

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 2001

PRICE Rs 15 00

Revised Subscriptions
from January 1999, owing to considerable rise in costs, especially of paper

INLAND

Annual Rs 120 00

Life Membership Rs 1400 00

Price per Single Copy Rs 15 00

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Life Membership \$252 00 or £168 00

Air Mail

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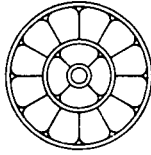
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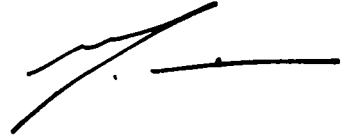


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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Published by HARIKANT C PATEL

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LIV

No. 7

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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CRY OF THE ABYSS AND HEAVEN'S REPLY

ONCE as she sat in deep felicitous muse. .
An abyss yawned suddenly beneath her heart.
A vast and nameless fear dragged at her nerves .
A formless Dread with shapeless endless wings
Filling the universe with its dangerous breath,
A denser darkness than the Night could bear,
Enveloped the heavens and possessed the earth.
It seemed her very being to forbid,
Abolishing all by which her nature lived .
It seemed to cry to her without thought or word
The message of its dark eternity
And the awful meaning of its silences
A voice to the dumb anguish of the heart
Conveyed a stark sense of unspoken words,
In her own depths she heard the unuttered thought
That made unreal the world and all life meant
"Who art thou who claimst thy crown of separate birth,
The illusion of thy soul's reality
And personal godhead on an ignorant globe
In the animal body of imperfect man?
Hope not to be happy in a world of pain
And dream not, listening to the unspoken Word
And dazzled by the inexpressible Ray,
Transcending the mute Superconscient's realm
To give a body to the Unknowable.
Or call into thy chamber the Divine
And sit with God tasting a human joy.
I have created all, all I devour;
I am Death and the dark terrible Mother of life,
I am Kali black and naked in the world,
I am Maya and the universe is my cheat.
I lay waste human happiness with my breath
And slay the will to live, the joy to be
That all may pass back into nothingness
And only abide the eternal and absolute.
For only the blank Eternal can be true
O soul, inventor of man's thoughts and hopes
At last know thyself, from vain existence cease " ..

Then from the heights a greater Voice came down

The cry of the Abyss drew Heaven's reply,
 A might of storm chased by the might of the Sun
 "O Soul, bare not thy kingdom to the foe,
 Consent to hide thy royalty of bliss
 Lest Time and Fate find out its avenues
 And beat with thunderous knock upon thy gates
 Fear not to be nothing that thou mayst be all,
 Assent to the emptiness of the Supreme
 That all in thee may reach its absolute
 If for thy own sake only thou hast come,
 An immortal spirit into the mortal's world .
 Why hadst thou any need to come at all?
 Thou hast come down into a struggling world. .
 To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven
 God must be born on earth and be as man
 That man being human may grow even as God
 He who would save the world must be one with the world
 His soul must be wider than the universe
 And feel eternity as its very stuff,
 Rejecting the moment's personality
 Know itself older than the birth of Time,
 Creation an incident in its consciousness,
 Arcturus and Belphegor grains of fire
 Circling in a corner of its boundless self,
 The world's destruction a small transient storm
 In the calm infinity it has become
 If thou wouldst a little loosen the vast chain,
 Draw back from the world that the Idea has made. .
 Then shalt thou know how the great bondage came
 Banish all thought from thee and be God's void.
 Then shalt thou uncover the Unknowable...
 Thou shalt be one with God's bare reality
 And the miraculous world he has become .
 Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work,
 Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name
 Annul thyself that only God may be.'

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 533-38)

ABOUT ASTROLOGY*

THE subject of this book is one which stands nowadays put away under a sort of intellectual ban, placed on it some centuries ago by the scientific and rationalistic European mind and not yet lifted. Mr N P Subramania Iyer has undertaken an astrological series which will deal with the various parts of astrology, and the present volume contains the text and translation of the *Kalaprakasika*, a treatise on the selection of the right times by astrological rule for undertaking any and every action of human life. The book is well printed and got up, the translation admirably done in a style free enough to avoid all awkwardness,—the author has a thorough control of the English tongue and an excellent style of his own,—but perfectly faithful to the matter of the text. But the most interesting part of the work for the ordinary reader is the introduction, in which he gives amidst other matter the psychological explanation of the influence of the planets and states for what they stand in relation to the Indian Vedantic philosophy of existence. I have not seen elsewhere any exposition of the subject equally original and illuminative.

Astrology is in the general mind associated with that class of subjects which goes under the name of the occult, and along with others of its class it has long been discredited by modern ‘enlightenment’, one does not quite know on what grounds or with what rational justification. It has its psychic and mystical side, but that is not its ordinary presentation, there it claims to be a science like any other with fixed processes and an exact and definite system of rules which ought to be perfectly capable of verification or of disproof by experiment and induction like any other science. Its basis is astronomical and mathematical, its data perfectly open and positive and in no way hidden or occult, nor does it at all shrink back from the test or hide itself in secrecy and mystery. It does not indeed give ordinarily the why, but only the how of the causes and effects it professes to establish, but so it is with all other sciences; they do not give the reason of things, but only their processes. Yet astrology is supposed at some indefinite time in the march of human mind to have been exploded,—along with such things as witch-craft and demonology, not to speak of the existence of spirits and the immortality of the soul,—and there is a sort of idea that it has been disproved and therefore put aside as a superstition which no reasonable man can even look at except with a lofty disdain, much less stoop to investigate with an open mind its truth or falsity. Still the anathema of Science has not been able to destroy it, in Europe it has revived, even though its practice as a profession is punishable by the law, and in India it has always survived. It is not indeed the habit of educated Indians to profess explicitly their belief in it, they fight shy of that as a rule, but it is largely consulted by numbers of them, as also by many Europeans. This is an anomalous position which ought to be corrected. Either astrology is a true science and should be investigated, proved, improved where defective and generally

* *Kalaprakasika* the Standard Book on the Election System by N P Subramania Iyer, Tanjore

rehabilitated in opinion, or else it is a pseudo-science and should be investigated and disproved so as to cut the ground away finally from all secret belief or open credulity

As a matter of fact astrology has never been scientifically disproved, nor has any rational ground ever been advanced for treating it as a pseudo-science. It simply came to be assumed at a certain period and under certain intellectual influences that it was a childish superstition. Or if there were any grounds, then it was left aside because astrologers were charlatans, because many, perhaps most predictions went wrong, but most of all because it was thought that in the nature of things, in any rational theory of the universe the planets simply could not have any influence on our characters, lives and actions. None of those grounds are sufficient. If many astrologers are charlatans, so also have there been many quacks in the field of medicine, at one time indeed not only did they pullulate, but the system of medicine itself seemed so defective that there were plenty of clear and enlightened minds who were inclined with Molière to denounce the whole thing as a gross pseudo-science, an elaborate and solemn system of ignorance, humbug and quackery. Supposing that view had prevailed,—it could not, merely because men are too vitally interested in healing their ailments and preserving their bodies and know no other way of doing it,—that would not have done away with the truth underlying the science.

That many predictions go wrong, proves nothing essentially, against astrology any more than the constant failure of doctors to heal diseases proves anything essential against their science. The first reason of this failure may be that a great number of practising astrologers are either charlatans who seek to please their clients rather than predict by scientific rule,—of that kind there are perhaps many,—or else inefficient and ignorant men who practise only by rule of thumb, perfunctorily and with a main eye upon their fees. But if even capable astrologers fail often, that also only proves that either the science or their way of treating it is largely empirical or that some of its rules and theories may be errors. But every science has to pass through its empirical stage and some—as, again, the science of medicine,—have hardly emerged from it, and every science too burdens itself in its progress with false generalisations, incorrect theories and imperfect rules which have afterwards to be discarded or amended. As the main point in medicine is whether herbs and metals and other remedies have or have not certain effects on the body and whether their workings can be substantiated by experience in a sufficient number of cases to establish a regular relation of cause and effect, so it is in astrology with the fundamental question of planetary influences upon earth and its creatures.

The *a priori* argument from the rational theory of the universe cannot stand. There is nothing essentially irrational in the idea that in this solar system, so closely linked together, there may be mutual influences of all the planets upon each other or that the beings of a particular planet are powerfully influenced or even dominated by influences from the others. The question remains, the *a priori* rationality being admitted or at least not summarily dismissed, first, whether it is so in fact and, secondly, how far those influences go and of what nature they are. Astrology affirms

that they not only affect our bodies, but also our psychical being. If matter and mind were entirely independent entities having no influence or determining effect upon each other, then such a result could not be; but that is not the case. According to the materialistic view of the universe which claims to be the sole rationalistic view, mind is itself an effect of matter and all its states and movements are determined by matter. There is nothing then impossible, planetary influence being once admitted, in the action of material bodies producing psychical conditions on the earth and thereby determining our psychical states and movements. In a more truly rationalistic view mind and matter are always influencing and determining each other, here too, given a universal mind and matter so acting upon individual matter and mind, the movements of the planetary system may be one or even the first nodus of their activities, and the assertions of astrology become at least primarily credible.

Farther, astrology affirms that these influences determine the whole course of our lives and that the all-important element is time. That raises the major question of the influence of Time upon human beings and events, does Time determine the course of our lives and the states of our being and if so, how far and in what way? or to put the question more precisely, as it is raised by astrology, do or can the conditions reigning at a given critical time, in this case the moment of birth, determine our physical and psychological conditions and the whole course of our future lives, or determine them to any considerable extent? and are the relative movements and therefore the mutual positions of the sun and planets with regard to the earth and each other either the nodus or in some way the effective signs of these determinations? And, secondly, do the developing time conditions which come afterwards, by themselves or viewed in reference to the original conditions, determine from moment to moment, from time to time the subsequent evolution of our primary physical and psychological conditions and the course of linked and successive circumstances which make up the history of our lives? and if so, again, are the relative movements and mutual positions of the sun and planets at any given time the nodus or the effective signs of this later determination also? can they therefore be taken for all practical purposes as determinants, or at any rate as sure signs by which the determinations of our life and being can be discovered? That is the question which astrology raises, and it is evidently a perfectly legitimate and rational question nor can we on *a priori* grounds condemn and put away an affirmative answer, which is based upon past experience systematised into rules and theories, as a superstition or a childish folly. Granted that in things here there is a chain of cause and effect—or at least, if causality is disputed, of antecedent condition leading up to subsequent condition—and that if and so far as we know that chain, scientific prediction becomes in that proportion possible,—two propositions which, unless we deny determination altogether, it would be difficult to dispute,—there is no inherent improbability in the clue to happenings human and other on the planets being found in the motions of those planets. Astronomy is in a sense the primary physical science, for the first facts which give all the others their field are astronomical facts, it may well be that in the psycho-

physical field the same rule holds and that there the first facts may be astrological

The *a priori* objections disappearing, the next step is to ask ourselves whether there is a sufficient *prima facie* empirical case for inquiring into the actual truth of astrology. This at present depends upon the experience of isolated individuals, a very unsatisfactory basis. But if this experience could be collected, sifted and published, I believe it would be found that a formidable *prima facie* case exists in favour of astrology, much stronger than that which encouraged the Society for Psychical Research to carry on its work in another psycho-physical field to such important conclusions. I may state my own experience in the matter in the belief, justified by many instances, that it is only typical of the experience of hundreds of others. My first accidental contact with an Indian astrologer was not encouraging. This gentleman was the most accomplished thought-reader I have ever seen, for he asked me to think my question without speaking it and not only successfully named the unspoken question I had fixed on, but three others which had crossed my mind, one of them only in the merest flash and without leaving any impression behind. This he pretended to do by mathematical calculation, an operation which I took leave to regard as humbug or professional parade. For when it came to his answers, I found that he was still doing thought-reading and not astrology, he simply echoed the hopes or thoughts in my mind and his predictions did not come within one hundred miles of the truth. Other practitioners I have found to belong, a few plainly to the class of mere flattering charlatans, but most to the inefficient who read by rule of thumb and have made no profound study of their science. On the other hand, with capable astrologers the results have been often of such a remarkable accuracy as to put quite aside any possibility of chance hit, mere coincidence, intelligent prevision or any of the current explanations. I may instance the father of a friend of mine, a deep student of the science but not a professional, who predicted accurately the exact year, month, day, hour and even minute of his own death. In my own case accuracy was hampered by the inability to fix the precise moment of my birth; still some of the results were extraordinary. Two may be mentioned, from one and the same astrologer, which related to my public career. One, given when I had not yet plunged into the political vortex and my then obscure personality was quite unknown to the astrologer, predicted as an inevitable certitude of the future a political struggle with powerful non-Indian adversaries during which for a time even my life would fall under the shadow of danger. The other, given at the time of my first prosecution in the *Bande Mataram* case, predicted three successive criminal trials in each of which the prosecution would fail. I may instance also two predictions by the book in which Slokas from Sanskrit astrological writings indicating the result of certain conjunctions or planetary positions were shown to be applicable to my horoscope. One foretold specific chronic illnesses for the body of which there was no sign at the time, but long afterwards they put in their unexpected appearance and persisted. Another indicated very precisely that one of my future activities would be to found a new spiritual philosophy and its discipline, at that time I had no knowledge of philosophy or Yoga and no turn or

inclination in my mind which could make the realisation of this prediction at all probable. These are only the most precise examples out of a number. Supposing all well-authenticated evidence of the kind to be collected, I am convinced there would be an overwhelmingly strong *prima facie* case and even a body of sufficiently strong empirical proof to establish at least a nucleus of truth in astrology.

That would be the first step. For if astrology is a science and is to take its proper place, the first necessity is to dissipate by an appeal to the empirical mind of the general public as well as of the sceptical thinker the great mass of unenquiring prejudice which now exists against it. To publish the text and translation of the best authorities, as Mr Iyer is now doing, with illuminating introductions is a preliminary need in this case so that we may know what we have to go upon. The second is to mass evidence of the empirical truth of the science, giving in each case the prediction in all its details, the more detailed the better, the astrological rules on which it was based and the event, each detail of the event being compared with the corresponding detail of the prediction. Only then would there be a clear field for the consideration of the scientific and philosophical doubts, questions and problems which would still arise; but this, though the most important aspect of the matter, I must leave for future handling.

An acceptance of the truth of astrology would not necessarily carry with it a complete determinism of Fate or mechanical law of Karma. In the Indian theory at least there is room for a determination by human will and endeavour, for Fate is mainly a determination by past action and a new will and action can cancel it, only a very strong Karma is imperative and irreducible. Even that may possibly be cancelled if one can enter into the freedom of the spiritual consciousness. One instance at any rate came to my knowledge in which the life had corresponded exactly with the predictions of the horoscope so long as the subject remained in the world but, as soon as he left it for a spiritual life, there was no longer any correspondence.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol 17, pp 283-89. Except for the last paragraph the article had first appeared in the 15th November 1917 issue of the *Arya*, pp 250-56.)

SERVICE TO THE DIVINE

*No joy can be greater
than that of serving the Divine*

No joy can be greater than that of serving the Divine.

*

We must be always, solely and exclusively, the servitors of the Divine.

*

*Above all preferences
we want to be at the
service of the Divine.*

Above all preferences we want to be at the service of the Divine.

+

To be at the Divine's service is the surest means of attaining realisation.

*

(About service to the Divine and meditation)

Both are equally good Nevertheless, through service one can attain a fuller realisation than through meditation alone

*

All service done sincerely to the Divine is sadhana.

And all increase in the urge to serve is a sure sign of progress.

*

Whatever you do in life must be done as a service to the Divine and nobody else.

Whatever you are, think or feel, you are responsible for it to the Divine and to nobody else.

He is the sole Master of your being and your life. If in all sincerity you surrender entirely to Him He will take charge of you and your heart will be in peace.

All the rest belongs to the world of Ignorance and is governed by ignorance which means confusion and suffering

Blessings

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol 14, pp. 110-11)

SADHANA

CAST off that outward life,
 The foe to what must be born;
 Bevel with whittling knife
 Wide windows for the dawn.

Break through the subtle net
 Of pastward-aimed desire:
 High in hope's turret set
 The all-renewing fire.

Within a barren world,
 Clear spring, a space of trees,—
 Could the mirage Wrong unfurled
 Be matched with these?

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment. I like the lines very much for the powerful and succinct expression of the thought, the rhythm matching it very well.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

विदा दिवो विष्यत्रद्रिमुक्थैरायत्या उषसो अर्चिनो गु ।
अपावृत व्रजिनोरुत् स्वर्गाद् वि दुरो मानुषीर्देव आव ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45 1)

Severing the hill of heaven by the words he found them, yea, the radiant ones of the arriving Dawn went abroad, he uncovered those that were in the pen, Swar rose up, a god opened the human doors (SABCL, Vol 10, p 204)

वि सूर्यो अमितं न श्रिय सादोर्वाद् गवा माता जानती गात् ।
धन्वर्णसो नद्यः खादोअर्णाः स्थूणेव सुमिता दृहत द्यौः ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45.2)

The Sun attained widely to strength and glory, the Mother of the Cows (the Dawn), knowing, came from the wideness, the rivers became rushing floods, floods that cleft (their channel), heaven was made firm like a well-shaped pillar (SABCL, Vol 10, p 204)

अस्मा उक्थाय पर्वतस्य गर्भो महीना जनुषे पूव्याय ।
वि पर्वतो जिहीत साधत द्यौराविवासन्तो दसयन्त भूम ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45.3)

To this word the contents of the pregnant hill (came forth) for the supreme birth of the Great Ones (the rivers or, less probably, the dawns), the hill parted asunder, heaven was perfected (or, accomplished itself); they lodged (upon earth) and distributed the largeness (SABCL, Vol 10, p 204)

एतो न्वद्य सुध्यो भवाम प्र दुच्छुना मिनवामा वरीय ।
आरे द्वेषासि सनुतर्दधामाऽयाम प्राञ्चो यजमानमच्छ ॥
एता धिय कृणवामा सखायो ऽप या माता ऋणुत व्रज गो ।
यया मनुर्विशिशिप्रं जिगाय यया वणिग्वङ्कराया पुरीषम् ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45.5-6)

Come now, today let us become perfected in thought, let us destroy suffering and unease, let us embrace the higher good, *eto nu adya sudhyo bhavāma, pra ducchunā minavāmā vartiyah*, far from us let us put always all hostile things (all the things that attack and divide, *dvesamsi*), let us go forward towards the Master of the sacrifice.

Come, let us create the Thought, O friends, (obviously, the seven-headed Angirasa-thought), which is the Mother (Aditi or the Dawn) and removes the screening pen of the Cow (SABCL, Vol 10, p 205-6)

अनूतोदत्र हस्तयतो अद्रिरार्चन् येन दश मासो नवग्वा ।
ऋतं यतो सरमा गा अविन्दद् विश्वानि सत्याङ्गिराश्वकार ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45 7)

Here the stone was set in motion whereby the Navagwas chanted the hymn for the ten months, Sarama going to the Truth found the cows, the Angirasa made all things true (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 206)

विश्वे अस्या व्युषि माहिनाया स यद् गोभिरङ्गिरसो नवन्त ।
उत्स आसा परमे सधस्थ ऋतस्य पथा सरमा विदद् गा ॥

(Rigveda, 5 45 8)

When in the dawning of this vast One (Usha representing the infinite Aditi, *mātā devānām aditer anīkam*) all the Angirasas came together with the cows (or rather, perhaps by the illuminations represented in the symbol of the cows or Rays); there was the fountain of these (illuminations) in the supreme world; by the path of the Truth Sarama found the cows (SABCL, Vol 10, p 206)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

Facts to Ponder

To handle yourself, use your head,
to handle others, use your heart

Anger is only one letter short of danger

If someone betrays you once, it is his fault,
if he betrays you twice, it is your fault

A TALK

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

THIS was at the beginning of 1920, in the early months of the year I continued for some months with increasing inner difficulties, and finally I asked to be put on leave. You understand I had all my family against me. This is normal. I had my relations, a father, a mother, a brother. Neither one nor the other appreciated what I did, nor why I did it. My father may have understood, he understood very well, he had followed me. He had followed me as well as he could,—that is to say, he had tried to understand the reasons for my action, and he sympathised with me. But he said: “Well, my son, look. If these things, these psychic phenomena interest you, all right. You can, if you wish to, I shall give you all that is necessary so that you become a doctor and study them as a medical man would. For that, you should study medicine for the necessary time, and you can study these phenomena with all the—what shall I say?—the knowledge and the method of a doctor of medicine.”

But what he could not understand was that I wanted to *live* that life.

“But no, you should not commit yourself, because you lose your critical faculty. You cannot come to know the truth if you adopt, if you accept one idea and if you try to put it into practice.”

That was the kind of difficulties I met at home. But it was—I can say, I was somewhat a fanatic like all beginners. For example, I did not tell you, on the front, when I was a junior officer I was in charge of the officers’ mess, of the officers’ kitchen. I ordered the menu and I had the money. Well, I had become a vegetarian (*laughs*) with much conviction. To be a vegetarian on the front, in a French officers’ mess, I can assure you, was not pleasant (*laughs*)—not pleasant. I made everybody laugh, or else, they pitied me (*laughs*) and they wished that I would turn sane once more and go back to the traditional opinion of the French regarding food. I shall not keep from you that before the war, I used to drink, to take wine, to take other drinks like the young people of my age. I did not have a particular liking for liquor, but after all, drinking is something very normal for the French. You should not see it very—*if I tell you this it is not in order that you look at it with your—what shall I say?*—with your traditional outlook that tells you: “Oh, that must be a very bad man”—because any one who drinks is, according to Indians, generally a very bad man. I did not tell you—I did not seek to sully myself, nor to—*is it not, I told you the truth.*

Well, I was a little of a fanatic and I was ready to defy all to leave that life.

(*Pavitra looks at his watch*)

What is the time? I make it 3.45

(*Some one replies and Pavitra repeats*)

3.45! 3.40

Then, an opportunity came my way. I had friends who were leaving for the Far

East, for Japan, and I decided to go with them. It brought me closer. As far as I was concerned I did not make a great difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Is it not, there was the same spirituality animating all religions of India. So I left for Japan. I went, not as an engineer, but as an ordinary individual, therefore it was necessary to earn my living there, it was not very convenient. It was not easy in an Asian country like Japan which did not welcome strangers except, like India today, is it not, those who are famous, or who bring money or who are supported by financial institutions. I had none of these.

But at last, after some vicissitudes, many difficulties, a life somewhat hard, I remained in Japan for four years. Many an experience, the study of Buddhism, especially of Zen Buddhism, life in the temples, work in the laboratories and, at home, in the evenings, the pursuit of my studies. My studies were on India, Japan and China. The alternatives—the alternations to speak French rather, the alternations of light and darkness, of an advance and stagnation, all the difficulties which meet those who look for light and who look by themselves, or at least seemingly so.

Then a delegation of Mongol monks, lamas, came to Japan and visited the laboratories, the factories where I worked. I entered into contact with them—because it is always, isn't it, Asia and Central Asia which, from the point of view of location, place, centre reunites—makes it converge under the ridges of the Himalayas—one side of the North or of the South—Tibet—the Himalayas.

And I saw there an opportunity. I asked myself if it was not a hint to go to Tibet. I had made their acquaintance. It was not very easy to talk to them because we did not have a common language. There was an officer of the old Russian army who knew—who was Mongol, who did not know even English or Chinese. And there was his wife who knew Chinese and English. Then, we could chat with this medium, it was not very convenient (*laughs*) but, little by little, the possibility arose to go and live sometime in their monastery, lamaseraï. It was necessary to go across China from the North, to go up to what is called Outer Mongolia, that is, Mongolia which was under Chinese suzerainty. It was in 1924. To put it briefly, I went with a Mongol lama who was a man full of wisdom, open. I learnt the Mongol language during this time, because I had to talk at least something to him. And so I applied myself to Mongol. How difficult it was to find books to learn the Mongol language and that with the few books I could find! And I went across North China, Peking, with—I do not speak to you of this experience, the adventures, of all that, no, I do not have the time—but my attitude was somewhat like the following: "I know that I am on the way to the Truth, towards him who will take me to the Truth. I do not know where he is, and how to reach him. What I can do is to remain completely attentive and open to all signs that I perceive. If I see a door opening in one direction, I'll follow it. If I see nothing, well, I stay, I wait." And even today I think that it was the right attitude.

And so I left. It was necessary to cross North China and reach a monastery where there were only Tibetan lamas. I stayed there nine months, a whole winter, a winter in a cold country. But anyway I cannot say that I suffered from the cold. It was

well protected, completely isolated from all contact I did not see any European during those nine months, some Chinese—merchants—and then the Mongols. It was, at certain times, rather hard We withdrew into ourselves, abandoned to our conflicts, to periods of crises

But what dominated was “My God, if only I knew what I must do on earth, whatever it be, whether it be to sweep the street, well, I would do it with joy But what is it that I have to do?” And already, it was three years or four that it had lasted, no? What must I do on earth? Where shall I find the clear indication?

I knew at that time of the existence. I knew of the existence of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother through common friends I had even an issue of the French *Arya* in my hands before I left France I had seen it I must admit, is it not, that it had not particularly attracted me. I had read the contents. I had said “Yes, it is interesting” But that which I wanted, was the contact with something that I was looking for in the . the book, the book itself conveyed nothing to me Moreover there were . how shall I say? yes, it included the first chapters of the *Life Divine* and then, the studies on Eternal Wisdom I had seen them. Yes, it was really interesting But it had not touched me more than the other things...I tell you that frankly.

When I was in Japan .I reached there just a little after the Mother had left It was in 1920, and the Mother had left a few months earlier Consequently I heard about her I had friends, common friends, I was interested in what they told me of Her and that is why I decided to write So I wrote to Pondicherry I did not get an answer (*laughs*) Never. I wrote twice No answer I think that at that time they did not answer letters often Perhaps . I hope they answer somewhat better now

Well, after that winter in Mongolia, a little severe, I felt very clearly that that experience was over, and that I must go elsewhere But where? Well, to India The moment had come for me to go to India Where? That I did not know As I returned from Japan I had to go somewhere Well, to others, to my family, to my friends I said “I return to Europe via India”

But within me, I knew that I would stay on in India. But I could not say that because they would ask me Where would you go? “Oh, but I do not know” Is it not? I had nothing . nothing material on which I could base my inner certitude, but that “It is in India that I must find what I seek”

So I left . I set out again . I passed by Indochina where my brother was an engineer in the telecommunications, that is, of the Radio TSF network in Indochina. I stayed there a month and then arrived in Ceylon, going South I reached Ceylon with India before me, the door to India

Well, where do I go now?

Pondicherry is very near, I go to Pondicherry. But I did not know what welcome I would receive. I did not even know if I would be received at all I had not got any answer to my letters. I go to Pondicherry because it is the nearest port. Then? Well, we shall see Perhaps I shall be able to go to Adyar, which is not far perhaps! I shall see This inner attitude was always the same, it was to see if a door would open

I waited a fortnight in Ceylon because rail traffic to India had been disrupted by floods. You see, that still happens. The railway lines had been cut; and for three weeks I stayed in Ceylon. Then I arrived in Pondicherry one morning by train. I went to the Hotel d'Europe, and immediately came to the Ashram. At that time Sri Aurobindo lived in the room where Anilbaran is living now. You know that

(Some music from a funeral procession which is passing the street)

What is this musical accompaniment?

There I asked if I could be received by Sri Aurobindo.

At that time, Sri Aurobindo still received, still saw his disciples. He agreed to see me. I described to Him my story, that which I was seeking, why I had left Europe and why I had come to India, and that which I hoped I would find here.

It was I who spoke the first day.

He asked me to come again the next day. In the evening I was received by the Mother. The Mother, I remember. I remember particularly Her eyes, Her eyes of light. I repeated my story to Her, perhaps a little briefly. She spoke a few words to me, and I returned to my hotel. I remember I went for a walk on Cours Chabrol and someone said "There, they are the swadeshis." That is, the people who were dressed in white and who were members of the Ashram. There were not many. There were, how many? .twelve or fifteen.

The next morning I came back, and Sri Aurobindo received me. And it was He who spoke. He told me that what I was seeking, that is to say, evidently I had revealed to Him my desire for liberation, isn't it, I had told Him that it was that which I was seeking, not so much the liberation from rebirth, but liberation..liberation of the self, from the ego, from ignorance, and sin, falsehood, from all that makes the ordinary human life. It was . liberation, moksha, that was my ideal. I did not . place it in another world. I did not desire particularly to avoid suffering. But it was the weight of ignorance, falsehood, ugliness, all that, and more than avoiding something, it was something positive. I searched rather for the light, not so much to avoid suffering, the end of suffering or falsehood, but the light, knowledge, truth.

Then He said that there were in India some people who could give me what I looked for, but they were not easily accessible, not easy to approach, especially for a European. And then He continued thus: that He considered what I was seeking, that is union with God, the realisation of the Brahman, to begin with as a first step, a necessary stage; but it was not all, that there was another .that is the descent of the divine Power into the human consciousness to transform it, and it was what He, Sri Aurobindo, was trying to do.

And he said to me. "Well, if you wish to try, you can stay." I fell at His feet. He gave me His blessings, and it was over. Is it not? A leaf in my life had been turned. The search...the search for the source of light, the search for Him who would guide me to the Truth was over. Something else was beginning . that is, the realisation, that. to put it in practice. But I had found Sri Aurobindo. I had found my Guru.

Well, that is how I came here.

As I tell you, I was accepted Then there was no Ashram There were some houses belonging to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother looked after Sri Aurobindo especially, and some disciples, but all were left, more or less, to themselves The Ashram was started a year later, in 1926, is it not? And so I had the great privilege to see Sri Aurobindo every day, to listen to him, to listen to him every day replying to questions which we put to Him But that is another thing, and I shall not speak of that today But! I have something to tell you How? If you permit me to give you an advice which this experience this experience has taught me, I shall tell you that that which is important is to give yourself wholly to whatever you do Whatever it is that you do, do it completely, do not do it in part And then, try to do something I speak if you have a choice of a profession, of a job—well, do what interests you, that which you are happy to do, do not seek a petty, easy life, in which you will be sheltered, in which you will not have much of boredom, much worry, or much work It is not that which is important What is important is to do something which interests you, to which you can give yourself completely And if you do that, well, you will always be guided, because now, looking at my life with the perspective which, to be sure, is given by age, I see that from the beginning, all that I did, even stupidities, even the errors, all that behind it all. there was the Hand ..the protecting hand of the Guidance And at bottom, even finally, all that I did, all my experiences, it is not to justify that, but all that had a meaning But finally I have reached where I had to.

There! I thank you

(Concluded)

PAVITRA

O IMMANENT

INTERMINABLE as the sky,
 O Immanent!
 I, a part and parcel,
 No doubt,
 Yet within my limit
 The Illimitable I house

May I crave
 For Your Grace
 To lift up the veil
 That wraps me
 Fold after fold?

G K SATPATHY

THE U.S. AND SOUTH VIETNAM*

SOME NEGLECTED TRUTHS AND FACTS

THE U.S. has come in for a lot of whipping on the strength of a grossly one-sided vision. A bit of counterbalancing treatment is called for—a sober look at some neglected truths and facts

We may admit that opinion even in the U.S. is divided. But we must recognise four strands in the anti-Johnson whip. First, there is the painful sense of the sacrifice of young Americans in their thousands so far from their own country and for so small a spot on the globe as South Vietnam. The question here is “What does it matter to us if the Communists of Hanoi take over?” The question is humanly understandable, but it is clearly short-sighted and takes no cognisance of world-issues. Secondly, there is the feeling of frustration: the war in South Vietnam seems interminable: the sacrifice of American youth might be worth while if the campaign could reach a quick satisfying end. Here, again, is understandable impatience and also some inkling of world-issues but little military insight.

Thirdly, there is the shocked impression that a lot of civilians in the enemy territory are suffering and that the U.S.’s bombing of North Vietnam is tending to be barbarous. This is a reaction made much of by many people outside the U.S. It forgets the bomb-raids on Hitler’s Germany in the last World War—raids both by America and Russia, more by the former because of greater power available but all of them fully approved by the whole Communist world. It forgets, too, that when strategic targets are set within civilian surroundings, the latter are bound to suffer to a certain extent. The crucial point really is “Are the raids meant directly to afflict the civilians?” The answer is undoubtedly a ‘No’. And, in any case, the shocked reaction does not dispute the rightness of the American cause as such: some of the means are disapproved, not the total end. Fourthly and finally, there is the condemnation of the end itself. A mere minority, though a respectable one, is vociferous here. By and large, the American public realises the need of the war.¹ But even this public, no less than the Government, is not a war-monger: there is always the eagerness to arrive at an honourable peace.

Sometimes the four strands are bound together and then the anti-American group outside the U.S. makes the most capital out of the anti-war opinion in the country itself. But what is generally overlooked is the fact that an enormous amount of liberty of speech is permitted in the U.S. Can we imagine it in any Communist state? The very mass of American criticism of American policy is an argument against allowing

* The article was written in 1967 for publication in *Jame-e-Jamshed* of Bombay, but the editor found it too long for his periodical. However, because of the importance of certain historical aspects discussed in it, we find it appropriate to keep the journalist cum political commentator K. D. Sethna’s view on record in *Mother India*. —R. Y. D.

¹ According to the Gallup Poll results announced on November 13, 1966, 55% of the American public feel the U.S. should increase attacks on North Vietnam, 18% feel the war should be carried on at the present level and another 18% feel the U.S. troops should be withdrawn from there.

Communism to take over South Vietnam Whatever the defects of a non-Communist system, it is at least free from that most fundamental defect which, over and above other defects, mars the opposite system suppression of independent individual thought, denial of the citizen's right to condemn his own government and even ask for a revolutionary change of it

Now we may turn from general considerations to particularities bearing on the situation in South Vietnam

T G. Menon, former Political Adviser to the International Control Commission, has written a long eye-opening article, "Chasing a Mirage in Vietnam" in *The Sunday Standard*, January 29, 1967, p 4 Towards the end of it he says

"Long before the intervention by the U S , complaints had been received by the International Control Commission regarding the infringement of the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

"It was proved beyond doubt after detailed investigation by the fixed teams stationed in different parts of North and South Vietnam that the communists had resorted to the most heinous methods of torture and intimidation to force South Vietnamese villagers to co-operate with the Viet Cong in their infiltration tactics

"For example, nine men and women in Quinhon were tied to pillars and buried alive The fixed team unearthed the skeletons of these nine victims of Viet Cong torture

"The booby-traps they lay for unsuspecting villagers whom they ear-mark for 'treatment' are equally gruesome There are many cases of unsuspecting pedlars blowing up innocent people by their ingenious devices The killings have gone on all the time in an indiscriminate manner "

In support of Menon's testimony we may spotlight some other facts. People who raise a hue and cry over the small number of civilian casualties of the U S bombing—casualties unavoidable, as we have said, in a war—never stop to point out that during the past year alone the methodical murder of over 3,000 civilians in the South has been carried out by Viet Cong terrorists. Nearly 10,000 others have been kidnapped. The sufferers include village chiefs, technicians, teachers, often their wives and children In the last ten years, these terrorists have butchered 30,000 civilians with the object of destroying all possible leadership and expertise in the South

The name of the American reporter Salisbury has recently been much thrust forward. He has sought to conjure up a harrowing picture of civilian casualties at American hands Only at the end of his fifth despatch did he admit that all his estimates and statistics were drawn from North Vietnamese officials. He has also suggested that areas of no military significance have been heavily bombed. But experts have found little difficulty in exploding his case A badly bombed "non-military" area named is Nam Dinh The Pentagon, as reported by *Time* (January 6, 1967, p. 10), has replied by drawing our attention to four major military targets in Nam Dinh (1) a big transshipment area for war-material, (2) a thermal power plant, (3) petroleum-storage facilities, (4) key rail-links to the South Salisbury has listed 89

civilian casualties in Nam Dinh. The Defence Department's Arthur Sylvester has neatly turned the tables on Salisbury: 89 civilian casualties would mean "rather precise bombing" of military targets, for the U.S. has made 64 raids on the city and still not even 1½ civilians have been struck per raid! R. C. Mandeville, Navy Commander and leader of frequent raids on Nam Dinh, has said that 100 anti-aircraft batteries protect Nam Dinh and that "the North Vietnamese don't waste their AA batteries—they only put them round stuff they want to protect"

A further list of truths to be realised may be gathered from Bryan Magee, the BBC broadcaster. In "Bombshell at the Aldwych" (*The Listener*, November 3, 1966, p. 651) he praises a TV show for bringing home to all of us the horrors of war and, in spite of its unfairness, creating a splendid salutary artistic effect. But he sets forth at the beginning some telling points which the controversy over Vietnam often slurs over. His first point we have already mentioned; the rest are new.

(1) Stupefying and unparalleled is the scale of the slaughter in the villages, by which the communists are trying to terrorize the civilian population into submission.

(2) The North Vietnamese insist that they will sit down to peace talks, which all other combatants offer unconditionally, only on condition that communists and communists alone represent the country they are trying to conquer.

(3) The majority of the soldiers fighting against the North Vietnamese are South Vietnamese and not Americans.

(4) The Vietnamese people have shown in every way that they do not want communist government—for instance, by the fact that the flood of refugees is almost entirely in one direction, from north to south, and above all by the fact that in the recent elections there was a higher turn-out than even in British general elections, in defiance of attempts by the communists to keep people away from the polling booths by a campaign of terror in which many voters were blown to smithereens.

In closing, we may return to T. G. Menon because his article is strikingly fair. According to him, Diem, the President of South Vietnam, had hoped for a unification of the North and South under a non-Communist government. The utter failure of Ho Chi-minh's ill-conceived land reforms in the North, admitted in March 1957 by Ho Chi-minh himself, and the anti-Communist unrest there in the same year, engineered by secret organisations and with the connivance of even some sections of the army—both these events made Diem optimistic about the collapse of the Hanoi regime. This regime, in order to divert the attention of its subjects from its failure on the economic front, had stepped up its own plans for unification with the South. More and more Viet Cong and regular troops started infiltrating the South under Hanoi's direction. Diem originally expected to meet successfully this subversive activity and the Americans were brought in only as advisers and trainers and for large-scale economic assistance. But when he intensified his campaign against the infiltrators, North Vietnam's regulars equipped by Peking and Moscow were sent through the so-called Ho Chi-minh Trail to oppose the Diem Government actively. Then, owing to increasing pressure from Diem, the U.S. not only stepped up military aid but also got

directly involved. No doubt, subsequently the Diem Government became unpopular. Madame Nu, a bigoted Catholic, played into the hands of the North Vietnamese leaders who—according to the International Control Commission—had a share in fomenting trouble amongst the Hoa Han and Binh Yuyen rebels and the Buddhists. But it is also unquestionable that Diem worked for economic well-being and sought the aid and co-operation particularly of India but failed to get sympathy or help. He had also an able and far-sighted Minister of the Interior, Mr Chan, who was anxious to expedite measures for social and economic progress. He wanted South-East Asian countries to join in mutual aid and form an economic unit so as to bring about general peace and prosperity and a natural capacity to resist tempting Communist overtures. He felt American aid to be absolutely necessary for a country living so close to a Communist power like China and facing more and more menaces from Hanoi. “What will happen in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Malaya and India itself,” he asked, “if communists go unchecked?”

This is the background of the American intervention. Although details differ, the overall situation is essentially the same as in Korea. Communism was checked there, but a hasty and premature peace was made and the negotiations for settlement dragged on and on, with the North Koreans in no mood to appreciate the concessions granted. How the final settlement was achieved we may best learn from what R. H. S. Crossman wrote in the *New Statesman* (London) of February 21, 1964, pp. 292-93, reviewing *The Korean War* by Robert Leckie and *Korea: The Limited War* by David Rees.

“The Korean War is full of dramatic irony. But the most ironic episode of all was the way the war ended. For months, the Panmunjom negotiations had been conducted by both sides with boneheaded bloody-mindedness, which excluded any chance of agreement. Suddenly, the atmosphere changed. Was it because in Washington Mr. Acheson, who dared not negotiate for fear of being called an appeaser, had been replaced by Mr. Dulles? Was it because Stalin was dead? These changes made an enormous difference. But both authors are in little doubt that the immediate cause of the armistice was Mr. Dulles’s brinkmanship: his calculated threat—leaked through the Indians to the Chinese—that if they did not sign on the dotted line straight away, the Americans would abandon the conventions of limited war and carry atomic bombardment to the Chinese cities. Apparently this threat was made with British agreement—and it worked. There is grim humour in the thought that MacArthur had to be got rid of before an American President could take the supreme MacArthurite gamble—a gamble repeated on a later occasion by President Kennedy.”

Here we have a precious clue to the Communist psychology and a reminder that unless the Americans are resolute and audacious in their fight they will accomplish nothing worth while and South-East Asia will again run the danger of Red aggression.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

P S (after some years) America pursued the war doggedly but under severe limitations for fear lest she should antagonise world-opinion which was mounting against her because the war was dragging on and because, within these limitations, she adopted severe measures like those odious ones exposed in the Mai Lai affair If she had not fought with one arm tied behind her back, as it were, her superiority in technology would have ended the war in no time The war ended only when President Nixon ordered all-out heavy bombing of Hanoi targets The North-Vietnamese came to heel and peace was signed but America agreed to withdraw from South Vietnam without losing face

KRISHNA WITHIN

O night bereft of moon the stars shall guide
 My steps upon the winding roads of time,
 No taint of darkness ultimately can hide
 Nor veil from sight the mystery sublime.

I've found the fruited grove where the God-child plays
 And slumbers in this hidden cave of mine,
 Opening late the secret Book of Days
 I befriended Him as I cleansed the vaulted Shrine

In dream-like fields amongst the golden kine
 I spy his blue-white radiance abroad
 Fluting to rapturous bloom this blue-green globe,
 Krishna, beloved, friend and guide and Lord

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

Amal's comment. A fine piece

THE UNIQUE MESSAGES FROM THE MOTHER

MANY people asked me after reading my book, *The Story of a Soul, Part I* how I could remember so many things of the past and all that the Mother had said to me, because everything was written so well in the book

I could not answer their queries earlier owing to other important and urgent work. Now I have the pleasure to state the facts

It was my great fortune to work with the Mother for eighteen years purely on the basis of spiritual and occult truths. She simply poured her Grace and Love abundantly

Every year the Mother used to give me two diaries for me to write in according to her instructions and guidance. This is how THE STORY was formed

In one of her letters to me dated 19-12-55, she wrote

My dear little child

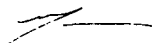
I have received your nice letter and am sending at once the second diary so that you can begin to write at once. I propose that in one of the diaries (Sri Aurobindo's) you should write daily a prayer, expressing your aspiration, or your gratitude, or your adoration, the progress you want to make. It does not need to be long, only a few lines, and it will help you to understand yourself. You will write as if you were speaking to him and to me directly and thus you will create an intimacy with him and myself. In [the] other diary you will write as you said

My love and blessings are always with you

Towards the end of each year the Mother saw my diaries, corrected them if necessary and then wrote beautiful messages on the last pages

Five of them appeared on the back covers of my books *White Roses*, *Gems from the Mother to Huta*, *Salutations*, *Victory of the Truth* and *The Story of a Soul, Part I*. *White Roses* holds this Message

*Truth is supreme harmony
and supreme delight.
All disorder, all suffering
is a falsehood
This world of misery and confusion
is a world of falsehood
Only a change of consciousness
and the conquest over falsehood
can change the world
of this world*



Gems from the Mother to Huta has the following Message:

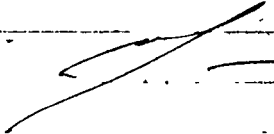
The Lord's
Grace
is infinite
Om
Amsi soit - il
/

Salutations had this Message

O Lord! Supreme
love, Supreme Beauty
with infinite gratitude
we thank Thee for
having heard our
prayer.
3/5

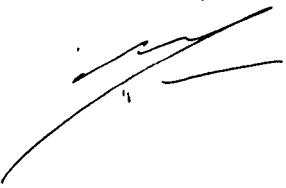
Victory of the Truth carries this Message:

O Lord
 With full faith, love and
 surrender
 we are ready for
 Thy Victory



The Story of a Soul carries this unique Message on its back cover

In the name of
 the Lord
 with the Power,
 the Grace and the Love
 of the Lord
 I bless you



Surprisingly, this very Message I found on the Darshan Day card of 24-4-2001!

Certainly the Mother's treasures are to be shared, enjoyed, assimilated and lived.

The Mother has not only given to me her treasures but told me how and when they are to be revealed in a proper and perfect way. This is what I have been doing so far. Let us all respect her wish.

We all are grateful to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for giving us so much along with their Grace and Love

I personally feel that we must never let the flame of our faith and aspiration be quenched

We must work together in peace, harmony, understanding and consideration in order to bring about the Victory of the Mother's Truth and Love, and make her happy

I end this article with the Mother's encouraging words:

We all who have a common uplifting ideal shall unite; and in this union and by this union we will face and overcome the attacks of all opposing forces of darkness and devastation. In union is the strength, in union is the power, in union the certitude of Victory

HUTA

(Copyright © Huta D Hindocha)

Facts to Ponder

Great minds discuss ideas,
Average minds discuss events,
Small minds discuss people

He who loses money, loses much,
He who loses a friend, loses much more,
He who loses faith, loses all

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

The Vision and the Boon

5

BY THE mid-1930s, the manuscripts of *Savitri* had begun to reflect with some fullness not only the heights of consciousness to which Sri Aurobindo had risen, but also the depths of unconsciousness and falsehood he was compelled to come into contact with in his attempt to get to the root of the problem of earthly life. Besides describing these realms of darkness in passages that would develop into Book Two, Cantos Seven and Eight of *Savitri*, he gave a graphic account of his experiences in "A God's Labour", a poem written in 1935-36. Here we meet again the Dragon and the Sphinx which had appeared together in the late 1920s in the *Record of Yoga* and in the speech of the Divine Mother in *Savitri*:

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate."

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings¹

The meaning of this surrealistic juxtaposition of the Sphinx and the Dragon may be understood if they are seen to be two aspects of the same Inconscient. I have already quoted Sri Aurobindo's statement in *The Life Divine* that "the black dragon of the Inconscience sustains with its vast wings and its back of darkness the whole structure of the material universe".² But in *The Life Divine* he also speaks of

the riddle of the true nature of his being proposed to man by the dark Sphinx of the Inconscience below and from within and above by the luminous veiled Sphinx of the infinite Consciousness and eternal Wisdom confronting him as an inscrutable divine Maya³

Just as the "Dragon of the dark foundations"⁴ guards the Law that has emerged from the Inconscient and substitutes its mechanical rigidity for the free and conscious working out of the divine Will, so the dark Sphinx evidently represents the power of

the Inconscient to withhold and obscure the knowledge of the truth of our being and all being, thus turning life in this world into an impenetrable enigma. On the other hand, there is another Sphinx of the Superconscient who dazzles the eye of the mind with too much light and thus poses an equally insoluble riddle. This is presumably the “golden Sphinx” mentioned by Sri Aurobindo in Book Two, Canto Fifteen of *Savitri*. One is reminded also of the “sphinx of eternity” in the Mother’s prayer of November 10, 1914

O Consciousness, immobile and serene, Thou watchest at the confines of the world like the sphinx of eternity. And yet to some Thou yieldest Thy secret. 6

Here, however, we are concerned with the lower sphinx who is a shadow, as it were, of the higher one. The lines referring to the grey sphinx, now found in the last canto of Book Three of *Savitri*, gradually increased from the original two lines to four. They reached their final form only in 1944, as Sri Aurobindo continued to work on them long after he was satisfied with the rest of the sentence. As revised, they read

On his long way through Time and Circumstance
The grey-hued riddling nether shadow-Sphinx,
Her dreadful paws upon the swallowing sands,
Awaits him armed with the soul-slaying word. 7

Sri Aurobindo’s image of this monster—represented in several ancient traditions with a lion’s body and a human face, with some variations in other details—seems to combine elements of the Egyptian and Greek sphinxes. The “swallowing sands” suggest the deserts of Egypt, the later Greek sphinx was perched on a high rock, from which she leaped to her death when her riddle was solved. But the female form and the riddle itself belong to the Greek conception.

The riddle of the sphinx according to Greek mythology was the question. “What walks on four feet in the morning, on two at noon, and on three in the evening?” The sphinx killed all who failed to give the answer, which is: “Man.” For man crawls on all fours as a baby, walks upright in the prime of life, and leans on a staff in old age. Obviously this simple riddle, which requires only a little ingenuity to solve, cannot be exactly what Sri Aurobindo meant by the “soul-slaying word” of the “nether shadow-Sphinx.” Yet the riddle in its traditional form, describing man in such a way that he cannot easily recognise himself, points to the essence of the eternal and fatal question. It is the riddle of who we are. We are a riddle to ourselves, because what we seem to be is neither what we really are, nor what we are meant to become.

Sri Aurobindo accepted from the Greek legend the notion of the deadly consequences of our failure to solve the riddle of our own identity. The confrontation between man and the Sphinx is no academic exercise, but a matter of life and death. Until now, the Sphinx has been the victor. Man’s age-long pursuit of knowledge has

not revealed to him decisively who he is. Unable to solve the riddle, he has gone on dying. But if he could know and live integrally the Truth of his immortal Self, the tables would be turned and it would be the Sphinx—or Death—who would die.⁸ This is what is depicted in *Savitri*. As foreseen in Book Eleven, the death of Ignorance will mean also the end of Death.⁹

Savitri may be regarded as Sri Aurobindo's answer to the Sphinx. There is some evidence that when he revised *Savitri*'s debate with Death in 1946-47, he had come to see the riddling shadow-Sphinx as an aspect of Death as portrayed in the poem. The lines on the riddle of Death near the beginning of Book Ten, before the reference to the dragon quoted in the last instalment, belong to this stage of revision:

Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face .¹⁰

Here, to be sure, there is no verbal formulation of the riddle, but it is a riddle none the less. *Savitri* comes upon earth to "wrestle with the Shadow" and to "confront the riddle of man's birth"¹¹ which is inseparable from the riddle of his death. While the Sphinx awaits man "armed with the soul-slaying word", *Savitri* brings the saving word for which Aswapati has prayed:

Let a great word be spoken from the heights .¹²

This word expressing a suprarational knowledge can alone solve the infrarational enigma, masquerading in a rational form, that is posed by the Sphinx of the Inconscient. When Death assails *Savitri*'s idealism with the one-sided logic of his cynical materialism, she responds:

O Death, thou speakest truth but truth that slays,
I answer to thee with the Truth that saves .¹³

Another passage identifies the argumentation of Death even more clearly with the "soul-slaying word" of the Sphinx:

But *Savitri* answered to the sophist God
"Once more wilt thou call Light to blind Truth's eyes,
Make Knowledge a catch of the snare of Ignorance
And the Word a dart to slay my living soul?"¹⁴

Like the Dragon, the Sphinx is a symbol whose importance in *Savitri* should be judged not merely by the number of occurrences of the word, but by what it repre-

sents in Sri Aurobindo's vision and experience. As one of the "four Powers that resisted", which he noted in the *Record of Yoga* early in 1927 and introduced into *Savitri* at some point during the same period, the "Sphinx of the eternal questioning" remained a force to be reckoned with in Sri Aurobindo's work of lightening, as he said in 1947,

the heavy resistance of the Inconscient and the support it gives to human ignorance which is always the main obstacle in any attempt to change the world or even to change oneself.¹⁵

In a passage dictated by Sri Aurobindo when he prepared an extract from Book Six, Canto Two for publication in the 1948 issue of *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, the Sphinx figures prominently among the obstacles the world-redeemer has to contend with. The "inert Soul" and "somnambulist Force" of the sentence in "The Vision and the Boon" are also present here as "God's slumber" (cf. "God's riddle sleep" in "A God's Labour") and "the unconscious Force that built the stars". The Dragon who keeps the old laws unchanged is implied by "the Inconscient's workings and its law". The parallel with the sentence in Book Three, Canto Four, drafted some twenty years earlier, is completed by the symbol of Night. This precedes an emergence into the eternal Light and a promise of the truth-conscious world coming down to earth in fulfilment of the world-redeemer's task

He too must grapple with the riddling Sphinx
And plunge into her long obscurity
He has broken into the Inconscient's depths
That veil themselves even from their own regard
He has seen God's slumber shape these magic worlds
He has watched the dumb God fashioning Matter's frame,
Dreaming the dreams of its unknowing sleep,
And watched the unconscious Force that built the stars.
He has learned the Inconscient's workings and its law,
Its incoherent thoughts and rigid acts. .
He must enter the eternity of Night
And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.¹⁶

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

- 1 *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, p 101
- 2 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 19, pp 665-66

- 3 *Ibid* , p 686
 4 *Savitri* (1993), p 336
 5 *Ibid* , p 300 A third Sphinx of the Ignorance intermediate between the Inconscient and the Superconscient appears in "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life", *ibid* , p 191
 6 *Prayers and Meditations*, CWM, Vol 1, p 269
 7 *Savitri*, p 336
 8 See the interpretation of the legend of the Sphinx from an Indian point of view in "The Legend of Savitri a mythic background", a talk given by Manoj Das at the Savitri Bhavan, Auroville, on March 12, 2000 (*Invocation*, August 2000, pp 28-29)
 9 *Savitri*, p 708
 10 *Ibid* , p 600
 11 *Ibid* , p 17
 12 *Ibid* , p 345
 13 *Ibid* , p 621
 14 *Ibid* , p 647
 15 *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol 26, p 170
 16 *Savitri*, pp 449-50

THE OLD NEW WORLD

THIS world is happy in its own way,
 Though pain and suffering are always at play.
 Why should we control and improve our lot?
 This world can never be a world of our thought

We seek and struggle but it is all in vain,
 We fall and we do fly, we have joy and pain
 We live and die, live to die yet again,
 We love our littleness, like a slave his chain

But look around and see, O small human thing
 This world is changed, be ecstatic and sing!
 Thou art no more senseless dust, no mire
 Thou art a torch of the Immortal Fire

The greatest and the smallest are one,
 We've changed this world and all our task done!

GLEB NESTEROV

THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

Third Element: Illuminating Light:

WE invite our readers to abandon one more of their well-cherished pre-conceived notions. It is as regards the true and essential nature of the light which illuminates an object and makes it accessible to our sight. Most of us take it for granted without much discussion and deliberation that light is essentially a phenomenon of the physical world. But this is not true. Let us listen to Sri Aurobindo and ponder over the implication of what he has to say in the matter.

“... it must be noted that, contrary to our ordinary conceptions, light is not primarily a material creation and the sense or vision of light accompanying the inner illumination is not merely a subjective visual image or a symbolic phenomenon, light is primarily a spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality illuminative and creative, material light is a subsequent representation or conversion of it into Matter for the purposes of the material Energy ” (*The Life Divine*, p 944)

Another interesting point we may note in this connection. Every plane of consciousness has its own characteristic light. Once when a sadhaka asked Sri Aurobindo whether a subtle physical object could be seen in a dark room with open eyes, the latter replied to the surprise of the disciple

“ . a subtle physical object [such as a flower] (quite substantial and material in its own plane)... could be sensed even in a dark room [if one is] able to bring out something of the light of the subtle physical plane to surround it and give it its natural medium.” (*Letters on Yoga*, pp 949-50)

It is not only that every plane has its own light, every level of consciousness too has its characteristic light which can proceed to the object viewed in the manner of a flashing torch-light and illuminate it. Here are some isolated lines from *Savitri* which may interest the readers in this connection:

“A timeless Light is in his hidden eyes ” (49)

“Some vision seen in the omniscient light...” (111)

“Raised into a splendid point of seeing light . ” (362)

Let us close our short discussion on the light that illuminates, and pass on to the consideration of the fourth element, “Obstruction”.

Fourth Element: Obstruction to the Sight:

As in the case of an ordinary physical sight the interposition of an opaque obstacle in between the viewer of an object and the object itself is liable to prevent the vision of the object from taking place, so in the case of a subtle supraphysical vision the “seer” has to take care that no “opaque” psychological obstacle intervenes between his “eye” of vision and the reality of the object viewed. Some of these possible obstructions are well-known (1) the insistent outward-darting action of the physical senses, (2) the turbidity and restlessness of vital desires, (3) the agitated activity of the thinking mind, (4) pronounced preferences and antipathies for and against anyone or anything, etc.

In the presence of any such or similar obstruction, the sight or vision of the viewer is liable to get distorted, falsified or even completely checkmated. Thus our mind’s throbs and the vital’s heavings have to be stilled before we can hope to have our inner consciousness awakened and functioning, offering us a vision pure and unclouded.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the illuminating light itself may at times act as an obstacle to a more profound vision. Just as the light of the sun shining during daytime obliterates the vision of the billions of stars present in the heavenly vault above, so a lesser but prominent and proximate light emanating from a relatively lower level of consciousness may blot out from the seer’s vision a far greater truth of the reality. Did not the Rishi of the Isha Upanishad send up his passionate appeal to Pushan, the Godhead, to remove the veil of dazzlingly golden light which was covering the face of the Truth? – *Hiranmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpīḥutam mukham* (Isha Upanishad, 15)

Here are some representative verses from *Savitri* referring to a few of the different types of veils and lids acting as obstacles to the spirit’s vision.

- (1) “Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit’s sight
In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal’s body in the world ” (476)
- (2) “ a curtain of bright mind
That hangs between our thought and absolute sight ” (74)
- (3) “The robes of mortal thinking were cast down
Leaving his knowledge bare to absolute sight ” (320)
- (4) “Through a gleaming far-seen sky of wordless thought,
Through naked thought-free heavens of absolute sight ” (632)
- (5) “That subtle world withdrew deeply within
Behind the sun-veil of the inner sight ” (527)

Fifth Element: Eye the Organ of Vision:

In our normal daily experience we proceed on the assumption that our physical eye is the only possible organ of vision and all sight has to depend on the proper employment of this physical eye. But this assumption too is not true to fact. Being governed by the overpowering experience of our physical mind we easily suppose that the fundamental thing in any "seeing operation" is the impression made by an external object on the physical organ of sight and that the only business of our mind which happens to be the present central principle of our consciousness is to receive the physical impression produced and its nervous translation and thus be aware of the object in question. But this account errs on many counts.

The physical eye belonging to the physical body is meant only for a limited range of physical sight. But we have bodies other than the physical one – the subtle body (*sūksma śarīra*) and the causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*), and these bodies have their corresponding "eyes". Our total being is not constituted of the gross material sheath (*annamaya kośa*) alone which is all that is visible and sensible to us. It is *pañca-kośātmaka*, made up of four more sheaths – a vital sheath (*prāṇamaya kośa*), a mental sheath (*manomaya kośa*), a "knowledge" sheath (*vijñānamaya kośa*) and a "bliss" sheath (*ānandamaya kośa*). Each of these subtler sheaths possesses its own faculty of vision. In fact, what we can see with our "mortal" physical eye is an infinitesimal portion of the multilayered multidimensional world of cosmic manifestation. All that exists in all possible worlds – yes, all without exception – is accessible to the sight of a corresponding eye and, what is most notable, all these different "eyes" are already there in the different planes of consciousness of every human being, although now hidden and dormant behind the thick veils of ignorance. If we can once awaken these various faculties of sight, there is no limit to the extent and splendour of the inexhaustible fields of visions that will open up before us.

Sixth Element: Sense Action:

All of us know that in our normal "seeing" of a physical object, a very complex neurological-electrical process goes on behind our optical organ, which alone gives rise to the visual sense action. Without this accompanying physiological process, so we believe, no sight is possible. But this too is an erroneous presupposition.

What is true is that all "seeing" arises basically out of a direct knowledge offered by the consciousness but because of our egoistic separative way of functioning we have divided the world into "self" and "not-self", into subject and object, and, then, in order to have the knowledge of the so-separated objects, we take recourse to indirect means like sense-organs and sense-actions. But this arrangement of external devices elaborated in terrestrial life-evolution does not and cannot abrogate the basic fact that the true sense-action is *in the mind* and not in the optical apparatus. Here is an illuminating passage from Sri Aurobindo:

“Mind, subconscious in all Matter and evolving in Matter, has developed these physical organs in order to apply its inherent capacities of sight, hearing, etc on the physical plane by physical means for a physical life [But] sight and the other senses are not mere results of the development of our physical organs in the terrestrial evolution. . they are inherent capacities [of Mind] and not dependent on the circumstance of terrestrial evolution and they can be employed without the use of the physical eye, ear, skin, palate ” (*SABCL*, Vol 12, p 195)

If we admit the truth of what Sri Aurobindo’s passage indicates, all our objections to the possibility of having suprasensuous supraphysical subtle vision of beings, objects, events, etc , cannot but vanish

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

THE MIRACLE OF GOD-TOUCH

I HAVE touched the fringe of joy.
 A profound serenity impels me inward
 And my inner space is limned with its glory,
 A burnished brilliance radiates from its core

Distress, sorrow, dark shadows
 No longer fret me,—for I am free,
 The air is fragrant, balmy the breeze,
 And like a lark I soar, unworried, in ecstasy

In this happy universe, of grace, beauty,
 Boundless, sanctifying, not in death,
 I now dwell, chanting the Hymn of Her Name
 Truly God-touch alone can do the wonder

VIRENDRA SHAH

OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

Overman

*The Truth is not linear but global, it is not successive but simultaneous
Therefore it cannot be expressed in words. it has to be lived*⁶⁶ —The Mother

IN December 1972, less than a year before she would lay down her body, the Mother thought about that momentous moment on 5 December 1950—the passing of Sri Aurobindo. “He had gathered in his body much supramental Force and as soon as he left .. You see, he was lying on his bed, I stood near him, and in a way altogether concrete—so concrete, I felt it so strongly that I thought it could be seen—all the supramental Force that was in him passed from his body into mine. And I felt the friction of the passage. It was extraordinary. It was an extraordinary experience. For a long time, a long time, like this (*gesture indicating the passage of the Force into her body*). I was standing beside his bed and that came into my body. Almost a sensation—it was a material sensation. For a long time. And that is all I know.”⁶⁷

Sri Aurobindo’s departure had been a shattering blow to her, an “annihilation.” They, the double-poled Avatar, were after all one and the same consciousness—one and the same supernal Consciousness that is Love. She had been compelled to “lock away” her soul by a yogic act in order to prevent it from following him. Often she must have relived the moment described above. For instance in May 1958 she recollected: “When he left and I had to do the Yoga myself, to be able to take his physical place I could have adopted the attitude of the sage, which is what I did, since I was in an unparalleled state of calm when he left. As he left his body and entered into mine, he told me: ‘You will continue, you will go right to the end of the work.’ It was then that I imposed a calm upon this body, the calm of total detachment. And I could have remained like that.

“But in a way, absolute calm implies withdrawal from action, so a choice had to be made between one or the other. I said to myself: ‘I am neither exclusively this nor exclusively that.’ And actually, to do Sri Aurobindo’s work is to realise the Supramental on earth. So I began that work and, as a matter of fact, this was the only thing I asked of my body. I said to it: ‘Now you shall set right everything which is out of order and gradually realise this intermediate overmanhood [*surhumanité*] between man and the supramental being, in other words, what I call the overman [*surhomme*]. And this is what I have been doing for the last eight years, and even much more during the past two years, since 1956. Now it is the work of each day, each minute.

“And that’s where I am. I have renounced the uncontested authority of a god, I have renounced the unshakable calm of the sage in order to become the overman

[*surhomme*] I have concentrated everything upon that''⁶⁸

Now that we have to relate the Mother's work in some detail, this is as good a place as any to draw attention to how much her personality and contribution to the Integral Yoga have been—and are—misjudged, underestimated and even neglected. In the first years of the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo time and again had to put the record straight about her, as one can read in his letters. A male Avatar was a known phenomenon, but a female Avatar, who had ever heard of that? And a French one, a *mleccha*, to boot! Sri Aurobindo, withdrawn, always looked majestic, guru-like, Shiva-like, the Mother, approachable and for many years moving among the disciples and Ashram students, changed her aspect according to the circumstances and the necessities. Sri Aurobindo had written volumes of learned prose, he was a poet of renown, and he still wrote letter after letter, sometimes several pages long, the Mother played a little on her organ, distributed flowers, and mostly communicated her knowledge orally, sometimes in English, more often in French.

But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had "the same path from the beginning" In 1920, when Mirra Richard and her husband Paul returned from Japan to India, "the Yoga was waiting for the Mother to continue," wrote Sri Aurobindo. It was on the Mother's advice that they descended from the supramentalised Mind into the Vital and then, in a daring yogic move, from the supramentalised Vital into Matter and, below, into the Inconscient. They divided the avataric task. Sri Aurobindo in the physical seclusion of his apartment did the general, fundamental Yoga, about which he communicated to the Mother regarding every progress, every gain, every realisation, the Mother took on the task of building up and guiding the Ashram, a world in miniature. She literally did the Yoga of all the accepted disciples, "taking them into her consciousness as in an egg". When Sri Aurobindo called the Second World War "the Mother's War", he must have had good reasons. And, as her body was constitutionally better than his for making the future effort of supramental transformation, she had to stay on and continue the glorious, gruesome job. It is all there to be studied and meditated upon by those interested.

Never has a Yoga of this magnitude, of this importance been so well documented in so many of its phases. Alas, words are but words, and to a new, ignorant eye it all looks so unusual, fantastic, overblown, and confusing—although the principles are logical and rational, the aim the most important and glorious possible, the protagonists human even if in part divine, and their thought practicable for every individual attracted to it. But, what have all those grandiloquent expectations come to? Where is the superman? Where is the new, divine world? Has the world ever been more inhuman and bewildering than now, at the turn of the millennium?

So much is new in this adventure of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Here is an Avatar not semi-mythical as in the great epics of the past, but in the flesh, talking, eating, sleeping, writing, riding in a car, being ill, having been married. And this Avatar is not solely male, as all the others were in the past, but also female, and he/she maintains that they have the same consciousness in their two bodies. Here is

an idea that evolution is to take a gigantic quantum jump now, possibly in our lifetime—not millions of years hence, and not only within the limits of our imagination but contriving something better than paradise! Here is a spiritual practice, called Integral Yoga, that demands the mastery of the whole range of yogas perfected before and recognised as valid, a mastery not to reach liberation, Nirvana, the Absolute, or Brahmaloaka, but aiming at the transformation of this whole problematical planet and the founding of heaven here. Including the transformation of the body and the awakening of a divine consciousness in the cells! Is this too fantastic to be taken seriously?

But in whatever way one judges the personalities, the intentions and the work done by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, no sincere critic can deny the coherence of the vision and the greatness of their effort to turn it into reality. That the world is very little aware of it, does not matter, as it is not a factor in the elaboration of that vision. For they have dug the foundations “to front the years”, and those foundations contain a spiritual Force to assure the *automatic* realisation of the Work they, as the Avatar of the Supermind, had come to perform. As they were one, neither of the two was “greater” than the other. And if the above is true, then the difference between both can only arise from our ignorance, from our lack of insight into who they were and what they did.

(To be continued)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

Notes and References

66 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 298

67 *The Mother Notes on the Way*, p. 328 (translation revised)

68 *Mother's Agenda I*, 10 May 1958 (emphasis added). The English translation gives here “supermanhood” and “superman” where the Mother in the original French used the words *surhumanité* and *surhomme*. This is a calamitous mistake, made persistently throughout the English translation of the thirteen volumes of *L'Agenda de Mère* as well as of the six volumes of *Entretiens*. The mistake is calamitous because it misleads the English speaking readers of the Mother about the many years of her effort to realise the overman. So consequential has this widespread mistake been that at present hardly any English speaking disciple, follower, devotee or interested reader is aware of the role and the importance of the overman. The misconception, or rather lack of conception, is still more widespread because many translations in other languages are made not from the French original, but from the faulty English translations.

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

The Culture of Gigantism

THE War-time Manhattan Project and the current space explorations have brought to us a new world of science and, associated with it, a certain internationalism though driven by the considerations of commerce and consumer goods Imported apples in Indian markets or spices returning to India with Western trademarks, for instance, are not very unusual these days Fast-food restaurants and American soft drinks are common everywhere Multinational brands are touted as a status symbol That cannot mean the opening of our economy to build up our own economy If for us that should mean progress, if that should mean the measure of being modern or socially advanced then, surely, there is a case for Swadeshi Nor can true Swadeshi mean just a reaction against these tendencies We have to discover its authentic roots in our own psyche What was until yesterday and to some extent even now a copyist's Max-Mullerian thinking about the ancient heritage of India, is that which has come back to us in another way through the route of foreign goods Our institutions do not seem to be our own institutions, but grafted creatures that struggle to survive in an alien climate This is an unfortunate aspect which gets reflected in all our creative endeavours as much as in scientific pursuits

Let us take an example, not from science but from literature. *The Death of Vishnu* is a recent novel which is being acclaimed widely in a "world of dissolving certainties" Its author Manil Suri is a professor of mathematics in Maryland and he attempts to depict life at three levels of symbolism The story is set in a pigeonhole apartment building in Bombay, its middle class people with different backgrounds and yet having common worries and common frailties. Neighbours quarrel, traditions clash, faiths lead to conflicts, yet there is a kind of agreeable relationship that sustains everything It is a story that depicts problems of urban life for which there are no answers Yet it is in this milieu that is seen the possibility of man's ascension to higher levels of values, even spiritual values

The reviewer of *New York Times* puts it as follows "In his applied mathematics work, which concerns the numerical analysis of stress, Suri is always trying to come up with the most abstract theorem, because the more abstract the theorem, the more applicable it is to many situations planes, bridges, heart attacks 'I almost think of the building like that,' he said 'It's India, or the various stages of Hinduism, or just what it is' And, Suri pointed out, in a passage in which the highly cerebral Mr Jalal has a revelatory vision of Vishnu as a god made of multiple, awe-inspiring suns, the passage of the Bhagavad-Gita he is envisioning is the same one that the physicist Robert Oppenheimer quoted when he witnessed the atomic blast "

Talking about it to the interviewer of the *Hindu*, Prof Suri clarifies his position

“As a mathematician, I looked at this building as an abstract entity, and it has these floors that are going to represent differences in class and religion and that is where the metaphor of India comes in and then it has these stairs and this sense of ascent and that will be the spiritual ascension. I started with Vishnu and I had observed this man die and there was this whole building with its own ecology and with all its characters that came to life. I like to think of it as three different things. One of them is that it is just a comic novel about people in a building, their fighting and so on. On the other level, it is a metaphor of India, it could be the whole world, people fighting with each other over various differences. On the third level, it is a novel about spiritual ascension of mankind, just getting more and more detached and inward looking and it is a parable for man’s quest for that.”

The story of a sickly character leading to spiritual ascension, “like the line of ants going upward on a wall,” is the Western view of India by an Indian and it shall never satisfy the deeper psychology nourished in genuine spirituality of the land. Neither will such abstract mathematics do, nor successful fiction. We have to have the intuitive eye of a Ramanujan to live in the wonderland of ideas that take mathematical shapes. Human conflicts are not uncommon and one of the greatest we see is in the Mahabharata which also comes out with enduring solutions in the context of spiritual urges and fulfilments. A nobler sense of life has to emerge and prevail in whatever we attempt and do. The artistry and elegance, be these in art or literature or science, in any secular activity, have to draw their inspiration, get their sustenance from the world of higher and all-observant Truth that is the foundation of the entire creation. The realistic is not the portrayal of the naked, but the leaping of possibilities, the depiction of the deepening or widening dimensions of man and his creations and his urges that lead him ever on, it has to be reality-based. There the secular and the esoteric cease to be separate.

The lure of the West is there for us in many ways and one of them is to adopt its life-style and become à la mode. If this is to continue then there is no hope. On the other hand, if we have to discover ourselves and grow in ourness, then a kind of soul-searching is called for. In fact we have to discover our own soul and live in it. Then shall we really be fulfilling ourselves. But, at the same time, it does not mean that we should not acquire the wherewithal of the current age. However, before we come to that let us follow the prevailing trends in their most objective manner. The globality that had come in the wake of the Atom Bomb and the Space Odyssey has, during the last few decades, entered in a most asserting manner in the bigness of modern experimental set-ups. With it has sprung up another culture of science. A scientific paper is published these days with the authorship of a large team of investigators and specialists, in contrast to the works of individual researchers and inventors of the bygone era. Those were the days when the scientist was a savant in contrast to a professional of modern times. We have to understand this phenomenon in the context of another cycle of human growth as a collectivity. Towards this we may take the example of complex sub-nuclear studies and the associated equipment that go with

them. Let us have a quick tour around some of the facilities that occupy a place of pride in these establishments

“Welcome to our Web pages CERN—the European Organization for Nuclear Research—is one of the world’s largest scientific laboratories” This is how we are escorted in an inspiring Hall of Fame located in the multi-storeyed Building of Science “Founded in 1954, our site straddles the French-Swiss border west of the city of Geneva The Laboratory is financed by 20 European countries More than 7000 scientists, from laboratories and universities all over the globe, work here to study the constituents of matter and the nature of fundamental forces CERN’s mission is to create new knowledge on subjects ranging from anti-hydrogen to neutrinos, to the proton’s inner structure, to the generation of mass and dark matter CERN is currently engaged in a difficult and exciting enterprise, the realization of a new accelerator, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), where high-intensity proton beams will collide head-on at unprecedented energies The extreme conditions will give new research possibilities, to test predicted but as yet unobserved phenomena and to search for the unknown With the participation of United States, Japan, Canada and other extra-European countries, the LHC is the first global project in particle physics Modern particle physics requires a close collaboration between science and industry Over the years, CERN has become an important center for transfer of sophisticated new technologies to European industry and for training young people in a variety of technical fields You are now using the most spectacular of the many spin-offs from CERN research, the World Wide Web, which was invented at CERN to improve communication between our many international collaborators International collaboration is a strong force of CERN By pooling intellectual and financial resources, national universities and institutes can stay at the forefront of modern research through the scientific network centered on CERN experiments Using the potential of the Web, this network is becoming a more and more powerful instrument for the diffusion of scientific and technical culture I hope you enjoy your visit”

To maintain such facilities smoothly running CERN employs 3000 specialist engineers, skilled technicians, craftsmen, administrators, secretaries, workmen Some 6500 particle physicists from all over the world conduct their research here They represent 500 universities and over 80 nationalities This is a phenomenon altogether new in the history of the scientific activities What matter is made of and what forces hold it together are some of the basic problems that haunt the explorer of the unknown. Unique are also the technological achievements “CERN’s biggest accelerator is 27 km around, and particles travelling near the speed of light lap it over 11000 times each second”

We may have a quick look at a few more accelerators Thus in Germany is located the world’s first electron-proton collider called the Hadron Electron Ring Accelerator, HERA Electrons up to 30 GeV and protons 820 GeV can be accelerated which offer the possibility to study the scattering between them “The construction of this two-ring accelerator took from May 1984 until November 1990 The commission-

ing of the machine proceeded during 1991. The HERA tunnel runs for most of its length of 6.3 km outside the site of DESY and 10-25 m deep under ground. There are four experimental halls with sizes of about 25 m x 43 m. The HERA ring tunnel has an inner diameter of 5.2 m. The two storage rings for the electron and proton beams are mounted on top of each other. Superconducting magnets which operate at a temperature of 4.4 K have been constructed. The 3.8 m wide tunnel, 100 m below French and Swiss countryside, has taken 8 years to complete."

The Large Electron Positron collider is the world's largest scientific instrument designed to study the weak nuclear force operating in the sun and all the stars. In the collision of high energy electrons and positrons there is a possibility of creating particles called Z^0 , W^+ and W^- which act as carriers of the weak force. The role of these particles is similar to the role of photons in the case of the familiar electromagnetic force.

Fermilab in the U.S., near Chicago, is a high-energy physics laboratory which houses the Tevatron, the most powerful particle accelerator. The big tool is meant for exploring the fundamental nature of particles and the forces that operate at these levels. The recent discovery of the top quark at this laboratory is a significant accomplishment. The 2-mile long Stanford Linear Accelerator started functioning in 1967 and produces electron beams of energy 20-GeV. In 1972 it was the first to obtain evidence for quarks. These are the sub-nuclear particles opening to us another world in the depths of Matter.

Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider at Brookhaven National Laboratory is a remarkable facility to study the interaction of quarks and gluons, the sub-nucleonic particles that go to make the hadrons of which we are made. This facility may be considered as an index to see the enormous scientific advances that have taken place these past 100 years. After the great success of Quantum Mechanics came another important development in the formulation of Quantum Electrodynamics that enabled precise calculations dealing with particles and photons bearing excellent comparison with experiments. Recently Quantum Chromodynamics has made it possible to go a step farther in describing interactions between quarks and gluons. Accelerating ions to 100 GeV/nucleon—20 TeV for gold nucleus—and collision between two such ions will make the individual protons and neutrons lose their identity. In such a compression temperature will be of the order of 10^{12} K when a quark-gluon plasma will be formed. This should possibly enable a study that can bring the reality of the Big Bang closer for examination. The BNL Accelerator is 3.8 km in circumference with superconducting magnets operating at 4.1 K and producing 3.5 KGauss magnetic fields. Four experimental detectors are employed to study the interactions. Data are analysed by developing a 0.6 teraflop parallel processor computer. 900 scientists from 19 countries and 90 institutions are busy in conducting the experiments. Such is the giant leap of science unparalleled in its history.

All this has far-reaching implications, not only for the particle physics but also for the theories of the universe. It is expected that high energy accelerators will

enable the experimenters to recreate conditions prevailing at the time very close to the Big Bang, that is, just 10^{-12} seconds after its occurrence when the temperature was 10^{16} degrees. This is a condition very far away from 10^{-15} seconds but that is the best the-state-of-the-art can offer. Our view of the material world rooted in these researches is thus the-state-of-the-art view. There are also interesting questions regarding the masses of particles. We have two types of particles, defining the granularity of matter and interactions amongst these grains. In the first category, called fermions, come particles like electrons and quarks, in the second category, called bosons, come particles like photons which play the role of intermediaries. The question as to why electrons and quarks have mass but not photons greatly occupies the mind of physicists. Entering into the graininess of matter and interactions amongst these grains is perhaps reaching the foundational depth of matter itself. The discovery of what are called Higgs particles is expected to provide answers to these questions. A substantial increase in our knowledge about the origin of matter is an engrossing aspect and physics is rightfully occupied with it.

Yet we may pause here for a minute and ask the question of pertinence regarding this super-gigantic effort into which, willy-nilly, we are being forced, an effort to explore the physical world. Is this the way the secret of matter will be revealed? A certain capability on a wide collective level with several nations prepared to fund such projects, and thousands of professionals working together, with skilled technicians and brilliant scientists slaving day in and day out in search of the mysterious and the elusive, is a new phenomenon of human consciousness. In the whole process there don't seem to be present little crooked or separating boundaries that so unpleasantly if not obnoxiously distinguish people in terms of castes, creeds, beliefs, customs, cultures, academic upbringings, ideologies, social moods and manners, spatio-temporal contingencies, not even varied psychological or historical encumbrances. If one has money and the desired talent one can easily join the club of the new élite. Science thus commendably proves to be an efficacious force of globalisation which no military empire in history has ever offered. An enthusiastic participation in internationalism is the hallmark of the age.

To reiterate the gain ensuing from the study of matter is the coming of a new collective consciousness. But this may also mean the loss of individuality of an individual. He becomes a cogwheel in the machinery of an accelerator. When he goes around the 27-kilometre marvel in CERN he doesn't know what he is looking at. At the end of the tunnel there is no light. Nor is the step-by-step understanding, à la Newton, available to him. The flashes and flickers that occur in the high vacuum, —better than what is there between the earth and the moon,—get finally computerised in a complex manner and there is the triumph and jubilation of the discovery of a new particle,—only to set the theorists a-wondering. We don't seem to know beyond the quick calculations we do in this sophisticated digital world what we are looking for.

Perhaps there could be another point of view, another way of understanding matter. But certainly not in the manner of traditional philosophies that look down

upon this world of matter with disdain,—because it has been full of inertia and obscurity. The Mother does not see it so. For her “this world of matter is the point of concentration of all the worlds, it is the field of concretisation of all the worlds, it is the place where all the worlds will have to manifest. At present it is disharmonious and obscure, but that is only an accident, a false start. One day it will become beautiful, rhythmic, full of light, for that is the consummation for which it was made” (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol 3, pp 102-03). It is no logic that because it has been obscure all along it should remain so for ever.

For a scientist the Laws of Nature are sacrosanct. In fact it is that belief which gives him the confidence that he will not be duped by her, that she will not prove capricious when he builds gigantic facilities to study her product that is matter. “But, really speaking,” says the Mother, “the laws of which he usually speaks are of his own mental making, and because he accepts Nature as it is as the very basis, things do not and cannot change for him in any complete sense” (*Ibid*, p 161).

The focus of mind on matter has richly yielded what the toiling centuries of metaphysical or dogmatised religion could not achieve. But mind is an instrument of analysis and not of synthesis. It has been probing deeper and deeper into the minuteness of matter, only to see that it cannot return to get a unified view of things. Atomicity is as old as Democritus but today it has acquired the keenness of the material tool itself. The larger the accelerator we build the tinier becomes this ‘atom’. Molecules, atoms, nucleons, quarks are the finer grains of this creation. Open the molecule and we see atoms, open the atom and we have the constituting nucleons, and open the nucleon and we are told that there are inseparable quarks. It is like a Chinese box within a box ad infinitum. The fragmentation seems to be endless. Breaking into bits, and yet apparently not into such insignificant bits,—that is the characteristic feature of mind. It is the transcription of the Vedic *tucchayena* of the unitary consciousness getting into interminable multiplicity. With this procedure we cannot arrive at the building blocks of matter. The only truth we can get is that of reducing matter to a dust of vanishing granularity. We shall never know how the quarks get together to produce nucleons, and so on to produce larger aggregates. Water droplets and the stream are two different things. White light is not just a combination of spectral colours. In fact the aggregate has features altogether different than its constituents. Every entity is therefore elementary and, irreducible in terms of its properties, is an element. A house is built with bricks but the brick and the house both have their own individuality.

The Newtonian-Cartesian approach has in it the seeds of glory and fall and perhaps we are at the end of this great Journey of Atomicity. We have gained much but we have also drifted considerably away from values that bring wholesomeness to life and living. Once the Japanese house was a place where beauty and harmony stayed together. But the atom bomb has not only destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it has also razed a whole culture. Not cherry blossoms but cars and consumer goods flood the place.

If we look at science we have gained a lot yet, unfortunately, much has been lost. But perhaps the strange thing is that we do not know why we are doing science. We live in a world in which abound experts and professionals and specialists. A cardiologist knows the heart and the neurologist the brain but they are awfully ignorant about man as a whole, that there is an interconnectedness is not known to them.

See the result "I believe," says the Mother, "there are general faculties and that it is much more important to acquire these than to specialise—unless, naturally, it be like M. and Mme. Curie who wanted to develop a certain science, find something new, then of course they were compelled to concentrate on that science. But still that was only till they had discovered it; once they had found it, nothing stopped them from widening their mind." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 18) It is good to concentrate on particle physics and build gigantic machines or huge telescopes to probe the secrets of nature. It has multifold rewards and they are always welcome. But we have yet to answer the question: What for are these machines and these experiments? Are we really going to unravel the mystery of matter? The development of tools by themselves can never be the sole objective, even the cave man invented them for the purpose of hunting. They may have acceptable social fall-outs, but that is another matter. In fact if they have to make genuine sense to us as investigators, our effort must be able to tell us whether we can go any nearer to the fundamentals of things. They have to reveal the truth, that something which is obscure can become luminous, that what is death-bound can overcome the unholy law of decay-disintegration-death, that what is inertial can breathe the true spontaneity of will and action.

Our specialisation has become a trap for us. And yet there is a strange paradox, that the smaller and finer also becomes the wider and subtler. Perhaps in the human cycle the role of science is to prepare with the help of the extreme focusing of attention an extensive foundation for a broad-based collective society. But before we take up these issues let us go back to our survey of things as they are. Let us also see in the Indian context the world of science and technology.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

REMEMBERING MRINALINI DEVI

NIRODBARAN'S short monograph *Mrinalini Devi*¹ is indeed a rare biographical treat for all lovers of Sri Aurobindo. It throws a flood of light on a little understood part of Sri Aurobindo's life, namely his relationship with his wife Mrinalini Devi. We learn from Nirodbaran's monograph all that can be known about Mrinalini Devi's life from available documents and oral testimonies of some of those who knew her. Besides, it gives us also the author's reflections on the nature of the relationship between them and on its significance and meaning to the life of the Avatar that Sri Aurobindo turned out to be.

This article of mine, which is based almost entirely on Nirodbaran's monograph, is an attempt to highlight as much the gracefulness and intensity of the human element in this relationship as the splendid fulfilment it reached when the cleansing spiritual fire "changed its human ways to ways Divine" and yet kept "its sovereignty of earthly bliss." It may be conceded that in terms of purely connubial fulfilment Mrinalini's married life was less than satisfactory. She did not get to live with her husband for extended periods of time except for the first year of their married life,² and most of the time she had to be away pining for him in far Shillong or in equally far Deoghar. But this was through no fault of her husband. He genuinely loved her and did mean to give her all that married life is supposed to give to a woman. But during the first 5 or 6 years of their married life there were circumstances beyond his control which kept them apart. Both longed for each other's company and Sri Aurobindo's letters to her bear this out amply. However, when the inner call came and Sri Aurobindo had no other choice but to respond to it, he did not forget Mrinalini, only the nature of this relationship changed. He hoped that she would be his companion on his spiritual journey as well. Genuine spirituality does not abrogate human love, it strengthens it by purifying it and giving it its true unalloyed form. "All is new-felt in God" says Sri Aurobindo while describing this alchemy in *Savitri*.

Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.³

"Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving"

My understanding of this relationship is that Sri Aurobindo married her when he thought that his lot in life was to be a pedagogue and a writer. Then he took a plunge into politics, which was not totally unexpected, and soon after that he turned to yoga, which was rather unexpected considering his educational background and upbringing. Once he took to yoga he made amazingly rapid progress and soon became, like Aswapati in *Savitri*, "affiliated to cosmic Space and Time", "paying here God's debt

to earth and man'' But there can be no doubt about the fact that Sri Aurobindo loved Mrinalini deeply almost from the time when he first set his eyes on her and this love never waned even after he had scaled great spiritual heights In the letter he wrote to Mrinalini's father after her death he said: "Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving" He also referred to her passing as "the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre" This letter was written in 1918, after Sri Aurobindo was already

On the white summit of eternity
A single Soul of bare infinities,
Guarded he keeps by a fire-screen of peace
His mystic loneliness of nude ecstasy⁴

For it is only from such super Shiva-like consciousness that books like *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and others being serialised in the *Arya* at that time could have come

Nirodbaran refers in his monograph to an episode in which, according to a cousin of Mrinalini, Sri Aurobindo on one occasion seems to have said that at the end of the Dwapara Yuga, he was born as Sri Krishna's grandson Aniruddha and Mrinalini as his wife Usha, the daughter of the Titan king, Banasur Sri Aurobindo also wrote at one time a long poem in Bengali, *The Abduction of Usha*, on this theme Nirodbaran comments "If true this suggests that Mrinalini's relation with Sri Aurobindo goes back many lives" I find this reference to Aniruddha intriguing for another reason as well In a brief article⁵ entitled *Things seen in Symbols* Sri Aurobindo gives the following names to the four powers of the Supreme each of whom governs one of the Yugas: Srikrishna, Balarama, Pradyumna and Aniruddha According to this system of symbols, Srikrishna (Ishwara, Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu) governs the Satya Yuga, Balarama governs the Treta, Pradyumna, the Dwapara and Aniruddha, the Kali Then he goes on to refer to the principal attributes of each one of these powers, although each of them is not simple in itself but contains all the other three and their attributes, only its own are usually the foremost Thus Aniruddha has Desire as his manifestation, bodily enjoyment and worldly reason are his attributes Aniruddha is the *kāmin*, the *bhagin*, the scientist, the user of material means, the leveller He breaks ancient moulds He questions everything, destroys everything, levels everything, rebuilds everything

I find this list of attributes of Aniruddha given here apt in many ways for Sri Aurobindo as well All through his life Sri Aurobindo was a great revolutionary, not only as a politician but even as a spiritual thinker and a Yogi Sri Aurobindo questioned everything, destroyed everything that belonged to the old world and aimed at rebuilding everything on the basis of a new consciousness He had the meticulousness of a scientist in all that he did, as can be seen from his *Record of Yoga* All his life he waged a relentless struggle on behalf of mankind to bring a new power on

earth which would transform life. And in doing all this, like the Shudra, he put off lordship in order to become the divine slave of humanity. He used this symbolism of Aniruddha in quite a few places in his *Record of Yoga*⁶ as well.

Now a word or two need to be said about the words *kāmin* and *bhogin* included among the attributes of Aniruddha. How do they apply to a Master Yogi like Sri Aurobindo? For one thing Sri Aurobindo was not a Yogi right from his birth although, in retrospect, many of the traits which he exhibited and the experiences he had augur a yogic tendency. In his early youth he showed great character, a multifaceted talent, a capacity for self-sacrifice, a fervent idealism but until he was about 35, he did not show a conscious turning towards Yoga. If anything, he was an agnostic most of this time. His poetry never spurns sensuousness when required, this sensuousness which was Greek in the works of his early youth becomes almost Kalidasian in his later writings. Bhoga in the sense of the Delight of Existence in itself was one of the siddhis aimed at in his *Yoga*⁷. So bhoga, even in the sense of vital enjoyment of life, was not a taboo for him, except that he hardly ever had an opportunity to indulge in the pleasures of the senses, even in the matter of food as Nirodbaran points out. He was not coerced by anybody to enter into the matrimonial state. At a particular stage of his life he became keen on getting married and even put in an advertisement for this purpose in the papers of Calcutta. He chose to marry Mrinalini because he felt attracted towards her. It is true that all this belongs to Sri Aurobindo's pre-yogic days. But even his spirituality was not entirely bereft of bhoga of a kind appropriate to the yogic consciousness. This may come as a surprise to those who look upon spirituality as a way of life in which bhoga is sternly refused and asceticism is pursued with a single-minded ardour. But this is not the true spirit of Indian culture or of spirituality. Yajnavalkya and his foremost disciple Janaka are the exemplars of the mighty Upanishadic discipline. "Renounce all that thou mayst enjoy all." India's characteristic message was not Buddha's absolute renunciation nor the European enslavement to bodily, vital and intellectual desires and appetites, but *tyaga* (sacrifice) within and *bhoga* (enjoyment) without—Ananda, the divine delight of the purified soul, embracing both. The Vedic spiritual ideal combines a splendid capacity for bhoga and tyaga. In ordinary life bhoga even in the sense of vital enjoyment plays an important role. The Aniruddha in Sri Aurobindo needed his Usha, and that explains the passion with which he loved Mrinalini until this love got transformed into a spiritual love of the highest order. Even then it always retained the touch of earth. So this is the way I see it—as the story of a love fulfilled and not frustrated. When the earthly fulfilment was denied to it, it did not turn bitter or cynical, the fire of spirituality probably scalded it, but it also purified it and brought to it a fulfilment no mere earthly love could ever have even dreamt of.

Sri Aurobindo is now known as a great Yogi of the most incomparable spiritual attainments. But there were several other lives he could have lived. He had undoubtedly resources of personality needed to live each one of these different lives. For each one of these lives he could have lived, but did not in fact live, one can

always find one or more people who were grievously hurt by his not choosing to live that life. Thus, we can think of Krishna Dhan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's father, how heart-broken he would have felt had he learnt that his son had decided to forego the opportunity of joining 'the heaven-born service' and had in fact joined the services of a princely state in India. Or think of the Maharaja of Baroda, and how badly let down he must have felt when his protégé decided to give up the comfortable and eminently successful career as an academic to take a plunge into active politics. Similarly, I am sure there were many colleagues and political co-workers of Sri Aurobindo who must have felt almost betrayed when Sri Aurobindo decided to quit active politics to enter his cave of tapasya in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo had certainly the capacities to make a great civil servant, an eminently successful academic, and also the unchallenged leader of India's freedom struggle. These were lives he did not choose to live because his life's mission was quite different from all these careers. Similarly he could have made a most caring and loving husband and filled Mrinalini's life with great conjugal fulfilment. But within 6 to 7 years after his marriage his life's great mission became clear to him and he gave himself entirely to it. What is important is that, in this process, he did not "abandon" Mrinalini Devi to her fate and, what is equally important, she too knew this fully well.

The triumphs and tribulations of the married life

"He [Sri Aurobindo] saw [in Mrinalini] what was beautiful and sweet and gracious in Hindu life, and what was lovely and noble in Hindu woman, her deep heart of emotion, her steadfastness, tenderness and loveliness, in fact, her woman's soul." This is part of a sentence, except for the matter in parentheses which is supplied by this writer, from an essay on Bankim which Sri Aurobindo wrote one year after his arrival in India. According to Nirodbaran,⁸ Sri Aurobindo seems to have got his insight into the character of Hindu women in Bengal from Bankim's novels. Undoubtedly he must have seen an embodiment of that ideal in Mrinalini Devi. Bhupal Chandra Bose, her father, has noted "Sri Aurobindo first met Mrinalini at the house of her uncle S. J. Girish Chandra Bose in Calcutta in the course of his search for a mate to share his life, and chose her at first sight as his destined wife."⁹ The simple Bengali girl with whom Sri Aurobindo seems to have fallen in love at first sight was Mrinalini, then 14, the daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose. Nirodbaran describes Mrinalini in these words "Of a fair complexion, a rosy hue seemed to be reflected from it. Her graceful face was framed by a rich crop of dark curls. The palms of her hands and the soles of her feet had a ruddy tint like those of new-born children, as if she had smeared *alta*. In her early days her friends used to tell her that her hands were stuffed with cotton. Feeling hurt at such odd remarks, she would complain to her uncle 'Do buy me a good pair of hands.' So simple she was!"¹⁰ They were married in April 1901.

Mrinalini Devi died in 1918 as she was on her way to join Sri Aurobindo in

Pondicherry, he had written to her “My tapasya is fulfilled, I have attained Siddhi. Come and be a help in my vast work.” Sri Aurobindo’s tapasya evolved through several stages, and he is probably referring here to the successful conclusion of one of its important stages. The 18 years of her life as Sri Aurobindo’s wife can be divided into three periods depending on where Sri Aurobindo was during each of these periods: the Baroda period (from 1901 to 1906), the Calcutta period, (from 1906 to 1910), and finally, the Pondicherry period (1910 to 1918).

The Baroda Period

Soon after marriage Sri Aurobindo returned to Baroda with his wife and his sister Sarojini via Deoghar and Nainital. The Maharaja of Baroda was vacationing at Nainital during that time. Mrinalini lived for a full first year with Sri Aurobindo on this occasion. But, as Peter Heehs points out, it was a bad time to be in Gujarat: “A countrywide famine had struck Baroda particularly hard and had been followed by a visitation of bubonic plague. Mrinalini and Sarojini were sent home and they did not join Sri Aurobindo for more than a year. This pattern—periods together followed by intervals of separation—continued throughout Aurobindo and Mrinalini’s married life.”¹¹ This was also the period during which, besides his teaching and administrative responsibilities, he was very busy trying to build up a revolutionary network in Bengal. During this period Sri Aurobindo had begun to visit Calcutta for his secret political work but he had no permanent home of his own there. He was very busy with his work, Mrinalini was away in Shillong, so they could not meet often enough.

But he was in touch with her through correspondence. Most of his letters to her are in Bengali. Although writing in Bengali was not easy for him, he still used that language as often as he could, because Mrinalini at that stage was somewhat ill at ease with English. In a letter he wrote on 25 June 1902, Sri Aurobindo makes the most tender inquiries about her health, he is quite concerned for her because of the cold climate of Shillong. He also refers to the possibility of a terrible famine overtaking Gujarat that year owing to failure of rains and regrets that, because of that, her return to Baroda that year may not be possible. He refers to a new house to which he will move in time for her return to Baroda. He concludes the letter most lovingly with these words: “You will understand all that I leave unwritten.”¹² Then a week later he wrote another letter dated July 2 1902 in which again he gives expression to his anxiety about her health and asks her to send him a copy of her horoscope, since he had by then acquired a good grounding in astrology.

Then, in a letter he wrote to her on 20 August 1902, he talks about his recent illness because of which he had to go out of Baroda for a few days for a change and rest, acknowledges the receipt of her telegram sent to him in Baroda while he was away. He again refers to the acute water scarcity in Baroda and the near-famine conditions prevailing there. “For you to come to Baroda and endure all the troubles and sufferings of such a state of things is out of question.” He was hoping to visit her

in Assam in October that year. He expresses his happiness about the fact that her father would be sending a cook with her when she returns to Baroda. Then towards the end of that letter he writes "Do not be too much disappointed by the delay in coming to Baroda, it cannot be avoided." The prospect of her returning to Baroda to live with him was always uppermost in the minds of both of them.

Although he was in Baroda and she either in Shillong or Deoghar, he was there for her all the time. He must have written several letters to her during this period. This was also the period when Sri Aurobindo's interests were undergoing a radical change. And he was getting to his real mission in life a little swifter. This is quite evident from his famous letter to Mrinalini written on 30 August 1905 about his three madnesses. He is keenly aware of the price she will be required to pay for marrying such a 'mad' person. He tells her that it must be the result of bad karma in past lives that she is married to a mad man like himself in this life. And as a madman he will not be able to make his wife happy unless she too shares with him the same madnesses. And what were the three madnesses he was talking about? They were a) his conviction all that he had, his accomplishments, education, wealth, etc. belonged to God and must be given back to God, by sharing it with his countrymen, and should not be used only for himself or his own family; b) the second madness which he says "has only recently seized" him was to have the direct vision of God by whatever means, and c) the third madness was that he had begun to look upon the country as the Mother, not as an inert piece of matter. It should be clear that anyone possessed by these three madnesses is unlikely to attach any importance to happiness or comfort for himself or for his family alone. But Mrinalini meant too much to him for him to want to tread this path alone. So he takes her into confidence, shares his dreams with her and asks her "What do you say, will you come along with me and share my ideal with me? My purpose can be fulfilled, once you give your approval, once you are able to accept the sacrifice." He also mentions in that letter that he believed that God had sent him to this earth to accomplish this great mission of delivering Mother India from the demon that is sucking her blood and in this task he wants Mrinalini Devi to be his Shakti. He assures her that whatever defects she may have in her nature can be overcome by faith in God and also that he too is determined to give her all the help that she needs. He exhorts her to pray to God so that she becomes not an impediment in her husband's path but only his helper and instrument.

Then there is a letter dated 3 October 1905, written originally in Bengali in which he wonders why he has not heard from her for quite some time, and mentions how most of his money is spent in making contributions to various public causes. The letter of 22 October 1905, written in Bengali and produced in court translation as an Alipore Bomb case exhibit, compliments Mrinalini for the acts of self-denial practised by her and he signs off most tenderly as follows "Yours, What need have you for my name? Will not this dash — do?"

Now Sri Aurobindo's life gets more turbulent because of his increased participation in political activities and his travels. When a long letter by him does not reach

her she is very much perturbed. He asks her to learn to be more patient. He writes “For, I repeat, you have not become the wife of an ordinary man of the world. You must have unusual patience and strength. A time may come when you will be without news of me, not for a month or a month and a half, but for as much as six months. From now on, you will have to learn to be a little stronger, otherwise there will be no end of misery for you in future.” This caution proved to be prophetic.

The last letter of the Baroda period was written just before he left Baroda for Calcutta, on 2 March 1906. He talks about the difficulties he may have to face in finding suitable lodgings in Calcutta because of his special requirements. He had now given up meat and fish, perhaps for good, and besides he needed an hour and a half in the morning and again in the evening to do a number of things alone (probably meditation). In this letter he also mentions the possibility of his being able to visit her in Shillong. This brings us to the end of the Baroda period. Sri Aurobindo, as we have seen, had a plethora of activities to occupy him—activities connected with his job as a college teacher and administrator, activities connected with his duties of a personal secretary to the Maharaja, his writing and reading schedule and, then, his activities as a political activist had just started. Furthermore, his inner life had started asserting itself and he had taken to certain austerities and was living a disciplined life. And yet, as the letters show, he did not forget Mrinalini and at every stage he tried to take her into confidence. He was trying to prepare her to be his *sahadharmini* in the life of austerities and sacrifice he had consciously chosen in response to the call of Mother India. If anything, he seems to have grown fonder of Mrinalini during this period.

(To be concluded)

MANGESH NADKARNI

Notes and References

- 1 *Mrinalini Devi* by Nirrodbaran (A Talk on the Occasion of her Birthday), Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry, 1988
- 2 It was during this period, soon after their wedding, that Sri Aurobindo and Mrinalini Devi spent almost a whole month in Nainital. This was in May 1901. This article is being written on the occasion of the centenary of this event.
- 3 *Savitri*, p. 632
- 4 Sri Aurobindo's poem “Shiva” in *SABCL*, Vol. 5, p. 140
- 5 *SABCL*, Vol. 3, pp. 452-53
- 6 *Record of Yoga* in *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol. 10-1, p. 54, Vol. 11-1, p. 50, Vol. 11-2, p. 135
- 7 *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol. 10-1, p. 138
- 8 *Ibid*
- 9 *Ibid*, Vol. 2-2, pp. 205-09
- 10 Nirrodbaran, *Mrinalini Devi*
- 11 Peter Heehs, *Sri Aurobindo*, p. 27
- 12 These were not Sri Aurobindo's actual words since the letter was in Bengali, and all we now have is only an English translation of this letter made by court officials. Some of these letters were exhibited at the Alipore Bomb trial and most of the translations done by court assistants in a hurry seem to be poor in quality.

RARE WORDSWORTH AUTOGRAPH POEM



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William Wordsworth

(1770 - 1850)

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A RARE WORDSWORTH AUTOGRAPH POEM SIGNED

A British poet, Wordsworth originally supported the French Revolution but the excesses horrified him. He moved to the Lake District, where his poems of nature and humanity heralded the Romantic revival. He was made Poet Laureate in 1843. "The Prelude", posthumously published, autobiographically relates his personal mental development.

rebound
smudging
N
how
carved
An autograph poem signed "Wm Wordsworth". He pens nine lines of an unidentified poem: "O, how canst Thou renounce the boundless store / Of charms which Nature to her botany yields, / The warbling woodland, the shore, / The pimper of groves, the garniture of fields; / All that the general ray of morning gilds, / And all that echoes to the song of Even, / All that the mountain's fostering bosom shields, / And all the dread magnificence of Heaven, / O, knowest Thou renounce and hope to be forgiven?" The ink has some slight smudging but it does not affect the legibility. The paper is in fine condition and the overall appearance is fine.

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O, how canst thou reverence the ~~lovely~~ ^{store}
 of charms which Nature to her votary
 The warbling woodland, the ^{wilds} ~~respondent~~
 The pomp of groves, the ^{shore} ~~garniture~~ of hills,
 All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
 And all that eludes to the sun of even,
 All that the mountain's ^{trough} ~~bosom~~
 And all the dread magnificence of ^{fields} ~~Heaven~~
 I know canst thou reverence and hope's
 be forgotten?
 Beattie

Wm. Wordsworth Esq.

WORDSWORTH'S *BY THE SEA* AND SRI AUROBINDO'S *EVENING*

A Comparative Study

BY THE SEA

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration, the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity,

The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea,
Listen! the mighty being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly

Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought
Thy nature is not therefore less divine

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not

WORDSWORTH

EVENING

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
That bend down to their green companion
And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these
And a wide silent sea Such hour is nearest God,—
Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO'S memory of the first eight lines of Wordsworth's poem has contributed to the new creative experience. When Eliot speaks of 'the historical sense', he means the creative impetus of the new poet. The sense of tradition is also the sense of new creation. Without the sense of tradition, nobody can hope to be creative. Sri

Aurobindo's poem—the whole unit—is related to the first two quatrains of *By the Sea*. The theme is identical: Man, Nature, God.

Wordsworth's language is deceptively simple, as if he has given little thought to selecting his adjectives. But the initiated reader of Wordsworth's poetry knows well the bare force of Wordsworth in his pre-1812 poems. Those were the days when Wordsworth was able to stop his sermons in favour of a bare direct revelation or the spontaneous expression of the inmost self. There is no trace of the teacher in verse in these first eight lines. Instead, we have the exact adjectives expressing the realisation of the magic hour, the great twilight which has flared up the poet's indwelling spirit. The adjectives are also interlinked. The evening is beautiful, calm and free. True sense of beauty can only be perceived when we are calm. There is a feeling of great liberation now and that is why the word 'free' is chosen. The 'holy time' is Sri Aurobindo's 'golden evening'. Both the phrases highlight the importance of the hour. The mind becomes calm and quiet at this juncture of day and night. The adjectives 'calm' and 'quiet' are related but not synonymous. Sri Aurobindo explains in a letter the distinction between 'calm' and 'quiet'.² According to him 'calm' is *sthuratā* and 'quiet' is *acancalatā*. The word 'breathless' is a supplement to 'calm' and 'quiet'. The phrase 'breathless with adoration' is a miracle of exactitude. Nature is aspiring to God and in her adoration she has become so quiet that no sound of her breath can be heard in this holy hush. It is a marvellous silence, which is intensified by the slow downward move of the 'broad sun'. There is no sound of the sinking sun. The last word in the quatrain is 'tranquillity'.

The second quatrain continues the note of 'calm', 'quiet' and 'tranquillity'. The incantatory style is obvious in the first two lines, which have no colour, no ornamentation, no outward glow.

The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea.
Listen! the mighty being is awake

The next two lines image the realisation of a pantheist.

Let us see how Sri Aurobindo feels in such a golden twilight. He is more metaphorical and eloquent than Wordsworth in certain places and at times he is as economical as the great Romantic. Sri Aurobindo's poem is more symbolic, Wordsworth's is more revelatory. *Evening* belongs to the early phase of Sri Aurobindo's poetic life. The 'thoughtful sun' is a mature sun, which symbolises the mature soul of man. There is no 'pomp' or exhibitionism in the mature Sadhak. Trees and plants are seen as companions and in this holy time the trees are bending to the grass and the plants. Young Aurobindo can already listen to the vague whisper of the Mother earth. His phrase 'a wide silent sea' is economical. There is a visual effect here, which is missing in Wordsworth's line—

The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea.

Sri Aurobindo's 'such hour' is Wordsworth's 'holy time'. The 'rich old age' indicates Sri Aurobindo's 'memory' of the future. This poem is something like an explanatory note to those eight lines of Wordsworth. The 'broad sun' of Wordsworth's poem is interpreted here as 'thoughtful sun'. Wordsworth leaves much for us to imagine. There is no glare in his 'broad sun', but he does not mention the fact. We have to imagine that with the help of his repetitional imagery of quiet and silence Sri Aurobindo sees in this broad sun a rejection of 'pomp'. In Wordsworth, we have two aspects of Nature, the sea and the sun. Sri Aurobindo includes the trees and the green below the trees. Both the poets are able to listen to the voice within Nature. Sri Aurobindo listens to the vague whisper, while Wordsworth hears a 'sound like thunder'.

Two different techniques are used in the two poems. The mature Sri Aurobindo preaches and practises the technique of the first eight lines of *By the Sea*. He rejects the philosophising gesture of *Evening* in his mature sonnets and lyrics. Talking of the future of poetry, he emphatically stresses the value of revelation which is direct sight on numerous occasions. Wordsworth loses this power in his post-1812 poems. That is why Sri Aurobindo sees the later Wordsworth petering out "like a motor car with insufficient petrol"³.

At another place, he has shown us the strength of Wordsworth, his moments of glory, which diminished in his later life. He tells us clearly why he lost his sight then:

At the beginning he struck in the midst of some alloy full into his purest vein of gold. His earliest vision of his task was the right vision, and whatever may be the general truth of his philosophy of childhood in the great Ode, it seems to have been true of him. For as intellectuality grew on him, the vision failed, the first clear intimations dimmed and finally passed, leaving behind an unilluminated waste of mere thought and moralising.⁴

Sri Aurobindo believes that the thing which the poet sees and feels, not what he opines, is the real theme of his poetry. Judged from this standard, the first eight lines of *By the Sea* is real poetry. While Sri Aurobindo combines his judgement and his realisation in *Evening*, Wordsworth is merely revealing in those great eight lines, great by Sri Aurobindo's own critical standard. What Sri Aurobindo appreciatively says of him is perfectly applicable to the first eight lines of *By the Sea*:

But it is in the Nature-strain of which he is the discoverer that he is unique, for it is then that the seer in him either speaks the revelatory thought of his spirit or gives us strains greater than thought's, the imperishable substance of spiritual consciousness finding itself in sight and speech.⁵

Even if we accept *By the Sea* as a great revelatory poem, we cannot overlook the beauty of young Aurobindo's original poem. For this is also Nature-mysticism of a

superior status. Even though Sri Aurobindo is passing judgement on a miracled moment of Nature, a deep experiential idea is lurking behind the apparently impersonal view. An identical theme is treated in two different ways. Wordsworth's lines are more Aurobindonian than Sri Aurobindo's. However, both the poems are gems of English literature.

GAUTAM GHOSAL

References

- 1 Enright, D J and Chickera, Ernst De *English Critical Texts 16th Century to 20th Century* Oxford, Delhi, 1982, p 294
- 2 *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 23, pp 641-42
- 3 *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol 9, p 521
- 4 *Ibid*, p 120
- 5 *Ibid*, p 121

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Not vain a poet's life
Nor futile his poetry,
Never does his soul sleep,
His dreams unrealised.

If ever his feelings
Are sunk in dense fog,
His sanity shattered
By the whips of grief
And he droops
Like a limp bloom,
Yet he wakes up
Suddenly charged,
As if after a spell
Of the celestial swoon
To rejoice, to live

Beyond fame and blame
Art ever chisels itself
Shaping the Formless
You may not be
The Bard of Avon,
Nor the Oracle of Delphi
Yet a poet's a poet
Walking undeterred
To Parnassus of the Muses

ASHALATA DASH

THE PRESENT MOMENT AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

THERE are moments when history reaches out to us with a special significance. We feel we are at one of those moments now. Our coming together, from different parts of the world, on the soil of India—which offers a material base to the experiment of Auroville—is part of that larger movement. If we enquire more closely into the significance that the present moment holds, there is a whole situation that emerges before us and in which we can discern some very specific elements.

The over-all situation of man strikes us, first of all, as one of tremendous inter-connectedness and of large-scale upheaval. Nothing exists in isolation, each thing is connected with something else and the least ripple sends waves all around. If something gets going in one place, the contagion is immediate and widespread—this is so with small inconsequential things as much as with larger issues and ideas. One has almost the feeling of living in a 'web'—if a delicate strand moves, the whole of it sways. This fact of the inter-connectedness of the general movement of the life of man is certainly the most significant one of the present times. At no other time in the growth and evolution of man, has he lived in such a psychological milieu. Hitherto, the sense of separateness was strongly entrenched, though between the ivory towers the interactions were, of necessity, always present. But the structural pattern was totally different—and so was its rhythm and movement. There was fixity and strain, in place of the wide-ranging mobility of today.

Given this general 'climate' in which we live and function, some specific factors dominate the scene. We witness an explosion of knowledge which exceeds all bounds. This explosion is taking place with a rapidity and a reach that are becoming incommensurate with our ability to absorb and deal with adequately. Man seems somewhat dwarfed by what he has created. New fields of research and investigation are opening up, some of which were unheard of even ten or twenty years back. There are no longer conventional subjects and conventional findings. Both have changed in character—the subjects are new, the findings unexpected and overwhelming. And what is fascinating to observe is that at the peak of specialisation to which the sciences had reached—with their divisions and sub-divisions of speciality—the results that are now forthcoming tend to unite, correlate and confirm one another. The separation was valid at the point of departure but not tenable on arrival! An amazing pattern of the unification of knowledge is beginning to emerge. Man is somewhat bewildered when it comes to relating this knowledge to life and yet is there a curious sense of fulfilment at having reached this point.

The sense of fulfilment, however, soon gives place to a feeling of anticipation. For one becomes keenly aware of the fact that the present moment, by its very distinctiveness, serves as a point of fresh departure. There is a new curve of life and culture and knowledge to be described and the various elements that are present in

man's situation today form a kind of seed-bed—the flowering out and maturation have yet to come. The feel of fresh beginnings to be made is very much in the air, many attempts are being worked out, simple and modest humanity, as a whole, seems to be on the move. The friction generated by this movement is the hidden cause of the upheaval and chaos around us.

To be 'on the move' is indeed a sign of our times. But in which direction shall we move? Does the present situation of man give us a clue to the direction that we have to take? If an altogether new curve of life and growth is ahead of us, the present must be able to give us at least some indication of the line of development that we have to pursue. A growing number of people feel that since the last decade this indication is being given to us. The ambiguity that once surrounded it is no longer there. Let us examine this more closely.

In this process of the explosion of knowledge, that we referred to earlier, and the subsequent unification that knowledge seems to be arriving at, what stands out as the single most significant fact is the work that has been done by physics in the field of the exploration of matter and its final constituents, which would lead us to the discovery of the nature of reality itself.

An attempt to discover the nature of reality has been made by man ever since he began to reflect. He has made this attempt, through all the ages of his culture, with a persistence and an earnestness which showed that his very existence depended on finding the answers. This attempt has been made in a number of diverse ways through philosophy, as the mind's quest for ultimate answers, through religion, as an expression of faith and the need to find a support for it, through direct spiritual experience, as an urge to know and feel that reality in the immediacy of consciousness. All these attempts have come up with a great diversity of answers—some complementing one another, others contradicting one another. If we cast a look at the history of these attempts and the answers they have come up with, we find no satisfactory resting-point, something which is conclusive in nature. They all carry, individually, an inherent force and strength and convincingness but an absolute stamp of truth that all can accept is not there.

What is interesting about the work being done in the present times is that it is by an exploration into matter, by an objective method of analysis, that the nature of reality is sought to be discovered. Will the answers that emerge from this attempt be finally conclusive? This is the question. It is likely that this will be so because matter enjoys a unity of disposition and offers a common base to all, which is not the case at the level of the mind, with all the multiplicity of its approaches, or the religious emotion with the variety of its needs, or the spiritual impulse with the range and breadth of its movement. Matter carries in itself an absoluteness of conviction as nothing else does. All this is in the nature of looking ahead. Let us see more specifically, but briefly, the point at which this work with matter has arrived and the line of further pursuit that it indicates. It is this that will give us a clue to the next state of evolution that lies ahead.

This work with matter began in its present intensive form in the sixteenth century, during the Renaissance in Europe. Matter came to be considered as the sole, abiding reality and an exploration of it and a discovery of its laws and processes became the goal of all knowledge. A consequent utilisation of this knowledge in terms of appropriate technology put at the service of man was the purpose to be served. The method of science, as it came to be known, that was postulated and elaborated at the time and painstakingly applied ever since is too well-known for there to be any need of delineation. However, for a continuity of presentation, we will touch upon it briefly.

The scientific method proceeded by a process of analysis and construction. It sought to disengage the constitutive elements in any given problem and having thus isolated them, attempted to study them in that setting of isolation and considered them to be almost independent in their functioning. After such study, an attempt was made to arrive at a construction of the whole by putting together these elements. The resultant whole was thus an aggregate of its constitutive elements. Such was the method by means of which the study of matter was undertaken and matter itself was seen as being of the nature of a discrete plurality.

This method achieved in this field such stupendous results that it came to be considered as the method of knowledge *par excellence*, which could enjoy a universal validity of application. It was thus applied to all fields of life—such as the psychological, the social, the economic, the political. In fact, there was nothing that was left out of its scope. In these fields, however, which were organic by nature and which centred round the being of man, the success was partial, limited and often subject to well-nigh total failure. The disenchantment with this method began to be felt very acutely from the second half of the nineteenth century. Towards the end of that century, forward-looking minds were beginning to express some fundamental and far-reaching doubts with regard to its continued application. It was felt that life and man were too complex, too varied and multi-dimensional and the linear and fragmentary nature of this process of knowledge and structuring was inadequate to meet their demands. A dimensionally fuller process—such as the intuitive—had also its role to play.

While this feeling of dissatisfaction was being expressed in different parts of the world and a new mood was beginning to settle in, science turned up with amazing discoveries in its exploration of matter. These first came to light in the second decade of the twentieth century and came to be known as the New Physics. However, it is only during the last decade or two that they are coming in for a wider general acceptance. And it is even more recently that people are beginning to feel that these are the critical findings of our times which must determine the future growth of man—in his own being first of all and then worked out in the building up of the structures of life and culture. What were these amazing discoveries?

Whereas matter had been considered earlier as being of the nature of a discrete plurality, further investigation revealed that there was here neither discreteness nor

plurality. These investigations revealed the presence of indivisible wholes, dynamic and organic, in which interconnections rested in a mobile, 'web-like' manner. This is an entirely new perception of reality that an investigation into the constituents of matter has revealed. If this be the nature of the real—and if it comes in for universal acceptance—then the entire existing world of man which has been built up following a contrary process of progressive fragmentation needs to be looked at afresh and a new creation attempted.

The physicist, in recent years, has been much struck by the fact that ancient Indian culture and civilisation, and to a large extent the Chinese, have always had a similar perception of the real, and an entire civilisation—with its many arts and sciences and all the organisational structures of life—was built up to embody this perception and to give it adequate form and expression. The physicist finds himself, all of a sudden, delving into the experience and thought-content of these cultures to see how this cumulative body of knowledge relates to his own findings in the field of matter.

What strikes us as being the most significant fact at this juncture and of the most critical importance for the future is not only the coming together of the findings of modern science and the traditional experience of India, as also of China,—overwhelming as that is—but the fact that the methods pursued in the two instances have been totally different. It is this fact of a *difference* of method but *unity* of result which seizes us. It seems to indicate that there is a *totality* of the real which emerges when two diametrically opposed methods are pursued *far* enough—like the coming together of the two halves of the circle. And it seems also to signify that if such a totality of the real does emerge at the end of investigations that have been long pursued, then that point of emergence must mark a special turning-point in the evolutionary progression of man as a whole. For, thereby, a new quality altogether seems to manifest. We feel its presence, see its contours but the rest is for the indeterminate future to reveal.

We have spoken above of two methods. Let us see briefly what the method consisted of in the case of the Indian experience. The Indian spirit has persistently—from the earliest to the most contemporary times—perceived reality as an organic whole of consciousness and energy. These are not distinct: consciousness *is* energy, it is a conscious current of force; energy is *conscious* force, it is consciousness in action. *Chit-Shakti* was the ancient Sanskrit word for it—which Sri Aurobindo, in our times, has translated into English as Consciousness-Force. There is thus a core of inwardness in all that is: the consciousness-content of all form. To experience it, one has to reach out to it by an inner movement of consciousness, culminating in identity. Since reality has a unified ground of being, such a process of identity—from the microcosm to the macrocosm—remains an intrinsic one. All effort at creativity too—whether in painting, sculpture, music, dance, the various sciences or in the case of the organisational structures of life—must follow the same movement: a consciousness-approach to the object so as to mould it from 'within'. Thus handled, the form

could be made to let something of the spirit within shine through, it could be made to reveal—by slow stages—its hidden content of consciousness

How different are the two methods! One takes its poise in 'inwardness' and reaches out to the form from 'within', makes it malleable, lets something of its transparency go through the density and opaqueness of matter. The other takes its stand 'outside' of matter but refusing to be stalled by its dense façade, it tries to make its way, disengaging all discrete elements layer by layer, till it reaches the core

A consideration of the two methods, however summarily it has been attempted, brings us sharply to the present moment of our existence, the point of time where the two come together in a curiously thrilling situation not of mere juxtaposition but of some kind of reciprocal completion. It is hard to find terms for these things yet, for they are too new. We had said at the beginning of the paper that this moment marks the beginning of a new curve of life and culture and knowledge—a trinity that perhaps can no longer be separated—and that humanity was on the move. Maybe this is where it takes its stand today and this is the direction in which it must look in order to create afresh. It is a veritable new dimension in terms of method and approach and process which seems to be called for. When these two known and well-tried methods meet, within the space of closeness in which they have met, then neither can continue as though the meeting had never taken place. The coming together of the two halves of the circle must release the power of a new puissance and effectivity that can only be seen in terms of totality and integration.

Sri Aurobindo, in the early years of the twentieth century, had felt the impact of this power and its hovering presence over the earth and the life of man. He even gave it a name—the Supermind. He and the Mother worked all their lives to experiment with it and make it accessible to others. There is certainly a generation of the young in the world today who give evidence of being partly aware of that presence and of the possibility that it offers. A conscious and deliberate working out of this possibility is indicative of the direction in which the future is likely to take us

ASTER

SUREN-DA

SUREN-DA (Surendra Nath Dutta) passed away on 5 March 2001 at the age of ninety. We feel sad that we have lost a friend, whose affectionate words and smile we always cherished.

To know more about him I met his niece Jharna, his wife Abha, his helper Gayatri and his friend Ranganath.

Jharna told me that Suren-da was born in the village Banagram in the Mymensingh District of Bengal, on 6 September 1910. He was the eldest of five brothers. Their father passed away when they were still young. Suren-da's maternal uncle gave shelter to the five boys and their mother. They grew up and started a small business in Assam. Suren-da was married to Abha. He was religious by nature and he worshipped his own mother with flower offerings, along with the worship of the family goddess. He had heard what the great yogi of Bengal, Bharat Brahmachari, had revealed to his disciples, that the Divine Mother had incarnated upon earth and she was now somewhere on the east coast of India. (Thereafter, some of his disciples who happened to visit Pondicherry felt that the Divine Mother was here. Sri Aurobindo confirmed their belief.) Suren-da came to the Ashram for the 15 August 1945 Darshan. He decided to stay on. The Mother accepted him as an inmate on 20 November 1945. A year later his wife Abha-da came and she also got permission to join the Ashram. They were lodged in separate houses, worked at separate places. He was given work in the Bakery. The Bakery had till recently ovens run on firewood. The work is tough and the heat intense. Here he worked from 1945 to 1965. Jyotin-da who was holding the responsibility of the Laundry passed away and Suren-da was given charge of the Laundry, but he continued to help in the bakery work on special occasions, such as Darshan days, Christmas, New Year Day, etc.

Suren-da held the responsibility of Laundry work from 1965 till the end. It is only recently that our Laundry has acquired machines to wash the clothes. Till then work was done manually. Ranganath had a very personal relation with Suren-da. He tells me that Suren-da was not really the sort of managerial person who is capable of heading a department. He was straightforward, simple, uncomplicated and childlike by nature. But what he perhaps lacked as an organiser, he more than made up with his capacity for hard work, dedication and service to the Mother. Ranganath further tells me that Suren-da was not an intellectual, though he read Bengali books. He was more at home with manual work or supervising the workmen. He was fond of simple pleasures and enjoyed playing the card game of Bridge. But his enthusiasm and interest for the same were more laudable than his skill and ability at the game. He suffered long due to many physical ailments. He was diabetic, requiring daily an injection of insulin. He suffered from stomach ulcers and had high blood-pressure. But these debilities never deterred him from discharging his duties thoroughly. He was known for his kindness and helpfulness to one and all. Ranganath adds that during a certain period, when there were proposals to completely overhaul the way of

working at the Laundry, Suren-da had to face many psychological tests and difficulties. But he bore all these stoically and with full faith in the Mother. That he came through this difficult period unscathed, nay, even heightened in his dedication to the Mother's work, reveals his inner strength. He was one of the stalwarts of the Ashram and his absence leaves a considerable gap in our collective life.

I met Gayatri to know more about the last phase of Suren-da's life. She had been helping him at his residence to take care of his particular diet requirements and other necessities. During the difficult period when his old-age problems were weighing on his mind, her help was timely and precious. I requested her to tell me some event in his later life that was particularly memorable. She said that in the year 1986, when Suren-da was 76 years old, he joined the batch for trekking to the Amarnath cave temple. Along with Dr. Bisht, Chandrakant and others, Gayatri also accompanied them. In that high Himalayan altitude, when men much younger than Suren-da were panting for breath, he was quite comfortable. Before commencing the last lap, Dr. Bisht checked Suren-da's condition and certified that he was quite fit. And they had the darshan of the deity and trekked back. After a couple of days' stay at the Ashram's Delhi Branch, they returned to Pondicherry. This trip to the Himalayas he always cherished.

I asked Pranab-da whether he had any personal contact with Suren-da. He said that he did not have any but whenever he approached Suren-da for any work concerning the Department of Physical Education he found Suren-da very helpful and prompt in fulfilling his commitments.

Suren-da left for the next generations a shining example to emulate in the dedicated service to the Mother and we are grateful to him for it.

RAMAKANT NAVELKAR

THE VEDAS NOT COGNISABLE TO THE SENSES: A REPORT

DR B V. Raman, Editor, 'Astrological Magazine' said here that the Vedas, far from being the founts of pessimism and asceticism, are examples of a strong affirmative spirit

One of the roots of religion is the yearning to make the best of life with the help of the unseen forces of the universe, he said in his inaugural address at the workshop on 'Yajurveda' organised by Vedadhyana Kendra, on Saturday

Quoting Sri Aurobindo, Dr Raman said that the Vedas and Upanishads are the sufficient fountain not only of Indian philosophy and religion but of all art, poetry and literature. It was the soul, the temperament, the ideal mind, formed and expressed in them which later carved out the great philosophies, built the structure of dharma, threw forth so many original intuitions in science, created so rich a glow of aesthetic and sensuous experience, renewed its spiritual and psychic experience

It has been said of the Vedas that they are not so much one kind of religion as religion itself—viz, they illustrate the universal pattern of human religion or quest for reality and salvation, peace and fulfilment on the highest plane. There is a sense in which this is profoundly true of the Vedas. In the hymns we can see the expression of the religious spirit in all its manysided moods and in its loftiest aspirations

The real philosophical question concerns the way in which human intelligence can rightly envisage the ultimate reality, which is the source, sustainer and destroyer of all, and which gives the opportunity for self-realisation in the world process

Veda means knowledge—knowledge of God, life, deities, nature, dharma etc not cognisable to the senses, Dr Raman said referring to questions raised by the educated as to how the word 'Veda' arose and what the features of Veda are

Of the four Vedas, the first three, viz the Rig, Yajur and Sama constitute the triad and the Atharva Veda is said to be a later addition. Each Veda has three divisions—Samhitas (mostly verse), Brahmanas (commentaries in prose) and the Aranyakas (forest treatises)

The Yajur Veda Samhita consists of formulae of verses to be uttered by the priests who recite the Vedas. The liturgical Yajur Veda is partly metrical and most of this part is extracted from the hymns of the Rig Veda and the remaining part is in prose. The word 'Yaj' means to sacrifice and it is from this that the name Yajur Veda is derived

The Rishis, Dr Raman said, obtained this divine knowledge through their extraordinary powers of tapasya and therefore the Vedas are 'apourusheya' i.e. not the handiwork of man. There is no answer to questions like when the Vedas were composed and who the authors were. The Vedas are 'apourusheya' i.e. they were revealed and hence they are 'srutis'. They were not written or composed. They were communicated by the Supreme God

Sage Vyasa did not compose the Vedas but only codified them. In fact, the

composition of the Vedas must have commenced before the days of Sage Vyasa. In the Vedas, the grand, sublime, beautiful and useful aspects of nature are deified and the different deities are personifications of the different powers of nature

It is also said that it is a mistake to call Sama and Yajur separate Vedas —the object of Sama being the correct way of chanting hymns and that of Yajur to prescribe correct procedures at the Yagnas

In our country we are witnessing an alarming rise in alcoholism, violent crimes, accidents, suicides, terrorism and disregard for long-cherished ethical principles even in the highest quarters

These are all symptoms of social ill-health and products of the age of science —science devoid of spirituality and human values This new creed of self-styled omniscience has taken upon itself the role of dubbing religion and spirituality as ignorance and superstition

In the light of the moral degeneration which our country is facing today, it is not too late to think that India has a fountain of spiritual vision and inspiration unique in human history which we have to recover, Dr Raman said

(Courtesy *The Hindu*)

IMPRESSIONS AT ADYAR

HERE, amongst these trees and shrubs, my memories are revisited and I search my soul plunging deep to contact the meaning, to which they bring links of old to life

In silence I walk, with mind stilled, amidst these quiet guardians swaying rhythmically in the breeze Awakened to the secrets which they guard, I halt

Beloved trees, you defy time. It is because of you, that the force of magic is held here good and firm I find it now and follow its lead through perception's door, moving past corridors of stored knowledge and come to a clearance of inner thoughts

I see before me another age, when the night of man's soul was deep and long and the light on the Eastern side of him longed to penetrate it

"Let us go forth," said the Beings of Light, "and prepare the dawn Let us find arms, which will build our new world and cut doors into the heavy walls which guard the night "

The workers heard the call and the labour began Bridges were built and spun like network over the world They reached from East to West

Even as I stand here observing them, I see that all the bridges are alive Alive and vibrant, lit by the souls who traverse them How many lanterns, who could count? The dark of the night is left behind

Where do they go, where do all the souls go? The light grows brighter on the horizon. Ever nearer to their source, the lanterns move and I follow The light is flaming-bright, so brilliant, I can scarcely dare to look In its centre some letters dance One supreme effort, I look on The letters come to focus There is a word The word is UNITY

7 1 74 at Adyar

GEORGETTE COTY

THE CITY THE EARTH NEEDS

An exhibition on Auroville

At just after 11 30 a m on Saturday 13th January 2001 the Tamil Nadu Express finally arrived almost five hours late into New Delhi Railway Station. The dense pea-soup fog that had covered the early morning hours was beginning to lift and a weak sunshine was attempting to break through the gloom. This hazy sunshine brought a little warmth to what had been a damp, bitter cold night.

Eight Aurovilians alighted from the train, carrying with them an enormous amount of luggage—cases, boxes and an assortment of parcels. I was one of the eight. We had come to Delhi to put up an exhibition on Auroville in the Visual Arts Gallery of the India Habitat Centre (IHC). The title for the exhibition was ‘Auroville—the City the Earth Needs’. The IHC had very generously donated not only their exhibition room, but also the Palm Court Conference Room and a large covered area free of cost for this Auroville exhibition. It was an opportunity to do something for Auroville that we all felt we just had to take.

It was a multimedia exhibition. What we aimed to give our visitors was (a) an experience of the inner chamber of the Matri Mandir—the soul of Auroville, and (b) information on Auroville.

The exhibition room of the Visual Arts Gallery of the IHC is a very large room and, after recent renovations, it is also a strikingly beautiful room. It suited our needs admirably. The size imbued an atmosphere of space and infinity and the surrounding freshly painted walls lent a white quality to the room. Our three Aurovilian architects and designers were very pleased to install their exhibition in this room. Their aim was to capture the essence of the twelve petals of the Divine Mother represented by the twelve petals of the Matri Mandir.

Our architects know very well how to play with space. Twelve large white vitrines (tables) and a small Banyan were the only material forms they moved into this large room. These vitrines were positioned randomly around the room and the small Auroville Banyan tree in its tub had an almost central position. Each vitrine represented one of the twelve qualities of the Divine Mother and contained some carefully chosen objects and script to express this quality. Lighting had been arranged in such a way as to correspond to the rays of light that beam down on the crystal of the inner chamber of the Matri Mandir. To complete the effect, the twelve colours that represent these twelve qualities were beamed at successive intervals onto a curtain by a computer that had been installed behind the screen curtain. It was a room of cool quiet beauty where as one moved around in it one got a sense not only of the spiritual life of Auroville, but also of the inner meaning of these twelve qualities of the Divine Mother.

In the covered area adjoining the exhibition room we set up an information gallery. Here we were able to give our visitors an understanding of the outer life of

Auroville, the Karma Yoga aspect of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga But we also sought to convey to them that spiritually there really is no separation between the outer and the inner life That the day-to-day work we do on the material level to physically manifest the City, which Auroville is intended to be, is an equally important part of the Yoga Our aim was to inform our visitors that the purpose for the experiment of Auroville is to bring consciousness down into matter

The entrance to the Visual Arts Gallery is at one of the entrances of the IHC From this entrance stone steps lead down into one of the capital's crowded busy streets What a contrast it was to leave behind the whirl of city traffic and enter the silent atmosphere of the exhibition room! To experience this stillness was an inner experience, it was to have a contact with something higher, a contact with the soul within We were so glad to have this crowded noisy city street juxtaposed to the exhibition room To enter the atmosphere of the exhibition room from the noise of the street evoked a sense of something infinite and real that exists beyond our busy little lives

For the closing ceremony Sruti chanted Hymns in Sanskrit to Shiva, interspaced with beautiful readings from Sri Aurobindo After the ceremony was over we had the moving experience of having so many come and express their feelings to us on how moved they had been by the exhibition

ANNE GILBERT

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo on Indian Art: Selections from His Writings, with photographs by *Elizabeth Beck* Mapin Publishing Pvt Ltd 228 pages

LOOKING back upon the life and writings of Sri Aurobindo, one is most impressed by his brilliant eclecticism. Educated in England, fluent in three Indian languages and six European ones, including the classics, a teacher of English Literature and a freedom fighter who anticipated Gandhi by a decade, few men of his generation could match him in intellectual stature and breadth of outlook.

The essays on Indian art and culture were a rejoinder to the English drama critic William Archer who, with no qualifications for the undertaking or empathy with the subject, wrote a book on *India and the Future* in 1917. Judging from a purely occidental standpoint, he saw any culture as worthless which did not conform in the Greek norms of Reason, Rationality, and Restraint. The doctrine of The Golden Mean must be the yardstick, which meant that any form of excess was condemnable, and the artist must never go beyond Nature. According to these restrictive criteria, Indian art was seen, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, as, ‘immature, monstrous, an arrested growth from humanity’s primitive savagery and incompetent childhood’.

Sadly these views, though scarcely believable now, were not uncommon in Archer’s time. He is distinguished only by the acerbity of his tone and the brashness of his conclusions, by his penchant for rushing in where angels fear to tread. The Indian ideal of the male physique, full in the shoulders but narrow-waisted, was unreal according to him. When told that it mimicked the torso of the lion to create a visual metaphor for bravery, majesty and so on, he adduced it as proof that Indians were culturally at the tribal level since they worshipped wild animals. Presumably, his own countrymen are similarly placed since one of their kings is admirably called Richard Lion-Heart.

To a mind so breathtakingly literal, a supra-rational and supra-sensual art was totally incomprehensible. Even sympathetic critics applied Western standards of realism to Indian sculpture and found it wanting because it was not anatomically correct in every detail. To the Eastern mind, however, musculature and bone structure are irrelevant since the aim of art is not to imitate Nature but to reach beyond the show of things to the greater cosmic truths. Western art is not entirely devoid of this visionary quality, but it is brought down to earth, expressed in accepted forms, whereas in Indian art the vision breaks through the form to project deeper meanings.

Having explained this fundamental difference of approach, Sri Aurobindo returns to William Archer and refutes his contentions point by point. Minor criticisms such as his dislike of the Indian arch and dome are attributed to prejudice, the very human preference for one’s own art forms over alien ones. The more serious charge is that Indian temples, particularly in the Dravidian mode, are gloomy, ponderous and over-ornamented. These have, says Archer, a titanic impressiveness but no trace of unity,

clarity and nobility They are overwrought, senseless, and swarming with contorted, semi-human figures, barbarous in their excess Islamic buildings, according to him, are a refreshing contrast They are rational and have a radiant lightness, a fairy-like quality but (since nothing Indian can be entirely praiseworthy) they are alas, superficial and decadent

Sri Aurobindo's riposte runs into several pages, but can be briefly summed up Islamic art is not superficial since the mosques, in particular, do convey deeper meanings Further, no art or structure can be both rational and fairylike, and whatever has a "titanic impressiveness" cannot be totally devoid of nobility As for the exterior of a temple being so over-decorated as to militate against its unity, each temple is a microcosm that celebrates the myriad forms of life in the universe Here, each tiny detail contributes to the overall harmony, just as the temple itself is an element in the landscape for which it was built As for the charge of barbarous excess, what is excessive in one culture is admired in others Sri Aurobindo reminds us that this is one of the defining contrasts between the Classical and the Romantic modes, and that, to the French mind, Shakespeare himself was "a drunken barbarian of genius"

One wishes sometimes that the Aurobindo style with its multiple clauses and extended periods was more pointed, less circumlocutory, but it does not obscure the sharpness of his perception or his catholicity of outlook Here is a mind not formally trained in art criticism which ranges from Classical Greece to Michelangelo and Tintoretto, to Chinese and Japanese landscape painting which he considers supreme in its treatment of nature. There is also humility, a willingness to see opposing viewpoints. For instance, he admits that perhaps he cannot appreciate Western art fully because his sensibilities are not attuned to it, not because it is intrinsically inferior

However, when all this is said, one wonders why essays published 80 years ago should be republished now Sri Aurobindo's views, ably seconded by scholars of the stature of Ananda Coomaraswamy, are too well known and widely accepted to need reiteration No Western critic today is so simple-minded as to judge the merit of a statue by the number of its arms, neither would he draw fatuous comparisons between an image and a living person, as when Archer condemns the Dhyani Buddha for its drooping eyelids, stiff pose and insipid expression in contrast with the spirituality in the visage of Rabindranath Tagore Such colonialist biases, like colonialism itself, have passed into history and deserve oblivion, not resurrection

Photographer Elizabeth Beck, who has compiled the book, evidently meant it as a tribute to her *guru* If, as she claims, her friends urged her to make his words visible in pictures, it could have been done in a less random manner There are some splendid studies in black and white, but they do not always match the text One looks in vain for a picture of the Dhyani Buddha and, in a particularly glaring instance, photographs of the temples at Mamallapuram and Bhubaneswar are used to illustrate the author's description of two very different temples at Kalahasti and Simhachalam There is little in common between the Southern and North-eastern styles, and surely

so devout a follower should have gone out of her way to depict the actual buildings chosen by the master

The many Nataraja studies almost compensate for these shortcomings. There are about a dozen, ranging from the superb Sixth Century Shiva at Ellora, dancing as if he were floating on air, to the dramatic 12th Century Chola statue with down-turned head, twisted torso and arms upraised in triumph in the Tanjore Museum. The famous *alidha* Shiva from Kanchipuram dancing on his knees is included. So is the Kala-sanhara Nataraja singled out by Sri Aurobindo for its majesty and power and “the concentrated divine passion of the spiritual overcoming of time and existence which the artist has succeeded in putting into eye and brow and mouth and every feature.” In the harmony of its lines and its perfect balance, in the mystic sense of transcendence it conveys, the Nataraja, as a religious icon, is surely one of the supreme achievements of world art.

ZERIN ANKLESARIA

(Courtesy *The Hindu*, 18 June 2000)

The Isha and Other Upanishads. Prof Jayashanmugam. Editor S Rajendran. Annamalainagar 1998. Pp 104. Rs 150.

Prof Jayashanmugam is already well known for his many contributions to the journals of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Some of these have been recently published under the title *Sri Aurobindo and the Indian Tradition*. The present volume brings together some more of his important essays on the Isha and other Upanishads and on Vedanta.

The author shows with a wealth of learning and deep insight how the tradition of the Vedas runs through the Upanishads and the vast corpus of Sri Aurobindo's writings on the Veda, the Upanishads and Yoga. The continuity of the Vedic tradition was interrupted at one stage by the rise of asceticism with its negative creed of life denial and repudiation of the world as unreal and unspiritual. Sri Aurobindo has reclaimed the affirmative and positive philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads, revitalising it in the light of his yogic experience and realisation. To quote from the author: “In the hymns of the Rig Veda asceticism has no place” (p. 24). The Vedic ideal stressed spiritual realisation, enjoyment of the world's riches without the taint of ego, the expanding of one's energies for the good of fellowmen as service to the Lord that dwells in all, to divinise earthly existence. The entire world, the universe, is to be the habitation of the Lord and to dismiss it as unreal or unworthy, to turn away from it in disgust or in the end commit suicide, is to deny the very purpose of life, repudiate the Lord Himself and in fact to kill one's soul.

The ascetic abandons action in order to preserve the freedom of his soul and pursue the formless divine. He fears that actions bind him down by the inflexible law

of cause and effect. But actions dedicated to God are beyond the purview of this law. What is more, "works informed by God's consciousness and will take advantage of the connection that exists between birth and past works and act gradually and steadily on the inherited impressions of man's subconscious being" (p. 10). The God-worker is thus liberated from Karma, the burden of the past; present actions cannot bind him and he is free and active for ever.

Asceticism in itself is not totally valueless. As Sri Aurobindo has said, it is much to be preferred to an unbridled materialistic epicureanism. However, while the latter ends in slavery to the senses, the former ends in their extinction and ultimately in self-inflicted death. The ascetics are thus slayers of the soul. The author has discussed this point at length and shown that they who thus deny life reach in the end only the sunless worlds—*asuryā nāma lokah*. It is significant that this phrase has been construed as sunless in name—*nāma mātra*—and not as worlds of utter and impenetrable darkness. Genuine ascetics reach sunless worlds, that is, not the worlds of full brightness but regions of light and shade, while those who have attained the vision of Brahman and lived a life of action to the full—*shatam samāh*—are received into regions of unmixed light. Such are those who have won the divine here and now.

Ātmahano janāh is another phrase which is interpreted by the author in a refreshing light; it refers not to all ascetics but to the lowest among them who think that suicide is the gate to the heavens and end their life in that false hope. The Upanishad, says the author, leaves out of account such "misguided mystics" but refers only to the genuine ascetics who, too, cannot reach the promised end.

The reader would be particularly impressed by the author's clarification of terms *sambhuta*—birth and *vināśa*—non-birth, crossing beyond death by non-birth and enjoying immortality by birth. The Isha Upanishad abounds in paradoxes which confound the reader if understood literally. Their true meaning is metaphysical and spiritual—the two terms of the paradox must be understood together if they are to be understood at all. Other instances of paradox, such as the juxtaposition of movement and rest, closeness and remoteness, *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* have been resolved and explained convincingly so as to disclose the truth that transcends the apparent contradictions.

Particular attention is also deserved by the author's comment on *śloka* 16 of the Isha Upanishad where he clarifies that the light of the Sun is twofold—one concentrated in Himself and the other diffused in Nature. The prayer addressed to Surya is "to spread out the light in Brahman and merge it with the light diffused in Nature and unite it with the light concentrated in Brahman, *vyuha raśmin, samuha tejah*"

It is significant that the first two verses of the Isha Upanishad are interpreted (p. 63) as practical instructions for the spiritual aspirant. The Guru's lead may follow only after the aspirant has fulfilled these instructions. Even then the spiritual quest remains incomplete. Agni must bless him with his grace and lead him forward.

The Kena and the Vedic Ideal of fulfilment (pp. 84-103) show how the Isha and Kena Upanishads are complementary and proclaim the same supreme truth about

Brahman On pages 93-100 we have an illuminating summation of the teaching of the Kena Upanishad—the work of the Gods, the work of Brahman and the right way of doing work. The author has very well brought out the significance of the story of the blade of grass with which Brahma exposed the vanity and pride of Agni, Vayu and Indra and made them realise through the vision of Uma that their strength was not theirs but gifted to them by the Supreme for his work in the universe.

This volume is so rich in content, comprehensive but concise, scholarly and illuminating, that it must be read again and again. The reader is sure to look forward to more and more from Prof. Shanmugam.

G N SARMA