of Man on the Moon.

NASA began operations by “absorbing into itself the earlier National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics intact its 8,000 employees, an annual budget of \$100 million, three major research laboratories—Langley Aeronautical Laboratory, Ames Aeronautical Laboratory, and Lewis Flight Propulsion Laboratory—and two smaller test facilities. It quickly incorporated other organizations into the new agency, notably the space science group of the Naval Research Laboratory in Maryland, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory managed by the California Institute of Technology for the Army, and the Army Ballistic Missile Agency in Huntsville, Alabama, where Wernher von Braun's team of engineers were engaged in the development of large rockets. Eventually NASA created other Centers and today it has ten located around the country.” (*A Brief History of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration* by Stephen J. Garber and Roger D. Launius)

Several major projects handled by NASA can be briefly mentioned as follows. Launching of satellites, human space flights, carrying out space operations, rendez-



vous and docking of spacecraft, extravehicular activity, landing of man on Moon, study of outer planets, aeronautics research, remote-sensing, weather monitoring, applications satellites for communications, orbital workshop for astronauts, the Space Shuttle

“The singular achievement of NASA during its early years involved the human exploration of the Moon, Project Apollo. Apollo became a NASA priority on May 25 1961, when President John F. Kennedy announced ‘I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth.’ A direct response to Soviet successes in space, Kennedy used Apollo as a high-profile effort for the U.S. to demonstrate to the world its scientific and technological superiority over its cold war adversary. In response to the Kennedy decision, NASA was consumed with carrying out Project Apollo and spent the next 11 years doing so. This effort required significant expenditures, costing \$25.4 billion over the life of the program, to make it a reality. Only the building of the Panama Canal rivalled the size of the Apollo program as the largest nonmilitary technological endeavor ever undertaken by the United States, only the Manhattan Project was comparable in a wartime setting. Although there were major challenges and some failures—notably a 27 January 1967 fire in an Apollo capsule on the ground that took the lives of three astronauts—the program moved forward inexorably.

“Less than two years later, in October 1968, NASA bounced back with the successful Apollo 7 mission, which orbited the Earth and tested the redesigned Apollo command module. The Apollo 8 mission, which orbited the Moon on December 24–25, 1968, when its crew read from the book of Genesis, was another crucial accomplishment on the way to the Moon.

“‘That’s one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind.’ Neil A. Armstrong uttered these famous words on 20 July 1969 when the Apollo 11 mission fulfilled Kennedy’s challenge by successfully landing Armstrong and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. on the Moon. Armstrong dramatically piloted the lunar module to the lunar surface with less than 30 seconds worth of fuel remaining. After taking soil samples, photographs, and doing other tasks on the Moon, Armstrong and Aldrin rendezvoused with their colleague Michael Collins in lunar orbit for a safe voyage back to Earth.

“In 1975, NASA cooperated with the Soviet Union to achieve the first international human spaceflight, the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project. This project successfully tested joint rendezvous and docking procedures for spacecraft from the U.S. and the USSR. After being launched separately from their respective countries, the Apollo and Soyuz crews met in space and conducted various experiments for two days.’”

Later, on 4 July 1997, the Pathfinder spacecraft landed on Mars to explore its surface. The Red Planet always has a special attraction for the scientific community as it is believed to have conditions favourable for the existence of life. The Pathfinder not only carried out the assigned mission successfully, it also proved to be exciting for the common man whose understandable curiosity in this respect was aroused to a

great extent. The arrival of communication satellites and online systems had made it accessible to him the world over and he was watching the progress with an unusual interest. But perhaps, and more importantly, the launching of the Hubble Space Telescope in 1990 opened out farther dimensions of the universe in front of which the achievements of long centuries paled into insignificance. All that was observed and done during those toilsome years seems to be of so little worth. One now wonders whether this "blue marble" called the Earth has any recognisable place at all in the immensity of the material reality. The outward-looking Eye of the Telescope has perhaps brought to us an inward vision. Maybe this is not an altogether new feeling, but presently it has come with a new sense of concreteness.

In the launching of communications satellites during the 60s NASA brought in a total change that made the world a global village. The boost it gave to computer science and information technology, and the development of hi-tech industrial applications based on them, had far-reaching implications.

More than the dream of world leadership, other countries were also quick to recognise the importance of space. Thus came into existence in 1975 European Space Agency with fifteen countries as its members. "Space already exists for Europe," says Antonio Rodotà, its Director General. But the question is what to do with it. Presently Europe's space industries employ 40,000 people directly and 250,000 indirectly. These numbers can grow further in proportion as they contribute to Europe's economic and social fabric. For example space navigation systems are indispensable for science and industry, the spin-offs of which are available even for household use. "But in critical areas such as air travel applications are restricted because the existing American and Russian systems are under military control." The US space industry benefits from large public funding and technological stimulation from the military space sector, which is relatively small in Europe. One interesting area of activity is the development of tiny satellites weighing less than 10 kg but clever enough to carry out sophisticated functions. Similarly, there are other possibilities. The Moon and the asteroids can prove to be rich in materials that could in principle be quarried for manufacture. The possibility of supplying the Earth with clean energy from space is another engineering prospect available to the enterprising ones. Ariane rockets developed by ESA now command the commercial market in space launches, especially for communications satellites, despite intense competition from the USA, Russia, China and Japan. This is now a billion-euro industry. Another important achievement is in the field of telecommunications satellites. Indeed this has, apart from becoming another billion-euro industry, marked a major step towards globalisation. In fact "teams of experts from various nations working successfully together on tough projects" is another phenomenon in European history. Very perceptively does the ESA Director General Antonio Rodotà observe "Please don't forget how amazing that is. Their grandparents were shooting at one another."

He further adds that space exploration is as much a part of the cultural and political scene as oceanic exploration was 400 years ago, and Europe has chosen to be

a participant, not a bystander. Space exploration is a great re-unifier of human knowledge and skills, countering a tendency to over-specialisation with projects that are inherently multidisciplinary. "During this century the human species will make stupendous choices about the uses of space and the whole Solar System," says Antonio Rodotà. "We have to be strong enough to be sure that Europe is in the room when the decisions are taken."

The Cold War of yesteryears between the world's two superpowers led to intense competition resulting in the infamous "Star Wars". The American initiative of the 1980s was towards destroying nuclear missiles in flight. One can perhaps also understand NASA opposing the Russian plan to send an American tourist to the space station. But it seems that, like the lost continent Atlantis, the very weight of technology itself was too much for Russia to sustain economically its pioneering effort in space. Today it has about 170 spacecraft active in orbit, makes 40 launches per year and in Cosmodrome Baikonour employs 12,000 people. However, in the final reckoning the famed 150-ton space station MIR had to end on 23 March 2001 its glorious 15-year odyssey in space by plunging into the Pacific. The technological feat of the flawless splash at about 3000 km east of Wellington, New Zealand, was a marvel in engineering and computer sciences. A report says "The third and last time the station's braking engines were fired when the MIR was over Tonga and were switched off 22 minutes later when the station flew over Iran. After that MIR streaked in elliptical trajectory over the Russian Far East and Japan, disintegrating on the way. The station's spectacular last flight could be observed from Fiji and Tonga as several fireballs dashing through the night sky at 200 metres per second and exploding on hitting the water. The Russian space officials had reason to feel proud of their technological prowess. 'It has been an exemplary operation, and our experts have not made a mistake in any single step, not in a millimeter.' Had the station's engines fired several seconds earlier or later than planned, the MIR could have hit Latin America." New MIRs can be built, but money is now the problem for Russia. At a cost of \$250 million a year the pride that MIR was had become a liability. What had drawn applause for years had to die. This jewel in the crown of Russian space glory is no more and the social ramifications that its absence will have forebode gloomier times. Russia of its own cannot any more afford projects of this kind and therefore has to engage itself with the United States to jointly set up an International Space Station. For a social scientist it will be interesting and also rewarding to analyse the deeper causes of the changes that are taking place with such breath-taking speed. The coupling of science and technology with industry and the national outlook towards systems of free and entrepreneurial management are some of the issues which perhaps must be pursued. Regimented economy where the individual enterprise is not available has in it its own dark seeds of doom.

America has already started dictating terms. The Russian plan to send a tourist to the International Space Station has been questioned. This would bring to it a fee of \$20 million for the privilege an American businessman would get under the proposal.

It is said that the "United States and all of the other international partners in the project remain opposed to sending an American businessman to the station as part of the crew of a Soyuz spacecraft scheduled to blast off on April 30." The chances are that the Russians will have to maintain a subdued attitude. The American humdinger is now on the run.

Will this not have a lesson for India also?

India's space programme began in 1963 as an extension of activities of the Department of Atomic Energy. In 1972 the Space Commission was set up and the Department of Space was entrusted with the responsibility for organising the country's space activities. Vikram Sarabhai was the pioneering spirit behind the whole effort. Justifying the necessity of such an activity, he said "There are some who question the relevance of space activities in a developing nation. To us, there is no ambiguity of purpose. We do not have the fantasy of competing with the economically advanced nations in the exploration of the moon or the planets or manned spaceflight. But we are convinced that if we are to play a meaningful role nationally, and in the community of nations, we must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to the real problems of man and society." Advancement in areas of communication, meteorology, resources survey and management, development of satellites, launch vehicles and associated ground systems were the initial objectives. Since then, India has made impressive progress in this field. Space technology has not only enhanced India's communication capabilities, but has also contributed in meteorological forecasting, providing advanced disaster warning, search and rescue measures and distance education to remote areas.

Two major space systems have been established by the Department of Space. These are Indian National Satellite (INSAT) system providing services in the areas of telecommunications, television broadcasting and meteorology including disaster warning, Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellite system for resources survey and management. INSAT is one of the largest domestic communication satellite systems in the world today with four satellites, besides seven transponders leased from Shin Satellite Public Co., Thailand. A total of 450 telecommunication terminals of various sizes and capabilities are operating and providing 5,103 two-way speech circuits or equivalent over 166 routes. Prasar Bharati covers important events in different locations for transmission via satellite. Optimal utilisation of the country's natural resources using remote sensing data is the other important space activity. Exploration and management of various resources, technology and training may be mentioned as some of the areas which occupy the experts in the respective fields. One perceptible result is the telecommunication network that has grown in the country on an unprecedented scale during the last decade or so. Not only remote villages are now accessible, contacting relatives, friends, business concerns the world over has become instantaneous.

India's first satellite Aryabhata was launched by a Soviet rocket on 19th April 1975. It marked the beginning of the Indian space journey. Many are the creditable achievements since then. With the "successful launch of SLV-3 on 18th July 1980

when a 35 kg satellite called Rohini I was placed in LEO, India became only the seventh nation in the world to achieve space orbit capability ”

In the words of K. Kasturirangan, Secretary, Department of Space “About forty years ago a startled world was ushered into the space age by Sputnik-I, the world’s first artificial satellite. Since then, the world’s space activities have grown manifold in magnitude and diversity. The new frontier continues to beckon the romantics with vision of space colonies and interplanetary travel, and the scientists with new discoveries about the universe. However, economic and other considerations have increasingly forced a more pragmatic utilisation of space. The commercial drive which has been increasingly influencing space activities has contributed to rapid adoption of space in several spheres of development. This development, spearheaded by satellite communications, has drawn in many civilian users of space services and products from industry and many other walks of civilian life. Space activities are now characterised by a wider and growing spectrum of applications spanning from weather observations to generation of information relevant to sustainable development of natural resources ”

The next step for India is to complete the development of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, GSLV, which can launch 2,500 kg INSAT class of communication satellites. Kasturirangan continues “The national investment to sustain the space programme can not only provide a significant and profitable domestic market for Indian industry, but also help it acquire technological muscle to enlarge its capability for increasing the value added component in other areas and eventually capture a part of the growing international market in high technology applications. Hence India encouraged an active participation of industries in its space programme that has resulted in the industry upgrading their own technological skills. Even though the Indian space programme is primarily directed towards establishment of space systems for national development, the capability that is built in the process has started yielding economic benefits. That, with a modest overall expenditure of about US \$2,400 million so far, India has built 29 satellites, developed three types of launch vehicles with thirteen flights in all so far, established an elaborate infrastructure to design, build and test communication and remote sensing satellites, their launch, and their in-orbit management as well as for data processing and application, and developed a strong manpower base for undertaking frontline R&D in space, proves that the Indian space programme has been one of the most successful and cost effective, especially, when one looks at the benefit that has accrued to the nation in terms of communication, television broadcasting, meteorological services, disaster management and resources survey and management. As India enters the next millennium, it is necessary to sustain this programme by continuously tuning it to the fast changing requirement and updating the technology that goes into the making of these sophisticated systems. The challenges continue to grow but that is what attracts and sustains the interests of personnel working in the space programme ”

This surely can be said to be quite commendable, particularly in the context of

the kind of funding that we can afford India's role in promoting the role of the space-based remote sensing for various applications has been recognised by the world community with the Indian Space Research Organisation taking over in November 1997 the chairmanship of the International Committee on Earth

But, in spite of all these gains, can we assertively say that the Indian scientific programme is at the front-line of the research and developments that are taking place in advanced countries? We are still orbiting around, tied to the gravity of our own problems. We have not yet launched ourselves into the freedom of space. This is true factually as well as metaphorically. The moment there are international sanctions or there are pressures against India, as it happened in the case of acquiring cryogenic technology, our programmes suffer a setback.

No doubt, this entire effort may be considered as a very satisfactory response in terms of applications of technology in view of the local problems. A certain degree of professionalism has been acquired in the process. More important, however, is the transformation that has occurred in the psychology of the people who now do look for modern facilities if not conveniences in life. Commerce has changed, business has changed, management has changed, society has become nuclear. It has unfortunately also become artificial and at times snobbish. There is a forced globalisation that has come to us and to the world. Also a conflict has arisen between Swadeshi and the Western style of doing things. But before we take up these issues let us follow the path that has come into view after World War II.

*(To be continued)*

R Y DESHPANDE

### NEWS FLASH

On 18 April 2001 at 3 45pm the Indian Geosynchronous Communication Satellite with 1500kg of payload was successfully launched from the Eastern Coast at Sriharikota. This used the cryogenic engines the know-how of which was acquired from Russia. This is a remarkable achievement and we must applaud the entire effort leading us into a new era of space exploration though not altogether into new skies. What *The Hindu* said editorially on 20 April 2001 may be reproduced here.

'India's quest for self-reliance in space technology has now been met in substantive measure with the launch of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) from Sriharikota. The majestic Indian triumph marks the fruition of a dream dared four decades ago by a few visionary nation-builders, especially Vikram Sarabhai to create a full-fledged space programme for the nation. What makes the latest lift-off an occasion to mark in India's chequered space history is the ability of the nation's scientists to handle complex systems. That the launch took place exactly three weeks after the March 28 last-second abort reflects not just the mastery of the Indian

Space Research Organisation (ISRO) over launch vehicle techniques. It is also a testimony in space to the ability of the organisation that it can quickly and accurately identify its mistakes and correct them. With its success, the ISRO has proved yet again that it can deliver what it promises to do, despite initial setbacks. In its immediate recovery from the aborted launch, the standing of ISRO as a 'can do' organisation has been established by becoming the sixth in the world to develop the capability to launch satellites into the highly challenging geosynchronous transfer orbit, which calls for mastery over launch vehicle and guidance systems.

While there is no doubt that Indian space capability has gained a remarkable boost with the GSLV, it would also be necessary to place the latest achievement in perspective. The most important factor to be weighed while evaluating the significance of the launch is that the very crucial cryogenic stage of the launch vehicle is imported. The ability of the GSLV to launch heavier communication satellites presently in vogue would also come under question, especially given the rapid advances made by other agencies. Nonetheless, the success should give the Indian space establishment the confidence to proceed with its own developments in cryogenic technology. Moreover, the latest Indian success has come against some odds, some of which, especially the difficulties faced on account of restrictions in transfer of cryogenic technology, could have been averted if India had unhesitatingly chosen to go indigenous in this core area. The immediate need is to intensify the efforts to make up for the lost time. The placing of the satellite in geosynchronous transfer orbit puts to test the Indian ability to handle complex satellites. In the years ahead, ISRO should take its aggressive efforts at indigenisation further, now that it has the confidence of a successful developmental launch. The nation's space organisation should also embark upon the wider support and enthusiasm that prevails in the country for advances in science and technology.

The long saga of the GSLV has also provided a much-required avenue of expression for the latent pool of scientific talent available in the nation. The involvement of over 150 organisations—including industries in the private sector and leading academic institutions—in this success story only proves the need for a convergence of the available domestic capabilities for furthering scientific advances. With appropriate adaptations, the success of the ISRO's linkages with industry and academia could be replicated in other crucial areas. To build on the successful launch of the GSLV, there could be adequate support from Parliament as well as the Government, especially at a time when the Tenth Plan allocations are under way. The thrust of the future of ISRO should be to make the required quantum leap to take the nation closer to the rapid developments that are taking place in the select group of nations involved in space technology. India should not be happy with merely remaining in the space club. It is important that it does not remain a laggard."

Well said, we must tell *The Hindu*. But let us also look at another report from Kyodo International posted at 07:51am ET on 18 April 2001.

“India successfully launched its most advanced rocket Wednesday, lofting an experimental communications satellite from a coastal space port in southern Andhra Pradesh State 20 days after its maiden launch was aborted due to a technical problems, Press Trust of India (PTI) said. The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-D1), using cryogenic technology for the first time, lifted off from the Sriharikota High Altitude Range at 3:43pm local time. The 160-foot (49-meter) tall rocket, weighing 401 tons, is a three-stage vehicle. Its core stage is powered by solid propellants, its second stage uses liquid fuel. The third is a cryogenic stage using liquid hydrogen and oxygen. The rocket carries a 3,395-pound (1,540-kilogram) experimental communication satellite for digital audiovisual broadcasting and Internet services. The GSLV will eventually be able to place loads of around 4,410 pounds (2,000 kilograms) into orbit by 2003, according to reports. The successful launch has put India alongside the United States, Russia, Japan, China and the European Union, which all can launch heavy satellites into space. The mission’s success is expected to end India’s reliance on foreign launch vehicles for homegrown satellites and may help establish it as a player in the lucrative space market. In the past India launched its satellites via Europe’s Arianespace. The Indian Space Research Organization’s (ISRO) GSLV project was initiated in 1990 at an initial cost of 756 crores (\$157 million) to achieve self-reliance in satellite launching. But the project got caught in technology-denial issues when the U.S. blocked Russia from transferring cryogenic rocket technology to ISRO. U.S. sanctions following India’s nuclear tests in 1998 also denied New Delhi access to components and led to further delay in the space agency’s most expensive project. Two more trial flights are expected before the rocket is formally commissioned and ISRO confirms its commercial potential in the international space launch vehicle market. So far, India has made commercial launches only of polar satellites.”

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## LETTING GO

A CLENCHED fist,  
The senses mist  
An open palm  
holds out a balm  
When I cling  
My claws sting

When I release  
There’s only peace  
When I hold back  
All I retain is crap  
When I let go  
The world falls into my lap

ANAHITA WADIA



## FIND THE PSYCHIC

WHEN all the mental structures fall  
And fails the vital self's appeal,  
A void appears, the nought of all  
And only emptiness we feel

If somehow we could find within  
The stillness and the glowing fire  
Free from error, free from sin,  
Free of all our dark desire,

Then might we touch the sacred heart  
Residing as the psychic being,  
Never again would we depart  
From the clarity of that inner seeing

All God's labor, all His care  
To transform our lives is hidden there

NARAD  
(RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

Amal's comment on the last two lines "Very fine insight"

## NIROD-DA, THANK YOU!

As a teenager seeking to comprehend the meaning of life and workings of the cosmos, I was faced with a daunting challenge. The more I understood, the more I realised the inadequacy of my knowledge acquired through successive steps of collection of data, data's conversion with context to information and information's transformation into knowledge with analysis and synthesis. I did not fathom the root-cause of my dissatisfaction but did recognise that something fundamental was missing. The natural conclusion I reached was that I was inadequately informed and lacking sufficient knowledge. I was also perceiving that my intelligence was not up to par for the task of unified understanding of life and the cosmos. Therefore, I did what any logical, sensible, and rational student of human existence would do: sought more data, obtained more information, and strove for more knowledge. To my utter frustration, I felt like a man with firmly planted feet on the sinking-sand. Deep within my being, there was an echoing cry, in the words of saint Kabir (in my mother-tongue, Gujarati) "*Gurubīnā kaun batāve vāt?*" —Without a guru who will show me the path?

In those earlier days, I had not come across the Chinese proverbial wisdom "When a student is ready, the teacher will come along." However, I knew of Sri Ramkrishna in his formative years of devotional sadhana of the Mother Kali when out of nowhere Bhairavi and Totapuri Aghorinath came along in his life. They steered him further in the pursuit of spiritual sadhana, which culminated in his attainment of Nirvakalpa Samadhi in which the object and subject become duality of expression of the unified reality. Subsequently, on his own he progressed spiritually and became the Paramhansa—the Supreme Soul, to fulfill his destined role on earth to actualize the inherent truth of various religions through the process of knowledge by identity and synthesize them as an integral part of the Universal Truth. Yes, I had known of all such facts and used to feel, how fortunate for the God-incarnate Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa to find a guru as he needed!

It was a period in my life when I wanted to understand Lord Krishna's Bhagavat Gita. I attempted to do so with the help of works of well-known personalities of India, such as Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Lokmanya Tilak, Jnan-dev, and Radhakrishnan. The constancy of my experience was the lack of satisfaction to my querying mind. The more I tried, the deeper was my frustration as the discourses of those luminaries did not complement each other, occasionally they even differed in their interpretations and more so in the emphasis they imparted about the value-system and guiding principles. I found the message of Jnandev beyond my ken and the old Marathi language posed a daunting challenge to my feeble mind to decipher, interpret, understand and assimilate. Oh, there are so many limitations to my mind—almost limitless! I felt I was living through the experience of a blind ignorant man touching a part of an elephant and claiming that to be the whole elephant. I knew at least that I had not seized the whole elephant—the whole Truth. I

merely had a perception of it. In those days of my despondency and despair, I thought of Sri Aurobindo, as my parents are followers of his teachings. I tried to read Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, and all my confusion disappeared like the morning mist with the sunrise. All of a sudden, "everything" became so simple to understand as "it all" made sense—perfect sense! I could feel deep within me the essence of the Teaching.

- to abandon all laws of conduct and with discrimination to seek refuge in Him alone
- to become His-minded, devoted to Him and to Him make offerings with adoration
- to renounce personal ambitions and strive towards perfection. Seek progress rather than success. Consider my individual work as an offering to Him. Change from a doer of a deed to a worker of His will
- to renounce not only the desire of the fruit, but also the claim to be the doer of His works
- to recognise the Supreme as the governing force of Prakriti, the Nature-Soul
- to realise the Supreme through Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Jnanayoga—work, devotion and knowledge, which are not mutually exclusive or hierarchical in their significance

The quest of finding the meaning in work of daily-life and discovering the purpose of life did not, after all, seem totally a hopeless endeavor! It was a sheer delight to discover the golden key to explore and investigate the reason for my existence to this earth. Eureka—Enlightenment! Hopes, dreams, aspirations, prayers, work, and pursuit of knowledge all made sense in a harmonised interplay! Much of the burden of ignorance seemed to have fallen off my small shoulders! I was so relieved to feel that at last there was a way to understand something of the things that I had been hankering for. And just then, the real "fun" began with countless hurdles.

- internalising all that was understood,
- practising what was mentally understood,
- learning to live with that truth within,
- facing the challenge of application of those internalised life-principles in daily life of an overachiever teenage earthling, who was preoccupied with the immediate task of studies, with a focus on career plans and life's future milestones!

I needed something to relate to in my world and to help me navigate through the maze of life, which was not static, to say the least. That is when I came across Nirod-da's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*. Thank God for that!

Nirod-da's two-volume collected *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* was a joyous, riveting, and illuminating and reassuring reading experience for me. While reading, I would wish that the book would never end. This collected work fascinated

me and intrigued me. It aroused my interest and inquiry to understand Sri Aurobindo and his teaching. It brought me closer to the world where *Essays on the Gita* was the reassuring first step of the journey, yet unknown. It brought me to the feet of the Lord. I found my guide!

It has been my hypothesis from my high-school days that every writer is living his ideals, pursuits, experience, discoveries and emotions of joy or sorrow through his work. Expressing is reliving it. Writing is surfacing the truth behind it. Soon I started to read his three-volume *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*. I felt Nirod-da was the type of person I could relate to. He represented my questions. He echoed my concerns. He argued my doubts. He sought my answers. He was unabashed, persistent, focused and above all was having so much fun with Sri Aurobindo! Gopies in Vrindavan were not the only people to enjoy Rasa-Lila. After all, who else would unabashedly convey (or command) to the Lord, "Stand up and deliver"? Who else would find the utterances of the supreme Guru at face-value 'non-acceptable' practice unless they passed the 'muster' of his personal 'critical thinking'? Who else would insist on clarity on teachings to penetrate through the mumbo-jumbo of the intricacies of Yoga and seize the core of spirituality that is at once eternal in meaning and universal in its application and yet simple and straightforward to practise? Who else would not hesitate to tell the Avatar of the Supreme if the message received was perceived to be empty and required to be brought down to the simple understanding for the groundlevel humans? Who else would draw out and down the reclusive August Olympian Master to relate to our life in the trenches? Who else would have the perseverance as boundless as the compassion and patience of the Lord to seek encouragement, enlightenment and clarity on the issues of a human mind, heart, and soul from the Guru of the Supermind? Who else could have been Nirod-da? In ancient times, the followers of Lord Vishnu were fortunate to have Narad Muni to help them relate to the Lord in a seemingly human approachable manner. In our time, we are fortunate that Nirod-da is among us for a similar benefit to us. Could it be a coincidence that Narad Muni was reputed to have a sense of humour and dealt with the Lord with levity?

Over the years, I came to know more of Nirod-da's work and himself. He became my role model for practising Bhaktiyoga along with Champaklal assigned in service of the Lord for twelve years when Sri Aurobindo fractured his left thighbone. He became a shining and guiding star for me to learn to work with ceaseless dedication, utmost care, unabated thoroughness, and singular devotion to pursue Karmayoga when he became Sri Aurobindo's scribe for *Savitri*. He became a reference point for me to fathom the practice of self-offering to the Divine's will for transformation as he offered himself totally to Sri Aurobindo for self-transformation (could one call it metamorphism?) from a practising physician of the Ashram to an aspiring poet. He became my level-setter.

I thank Nirod-da for being himself. In fact, over a quarter of a century ago, one day I just went to him and said with my whole heart and every fiber of my being,

“Thank you, Nirod-da!” He with puzzled face and inquiring eyes looked at me for a moment and said, “What about?” I narrated to him what he meant to me in helping me to come to Sri Aurobindo. He simply smiled and softly murmured “Oh, you crazy American friend!” Since I have been living in the USA from 1969, he calls me, “My American friend.” I am of the humble opinion that I would not be alone in thanking Nirod-da for being himself and for his contribution in our enthusiasm in learning of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga. I am sure, the multitude of people of all ages around the world sharing similar feelings would join me in spirit in thanking Nirod-da. On behalf of all of them and as an unofficial representative of them may I offer our salutation, tribute and homage to You—Nirod-da the one-and-only! I bow down to you Sir—Thank You forever for being YOU!

It may be of some interest to some of you to know about a time-honoured ancient Indian hierarchical tradition of giving respect to parents, Guru, and God. If one were to be so fortunate as to have all of them appear simultaneously, one would first bow down to the parents as they brought you to this world for which one must forever and foremost remain thankful. Next, one would bow down to the Guru because he led you to God for which you can never thank him enough. The last one to receive the obeisance is God in the trinity of body, mind and soul’s offerings. God does have a mysterious way of working—does He not?

Sri Aurobindo’s description of a truth-seeker’s pursuit puts into perspective the daunting challenge he faces and the significance of a guide.<sup>1</sup>

Truth is an infinitely complex reality and he has the best chance of arriving nearest to it who most recognises but is not daunted by its infinite complexity. We must look at the whole thought-tangle, fact, emotion, idea, truth beyond idea, conclusion, contradiction, modification, ideal, practice, possibility, impossibility (which must be yet attempted,) and keeping the soul calm and the eye clear in this mighty flux and gurge of the world, seek everywhere for some word of harmony, not forgetting immediate in ultimate truth, nor ultimate in immediate, but giving each its due place and portion in the Infinite Purpose. Some minds, like Plato, like Vivekananda, feel more than others this mighty complexity and give voice to it. They pour out thought in torrents or in rich and majestic streams. They are not logically careful of consistency, they cannot build up any coherent, yet comprehensive systems, but they quicken men’s minds and liberate them from religious, philosophic and scientific dogma and tradition. They leave the world not surer, but freer than when they entered it.

ARUN VAIDYA

<sup>1</sup> *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 13

## RANDOM VERSES

To suffer woes that hope thinks infinite,  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,  
To defy power which seems omnipotent,  
To love and bear, to hope till hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates

—*Shelley*

I see, I feel the vastness and agony of this earth,  
The vainness of its joys,  
The mockery of all its best,  
The anguish of its worst

—*Sir Edwin Arnold*

Along the mountain path  
The scent of pine-blossoms—  
And on a sudden the rising sun!

—*Basho*

What else is wisdom? What of man's endeavour  
Or God's high grace so lovely and so great?  
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait

—*Euripedes*

Yet be not sad  
Evil into the mind of God or man  
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave  
No spot or blame behind

—*Milton*

Why stand we here trembling around,  
Calling on God for help, and not ourselves in whom God dwells,  
Stretching a hand to save the falling man?

—*Blake*

Hast never come to thee an hour,  
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these bubbles,  
fashion, wealth?  
Those eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,  
To utter nothingness?

—*Walt Whitman*

Live in simple faith  
Just as this  
Trusting cherry  
Flower fades and falls

—*Issa*

## THE MOTHER—ON HERSELF

I WAS a bit perplexed. Some of the visitors to the Ashram from home and abroad ask a variety of questions about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. One of them is “Who is the guru among them and to whom have we to be open, and to whom should we pray for guidance?” The questioner’s stand is that he was told that the Mother was the founder of the Ashram and sadhaks have to surrender to Her. I read out to them a few letters of both, Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s, and said “Sri Aurobindo has thrown sufficient light in *On Himself and the Mother*. Please read it. It will be positively helpful. Nevertheless, I shall tell you that the Mother had come to India to meet Sri Aurobindo. She herself had seen the power and height of Sri Aurobindo’s consciousness. She too had spiritual vision and many realisations. At the first sight she knew that Sri Aurobindo was the incarnation of the Supreme Lord and surrendered to Him and remained sincere to this spirit.”

Still something within me was not satisfied. I offered it to the Mother in my heart and concentrated on it. That is the way I wait for a solution.

“My child! To understand my position one sentence of Sri Aurobindo is enough ‘Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you, because she is, indeed, always present.’ Each word of this sentence describes my real divine eternal infinite Personality. This phenomenon is one of his highest experiences. Firstly, I am one who is ever present in Time and beyond Time. Second, I see everything all the time, every event not only in this world but in the worlds beyond also. Third, I am present as the all-pervading omniscient omnipotent infinite divinity, beyond all limitations of this individuality which men see and call ‘The Mother.’ To understand me every child has got to transcend his mental consciousness. I am the Consciousness-Force of the Supreme, *Chit-Shakti*. Whatever is manifest here or beyond, wherever is the self-expanse of the Lord, it is all by me. I am the Cause. Therefore Sri Aurobindo called me the Mother, addressed me as the Creatrix of the Worlds, the Divine Mother. My child! Know and understand this one reality beyond all reasons, that I knew from my childhood who I am. Only one person in the world could recognise me. It was Sri Aurobindo. And he declared my Transcendental reality of existence beyond the Universal Being. I have descended from there.”

SUKHVIR ARYA

## FROM KNOWLEDGE TO WISDOM

NAROPA was a great scholar, a great pundit. This story happened before he became enlightened. It is said that he was the great vice-chancellor of a great university, with ten thousand disciples of his own. One day he was sitting surrounded by his disciples. All around him were scattered thousands of scriptures, very ancient, rare. Suddenly he fell asleep and he had a vision. It is so significant that to call it a dream would not be just—it was a vision. He saw a very old, ugly, horrible woman, a hag. Her ugliness was so great that he started trembling in his sleep.

She asked, “Naropa, what are you doing?”

He said, “I am studying.”

“What are you studying?” asked the old woman.

He said, “Philosophy, religion, epistemology, language, logic.”

The old woman asked, “Do you understand them?”

Naropa said, “Yes, I understand them.”

The woman asked again, “Do you understand the word, or the sense?” And her eyes were so penetrating that it was impossible to lie to her. Before her eyes Naropa felt completely naked, transparent.

He said, “I understand the words.”

The woman started dancing and laughing and her ugliness was transformed. A subtle beauty started coming out of her being.

Naropa thought, “I have made her so happy, why not make her a little more happy?” So he added, “Yes, and I understand the sense also.”

The woman stopped laughing, stopped dancing. She started weeping and crying, and all her ugliness was back—a thousandfold more.

Naropa asked, “Why?”

The woman said, “I was happy because a great scholar like you didn’t lie. But now I am crying because you have lied to me. I know, and you know, that you don’t understand the sense.”

The vision disappeared—and Naropa was transformed. He left the university, he never again touched a scripture in his life. He understood.

A man of wisdom, a man of understanding, has a freshness about him, a fragrant life, totally different from a pundit, from a man of knowledge. One who understands the sense becomes beautiful, one who only understands the word becomes ugly. And the woman is just a projection of Naropa’s inner part, his own being, become ugly through knowledge. Naropa went in search. Now scriptures won’t help, now a living Master is needed.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

(Courtesy *The Awakening Ray*, Nov/Dec 2000)



## I KNEW YOU WOULD COME

HERMAN and I locked our general store and dragged ourselves home. It was 11:00 p.m., Christmas Eve of 1949. We were dog-tired. We had sold almost all of our toys, and all of the layaways, except one package, had been picked up.

Usually we kept the store open until everything had been claimed. We wouldn't have woken up happy on Christmas knowing that some child's gift was still on the layaway shelf. But the person who had put a dollar down on that package never returned.

Early Christmas morning we and our twelve-year old son, Tom, opened gifts. But I'll tell you, there was something humdrum about this Christmas. Tom was growing up, I missed his childish exuberance of past years.

As soon as breakfast was over Tom left to visit his friend next door. Herman mumbled, "I'm going back to sleep. There's nothing left to stay up for." So there I was alone, feeling let down.

And then it began. A strange persistent urge. It seemed to be telling me to go to the store. I looked at the sleet and the icy sidewalk outside. That's crazy, I said to myself. I tried dismissing the urge, but it wouldn't leave me alone. In fact, it was getting stronger. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer, and I got dressed.

Outside, the wind cut right through me and the sleet stung my cheeks. I groped my way to the store, slipping and sliding. In front stood two boys, one about nine, and the other six. What in the world?

"See, I told you she would come!" the older boy said jubilantly. The younger one's face was wet with tears, but when he saw me, his sobbing stopped.

"What are you two doing out here?" I scolded, hurrying them into the store. "You should be at home on a day like this!" They were poorly dressed. They had no hats or gloves, and their shoes barely held together. I rubbed their icy hands, and got them up close to the heater.

"We've been waiting for you," replied the older boy. "My little brother Jimmy didn't get any Christmas gift." He touched Jimmy's shoulder. "We want to buy some skates. That's what he wants. We have these three dollars," he said, pulling the bills from his pocket.

I looked at the money. I looked at their expectant faces. And then I looked around the store. "I'm sorry," I said, "but we have no..." then my eye caught sight of the layaway shelf with its lone package. "Wait a minute," I told the boys. I walked over, picked up the package, unwrapped it and, miracle of miracles, there was a pair of skates!

Jimmy reached for them. Lord, let them be his size. And miracle added upon miracle, they were his size.

The older boy presented the dollars to me. "No," I told him, "I want you to have these skates, and I want you to use your money to get some gloves." The boys just blinked at first. Then their eyes became like saucers, and their grins stretched

wide when they understood I was giving them the skates What I saw in Jimmy's eyes was a blessing It was pure joy, and it was beautiful My spirits rose

We walked out together, and as I locked the door, I turned to the older brother and said, "How did you know I would come?" I wasn't prepared for his reply His gaze was steady, and he answered me softly "I asked Jesus to send you "

The tingles in my spine weren't from the cold God had planned this As we waved good-bye, I turned home to a brighter Christmas

ELIZABETH KING ENGLISH

(Courtesy *The Awakening Ray*, Jan/Feb 2001)

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## ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

THE worship of the ancestors  
at the river-bank where  
the rain-worms dig the dreary loneliness  
was heralded by a hungry growl

The ghosts were expectant,  
they wanted the blind devotion  
of posterity—  
everything to them was simple

But the living flesh was strained,  
looking for signals that never came  
Abandoned priestly robes lay scattered  
beside the faltering organs

Of what avail are the riddling chants?  
We, who stand naked and fleshy  
on the ungrassed banks, see  
the ancestral ghosts clamouring

RANAJIT SARKAR

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of April 2001)*

FROM 1912 onwards, Sri Aurobindo's birthday was celebrated on the 15th August, every year by the few disciples who were living with him. As years rolled on the number of disciples and also visitors increased. The 15th August came to be observed as Darshan day and both the disciples and the visitors would go to him one by one and receive his Blessings. It also became a sort of convention to expect a speech from him on his birthday. Sri Aurobindo's birthday messages, conversations with disciples, gave an opportunity to those around him to know Sri Aurobindo's work and mission, the procedure of the Supramental Yoga. Though every day was a special day in the Guru's house, on his birthday every one was feeling "increasingly they were basking in the ambience of the Spirit radiating from the Guru's power and personality"<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo would oblige them with a talk. He would elucidate or clarify some points of his yoga or give advice and general direction of progress to be followed. For instance, on the 15th August 1923, he summed up his speech thus

"I have been working all these years to meet the obstacles and remove them and prepare and clear the path so that the task may not be very difficult for you. As for helping you in that task it all depends upon your capacity to receive the help. I can give any amount that you can take. There is an idea that to-day every sadhaka gets a new experience. That depends upon your capacity to receive the Truth in your self. Real spiritual surrender is of course, quite another matter, but if any of you have experienced even a degree of it, even some faint reflection, then the purpose of the 15th will have been served"<sup>2</sup>

15-8-1924

Who can describe this day? Nothing can be added by the colours of imagination, poetic similes, and loaded epithets. It is enough to say "It was the 15th of August". No other day can come up to it in the depth and intensity of spiritual action, the ascending movement of the flood of emotions, and the way in which each individual here was bathing in the atmosphere.

It is the supreme sign of the Master to assume all possible relations with his disciples, make them real, and concrete. Each disciple knows him as his own, and each the Master accepts as his.

15-8-1925 (4 30 p m)

Our Yoga aims at the discovery of the Supramental being, the Supramental world, and the Supramental nature, and their manifestations in life. But we must guard ourselves against certain general mistakes which are likely to arise. People

think that certain powers such as Anāṁ, Garīma, or the control of the physical functions, and the capacity to cure diseases, constitute the Supramentalised physical. In many cases, these powers are acquired by persons who happen to open themselves consciously, or unconsciously, to the subliminal being, where these powers lie. There are plenty of cases where such powers are seen in persons who have no idea of the Supermind or Yoga.

There is an idea that this Yoga has been attempted times without number in the past, that the light descended and has withdrawn again and again. This does not seem to be correct. I find that the Supramental physical body has not been brought down otherwise it would have been there. We must not therefore belittle our effort and throw obstacles in the way of its accomplishment.

The time has not yet come to say what would be the nature of the ultimate transformation. What the old yogins manifested in their life was largely due to the control of the vital being over physical functions. Our aim is not this attainment of the vital Siddhi,—the control of the physical substance and functions through vital force. What we are attempting to achieve is a complete transformation of our entire being in all its planes of manifestation. In the old disciplines the goal was not transformation or victory over the physical being. They did not lay any direct hold on it.

Then there is an idea that since everything is One, what we have to do is to realise the One Consciousness and have some experience of it on various planes of our being. This is a mistake due to obsession by Vedantic ideas. It is true that there is the One Consciousness and we have to realise it, but we have not to stop short with that realisation. We have, as I said just now, to transform our entire being.

There is an idea that our yoga is an attempt at conscious evolution. The Spirit is here involved in Matter and appears subject to it. By the process of evolution the vital and the mental being have come into manifest existence here. Our effort is to evolve to the Supermind from mind.

The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the physical being taken up into the vital, and that into the mental and that again into the Supramental and Ananda Consciousness. Another Upanishad says that the man who attains the Supermind escapes through “the door of the Sun”. There is no idea of a conscious descent upon life after ascending to the Supermind.

But it is possible to regard the process as an involution,—involution of the manifested being into the Truth-Consciousness of the Supermind which descends with the perfection of the same into the mind, into the vital and into the physical being.<sup>1</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

#### *References*

1 *Sri Aurobindo* by Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 525

2 *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by A. B. Purani. Second Series. First Impression (1961), p. 298

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 301, 313-315

## THE REVELATIONS OF KIRLIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

KIRLIAN photography is a method of making photographs without a normal camera. It is made on sheets of film that are placed upon a specially insulated electrical machine, with the object to be photographed placed on the film for a few seconds while the machine is electrically charged. The photograph is then developed immediately.

Through this photography it is shown that everything, living or inanimate, even a stone or a piece of metal, is radiating some kind of energy which shows up as a halo of light.

We too have a personal radiation, sometimes called an aura and sometimes called an energy field. But the name which is given to it is of no importance. The significant fact is that in a human being this surrounding aura changes in various ways with different kinds of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual states, showing that it is indeed an integral part of that human being.

This is the very best way of showing to children the great value of becoming tranquil by deliberately becoming still, silent, calm, and peaceful. It also demonstrates that by doing this we are increasing the intensity of light and beauty that we are radiating into the environment. We can actually radiate to people near and far. A child does not have to be 'clever' to do this, and one who is poor academically can have his confidence and self-respect greatly increased by knowing that he can help the whole world as well as any other person can.

Any parent or teacher can enhance the lives of the children for whom they are responsible by showing them the enormous possibilities and value of their power to increase peace around them.

A family that will meditate together, concentrating on the giving out of love, light, beauty, harmony, and peace, will experience a special sense of togetherness. Sometimes they could also try doing some drawing or painting together immediately after their meditation, then the results will be interesting and sometimes even quite startling.

There is another lovely thing that can be done within either a family group or a classroom. Holding a specially chosen stone or crystal between the palms of the hands, they can concentrate on pouring into the stone first their love, then light, followed by other qualities such as harmony, peace, strength, courage, healing. The stone will be charged with these in the same way as sound is recorded onto a cassette tape, and in the future it will radiate them like a battery. In the future, at times of need, that stone can give back these forces or energies. This activity could greatly help the development of the inner being and its potentialities.

SEND YOUR LIGHT AROUND THE WORLD

MARGUERITE SMITHWHITE

## THE COCONUT PALM

### THE UNFORBIDDEN FRUIT

When the great God the world did plan,  
He, 'tis said, sought to make it for Man  
A home most meet, an abode most sweet  
With which He could His fondest creature greet,  
And among the leafy home he made  
His heart's own child to gently shade,  
As His thoughtfullest gift to His kingliest creature  
The sleek and lanky coconut did feature  
For, the sturdy stem of the Coconut  
Holds up the roof of the homeliest hut,  
Its leaves make fans, and mats on which man can lie  
When sore labour's sweat he needs to dry  
In the fruit's fibrous coat he can find  
Ropes and strings which his dreams can bind  
The fresh white flesh within its shell  
He offers to God, with it does his prayers tell  
And then of the earthly Manna fair  
He claims his soul-sustaining share  
And of its nectar he drinks deep,  
Ere his day's toil earns him his sleep  
Paradise wouldn't quite be Paradise,  
If its Maker didn't the Coconut devise

Alo Sircar

To the coconut plant the Mother gave the name "Multitude", the plant which "gives itself without stint and satisfies innumerable needs"

The Sanskrit name for the coconut is *Narikela* or *Sriphala*

Considering the manifold uses of the coconut palm, the famous historian Edward Gibbon mentioned 360 different uses to which the trunk, the leaves, the fruit, the juice so readily lend themselves

For the Hindus the plant has an exquisite aroma of piety, it is also a symbol of prosperity and fertility So it is called *Sriphala*, the sacred or holy fruit, the word "sri" meaning grace and "phala", fruit The fruit is said to have the pious potential of making human dreams come true The three black spots on the fruit are said to be symbolic of the three eyes of Shiva No auspicious occasion in India is celebrated without a green or a ripe coconut The two sides of a gateway to a *Mandapa* (altar) or a marriage pandal are always decorated with a pair of "Purna Kumbhas" each of which consists of a pitcher full of water with a sheaf of mango leaves covering its

mouth and holding a green coconut. The pitcher is adorned with the sign of the "Swastika" and other religious hieroglyphs painted with vermilion paste. Permanent "Purna Kumbhas" are often painted on the doors of the clay huts in our villages. When a person goes on a long journey or voyage he is ceremonially given a sendoff with a "tilak" (a religious mark) and a coconut is offered to the Gods imploring them to ensure the safety of the sojourner. During Ganesh and Saraswati pujas students break coconuts at a single stroke. In Gujarat the bride offers a coconut to the groom for him to preserve as tenderly as he preserves her heart as long as they live. The coconut is worshipped as a family god in Mysore. On "Nariel-Purnima" day in the coastal areas, a coconut is offered to oceans and rivers mostly by fishermen for the powers above to protect them against ravaging rains. In the Prayag Triveni Sangam or at any other confluence of rivers the offering of a coconut is an inalienable part of a religious ceremony.

The mythological story associated with the origin of the palm says that Rishi Vishwamitra once undertook a grim unrelenting *tapasya* and obtained supernatural powers. To prove his powers he decided to send the volatile king Trishanku to heaven clothed in his mortal body, as the king had so desired. The Rishi was obliged to Trishanku, since the latter had looked after his family when he was away and a famine had struck the country. So, to pay off his debt and to satisfy the king's desire, he transported the king to heaven in his mortal frame. However, other sages and the gods were outraged by the act. When Trishanku reached *Swarga*, Deviaj Indra was roused to rage at the very thought of a human being clothed in his mortal body inhabiting the abode of the spirits. Indra turned against Vishwamitra for his thoughtless act and threw the king out of heaven. Then a battle of egos was sparked off. If Trishanku were to return to earth, then the Rishi would suffer humiliation and ignominy. So he used his supernatural powers. Trishanku remained for a while suspended in the air, the Rishi then planted a pole under him to prop him up in space. In the course of time the straight unbranched pole turned into a coconut palm.

The word "coco", according to etymologists, has been derived from the Spanish word "macoco" or "monkey-faced", which possibly owes itself to the fact that the fruit with its spots resemble the face of an ape.

The coconut palm is a native of the Malayan and South-Pacific regions but naturalized widely in the Tropics and sub-tropics, including peninsular Florida. So the fruit is considered a "Tropical jewel". It is now difficult to ascertain the original homeland of the palm tree. In 1577 during his visit in the Cape Verde Islands surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean off the bulge of Africa, Sir Francis Drake encountered coconuts. He recorded in his log book that within the shell of the seed was "a kind of substance very white, no less good and sweet than almonds."

Captain James Cooke, with the help of two naturalists during the period 1768-1771, reported coconut trees growing on most of the South-Pacific Islands he visited. The coconuts may have come from South America, floating and drifting to remote bits of land. They could have been brought eastward from Africa. Traditionally, on

many South Sea Islands it is believed that coconut palms will grow well only where they can hear the sound of the sea and human voices

Coconut palms largely grow near the coast Their seeds were brought to India by sea-currents This spreading of the palm trees must have occurred many centuries ago making it difficult to maintain a historical record

In his *Oriental Memoirs*, James Forbes wrote in 1813 “Of all the gifts which providence has bestowed on the oriental world, the coconut tree most deserves our notice In this single production of nature what blessings are conveyed to man!”

The Chinese traveller Fahien has recorded in his diary that in India a kind of fruit is available which provides a traveller with bread and water when he is tired and thirsty Obviously he meant the coconut fruit

There is scarcely a tree in nature that gives us as many useful products as the coconut palm No wonder it is named ‘Multitude’ by the Mother Not a single part of the tree remains unutilised

Garcia D’orta, a Portuguese physician and botanist, wrote in the 16th Century a lucid account regarding the various uses of the palm including many recipes He mentioned that small pieces of the dried ‘copra’ were sent to Ormuz, Balaquate and other countries These tasted like dried chestnuts He further recorded that two varieties of palms were cultivated in India—one for the fruit and the other for extracting toddy or arrack

The fallen immature fruits are polished to make decoration pieces For musical instruments the shells serve as resonant backing They also make hubble-bubbles or hookahs of the village folk.

The ‘mesocarp’ of the fruit furnishes the ‘Coir’ of commerce which finds its use in upholstery, saddles, brushes and rope-making

In our grandmother’s time many kitchen utensils were made from coconut shells—cups, ladles, spoons and strainers These have the added advantage that they never corrode Many of these are coming back to modern kitchens in new decorative designs

No wonder, the coconut palm, the Multitude is held in high esteem by Indians and has struck roots not only in the geographical landscape of the country but its pious soul-scape as well

GOURI RANI GHOSH



## THE TWO LESSONS SADHU LEARNT IN HIS CHILDHOOD

HE was of my age and perhaps I was the only one alive to address him as Sadhu. His mother used to tell me that he sported long hair in his childhood and his *mundan* (head-shaving) was delayed by two years, that is how he came to be known as Sadhu, and is so even today for me. Although his hair is now appropriately trimmed and he appears very much like a normal man, yet in his behaviour and dealings he impresses more like a Sadhu. He has a helping nature and would help even at the cost of his convenience. He has been a determined man. He was more involved in teaching and research than in household-chores, but he did not neglect the house and the family whenever called upon to do a thing by his wife. The only thing in which he seemed to deny his simple nature was his intolerance towards injustice, done to him or to anybody else, to which he would not react immediately but silently took up the challenge to undo the injustice later. These were his characteristics in which he was more like a normal man but in two ways he was very different. He did not build a house in spite of reasonable opportunities available and offered to him. Secondly, he lived a life-style in which he did not care to save, though he was not extravagant and wasteful. This second habit made him a liberal who would spare some of his possessions for his near and the dear ones, and even for others not related to him.

As I said, Sadhu had no plan or temperament to build and own a house and he made no secret of it to us. Almost all of us in the University had a house either inherited or self-built, except Sadhu. In his forties when all of us were making a deposit to register ourselves for houses with the State Housing Board, we forced him to do so which he reluctantly did. After sometime he was in need of money (as he told me later) and cancelled his registration quietly. Later when we came to know of this I expressed my displeasure, but all was in vain. He was neither sorry nor happy to do so, but he definitely had an expression of relief on his face. A decade later another opportunity was offered by the University to make such registrations by a loan from the provident fund account of the individual teachers. We again persuaded him to get himself registered for a house. Before allotments were to be finalised, Sadhu again felt the need for money and withdrew the registration-deposit before it would lapse. I was very angry with him and did not talk to him for several days.

I said, "Look, Sadhu, what will you do after your retirement? Where will you live? You have to have a house."

" " he kept quiet.

"Why don't you speak? Where will you live?"

"I would live anywhere, I may live in an ashram," he said.

"Do you think it is that convenient for you to live in an ashram?" I said.

Five years passed and another scheme of the State Housing Board, the Self Financing Scheme, was launched. I, Sadhu's wife and his son, who had been in service for

about five years then, talked over the matter, took Sadhu into confidence and the registration was made in this scheme. It was expected that the house would be ready for occupation in about a year, by the time Sadhu retired. It so happened that when Sadhu retired the house was not ready. He moved into a rented house and it took one year to get possession of his house. During this period I had not much contact with him, but when I did not hear from him about the house-warming ceremony, I myself contacted him. I was shocked to learn that during this period he again changed his mind and did not occupy the house after taking legal possession. In fact he was frantically trying to dispose of the house. This time I was not angry, because Sadhu's intention and action were not unexpected.

"Sadhu, you will do whatever you have decided and I know I shall not be able to change your mind. However, do tell me what's the real reason for this unusual dislike to own a house?" I asked.

"Since you ask me, I shall tell you," he said.

"Yes, yes!"

"When I was in class IX, we had a Hindi-poetry book with a chapter on Kabir in which there were several of his couplets, of which one was the following

ऊचा ऊचा महल बनाया, लावी लावी भीति उसारि,  
घरतो चाहिये तीन हाथ, अधिक घनाहो पोने चार।

People build high palaces for themselves by raising high walls but they need only a three hand-measure house (grave) or three quarters and three, if they happen to be big.)

This couplet had such a profound philosophical effect on me then, that unknowingly I became set on not owning a house for myself and it is that incident which culminated in my not possessing a house," he narrated calmly.

"But why did you not tell us before?" I asked.

"Because you would have laughed at me and rejected the idea. However, I must tell you that it was the circumstances and the financial need that actually helped me to uphold my determination," he said.

"No, don't be apologetic. It is more your determination. Sadhu! you are a true sadhu." I put things at rest.

He disposed of the house and went to live in an ashram.

†

He had a liberal attitude, I mean a lifestyle for himself and the family in which he saved little, while in service. However, after retirement the style slightly changed. The University did not have the pension-scheme then and his only source of income was the interest on the provident fund. This was just sufficient for him to sustain himself and his wife. Since he was now living in an ashram, I could meet him rarely.

Once when I met him, I said, “Sadhu, don’t take it amiss but your life-style seems to me quite artificial. You have already given away most of your possessions to your near and dear ones. Now while in ashram-life too, you wish to give away part of your meagre income in charity, which you can little afford. Is it not artificial?”

He replied, “I have lived my life the way I liked. Let me now live somewhat for others too, that’s my desire. I am able to do very little, but I do have a desire. It’s only an attempt to carry out what I believe in.”

“I feel you could have lived a better life elsewhere with your intellectual and academic pursuits,” I said.

“Yugul, you are mistaken. You forget the financial aspect of life in living outside the ashram. The income from the interest would not be enough for that life. This life is better in all respects. Apart from the spiritual, intellectual and to some extent academic interest that I am able to pursue here, I also have the satisfaction of sharing my possessions and money with others,” he said.

“People say you are rich the way you give charity,” I said.

“You know what I am. It’s only a plan I am living out. I am not rich at all, you know, but I don’t feel poor. I feel I have enough for what I need,” he said.

“But, Sadhu, don’t you think you must save something for the day when your income falls short of your requirements? You have a fixed income from the interest. The interest rate has decreased and may decrease further and the cost of living is rising.”

“Yes, you are right, Yugul. Let that time come and I am sure the Divine will show us the path to enable me to revise my plans for the lifestyle I am living,” he hopefully said.

“But what made you adopt this way? Who inspired you to do this?” I asked.

“If you wish to know I shall tell you. It’s an old and long story. Would you believe it?”

“Yes, yes, why not? I would like to know and possibly appreciate it,” I said.

“I was then 9 or 10 years old. A Sannyasi used to visit the locality where my house was. He used to come daily exactly at 6 o’clock in the morning in the first week of January every year. He used to recite a few verses and then ask for alms. He would ask for a hundred *duannis* (old two-anna bit coin equivalent to twelve modern paisa) and one blanket to enable him to meet the expenses to go to Ganga Sagar in Bengal (now West Bengal) for a holy dip on the occasion of Makar Sankranti on 14 January. The number of *duannis* asked for would go on decreasing day by day and he would stop coming and asking for it if his demand was met earlier. The Sannyasi would recite

था भरा सोना सदा, हर लक की दीवार मे,  
 एक रस्ती सोना ना मिला, रावण को मरती बार मे।  
 जो दे गया, सो ले गया, बाकी जमीपर रह गया,  
 लोभ का दरिया व है, चाहे जिधर को बह गया।

(Each wall of Lanka was stuffed with gold but Ravana could not carry with him even a *rattu* of gold at the time of his death Whatever one gives here (in this world), he takes (to the other world after death) with him and the rest of his possessions are left behind These are like a river of avarice which flows anywhere, *i e* , are wasted )”

Sadhu went on “Day after day and year after year for three consecutive years these verses recited by the Sannyasi and heard by me had a great impact on my young mind though I hardly understood the meaning and the great message that the Sannyasi wanted to convey to us The miracle is that I remember the verses even today I could do nothing about it earlier while in family life because I never had the time or the opportunity to understand the hidden meaning of the verses, but now having become free from all family responsibilities, I have the state of mind to receive the message offered by the verses I can even try to practise what the Sannyasi said and wanted us to do ”

“So, Sadhu, you seem to believe that you will take with you for the next life whatever you give here?” I remarked

“It is symbolic Nobody can prove this, but whatever I give does not give me the feeling that I am parting with it I have the feeling of giving all this to my own kith and kin, or that what I do is for my larger family,” he replied

“So you are happy?” I enquired

“Yes, most happy!” he said

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Sadhu lives in an ashram happily with no regrets for not possessing a house, also he gives away what he can afford or whatever he possesses, and that without a feeling of parting with it. He seems to be sure that whatever he learnt and did or whatever his way of life had been, all was because the Divine desired it that way

YUGUL KISHORE GUPTA

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Classical and Romantic** by Amal Kiran (K D Sethna) Price Rs 70 Publisher Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

THE Clear Ray (=Amal Kiran) has thrown its light on a number of aspects of literary and other matters and made us see things better than ever before. It now directs itself to a subject once discussed *ad nauseam* in classrooms and in books and articles to nobody's benefit.

Though the subject is no longer looked upon as important as it was once considered, thanks to recent developments in both literary theory and creative work, Amal Kiran's work is a boon to every serious student of poetry. He deliberately ignores the post-Victorian (rather the post-Georgian) reaction to Romanticism and the various movements that followed it in the last half-century labelled as *modernist*, *post-modernist*, etc. He has also shut his eyes to the various movements in literary criticism like Structuralism, post-Structuralism that followed the "New Criticism" of the nineteen forties and fifties.

The value of the distinction between Classical and Romantic is not only in seeing clearly two distinct modes of poetry as perceived in the past but in learning what Sri Aurobindo calls the different planes of consciousness from which the two modes of poetry along with others spring. Sri Aurobindo also tells us, as Amal points out in his valuable work, that the later Romantic poetry of the early Nineteenth Century England ushers in the "dawn" of the poetry of the Future, the poetry which presents a transcendent vision of all life though not necessarily in the style and language of the Romantics.

Amal launches an attack on the work of F. L. Lucas on the subject of Romanticism, which like other works of this author and his contemporaries, now enjoys the "dusty immortality of libraries" in the words of J. H. Cousins immortalised by Sri Aurobindo in his *Future Poetry* on which as on *The Human Cycle* and *The Letters on Yoga* Amal freely draws to develop the theme.

Lucas commits a number of errors. He depends on Freudian psychology to distinguish between the Classical and the Romantic. He believes that the Middle Ages are the Golden Age of Romanticism and that Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is its Testament. He also belittles mysticism.

Amal shows that the Freudian Id and Super Ego, subconscious and unconscious cannot help us to understand the true nature of poetry. He tells us that according to Sri Aurobindo there is the subliminal below and the Superconscious above. There are also various planes of consciousness like the subtle physical, vital, mental, mystical and spiritual. Sri Aurobindo speaks of pure creative intelligence, imaginative and reflective intelligence and intuitive intelligence. Amal deals with the different planes of consciousness in relation to poetry elaborately and comprehensively in his *Talks on Poetry*.

Classical Poetry, according to Sri Aurobindo, belongs to the Creative Intelligence. Creative Intelligence could also inspire other kinds of Poetry, like the Romanticism in England of the early Nineteenth Century. But the Creative Intelligence which inspires Classical Poetry is simple, straightforward, with a turn to the universal rather than the individual and particular. Romanticism, whatever its source of inspiration, is complex, turned inwards or to the beyond with an emphasis on the individual and particular.

Amal takes the whole of European poetry when he speaks of different types of Classicism but speaks of only English poetry when he considers different kinds of Romanticism. The European Romanticism is of an inferior kind and does not rise to the heights of English Romanticism.

There are four phases of Classicism, (1) the Graeco-Roman—with six poets as supreme examples of it, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil and Lucretius, (2) the Christian—the Italian Roman Catholic Dante and the English Puritan Milton, the poets under Louis XIV of France—Racine and Corneille and the pseudo-Augustans of the Eighteenth Century England, Dryden, Pope and others. Though it is impossible to show the brilliant exposition of the different phases in a brief review, one or two points ought to be made. While speaking of the Graeco-Roman classicists, Amal makes a distinction between Homer and the others. Homer is a supreme Bard but inspired not by the Creative Intelligence like the others but by the subtle-physical; he is concerned with the outer world and the external aspects of life and even when he is trying to say higher things he moulds them in outer forms. The English Chaucer is also inspired by the subtle-physical though he does not rise to the Homeric heights either in vision or in rhythm. Dante is greater than Milton since Milton constructs rather than creates on many occasions. The French poets are less inspired than the Graeco-Romans and the English Augustans are often superficial and trivial. But all poets have their great moments. Amal's choice in gathering the different kinds of flowers from the garden of Classical poets and later from that of the Romantic poets enables us to see the relative colour, glow and fragrance of the various types. The profuse quotations almost provide us with an anthology of different kinds of poetry along with their levels of inspiration, technique, etc.

Amal disagrees with Lucas, as we saw, about the Middle Ages being the Golden Age of Romanticism. In spite of the presence of the fantastic and the fabulous elements in the poetry of the Age, its concerns are different from those of the two phases of English Romanticism, the Elizabethan age and the early Nineteenth Century. Its source of inspiration is also not different from that of Classicism.

On the authority of Sri Aurobindo, Amal refers to the two elements that go to make the English poetic genius, the Teutonic and the Celtic. The Teutonic element gives life and action, feeling and passion, the Celtic gives the turn to the other world.

Lucas does not consider the poetry of the Elizabethan Age as totally Romantic. He refers to the bookishness and the dependence on Classical myth and legend. Amal explains the movement of the Renaissance that led to the poetry of the Elizabethan

Age Though Renaissance means rebirth of Classical learning what it did was to release the sense of Joy and Freedom from the closed Christian world of the Middle Ages The Life-Force arose in all its fullness and gave the poetry of the Elizabethans, especially Shakespeare and Spenser, a new value and meaning Sensations and emotions embodied themselves in Shakespearean characters and Spenserian stanzas There was very little thought element in their poetry and even thoughts expressed themselves through sensations and emotions

Contrary to the common belief, the poets of the later phase were thinkers and were moved by thought Amal quotes from one of the best English authorities on Romanticism, C M Bowra, to show the importance of thought in the poetry of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats But the thought was felt and sensed and it led them beyond thought and feeling, to a semi-mystic experience What made it possible was their "Romantic Imagination" As Bowra, quoted by Amal, shows, what brought together all the great Romantics was their conception of Imagination, the power that took them behind and beyond the visible world

Amal shows how Coleridge demonstrates the occult presences, Wordsworth the Supreme Presence behind all forms of Nature and Shelley the Spirits of various aspects of Nature as well as experiences and the One that remains when the many change and pass Even Keats sees Beauty as a Spirit With numerous quotations Amal illustrates from Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and even Byron the awareness of the Invisible and the Infinite Such awareness was not "religious", much less Christian Shelley had to deny the Christian God to affirm the Divine If there could be any ancient parallels it could be only in the Scriptures of India, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita

Stating that the poetry of the future will be the expression of the Spirit, Amal says the articulation could be that of Classical poetry "Stylistic classicism is not alien to the Spirit" Even Shelley could write in the Classical mode in lines like

The One remains, the many change and pass,  
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly

though the lines that follow revert to the Romantic mode

Amal's attack on Lucas's ridicule of mysticism is typical of one who is not only a great Mystic but a Mystic Poet of the highest order He shows how mysticism is not "loss of nerve" He shows the vigour and strength of mystic poetry with examples from Wordsworth, Shelley and others

Though like every piece of Amal's the work on Classical and Romantic is a masterpiece there are sections, as in other works, which reveal him at his best One such section is his "explication", to use a favourite term of the academicians of the 1950s, of Rousseau's letter to Malesherbes in which the great Frenchman describes the suddenness with which he received inspiration to write his first ever essay on coming upon the question set for discussion by the Academy of Dijon in *Mercure de*

*France* Instead of merely speaking tritely of “Back to Nature” Amal brings out the mystical experience charged with illumination and intuition. He points out how the part which receives the supernormal vision and truth-touch is the thinking mind. He shows how the complexity and the force with which the mystical experience occurs creates a brilliant confusion and a violent stir which is both emotional and nervous. Here is the very beginning of the true Romanticism we see in Wordsworth and his contemporaries. Though Rousseau himself moves away to other paths he becomes the true father of the later and greater Romanticism in English, the dawn of spiritual poetry.

Equally great is Amal’s exposition of *Kubla Khan* with all its occult significances. Also remarkable is his presentation of Coleridge’s conception of Imagination and Fancy.

A sensitive reader of the book feels the drawing off of veils and the breaking of barriers in his consciousness.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA