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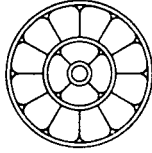
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 8

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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THE MANY BIRTHS OF THOUGHT

THUS spoke the mighty and uplifting Voice,
And Savitri heard, she bowed her head and mused
Plunging her deep regard into herself
In her soul's privacy in the silent Night
Aloof and standing back detached and calm .
She watched the passion and the toil of life
And heard in the crowded thoroughfares of mind
The unceasing tread and passage of her thoughts
All she allowed to rise that chose to stir,
Calling, compelling nought, forbidding nought,
She left all to the process formed in Time
And the free initiative of Nature's will.
Thus following the complex human play
She heard the prompter's voice behind the scenes
She saw the Powers that stare from the Abyss
And the wordless Light that liberates the soul
But most her gaze pursued the birth of thought .
In our unseen subtle body thought is born
Or there it enters from the cosmic field
Oft from her soul stepped out a naked thought
Luminous with mystic lips and wonderful eyes;
Or from her heart emerged some burning face
And looked for life and love and passionate truth,
Aspired to heaven or embraced the world.
A seeing will pondered between the brows,
Thoughts, glistening Angels, stood behind the brain
In flashing armour, folding hands of prayer,
And poured heaven's rays into the earthly form
Imaginations flamed up from her breast...
Around her navel lotus clustering close
Her large sensations of the teeming worlds
Streamed their dumb movements of the unformed Idea,
Invading the small sensitive flower of the throat
They brought their mute unuttered resonances
To kindle the figures of a heavenly speech.
Below, desires formed their wordless wish,
And longings of physical sweetness and ecstasy
Translated into the accents of a cry
Their grasp on objects and their clasp on souls
Her body's thoughts climbed from her conscious limbs

And carried their yearnings to its mystic crown
 Where Nature's murmurs meet the Ineffable. .
 Impenetrable, withheld from mortal sense,
 The inner chambers of the spirit's house
 Disclosed to her their happenings and their guests;
 Eyes looked through crevices in the invisible wall
 And through the secrecy of unseen doors
 There came into mind's little frontal room
 Thoughts that enlarged our limited human range..
 A sight opened upon the invisible
 And sensed the shapes that mortal eyes see not,
 The sounds that mortal listening cannot hear,
 The blissful sweetness of the intangible's touch...
 She saw the life of remote continents
 And distance deafened not to voices far,
 She felt the movements crossing unknown minds,
 The past's events occurred before her eyes
 The great world's thoughts were part of her own thought,
 The feelings dumb for ever and unshared,
 The ideas that never found an utterance. .
 The unseen grew visible and audible
 Thoughts leaped down from a superconscient field
 Like eagles swooping from a viewless peak,
 Thoughts gleamed up from the screened subliminal depths
 Like golden fishes from a hidden sea...
 This world is a vast unbroken totality...
 The high meets the low, all is a single plan.
 So she beheld the many births of thought,
 If births can be of what eternal is,
 For the Eternal's powers are like himself,
 Timeless in the Timeless, in Time ever born.
 This too she saw that all in outer mind
 Is made, not born, a product perishable,
 Forged in the body's factory by earth-force...
 The genius too receives from some high fount
 Concealed in a supernal secrecy
 The work that gives him an immortal name.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29. pp 538-42)

SOME LETTERS

For a long time I find myself supporting vital urges, especially urges of the palate and sex. Sometimes the vital uses reason as a garb, saying "This is only an experiment" or "The rule is not for all" or "It may be necessary for you at this stage not to check desires since you have sufficiently suppressed them during Gandhism" or "The sense of craving is worse than the actual action" Of course, all these tricks are recognised, but the craving still is there I wish to be enlightened about this movement and to have your help to get rid of the difficulty

THE vital of most people is of this kind, except in a few who are indifferent to sex or food desire or to both, by temperament and nature. There is always something in the lower vital which is recalcitrant and takes a pleasure in following its own way and disregarding the higher dictate, and there are always external forces hostile to the Yoga which try to take advantage of its obscurities, revolts and weaknesses. Neither neglect this turn of the nature (food-desire) nor make too much of it, it has to be dealt with, purified and mastered but without giving it too much importance. There are two ways of conquering it—one of detachment, learning to regard food as only a physical necessity and the vital satisfaction of the stomach and the palate as a thing of little or no importance, the other is to be able to take any food given and find in it (whether pronounced good or bad by others) the *sama brahma-ananda*. But the latter comes usually only when one can live in the cosmic consciousness or rise into the Overmind—and for this you are not ready. So the first way is the one you should keep in view.

17 November 1931

This is a letter from a friend with whom I frequently met Lele and M. Paul in Bombay. Mr. Lele once gave him an experience which frightened him and he left off the contact. Can I let him know some details about the Ashram?

It is an express rule of the Ashram not to give inner information of the Ashram life to people outside. If the correspondent is a seeker after Yoga (which does not seem to be the case here) he can be told general things about the Yoga (not anything personal to the sadhaks or to Sri Aurobindo or to the Mother).

19 November 1931

Often I think I have thrown out my ego-centric nature, but then, like Raktabya in the Chandi, it assumes multiple forms and displays itself. Sometimes it compares itself with others, sees some superior quality in itself and exults. Sometimes it broods on past achievements (though petty) and finds a sweet corner there. Sometimes it observes the defects or egoism in others, leading to a fault-finding habit. But usually this tendency is not allowed to persist.

Good. These movements of the lower vital ego are very sticky, but by persistent rejection they will diminish and go

With regard to dealings with others I try to keep the following points in view First, since Mother is working through all and in all here, whatever suggestions others give should be respected, though taken up with discrimination. Second, no ungenerous opinion or judgment should be built about anybody since all imperfections, defects and even vices will be destroyed in course of time Third, an affectionate attitude towards all should be kept, since we are all here for the fulfilment of one Ideal

This is altogether the right attitude.

Is it possible to abolish the "separatist egoism" by trying to live in a sort of mental representation of the unity in the Supermind? I think it would at least bring in a wider outlook and a sort of universal love

It will not abolish the separatist egoism, but it can change the mental outlook and through that the vital reactions to a great extent

During my five months' stay here, I have had several interesting dreams. In one I saw a bullock-cart and the bullocks getting unruly and running away In another I saw two men standing who then changed into elongated pyramid-shaped wooden posts and at the centre I read "27" and "35", then rang the words in mental form "white age—will come—the truth" Afterwards I interpreted this as some prominent years in my life—27 being my age till October last

The bullocks and cart were probably symbolic of some part of the smaller vital movement wanting to get out of hand—it need not refer to anything in the waking consciousness or movement, but to some subconscious impulse. The interpretation of the second dream is probably correct—two landmarks of the life, perhaps indicating a change in the personality at those dates But these things are indications of possibility more often than of destined occurrences, though naturally the possibilities may fulfil themselves, if accepted

Two days ago a peculiar incident occurred I sat down in the office and decided to inspect certain almirahts In one I came upon some articles for the Stores Thinking they might be useful to Mrityunjoy, who probably did not know about their existence, I took them out After five minutes or so, I saw Mrityunjoy passing by, so I called him and he stopped. I showed the things to him and with astonishment he said he was going up to his room in search of one of those

things — some washers He told me that washers were not in stock and that Mother had looked askance at him when he had informed her of it He would never, of course, have inquired of us We were quite delighted at this small piece of telepathy I felt that if we are sufficiently open, quiet, enthusiastic and unegoistic we can get frequently such suggestions and the delight thereof Is it so or am I rather exaggerating the importance of the occurrence?

No, you are not exaggerating It shows an opening of the consciousness and what you write about it is quite correct

Before I came here, I occasionally used to feel a blissful stillness in the chest (more often in a train or in a crowd) alternating with a quiet activity of the pure higher reasoning. Here it completely disappeared during the first month, then again reappeared at Pranam or in work For the last two months, it comes frequently, sometimes by itself, sometimes by an effort to go inward, it also lasts longer and, if concentrated upon with higher thoughts, it culminates in an intense bliss, often almost unbearable Sometimes on concentration, there is a pressure at the navel, then it rises by jerks till it comes to the throat, where it feels some obstruction (there is rapid and difficult breathing also) and reaches the head However, I am neither in a deep trance-like state nor in a particularly inward-turned attitude This is why I suspect that it may only be some histrionic imitation But how can this intensely blissful, naturally detached, automatically concentrated and effortlessly aspiring state be an imitation?

It is not necessary that these things should occur in trance or samadhī, it is quite possible for them to take place in the waking state and it happens as often in that way as in the other It shows the awakening of the consciousness and the liberated energy rising through the centres towards the head (thousand-petalled) lotus The pressure at the navel means some slight difficulty in the vital centre, the obstruction in the throat some unreadiness in the external mind

This leads me to a point which I have not yet been able to understand precisely. In the letter of 15th August last year, it was mentioned that though Ananda is the aim, it should be supported by Truth and for practical purposes it should be subordinated to Truth Does this mean that any joy or bliss that comes up should be ignored or rejected and only Truth called for?

No

Secondly, on whatever plane it comes, is it possible that Truth can come without the Ananda of that plane?

It can come solely as knowledge or as knowledge + calm and peace or knowledge with power. It is not always accompanied by Ananda

What was meant was that it is possible to have some kind of Ananda on all the planes, vital, mental, physical, but if one wants to live securely in the highest divine Ananda it can only be done by bringing down the (supramental) Truth and living first in the supramental Light. But this is the eventual aim of the Yoga, it does not debar one from accepting whatever Ananda comes on the way. Only, mere pleasure or vital excitement and gratification must not be mistaken for Ananda

Occasionally I get a dream from which I awaken with a sense of fear and slightly increased heart-beats. In my external nature I have a sort of cautiousness, a desire to avoid physical difficulty, danger or accident, but in psychological affairs I usually display an audacity which is sometimes even undesirable. Is it because there is more fear in the subconscious than is allowed to leak out externally?

Certainly, the subconscious has many more fears in it than those admitted or acknowledged by the waking consciousness

Is it true that fear can be completely destroyed only when one lives in perfect Adwaitabhava? Otherwise, what is the significance of Dwaitadwaibhayam bhavati?

Yes, but it must be a *perfect* Adwaitabhava, union with the Divine (or even a compelling contact with the Divine) in all parts of the being—otherwise something of fear may still lurk (or at least its possibility) in the subconscious parts.

4 February 1932

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of July 2001)

अग्निर्जज्ञे जुह्वा रेजमानो महस्पुत्रां अरुषस्य प्रयक्षे ।
महान् गर्भो मह्या जातमेषां मही प्रवृद्धर्यश्चस्य यज्ञैः ॥

(Rigveda, 3. 31.3)

Agni (the Divine Force) is born quivering with his flame of the offering for sacrifice to the great Sons of the Shining One (the Deva, Rudra), great is the child of them, a vast birth, there is a great movement of the Driver of the shining steeds (Indra, the Divine Mind) by the sacrifices (SABCL, Vol. 10, p 207)

अभि जैत्रिरसचन्त स्पृधान महि ज्योतिस्तमसो निरजानन् ।
त जानती. प्रत्युदायनुषासः परिर्गवामभवदेक इन्द्रः ॥

(Rigveda, 3. 31.4)

The conquering (dawns) cleave to him in his struggle, they deliver by knowledge a great light out of the darkness; knowing the Dawns rise up to him, Indra has become the one lord of the luminous cows (SABCL, Vol 10, p 207)

वीळौ सतीरभि धीरा अतृन्दन् प्राचाहिन्वन् मनसा सप्त विप्राः ।
विश्वामविन्दन् पथ्यामृतस्य प्रजानन्नित्ता मनसा विवेश ॥

(Rigveda, 3 31.5)

The cows who were in the strong place (of the Panis) the thinkers clove out; by the mind the seven seers set them moving forward (or upwards towards the supreme), they found the entire path (goal or field of travel) of the Truth, knowing those (supreme seats of the Truth) Indra by the obeisance entered into them. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 207)

विदद् यदी सरमा रुग्णमद्रेर्महि पाथ. पूर्व्यं सध्यक्कः ।
अग्रं नयत् सुपद्यक्षराणामच्छा रवं प्रथमा जानती गात् ॥

(Rigveda, 3 31.6)

When Sarama found the broken place of the hill, he (or perhaps she, Sarama) made continuous the great and supreme goal She, the fair-footed, led him to the front of the imperishable ones (the unslayable cows of the Dawn), first she went, knowing, towards their cry. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 208)

अगच्छदु विप्रतमः सखीयन्नसूदयत् सुकृते गर्भमद्रिः ।
समान मर्यो युवभिर्मखस्यन्नथाभवदङ्गिराः सद्यो अर्चन् ॥

(Rigveda, 3 31 7)

He went, the greatest seer of them all, doing them friendship, the pregnant hill sent forth its contents for the doer of perfect works; in the strength of manhood he with the young (Angīrasas) seeking plenitude of riches attained possession, then singing the hymn of light he became at once the Angīrasa. Becoming in our front the form and measure of each existing thing, he knows all the births, he slays Shushna. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 208)

नि गव्यता मनसा सेदुरकैः कृण्वानासो अमृतत्वाय गातुम् ।
इदं चिन्नु सदन भूर्येषां येन मासां असिषासन्नृतेन ॥

(Rigveda, 3. 31.9)

With a mind that sought the Light (the cows) they entered their seats by the illumining words, making the path towards Immortality (*ni gavyatā manasa sedur arkath krñvānāso amṛtatvāya gātum*). This is that large seat of theirs, the Truth by which they took possession of the months (the ten months of the Dashagwas). (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 208)

संपश्यमाना अमदन्नभि स्वं पयः प्रत्रस्य रेतसो दुधानाः ।
वि रोदसी अतपद् घोष एषां जाते निःशामदधुगोषु वीरान् ॥

(Rigveda, 3. 31 10)

Harmonised in vision (or, perfectly seeing) they rejoiced in their own (abode, Swar) milking out the milk of the ancient seed (of things). Their cry (of the Word) heated all the earth and heaven (created, that is to say, the burning clarity, *gharma, taptam ghrtam*, which is the yield of the solar cows), they established in that which was born a firm abiding and in the cows the heroes (that is, the battling force was established in the light of the knowledge) (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 208)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

FRONTISPIECE

NEW country lies before me,
The old is far away;
New voices whiles* implore me
That I turn toward their Day

Toward their Day I'm turning—
No other goal will guide—
To Its faint glimmer yearning
I climb the valley side.

Up valley side I clamber;
The mists are wearing thin;
In ecstasy of amber
The sunrise pomps begin

The pomps begin, and glory
Of purple and ruby gold
Are frontispiece to story
The far-glimpsed Hours enfold

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment. Exceedingly beautiful

* Old English word —Amal Kiran

People usually don't make sadhana the one thing of their lives. They have two parts, one internal and the other external which goes on with its ordinary movements, social contacts, etc. Sadhana must be made the one central thing

SRI AUROBINDO

(Nirodbaran *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 6)

FROM ONE AGE TO ANOTHER

WHEN immense changes and irresistible movements are in progress, it is astonishing how a single event, often a chance event, will lead to a train of circumstances that alter the face of a country or the world . It is on such occasions that we feel most vividly the reality of a Power which disposes of events and defeats the calculations of men. . Certainty disappears and we begin to realise what the *pralaya* of the Hindus, the passage from one age to another, really means and how true is the idea that it is by rapid transitions long-prepared changes are induced Such a change now impends all over the world, and in almost all countries events are happening, the final results of which the actors do not foresee

SRI AUROBINDO

(SABCL, Vol 2, p 406)

ABOUT HEALTH

I HAVE already had the experience, partially, that when one is in this state of inner harmony and no part of the attention is turned towards the body, the body works perfectly well It is this . “self-concentration” which upsets everything. And this I have observed many times, many times In reality one does *make* oneself ill It is the narrowness of consciousness, the division If you let it work, there is . everywhere there is a Consciousness and a Grace that do everything so that all may go well, and it is because of this imbecility that all goes wrong—it is strange! The ego-centric imbecility

*

And then, as I have said, for all the actions of life, even the most ordinary, it is demonstrated that if the presence of the ego is suffered (surely to make you understand what it is), it can really lead to an imbalance of health, and that the only remedy is the disappearance of the ego—and at the same time the disappearance of all illness

*

as soon as one feels a wave of physical disequilibrium, of ill health coming, well, to concentrate in the right spirit is to concentrate in an inner calm, a trust in the divine Grace, and a will to remain in physical equilibrium and good health This is the right spirit. In another case, one may feel a wave of anger or a fit of temper coming from outside; then one should withdraw into an inner calm, a detachment from superficial things, with a will to express only what comes from above and always be submissive to the divine Will This is the right spirit

THE MOTHER

(CWM, Vol 11, pp 207, 219, Vol 6, p 340)

A LETTER

I HAVE now quite a body of your poetic work with me—and I may say at once that you are capable of very impressive production *Incitatus*, as you know, I took up immediately for *Mother India*. I did so not only because I am a lover of horses and here is fine praise but also because here is a gradual uplifting towards the equine archetype in language that is always strong and significant and gathers towards the end (the last 20 lines at least) an inspired tone that breaks through strength into radiant energy and through significance into visionary suggestion

Your *Flamingo* is appearing in this month's issue, which will be out in a week or so I think it is even better than *Incitatus*. The words carry almost everywhere a depth and a height of thought and image I mention the two categories—depth and height—on purpose For, language can sometimes soar without having something profound to soar from; then in the midst of the exaltation and the power we feel occasionally a certain emptiness, a sensation of what T. E. Hulme called "circumambient gas", the frequent resort of the undisciplined Romantic The uprising idea, abundantly articulate, often lacks the true penetrative feeling, the moved in-look into self and object, the intuition that goes in one way or another into the hidden heart of Reality and packs every shade of speech with a mystery beyond utterance If there is a depth answering to the height, we get the greatest poetry Of course there can be great poetry that is subdued in language—it does not soar exactly, but gives us an experience of controlled depth-stirring And there can be great poetry without any precise plunge of emotion; it just leaps, high with an imaginative vividness We cannot cut poetry down to one pattern. It can even look bare and prosaic, as it were, and yet hold a secret intensity completely transfiguring the apparent elements of prose. But I believe that poetry at its very greatest brings us a simultaneous sense of height and depth, though not necessarily with both in equal prominence And even height or depth is not always its fullest extension, but this depends on the plane, so to speak, on which the inspiration functions. The usual planes are vast without being truly infinite and there the Cosmic Spirit speaks in the accent of what I may call a translation rather than in the rhythm of its own original tongue But wherever the Cosmic Spirit breaks into language it has, to my perception, the height echoing the depth, the depth mirroring the height And something of this I perceive again and again in your *Flamingo* in a key which perhaps is not absolutely in tune with the infinite as distinguished from the vast but is still harmoniously splendid with a spontaneous straining into the beyond without losing the measure and the order that are essential to full poetic success.

Yours is mostly the language of the imaginative intellect, deep-gazing and up-glancing from a poise of thought refined to what I may designate a crystalline compactness The idea-stuff is constantly in action but is mainly saved from the tendency of such stuff to be somewhat abstract and to vivify itself by an imagery added on to it rather than being twin-born. What saves it is the vision-flame of your

powerful mind· the idea-stuff, without giving up its tautness, becomes transparent to a ‘Platonic’ world of truth-beauty in diversified yet unitary play The sheer spiritual sight does not seem to be caught very frequently in its native colour-cry, so to say, but, from the purely literary viewpoint, this reservation of mine is a bit of hyper-criticism and need not discourage you

Let me now come down to a look at some of the details of *Flamingo*. You begin with a lucid statement, setting briefly the theme, but it is vibrant with a hidden excitement.

Nobility is fiery in repose

And the excitement is not merely of a discovery made by the poetic intellect subtler sources seem lightly tapped, and a striking psychological paradox appears to haze off brightly into a profound truth of the soul This truth is then worked out in terms precise without being rigid, with a constant core of imaged idea which yet broadens into a corona of suggestion melting that idea into a moved vision And together with the broadening (linguistically represented by the sustained continuing sentence of 73 words) there is what I have described as a combination of height and depth—a combination attaining a self-consciousness in the very theme

.to bring
The summit to the sea
And raise the waters deep and wide .

The movement ever-broadening is kept up through all the first three or four stanzas and the language maintains—true to the poem’s first line—a nobility of tone, a high seriousness, which is kept alive all the way by a keen inventive energy and audacity Without this drive of verbal originality the high seriousness might become a poetic apotheosis of ‘the long face’ The words are incessantly carrying on experiments in expression, nothing deliberately *outré* or caper-cutting but everything significantly adventurous-like, to take a somewhat extreme example

that the crown
Vortexively be swirled
Of timelessness in time

But here I may mention a point which I particularly like a certain elegance mixes with the dynamism and the daring—and, as if to live up to the theme set in the opening line, the fieriness is caught up again and again into a poised beauty, a rich refinement· the flame grows a flower and the flower once more becomes incandescent It is as if on a small scale the Virgilian and the Aeschylean were intertwined and occasionally separating and again blending Mention of Aeschylus suggests a

comparison with the Greek chorus-movement. Something of that forceful yet controlled sweep is here and perhaps to combine Virgil with Aeschylus is to create something of Sophocles. However, whatever of chorus mood and rhythm is at work is not quite classical. Both the romantic and the modern have entered in, the former bringing a "blueywhite intensity" and the latter an inspired cunning and complexity.

The last two stanzas change the expressive posture a little. The *longue haleine* is somewhat relaxed and that is as it should be to prevent an impression of too much of a *tour de force* and also to get some home-going final effects which would stand out in the mind, effects like

More fervency and ample sweep is sought;
Great is the need, the burning—

and the four closing lines, with their fine resolution of the whole poem's burden of the mortal putting on immortality here and now:

Flowers that never fade.

This is not by itself a very original phrase but it fills with both the new and the true as the culmination of the great argument and stands where it is with a calm felicity making the marvellous familiar, the supernatural a part of nature

I have left myself no space to speak of your other works. All are not of equal quality and now and again there is too marked an impress of the discursive though still powerful mind. But with much of your creation I feel happy

17 10 1968

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

THE BALLAD OF SAVITRI

[*Ancient Ballads of Hindustan* is a remarkable work of Toru Dutt (8 March 1856-30 August 1877) falling in the genre of early Indian writings in English. This “daughter of Bengal, so admirably and so strangely gifted, Hindu by race and tradition, an English woman by education, a French woman at heart, [she] blended in herself three souls and three traditions.” The character of Savitri fighting Death himself with the power of love and “getting better of him” becomes more appealing in her when she also recognises that he as Yama is both the Destroyer and the Upholder of the worlds. We reproduce in several instalments Toru Dutt’s *Savitri*-ballad published posthumously in 1882 —R.Y D.]

PART I

SAVITRI was the only child
Of Madra’s wise and mighty king,
Stern warriors, when they saw her, smiled,
As mountains smile to see the spring.
Fair as a lotus when the moon
Kisses its opening petals red,
After sweet showers in sultry June!
With happier heart, and lighter tread,
Chance strangers, having met her, past,
And often would they turn the head
A lingering second look to cast,
And bless the vision ere it fled

What was her own peculiar charm?
The soft black eyes, the raven hair,
The curving neck, the rounded arm,
All these are common everywhere.
Her charm was this—upon her face
Childlike and innocent and fair,
No man with thought impure or base
Could ever look,—the glory there,
The sweet simplicity and grace,
Abashed the boldest, but the good
God’s purity there loved to trace,
Mirrored in dawning womanhood

In those far-off primeval days
Fair India’s daughters were not pent

In closed zenanas On her ways
 Savitri at her pleasure went
 Whither she chose,—and hour by hour
 With young companions of her age,
 She roamed the woods for fruit or flower,
 Or loitered in some hermitage,
 For to the Munis gray and old
 Her presence was as sunshine glad,
 They taught her wonders manifold
 And gave her of the best they had

Her father let her have her way
 In all things, whether high or low,
 He feared no harm, he knew no ill
 Could touch a nature pure as snow
 Long childless, as a priceless boon
 He had obtained this child at last
 By prayers, made morning, night, and noon
 With many a vigil, many a fast,
 Would Shiva his own gift recall,
 Or mar its perfect beauty ever?—
 No, he had faith,—he gave her all
 She wished, and feared and doubted never

And so she wandered where she pleased
 In boyish freedom Happy time!
 No small vexations ever teased,
 Nor crushing sorrows dimmed her prime
 One care alone, her father felt—
 Where should he find a fitting mate
 For one so pure?—His thoughts long dwelt
 'On this as with his queen he sate
 "Ah, whom, dear wife, should we select?"
 "Leave it to God," she answering cried,
 "Savitri, may herself elect
 Some day, her future lord and guide "

Months passed, and lo, one summer morn
 As to the hermitage she went
 Through smiling fields of waving corn,
 She saw some youths on sport intent,
 Sons of the hermits, and their peers,

And one among them tall and lithe
 Royal in port,—on whom the years
 Consenting, shed a grace so blithe,
 So frank and noble, that the eye
 Was loth to quit that sun-browned face;
 She looked and looked,—then gave a sigh,
 And slackened suddenly her pace

What was the meaning—was it love?
 Love at first sight, as poets sing,
 Is then no fiction? Heaven above
 Is witness, that the heart its king
 Finds often like a lightning flash;
 We play,—we jest,—we have no care,—
 When hark a step,—there comes no crash,—
 But life, or silent slow despair
 Their eyes just met,—Savitri past
 Into the friendly Muni's hut,
 Her heart-rose opened had at last—
 Opened no flower can ever shut.

In converse with the gray-haired sage
 She learnt the story of the youth,
 His name and place and parentage—
 Of royal race he was in truth
 Satyavan was he hight,—his sire
 Dyoumatsen had been Salva's king,
 But old and blind, opponents dire
 Had gathered round him in a ring
 And snatched the sceptre from his hand,
 Now,—with his queen and only son
 He lived a hermit in the land,
 And gentler hermit was there none.

With many tears was said and heard
 The story,—and with praise sincere
 Of Prince Satyavan; every word
 Sent up a flush on cheek and ear,
 Unnoticed. Hark! The bells remind
 'Tis time to go,—she went away,
 Leaving her virgin heart behind,
 And richer for the loss A ray,

Shot down from heaven, appeared to tinge
 All objects with supernal light,
 The thatches had a rainbow fringe,
 The cornfields looked more green and bright

(To be continued)

TORU DUTT

FEET OF CLAY

ASPIRATION sky-high touching the beyond,
 Prayer oceanic wide submerging all within,
 Hopes and dreams encircle the universe,
 But feet of clay that is what I have

Aspirations make the soul ethereal,
 Prayers make heart full with joy,
 Hopes and dreams find their roots,—
 Feet of clay remain on the sinking ground

When all is quiet within,
 Spirit and soul in solitude,
 Silence becomes the only muse,
 Feet of clay follow the Whisper.

When the Grace comes with arms outstretched
 Soul is bared with all its contents,
 Heart is opened to be the shrine,
 Feet of clay find some repose

When the footprints on the sand disappear
 The feet of clay find Your Feet
 The feet of clay soar with the soul,—
 Oh You become the Wind under my wings.

ARUN VAIDYA

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of July 2001)

The Vision and the Boon

6

SIMILARITIES between a sentence in Book Three, Canto Four and an entry in the *Record of Yoga* have led us to explore what the Dragon and the Sphinx represent in the symbolism of *Savitri* as it evolved from the late 1920s onwards. This inquiry must now be completed by looking at the other two great obstacles Sri Aurobindo had identified by 1927 as standing in the way of the transformation he envisaged. These appear in the remaining lines of the same sentence in “The Vision and the Boon”. Their place in the scheme of *Savitri* emerges most clearly when this sentence is studied in relation to the development of the first page of the epic.

The opening of *Savitri* has an incalculable importance for understanding the rest of the poem. Paralleling the movement from Night to Twilight to Day in Books Nine to Eleven, with glimpses of some of the other Books, this evocative account of the commonest of events—the daily rising of the sun—sums up Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the problem of this world and its solution in a few pages of incomparable poetry.

But all this took many years and many successive versions to become what it is now. No less than forty-five manuscripts of the opening passage in Sri Aurobindo’s handwriting have been found, each differing at least slightly from those that precede and follow. In addition, we must count three typescripts by Sri Aurobindo himself from the period before 1920, his revision of a copy typed by Amal Kiran in the 1930s, and the changes marked at his dictation in the 1940s on a handwritten copy by his scribe, Nirodbaran. This adds up to fifty versions in all.

Unless we become mystics ourselves, we can only enter into the sense of Sri Aurobindo’s symbols through an intellectual, aesthetic and imaginative response and catch indirect glimpses of the reality behind them. Even so, it is not difficult to see from a study of the manuscripts that his vision of Night in the opening passage became in the end something different from what it had been in the early or even the intermediate phases of the writing of *Savitri*.

We will find that the significance of Night on the first page came to coincide with what it represents in the sentence in Book Three that we have been discussing. The three other opposing Powers mentioned in that sentence in the Divine Mother’s speech also came to figure, overtly or covertly, in the epic’s crucial opening passage.

To allow the readers to appreciate the distance Sri Aurobindo travelled as he reworked this passage through so many versions over so many years, let me quote first his earliest draft of the description of Night and Dawn, dated 8-9 August 1916.

In a huge forest where the listening Night
 Heard solitary voices and a tread
 That had no sound for the rich heart of day,
 But now her phantom tribes were not abroad,
 The panther's eyes glared not, the tiger slept
 Hushed in his lair of jungle or deep grass,—
 Startling the wide-browed Night young Dawn awoke
 Lain in her darker thoughtful sister's robe
 She pushed the loving cloak from her bright eyes
 Young, smiling, glad, pure-thoughted she arose
 And let her lucent robe drift over the sky

After a couple of years, the treatment of Dawn had deepened considerably, but the preceding passage on Night remained much the same. It was when Sri Aurobindo altered the divisions of his narrative poem from "cantos" to "books" that he abruptly replaced this picturesque depiction of night in the jungle by something more mystical.

The stages through which the first line arrived at its present form have been described earlier in this series.¹ The last change in wording occurred in the late 1920s, when "It was the moment when the gods awake" was revised to

It was the hour before the gods awake

Even at this stage, the passage on Night continued for only five more lines

The huge unbounded spirit of Night alone
 In the unlit temple of immensity
 Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge,
 Mute with the expectation of her change
 The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still

In spite of her huge, dark immobility, Night's "expectation" of change suggests an attitude that is still far from what we find in the final version. She seems not unwilling to renounce her sovereignty and welcome the advent of Dawn. Something of a sisterly relationship between the two—a Vedic idea that is implied elsewhere in *Savitri*²—is still felt and would remain for some time

It was in the next manuscript that Sri Aurobindo introduced, after twelve pages, the sentence in the Divine Mother's speech that has led to this discussion. The sentence began with two lines that were identical when they were first written to what they are in the published text

An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force
 Have made a world estranged from life and thought,

The lines about the Dragon and the Sphinx came next. The last line was initially written in this form

And on his path sits the unconquered Night.

The first two words were cancelled in the same manuscript and replaced by "Across", so that the line came to read:

Across his path sits the unconquered Night.

Much later, Sri Aurobindo revised this to what appears in the 1942 version and the final text.

Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.³

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1 *Mother India*, November 1999, pp 1075-77

2 Compare, for example, the line "Where the God-child lies on the lap of Night and Dawn" (*Savitri* [1993], p 36) with the Vedic verse "Dawn and Night, two sisters of different forms but of one mind, suckle the same divine Child" (*The Secret of the Veda with Selected Hymns* [1998], p 365)

3 *Savitri*, p 336

Facts to Ponder

Beautiful young people are accidents of nature,
But beautiful old people are works of art

Learn from the mistakes of others
You can't live long enough to make them all yourself

Yesterday is history
Tomorrow's a mystery
Today is a gift.
That's why it is called the "present"

AT THE DOOR

A PREGNANT silence choked the sacred Place
As a voice was heard as of Doom preordained,
A staggering proclamation arrested our breath
And Darkness loomed in formidable strength

For none knew from where it came
Nor had they heard it ever before,
From above us like a burning shaft
It hurled onto us wrenching the heart

“The Mother’s Room in danger lies—
And those who would guard It
From Evil and from Death
Must make a sacrifice
Shedding the beauty of the human form
And all the glory of mind and soul,
They into a stallion be transformed
To protect the sacred place ”

So ominous was it, so oppressing
That all felt some unseen talons
Gripping the throat with dread,
A horror that whipped the inmost faith.

With a spontaneous cry from my heart,
I willed to forego this form,
For there was not a wink of doubt,
We had to pass this storm.

And in an instant I found myself
With a surge of white faith,
Stationed alert, still, one-pointed,
Outside the sacred Door

And seven others stood with me,
Eight stallions in all we stood
Guarding the Divine Mother’s Room,
All white in a shimmering light

M SUTAPA

A MESSAGE

(Message written by Pavitra for the Sri Aurobindo International University
Centre Laboratory on the occasion of its opening on 26 6 1956)

À TOUS CEUX, PROFESSEURS ET ÉLÈVES QUI TRAVAILLENT AU LABORATOIRE DU CENTRE UNIVERSITAIRE INTERNATIONAL SRI AUROBINDO

QUE ce laboratoire soit pour vous un lieu de recueillement. Le travail que vous y ferez a l'avantage précieux de développer à la fois l'intelligence et l'habileté technique et manuelle. Vos progrès seront en proportion de votre concentration. Tant que vous êtes ici, évitez toute dispersion et tout relâchement.

Si vous voulez profiter utilement des avantages qui vous sont donnés, ne perdez pas de vue les cinq principes suivants, qui doivent guider vos actions.

1. ORDER. Une place pour chaque chose et chaque chose à sa place. Ayez de l'ordre, non seulement pour les objets, mais dans vos pensées et dans votre travail. La propreté est une manifestation de l'ordre: la saleté n'est que de la matière mal placée. De l'ordre relèvent aussi le soin des appareils et leur emploi judicieux. Les instruments ont une conscience et, pour la percevoir, il faut les traiter avec respect et compréhension.

2. CONCENTRATION. Pensez à ce que vous faites et faites-le le mieux que vous pouvez. Vous y trouverez un intérêt toujours renouvelé en même temps que vous développerez la conscience de votre corps et la maîtrise de vos mouvements. Les accidents sont une marque d'inconscience: la plupart sont dus à un manque de réflexion ou à un fléchissement dans l'attention.

3. SILENCE. Parlez le moins possible et seulement pour dire quelque chose. Évitez par dessus tout les disputes. L'économie de la parole fait partie de la maîtrise de soi.

4. OFFRANDE. Vous pouvez faire de votre travail ici un instrument de votre progrès spirituel. Offrez-le à la Mère et demandez-Lui de vous aider.

5. COLLABORATION. La Mère ne vous a pas chargé seul de ce travail. Elle vous a donné des compagnons. Percevoir, dans ces compagnons de travail, la même Conscience. Une qui s'exprime en vous est la base de la collaboration véritable.

Mes bénédictions
La Mère (signature)
26 6 1956

(Rédigé par Pavitra)

**TO ALL THE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS
WHO WORK IN THE
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE
LABORATORY**

Let this laboratory be for you a place for concentration. The work you do here gives you the privilege of developing both your intelligence and your technical and manual skills. Your progress will depend on the intensity of your concentration. As long as you are here, avoid all dispersion and slackness.

If you wish to benefit fully of the privileges given to you, do not lose sight of the following five principles which should guide your actions:

1. **ORDER.** A place for each thing and each thing in its place. Let there be order, not only in things but also in your thoughts and in your work. Tidiness is an expression of order, and disorder is simply things in the wrong place. Order also implies care of equipment and their right use. Instruments have a consciousness and to feel it one must treat them with respect and understanding.

2. **CONCENTRATION.** Think of what you are doing, and do it as well as you can. You will discover a constantly renewed interest and you will develop the consciousness of your body and mastery of your movements. Accidents are a sign of in-conscience, most of them are caused by a lack of thought and a flagging of our attention.

3. **SILENCE.** Speak as little as possible, and then only to say something worthwhile. Above all, avoid disputes. Economy of words is part of self-mastery.

4. **OFFERING.** You can make of your work here a means of your spiritual progress. Offer it to the Mother and ask Her to help you.

5. **COLLABORATION.** The Mother has not laid this work on you alone. She has given you companions. To see in these fellow-workers the same Single Consciousness which expresses itself in you, is the basis of a true collaboration.

My Blessings
The Mother (Signature)
26 6 1956

(Drafted by Pavitra)

SRI AUROBINDO MEMORIAL CONVENTION

Speech by Chapalakanta Bhattacharya*

(25th April, 1951)

FRIENDS, I came here with the impression that I was to join the inaugural ceremony for the foundation of an International University in this sacred place. But when I reached it I found an International University already in existence and in full working order. By this I mean this Ashram with the manifold ramifications of its creative activities. During the short period that I have been here I have had the privilege of seeing and knowing some of these activities. Even from this short experience I am convinced the Ashram contains all the elements that would go to constitute an International Institution of this type. As I saw it I could realise at once what it was that the Sage of Pondicherry was striving for.

Friends, as I look upon the vast expanse of water before me—a symbol of the infinite in continued restlessness and then turn to the serene picture of the Sage behind me reposing in the perfect and immobile calm of Mahasamadhi I cannot but be conscious of the fact that, though outwardly so different, essentially they represent the same truth. The same reality finds expression in different forms. It should be a special privilege of the students of this University to be trained to realise this fundamental truth—the truth that underlies and pervades all creation, illumines the entire mind and soul of man and makes it prepared to receive the supramental illumination. Because we all know this was the “sadhana” of the Sage of Pondicherry whom we have lost and whom we all adore.

Friends, when we use the word ‘University’ with reference to the institution we have in mind we suffer from the limitations of language and expression. The word ‘University’ has by this time acquired a stereotyped meaning—an institution for the advancement of learning, for the acquisition of highest academic knowledge in a number of prescribed subjects. The institution that we have in view would be something different and quite above this stereotyped pattern. It would be an institution the object of which would not be limited to mere academic studies but which would guide and lead the alumni to the acquisition of the fundamental knowledge of all life and creation—the search for and realisation of the one Truth “যস্মিন বিজ্ঞাতে সৰ্বমিদং বিজ্ঞাতং ভবতি” (*yasmun vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātam bhavati*)—knowledge of which enables a person to know everything else.

The Rishi of the Upanishads having taught his son all branches of scriptural knowledge asked him to see the Kshatriya King to have his knowledge tested. The boy went there and on being questioned by the King narrated all the scriptures that he had studied. The King said that was only scholarship and asked him what he had actually learnt after all. The boy again repeated the names of scriptures that he had

* Editor of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*

studied After having interrogated him for a second time and having got the same answer the King put to him the question to which I have already referred—“My boy, have you known That, the knowledge of which gives you the knowledge of all other things?” The boy was puzzled and replied in the negative. The King advised him to go back to his father and acquire from him this fundamental knowledge. This ultimately led to a series of contemplation, analysis, elimination and realisation revealing at last the truth that ‘Ananda’ was the reality under this creation—the creative and sustaining element

Friends, from the very dawn of our civilisation the prayer of India has been the prayer for ‘light’ The ‘Gayatri’ which is said to be the essence of the Vedas only typifies that inborn and unfailling prayer—*ধিয়ো যো নঃ প্রচোদয়াৎ*—(*dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt*)—“May He illumine our understanding” This is the prayer that has pervaded Indian thought from the very early stages and persisted and prevailed through all vicissitudes of history In this inaugural function of the proposed International University if I have to offer any prayer I would repeat this eternal and unfailling prayer of India Let this be the motto of the University and the objective of the life and Sadhana of the students who will congregate here from different parts of the world

OVERMAN—THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of July 2001)

“This is what I have been doing...”

LET us, at this point of our enquiry concerning the overman, repeat what the Mother said to K.D. Sethna in June 1953 about the Mind of Light “The Supermind has descended long ago—very long ago—into the mind and even into the vital it was working in the physical also but indirectly through those intermediaries. The question was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light the physical mind was the instrument for direct action upon the most material. This physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light”⁶⁹

After all we have learned so far about “the new humanity” which will be endowed with the Mind of Light, this new definition of the Mind of Light comes as a surprise. For as far as we know, in *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* Sri Aurobindo never even mentioned the physical mind, and surely not in this context. The Mind of Light, he wrote, is “the last in a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification”; it is “a subordinate action of the Supermind”, “aware of its affiliation to Supermind”, “capable of living in the Truth”. Yet, Sethna’s report of the Mother’s words has to be taken into account not only because it is trustworthy, but also because of what the Mother says at the beginning here in the quotation from 1958 “This [namely realising the overman, the being to be endowed with the Mind of Light] is what I have been doing for the last eight years, and even more during the past two years. .” This yogic work started at the very moment that Sri Aurobindo left his body. What entered into her body, palpably, was all the supramental Force he had accumulated in his—the Force that was the beginning of the formation of overman⁷⁰

Secondly, as we can read in *Entretiens*, her “questions and answers” at the Playground, the Mother sometimes talked on appropriate occasions about her personal yogic experiences and progress. The word that crops up time and again in those brief glimpses of her inner life and work is “cells” their consciousness, aspiration and transformation. Might Sri Aurobindo have expanded on the transformation of the body cells if he had had the time to complete his last series of articles? The lack of reference to the physical cells which, as we shall see, play such an important part in the transformation process, is certainly an argument in favour of the supposition that the series of articles remained unfinished.

Sri Aurobindo has, however, written in *The Life Divine* the following words

“When the powers of any grade descend completely into us, it is not only our thought and knowledge that are affected,—the substance and very grain of our being and consciousness, all its states and activities are touched and penetrated and can be remoulded and wholly transmuted. Each stage of this ascent is therefore a general, if not a total, conversion of the being into a new light and power of a greater existence.”⁷¹ Any yogic *siddhi* has repercussions in the *adhara* of the Yogi, but such effects remain limited to the person having the *siddhi*. The *siddhis* the most recent Avatars worked out for humankind—Rama, Krishna, the Buddha, Christ—were to become permanent psychological properties, qualities or possibilities within the human species. As Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had come to initiate a new species, the consequences of their *siddhis* had to be not only psychological but also physical, material, and this was the reason for their unprecedented difficulty.

Sri Aurobindo had seen that an intermediary species, called by him “the new humanity” and by the Mother “overman” (*le surhomme*), would be necessary to make the appearance of “superman”, the supramental being, possible on earth, as the gap between Mind and Supermind was too huge for a direct transformation. A new species necessitates a newly evolved, higher physical embodiment, “a greater existence”. Sri Aurobindo had started realising such an embodiment in the cells of his body, pulling down the supramental Force into them. When the general cosmic circumstances proved to be such that the supramental transformation leading to the superman was possible only by descending consciously into death, Sri Aurobindo transferred the force he had acquired to the Mother with the instruction to continue the work. This she did at once. Now she was not only guiding the Ashram, she was in charge of the full avataric Yoga too.

On 5th of December, the Mother suspended all activities in the Ashram for twelve days. The first *entretien* we have is dated 21 December 1950 exactly twelve days after Sri Aurobindo’s body was put in the Samadhi. There she sat, fully present again, but now alone in this physical universe, with on her shoulders the task of making the impossible possible. The talks she gave at the Playground were actually French classes for the students of the Ashram School; interested adult Ashramites were allowed to participate too. From the very beginning she talked about all possible topics under the sun. Those talks as a whole form an impressive teaching in their own right. It is true of course that what she said expressed essentially the same vision to which Sri Aurobindo had given shape in his prose writings and in his poetry, and she commented in many “classes” on texts by Sri Aurobindo, but the *Entretiens* bear a distinctly personal stamp, rooted deep in her own experiences. The audience could ask any question that popped into their head—and that sometimes she made pop into their head.

As early as 4 January 1951, she talked about “the work of physical transformation, that is the most difficult of all things”⁷² On 26 February, less than two months later, she spoke about the “gnostic”, i.e., the supramental consciousness, and concluded her talk with the words “I am telling you that this evening because what has

been done, what has been realised by one can be realised by the others. It is enough that one body has been able to realise that, one human body, to have the assurance that it *can* be done. You should consider it still very far into the future, but you may say ‘Yes, the gnostic life is certain, for it has begun to realise itself.’⁷³ That “one body” which had been “able to realise that, one human body”, was of course her own.

Some six weeks later, on 19 April, the Mother told her Playground audience that what had been until then a “psychological” Yoga, had now become a “material” Yoga, a Yoga of Matter, of the cells of the body. It is in the cells that we are Matter, they are its presence in us and our direct access to it. Now the consciousness in the cells themselves began to aspire and surrender to the Divine, trying to establish the complete equanimity, which is the precondition of the Integral Yoga, and became aware of the inherent unity of all things. “Now it [the offering of everything to the Divine] has become the very movement of the cellular consciousness. All weaknesses, all responses to adverse suggestions—by this I mean the little things that happen every moment in the cells—are taken up in the same movement of offering. And that comes sometimes in waves, so much so that the body has the impression that it will lose consciousness because of the assault. But then comes a light so warm, so profound, so sweet, so powerful, that puts everything back in order, in its place, and opens the way to the transformation. Such moments are very difficult moments in the life of the body. One feels that there is now only one thing that takes the decisions—the Supreme Will. There is no longer any other support—no support, neither the support that habit gives, nor the support of the knowledge, nor the support of the will: all the supports have vanished. There is only the Supreme. Aspiration in the cellular consciousness for perfect sincerity of consecration.”⁷⁴

In March 1953, the Mother said: “I tell you only if you are sincere in all the elements of your being, up to the very cells of your body, and only if your whole being integrally wants the Divine, are you sure of the victory, but on no less a condition.”⁷⁵ The invisible work of the transformation of the cells was continuing. She could not speak much about it because many of the students in the Playground were very young and would not understand, but also because it was a principle with her never to limit or distort an ongoing experience by formulating it in words and thus fixing it.

By the year 1954, however, the transformation of the cells, at this stage part of the creation of overman, reached something like a climax. 24 February: “[The meticulous occupation with the body] is an enormous work. Yet, it is what must be done if one hopes to transform one’s body. It must in the first place be completely harmonical with the inner consciousness. And that requires working in each cell, one might say, in each petty activity, in every activity of the organs.”⁷⁶

21 April 1954. “It will take a number of years before we can speak knowledgeably about how this is going to happen [the transformation of the body], all that I can tell you is that it has begun. If you read attentively the next issue of the

Bulletin . you will see that it has begun.”” In the issue referred to, the Mother published *Some Experiences of the Body Consciousness* and *New Experiences of the Body Consciousness*. Without the titles these experiences would read just like other “psychological” yogic experiences. The difference, nevertheless, is enormous. This was a Yoga in which it was no longer the consciousness located in and above the Mind that was instrumental but the consciousness in the cells, the existence of which few people are aware of. Yet if Matter was to be transformed, divinised, it was this consciousness of the cells that had to be transformed and divinised.

Now that today, thanks to the discoveries of science, we are in some way aware of the complexity of a cell (and of an atom, etc.), it seems hardly amazing that some form of consciousness, very different from ours, is at work there. For the simple question is how otherwise it all would keep together and work in such a complex way. In our daily life, the physical consciousness of the cells makes itself felt only in the form of a vague bodily heaviness and sometimes by a mechanical repetition of suggestions, physical impressions or elementary remembrances. But if Matter is to become divine, then it is exactly this lowest form of physical consciousness, directly in contact with Matter and supporting it, that has to become divinised. This more than anything else may give an idea of the enormous gap to be bridged and of the necessity of there being a step in between the human and the supramental being—which is what the Mother was working on.

In the *Experiences of the Body Consciousness*⁷⁸ we read

“When we speak of transformation, the word still has for us a vague meaning. It gives us the impression that something is going to happen and all will be well as a consequence. The notion reduces itself almost to this: if we have difficulties, the difficulties will disappear, those who are ill will be cured of their illness, if the body is infirm and incapable, the infirmities and incapacities will be removed; and so on. But as I have said, it is all very vague, it is only an impression. Now a remarkable thing about the body consciousness is that it is unable to know a thing with precision and in full detail except when it is on the point of accomplishing it. So, when the process of transformation becomes clear, when one is able to know through what sequence of movements and changes the total transformation will take place—in what order, in what way, so to speak: which things will come first, which things will follow—when everything will be known in full detail, that will be a sure indication that the hour of realisation is near. Because each time you perceive a detail with exactness, it means that you are ready to accomplish it.

“For the moment, one can have a vision of the whole. For example, it is entirely certain that under the influence of the supramental light, the transformation of the body consciousness will take place first, then will follow a progress in the mastery and control of all the movements and functions of all the organs of the body, afterwards this mastery will change little by little into a sort of radical modification of the movement and then of the constitution of the organs themselves. All that is certain, although the perception of it is not precise enough. But what will finally take

place—when the various organs have been replaced by centres of concentration of different forces, qualities and natures, each of which will act according to its own special mode—all this is still merely a conception and the body does not comprehend it very well, because it is still far from realisation and the body can truly comprehend only that which it is on the point of being able to do’’⁷⁹ Fully involved in the process of transformation, the Mother sketched here the programme for her future work in the body.

19 May 1954 “It is as though the cells themselves burst into an aspiration, into a call’’⁸⁰

3 November 1954 “each part of the being has its own aspiration, which takes on the nature of the aspiring part. There is even a physical aspiration. The cells of the body understand what the transformation will be, and, with all their strength, with all the consciousness they contain, they aspire for this transformation. The very cells of the body—not the central will, thought or emotion—the cells of the body open in this way to receive the [supramental] Force’’⁸¹

Within four years the Mother, supported from behind the veil by the work of Sri Aurobindo in the invisible realms, had undertaken an enormous amount of work, without anybody knowing. She had given a hint from time to time, but who had noticed? Then, towards the end of 1954, the situation seemed to have grown critical. On 31 December her traditional message for the new year was distributed. “No human will can finally prevail against the Divine’s Will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain.’’⁸² “This message,” she commented, “was written because it is foreseen [by herself] that next year will be a difficult year and there will be many inner struggles and perhaps even outer ones’’⁸³ So I tell all of you what attitude you should take in these circumstances. These difficulties may last not only twelve months—one full year, that is—but fourteen months. And during these fourteen months you must make an effort never to lose the attitude about which I am going to speak to you now’’⁸⁴—which was an attitude of utter equanimity, whatever the inner and outer circumstances, and total surrender. This was an astonishing prediction, as we shall see presently.

The difficulties the Mother spoke about were caused by the hostile forces who intended to hamper and if possible to block the work of the Yoga. Of the battles she has fought at that time we know nothing, but as the situation seemed to have become critical because the Yoga was about to reach its main objective, they must have been fierce. Something decisive seemed to be imminent. “One has the impression, really, that it has lasted long enough [the ordinary human condition], that one is fed up with it, that it *has to change*”, she said in October 1955. “Well, when one has that kind of impression, one takes all—all one is, all one can, all one has—and one jumps into the fray without ever looking back, come what may’’ —“Mother”, asked a child, “you just said that it is very near’’ —“What, very near? The event? Yes, otherwise we would not talk about it’’⁸⁵

The “event” happened exactly as foreseen fourteen months after the day it was announced. On 29 February 1956 the Supermind descended into the earth-consciousness, a “first” in the evolution of the planet. The event Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been looking forward to and working for from the beginning, the event that was rendered possible by Sri Aurobindo’s descent into death and the Mother’s working out of the overman consciousness, took place on that day—and the world will never be the same again but become a much better place.

A long dim preparation is man’s life,
A circle of toil and hope and war and peace
An endless spiral of ascent and fall
Until at last is reached the giant point
Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made
And we break into the infinity of God⁸⁶

The fact that this descent of the supramental Force into the earth-consciousness was essential, that it was the peak realisation, “the giant point” Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been working towards, is proven by a text of hers, a direct address to the Divine, noted down in her handwriting: “My Lord, what Thou has wanted me to do I have done. The gates of the Supramental have been thrown open and the Supramental Consciousness, Light and Force are flooding the earth.”

“But as yet those who are around me are little aware of it—no radical change has taken place in their consciousness and it is only because they trust my word that they do not say that nothing has truly happened. In addition the exterior circumstances are still harder than they were and the difficulties seem to be cropping up more insurmountable than ever.”

“Now that the supramental is there—for of that I am *absolutely certain* even if I am the only one upon earth to be aware of it—is it that the mission of this form [her body or adhara] is ended and that another form is to take up the work in its place? I am putting the question to Thee and ask for an answer—a sign by which I shall know for certain that it is still my work and I must continue in spite of all the contradictions, of all the denials.”

“Whatever is the sign I do not care, but it must be *obvious*”⁸⁷ And obvious it must have been, for she stayed on.

(To be continued)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

Notes and References

70 Sri Aurobindo kept his vital and mental supramentalised body-sheaths, consciously descending with them into death and now existing in them in his supraphysical "dwelling" referred to several times by the Mother in the *Agenda*

71 Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p 938

72 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1950-51*, p 19

73 *Ibid*, p 159 All French texts of the Mother have been checked against the original and corrected where necessary

74 *Ibid*, p 339

75 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1953*, p 7

76 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954*, p 36

77 *Ibid*, p 111

78 The body consists of organs and other parts, the organs and other parts consist of cells the body consists of cells The body, the organs and the cells, all have a consciousness of their own, but their interconnectedness sometimes causes confusion about the definition of the various forms of consciousness In this case, the Mother clearly writes about the consciousness of the cells

79 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol 15, pp 300-301

80 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954*, p 140

81 *Ibid*, pp 391-92

82 *Ibid*, p 454

83 The Cold War was then at its peak

84 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954*, p 453

85 The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1955*, p 374 (French)

86 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p 24

87 *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol 13, pp 57-58

THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of July 2001)

Seventh Element: Mind the Only Sense:

That mind is the real determinant in one's sense perception and not the sense organ nor the complex processes going on there was demonstrated by Dr. Leslie Weatherhead before a team of distinguished physicians and surgeons in the course of his experiments on a hypnotised subject Ethel already referred to on p 5 of this essay. Dr. Weatherhead reports.

“Ethel's senses could all be controlled. If, when she was hypnotised, I told her she would hear nothing, she could not detect a loud noise even close to her ears. If I told her sugar was bitter, she would spit it out, and she could smell several perfumes successively on being told that her handkerchief was drenched with them ” (*Op. cit* , p. 124)

All this was, of course, imposed on the subject from outside by the hypnotist's suggestion and the sceptic may well aver that these sensory experiences of Ethel were merely her subjective constructions and did not in any way correspond to anything objectively real. But we would like to assert on other well-validated grounds that our mind has the inherent capacity of sensing *directly* something concretely physical existing in the physical space, without the employment of any physical organ or of any physiological process To quote Sri Aurobindo.

“Mind is... able to assert its true character as the one and all-sufficient sense and free to apply to the objects of sense its pure and sovereign instead of its mixed and dependent action [as at present].” (*The Life Divine*, p. 63)

Sri Aurobindo has discussed this surprising point in great detail at four different places. in *The Life Divine*, in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in his commentary on the *Kena Upanishad*, and, of course, in his *Letters on Yoga* We quote here only one representative passage from his writings

“ . we have to realise first that the mind is the only real sense even in the physical process its dependence on the physical impressions is the result of the conditions of the material evolution, but not a thing fundamental and indispensable Mind is capable of a sight that is independent of the physical eye, a hearing that is independent of the physical ear, and so with the action of all the other senses ” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 833)

We repeat. our mind's dependence for its sense perception on the elaborate system of physical sense organs considered as its "too imperative and exclusive conveyors" is only habitual and a transitional evolutionary device. In reality, mind is not only the "sixth sense" as it is often called but the only true sense and the other sense organs are no more than its outer conveniences.

Now this direct use of the mind as the only real sense is not a freak or an aberration as in the case of some exceptional "mystics" it can be made constant and normal by proper psycho-spiritual training. To quote Sri Aurobindo again:

"Those who have carried the study and experimentation of them to a certain extent, have found that we can sense things known only to the minds of others, things that exist only at a great distance, things that belong to another plane than the terrestrial but have here their effects, we can both sense them in their images and also feel, as it were, all that they are without any definite image proper to the five senses" (SABCL, Vol. 12, pp. 194-95)

Eighth Element: Consciousness the Ultimate Determinant:

Our sustained pursuit of the discovery of the fundamental source of sense perception cannot rest with the action of the sense-mind, the Manas of the ancient Indian spiritual psychology. It has to proceed still further. For, as Sri Aurobindo has so trenchantly put it:

"we have to realise—and this is more difficult to admit for our normal ideas in the matter—that the mind itself is only the characteristic *instrument* of sense, but the thing itself, sense in its purity, *samyñāna*, exists behind and beyond the mind it uses, and is a movement of the self, a direct and original activity of the infinite power of consciousness. The pure action of sense is a spiritual action and pure sense is itself a power of the spirit" (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 833) (italics author's)

Making the point more explicit Sri Aurobindo says elsewhere:

"This essential sense [*samyñāna*] is the original capacity of consciousness to feel in itself all that consciousness has formed and to feel it in all the essential properties and operations of that which has form, whether represented materially by vibration of sound or images of light or any other physical symbol" (SABCL, Vol. 12, p. 195)

So we see that the deepest and highest consciousness of our inner subliminal being is the primary source of vision and sight. The subtle sense action through the psychical bodies are channels for this direct vision rather than its informants. But while speaking about consciousness we have to mention an important fact: it is that this consciousness itself in its actual functioning in a particular individual is very

complex in its character. For just as in the case of physical light there are many different "colours", visible or invisible, in the visible spectrum or beyond, so in the case of consciousness there are many levels and ranges accessible to man, extending from the "blind" Inconscient up to the heights of the supreme Superconscient. And what is very pertinent to note is the inestimable privilege of any human being to have in his possession the latent capacity of developing, of being aware of, and finally of actively functioning in any of the levels of this immensely extended field of consciousness.

Thus one need not remain "limited by his outward surface or waking consciousness." Everyone has "a latent capacity [which can be perfected by training and practice] for entering into the experiences of the inner consciousness" (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 932)

The upshot of all this discussion on consciousness is that a particular "seer" focusing his attention on a given object with the employment of a particular level of consciousness different from that of the normal physical mind will have a different kind of sight of the object in view. This vision of the "seer" is bound to vary widely and naturally with the change in the quality and grade of the "seeing" consciousness. Thus there may possibly be a gross physical seeing, a subtle physical seeing, an ordinary vital seeing, an inner subliminal vital seeing, a common mental seeing, an inner mental seeing, a psychic seeing, a spiritual mental seeing with many variations in it, an overmental seeing and so on and so forth. And when we pass on to the Higher Hemisphere of Supermind and the trinity of Sachchidananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), we first develop the exceptional capacity of possessing and exercising a supramental sight, then the sight of the dynamically active Cosmic Divine, and, who knows, finally even the sight of the Supreme.

At this point let us end our short survey of the eight elements involved in any act of "seeing". Now, if we permute and combine all the different possibilities operating in each of these eight factors of vision, and for all the factors in the same way, we can easily imagine that there are bound to be visions and visions of all kinds and of every hue, varying in the degree of their triviality or profundity, also in their respective value and importance. Indeed, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, there are inexhaustible ranges of sensory experience other than those of the outward physical which alone we are normally conscious of. (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 937)

Section V: Supraphysical Subtle Visions

The first question we have to answer is: What is, after all, a "vision"? Here are two passages from the Mother's writings which make the point absolutely unambiguous:

(1) "A vision is a perception, by the visual organs, of phenomena that really exist in a world corresponding to the organ which sees. For example, to the individual

vital plane there corresponds a cosmic vital world. When a human being is sufficiently developed he possesses an individualised vital being with organs of sight, hearing, smell, etc. So a person who has a well-developed vital being can see in the vital world with his vital sight, consciously and with the memory of what he has seen. This is what makes a vision” (CWM, Vol 10, p 41)

(2) “VISION is another plane of perception which awakes. It is the senses in the mind or vital or physical which wake up and manage to pass their experiences to the outer consciousness. It is as though one had another pair of eyes behind these, eyes which could see [other planes of consciousness] instead of seeing in the physical” (CWM, Vol 7, p. 129)

The second question requiring an answer is: Are visions a freak, an abnormality? The answer is: No, the faculty of subtle sight is always there. Only, as one is concentrated in the most material life, one does not notice it.

For the normal functioning of this supraphysical occult sight, the conditions that have to be fulfilled are: (i) the quietening and the purification of the surface mind and vital, (ii) the opening up of the wall separating the outer mind and the inner consciousness, and, preferably, (iii) the capacity to enter freely within and dwell there at will. In this connection we may read with profit the following letter of Sri Aurobindo addressed to one of his disciples who wanted to know the truth about the matter:

“ . this power or gift of [supraphysical sight] . is a universal faculty present in all human beings, but latent in most, in some rarely or intermittently active, occurring as if by accident in others, frequent and normally active in a few . almost anyone, if he wants, can with a little concentration and training develop the faculty of supraphysical vision . It comes more easily with the eyes shut than with the eyes open, but it does come in both ways.” (Letters on Yoga, p 937)

The third question that may haunt our mind sometimes is: What value is there in developing this faculty of subtle sight? The answer is: All visions have a significance of one kind or another. When rightly interpreted they can be of great help in the development of Sadhana. Also, by the opening of the inner vision, one becomes aware of the subtle planes of experience and of the worlds of existence other than the material, which are all the time exercising their occult influences to shape and govern our outer life and consciousness. The following quotation from Sri Aurobindo pithily sums up the matter:

“This power of vision . should not be rejected although it is not the most important thing—for the most important thing is the change of the consciousness” (Letters on Yoga, p 931)

The fourth question that may intrigue some persons is Is there any negative side to the free indulgence of the faculty of subtle vision? The answer is Yes, all that comes in visions may not be true; some visions may be due to the mental or vital formations of the subject, some others may be introduced by some hostile occult forces and beings. Some visions may be nothing more than alluring falsehoods. Some others may come only with the purpose of sidetracking the spiritual aspirant from the main path of sadhana. So, in order to avoid all these dangers and pitfalls the sadhaka should develop in himself inner purity and sincerity, a clear mind, a power of luminous discrimination and above all an attitude of "benevolent indifference" In Sri Aurobindo's pointed recommendation.

" one must see and observe without attachment, keeping always the main object in front, realisation of the inner Self and the Divine" (*Letters on Yoga*, p 1027)

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of July 2001)

Indian Research and Development

At this point of survey of different activities in the field of science and technology it may be appropriate to have a quick look at their status in India. We may take three examples just to get some broad idea which may be helpful to see the possible trends. These are taken from varying perspectives, as if also reflecting the corresponding cultures in which they flourish. To see the Indianness in these occupations may be somewhat too early, it may be too hasty to comment upon their functional role in the overall scheme of working. To witness national character in this science and technology endeavour could be prematurely hazardous, but it will give us an idea about the state-of-the-art in the country. The examples we select are the trend-setting achievements in the fields of atomic energy and research in particle physics, the technology improvement and steering the industrial projects for modernised functioning under the vision of governmental expertise may be another illustration. Let us first take atomic energy in India. Homi Jehangir Bhabha was undoubtedly the initiator and prime architect of the Indian Atomic Energy Programme. He gave to science in the country a modern dimension in the context of the age-old tradition that was basically university-bound and academic, without relevance to technology and application, or even to society. And then whatever educational system was current at that time that itself was a poor if not a crude lifeless replica of the British methodology of doing things. There was a kind of mediaevalism prevalent all around. The thought was always slavish without the life-breath of the Indian spirit. But with the dawn of independence arrived the day in which would awaken a slumbering nation to the possibilities of its varied creativity. Bhabha's was a bright-prepared soul quick to respond to the demands of this renascent surge in its multi-streaming nobility, elegance, inventiveness and proficiency. A new culture of modernity took birth in these beginnings. With a sound physics and engineering background he was ready to launch on a new mission, to give a new direction to science in India.

On 12 March 1944 Bhabha wrote to the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and submitted a proposal to start an institute to carry out fundamental research in mathematics and physical sciences. Soon, towards the end of 1945, was inaugurated the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai. After the War when atomic energy in advanced countries began to be used for peaceful purposes, Bhabha was quick to recognise its importance in national development. He had confidence that such a programme could be initiated in India though the needed industrial support was greatly lacking at that time. He said "When nuclear energy has been successfully applied for power production in, say a couple of decades from now, India will not have to look abroad for its experts but will find them ready at hand." On 15 April 1948 the Atomic

Energy Act was passed and later, in August in the same year, the Atomic Energy Commission constituted.

Very rarely does the ideal take a tangible concrete shape. But the great dream has been fulfilled, and that too just within the span of a generation India now ranks as one of the first ten countries in the world with advanced science and technology at its command and with an equally impressive professional strength. If any outward indicators are required to recognise this accomplishment, we may proudly point at the underground atomic detonations and the launching of a geosynchronous satellite with indigenous capabilities.

Let us at this stage get some hurried glimpse of the nuclear establishment in the country. The formal beginnings of this altogether new activity can be traced as follows. The Department of Atomic Energy was set up under the direct charge of the then Prime Minister (late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru) through a Presidential Order in August 1954. He also laid a copy of the pertinent Resolution on the table of the Lok Sabha on 24 March 1958. The entire effort rapidly assumed the size of a multi-branching tree planted in Indian soil, though several ingredients to nourish its growth had come from abroad.

“The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in India is a broad based multi-disciplinary organisation engaged in basic research, applied research, technology development and translation of the latter to industrial applications. As a result, the Department today builds its own nuclear reactors and associated nuclear fuel cycle facilities, is one of the leading producers of radioisotopes for use in industry, medicine, agriculture and research, and has established itself in hi-tech areas relating to accelerators, lasers, supercomputers, advanced materials, and sophisticated instrumentation. The stringent quality needs of nuclear technology have helped in upgrading the quality levels of the Indian industry. Besides all this, a pool of quality manpower has also been developed. Today, DAE is marching ahead with the mission enshrined in its mandate.” This is what the latest annual report of the Department informs us.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Trombay, named after its founder in 1966, is a “premier versatile, technological and multi-disciplinary nuclear research centre of India having an infrastructure of advanced Research and Development facilities with expertise covering the entire spectrum of Nuclear Science and Engineering ranging from particle physics, nuclear engineering, isotope technology, nuclear agriculture, computers, and robotics to information technology.”

Some of the early landmarks of these activities are the commissioning of the first Asian research reactor on 4 August 1957, the 40 MWt research reactor CIRUS attaining criticality on 10 July 1960, the setting up of the Electronics Corporation of India Limited in April 1967 at Hyderabad for producing electronic systems, instruments and components. The peaceful underground nuclear experiment conducted on 18 May 1974 and later five tests on 11 and 13 May 1998 at Pokhran Range in the Rajasthan desert gave another degree of confidence to the country's atomic occupa-

tion We have now power reactors, manufacturing facilities, research centres in different parts of the country The nucleus that had formed in Mumbai has now acquired the nature of a vigorous activity embodying practically all the aspects of the atomic world Variable Energy Cyclotron at Kolkata and Centre for Advanced Technology at Indore may be mentioned as new offshoots of the recent BARC success A supercomputer consisting of eight Pentium-III nodes reaching a sustained speed of 2 giga flops (floating points per second) is a significant achievement of its capabilities This is particularly so when we remember that it had to be accomplished under the duress of international sanctions making all hi-tech products inaccessible to us Self-reliance is perhaps the bigger gain of these severities of life.

On the front of basic research in particle physics we may take the example of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) The experimental high-energy physics group of the Institute has since the 1960s a long rewarding association with the corresponding group at CERN During the early years it carried out research work using nuclear emulsions exposed at the accelerator. Interaction characteristics of pions, kaons and protons were studied Also were studied the production and decay characteristics of hypernuclei We should remember that a hypernucleus is different from a normal nucleus in the sense that it contains an extra lambda hyperon in the nucleus It may also be mentioned *en passant* that such a hypernucleus was first observed by Danysz and Pniewski in 1953

In the 1970s the group was engaged in various bubble chamber experiments, these were carried out in collaboration with several groups of CERN A bubble chamber functions through an expansion system which makes a charged particle leave bubbles along its path; these are then photographed by three or more cameras. The detector consists of a cryogenic liquid placed in magnetic field The experiments are aimed at studying the production characteristics of mesons and strange baryons which come from the interactions of antiprotons and kaons with protons. Some other investigations carried out included the study of strange particles and Bose-Einstein correlations When in 1989 the Large Electron Positron Collider was commissioned at CERN, the TIFR group also participated in the experimental programme. In this particular experiment some 500 physicists from 45 institutes from all over the world took part The need for such a large-scale collaboration can be appreciated from the following

“Earlier experiments in the 1960s and 70s with nuclear emulsions, bubble chambers and counter detectors were all small ones and could be handled by a few groups with about twenty physicists or less. But with the passage of time, one was studying and looking for rarer phenomena with smaller cross-sections. For example, during the 1960s one was studying production of pions and kaons in hadronic interactions and the cross-sections for these processes are in milli-barns, during the mid 1970s the interest shifted towards study of charm particles of which the production cross-sections are in micro-barns, that is one thousand times less than those of pions In 1980s one started searching and studying W and Z particles and their cross-

sections are in the range of nano-barns or less, that is one to ten thousand times less than the production cross-section of charm particles and some tens of million less than that of pions. These basically mean that experiments are becoming more difficult in the sense that one will have to reject millions to billions of normal events to look for our rare kind of events, in a popular jargon one may say that experimentalists are searching for a needle in a bundle of hay. As a result experiments have become very complex and mammothian in size, complexity has come due to high precision required in these experiments and also due to small signal over a huge background as mentioned above. These requirements have forced physicists from several laboratories and countries to work together and form international collaborations.” (Private communication from Prof. Somanath Ganguli of TIFR)

Design and implementation of the large software required for the offline and also part of the online monitoring programmes are some other significant contributions.

“The experiment has led to precision measurements of electroweak parameters of the carriers of weak force called Z and W particles. The measurements include the mass, total and partial decay widths of the W and Z particles. Coupling constants of Z to fermion pairs and the determination of the electroweak mixing angle. The number of light neutrino species is determined to be 3 with an error of 1%. The Bombay group has been responsible for carrying out this so-called ‘Z line shape’ analysis.”

The experiment connected with precision measurements of the electroweak parameters has led to the detailed understanding of the carriers of weak force, Z and W particles, it has also predicted the mass of the top quark, which was finally discovered at the Tevatron collider confirming the prediction.

Ganguli adds that the Bombay group has also taken major responsibility in the analysis using the theory that is presently available, viz. quantum chromodynamics (QCD). The strong coupling constant α_s between quark-quark-gluon has been measured with high precision. They have also made significant contributions in Higgs search in the framework of the Standard Model and in the Super-symmetric Model.

In all these experiments we notice again the coming together of several institutions to carry out research. Indian groups from Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Variable Energy Cyclotron, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics as well as Universities of Delhi and Panjab have thus joined in these complex activities.

In spite of these glowing achievements one may quite pertinently ask a question as to what exactly would these researches mean in totality of the search in physics. Apropos of the *New Physics for the New Century* T. D. Lee and N. P. Samios reflected in the *Science Spectra* issue 21 (2000) to the following effect. In the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider at Brookhaven National Laboratory (one of the oldest centres in atomic energy) interaction of quarks and gluons and their reformation into the hadrons of which we are made will be studied. Enormous scientific advances that have taken place these past 100 years have given us a new world altogether. The advent of Quantum Electrodynamics (QED) enabled precise calculations and com-

parison with experiments dealing with particles and photons. Recently QCD has been formulated to describe 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. Compression of matter in these experiments can be such that the temperature will be 10^{12} K, thus forming a quark-gluon plasma. Such a study can bring the reality of the Big Bang closer for examination. The BNL Accelerator is 3.8 km in circumference and uses superconducting magnets at 4.1 K producing 3.5 Kgauss magnetic fields. Four experimental detectors, 900 scientists from 19 countries and 90 institutions, 0.6 teraflop parallel processor computer constitute the paraphernalia to do this new physics.

This is all mind-boggling and one begins to wonder if we are not creating another myth of matter. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger asked the basic question "What is it to be?" Man the being, as Being, that is the question. The answer will determine man's destiny. Earlier he expanded the relevance of human existence. But this is a deeper issue with which he was much occupied.

Do we have such a perspective in our search, or is it simply a pragmatism governed by things as they are? It may be argued that we should accept life as it is and leave vague philosophical queries to others as they are of no consequence to the scientific pursuit. Comtean positivism proved fruitful and it is better to reap that positivism to get whatever we can in the process. After all, science has come to this glorious position adopting such a businesslike or hard-nosed policy and that is its true merit. Yet one cannot be drifted or driven by the utilitarian approach which smacks of gross commercialisation of talent. While in the majority of cases this utilitarianism is all right, there has to be somewhere in the corner of our life an urge to see beyond.

It is necessary to resolve, firstly, "the aspect of facticity of the existence of the world, secondly, the fact of making the existence a personal reality, which is finally lost in the sea of humanity." Can a similar question be posed as to what it is that actually constitutes the materiality of matter? The very word "substance" means, according to Chambers, that "which constitutes anything what it is", etymologically the support underneath the physical world. What is substance? Can such a substance be defined for science? But even if it can be defined the problem will remain unanswered if that substance cannot be carried to the laboratory. The tangibility of a scientific instrument for any investigation is absolutely necessary if physics is not to peter out into ungainful metaphysics.

But before we come to these imponderables—and perhaps these imponderables are to the mettlesome mind irrelevant—let us get some idea about another scientific activity in India. If atomic energy, space and fundamental research in particle physics have one type of culture, we encounter another type in the technocratic approach originating from New Delhi. In it the government tends to be the repository of all wisdom and it is in that wisdom it applies itself to play the role of a Good Samaritan.

We are referring to the pragmatic Vision 2020 projected for a certain kind of science and technology that should be organised in the context of industrial deve-

lopment in the country First we may briefly refer to the Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958 which discerned their role as follows "The key to national prosperity, apart from the spirit of the people, lies, in the modern age, in the effective combination of three factors, technology, raw materials and capital, of which the first is perhaps the most important, since the creation and adoption of new scientific techniques can, in fact, make up for a deficiency in natural resources, and reduce the demands on capital" This also meant that the gains of science and technology should be finally converted into meaningful economic and social parameters. The approach followed is through a planned process coupled with governmental regulations on imports, exports, and licensing of industries However, such a centralised planning system for over four decades created large gaps between innovations, industry and users This further added to the lag in technology development vis à vis the pace at which it was moving in the world.

In his paper entitled "Technology Road Mapping and Indian Experiences in Stimulating Actions" Y.S. Rajan writes as follows "Even during the close of the nineteenth century, India had a major share of the global trade, though it was declining over the earlier periods However, it has sharply declined during the twentieth century At the time of its independence India's share in global trade was about 2.05 percent (1950-51) It declined to a low of about 0.4 percent and now stands at about 0.8 percent While detailed studies on the causative factors do not exist, one major reason is identified to be the autarchic economic structure, generally now referred to in India as the 'license-permit-quota-raj' Even other indicators such as national wealth, per capita income and productivity at best indicate mediocre performance The centralised planning of the economy had its advantages in the early years after independence to build up an industrial infrastructure, a modern support system for agriculture such as dams and fertilisers, as well as to establish several other socially important mechanisms for a modern society such as public health system and education However, the centralised economic planning was too much oriented towards the internal balancing of resources of the economy External aid and foreign trade were almost considered as 'avoidable evils' of the growing phase"

In order to correct the dampening consequences of the Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958, the technology policy statement of 1983 relooked into the problem and identified technology as an altogether separate entity An institution called Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) was established in 1988 The purpose is to generate technology forecasts and stimulate actions

The TIFAC produced about 200 reports covering most of the economic sectors ranging from agriculture to environment to materials. "They provide road maps and project possible business opportunities in the short, medium and long term terms Another major countrywide technology foresight exercise involving 5000 experts was carried out during 1994-96 resulting in 25 documents called Technology Vision for India up to 2020 These cover areas of where India has comparative advantages and where core strengths can be profitably tapped"

Rajan further comments. "It is found that it takes about 5 to 7 years from the beginning of the forecasting or road mapping exercise, to start the first few steps of actions to realise the vision or the road maps. Whenever there are a large number of uses in different application sectors and when a major investment by a single agency is not involved, successes appear to be coming much faster after this gestation period of 5 to 7 years. It is also found that during the past four years industries, small, medium and large, have begun to take a greater role in proposing and executing innovative technology development projects."

To illustrate the utility of the approach the author takes the example of the sugar industry which is one of the oldest industries in the country. From a few sugar mills in 1903 a large number came up during the 30s. A technical committee in 1957 prepared specifications for a 1000 Tonnes Crushed per Day (TCD) capacity sugar factory capable for expansion to 1500 TCD. These were reviewed in 1959. With increase in cost of raw material, consumables and overheads, economy of scales demanded yet higher capacities. 2500 TCD as the economic size was recommended in 1987 and accordingly the technical committee prepared specifications with provisions for 3500 TCD.

"Within 5 years the following have already been achieved: four new technologies declared successful; more than 14 replications of the successful technologies, 10 new technologies under trial, technology upgradation scheme for 17 sugar factories, 8 sugar mills have taken up technology upgradation schemes."

TIFAC also initiated in 1992 the Home Grown Technology (HGT) programme. It provides partial financial support and guidance for technology projects proposed by industry. In this scheme about "10 projects have been completed and 50 projects are presently active under the HGT Programme. In the last one year a few projects reached commercial stage and have started to return the money to TIFAC like rapid diagnostic kits for poultry and veterinary diseases, synthetic substitute for kerosene in pigment printing and Eco-friendly melting furnace, to name a few."

Rajan assesses the success of the programme as follows: "Whenever there are a large number of smaller stakeholders, the process of realisation of road map, though appearing diffused at the beginning, tends to become successful after the interaction period of 5 to 7 years. Where there are a large number of beneficiaries in the private sectors, as in the sugar technology mission, there seems to be a success in a mission mode approach with part government funding and with dedicated teams working for the sector as a whole. Such a mission mode approach appears to be successful for advanced composites area as well though the end users are from different sectors. However even when the stakeholders (or rather beneficiaries) are large, where the key technological strengths are limited to major government laboratories or a government company, progress is uncertain as in the case of titanium and permanent high energy magnets. Experience of the Home Grown Technology Programme viewed along with the experience of surface engineering activities, advanced composites, sugar technology as well as other programmes like Technology Development Board, indicates that

there is a decided shift: the private sector industries (small, medium and large) are now coming forward to propose and execute projects envisaged in the road mapping exercises conducted so far. How much of this shift is due to the road mapping exercises or the followup actions, or the competitive pressures of the liberalizing economy or other causes, is difficult to decipher as changes have been taking place relatively rapidly during the past four years. Whether this trend will reduce the 5 to 7 years gestation period from the time of initiation of road mapping exercise to begin to take the first steps of actions, is also to be seen. It may be worth while watching the response of many stakeholders to the mega road mapping exercise done by TIFAC called Technology Vision for the India 2020 ''

Can we have a look at these programmes in the world context? But before we come to that aspect let us have some idea about the pioneering spirits that moulded our present-day science. We may have a hurried biographical peep into the contributions of some of these forerunners, for instance Meghanad Saha and Homi Bhabha

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

HE TRUDGES ON...

TEARING into the darkness of the night long forgotten
Or bowing to the dawn bathed in the first rays
of the sun he had set out on the journey
He moves on
From time immemorial he is on the way endless
untiring unavoidable journeying towards but one goal
The path has gone across the barren desert that has
initiated him in endurance and detachment,
Through the dense majestic forest as well that has
conferred on him upwardness and kindled aspiration
At times he moves like a river singing to the notes
of the star within.
At another like a cascade in its selflost maidenlike wantonness
He moves on following the succession of the seasons
to be showered with riches and encomiums
by Spring,
Or despoiled at the robber-hands of Winter
Yet He moves on
Leaving behind innumerable cycles of birth
as if through infinity.
Was there ever any goal anywhere?
—Not a shadow of doubt
For it is He in him who has marched all along
The two are one and inseparable
unerring

ROBI GUPTA

REMEMBERING MRINALINI DEVI

(Continued from the issue of July 2001)

The Calcutta Period

IN March 1906 Sri Aurobindo came away to Calcutta as the principal of the National College on a salary of Rs 150, leaving his Baroda job with handsome pay of Rs 600 per month. He rented a house and, though Mrinalini was living with him, he was so preoccupied with various activities that he could hardly spare much time to give her company. He was in charge of writing for the *Bande Mataram* and he was also in charge of the work of the Congress party, whose politics was in a turmoil after the schism between the Extremists and the Moderates. He was also busy with his administrative duties as the principal of the National College where he also taught English, French and History. These were years of great unrest, the resistance to the partition of Bengal had reached a boiling point and, with leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, he was also touring the districts of Bengal.

Besides, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual life had now reached a stage when he was getting powerful experiences. After the Surat Congress Sri Aurobindo went to Baroda where he met Lele. Almost immediately he was able to silence the mind. It is here that he had the experience of "concrete consciousness of stillness and silence," and there rose "the awareness of some sole and supreme Reality." He lived in the experience of "no ego, no real world" for days and for months "before it began to admit other things into itself" and he had a series of further realisations. This was the great realisation of the passive Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo was absorbed in spiritual practice as well as in political work at this time and so, in spite of the genuine affection he had for Mrinalini, he had little opportunity to enjoy a conventional marriage. There is a humorous episode Nirodbaran refers to which belongs to this period and which was originally narrated by Charu Dutt, a close friend of Sri Aurobindo. In 1907 Sri Aurobindo was arrested for sedition and then released. Soon after this Bhupal Bose, Mrinalini's father, came down to Calcutta from Shillong with Mrinalini and rented a house. One evening he came to invite Sri Aurobindo to have dinner at his place, meet Mrinalini and spend the night at their house and return next morning. He left this message with his friends since Sri Aurobindo would not return from college until 5 o'clock. Sri Aurobindo's friends were all excited at the prospect of Sri Aurobindo meeting his wife after such a long time. They conveyed to him the invitation extended to him by Mrinalini's father. They had sorted out for him new clothes to wear for that occasion and sent him away for the night with two garlands, one for him and the other for Mrinalini. The friends exhorted him not to return until the following morning and, to ensure this, they asked the servant to lock the gate of the house. But next morning when the friends woke up they discovered that Sri Aurobindo had returned home that night itself. When they

showered him with questions, he answered quietly that he had a sumptuous dinner at Mrinalini's house and had done exactly their bidding. But when asked why he had come away that night itself, he replied "I have explained to her everything. With her permission, I have come away."

During this period once Sri Aurobindo came down with a virulent attack of malaria after a political tour in the mofussils. During this illness he stayed with Bhupal Bose in Calcutta and Mrinalini, with tender care and great solicitude, nursed him back to health. Whether it was his meal or his tea, Mrinalini saw to it he had them at the appointed time and exactly as he wanted them. And nursing the sick was Mrinalini's forte, as one of her cousins has noted:

In a letter he wrote to Mrinalini on 17 February 1908, he poured out his heart to her. This again is a letter originally written in Bengali: "The state of my mind has undergone a change. But of that I shall not speak in this letter. Come here, and I shall tell you what is to be told. But there is only one thing that must be said now, and that is from now on I no longer am the master of my own will. Like a puppet I must do whatever he makes me do. It will be difficult for you to grasp the meaning of these words just now. But it is necessary to inform you, otherwise my movements may cause you regret and sorrow. You may think that in my work I am neglecting you, but do not do so. Already, I have done you many wrongs and it is but natural that this should have displeased you. But I am no longer free. From now on you will have to understand that all I do depends not on my will but is done at the command [*adesha*] of God. When you come here, you will understand the meaning of my words. I hope that God will show you the Light he has shown me in his infinite Grace. But that depends upon His Will. If you wish to share my life and ideal you must strive to your utmost so that on the strength of your ardent desire, He may in his Grace reveal the path to you also."¹³ Here he is obviously referring to his state after the experience of the *Nirvanic* state which he had had in Baroda and which stayed with him for several months until it was followed by other equally powerful experiences. After such profound spiritual experiences, Sri Aurobindo was now almost a changed person, he had become a *Yogi*, and yet this did not affect his feelings for Mrinalini. He is keen on explaining to Mrinalini what profound changes he had undergone and what implications they were going to have for their relationship. It is most touching to read the lines in which he says he hopes that "God will show you the Light he has shown me in his infinite Grace." No matter where he is, his one ardent wish is that Mrinalini be a part of his life.

Mrinalini was present with her husband at the time of his arrest in May 1908. The crude behaviour of the police and the savage treatment they gave Sri Aurobindo on that occasion gave her such a frightful mental shock that she never recovered from it fully until the end of her life. When the police took Sri Aurobindo away, she felt a great darkness had descended upon her life and she lost consciousness. One day while talking to a cousin of hers about this experience, she said "I couldn't even call God. How could I? I had no other God except my husband. I have seen God's mani-

festation in him alone. When he spoke I felt as if a distant bodiless sound was coming out of his mouth. When he looked at me, I felt two dreamy eyes were pouring their effulgent rays on my body. When such an unearthly person was snatched away from my world, I felt that death was my resort without him.”

During Sri Aurobindo’s trial at Alipore which lasted a whole year Mrinalini lived with her parents in Shillong or with Girish Babu in Calcutta. She paid several visits to her husband at Alipore Central Jail in the company of her father. Her father has testified that during this period she never evinced any agitation but was composed and firm throughout.

When Sri Aurobindo was released, Mrinalini came down from Shillong and went to live with Sri Aurobindo at his aunt’s place. At this time Sri Aurobindo started the journals *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*. He and Mrinalini spent short periods together at Deoghar with his maternal uncle’s family. On the day Sri Aurobindo left for Chandernagore, Mrinalini was living elsewhere in Calcutta. She knew nothing about his whereabouts until after he had reached Pondicherry and the news became public. Then Mrinalini was taken back to Shillong.

The Pondicherry Period

Then began for Mrinalini the hardest phase of her tapasya as Sri Aurobindo’s wife. They were never to meet again after he disappeared from Calcutta. “During the first 3 or 4 years of his exile, Sri Aurobindo lulled her with the hope that some day (which we thought would not be distant) he would return to Bengal. His letters to his wife as well as to the writer were few and far between, but they gave ample grounds for such hope. To the last day of her life Mrinalini never ceased to hope.” So wrote Bhupal Chandra Bose, Mrinalini’s father in a statement dated 26 August 1931.¹⁴ Bhupal Babu was right. Even in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo was intensely preoccupied with his Yoga, and before the year was out, he had another major experience, that of the Immanent Divine and the cosmic experience, of *vasudevah sarvam iti*—Vasudeva is all. When he first came to Pondicherry, there were lots of uncertainties about his future, the living conditions were woefully inadequate for Sri Aurobindo even to entertain the idea of calling Mrinalini to join him. The police in British India had kept a close watch on Sri Aurobindo and all kinds of plans were being made by them to take him back into their control. This then was not the time for Mrinalini to join him. He himself for quite some time kept hoping that once the work for which he had come to Pondicherry would be finished he might be able to get back to Calcutta.

Nirodbaran has written with great insight how this external separation made Mrinalini’s inner bond with Sri Aurobindo more intense. At this time, during which she must have gone through a fire ordeal of spiritual change, she finally became what Sri Aurobindo wanted her to become. She embraced the ideal of a spiritual life wholeheartedly and started her Godward pilgrimage. But her God was Sri Aurobindo. She would spend hours in puja and meditation, morning and evening. She would

attend to the usual chores and spend the rest of her day in the study of religious books, mostly of Vivekananda and of Sri Ramakrishna. She normally excluded meat, fish and sweets from her diet during this period, dressed most simply and looked like a Yogini. Letters from Sri Aurobindo arrived at long intervals. This was the time when he was deeply plunged in his Yoga. He had asked Mrinalini to follow the same path. She began her spiritual practice according to the directions given to her by Sri Aurobindo. Since Sri Aurobindo would have been arrested if he had returned to Calcutta, Bhupal Bose tried hard to take Mrinalini to Pondicherry, but the Government refused permission.

“These long years of separation (1910-18) she spent with her parents at Shillong and Ranchi, paying occasional visits to Calcutta. She devoted these years exclusively to meditation and the reading of religious literature, which consisted for the most part of the writings of Swami Vivekananda and the teachings of his Great Master.

Mrinalini visited Sri Ma (widow of Paramahansa Dev), at the Udbodhan Office in Bagbazar, who treated her with great affection, calling her Bau-Ma (the normal Bengali appellation for daughter-in-law) in consideration of the fact that the Holy Mother regarded Sri Aurobindo as her son.” Bhupal Babu wrote this in the statement referred to above¹⁵. The same statement also mentions how at one time, when Mrinalini desired to have *diksha* from one of the sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission, Sri Aurobindo advised her not to receive initiation from any one else and he assured her that he would send her all the spiritual help she needed¹⁶.

It is clear from the account given by Nirodbaran of this last phase of her life that, however hard life was for her, she was making very good spiritual progress and was often in elevated moods of inner bliss. Once seated on a hillock in a pinewood in the outskirts, Mrinalini fell into a meditative mood. Her meditation lasted too long for the young cousin who was accompanying her. This young cousin was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. And so when she opened her eyes he asked her “Didi, there is so much beauty all around us and you pass the entire period in darkness!” She answered “Silly boy, you don’t know that this infinite splendour helps me to plunge into the source of its beauty. You were annoyed perhaps! You know in your Gurudev’s heart is a heavenly city many times more beautiful than this outer beauty.” A woman who has this realisation is no ordinary housewife, disappointed and frustrated by the vagaries of fate and an unfulfilled married life. She had already reached an advanced stage in her spiritual journey.

Now came the year 1918. Mrinalini was at that time staying in Calcutta. Some of Sri Aurobindo’s followers, who were staying with him in Pondicherry, were going to Bengal for some work. One of them asked Sri Aurobindo what they should tell Mrinalini when they met her in Calcutta. He replied “I shall be glad if you can manage to bring her here.” Nirodbaran adds. “Life was hard at that time, with great financial difficulties, but in spite of everything Sri Aurobindo wanted Mrinalini to join him. When somebody told Sri Aurobindo about this difficulty, he answered, ‘Eat less food.’”

Then Mrinalini Devi received a letter from Sri Aurobindo himself in which he said: “ My sadhana is over I have achieved my object, *siddhi* I have a lot of work to do for the world You can come now and be my companion in this work ” At this point the Government too gave permission to Bhupal Bose to take his daughter to Pondicherry. And Bhupal Bose and Mrinalini came to Calcutta via Ranchi on their way to Pondicherry. But Mrinalini fell a victim to the scourge of influenza which was raging everywhere. After a week’s illness, Mrinalini passed away on 17 December 1918 at the age of 32

A cousin of Mrinalini was in Pondicherry with Sri Aurobindo when the telegram about Mrinalini’s passing reached him. And this cousin wrote in a letter to Mrinalini’s mother. “Today I saw tears in the eyes of your stone-hearted son-in-law With the telegram in hand, he sat still and tears were in his eyes ”

Mrinalini’s Place in Sri Aurobindo’s Life

Mrinalini symbolises an aspect of Sri Aurobindo’s life which he was well-endowed to live but was not destined to live because a higher destiny claimed him But although in conjugal terms their life did not flower in the normal way, her value to him cannot be underestimated. She was the one person who gave Sri Aurobindo her love completely and under all circumstances. Except for the first five years of his life, he hardly knew the love of parents directly Soon after that he spent over a year at a school in Darjeeling and, from 1879 to 1893, he was away studying in England Although two of his brothers also lived with him during the period he was in England, he does not seem to have formed any intimate bond of affection with either of them. He was 21 when he returned to India. His father was no more and his mother was not fully in possession of her senses. During his Baroda days he cultivated some noteworthy friendships but most of these loosened once he took the plunge into politics. He was close to his maternal uncle and other members of his family in Deoghar, he was also close to his sister Sarojini and to his younger brother Barin But once he took to the spiritual life and started making speedy progress, his became a lonely pilgrimage, on a path which none else could walk with him, including his first spiritual instructor Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. It is in the life of such a person that Mrinalini appeared as the red rose of human love which later transformed itself into love divine. Sri Aurobindo was always mindful of the fact that Mrinalini was alone and miserable without his company We have seen the circumstances were such that, so long as he was in Baroda, Mrinalini could not have stayed with him except for short periods The Calcutta period was the most turbulent and they met on a few occasions and stayed together for short periods but this was not only a most turbulent and hectic period in Sri Aurobindo’s political life but also in his inner life He had taken to Yoga seriously and was surprised by the rapidity of the profound experiences he was getting In the midst of all this he did not forget Mrinalini He kept writing to her as often as he could. When he became conscious of the three madresses of his

life, he took her into confidence and explained to her what turn his life was taking and encouraged her to be his *sahadharmini* on his chosen path. He never took a haughty or superior or dismissive attitude towards her. He always was tender towards her in his letters. When he was firmly set on the yogic path, he gently explained to her the new basis of their relationship as we have seen above. When Bhupen Babu invited him to his house for a meal and to spend the night with Mrinalini, Sri Aurobindo accepted the invitation, had the meal, and told Mrinalini what their new relationship was and with her permission he returned to his residence the same night. We have also seen how, after he had had the profound spiritual experiences in Baroda and in Alipore Jail, he kept hoping that Mrinalini too would be able to walk with him on this path of Yoga.

Our modern mentality puts a premium on one's moral, social and other duties. Did Sri Aurobindo not have a duty towards Mrinalini as her husband? Yes, of course, and I have tried to explain how he tried his best to fulfil this duty under very trying circumstances. But a clash between domestic duties and the call of the country and the good of humanity at times arises in human life. Buddha had a duty toward his young wife and infant son, towards his parents, etc. But he abandoned all of them, flung them aside in order to follow the call of the Divine. Through this, prince Siddhartha became the Buddha, the World-Redeemer. In a way the same would apply to the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Aurobindo, too, when he heard the inner call, had to abandon all other duties and respond to this call. But what is important is that he never gave the impression to Mrinalini that he was abandoning her in the process. He was acutely aware of her human suffering all the time. He even spoke of the possible bad karma in her previous lives which has bound her to the life of a madman like him. He always encouraged her, always understood her difficulties, and was always willing to listen to her and to respond to her. During the last 8 years of her life, he was rapidly scaling the yogic heights, and was already on the way to becoming a Jagadguru, having launched the *Arya* and started giving the world the great works which were serialised in the journal. Even at that point, he did not forget Mrinalini. We do not have all the correspondence that passed between them. We have hardly any letter which Mrinalini wrote to Sri Aurobindo. And yet what we have is enough to confirm that even as a Yogi he never lost his tenderness and love for her. He encouraged her to take to the spiritual life. And when her father asked his permission for her to take initiation from a monk of the Ramakrishna order, Sri Aurobindo informed him that it was not necessary to do so since he was sending her all the spiritual help that was necessary. And we have seen how Mrinalini herself changed during her last 8 years, how she became almost a Yogini, reconciled with her lot, content to worship Sri Aurobindo from a distance. The inner felicity and yogic peace she had attained during this period are a testimony that Sri Aurobindo was successful in sending her spiritual help and in hastening her yogic journey.

Once when Nirodbaran asked Sri Aurobindo why people like Buddha, Confucius, Ramakrishna and himself had to marry if married life were an obstacle to

spiritual life. He answered. "Do you think that Buddha or Confucius or myself were born with a prevision that they or I would take to the spiritual life? So long as one is in the ordinary consciousness, one lives an ordinary life. When the awakening and the new consciousness come, one leaves it." An ascetic renunciation of the world was no part of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The Yogi in him valued love very highly as can be seen in lines like the following in *Savitri*, written during the most mature state of his spiritual life

Love must not cease to live upon the earth,
 For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
 Love is the far Transcendent's angel here,
 Love is man's lien on the Absolute¹⁷

(Concluded)

MANGESH NADKARNI

Notes and References

13 One of the letters produced before the judge during the Alipore Bomb case

14 *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol 2 2, p 208

15 *Ibid*

16 *Ibid*

17 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p 633

ON THE NEW MUSIC

Offered to The Mother and Sri Aurobindo

I feel more than ever before that music is a connection to the Divine

Bruno Walter

Architecture is frozen music

Friedrich van Schilling

On the conductor Christian Zacharias

His gestures are reminiscent of a painter applying oils and of a sculptor molding materials He acts as though the music were a physical substance to be molded in air

Fred Childs (National Public Radio)

I HAVE an intimation that the new music will be visual as well as aural, its strains, unknown to man before the descent of the Supramental, tone clusters of an infinite love filling the vortices of space, descending in a supreme harmony, a music of the highest spheres enriched by the aspiration of the earth. On the wings of these choral prayers there rides a voice of such haunting beauty that no heart will remain unmoved, no soul fail to leap up at the call of its pristine melody, no mind left uninspired, even the body will vibrate to these chords of the divine Musician.

In the new music one will experience the mantric force that calls into manifestation the supernal bliss, the grace ever present in our lives that rarely we feel and seldom acknowledge. The music of the future has begun and one can catch its subtle notes in the subtle realms, but its plenitude awaits our receptivity to the Divine's behest. It is a music of force and majesty scored with divine humility. The Mother brought down its first tremendous notes into the rhythmic pulse of earth's awakening and gave to Sunil-da the opening movements of its massive themes. Those shall come who will complete the full orchestration of the music of the New Creation, singers of the ultimate songs of praise, musicians of a higher order, composers of canticles of light and peace, ennobling men, enriching life, enhancing joy.

I have heard a strain of the music waiting behind the iron wall of self. Its moment is near and the rapture it brings shall transport the soul and renew the spirit's ageless quest. I have sensed its rhythms in the quickening pulse of earth, caught faint echoes in the counterpoint of our days and once, in a moment of unparalleled grace chanced upon its cadences in the music of the spheres. I have heard the inner melodies in my youth and when I met Mother for the first time She talked to me at length about music and musicians. She told me many things, among them that the music heard most often on the inner planes was that of Chopin though She said She didn't know why it was so. During our talk She asked me "Is it [the music] with you

now?’, and I replied, “Yes, Mother, it is always with me ” And She replied: “Not always ” Then passed a phase in which the sounds that filled my soul were heard no more, for it was a time of emptying And then, for a brief moment in the old unfinished halls of Bharat Nivas, in the early days of Auroville, a few gathered together to aspire to bring down the new music And that which descended was a chorale of voices each alone in its prayerful expression yet united with the others in collective aspiration in a sound-field of calm and joy.

Here in the silence of the soul I listen now for the new sounds—a single note supported by symphonies of light, a swelling diapason of orchestral might, a lone and perfect voice singing of a golden age, a life divine, in immortal strophes, the voice of the eternal Bard, the singer supreme, the Lord and Master of our lives

A GREATER MUSIC

A far and haunting melody
Like something caught at the edge of dream,
A song of human destiny
Came flowing in a golden stream

Before it all our music pales,
Our harmonies seem a monotone,
Our complex erudition fails
And art an imitation grown

And weak attempt to catch the strain
Of music from our higher spheres
That falls to earth as subtle rain
Fades and suddenly reappears

A tremolo on a silver string
Draws the soul from its secrecy,
A chant the astral choirs sing,
A conch that blows on Triton’s sea,

Call the heart to deeper ways
Its chords vibrating in sympathy,
And last a flute the Blue One plays
Attunes us to His ecstasy

For man shall overleap his day,
A greater music will compose,
On the score of life must overlay
The song of truth that in us grows

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

QUELLE EST CETTE LANGUEUR QUI PÉNÈTRE MON CŒUR?

(What is this languor that penetrates my heart?)

I WOKE up with a start! For a while my mind was blank Who was I? Where was I? What woke me up? I racked my brain but to no avail. Suddenly I felt a pain Thin and snake-like, but with a strong surging movement, it found its way into my heart Gradually it gathered there and seemed to make a decision, for that day at least! The whole day it would not leave me

This was no ordinary pain, but a bitter pain with a heart wet with tears But why and for whom? Slowly I realised that my eyes were also contributing to the weeping heart their share

My heart went on asking again and again why I was weeping Why at that hour? What was so special about that particular day? I tried to calm myself to find out why my whole body was suffering Then, after a while, I could see a light, a tiny flame beckoning to me

My eyes fell on the wall-clock It was four-thirty in the morning My first thought was that now the Ashram Main Gate must be open At once I was filled with an intense longing to see the Mother. All doubts dispersed and my mind became still, like a clear blue sky

The Mother—She was such a beauty, a radiant fire, so sweet, so loving! Her single touch could transform man's life The whole world could take refuge in Her arms. How could the longing soul then stay even for a moment away from Her? Was that the cause of my persistent grief?

Today is the date long ago the Mother first arrived at Pondicherry What an auspicious day! I had been counting days for the 29th of March to come And yet, somehow, I had totally forgotten all about it What an irony! But all this while the intense yearning in my heart to see Her once more kept on increasing At the same time I was conscious of a sense of despair because of the sheer impossibility of seeing her now physically I cannot say how long I swayed between these two contrary feelings; but suddenly I heard a whisper which seemed to echo and re-echo inside my head: "Look within, my child" I seemed to hear Her I tried to do just that But it was not easy There was something that literally pushed my sight out, towards the surface Still I persisted Gradually the resistance ceased And yet I could see nothing. All was dark I kept on looking, trying to penetrate that inscrutable darkness And then it happened At the far end, as though it were a tunnel I could feel the presence of a light Slowly it grew, until it took a definite form. It looked like a vague white figure, something as we see in the Mother's painting *The Apparition* As I concentrated on it, it became clearer every moment I now saw Her vividly, standing on the staircase She was clad in a white silver sari, Her head covered by the *pallu* and held in place by a Golden Tiara—The Mother

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of March 2001)

THE most pertinent question that naturally wells up in the human mind is this: What is this “Word” that forms “All Things”, meaning thereby the entire Creation and, curiously enough, that is heard in the silence?

The Vedas and Upanishads describe the word as threefold and it is sometimes written as OM (ॐ), to represent its three aspects, it is also written as AUM

When pronounced correctly (almost like “home” without the ‘h’) this form of sound of the Word, which is the most ancient, the primordial Sound (Shabda Brahman), which is said by all scholars and realised souls to be the “purest syllable” When correctly intoned, it travels a complete octave and, in incorporating pure expression of the human breath, the proper use of the throat, the palate and the lips, and including the closed-mouth, the spontaneous nasal sound of the ‘M’ or Mmm-m-m-m .., it encompasses the entire range of music and all “vocal possibilities”

The Sound is the original “matrix” from which all other sounds may be developed with the help of the tongue, vocal chord, etc. And such is its power that it is said to evoke the “whole range of human emotion” In it we can perceive the Hindu Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Lord Brahma creates, from the very breath of the first vowel ‘A’, with the vocal chords, Lord Vishnu moulds and holds the Sound in the containing space of the mouth (‘U’), and Lord Shiva cuts off the flow of the open Sound so that the breath dies in (or more appropriately merges with) the fading hum of the ‘M’—mmmmmm

At its deepest and most refined—that is to say, when it is heard by one who is finely enough “tuned” to receive it—the Word with all its divine glory can be “heard”, vibrating through the Universe. That is why there is a beautiful description in Kathopanishad where Lord Dharmaraj had thus explained the significance of the eternal Word (or *Nāda Brahman*) to Nachiketa. “The Word that the Vedas extol, austerities proclaim, sanctities approach—that word is OM.”¹ That Word is eternal Spirit, eternal distance, whosoever knows It, attains to his desire. That Word is the ultimate foundation. One who finds it or whosoever realises it is “adored among the saints”

So, the stages of unfoldment of the Creation may be laid down as: “God breathes out—” and in so doing, the Word is spoken or the monosyllabic Mantra OM is uttered and chanted (or rendered musically)—of course, it is the most charming celestial Music, which can be heard by great saints.

It is then only “the All is formed”—the Creation begins. Brahman means the “Word”. The sound of the Word (*Nāda Brahman*) forms All things in the Universe. And the blessed Man listens and hears the Word of All things.

When we listen to the Silence
 All things Sound in the Silence
Brahman is the Silence
 beyond all Sound²

(*To be continued*)

SURESH DEY

References

1 *The Hindu Sound*, p 149, by William Corlett and John Moore

2 *Ibid*

A NOTE ABOUT YOGISHRESHTHA

IN the series of articles on the Prophet of Islam that had appeared in *Mother India* last year, there is a reference in the September 2000 issue (page 722) to Atharva Veda mentioning the name of Mohammed. This reference is given in the *Bangala Bhashar Abhidhan* by Gyanendra Mohan Das, 1937, page 145 under "allaa". He quotes that Atharvan Sukta part from the *Shabdakalpadrum, Bharatkosha Abhidhan*. There are varying recensions of the Atharva Veda, like the Puranas. For instance, the *Bhavishya Purana* in 2.22-24 has a "Jesus passage" where Shalivahana, having conquered the Shakas, meets in the middle of the land of the Hunas an auspicious man standing on a peak, yellowish-white complexioned, dressed in white, who joyously announced himself as the son of the Lord, born of a virgin womb, a proclaimer of the Mlecchadharma whose highest goal is the vow of truth. As Ishaamasī, causing fear among the Dasyus, he has reached the status of Masiha, teaching to worship the Isham established in the Mandala of the sun by truthful speech, mental concentration, meditation. Thereby the Masiha, purified, goes to dissolution, having received the form of the Lord in the heart. In 2.18-31 he tells Salivahana that his name is Ishamasīha. Quite fascinating!¹

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

A VISIT TO THE MAHAKALI PATHASHALA

SWAMI Vivekananda paid a visit to the Mahakali Pathashala shortly before he left for Almora. Though Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, who accompanied the Swami in a hired carriage to the institution, says that the event happened in April 1897, we learn from a news-item in *The Indian Mirror* of 8 May that the Swami visited the place "last Thursday", which means 6 May, the very day on which he left for Almora. Swami was then living at Balaram Babu's house from which place the school, which was then situated at Chorebagan, was not far off. As the Swami was about to leave for the school, the time being morning, Sarat Chandra Chakravarti turned up and he asked him to accompany him. He did not tell him his destination till the carriage had left behind the Brahmo Samaj building in Cornwallis Street (now renamed Bidhan Sarani), when he directed the coachman to proceed towards Chorebagan and told his disciple that Tapasvini Mataji, who had founded a new-type girls' school where instruction was given on orthodox lines, had invited him to visit her school. When they reached the place, Tapasvini Mataji received Swami respectfully and took him to a class-room, where the girls, as asked by her, recited the Sanskrit meditation of Lord Shiva and demonstrated how they were taught the worship of the god in the school. Swami was highly delighted and expressed his appreciation of the measure of success Mataji had attained by her perseverance and application in the cause of diffusion of knowledge among women. Mataji said she looked upon the girls as the Divine Mother and her work as service to Her.

Being asked to record his opinion about the school, Swami Vivekananda wrote the following in the Visitors' Book: "Have great pleasure in witnessing the good work inaugurated in our city by Mataji. The move appears to me to be in the right direction and deserves the support of all who desire to see their daughters educated on national lines."¹ Later, as they were returning in a carriage to Balaram Babu's house, Swami Vivekananda highly praised Tapasvini Mataji who, born at a place far off from Bengal, had founded an institution of such a type in Calcutta, and her spirit of renunciation and dedication. He, however, disliked, said he, the sight of some male householders acting as teachers there. "The duty of teaching in the school," observed he, "ought to devolve on educated widows and brahmacharinis. It is good to avoid in this country any association of men with women's schools." The disciple objecting that Gargis and Maitreys might be difficult to find in India at the present day, the Swami said: "Do you think women of the type don't exist now in this country? Still on this sacred soil in India, this land of Sita and Savitri, among women may be found such character, such spirit of service, such affection, compassion, contentment, and reverence, as I could not find anywhere in the world. In the West, the women did not very often seem to be women at all, they appeared to be quite the replica of men. Driving vehicles, drudging in offices, attending schools, doing professional duties! In India alone the sight of feminine modesty and reserve soothes the eye!"² The visit is not without importance, since it elicited something of Swami Vivekananda's opinion

on the education of women in India

SHAIENDRANATH DHAR

(Courtesy *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, Vivekananda Kendra Publication)

Notes and References

1 *The Indian Mirror*, 8 May 1897 (Indian Newspapers, cited 199)

2 *Collected Works*, cited, VI, 488-91 Tapasvini (or Gangabai) Mataji was born in 1835 of Maharashtrian parents at Rai Belur in Arcot District, South India, where her father was the ruler of a tiny State. From an early age she was versed in Sanskrit religious literature as well as skilled in riding, sword-play, and all manly games. Hearing the call of God and the Motherland she left her home and, after many adventures, came to Jhansi, and became an intimate companion of Rani Lakshmi Bai, who was a distant maternal aunt of hers. Along with her she plunged into the conflagration of 1857, and fought bravely in her army on horseback, sword and lance in hand. After Lakshmi Bai's death, she fled to Nepal, in the company of Nana Saheb, and spent the life of a fugitive there for nearly thirty years, practising the hardest sadhanas which probably gave her the name Tapasvini Mata and preparing for her next mission in life, which was carried out in Calcutta. She probably came to Calcutta in 1890 and founded her school in 1893. She died in 1907 (*Mataji Gangabai* by Ajendrakrishna Ghosh, Calcutta, 1369 B S.)

ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY OF TAGORE

OUR Rabindranath, in our beautiful mother tongue, has always sung of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. In the course of his long life (may it be longer still), the surging events of the times have always found a ready response in his poetical heart. Sometimes like Homer, he sings in irresistible strains of the prowess of an old hero, then he passes into a deeper mood, and sings of piety and devotion like an old Hebrew prophet. Sometimes like Aeschylus he repaints an old story in more gorgeous colours of morality and virtue; and again like Aristophanes, he pours scorn on the still lingering old-world superstitions with crushing effect. Sometimes like the old master Kalidasa, he picks up words like a jeweller, and pieces them together with the finest effect, then he relapses into the simple unaffected art of the country poet. His career reads like a poetical Odyssey, and he is the old, yet the ever young poet. In him the art of speech has reached its perfection.

MEGHNAD SAHA

MAN VIS-À-VIS GOD

IN what manner can man relate himself to God? A very interesting answer to this question has been given by Hanuman. There is an episode in which Sri Rama is said to have asked Hanuman: "How do you relate yourself to me?" Hanuman's answer was

देहबुद्ध्या तु दासोस्मि जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदशकं ।
आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहमिति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

which means

O Lord, while I identify myself with my body, I am Thy servant. At the level of my individual soul, I am Thy part. And, when I look upon myself as the Spirit, I am one with Thee. This is my firm conviction.

This single sloka, of just two lines, is rich in meaning and gives in a nutshell the different ways in which man can relate himself to the Divine.

It also, in effect, sums up the philosophies of Dvaita (Dualism), Vishishtadvaita (Qualified Monism) and Advaita (Pure Monism). In the Dvaita approach, the devotee is merely a supplicant before God, serves God and His creation with love, can at best get an occasional glimpse of God, but can never think of union with Him. In Vishishtadvaita the embodied soul or Jivatma is realised to be a spark of the Divine, but not identical with Him. In Advaita there is no distinction between the Jivatma and the Paramatma, because there is naught other than the unconditioned and undifferentiated Brahman.

These three types of relationship with the Divine are also indicative of the stages of progress that an aspirant makes as he proceeds on the path of his long and sometimes seemingly unrewarding spiritual quest. He is only a devotee and a slave of the Divine. He apprehends his psychic being and experiences the spark of the Divine in himself. The immergence of his individual being in the Divine becomes so complete that he is totally unaware of his lower self and all his thoughts, feelings and actions originate in the Divine, even as the moment a river flows into the Ocean it becomes one with the latter and cannot any more have its separate identity.

B G PATTEGAR

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of June 2001)

WE now come to November 24th 1926, the day of Siddhi or the day of Victory. The year 1926 is a year of spiritual significance not only for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but also for those who have opened themselves to the light of his Ideals and are following the discipline taught by him. Sri Aurobindo gained for himself and for the world at large a significant victory in the annals of spirituality. On 29th October 1935 Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple:

“24th [November 1926] was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind/Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya, he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards the Ananda.”¹

In order to know the process and plan of achieving the victory of Sri Aurobindo, we must go back to the letter of his to his younger brother Barin, dated 7th April 1920, where he mentioned his “preliminary and preparatory” stages of Supramental Yoga and what he had achieved during the ten years 1910-1920. He wrote:

“The Guru of the world who is within us then gave me the complete directions of my path—its complete theory, the ten limbs of the body of this Yoga. These ten years He has been making me develop it in experience, and this is not yet finished.

“The Brahman, the Self, God are always there. What God wants in man is to embody Himself here in the individual and in the community, to realise God in life.

“If we cannot rise above, that is, to the supramental level, it is hardly possible to know the last secret of the world and the problem it raises remains unsolved. . . The physical body, the life, the mind and understanding, the supermind and the Ananda—these are the spirit’s five levels. The higher we rise in this ascent the nearer to man comes the state of that highest perfection open to his spiritual evolution. Rising to the Supermind, it becomes easy to rise to the Ananda. One attains a firm foundation in the condition of the indivisible and infinite Ananda, not only in the timeless *Para-brahman* but in the body, in life, in the world. The integral being, the integral consciousness, the integral Ananda blossoms out and takes form in life. This is the central clue of my Yoga. Its Fundamental principle:

“This is no easy change to make. After these fifteen years I am only rising into the lowest of the three levels of the Supermind and trying to draw up into it all the lower activities. But when this Siddhi is complete, then I am absolutely certain that God will through me give to others the Siddhi of the Supermind with less effort. Then my real work will begin. I am not impatient for success in the work. What is to happen will happen in God’s appointed time.”²

K. D. Sethna writes, “Even as late as November 1926, when the Overmind Consciousness descended into his body, He declared that He would be going into

retirement for a dynamic meditation to bring about the Supermind's Descent''³

K. D. Sethna further says "The Overmind, The World of the Great Gods, may rightly be considered the Supermind's delegate, constituting the door to the Super Dynamic Divine''⁴

Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Life Divine*: "If we regard the Powers of the Reality as so many Godheads, we can say that the Overmind releases a million Godheads into action, each empowered to create its own world, each world capable of relation, communication and interplay with the others. There are in the Veda different formulations of the nature of the Gods: it is said they are all one Existence to which the sages give different names; yet each God is worshipped as if he by himself is that Existence, one who is all the other Gods together or contains them in his being, and yet again each is a separate Deity acting sometimes in unison with companion deities, sometimes separately, sometimes even in apparent opposition to other Godheads of the same Existence. In the supermind all this would be held together as a harmonised play of the one Existence; in the Overmind each of these three conditions could be a separate action or basis of action and have its own principle of development and consequences and yet each keep the power to combine with the others in a more composite harmony. As with the One Existence, so with its Consciousness and Force. The One Consciousness is separated into many independent forms of consciousness and knowledge, each follows out its own line of truth which it has to realise''⁵

Many months before the descent of the Overmind the disciples of the Ashram were experiencing an unusual intensity and pressure in the atmosphere as well as in the sadhana. They were led to an intuitive anticipation of an imminent descent on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's repeated references to the Supermind and the speech he delivered on his birthday that year. The extracts from his speech delivered on 15.8.1926 run as follows. "The common object we all have in view is the bringing down of a Consciousness, a Power, a Light, a Reality that is other than the consciousness which satisfies the ordinary man upon earth; a Consciousness, a Power and Light of Truth, a Divine Reality which is destined to raise the earth consciousness and transform everything here.

"That cannot take place unless there is a decision from Above. But, also it cannot be unless the earth-consciousness itself is in some part of it, in some of those who dwell here upon these lower planes, ready to receive. Once the Consciousness, the Power descends it is there for all times and every day for those who are willing and fit to receive it.

"But we have attached a special importance to this day and it is justified if we live in the light of the Truth it symbolises. For this day we can fix a mark in the stage in the individual and general progress. It is a day which ought to be a day of consecration, of self-examination and a preparation for future advance, if possible, for the reception of a special Power which would carry on the work of advance.

"This can only be done in each individually if he takes up the true attitude and lives on that day under the right conditions. There must be a consecration from

beforehand, and a looking inward on the past to see how far we have reached, what in us is ready, and what in us has not yet changed, what stands behind waiting for a complete transformation; what still resists and what is still obscure. There must be the aspiration, a calling down of Power to effect the change which we see to be necessary.

“As to taking stock of the work, where you are and how far the work is done, etc., certain things ought to be remembered. You know them with the mind. In the former ways of yoga men were satisfied if they could feel the Brahmic Consciousness or the cosmic consciousness or some descent of Light and Power, some intimation of the infinite. They sought for a static condition and considered release as the final goal, and final aim. To realise all this, to be open to the Infinite and Universal Power, to receive its intimation and to have experiences, to completely go beyond the ego, to realise the Universal Mind, the Universal Soul, the Universal Spirit, that is only the first condition.

“We have to call down the greater Consciousness directly into the vital being and into the physical being, so that the supreme calm and universality will be there in all its fulness from top to bottom. If this cannot be done then the first condition of transformation is not fulfilled.

“The second thing we have to know and remember is that nothing is perfectly done unless all is perfectly done. It is not sufficient to open the Mind and the Vital Being and leave the Physical Being to its obscurity.

“So in the transformation also, mind cannot be transformed unless the Vital Being is transformed. And if the Vital Being is not transformed nothing can be realized because it is the vital being that realizes. So if the mind is only partially changed and if the Vital Being is open and also partially changed it is not sufficient for our purpose. Because the whole range of the Vital Being cannot be done unless the Physical Being also is opened and changed, for the divine Vital cannot realize itself in an unfitting environmental life.

“And it is not enough for the inner Physical Being to be changed if the external man is not transformed. In this process of yoga there is a whole totality and each depends upon the other. Therefore to stop short may be a preparation for another life but it is not the victory. All has to be changed before anything permanently can be changed. The third thing to remember is that if all is to be changed and done then there must be complete surrender.

“It means there must be no reservation in any part of the being, any compromise with old customary thoughts and human ways of doing things. Wherever anything is reserved, it means the Truth is not accepted and we shall commit, again, the old mistake of partial achievement and transformation. We should leave no field for the indulgence of ignorance.

“For us there can be no such theories, no such compromise between falsehood and Truth, between the Supreme and the Lower Nature.

“It is in remembering these things that we have to take stock of our work. To

see how much is to be done, not in any spirit of pessimism because the way is long and hard and cannot be done by a miracle. It can only be accomplished by a large and thorough movement. Each step you have to take as a mark, as an encouragement, for a step towards the Beyond. On one side no lack of resolution and the zeal for the victory to be won, on the other no hasty impatience nor depression. But the calm certainty for the Divine Will,—and the calm will that 'It shall be done in us' and the aspiration that it may be done for us so that it may be done for the world''⁶

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *On Himself*, SABCL Vol 26, p 136
- 2 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A. B. Purani, Fourth Edition (1978), pp 170-72
- 3 *Aspects of Sri Aurobindo*, by K. D. Sethna, p 91
- 4 *Ibid*
- 5 *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, p 280
- 6 *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, recorded by A. B. Purani, Second Series, April 1961, pp 324-28

SHELLEY AND THE HUMAN ASPIRATION

OF the English Romantic poets, Shelley alone possesses an impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss and the sense of a secret divinity in man and Nature. His poetry is witness to this constant preoccupation and human aspiration. The work of the poet depends not only on himself and his age, but on the mentality of the nation to which he belongs and the aesthetic, spiritual tradition and environment it created for him. Yet he need not be entirely limited or conditioned by his environment. He may regard himself as only a voice of the national mind, bound by some past national tradition. Or he may choose to strike out a novel and original road of his own. Shelley belongs to the second category. We may very easily read into him and his work things which have been there in front of him or around him and sometimes really got into him. This makes him a sovereign voice of the new spiritual force that was attempting to break into poetry and possess there its kingdom. "Shelley is at once seer, poet, thinker, prophet, artist even he has to deny God in order to affirm the Divine. In his view Heaven cannot descend to take possession of the gross, brute and violent earth around him, therefore he carries up the delivered earth into a far and ideal heaven."

For example, we may take his poem *Ode to the West Wind* which alone is enough to place Shelley apart from the other lyrical poets of England. In it, as in *Prometheus Unbound* and still more splendidly, all his powers and poetic subjects are wrought into a whole. Emotion awakened by an approaching storm sets on fire other sleeping emotions in his heart and the whole of his being bursts into a flame around the first movement. He has complete identification with Nature and magnificent realisation of storm and peace in which he can sing the Restoration of Mankind. There is no song in the whole of English literature more passionate, more penetrating, more full of the force by which its idea and its form are united into one creation. In the poem we see that Destruction and Preservation are not antagonistic. The destruction is not of the Essence of Being but only of the form. The leaves are destroyed but not the seeds. The spiritual force which it embodies is beyond Time, though it controls Time; Shelley is essentially a poet of human aspiration for Eternity. It is not that Eternity is static, it is the cause of all dynamism in this Universe. That is why the West Wind is spoken of as the dirge of the dying year.

Life in Nature has got an innate quality of spontaneous response to this spiritual force behind the West Wind. Nature, in short, is in complete harmony with the universal current of life. Man has separated himself from the universal current and this separation is marked in his manhood. When Shelley was a child, he lived at a level of deeper awareness where he could share the consciousness of this life. The poem is to be interpreted from the view of humanity at large. Then only can it become an Ode. The romantic agony of man is the agony of separation of himself from the Universal Presence.

Incidentally, Sri Aurobindo begins *The Life Divine* with the first chapter called

The Human Aspiration To become absolutely plastic to the touches of the Universal Presence is the only hope of man Self-surrender must be the attitude "A vast surrender is our only strength" When there is the suffusion or interpenetration of the Divine Spirit and complete annihilation of man's separative consciousness, then there is the resurrection of man, of humanity. This is Shelley the prophet and myth-maker.

To conclude, one should be a leaf in the wind to live a surrendered life. "Let thyself drive in the breath of God and be as a leaf in the tempest."

C SUBBIAN