

THE ADVENT

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*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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The Advent

Salvador

Think only of the Divine
Work only for the Divine.
Live only for the Divine

J. J.

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February 1981

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A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.

SRI AUROBINDO

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OUR HOMAGE

In memory of Rai Bahadur G. V. Swaika
SWAIKA GROUP OF INDUSTRIES

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KING

The love that burns always
THE ADVENT

THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without
reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the
calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wide-
ness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

PRIEST

A COLLOQUY

KING

What a formidable wild spot, a desolate land
Have we chosen to live in! Pressed under hard rules we are;
We have discarded our fondness for our native land; forbidden for us
To look upon cherished faces. Is it true then
That this world is someone's play, to whose eyes the bondage of rules
Is only an image of his fancy? True then that there is someone
Under whose direction we — blinded by illusion —
Wander in a field hemmed in by delusion on an unreal earth?
There glimmers a city of mirage, light is but the rays of darkness,
The wisdom of the wise is a dream's orderlessness.
A dense woodland is the earthly life,
Thoughts there fly about like fireflies
In the darkness. Vainly did we think then
That this utterance was the musing of hopelessness
Of one conquered in the battle of life, only a wailing of the weak.
Now I see that wailing is true; it is the ultimate vision.

Go hence, O happy dream; come thou, sorrow!
 An invincible teacher art thou, own brother of wisdom,
 The first-born from the womb of the great Delusion.
 Come, let me embrace you. It is just meet
 You play with me in this dense forest,
 It is a fitting playground for the sorrow you are.
 In vain the human being dances about
 With the short-lived couple, pain and happiness.
 Death will come and stay the dance.

PRIEST

Just at this hour art thou defeated in the battle of life,
 O King! In your burning heart is the utterance of hopelessness.
 The cry of grief is in your voice and not the Knowledge of Brahman.
 Other is that acquisition beyond the reach of the weak,
 A great truth attained by heroes only, hidden in the cavern.
 True it is that it is a dance, the earthly life.
 Whose dance is it? The Lord of the people is the master of dancing.
 Embrace not sorrow but him, O King,
 Carry him with you, in battle after battle, flood with frenzy.
 Your body and soul, the home of delight.
 Victory and defeat, the battle-field aloud with wailings
 Are various footsteps only of the dancer
 On a varying background. The king and the kingdom
 Are for the sake of the decorative beauty of the dance
 Upon the arena of the stage.

KING

With empty words you comfort me.
 The heart knows its own sorrows. Narayana dances?
 The demoniac nature dances in the chamber of illusion,
 It is the demon-girl's doll's play — she builds and breaks
 Always the living dolls. When she sees a broken heart,
 She laughs, her curiosity satisfied. Illusion is true,
 True this desolate spot, true also the defeat,
 Sorrow is true. Happiness is not true upon this earth,
 Nor true is the kingdom. True it is that ignorance is punished,
 Love is not true in this world filled with lamentation.

PRIEST

Delve then into your sorrowing heart and wallow in its slime,
Probe into your suffering soul and there find the secret of sorrow.
Finally you will recognise Krishna, full of delight, full of love.
It is the play of the great Lover, this life upon earth.

KING

The love that kisses with the lips of thunder,
The love that burns always with the agony of diseases,
The love whose guise is sorrow and hate and death,
That is of the lowest kind. Compassion is there in the human heart;
Creation is not kind, nor Nature, nor God.
Man builds an image of his own compassion, a fanciful idol
In his own heart. That shadow he worships as God. There is
now they can grub in about, wd honobasde, at odv and King
God is but a dream, another kind of dream,
A false consolation created by the imagination of the miserable.

PRIEST

O King, through your utterance, I am witnessing Krishna-play
And my body shivers in delight; I hear
As though Radha, the beloved, is chiding in the words of your mouth:
Never shall I see his face nor hear his name,
Nor shall I know that he exists any more.
Such utterance in the mouth of a mother is the vain fancy of an
atheist, w
I understand. So I say it is not a mere consolation,
O King! You will surely see my Krishna
Manifesting again in a befitting guise:
[Here one line of the Bengali manuscript is illegible. —Editor]

THE VOICE OF KRISHNA

The toy is mine. I have snatched it away and I have given it back
Only to teach you that I am your Master.

KING

My heart has not trust in these empty words.

Vainly human intelligence creates wordy brilliance
In order to dazzle one's own eyes. Have done with these words.

PRIEST

I obey, but remember, O great King,
What the Vaishnava says.

In vain the human being dances about

KING

KING

In vain is such an address.
The tiger is the king of this forest, not I.
As to a beggar, the forest deity doles out
Scanty fruit and roots — just to appease the hunger.
I roam about without my army, abandoned by relatives.
The name king sounds a taunt to my ears.
He is not a king who is abandoned by friends in danger,
One who lies tired in this desolate spot.

PRIEST

There are your subjects, we are there. Always everywhere
You are the king, you are my father,
In no other terms will you hear me address you,
Neither in the woods nor in the city.

(Incomplete)

SRI AUROBINDO

Translated from the original Bengali by Nolini Kanta Gupta

With empty words you create and kill
By the courtesy of
Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives

The demoniac nature dances in the chamber of illusion.
It is the demon-girl's doll's play —
she laughs, her curiosity satisfied. Illusion is true.

True this desolate spot is, but not the world.
Sorrow is true. Happiness is not true upon this earth.

Not true is the kingdom. True it is that ignorance is
Love is not true in these words.

IN PRAISE OF POETRY

(With respects to Sir Philip Sidney and Shelley)

It ist he worshippers of beauty, after all, who have done the real pioneer work of the world.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

ONLY recently has man's frame of reference become large enough to assess the last enemy other than subjectively. The aim of this brief essay is to try to place age-old subjective insights within the new objective, empirical frame of reference. The spiritual findings of such as Sidney and Shelley — which reflect a primordial cumulative heritage — receive abundant confirmation. But now they can be expressed as hypotheses with tangible evidence for verification. This process should make them eventually as irrefutable as the boiling temperature of water. As scientific hypotheses can be verified by repeated experiments, so the spiritual hypotheses may be verified by repeated experience.

Astronomers such as Fred Hoyle tell us that in the beginning there was nothing but very thinly spread atoms and simple molecules comprising largely hydrogen. Out of this was to come everything else — including men and machines. This thin gas seems to be the nearest we can approach the Creator physically. But, of course, it is everywhere. Its Composition is now considered to be mostly hydrogen, helium, some carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and a few metals. These are the raw materials on the many benches which are the galaxies of the workshop of the universe itself.

However, for about every cubic mile of this gas exist about one thousand particles of cosmic dust. This dust is not spread evenly but concentrated here and there in clouds. Each cloud has enough material to produce about four hundred stars like the sun. This original matter has become the matter with us. Etymological significances of the word matter or material are Latin *mater* and Greek *meter* meaning mother. So with this matter we have the body of the universe. Einstein's theory of relativity seems to confirm that the universe is indeed one verse; the meter is inherent in the motion. Here is the body from which all offspring must come.

The offspring must come because this body is in motion and has intercourse with a charge. This charge or magnetic field is vital. It aligns the dust particles, thus giving direction. Its origin is still unknown. Here we again seem to be as physically near the Creator as we can come. This union of magnetism, motion, and matter involving needle-like dust particles anticipates the fertilisation of eggs by spermatozoa — a process still dependent on personal magnetism. As the Matter is the body of the mother, the charge seems to embody the injected psychic energy or libido of the Father. For us it was certainly to produce the father and mother of a predicament.

In other words, in the workshop of the universe, along with the raw materials there is also a controlling and directing force. Where the matter is passive, the charge is active. Together in motion they give birth to galaxies of stars and planets. All remain inter-related.

The core of the earth is largely iron; its motion converts it into a giant dynamo making a magnetic field; this interacts with high-speed particles streaming from the sun and oscillating between the earth's poles. Sun, moon, earth, and stars all remain intimate. Their relationships produced a series of effects first chemical, then biological. As these effects constitute consistent and unidirectional growth they could be fully and precisely calculated. In fact, they seem to be the rudiments of external necessity. This was to be regarded later as the gods, fate, or that divinity which shapes our ends. Now it is seen as *immanence* producing evolution possibly given a specific direction in a process of calculated creation.

As we ourselves are sexually differentiated only on the biological bisexual foundations of chromosomes as illustrated in the early embryo in the womb, as Eve was made from Adam, as the neutron is neither positive nor negative in charge, so this matter, motion and force could derive from a bisexual Creator. Thus the symbolism of Hermes and Aphrodite would be objectively verified. As the concept of immanence makes clear, God and the Devil are one and the same. This further reduction to genuine Monotheism shows that if the Devil is the subservient jester, God shares the joke. Yet when male and female of necessity get together, osculation for cleansing eventually becomes an act of love. What the Creator ultimately derives from the matter may be the matter of most concern to us, His creations.

However strong the scientist may be on cortical functions, he

may still be dangerously weak when it comes to diencephalic or emotional functions. No one can compare with him, perhaps, among the denotations; but sometimes he is not so happy among the connotations. He is fine on the edge of the wood but not so good in the middle. Thus Fred Hoyle, having stripped the bark so magnificently, states that "we still have not the smallest clue to our own fate."¹

There are many clues. The sap of the matter may be approached closer through a law promulgated by the scientific philosopher Herbert Spencer in *First Principles* (1862).

All manifestations are of the one cosmos whether chemical, biological, historical, or individual. Spencer seems to have formulated a theory which renders these manifestations consistently intelligible as parts of a whole. The law expresses the continuous redistribution of Matter and Motion as derived from Persistent Force in alternating processes of concentration and diffusion. It states that the concentration of Matter implies the dissipation of Motion while the absorption of Motion implies the diffusion of Matter. This could be called the Law of the Pendulum. It makes all the difference in the world. Spencer claims that this law governs the entire cycles of change of every existence and applies to every detail of change. It is as if the largest pendulum of continuous creation contains ever smaller ones down through the solar system, ice-ages, and political change to the phases of an individual's life and the ultimately infinitesimal process of metabolism in a total process of metamorphosis. The etymological significance of the word psyche is "butterfly".

In the light of quantum physics, Spencer's fundamental propositions may not now be fundamental enough. Even Bertrand Russell is prepared to gamble on the persistence of matter if not on the law of gravity — so Spencer's "Indestructibility of Matter" may hold good, bearing in mind that matter is only patterned energy. However, his "The Continuity of Motion" may not be quite right if energy at its smallest, in quanta or photons, is discrete when looked at bit by bit. Yet the effect is of continuous motion. Similarly, perhaps his "The Persistence of Force" should be replaced by "The Distribution of Energy", a distribution leading to very forceful effects.

If quantum physics appear rooted in Chaos or Chance, they soon seem to yield to law and order aiming at stability. It is rather as if a

¹ Concluding line to *The Nature of the Universe* (Oxford, 1960 edit.).

heap of indeterminate iron filings were being subjected to a strong magnet turning their chaos into order. It is unfortunate that Hitler and Mussolini still have so much magnetism leading eventually to apparent chaos again. By the time we get to biology, the organism seems very ingenious in dodging any random effects. Professor C.R. Frisch, F.R.S., in a talk on Causality on the B.B.C. (A Few Ideas, 1964) said:

"Indeed, the more we study living organisms, the more we admire the cunning with which they exploit those features of quantum physics which make for stability, and avoid the consequences of those uncertainties that go with it."

The looseness which is inherent in quantum physics may account for an occasional involuntary twitch; but my will is free — that is, free to act on all the information I have — only so far as my brain is subject to causality."

So Spencer's superstructure, his law of the pendulum seems to remain valid. As Einstein said, an unbelievably high Intelligence must be at work putting Himself or Itself into His or Its creation as novelist into his novel. The odds against Chance arranging the proper chemicals into proteins are so high the earth just isn't old enough to permit Chance to do it. And then the proteins still have to be animated.

Spencer's law both predicted and is corroborated by Professor Martin Ryle's recent discovery of the diminishing numerical density of radio stars (cf. *The Oscillating Universe* by Ernst. J. Opik, N.Y. 1961). If we turn from the infinite to the infinitesimal what do we find? According to a medical psychologist in an article "The Chemistry of Mind" (*The Listener*, London February 16, 1961): "Temperament is mainly controlled in the mid-brain by what must be a balancing action between stimulation ... and relaxation.... The balancing mechanism must be capable of regulating and timing itself so that it produces energy in a rhythmical manner and gives rise to the right activity of the appropriate degree in the right place at the proper time." In addition, Dr. Fleiss, a German physiologist and psychologist, has recently ascertained three overlapping cycles of biological rhythm in human beings. One is of physical endurance over 23 days; one is of nerves, or emotional and creative, of 28 days;

one is of intellect, involving memory and alertness, of 33 days. These cycles correlate with dates of birth (note the evolved transformation of superstitious astrology into the magic of science) and are to be computed to predict pilots' off-days. Here seems to be further most substantial confirmation for Spencer's Law of the Pendulum. As Hamlet said to Ophelia, we are machines — but the important fact is that we are vehicles of evolving spirit or soul, the etymological meaning of which, through Old English and Greek, is 'light, colour and mobility'. After all, according to the Quantum theory, particles seem most intelligible as waves. Thus the whole Universe could be a manifestation of "Soul".

The opposite processes of disintegration and intergration are simultaneous but give a balance to one or the other so that each will dominate alternately. Spencer identifies important secondary effects. As the pendulum swings upwards to rest or peace and harmony, the matter absorbing motion has become more complex and its parts further differentiated and individualised whether this matter is Hamlet out of tune and harsh, or a multiplying universe. When the Pendulum swings down again and matter again goes into motion, that motion itself becomes more functionally complex particularly in war. Again this seems objective verification for the rule of Heraclitus that everything must produce its opposite.

Thus disintegration is merely the means to further growth at ever more complex or higher levels — where the water supply is not cut off.

Spencer's law, which seems to be the vital clue to a process which started from star dust and produced man, first instinctive and now cognitive, does not appear to be outdated. The fundamental particles still accord adequately with the Laws of the conservation of mass-energy, charge and spin as do the giant, spinning, spiral galaxies. Problems such as matter and anti-matter, and the apparent nonconservation of parity in the decay of "strange" particles seem resolved with further knowledge. In fact, as the charge known as strangeness seems the only one not giving rise to force it could be another vital clue to the growth of psychic energy or spiritual reserves; it could be what the Creator gets out of his work — the distinction between life and death, a kind of spiritual residuum of evolved psychic energy. Spencer points out that nothing can be finally interpreted

until placed within this evolutionary frame of reference. He also indicates that integration or God and dissolution or the Devil work to the same end; that all religion and philosophy is moving towards a further reduction of monotheism to be replaced by the concept of an immanent Creator expressing Himself from *within* his creations.

Thus we could be simply embodiments of the Creator's imagination in which History is His story, matter being no more than patterned energy. We are ourselves a kind of colour television. We are being lived by Something which needs billions like us to express Itself.

Putting 2 and 2 together, it is as if life is a kind of grandiose Cosmic television show or film, the sun a kind of filament, the iron-cored magnetic earth with its attendant ionosphere a kind of anode in a vast infinitely complex tube. Every thought and feeling, from the mother's lullaby to rape and genocide is predetermined as the Creator manipulates all from genetic codes to volcanoes.

James B. Beale, an American aerospace engineer, wrote in No. 12 (Summer, 1974) of *Fields Within Fields*, N.Y., in an article entitled "How Fields Affect Us" (p. 56) : "... as a product of the Cosmos we are all "tuned in" and our biorhythms react accordingly to EM and ES fields, low frequency radiation, ions, and other as yet unknown factors." In the same issue (p. 58), in an article entitled "Light and the Human Environment", Henry L. Logan wrote : "Human beings are electromagnetic organisms operating in a mesh of inter-related and interacting field patterns principally generated by ... the Sun."

Attributes of dissolution in the interests of increasing functional complexity are, at the highest level, analysis of fresh evidence, and also representational art; lower down will be a multiplication of effects as in ostentatious expenditure or conspicuous consumption; also will be loss of values as earlier syntheses disintegrate and promiscuity of judgment and conduct lead to intensifying violence.

Attributes of integration will be, on balance, the syntheses of romanticism instead of realism; liberal legislation of these syntheses; more general well-being in an era of peace. The two processes are simultaneous but give a balance to each alternately. The swings are clearly discernible in the alternations of romanticism, and realism, deductive subjective philosophy, and liberal or reactionary government — all parallel manifestations. The nineteenth century, the

romantic age of ideology, disintegrated into the twentieth century, the age of analysis and violence, but also of greater objectivity, and higher standards of social welfare.

The scientist and the scientific philosopher supply valuable clues. These bring us to man himself and the philosopher-historian. Toynbee's *A Study of History* establishes the primary principles of motivation responsible for the rise and fall of civilisations. Life emerges as a challenge to which various responses are possible in a process of conflict. The conflict is necessary to put matter into motion, to provide the tension correlative to growth. The responses are conditioned partly by the environment. If the response is adequate, survival results.

Practical considerations must predominate initially. Here are the beginnings of conscious or directed thinking. But survival alone is not enough. It needs to be enjoyable. So man's inner desires operate to adapt the environment itself in the interests of pleasure. When the cave is safe, warm, and possessed of food, the murals on the wall or television screen become the centre of attention. The practical considerations are conditioned by environment; the desires released by and for mastery of the environment come from within. The former develops the frontal lobe or conscious mind and cognitive ability; the latter flows up instinctively from the sub-conscious depths on the carrier-wave of rhythmic emotion.

We are only too aware of practical considerations — more or less synonymous with expediency and compromise. We have almost forgotten these ideals which mould the environment for enjoyable survival. As Toynbee illustrates, if man cannot go beyond practical considerations his survival itself is relatively short-lived. A breakdown occurs and his civilisation passes away or becomes fossilised.

However much the tree is pruned, the sap cannot flow if the roots are starved. This requires man to remain in contact with his ideals. These are within his sub-conscious in images of conflict. They are embodied in healthy art and show what leads to evolution and what to dissolution as in Prometheus and Jupiter, Jesus and Pilate, Hamlet and Claudius. Both sides are necessary — all problems of beauty and morality are resolved by this frame of reference as beauty still embodies truth but at last resolves the ambiguities of good and evil — good being what integrates, bad what disintegrates. Toynbee's

truly great achievement was to show that the environment was not, ultimately, the controlling factor but simply contributive, that the controlling factor is a judgement by but also upon man. Every day is Judgment Day. It is man's disadvantage that to survive he must be practical yet nothing diffuses integrity like expediency.

On the other hand, the artist who integrates will grow in sincerity, and consequently become more physically vulnerable as, for example, when Tolstoy practised what he preached sincerely enough to be excommunicated. But without the artist and the poet man becomes arrested. To be arrested is to go to gaol. To be in gaol is to be in hell?

Toynbee illustrates a fundamental rhythm or cycle of three and a half beats in the general process of disintegration in societies which lose their ideals. Still we have one verse with a consistent meter illustrating Spencer's law. Still we have the same material, the same technique, and the outcome of the same primary motives in man as at the start. As it was in the beginning ...

However, as the scientist could see no clue, as the scientific philosopher concentrated chiefly on external manifestations, so the historian, when he does at last objectively bring us to the psyche, misplaces the emphasis by elevating the conscious above the sub-conscious. For Toynbee concluded that man has a measure of freedom of choice during periods of growth. He considered¹ that to be free is to keep the sub-conscious under the control of the conscious will or reason; thus and only thus could man hope to control the law of Nature and be free from destruction. This was a natural error as the dominant psychology of the time was Freud's which regarded the sub-conscious rather like a refuse bin for the unwanted.

Now, however, the findings show otherwise. For an understanding of the psyche or spirit itself we must turn to the psychologist not of disintegration but of growth, to Carl Jung and his followers. Anyway, as Tolstoy insisted in the second epilogue to *War and Peace*, Matter is either under complete control or it is, in fact, not controlled. Jung confirms Tolstoy's reasoning that we must give up a freedom that does not exist and recognise a control of which we are unconscious. As soon as we do this and can work harmoniously with

¹ *A Study of History, Abridged*. Vol II pp. 287, 288.

this inner necessity we feel free, as Milton showed in *Samson Agonistes*.

But Toynbee has shown empirically that man makes one of four responses to the challenge of life. Two of these are negative and produce disintegration. They are symbolised by such as Jupiter, the Devil, Claudius, Nicodemus, or self-interest. Two are positive, produce integration, and are symbolised by Prometheus, God, Hamlet, Jesus, or self-sacrifice. All of us have some of each of these. Both sides are necessary. The lowest and most childish response is the inability to recognise and correlate significant experience, with a consequent loss of orientation and passive acquiescence or drift as in Hamlet's mother. This is the response of the overwhelming majority of people at our present dangerously early stage of development. Its active but negative counterpart is when the conscious mind cannot distinguish among its sub-conscious instincts and gratifies the carnal ones in a process of abandon. Pindar and Tennyson's eagle of power is then the Nazi eagle. Marlowe's *Faustus* sums up the cause and the effect at this level.

The two positive responses also consist of one passive response and one active. Here the passive involves withdrawal to analyse and understand — as with Hamlet and his words. If understanding is fully achieved then the highest-most childlike stage of growth is reached and an active return is made to transform the society in the light of understanding for integration and growth. Concomitants of the negative responses are fear and belief in chance or superstition; concomitants of the positive are an increasing sense of elan or freedom, and belief in the virtues of necessity in an increasingly conscious perception of the Creator's aims and methods in a process of disciplined responsibility. Each one of us is making one of these four responses; in accordance with the majority, so is our society for better or for worse.

Since the end of the last phase of growth in the nineteenth century with its affirmative romanticism, the two inductive business-men, Faustus and Falstaff, have ruled triumphant. Matthew Arnold articulated the situation in *Dover Beach*, anticipating Dunkirk. Inevitable accompaniments have been violence and war, fear, objective philosophy, realistic analytical or merely representational art, and ever faster motion. All culminated in the damnation of financial, spiritual,

social, and artistic bankruptcy; as Western Civilisation hardened its heart like Faustus it risked the same rejection as met Falstaff. All his poetry came from lust and rage said Yeats, adding that night after night he could never get the answers right as he exploited the fragments of his own personality; all represented and articulated T.S. Eliot's Waste Land of hollow men undone by death.

In his book *Crisis in English Poetry* (Hutchinson, London, edition 1958, p. 123) Vivian De Sola Pinto wrote of, "The bewilderment and despair of an age which has lost the traditional clues to the labyrinth of the inner life ...". Writing of Wallace Stevens in *Poets of Reality* (Harvard and Oxford U.P.'s 1966, p219) J. Hillis Miller wrote, "The vanishing of The Gods, leaving a barren man in a barren land, is the basis of all Stevens' thought and poetry."

The psychologist shows that the neurosis of behavioral disintegration, the sense of futility which makes the world flat, stale, and unprofitable, can be cured only by reconnection with the roots of being embodied in symbols below consciousness. These express themselves individually in dreams, collectively in art. Where Toynbee followed the mythological clue as far as man's conscious mind, Jung follows it into the thick, strangely populated, dark but sun-splashed forest of primordial continuity. Here are all man's personified emotional drives, a great surge of instinctual libidinous energy, the tiger in the night, the horse that must be tamed, the serpent of discord, and the squawking ravens of darkness. Here also are Spenser's silver moon and Milton's sunbright sword. Here are all those laws we cannot consciously accept, making us suffer until we *can* accept and obey. Monkeys are trained for space travel by giving them shocks until they make the correct response to signals or images.

To climb Toynbee's or Jacob's ladder of etherialisation is to remain in harmonious union with this primal force and to do its will constructively in fashioning the external world. Man comes from his conscious external self to his sub-conscious eternal Self. This Self is the Creator. The union is still that of the male or conscious intellect with upwelling fantasies from what Jung calls "the maternally creative side of the masculine spirit."¹

¹ *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933), Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd. p. 76. This has been taken much further in *The Origins and History of Consciousness* by Erich Neumann, 1954, Princeton, & Routledge & Kegan Paul.

The union of directed thought with upwelling "female" emotion forms imagination. With this the poet analyses experience to identify its meaningful aspects and communicates his understanding in re-created forms for greater effect and durability. He does this for pleasure; in doing this he grows towards his inner Self; in doing this he moulds the environment in accordance not with mortal self-interest but with a larger and more lasting Self interest. The poet is simply that form of life sufficiently evolved, strong, and impersonal — Thoreau's "toughest son of earth and Heaven" — to seek and find the signposts of the sub-conscious. However tumultuous his search he finds also, as Dylan Thomas said, a moment's peace in resolving the discord of his search by articulating, more or less profoundly, the forces in his conflict which bar him from his Self. As the psychologist shows, all his cries still concern water, alarm, or mating as he tries to communicate to the family. The poet is the sap, but the sap is life.

The definition of imagination of such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, were in effect confirmed objectively by Spencer when he said that the highest level of knowledge is when generalisations previously separate give a new meaning when juxtaposed. Now there is further objective verification from Medical Science as Sir Russel Brain notes in his essay "Words" in "*Some Reflections on Genius*" (1960) that recent enquiries suggest that the frontal lobe of the brain has a main task of integrating "the cortical function which we may broadly call 'knowledge' with the diencephalic function which we may broadly call 'feeling'." Poetic genius would appear to be the highest simply because it requires an *even* union of *both* these two functions in an advanced but simplified state of evolved complexity.

The highest quality both of general and specific factors of intelligence select, co-ordinate, and direct root desires which keep the horses of "id, ego and super-ego" harmoniously in harness. Only the great poet is at all really capable of this. Only he can articulate the universal forces echoed in his own journey to his Self. Yet all are committed to the descent to Demogorgon, the climb to the summit of this spiritual Everest. Without the words of the poet and artist there are no signposts; without direction there is futility; with futility is fear; with fear is guilt; with guilt is violence; with violence there is the opposite of growth. There is disintegration. But can there

be death? What is there to destroy? The psyche is everywhere, one and the same, a means in whatever form for further growth when, with the next swing, the unacknowledged legislator is again heard by spirits in better shapes. It is at least a valid possibility.

As the psychologist shows, the sub-conscious provides us with an internal necessity. This works through the senses and eyes to unite with the external necessity. Necessity is the Mother of invention. By successive returns to the Mother or her substitute for renewals, rebirths, or resurrection, the poet becomes more or less divine, even if led by the devil. Only the poet's divinations lead to a golden world, giving direction to the inventions. Medical science has revealed, in operations with electrical probes deep into the brain, that the past is as if stored on a film. Many have accurate dreams of future happenings they live out in fact. It is as if all life is contained in the brain to be lived out as the stored inner images coincide with that external environment which elicits electrically the relevant images which trigger off responses for action. So we puppets dance. In proportion as the images become symbols — through preciser observation — a hidden pattern of cause and effect emerges which makes life increasingly intelligible; intuition may well be simply an efficient brain almost simultaneously juxtaposing the relevant past experience with the present to supply an instantaneous judgement.

A spade is a spade in an image. With this we dig, plant, and exist. A cross is not a cross but a symbol. With this we return to the Maker. Where something has been made there must be a maker? With the compulsive apprehension of symbolic intelligence the imagination enters the garden of mysticism. As Wordsworth said, we see into the life of things. We can watch the strings being pulled. As Jesus said to Nicodemus : Think not carnally or thou art carnal, but think symbolically, then art thou spirit.

Our clues suggest that we are such stuff as dreams are made of. The process of life would be a metamorphosis towards a state first of Paradise then of wings; that is, to a greater, more mobile subjective intensity which is more colourful, in a state of unbelievably heightened responses or ecstasy.

If intellect makes words and words intellect, then it follows inevitably that any society evolving instead of declining must express a flourishing tradition of imaginative poetry. In other words it is

always good when the ship of state has a major poet — as with Pindar, Virgil, Dante, and Milton — checking the plumb line.

This attempt to juxtapose some of man's more recent fundamental propositions is not the place to dwell on the suffering involved. But surely a Creator who paralyses the pianist, blinds the painter, deafens the composer, maddens the poet, and disintegrates inexorably with cancer, must needs make of death a very great reward. Perhaps He too is subject to Necessity. But let us not hesitate to praise poetry — in proportion as it says something.

So let us spare a penny for the Poet. In exchange, he, most of all, will give us, to the best of his powers, pennies from heaven. His could be the only currency accepted for admission at any Golden Gates.

DESMOND TARRANT

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MYTHICAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEATH IN SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

IN Sri Aurobindo's poetics, a poet is expected to transmute the external experiences into a vision of eternity, and archetypes are the means to transmute the personal destiny, into the destiny of mankind. Poets with archetypal vision use myths and images as very real, "not as an imaginative indulgence, but as living parables". Archetype is Real-Idea, the creative aspect of the Supermind or the Truth-Consciousness that expresses itself in various modes with infinite potentialities.¹ The poetic experience communicated through the structure and framework of a poem is timeless and impersonal : "it has at once a universal and an individual character, creating itself anew in different minds by virtue of those universal emotional energies to which it gives expression."² As the spiritual experiences of *Savitri*, the result of nearly four decades (1914-1950) of mythopoetic concentration, are at once individual and collective, the epic has an archetypal significance.

Myth, in the archetypal design of the poet, turns into the structural principle rather than the psychoanalyst's collective unconscious expressing itself in dream. It is an intellectual strategy rather than a philosophical proof of human behaviour in a particular way. To articulate the cultural values of a race, it may be considered as the "primitive habit of mind". It is an "aesthetic creation of the human imagination" as Richard Chase suggests, and as such, it has a fictional character which is imaginatively true. As a product of the poetic faculty, it is a thing in itself, single, whole, complete and without ulterior purpose. In its purest form it is the closest verbal approach to an immediate intuition of reality. Northrop Frye observes that myth is expressive of the total vision of human situation, human destiny, human inspirations and fears.

In Aristotle's *Poetics* the word myth (*muthos*) is used for the plot of a play : "Muthos" itself means 'utterance', something one says in the form of a tale or a story, commonly understood by the ancient Greeks as "traditional tale". G.S. Kirk points out that myth is a narrative with a dramatic structure and a climax and bears an "important message about life in general and life-within-society in particular."³

As an aesthetic means to explore and recreate the individual experience and to apprehend the contemporary man's response to the central question of his time, myth is a mode of expression of the complex interaction of the self and the world. It provides "an essential matrix" to poetry. Referring to this mythical matrix, Frye writes : "literature is only a part, though a central part of the total mythopoetic structure of concern which extends into religion, philosophy, political theory, and many aspects of history, the vision a society has of its situation, destiny, and ideals, and of reality in terms of those human factors."⁴ In *Savitri* myth is the principle of construction of the language of argument and the crux-factor that dominates the entire process of structure. It is the fundamental way of apprehending the world.

The literary exploitation of mythology is not new : Aeschylus' *Oresteion*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* are some of the notable examples. The mythic perception in the poetry of *Savitri* has not only a legendary origin but a future association, the future of the humanity as a whole. The Vana-Parva legend of the *Mahabharata*, "the great epic of the soul"⁵ of the Indian people, is the "original pattern" from which the all-imbibing symbol of *Savitri* is carved. The Savitri-Satyavan legend is transmuted to recover the human wholeness. The poet-innovator's mythic mode of awareness reorganises the life and culture with the sense of the total past as *now*. His adventure is directed towards the realisation of human unity, universal peace and happiness, based on a spiritual foundation, which ensure the orderly progress and fulfilment of man's destiny.

Savitri constructs a character and event which has archetypal bearings. Sri Aurobindo concerns himself with archetypal subjects like love and death in an archetypal situation which depicts the tension between the higher and the lower levels of consciousness in a person, the conflict of the male-female relationship, the search for the mother etc. Savitri, the heroine herself, is conceived as an archetypal character, a mythic image. She assumes a personality overwhelmingly supernatural and her awareness is the glorification of the divinity of the soul. The poet's artistic programme of self-discovery and world-discovery through Savitri turns the legend into

a mythologem, a universal symbol. The transformation of the legend on which evolves the symbolic contexture of the epic to sum the emotional, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual experiences emanating from his personal concern with self-preservation, spiritual evolution and quest for knowledge reflects, as is the nature of myth, his "persistent desire for extra-ordinary power, vision and control."⁶ The ritual of yoga that drapes the mythical framework of the epic is the human conquest of the divine : the symbol of the past gets "a new emotional-spiritual dimension, and the process is a search for reassurance, an answer to some 'overwhelming question' ".⁷

The chief problem of the epic hero has been his confrontation with mortality, the end of his fallen existence with a view to proceeding toward self-transcendence. The heroine, Savitri, is educated in the self and in otherness by observing herself, her other half, her opposite, her false self, and finally, her whole transcendental being. Her yogic movement is the ritual to enact the ancient story with new motifs. The action is all internal, shifting back and forth on the various planes of consciousness and manifesting a spiritualised uplifting of thought, feeling and sense. The inner mind, the repertory of myth, is the focal point of the whole poem, the battleground of the two mighty opposites, Love and Death, Knowledge and Ignorance.

In the character of Savitri, close to Gilgamesh's, we find "the revolt of mortal man against the laws of separation and death."⁸ Her stupendous task is to discover her own Timeless Being and her heroic qualities lie in internal struggle and victory: she faces the Lord of Death (Books Nine, Ten and Eleven of *Savitri*) not for her sake but for the sake of the human race. Satyavan as husband was her own choice, her "self-chosen Doom"⁹; she knew that he is destined to live only for one year, yet she chose him, arguing:

I am stronger than death and greater than my fate; My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me Helpless against my immortality.¹⁰

Death and grief are nothing to her and as she has seen God in Satyavan, she cannot part with him.¹¹

Savitri is born with a mighty mission, to wrestle with Death, to "confront the riddle of man's birth". The issue is: "Whether to bear

with Ignorance and Death/Or hew the ways of Immortality.”¹² She is born “not to submit and suffer” but “to lead, to deliver”. She is a self-born Force and her strength is the World-Mother who resides in her and who has to be awakened in order to “stay the wheels of Doom”.¹³ It is this problem that sets the theme of the epic: “In the world’s death-cave uphold life’s helpless claim/And vindicate her right to be and love.” Her desire to undo the fated death of her husband, in other words, to conquer death, is an archetypal desire: her task is not only personal but universal, her problem is the problem of everyone.

The poet of *Savitri* conceives death and suffering as part of and process of immortality, and not something alien and frightful: “Death is our road to immortality”¹⁴ says Savitri’s father while approving of her choice of Satyavan as husband. Even Fate, as Narad explains, “is Truth working out in Ignorance”¹⁵, a power from the gods that imposes itself on men against all their will and endeavours, and drives them on. As the decreed death of Satyavan is the beginning of a greater life¹⁶ and Savitri is destined to bring about a spiritual change in man, Narad persuades her parents not to come between “her spirit and its force/ But leave her to her mighty self and Fate.”¹⁷

In the universalised and philosophic drama of *Savitri* the heroine undergoes the fated sufferings and changes her doom by destroying it with her spiritual mind that strives through yogic illumination to reach upward and free the individual from the bond of individuality, and by extension, liberate the whole mankind. She resigns to the divine power in her inner being, and controls her nature by a yogic withdrawal within. Her quiet inner action leads her to achieve Knowledge about the immortality of the spirit which emboldens her to face death of anyone, even of Satyavan, as an event *in her*. Her conflict is inner *per se*, initiated and resolved in her consciousness. Her inner-liberation through God-realisation, her meditational quest, her progress through “inner countries” turns her to elevate man, to save him from the clutches of death, passion, and darkness. The realisation of an earthly immortality is her bold attempt.

She is unperturbed on encountering the Lord of Death. In the original story she scores over Yama by her chastity and love for the husband, while in Sri Aurobindo’s scheme she is turned into a human-divine character facing Death like Eternity, “stripped of the girdle of

mortality", a cosmic symbol of light defeating darkness. Her evolution to the higher planes of awareness does not mean any severance of the mind or life or body but their complete transformation; it is not withdrawing from life or mind but conquering them by the power of the spirit. She sees the problem of death not as an inherent characteristic of life's rhythm but only as subject to the operation of mind. As long as life is subject to the control of mind, the fear of death is bound to remain but as soon as life is freed from the control of mind, giving way to supermind controlling it, there will be no death.

Savitri's lone and crucial wrestle with Death in his own regions, which is the climactic building-block of structure, holds the weight of the whole epic. Her confrontation with the Lord of Death is intensely dramatic with the ironic sternness of the dark power gradually yielding to the power of love in the heroine. She bravely repudiates his authority as he is Mind's creation and, conscious of immortality as she is, she cannot stoop "with the subject mob of minds".¹⁸ She unveils her being as a sun and her coming as "a wave from God" to conquer Death with the arms of Love. Death ultimately admits the archetypal relationship of Savitri and Satyavan as "the eternal bridegroom and eternal bride", and releases Satyavan from his clutches. As a result of the confrontation, he is himself transformed into an amiable figure before Satyavan rises at the touch of Savitri, vaguely recollecting his separation from her by death and the "vision seen in a spiritual sleep".¹⁹

Implied in Savitri's rise to the apex of spiritual height through the yogic ritual is the wish to attain something unattainable: the inner movement of Savitri is directed toward the supreme force of God and Death; her quest is for the establishment of man's right to immortality on earth. Her action, in the main, centres round the vital issue of the death of Satyavan and transformation of the earth-life into the life divine. The attempt is to understand the "spiritual paradox" that this world is. T.S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday* (1930), though it betrays the modern man's self-deception and confusion, is his search for spiritual discipline: his prayerful submission — "Teach us to care and not to care", "to sit still", to feel the essential oneness with the divine as also with everyone, "Suffer me not to be separated"; his ascent to redeem the time and hear the Word, to seek peace in His will; his inner struggle for moral and spiritual values amidst the ironic

helplessness of his time, his desire to climb the staircase for "raising" oneself spiritually or becoming purified, all is echoed by the poet of *Savitri*.

Savitri's argument consists in the Upanishadic statement that "God must not be sought as something far away, separate from us, but rather as the very inmost of us, as the higher Self in us above the limitations of our little self. In rising to the best in us we rise to the Self in us, to Brahman, to God himself."²⁰ The action in the silence of the soul that *Savitri* presents is the Upanishadic concept of God who is silence and whose reality is apprehended in a consciousness of joy. The light of the soul which is love, the eternal joy, shines in the inner quietude of Savitri and leads her to God, to that centre in her which is beyond time and space, to the Sun of the Spirit. Having liberated herself by becoming one with the Spirit, she assumes the role of the sovereign and protector of all beings as she knows she possesses spirit-wisdom.

She evokes her mythical similitude in the Sumerian Gilgamesh, who rises against the decree of his destiny and goes to the Land of Humbaba to destroy the evil. His success, as in *Savitri*, is characterised by a descent-ascent pattern. Like Savitri, he desires immortality and undertakes the quest, journeying through oppressive darkness and overcoming temptations. Death is analogous to the demonic powers of the lower world while Savitri turns out to be the deliverer, coming from the upper world.

She explores the darkness of Inconscience to bring out the Supreme Truth, rather it is turned into a means of transformation of Death. Her inner quest glorifies the concept of love and eternal life as advanced by Yajnavalkya in the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*: it is not for the love of his body that Satyavan is dear to her but for the love of the Soul in him.²¹ Moreover, her marriage with Satyavan, the result of an explicit quest, is "a representation of their integration with and ultimate responsibility for social continuity".²² Death appears as a tremendous obstruction in the establishment of a continuing and harmonious society. After removing the obstruction, rather transforming it, she returns to the society to re-create it. The movement from Death's Law to Spirit's Liberty abolishing all bondages points to the strong 'comic' tendency in the quest-with-conflict structural pattern of the epic. The creation of a new world

order, a divinised society — analogous to the Aeneid's theme of the building of the new city, the move from Troy to New Troy — by destroying Ignorance and Death in oneself is mythical.

The primeval creator, Prajapati, creates Death as a woman to preserve distinction between mortals and immortals²³. The Japanese myth of Izanagi and Izanami, the original couple whose marriage produced various deities, can also be cited to explain the feminine motif related to death. After Izanami dies, she goes to Yomi, the land of the dead, not wanting anyone to see how ugly she had become. Filled with grief of separation Izanagi, however, visits her there but is frightened by the decayed state of her corpse and runs away. He is pursued by Izanami and other creatures of Yomi but somehow he manages to escape. While he flees, the dead wife in hatred calls to him and says that she will each day strangle to death one thousand of the populace of Izanagi's country.²⁴ In one of his own poems, *The fear of Death*, Sri Aurobindo presents death as a female figure. Thus, fighting Death, Savitri fights against herself and her confrontation with him is internalised in her consciousness.

The transformation of Death from the ugly, terrifying, dark power that frustrates life and freedom of the soul into the friend of mankind reminds one of the Buddhist legend of transformation of the fierce robber Angulimala, who, confronting Buddha, turned a monk. In the Bible also, death is not something to be feared but as Christ testifies, the glory of eternal life is the fruit of death since it is to follow the resurrection of the Son of Man. Christ descends into the grave for the sake of mankind and his lifting up is fraught with comfort for the whole humanity. Satyavan, the symbolic soul of the World redeemed by the Divine Mother who descended in Savitri as Power that can defeat Death, is the archetype of rebirth: his death is very much like the Mariner's death-in-sleep in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Savitri, with the "original Shakti" of the Supreme Divine in her, is the woman-image who brings to man glory and eternity. Death, as in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, is world's ignorance of its own divine self. Savitri turns this ignorance into knowledge.

The death and resurrection of Satyavan is characterised by a displacement: it is the shifting over from the old psyche to a new one, the disintegration and sloughing of the ignorance-bound old consciousness and formation of a new consciousness. His is a 'mock death' in that

he dies the death of ignorance, heedlessness, unbelief; and is resurrected to the birth of spiritual life, entering into love of God, living the life of Spirit, which is deathless. In other words, he is transformed into a new consciousness through death.²⁵ He becomes a "new sun", and his death, as Narad says, "is a beginning of greater life."²⁶

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THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE

A POINT OF VIEW

HIStory is less a matter of facts than of interpretation. Also not what happened but what we do to what happened is what makes the difference, makes history. This involves, willynilly, a subjective factor, even if objective criteria are professed. The mournful history of our days, since the Partition miscalled Independence, has caused a sharp change in mood. Today when we look back at the Elders it is usually in anger. The tradition of the new tramples on idealism as but an illusion. For the majority today the Indian Renaissance is a thing of the past. They could not care less. The metaphor is dead. But perhaps neither enthusiasm nor disillusionment is the best way to understand. And that there was nothing like a Renaissance and that the Renaissance has come to very little are quite separate propositions. If the second, the likelier version, is the truer version, there is reason for being critical no less than self-critical. If the Renaissance has come to very little the fault may be with us. That we have betrayed it, or, to put it mildly, failed to live up to it.

But, first, about the view that would like to dispense with the Indian Renaissance as little more than a myth. What is the argument like? To begin with, a dependant country, the critics hold, a colony cannot claim a genuine Renaissance. That is the privilege only of free nations. In any case, the devil's advocate continues, what we call Renaissance was no more than reform and revival. There was hardly any new creation, at best some beginnings. Some, like the sociologist Motwani, feel constrained to observe that instead of a renaissance the core of Indian culture is in the process of disintegration. Further, the argument accumulates, the so-called Renaissance was almost wholly confined to the middle-class intelligentsia or *Bhadralok*, a tiny fraction. It did not really touch the life of the masses. (This was to be the aim and work of Mahatma Gandhi though here too one must admit a sense of failure, especially in view of what has been happening since his departure from the Indian scene.) Finally, apart from a certain chauvinism and self-complacence there has been little clarification of motives, of our life-style or policies. Drift and

opportunism are as rampant as ever while the elite is almost indistinguishable from the expatriate. In spite of tall talk modern India has achieved precious little and the modern Indian continues to be a schizoid, who belongs nowhere. If these be the results of the Renaissance, so much the worse for it.

These charges have to be met and not merely ignored. As for the first objection, about political dependance, it may be said that in a sense, the Indian had never lost his selfhood or identity. The loss of political freedom did not mean a loss of cultural self-determination. Thus, for a politically subject nation the Renaissance is not an *a priori* impossibility. Friendly western observers like James Cousins, John Woodroffe, Evans-Wentz and others have expressed the view that India needs no awakening because where deeper issues of life are concerned, she has always been wide awake. "Throughout the Orient the Promethean fire was never allowed to die out." (Evans-Wentz, *Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa*, p. 1). This is a flattering thought and should be taken with a pinch of salt. Secondly, that the Renaissance was confined to social political, religious reform and revival cannot be denied. But behind the reform and the revival there were other implications and possibilities. To be innocent of these is to be unaware of the larger, basic issue of the Indian Renaissance. As for the middle-class origin and orientation of the movement, that, again, has to be admitted. But the creative role in a society or history has rarely been shared by all classes or peoples alike. The middle-class ethos may have carried disabilities but it is not the same thing as saying that it achieved nothing. As for the incongruities of present-day India, the 'crisis of India', the fault may not be those of the pioneers but of those that have come after. It is precisely this, a scrutiny of what passes for leadership in modern India, that is called for. If the Renaissance compels us to the critical frame of mind, to be critical of the leadership, the *Führerprinzip*, small gain. Our solutions fail because the problem of India has not been grasped in its entirety, because we fail to see the 'Indian problem' in the context of a world-crisis and its solution is, therefore, part of a universal resolution of the world problem (Vidyarthi, *Indian Culture Through the Ages*, p. 345).

The Indian Renaissance was no doubt a result of the western impact. But for the British Raj there would have been no Indian

Renaissance. As Sri Aurobindo has shown, the process may be analysed, logically and historically, into three processes : i) The earliest represented an uncritical reception of the Western impact, a more or less wholesale rejection of ancient Indian values; ii) The second was, in many ways, the opposite of the first, and stood for an equally uncritical rejection of nearly everything that the West had brought. But in truth even behind this apparent rejection a movement of assimilation was under way and the champions of conservatism were not slow in borrowing from the enemy's armoury. iii) The third process, an ongoing process, has been a more or less conscious attempt to master the modern needs and influences, to create a new harmony or world-culture. The first was rootless and radical; the second, though conservative, was compelled by the Time-Spirit, to modify some of its negative and irrational stances; the third, not yet over, remains tentative but integral by choice. Needless to say, each of these was needed, though what they add up to has often been missed, even by the protagonists themselves. Before turning to the latent content of the unfinished Indian renaissance or revolution, a birds'-eye-view of the prominent socio-religious revivals, the work of a numerically small family of radicals, might help us to see some lines of that emergence.

II

The first of these movements was the work of that truly capacious and comprehensive spirit, Raja Rammohan Roy. The polyglot, polemic Raja, almost a free-thinker, heralded the spirit of modern India. Though well-versed in the Hindu (as well as other) scriptures, he encouraged the New Learning. One of the first to engage in a comparative study of religions, he later founded or developed a lofty monotheistic creed, Brahmadharma, based mostly on ancient Hindu insights and speculations. The Raja personally preferred the Formless aspect of the Unknown and was severe with all forms of idolatry, bigotry and outmoded socio-religious practices. His group, or Samaj, of which he remained the informing spirit, declared itself in favour of the emancipation of women and stood against the caste system. The Brahmo Samaj which had a brief but brilliant career proved to be a major factor in steaming the tide of Christian mis-

sionary activity. In fact, at different periods Raja Rammohan Roy had to engage in debates with the Christian missionaries as well as the orthodox Hindus of the day. And yet, the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj — especially the eloquent, emotional, syncretic Keshub-chandra Sen — were hospitable to a variety of religious experiences and formulations. The Raja had a soft corner for the monotheism of Islam while Keshub took generous helpings from Christianity, Vaishnavism, even the Shakti cult. The fact could not but fill the old guards of the Brahmo Samaj with misgivings. Some indeed feared his conversion. And of course he remained loyal to the Crown and sang glories to Queen Victoria. The attempts of the Samaj to bring in a modern note of social reform and its insistence on niceties of etiquette had a touch of the exotic and *haute couture* — so easy to parody — have helped to set this enlightened group somewhat apart from the rest of their countrymen. Paradoxically, this western accent itself might have saved many Indians from going completely West.

All told, the Brahmo Samaj had been an elite enterprise, a ‘polite society’, *à la européenne*. There was the need and scope for something more direct, vital, indigenous. This was the work of Swami Dayananda. A Hindu ascetic, “the Indian type”, a competent Vedic scholar, the Swami delighted in controversies. He toured all over the country trouncing the heretics and the missionaries alike. Dayananda carried the war into the enemy’s camp. With the Vedas as stand-by he opposed the inroads of both the foreign missionary and the fanaticism and intolerance of Islam (from which he himself was not quite immune). Dayananda was harsh with the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj since it did not subscribe to the infallibility of the Vedas, the doctrine of rebirth, etc. In some respects archaic, Dayananda extolled the past and turned “back to the Vedas” into a slogan. This did not save him from contradictions, since he translated the Vedas — a thing not to be done — and offered individual interpretations. For the post-Vedic developments of Hinduism he was out of sympathy and his iconoclastic zeal helped to keep the Arya Samaj more or less on the outskirts of the larger Hindu society. The Arya Samaj has, however, a fair record in social reforms. It has stood for widow re-marriage and opposed child marriage and untouchability, has been active in reclaiming the Depressed Classes and in prosely-

tizing non-Hindus (which may or not be Vedic in spirit).

The third important movement, Theosophy (Greek for Brahmanavida), had a somewhat curious and more colourful history. Product of the labour of non-Indians, primarily of two remarkable European ladies, Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant, it found a congenial soil in the Indian climate. A Russian emigrée, Madame Blavatsky was deeply interested in the occult. Drawing her material heavily from Tibetan Buddhism and other esoteric, mystical traditions, Platonic, Pythagorean, Hermetic and Egyptian, she formed a common denominator with which to fight modern, materialistic ideas. The Theosophical Society had a New York christening and première and, in its early days, was able to make converts in the West. At one time successful in buttressing the Hindu faith and intelligentsia — like Sister Nivedita, Annie Besant found nothing wrong with Hinduism — the Society has published translations of many Sanskrit texts, of which it has a rich library. Eclectic, the Theosophical Society has every right to be considered as part of the Indian Renaissance and the re-affirmation of ancient insights.

But all these movements — the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Theosophical Society — were somewhat of fringe movements that left the core of Hindu society on the whole unaffected. The general masses continued, as always, "preferring to stand or fall by the entirety of Hindu traditions". What was called for was a dramatic enactment of the ancient ideals and practices to which even the common people could respond but without in any way denying the demands of the new spirit, *yugadharma*. The twin-heroes, cast in contrary moulds, of this Renaissance high drama, were Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Ramakrishna or Gadhadhar Chatterji's life had little to show from the outside. Perhaps its strength lay precisely there. A humble, unlettered (but not unintelligent) village lad, with an astonishing insight into folkways, the officiating priest of a Calcutta suburban temple, a man of moods as of racy, homely speech — that is what the world saw and knew. Till the charisma could not be contained and took Calcutta by storm. Ramakrishna's career, a story of "religion in practice", was a kind of summing up of India's and the world's religious evolution before the spirit in man takes another saltus or leap. That inner meaning has, however, been little under-

stood or acted upon. In the meantime Hindu orthodoxy has not been slow to capitalize upon his extraordinary career.

But Ramakrishna's greatest work, or proof of genius, lay in the choice of Narendranath or Swami Vivekananda as his St. Paul. A trail-blazer, the young Swami's resounding speech at the Chicago Parliament of Religions went round the world. It gave Hinduism a boost such as it had never before and many have cashed in upon it since then. A fiery, moody, sensitive, patriotic soul, Vivekananda is the spirit of eternal youth whom we have learned to venerate rather than emulate. But Vivekananda was more, much more than a meteor that flashed across the Indian sky. We do him wrong by looking upon him as only a royal rhetorician of 'aggressive Hinduism', the 'redeemer of India's honour' or as one who added evangelism to modern asceticism and set in motion a chain of international Vedanta centres. His vision of India and the future is still unfulfilled.

III

And now to sum up nearly a century's unfinished work.

Reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, etc., the lives of saints and sages known and unknown to fame, above all, the complimentary-contradictory genius of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda form a remarkable chapter in national recovery. The question: "Is India Civilized?" has perhaps been answered once for all. The men and women of the Indian Renaissance brought back self-respect and self-confidence when it was sorely needed. But for them we would have gone under long back. The warrant of her high civilization, wrote Sir John Woodroffe, which may yet bear fruit not only in India but throughout the world, justifies her claim to be the *Karmabhumi*.

In the nature of things the nineteenth century left certain areas of life and thought untouched. In an objective survey these have to be noted. They have a moral for us who have come after, provided we are willing and capable of learning.

The men behind the reform and religious activity no doubt represented the cream, "the ascending element in humanity". Exceptional characters, they were easily raised into cult figures. But in most cases there was no apostolic succession worth the name.

Behind the glorification of sects and individuals little of the progressive spirit was left, except as an exercise in nostalgia. Is it surprising that the Renaissance has so little relevance in present-day India? The secret of creative continuity was not fully grasped and we allowed the Renaissance to be a still-birth.

Why and how did this happen?

As we have said, there were areas where the religio-theological movements did not penetrate. In the religious experience the inner life is no doubt of the first importance. Unfortunately, it also tended to be other-worldly. Maharshi Devendranath, a cultured landlord, speaks of his spiritual experience thus: "Now He reveals Himself to my spirit within; I beheld Him within my soul." In the soul rather than in the world outside, where his poet son would seek Him, among the tillers of the soil and the roadmenders. Our religious bent has often blunted the revolutionary social ardour. On his part Shri Ramakrishna did not believe in doing good, the popular forms of philanthropy, though Vivekananda would give the Mission a tremendous pull towards social service. "Up India, and conquer the world with spirituality!... Now is the time to work.... There is no other alternative, we must do it or die."

This of course is not a child's work. It calls for long and subtle preparation, for energy and understanding, not only of the situation in India but of the world. Essentially, it is a problem of education, for wholeness and the future. Here, except some theorising, the Renaissance has little to show. True, the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society took up educational work in keeping with their tenets. But the Arya Samaj was, and still is, orthodox, while the Theosophical Society's schools and colleges, psychologically and aesthetically much sounder, seemed not to have made much mark in the nation's life. This may not be the Society's fault. In its earlier days the Ramakrishna Mission was more concerned with organising monastic orders than schools for the young. No wonder Ananda Coomaraswamy had cried: National education is our top priority. For all the tall talk it still isn't.

Another serious gap, or lacuna, of the nineteenth-century movements was that they could do little to improve the lot of the people, except to watch helplessly, the calculated ruin going on all round. Or make fervent appeals, like Dadabhai Naoroji's patient and pro-

lific memoranda on the 'drain' of India's wealth and resources. As for the rising middle-class, its eye on the main chance, it was not too bothered, at least not while the going was good. As a result interest in economic affairs tended to be minimal or favoured the *status quo*. In this respect the Indian Renaissance was not rational or revolutionary enough. Religious revivalism and middle-class opportunism could provide no cure for the decay of Indian economy. The people themselves left it to fate.

Also while in religion liberal views prevailed, generally speaking outmoded rituals and superstitions continued, as they do to this day. Whether India is the land of cultural synthesis or not, it takes the cake for cultural co-existence, which may or may not be creative. We tolerate even intolerance.

The biggest gap in the Indian Renaissance lay perhaps in that most intractable area of human behaviour or misbehaviour called politics. "For the next fifty years let politics be your only religion," the speaker was a world-renouncing young ascetic. If only he could have seen what fifty years of a religion of politics would bring to India, what bitter harvest! It is here, under the most mistaken leadership, that the Indian Renaissance has gone down the drain. For our present wretchedness we cannot hold the Indian Renaissance responsible. It is our so-called leaders who are the wanted men of history. The debacle of the Indian National Congress is its latest Q.E.D.

But in spite of the chaos and the loss of self-confidence there is no reason to lose heart. "Never should we think of failure." (Sir John Woodroffe, *Is India Civilized?* p. 275). We have not seen the last of the Indian Renaissance. It is more a matter of the future than of the past tense. Its essential, animating ideas wait their hour. Among these essential, animating ideas of the Indian Renaissance the following may be singled out: that spirituality is wider than any religion; that spirituality without body and mind is not the ideal; that the earthly life is not a vanity; that nationalism is not enough and that a world community, *viśva-samāj*, is the answer to our time of troubles. Unless we can see the Renaissance in the light of these forward-looking ideas we do it injustice.

And when we do so we find there is work for us to do. In keeping with the vitality and sense of order of the old Indian culture we have to learn once more that man is more than reason, more not less, that he

is not exhausted by externalities, by manipulation of superficial factors which is what science has to offer. This Vedantic psychology or image of man has no quarrel with science or reason. In fact, it is itself a science, the science of the self. It is only by utilising, simultaneously, a science of self and a science of things that we can hope to build a supra-national culture which is the cry of the world's unborn soul. India, we love to say, is the guru of the world. But the guru will have to learn a few things. Among these is the nature of an industrial society. It will have to provide for a trans- and not a sub- or anti-industrial order. You can't put the clock back. This search for a new world of freedom — or gnostic society, *sādhunām rājyam*, shall we say? — is in keeping with the Indian attempt down the ages, it is to carry the age-long effort of man towards a new consciousness and race, an age of the Spirit. This is the heart of Indian wisdom, the Indian experiment, not of course of "India as she is today but of India as an idea," "It is this India that needs to be discovered by every man for himself." (Kewal Motwani, *India: A Synthesis*, p. 4) This, we repeat, is the latent content of the Indian Renaissance as well. "A greater India shall be reborn for self-fulfilment and service of humanity," that leitmotif can never be forgotten. The recognition of such a purpose is likely to give us the power to use the present crisis as an opportunity. This is a task for the young and adventurous in spirit, to carry on the unfinished renaissance or evolution.

The idea that "All Life is Yoga" has not yet gained firm ground except here and there. But precisely this may be the key to the Indian Renaissance, that will unlock the future of her potential creativity. In the words of Arnold Toynbee, to give a fair chance to potential creativity is a matter of life and death for any society. Fortunately, as James Cousins (*The Renaissance in India*, Preface) and others had seen it, the Indian renaissance is not retrospective and finished, but contemporary and therefore happily incomplete. Truly speaking, there has been but one renaissance since man began his chequered history, the Vedic Dawn. The Vedic cry, *Janaya daivyam janam*, create a divine race, points to that noon of the future. The bungling of a few decades or generations does not matter and cannot alter the workings of the larger law. The new India can, "if she will, give a new and decisive turn to the problems over which mankind is labouring and stumbling, for the clue to their solutions is there in her ancient

knowledge. Whether she will rise or not to the height of her opportunity in the renaissance is the question of her destiny", of "a higher history than any history hitherto". We have not seen the best of her yet.

So long as we have pride in the past and faith in the future it is better to believe that, appearances notwithstanding:

The journey of our history has not ceased....

The metaphor still struggles in the stone.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER'S CONCEPT OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

SRI Aurobindo was a versatile universal genius whose writings reveal the range, consistency and integrality of his living thought and his long labour for a new India and a new world. As an educationist, his theory of Integral Education provides an answer to the contemporary educational crisis in India and the world. He has written with first hand experience calling for a revival of the basic values of the ancient system of education though in changed forms suited to the new conditions of the day. His and the Mother's writings on education are seminal books which if studied with attention could give much food for thought to those today who are concerned with the deterioration in the educational standards all over the world. They are unique in the field for the thoroughness with which they tackle the problem of education and invest it with an altogether new content and significance.

According to the Mother, real education starts even in the prenatal stage and continues up to the very day of the death of the physical body. Experiments are being made on these lines in the International Centre of Education run by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Here the students and the teachers from over fifteen countries in the world are participating in the project. Sri Aurobindo was quite careful to note that, in truth, the real and only Guru is the inner Guide, the luminous Dweller in the heart, the Divine within, of whom the human Guru is but the representative or external manifestation. It is said, "The teacher shows the way: the Guru is the way". Sri Aurobindo fulfilled wonderfully the description of the Guru. Perfectly manifesting the truth of his own teachings, his external life remained simple, natural, human to the end. The divine light burned quietly: the life divine was lived for all who had eyes to see, a fact which can be recalled in the following lines from *Savitri*:

"God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep
 For man shall not know the coming till its hour
 And belief shall be not till the work is done."

(Book I, Canto IV)

According to Sri Aurobindo, "The true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within." He was a critic of the European system of education as it was introduced in India. He was a champion of national education suited to Indian traditions and conditions. He presented a new approach to the problem of education from the standpoint of Indian psychology. He emphasized the spiritual aspect in the development of the individual. He found fault with the English system of education which had disastrous effects on the body, mind and character of the youth of the country. He attributed these defects to the insufficient knowledge of human psychology and corresponding evils of strain and cramming on the minds of pupils. He described the western style of education in India as 'the practice of teaching by snippets' resulting in the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average Indian youth. He deplored the lack of emphasis on the literature and history of the nation in the curriculum. The main defects of the prevailing system of education are too much emphasis on examinations, their faulty structure and defective working, the over-burdened curricula, the emphasis on cramming and reproduction of memorized answers, lack of mental, physical and moral training to the young students. All this results in the growing indiscipline in the student community, the meaninglessness of educational qualifications and certificates, the mental and moral corruption of the so-called educated classes. Since our educational system is big and large, slavishly copied from the western models, a rethinking about it has become quite imperative in the changed context.

The Aurobindonian concept of Integral Education envisages the training of the senses, of moral and mental habits, and finally of the logical faculty among the young students. A healthy body and a healthy moral character form the essential ingredients of this scheme of national education. Sri Aurobindo considered the true basis of education as the study of human mind, infant, adolescent and adult. In the Indian context he epitomized the problem of education as to give an education as comprehensive as the European and more thorough, without the evils of strain and cramming. The chief aim of such a scheme of education is to help the growing soul to draw out the best and make it perfect for a noble use. The role of the teacher

here is not as an instructor or a task master but as a helper and a guide. The spontaneous urge to develop the faculties of mind is the first principle of education. Greatest emphasis is placed on the ability of the individual mind to rouse interest, sharpen intellect and find out knowledge for himself. He believed that everyone has in him something divine. He visualized individual mind as a particle of universal cosmic mind. Greatest stress is laid on the right use of all the senses by co-ordination of various sense organs. Psychic or spiritual education is the unique feature of this scheme. Concern for the spirit remained the most important element of Aurobindonean thought and forms the corner stone of the system of Integral Education. The Aurobindonean ideal of education is to prepare the individual ultimately for the highest objects of existence — the life of individuality, humanity and divinity. It devotes the early period of childhood for the mastery over the mother-tongue, development of the faculty of imagination, instinct for words, dramatic abilities, ideas and fancy. Its main concern is to train the mind to be a seeker of true knowledge. Yogic practices, therefore, form an essential element of this national system of education.

Sri Aurobindo's scheme of national education contains extremely valuable suggestions for the re-orientation of the whole system of primary and secondary education. His theory and practice of integral Education includes all the five aspects of educational life — the physical, the vital (moral), the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. It is high time now that his ideals on education should be taken up seriously and made the basis of educational reconstruction in India and the world. The prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo — the educationist, provides the sure and practical remedy for the disillusionment with the existing set up of education everywhere.

O. P. MALHOTRA

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9. *Bulletin of Physical Education* later called the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* (February, April, 1949, 1952 & April, August, 1960).
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In Chapter 6, p. 80, the authors deal with the ancient vishvavidyalaya system of education which was a unique and original one.

REVIEW

People of the Lake : Man; his Origins, Nature and Future by Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin, Collins, 1979—223 pages, £ 6.50.

MAN AT THE CROSSROAD

IN the last ten years there has been much activity in many disciplines searching into man's past as a guide to the present and future.

The two authors of this book are well placed to make a significant contribution to the developing understanding of our place in our environment. Richard Leakey, aged 34, is the son of Louis and Mary Leakey who took him with them from his birth on their exploration of archaeological sites in Kenya and Tanzania. He is now head of the Kenyan Museum and Chairman of the New York based Foundation for Research into the Origins of Man.

Roger Lewin, also 34, is a biologist, now deputy editor of *New Scientist*; he has been collaborating with Richard Leakey since 1975, visiting many research sites in East Africa.

The lake is Lake Turkana in the extreme north of Kenya with Uganda to the west, Ethiopia to the north, Tanzania to the south and the Indian Ocean to the east.

In the early part of the book they deal with the "bare bones" of evolution, the biological structure, and the basic economy and social organisation of the gathering and hunting people, and speculate about the origins of these characteristics. Then they move on to intelligence and language in their social and cultural contexts and this brings them to the difficult matter of sex and sex roles. Finally, they tackle the political aspect of human prehistory and ask the essential and vital questions — are humans innately aggressive? Are war and oppression inevitable wherever man is to be found?

At the beginning we are told (p. 25) that already some 40 million years ago an apparatus that is important to us now — grasping hands, stereoscopic vision, and the gift of seeing in colour — existed, establishing the evolutionary secret of humanity: to keep equipment simple and adaptable, and not to become specialised into a biological dead-end.

Then came the monkeys to dominate and a change of diet from

insects to leaves and fruit. The monkeys did not rule for long; some 30 million years ago came the apes, bigger than the monkeys and exploiting a whole range of ecological opportunities. Between 15 and 12 million years ago (p. 30) changes in the environment opened a new ecological niche for a woodland animal that could survive on tough food; between 3 and 12 million years ago, there were important advantages in walking on 2 rather than 4 legs. With the forests shrinking, the competition of natural selection would make the discovery of new environments and adaptation to them very necessary. Hence a move by many, including our ancestors, into a more open savanna on the basis of the businessman's opportunism.

On p. 35 is stated that the most dramatic thing that happened to man is that he learned to walk upright. "By about 3 million years ago our ancestors walked around the Pliocene landscape in much the same way as modern humans walk around modern cities." Desmond Morris suggested that man stood up to improve his "prey-killing powers", while Branko Bokum in his interesting book, *Man: the Fallen Ape*, (p. 51), suggests that the upright posture was adopted because it was better for carrying the increased weight of the brain.

The writers suggest (p. 46) that between 2 and 3 million years ago there were at least 3 different early humans or hominids living on earth. Only *homo habilis* ('able man'), between 4 ft. and 5 ft. tall with a notably large cranium, survived to give rise to *homo sapiens*. The others lost out and became extinct.

Homo erectus (p. 66) was the evolutionary progeny of *homo habilis* and he lived in many parts of Europe and Asia until as recently as half a million years ago. *Homo erectus* has a culture good enough to enable him to escape the climatic constraints of the tropics and migrate to cooler areas so that something over a million years ago, groups of African-born *homo erectus* moved into Asia and then into Europe, evolving into *homo sapiens* in the process, inventing a hunting and gathering economy.

Humans started making stone tools (p. 73) to 'a purposeful and organised pattern' at least two-and-a-half million years ago in specific camp sites. This constituted a tremendous social and mental revolution involving planning and foresight.

In Chapter 6, p. 80, the authors deal with the ancient way of life itself, noting that agriculture first arose as recently as 10,000 years

ago, marking the slow demise of the hunting and gathering existence that had dominated for at least 2 million years.

An important point is that, '*The forces of evolution that... moulded the human mind and shaped our psychology and our social responsiveness are those embedded in the hunting and gathering way of life... we look out on a technologically sophisticated and socially divided world with the brains of hunter gatherers in our heads.*' This is a daunting thought when coupled with inter-continental missiles....

However, it is pointed out (p. 82) that the network that held different and overlapping bands of people together, both within and between them, is kinship, sharing, and co-operation, and that flexibility was socially and ecologically adaptive. On p. 99, it is stated, after a survey of communal life involving gathering and hunting, '*co-operation must be a very basic motivation in human nature.*' The whole way of life was based on a 4 year interval between children, the size of 25 for the band, within a tribe of some 500, formed by biological necessity for '*the cutting edge of evolutionary pressure*' carving out the most efficient systems based on the mixed altruism economy of gathering vegetables, etc., hunting flesh, and sharing (reciprocal altruism) using a division of labour (p. 112).

The authors consider (p. 113) that this economy gave rise to plenty of leisure and the first affluent society. A basic biological aim was the preservation and perpetuation of the immortal genes, the '*engines of evolution*' (p. 121).

On p. 138 in Chapter 8, dealing with "*Intelligence and Tools*", we find that '*the really special feature of the human brain is its use of language to question our place in nature.*' Next comes self-awareness and then death-awareness and so, long ago, was founded ritual burial and the seeds of embryo religion and philosophy. The '*pressures of social life (p. 148) were an important engine in the evolution of intelligence, both in the higher primates and ourselves.*' Between 3 million to one million years ago, under these pressures and including stone tool-making and social intercourse, our ancestors' brains virtually doubled while dealing, on the basis of genuine reciprocal altruism, with the qualities of cheating, bluff, trust, and suspicion — the whole range of early emotions, good and bad, and the tricks of the trade involved in natural selection as man evolved and survived on his way to the present.

Dealing with language and culture, the authors note that our group culture became possible only with the advent of language. Conformity plays an important part in this (p. 160), and it makes wars easier to organise by power-motivated leaders. The ultimate improvement in tool-making reflected the better social structure that came with language (p. 165), which thus appears vital to the whole of evolving life for humanity, particularly from as recently as 50,000 years ago.

The subject of Chapter 10 is "*Sex and Women's Liberation*". Here we see the vital importance of the genes. The writers say (p. 173), '*Through the long eons of biological time there is a slow but steady drift in animals' genetic makeup so that the behavioural effects of new or modified genes are "tried out" against prevailing conditions: if the new genes are advantageous they survive and thrive, if not they disappear.*' This is how new species arise while others become extinct.

Sexual relations between animals and between early humans are examined and male dominance in the latter confirmed also in the modern world. Early male dominance was in proportion to their hold over the meat supplies (p. 188). The writers believe this will yield to genuine female equality only very slowly on the basis of increasing social justice giving rise to better values.

In the final Chapter 11, the authors say, "*Hunter to Farmer*": and they ask '*giant leap or fatal step?*' The agricultural revolution began about 12,000 years ago and it led to a population explosion. All this has produced a very unusual animal (p. 195) and the only one to wage organised murder on its own kind.

However, the authors conclude (p. 209) that our past is not unduly violent and that blood lust and organised murder is not necessarily innate in our genetic imperatives. They put their hope in the need for co-operation as applied in peace and not in war. '*It is the right political motivation that is needed.*' (p. 213).

This book is well written and easy to understand. The authors handle the evidence carefully and are cautious about their conclusions, not rashly hazarding ones that are merely sensational or dramatic. It makes a very worth while and helpful contribution to the understanding of our human predicament, building on the past to point the way ahead to a viable future, even if it is on a razor's edge.

DESMAND TARRANT

The Spiritual Nature of Man — A Study of Contemporary Religious Experience by Sir Alister Hardy, F. R. S. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979. 162 pages, £ 6.95

SIR Alister Hardy was a Professor of Zoology in Oxford from 1946 to 1961 and he has written scientific books about marine life; so he approaches the problem of religious experience as a scientist. He founded the Religious Experience Research Unit at Manchester College, Oxford in 1969 and was its Director until 1976.

He is well known for his books *The Living Stream*, *The Divine Flame* and *The Biology of God*, all of which reflect the spiritual insights of an imaginative pioneering scientist.

The present book is based on the fact that a large number of people have an awareness of a "benevolent" non-physical power or force that seems to be partly or completely beyond and greater than the individual self. It is maintained that the experience of this power is profound and not always identified with religion. Sir Alister's aim in founding his research unit was to make an ordered and objective study of this phenomenon.

The book is based on eight years of research by a small team and it draws on some 3,000 - 4,000 first-hand accounts collected and classified. It must be stressed that the aim is not to find support for any kind of institutional religion or doctrine, and certainly not "to prove" that God exists, but to understand man's spiritual feelings in general and to ascertain the effect these emotions may have on the individual's life, the approach being that of an inquiring naturalist.

Sir Alister is a Darwinian convinced that man's spiritual nature must tie in with the evolutionary process. He also believes in the fundamental concept of immanence, the indwelling of the Creator within all created, but above all in his research he is the impartial scientist as far as this is humanly possible with such touchy material.

The book looks first at spiritual feeling in a scientific age and (p. 8) maintains that scientific study of religion is vital as without it religion may disappear as a moral force and if this happens our civilisation could die.

On p. 11, Sri Alister notes, in what seems to be a general shift of interpretation today, that, 'It is a fallacy to suppose that chance random changes in the DNA molecules control the course of evolution; they

provide the almost infinite range of variation among members of any population of animals and plants for natural selection to act upon, but it is selection that guides the process and selection is far from random.

The book deals with the written samples broken down for classification and analysis. These categories range from sensory or quasisensory experience, visual, auditory, touch and smell, through cognitive and affective elements such as sense of security, protection, peace and sense of new strength, guidance, awe, reverence, and wonder, to antecedents or "triggers" of experience such as natural beauty, creative work, illness, crisis, and silence or solitude. Finally, the categories are rounded off by looking at the consequences of experience, such as sense of purpose or new meaning to life and changes in attitude to others. There were twice as many females among the respondents as males.

Nearly all the recorded experiences were good ones but not quite all. On p. 63, we see, '*Among our first 3,000 records there were 125 which described the appalling sense of fear that people may experience.*'

Just a few accounts seem to support Carl Jung's process of Individuation, the approach to an Inner Self which dominates the Outer Self or ego in the later part of life, e.g. (p. 77) '*Progressively I found by experience that the little ego (conscious "I") was only part of a more all-inclusive "Self" with the increasing awareness that, if I would allow it, this "Self" lived me, and lived me far more wisely than could my limited ego.*'

Also (p. 91), '*The number of people who have come to find a greater spiritual awareness through states of depression forms indeed a relatively large proportion.*'

So the whole exercise can be seen as thorough and painstaking even if it is only a beginning in a difficult field. The first and larger part of the book is based on qualitative research; with Chapter 8, p. 124, the emphasis is on quantitative research. This was based on 'Hardy's question', i.e. '*Do you feel that you have ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?*' Of those asked in a nationwide survey, 69% of males said "never" out of 853 asked; 58% said "never" of 1,012 females asked; total was 63.6% saying "never" out of 1,865.

Finally, Sir Alister writes about Spirituality itself — what is it? He answers (p. 131), "It seems to me that the main characteristics of man's religious and spiritual experiences are shown in his feelings for a transcendental reality which frequently manifest themselves in early childhood; a feeling that 'Something Other' than the self can actually be sensed; a desire to personalize this presence into a deity and to have a private I-Thou relationship with it, communicating through prayer."

Sir Alister notes that his findings are similar to those of that other pioneer, William James, in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). What worries me is that the immanent or indwelling Creator responsible for all this also arranged for napalm bombs to be dropped on Vietnamese children..... but Sir Alister asks for an experimental faith, a trial approach which may, if sincerely attempted, put one in friendly touch with the Maker who is all things.

This book is a very fine attempt at an objective evaluation of religion and, as it points out, there may well be a new and better awareness of these matters if this kind of research is taken seriously and added to in the future 'before it is too late'.

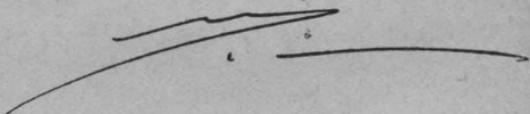
DESMOND TARRANT



The Advent

True spirituality is not to
renounce life, but to make life
perfect with a Divine Perfection

14.12.62



The ADVENT

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Even out of darkness the day is born and lightning
has its uses !

SRI AUROBINDO



THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

A POETIC FRAGMENT*

Who says our Mother is a beggar-woman, the whole universe is
her foothold,
Her sons are the armies of Sikhs, Jats and Rajputs.
The song of Vande Mataram infuses strength into Bengal.
Even till today the glory of Shivaji is awake in Maharashtra.
Each mountain-rib of hers embodies millions of her invincible
sons,
The band of the Bhils, Gonds and Kharwar and free Nepal,
Malias and Khesias and Garos — how to enumerate all —
The Mughals, Pathans and Nagas — the sands of the beach.
There is no end to the treasure that is Mother's children,
Sindhu and Ganges and their sisters — the Mother clad in
paddy green.

* It is a rare find, a Bengali poem by Sri Aurobindo — although a fragment — with a photostat copy of the manuscript which proves its authenticity. It is a newspaper cutting thrown into a heap of rejected rubbish and old papers. It has been recovered most accidentally and preserved by a devotee with great respect and veneration. The paper and the print indicate that it must have belonged to an old Bengali newspaper. We give here a literal translation in English. (Note by Shri Nolini Kanta Gupta, the translator of this fragment by Sri Aurobindo.)

Even today Riks and Samas resound in the Vindhya and
Himalayas,
Till this day our Mother remains unreachable to us in the high
hills and spring-heads.

SRI AUROBINDO

একটি অসমাপ্ত কবিতার টুকরো

কে বলে যা কাঙালিনী বিশ্বচরণ।
যার পুত্র শিখ জাঠ রাজপুত সেনা।
বন্দে মাতৃং গান বঙ্গে করে শক্তিদান
আজও মহারাষ্ট্রে জাগে শিবাজী গরিমা।
পরবর্ত-পঞ্চরে যার কোটি শূত দুনিবার
ভীল গঙ্গ খারোয়ার নেপাল স্বাধীনা।
মালিয়া খালিয়া গারো কত বশিব রে আর
মোগল পাঠান নাগা — সিঙ্গু বালিকণ।
অজন্ম রে মণিময় জননীর জীবচয়
সিঙ্গু গঙ্গায় যা ধান্যবসন।
আজও ঝাক্ক-সাথ হ্বনি বিক্ষ্য হিমাচলে শুনি
আজও যা ঘৱণা গিরি — চিরদুর্গমা।

रो यह पर मंगली दिन दिन
 अस्तु भूमि वाटे श्रवण लक्ष्मी
 यह करु लन तर तर गाँधीजी
 आउ आकृति याए शिवी शिवी,
 आउ आकृति याए शिवी शिवी
 औ भू याकृति याए शिवी
 यानी यानी याए शिवी शिवी
 आउ आकृति याए शिवी शिवी

SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM

(MINSTREL OF LIGHT AND DHARMA)

Lecture I

Goethe wrote in a poem:

*Freuet euch des wahren Scheins,
Euch des ernsten Spieles:
Kein Lebendiges ist ein Eins,
Immer ist's ein Vieles.*

*Rejoice in this game of true make-believe
Nothing on earth is what it seems to us.
All that strikes the eye as of a piece
Is, in essence, mystic — multitudinous.*

Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me in a letter, fully endorsing this profound observation of Goethe: "Nobody can understand himself or human nature if he does not perceive the multi-personality of the human being."

Sri Aurobindo himself was a luminous corroboration of the truth of this multimoodedness of an evolved human being, having flowered out in life as a poet, savant, revolutionary, philosopher, Yogi, critic of life, commentator of scriptures, lover of man, mystic and Messiah par excellence. I will endeavour in my brief discourse today to touch upon some of these diverse aspects of his astonishing personality.

He made his mark in a way that can well be described as miraculous. But then he really spoke of himself when he described King Ashwapathy, Savitri's father, as one who "made of miracle a normal act".¹ In fact he was all his life an emphatic contradiction of the rationalist's pronouncement that a man is, in the last analysis, a product of his heredity plus environment. His whole life is an instance of "a thorn breaking out into a rose". How else could one explain his genius of transforming life's difficulties into opportunities at every turn? His Anglicised father, Dr. K. D. Ghose held Indian culture in contempt and wanted his sons to be completely insulated

¹ *Savitri*, I, 3.

even from their mother tongue, Bengali. So Sri Aurobindo began his English education at the Loretto Convent School in Darjeeling at barely five years of age and then, after two years was sent, along with his brother Manmohan, to England where they stayed with an English family. In England he had no contact at all with any Indian friend with the result that he completely forgot his mother tongue. He studied Latin and Greek in which he wrote poems and scored record marks in Cambridge and passed his Tripos in the first class. His incredible genius was admired by his tutors, the more so as he had gone to Cambridge on a scholarship. He also passed the I.C.S. Examination but did not want to enter Government service. His father had given him the name Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose and in England he learned besides Latin and Greek, German, French and Italian. But his *grand passion* was English in which he turned out poems as easily as a juggler produces rabbits from his sleeves. He returned to India in 1893 and was appointed Professor (later Vice-Principal) at the college in Baroda, where he learned Bengali and Sanskrit. But the miracle of miracles was that a youth who had had no grounding in Indian culture and spiritual traditions flashed out overnight as a fire-brand revolutionary and left his high post to plunge straightaway into the vortex of politics and, after accepting Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak as the All India leader of the Revolutionary movement,¹ worked with him whole-heartedly and called for boycott of foreign goods, passive resistance and civil disobedience, adopted subsequently by Mahatma Gandhi in his great clarion-call to non-cooperation.

Apropos, I may quote here, with my annotations, a relevant letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to me years ago in Pondicherry: I have a twofold object in view: first, to underline his outlook on karma which he accepted as a yoga, as defined by Krishna and secondly, to delineate his exquisite humour in all its native charm.

¹ Sri Aurobindo always cherished Tilak as a great soul. In a tribute he wrote : "Neither Mr. Tilak nor his speeches really require any presentation or foreword.... He could not but stand in the end where he stands today, as one of the two or three leaders of the Indian people who are in their eyes the incarnation of the national endeavour and the God-given captains of the national aspiration.... Mr. Tilak's name stands already for history as a national-builder, one of the half-a-dozen greatest political personalities, memorable figures, representative men of the nation in this most critical period of India's destinies, a name to be remembered gratefully so long as the country has pride in its past and hope for its future."

The letter was written in answer to an urgent request by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who asked me to induce Sri Aurobindo to contribute an article on philosophy to be included in a book on philosophy he was going to bring out in the West. I was overjoyed and urged Gurudev to smile obligingly on the noble invitation of a noble soul.

But Sri Aurobindo was not to be cajoled: he was adamant. "Look here!" he wrote back. "Do these people expect me to turn myself again into a machine for producing articles?"...

"And philosophy! Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never, never was a philosopher — although I have written philosophy, which is another story altogether. I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the yoga and came to Pondicherry — I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher! How I managed to do it and why? First, because Paul Richard proposed to me to cooperate in a philosophical review — and as my theory was that a yogi ought to be able to turn his hand to anything, I could not very well refuse: and then he had to go to war and left me in the lurch with sixty-four pages a month of philosophy all to write by my lonely self! Secondly, because I had only to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising Yoga daily and the philosophy was there, automatically. But that is not being a philosopher!"

"I don't know how to excuse myself to Radhakrishnan — for I can't say all that to him. Perhaps you can find a formula for me? Perhaps: 'so occupied, not a moment for any other work, can't undertake because he might not be able to carry out his promise.' What do you say?"

I wrote what I could to Dr. Sarvapalli but he importuned. So once again I wrote to Gurudev imploring him to unbend. In the end I even tried to coax him: "Your name, Sir, is not yet known to the West and Dr. Radhakrishnan will give you wide publicity, fancy that! Besides, he is right and rational... etc."

But he stayed adamant and wrote back:

"As to Radhakrishnan, I do not care whether he is right or wrong in his eagerness to get the contribution from me. But the first fact is that it is quite impossible for me to write philosophy to order. If something comes to me of itself, I can write, if I have time. But I have no time. I had some thought of writing to Adhar Das pointing out that he was mistaken in his criticism of my ideas about consciousness

and intuition and developing briefly what were my real views about these things. But I have never been able to do it. I might as well think of putting the moon under my arm, Hanuman-like — although in his case it was the sun — and going for a walk. The moon is not available and the walk is not possible. It would be the same if I promised anything to Radhakrishnan — it would not be done, and that would be much worse than a refusal.

“And the second fact is that I do not care a button about having my name in any blessed place. I was never ardent about fame even in my political days; I preferred to remain behind the curtain, push people without their knowing it and get things done. It was the confounded British Government that spoiled my game by prosecuting me and forcing me to be publicly known as a ‘leader’. Then again I don’t believe in advertisement except for books, and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. But for serious work it is poison. It means either a stunt or a boom, and stunts and booms exhaust the thing they carry on their crests and leave it lifeless and broken, high and dry on the shores of nowhere — or it means a movement. A movement in the case of a work like mine means the founding of a school or a sect or some other damned nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the ‘religions’ and is the reason of their failure. If I tolerated a little writing about myself, it is only to have a sufficient counter-weight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always roused by the presence of a new dynamic Truth in this world of ignorance. But the utility ends there and too much advertisement would defeat the object. I am perfectly ‘rational’, I assure you, in my methods and I do not proceed merely on my personal dislike of fame. If and in so far as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it; but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable.”

And yet he went on writing reams and reams of letters to such as we — for hours on end and for years and years!

Yes, to our reason he was baffling, although he claimed that he was “perfectly rational”. But I find it difficult to take him at his word because I have not yet been able to find a clue to the mystery of his strange personality which not only drew us to his Yoga but made us

cleave to his all but invisible self in spite of the enormous hypnotic pull of multitudinous life outside. But to give a few more instances of how subtly he led us on to "discuss" things with him and in what a carefree way!

"O Guru", I wrote, "I enclose a fine poem of Nishikanta's entitled, *The Yawning West*. Incidentally, I was telling him yesterday about Europe's frantic drive for the charnel-house in a fit of 'rationa-lised lunacy', as Russell puts it in his latest book, *In Praise of Idleness*. There he laments the imminent devastation of the coming War with the consequent holocaust of the finest ideals cherished by a handful of dreamers. Let me quote to you a few passages from his book which I wish my activist friend would ponder a little.

"After castigating 'compulsory military service, boy-scouts, the dissemination of political passion by the Press', etc. Russell girds at the blind restlessness of pugnacious activism thus:

'We are all more aware of our fellow-citizens than we used to be, more anxious, if we are virtuous, to do them good, and in any case to make them do us good. We do not like to think of any one lazily enjoying life, however refined may be the quality of his enjoyment. We feel that everybody ought to be doing something to help on the great cause — whatever it may be — the more so as so many bad men are working against it and ought to be stopped. We have not the leisure of mind, therefore, to acquire any knowledge except such as will help us fight for whatever it may happen to be that we think important.'

"O Guru, what, I wonder, will be X's rejoinder to this sarcasm of Russell directed against his darling activism which, thanks to its blindness wedded to greedy self-aggrandizement, is today crushing out our delicate soul-aspirations for all that is noble and beautiful in life?..."

"But Dilip", he wrote back promptly, "you forget that X is a politician and the rationality of politicians has, perforce, to move within limits; if they were to allow themselves to be as clear-minded as Russell, their occupation would be gone! It is not everybody who can be as cynical as a Birkenhead or as philosophical as a C.R. Das and go on with political reason or political make-believe in spite of knowing what it all came to, from arrivism in the one and patriotism in the other case."

Although he was appointed Principal of the National College, at heart he was a revolutionary first and last. He edited two dailies in which he wrote fiery articles week after week, besides speaking about India's ideals in meetings all over India, electrifying the country. Naturally, the British Government took alarm and in 1908 arrested and detained him as an undertrial prisoner for a year at Alipore Central Jail.

It is not possible to speak about his multifarious achievements within the brief compass of a lecture, nor is it necessary as his greatness as a patriot, poet, and freedom-fighter has been fully recognised and is still gratefully remembered by all. Rabindranath gave him a magnificent tribute in one of his soul-stirring poems entitled *Namaskar*, Salutation, which was subsequently translated into English by Justice K.C. Sen and published in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. To quote a few lines from this great poem:

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!
 O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,
 Of India's soul! No soft renown doth crown thy lot,
 Nor pelf or careless comfort is for thee...

When I behold thy face, 'mid bondage pain and wrong
 And black indignities, I hear the soul's great song
 Of rapture unconfined, the chant the pilgrim sings
 In which exultant hope's immortal splendour rings...

And so today I hear

The ocean's restless roar borne by the stormy wind,
 The impetuous fountain's dance riotous, swift and blind
 Bursting its rocky cage — the voice of thunder deep
 Awakening, like a clarion-call, the clouds asleep,
 Amid this song triumphant, vast, that encircles me,
 Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee...

And here is one of his moving speeches addressed to the students whom he hailed as India's future nation-builders:

"I wish to see some of you becoming great, great not for your own sakes, not that you may satisfy your own vanity, but great for

her, to make India great, to enable her to stand up with head erect among the nations of the earth, as she did in days of yore when the world looked up to her for light. Even those who will remain poor and obscure, I want to see their very poverty and obscurity devoted to the Motherland. There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Mother land when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake; train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice."

A few among the noblest revolutionaries have described the prison as their *tapovan* — the prayer ground where they first glimpsed the new light. To Sri Aurobindo — who meditated night and day — his heart's Lord Krishna¹ appeared and he was enjoined to leave his political activities to dedicate himself to the spiritual life, to invoke, that is, India's millennial wisdom and manifest it anew for the world.

Here I must pause a little to stress what I knew to be true; that God has appeared to many an illuminate to guide and call him to surrender his self-will to His All-will. A friend of mine who plumed

¹ Krishna (sonnet)

At last I find a meaning of soul's birth
 Into this universe terrible and sweet,
 I who have felt the hungry heart of earth,
 Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna's feet.
 I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,
 And heard the passion of the Lover's flute,
 And known a deathless ecstasy's surprise
 And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.
 Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
 Life shudders with a strange felicity;
 All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
 Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.
 For this one moment lived the ages past;
 The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.

himself on his acumen once cross-questioned me. He quoted from Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam:

*The Moving Finger writes: and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.*

"This implies," he wailed, "that India has had her day and so had better get reconciled to the fate — the decline of our Dharma — prophesied by the Moving Finger. In other words, India's twilight hour bids fair to be engulfed by the implacable dogging Night that casts its grim shadows everywhere we look. And besides, why must we survive?" he asked challengingly, "seeing that we don't deserve His Grace?". This he flung at me as I had quoted to him from Swami Vivekananda's prophetic Colombo speech way back in 1897 :

"Formerly," Swamiji had declaimed, "I thought... that this is the Punya Bhumi... Today I stand here and say, with conviction of truth, that it is so... Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West, North or South, and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilisation of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be."

My friend, being an Indian, could not help but be moved by these noble words, but still he countered: "But how, my friend? How is India's spiritual message going to be transmitted? Through whose voices? Where are the prophets, not to mention the Messiah? How can we believe in Swamiji or Sri Aurobindo whom you quoted the other day from Savitri:

*"The high gods look on man and watch and choose
Today's impossibles for the future's base?"*

And we went on: "How can a realist look on such utterances as anything other than wishful thinking? Christ, the idealist, said: "God is not mocked". But science, the realist says: 'Destiny is not mocked — let us not be star-gazers'. And isn't that destiny toppling us down from decadence finally into the abyss?"

I smiled and said: "Not so fast, my friend. India's soul has yet to be crumpled. What has changed is peripheral — the outer crust of so-called culture. But has not India assimilated miraculously — and over and over again — alien elements to achieve every time a new synthesis? Our sages and saints, prophets and Messiahs, were neither blind nor senile. Besides, how can you say that they were 'star-gazers' the authentic Illuminates who have not only rescued us repeatedly from sheer disasters by inspiring us to hark back to His Flute-call but also by weaning us from siren glamours that land us in the Abyss? Not for nothing did Sri Aurobindo sing in *Savitri* :

"How shall the end be vain when God is guide?"

My friend made a wry face: "But is God our guide today or the other Fellow? What about the deep unrest, violence and indiscipline we meet with at every turn? No, my dear friend, our bankrupt spirituality has *not* delivered the goods — that sticks out a mile."

"I know, my friend," I cut in. "None but a blind man will say that we are riding the rainbow to the golden sunrise. 'Time is out of joint', as Shakespeare sighed. But the root cause is, assuredly, not the bankruptcy of our spirituality. It is our blind God-hostility that is leading us to the Pit. Sri Aurobindo has stressed it in *Savitri* over and over again:

*"A dark concealed hostility is lodged
In the human depths, in the hidden heart of Time,
That claims the right to mar and change God's work.
Till it is slain peace is forbidden on earth."*

My friend countered: "But are we God-hostile, we intellectuals? We want only to call a spade a spade."

"Yes, but don't you deny, in effect, the marvellous existence of diamonds? Listen. The omens are, indeed, bad — as Karna said

to Krishna on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra. But you must look up a little if only to spot the silver lining. Just an instance in point: in spite of all our deplorable blunders we *have* given refuge to millions of refugees whom we might well have shut out by closing our borders. That is, surely, the first sign of the Lord's intervention. But there is also another hopeful sign: to wit, the widespread thirst for Light today all over the world—a dim perception (now incipient but it keeps growing) that a new horizon is opening out before our gaze, a new ideal of one World, World Government, World Tribunal, World Bank, World Army and so on. Never in human history have men and women acclaimed with one voice, as they have today, the banner of universal brotherhood and a new gospel of Truth and Love that brooks no barriers of caste or creed, race or colour. I concede, sadly, that we are at the moment denigrating the potency of the Song of Songs, of the Gita, that even an iota of dharma delivers us from great peril — “*svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*”. But, my dear friend, the present unrest and topsy-turvy reversal of values just had to happen if only to open our eyes to the lunatic folly of indicting God as the author of crimes perpetrated by the Devil's disciples. And that is why in this fateful hour we must all the more be on our guard and not play into the hands of our Enemy number One — atheism — who cajoles us into throwing away the baby with the bath-water. In other words, we must never forget the great Upanishad's saying:

“*Yadā carnavadākāśam veṣṭaiṣvanti mānavaḥ
Tadā devam avijñāya duḥkhasvanto bhavisyanti.*”

“What does it mean?”

“It means that the impatient clamour to eradicate at one sweep the evil lurking in life's roots, without first knowing the Divine, is essentially as futile as wanting to girdle the sky with leather. This has been the Eternal message of the Sanatana Dharma which Krishna appointed Sri Aurobindo to preach — the Sanatana Dharma of the Gita which is based, first and last, on man's aspiration to divinise his life with the power of prayer, meditation and dedication to the spiritual life.”

“Sanatana Dharma?” asked my friend, somewhat mystified.

"You mean dogmatic religion?"

"No: I mean the Eternal findings of the soul which are embodied in all revealed scriptures and hymned by poets and prophets and seers in all climes."

"How do you mean?" he asked, still at sea.

"You haven't read Sri Aurobindo's *Uttarpara Speech* — the famous pronunciamento he uttered when he came out of the prison?"

"N — no, though I have heard about it from gossips who told me that in prison Krishna materialised before Sri Aurobindo and gave in his hands the Gita, enjoining him to preach it to his countrymen."

"Not gossips, my friend," I laughed. "Nor had Krishna materialised like a ghost, out of ectoplasm. It is called epiphany, that is, He manifested Himself to Sri Aurobindo in his prison-cell — even as He had to many a previous Messiah — to convey His divine message. Here let me read out from the book. Krishna came and said to Sri Aurobindo (the first message):

'I have given you a work and it is to help to uplift this nation. Before long the time will come when you will have to go out of jail; for it is not my will that this time either you should be convicted or that you should pass the time as others have to do, in suffering for their country. I have called you to work, and that is the *Adesh* for which you have asked. I give you the *Adesh* to go forth and do my work. The second message came and it said: 'Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the *rishis*, saints and *avatars*, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth My word. This is the *Sanatana Dharma*, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the *Sanatana Dharma* that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When, therefore, it is said that India shall rise, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the *Sanatana*

Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall expand and extend itself, over the world. It is for the *Dharma* and by the *Dharma* that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country. I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do they can do nothing but help in my purpose. They also are doing my work; they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is *Shakti*, that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment."

And so, Sri Aurobindo went on to add in explanation: "That which we call the Hindu religion is really the eternal religion, because it is the universal religion which embraces all others. If a religion is not universal, it cannot be eternal. A narrow religion, a sectarian religion, an exclusive religion can live only for a limited time and a limited purpose. This is the one religion that can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy. It is the one religion which impresses on mankind the closeness of God to us and embraces in its compass all the possible means by which man can approach God. It is the one religion which insists every moment on the truth, which all religions acknowledge, that He is in all men and all things and that in Him we move and have our being. It is the one religion which enables us not only to understand and believe this truth but to realize it with every part of our being. It is the one religion which shows the world what the world is, that it is the *Lila* of Vasudeva. It is the one religion which shows us how we can best play our part in that *Lila*, its subtlest laws and its noblest rules. It is the one religion which does not separate life in any smallest detail from religion, which knows what immortality is and has utterly removed from us the reality of death.

"This is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to

you today. What I intended to speak, has been put away from me, and beyond what is given to me I have nothing to say. It is only the word that is put into me that I can speak to you. That word is now finished. I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the *Sanatana Dharma*, which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the *Sanatana Dharma*, with it it moves, and with it it grows. When the *Sanatana Dharma* declines, then the nation declines and if the *Sanatana Dharma* were capable of perishing, with the *Sanatana Dharma* it would perish. The *Sanatana Dharma*, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you."

I do not know whether or no the questioning intellect of my sceptical friend was finally appeased. But that is no concern of ours — by ours I mean of those who believe in the eternal Gospel of the soul which India has sponsored from time immemorial through her great saints, sages and apostles of the spirit. Such standard-bearers of the Lord must serve India today one-pointedly, holding up the banner of the One-in-all who is called by many names — say the *Vedas* (*ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*). Sri Aurobindo belongs to this Pleiad of Illuminates and as such should be acclaimed by all who would co-operate with him — who love the India of the *Upanishad*, *Gita* and *Tantra* — the India whose sacred soil has been showered with the *Kathamrita* — nectarous words — of her darling sons: the minstrels of love divine leading us from age to age to the flowering fulfilment of the illumined soul.

To end on a note of warning sounded by Sri Aurobindo if only to stress that he was no "star-gazer" but a mighty sentinel in this distracted age.

In one of his most heart-warming messages he said that the hour was big with fate and so all who cherish India must hark back to her ever-ringing call of the spirit, otherwise we may "forfeit our *Swadharma*" which will be a disaster of the first magnitude because:

"The ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether

she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and surely will not happen: but it cannot be said that the danger is not there.”¹

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

And so, we must brace ourselves to the supreme task of voicing, not merely with our tongue but through our every act, thought and aspiration, the deathless call of the India of Krishna (The Bhagavat, 11.12.15).

*Māmekameva śaraṇamātmānam sarvedehinām
Yāhi sarvātmabhbhāvena mayā syā hyakutobhayāḥ*

That is

*I am the soul of all, and so.
Thou shalt for ever be free
From cosmic fear if thou, O friend,
but refuge seek in me*

Sanatana Dharma means, literally, eternal religion. But since like (Shelley's) ‘Love’ it has been a “word too oft profaned” (exploited by fanatics and chauvinists and what not) I may here, in parenthesis, explain what Sri Aurobindo meant by it from his summit view of Yoga.

“The deepest heart, the inmost essence of religion”, he writes, “apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony, and symbol, is the search for God and the finding of God. Its aspiration is to discover the Infinite, the Absolute, the One, the Divine, who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being. Its work is a sincere living out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its

¹ The message was sent to the Andhra University at the convocation in December 1948.

normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine and a descent of the Divine into man." (*The Human Cycle*, Chapter XIII).

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(*Delivered under the auspices of the Poona University*)

"SRI" IN THE NAME "SRI AUROBINDO"

30 November 1961

Soeurette,¹

Mother has shown me the letter you wrote to her about the problem of "Sri" that is troubling you. She wishes me to communicate to you my view of the matter. Well, I shall be frank and forthright. It is an error to think that Sri is only an honorific prefix to Aurobindo which is the real name. It is not so. Sri here does not mean Mr. or Monsieur or Sir, etc. It is part of the name. Sri Aurobindo forms one indivisible word. This is the final form Sri Aurobindo himself gave to his name. And I may tell you that the mantric effect resides in that form.

Sri is no more difficult to pronounce than many other Indian or Euro-American syllables. And I think it is not always healthy either to come down to the level of the average European or American under the plea that that is the best way to approach and convert the many. I am afraid it is a vain illusion; better rather to oblige the average to make an effort to rise up and grapple with the truth as it is.

Mother has seen this admonition of mine to you and fully approves of it.

Begging to be excused for perhaps a highbrow tone in my letter, I remain

Your very sincere and affectionate *grand frère*,
Nolini Kanta Gupta

¹ Although the opening (Soeurette: Little sister) and part of the closing (*grand frère*: big brother) are in French, the letter itself was written in English. It is being published with the author's permission.

ORDER AND DISORDER

IN several places but chiefly in his book *Man's Rage for Chaos* the unusual literary scholar Morse Peckham agitates an arresting theme.

He is unusual in that he reneges against the ways of his calling, not being quite comfortable as an inbred and anaemic scholar-critic in the academic vein: in so many words, in fact, he considers the specialization forced upon him to be no perfect blessing, and advocates for those in his position the cultivation of knowledge in some alien field. Suiting his actions to his words, he has indeed ventured far from the study of literature and especially the paraliterature (not to say parasitic scribbling) of his colleagues; he has elected, in fact, to acquaint himself with what would seem to be at one of the farthest removes from any concern with culture, literary or otherwise: that is, experimental psychology. In this he seems not to have any "ironical" intention; rather he gives every sign, or at least many signs, of taking this "discipline" quite seriously.

He may be said to have the virtues of his unorthodoxy, or his eccentricity; and surely his is a fresh and stimulating approach. With his entire book, however, and his ventures into sign-language, I have no concern. His main thesis is clear and simple; and though it is not difficult to understand that it should have stricken some aestheticians with consternation (as by Peckham's account), or even that he himself should feel temerarious, or at least somewhat diffident, about advancing it — yet to me it is quite acceptable, and indeed one of those things that are so patently obvious — once they have been seen. But the fact here, perhaps, is that people do not *wish* to see clearly, because of the difficult issues that it would raise.

The thesis is, that the idea that art gives order to our experience and our existence is a grasping of the wrong end of the stick: rather, art is a powerful means of exposing us to the chaos, the disorder, that we could not live without.

Anyone who has really experienced art with something like full consciousness and awareness should be able to accept this readily enough; and anyone who has lived with serious and capable attention to life and human psychology should know all too well how we are continually being stifled by all the order and the systems of order

that we set up around ourselves. In fact, by the very structure of our minds (as we have known since Kant, at least) we necessarily *make* order to have experience at all; we are constantly *categorizing* everything, and cannot get through all this construction to the true thing, or the ground of reality. Yet also not to break through, in some degree, is to smother or strangle — or subside to the dullest conventionality of "orthodox" ignorance; and in this sense, art is our salvation.

Peckham deals in some detail with the four major arts of poetry, painting, music and architecture. I am not competent to resurvey the whole field, nor do I consider it necessary; poetry is sufficient. Here even a cursory observation of the great body of English poetry should give support to the thesis beyond serious demur. Leaving out the Old English, which may be said to have accommodated a wild disorder in a relentless ordering, and beginning with Chaucer, we may find in the immense plasticity and subtlety of English versification a continual denial, or evasion, or defiance of the basic order of which the prosodists speak. There is no codification whatever that the English poets do not flout, not only with impunity, but of necessity, and in triumph. As Peckham puts it, prescriptive systems are put forward in the hope that they may prove or become descriptive; but they never do, and if they did it would be the death of our poetry.

An abundance of illustrative examples may be found on every page of every poet worthy of the name. Here it is sufficient to take one of the greatest, Milton, and the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*. As Peckham notes, we have here a veritable tissue of irregularities, and certainly not what is obtusely called "iambic pentameter". If it were this, in fact (as in the earliest examples of the verse, in Surrey, or Sackville, before it had been mastered by Marlowe and then Shakespeare), it would be intolerable. The poet's function is to *break* the order, and the greater he is the more powerfully and largely he does so. In poetry — certainly in English poetry — "rules" are made for the breaking; that is their function, in so far as they have one, other than to comfort the scholar with an illusion of understanding and control.

Milton's verse is indeed one of the greatest examples of "iambic pentameter", and is recognizably in the measure that has been given that name — *Paradise Lost* is in the same meter as *Tamburlaine* and *Hamlet*, as *The Prelude* and *Idylls of the King*. But that Milton com-

posed in terms of "iambs," or of "feet" at all, is very doubtful. There is evidence that he wrote *syllabically*, with no idea of regular stress, beyond what recommended itself to his ear in the great flow of the expression. In one of his rare pronouncements on the subject, he speaks of "fit quantity of syllables," but not of stress at all. It is true that what he meant by "fit quantity" is not wholly certain; but whether or not he was also considering weight or length, as in classical prosody, it seems evident that by "quantity" he meant "number", and that that number, in his blank verse, is ten. With the ten, within the minimum framework, he can take almost any liberty; and that he could be considered a model (or an intolerable burden) of "traditional regularity", or however it may be phrased, is an astounding comment on human imperception.

The English poetical achievement is exceptionally rich and great, but I do not think that its versification is exceptional in this crucial matter. The Italian and Spanish hendecasyllabic is as flexible as the English blank verse line (though when Dorothy L. Sayers tried to show something of this in her translation of Dante, she struck some scholars aghast); and certainly the French alexandrine is not rigidly mechanical. Moving further afield from our still rather parochial preoccupations, in a purely syllabic meter, as found in Japan, the permissible and natural variation is checked only by the quality of the language and the length of the lines. A haiku or tanka does not have "meter" as the Western scholars are still laboring to understand it: but still, being short poems, with short lines — and even the old choka (or naga-uta, "long poems") being in this category by our standards, rarely exceeding something like forty lines — the flexibility is kept taut, as it were, and there is no possibility of a tendency to something like the "iambic" overall, such as we find in Milton: also none of sprawling away, as in many who cannot sufficiently distinguish verse from prose. When it comes to a quantitative prosody, to which "scansion" really applies, it may be that monotony, over a long stretch, may be difficult if not impossible to avoid (as I have been told that it is in Persian); but I think that the Sanskrit sloka is not a rigidly codified means of expression; and in the classical Latin the metrical requirements were played against the natural speech rhythms in a way that must have been exceptionally pregnant and aesthetically powerful: giving us ground, perhaps, for wondering how our lack of knowledge

on this subject may detract from the possibility of anything like a full appreciation of Vergil. Greece, again, gives us problematical evidence; but if we really understood Homer's meter, we might find much that would have shocked the later codifiers and prescribers; and it is hardly to be doubted that in the choral lyric — as most greatly exemplified by Pindar and Aeschylus — a truly Dionysian outbreaking came, in celebratory triumph. It has been complained of Pindar, by timid souls, that he "never wrote in the same meter twice" — that is, that he was bewilderingly irregular and a law unto himself. Pindar, however, boasted of being so: of being divinely inspired, and thus giving out his great flashes of light in the most arresting way. The only thing "classical" about him, by later notions, is that he does "keep time" in his sovereign way: each poem of his being metrical, though according to so intricate a scheme as to affront and bewilder the simple-minded and the aesthetically callow.

When it comes to Germany, whose versification would seem to be tame enough, we may agree that the "rage for chaos" has been amply satisfied in the tremendous achievement of German music; then, though I do not really know what the Dutch have, having Vondel, surely in their painting there is an enlivening force to be reckoned with. Different peoples are more or less capable in different areas; but all have some capacity for meeting their requirements as developing human beings, living in societies; and then, of course, boundaries may be crossed: Shakespeare, Beethoven and Rembrandt belong to the world.

Returning to poetry — another aspect of the subject is the language used — the diction, word order and syntax. The greater the poet, the better he is able to write with "all stops out": to employ all possible means of expression and effective art. He will not avoid words because they are obsolete (for ordinary prose or conversational usage), or rare, or new or unusual; or because they are common and "low"; or because they are "poetical": he will be able to find place for anything, always sure and triumphant. (Homer is one, and sufficient example here.) He will not feel that he has to keep to the accustomed order of words and the accepted sentence structure; for he is not writing expository prose, nor is he carrying on a conversation (though indeed, in such, many liberties are wont to be taken with the formal sets prescribed by the books of grammar and usage). Here

is a great field for variation, which, added to the more purely rhythmical possibilities, may most powerfully break the expected order, thus doing the artist's job.

And then again, one need not be constantly "all out"; he may restrain himself in various ways, for various purposes. Legitimate work is possible in the whole range from carving peach-stones to moving mountains. Indeed, one *must* vary, to do living work at all, and here *anxiety* to vary, or just to be different, is self-defeating. No two lines of verse, however similar in rhythm and meter, can be identical, because the *words* are different. Of course without sufficient variation of pause, emphasis, stress and quantity, one soon becomes monotonous; but with a minimum one may still work powerful effects, if one's words are right.

Order, pattern, formal establishment, of course are essential; without them, there is nothing to vary from. The reason for the obvious failure of the "modern" movement, in fact, is here: nothing is established, and so everything flounders at random, with no issue, and no engagement of a large and comprehensive, a really artistic consciousness. Alike in the avoidance or the destruction of meter and in the inhibition of language, both individual words and syntactical structure, Modernism is suicidal. Unfortunately it is also murderous, not allowing the genuine thing to live. Poetry is elevated, and elevates. What we have now hugs the ground, it grovels in the dust; but is not for this reason "poetry of earth". It is nothing.

Order and disorder comprise one of those interacting and interdependent pairs of opposites with which we live. Neither is meaningful, neither exists, without the other. "Absolute order" is an empty category, a sleight of logic, as incomprehensible as "absolute chaos". One implies the other, one contains the other (if they do not alternate as by the vision of Empedocles); and thus, to say that the artist's function is to expose us to disorder is as partial and inadequate as to say that the artist's function is to give order to our existence. But still, this side of the matter needs emphasizing, in the face of all the pedantic ramblings about "order" that we have been getting from the aestheticians for all too long.

Thus Peckham's work is well-taken, stimulating, penetrating, suggestive, pointing and leading in new directions. But these remarks of mine take this work largely as a point of departure, and go into

variations upon it that Peckham might well not recognize, or accept; for, with all his wide-ranging acuteness, he labors under a severe disability, which is his submission to the "dominance of the foreground", to borrow and extend one of Santayana's more felicitous terms: that is, he (Peckham, as well as Santayana and any good "modern") is a true and true-blue victim of the twentieth century. So, he cannot believe in the existence of the mind, as an entity, with its own particular character and terms of being (though his whole interpretation of cultural history cries out for such an acceptance); nor can he accept the vital nature as also existing, another and different entity, again with its own native terms; in fact, he makes no mention of Bergson, to my knowledge, in all his writing: Bergson, whose *Matter and Memory* has yet to be taken with a full and competent seriousness by either philosophers or psychologists. So, he assumes that ideas, feelings, emotions are only perturbations of the physical body — actually telling us that one does not know what emotion one is experiencing, until he has consulted his physiological alterations, and made a choice of the possibilities! — and so proceeds from the obscure to the more obscure, as if he were the veriest emptiest metaphysician of them all.

Again, strangely enough, in his book on the rage for chaos Peckham does not mention Nietzsche; though certainly he has read him, with exceptional competence, for which he gives evidence in his previous book, *Beyond the Tragic Vision* — which in fact culminates in Nietzsche, with the suggestion that he represents an ultimate of insight beyond which humanity may never proceed. Certainly to accept the unredeemed conflicts, the unresolved oppositions and claims of equal power and insistence, that make up our "existential" muddle is the most that one can do, so long as one confines oneself to this physical existence, and can accept no possibility of anything really transcendent. But then, Nietzsche tried desperately to be heroic about it, and Peckham seems not to have much taste for heroism. Even so, it would seem that his thesis concerning the nature and function of art cries out for some treatment of the Appollonian and Dionysian polarities that Nietzsche has so acutely brought to our attention.

Because of his own "existential" limitations, Nietzsche's treatment of this subject is far from adequate, and his full meaning is

singularly elusive. Appollo he confines to the kind of dream-consciousness that can make a perfect order because it excludes difficulties: and unstable triumph of the "principle of individuation", weaving its illusions. Nietzsche is by no means blind or insensitive to the "classical" beauty which he conceives in these terms: but he recognizes that the true life is elsewhere: in the Dionysus who ravages the order and destroys the principle of individuation, intoxicating in a liberating creative fervor. He did not champion Dionysus exclusively for all that, recognizing the legitimacy of the two poles and the alternation; and his later conception of Dionysus, in which he does seem to accept him more exclusively, subsumes Appollo, as it were: a Dionysus of high order and light.

There is great but not sufficient insight here. Apollo is more than such a dream consciousness and such a principle of individuation. Nietzsche admired Pindar; but Pindar, with his triumphant mastery of turbulence, was an Apollonian, a champion of the high god of order and the light he sheds on the favored moments of the favored of mankind; and his "become what you are", the piece of heroic advice that so aroused Nietzsche, is pregnant beyond the full comprehension of either man. It is indeed a call to self-mastery and self-knowledge that is not to be exhausted, until man is no longer man.

One becomes what one is by opening windows on, and eventually plunging through to, a larger existence. Here is the real function of art, to help in this evolutionary movement. And the passage is not easy; it is a serious and even a deadly serious business, and art is not tea-parties and rose-petals (or even a game, though it be so serious a game as chess). Here reflection on the participants in the Japanese tea ceremony may be instructive: for they are disciplining and raising, rather than "enjoying" themselves. It is not pleasant to have all one's convictions tested and questioned, and feel threatened in one's orientations: all those constructions of the dream Apollo that one has been building around oneself from one's birth. It is by no means an easy matter, to rise to the required mastery and flexibility, and not be enslaved by the forms of one's own making. Societies succumb, art grows sterile and lifeless, all is the conventional repetition of a living death. One must have a great personal energy, really to respond to genuine art; strength and balance sufficient to

withstand the Dionysian breakthrough, the dislocation and the devastation, and arise to the greater order that has been obscurely prepared. But this is the way, the necessary passage of evolution, the unfolding of the potentialities. One's "normal" orientations must be broken, because they are not sufficient: there is no "normal" humanity, and if there were, the story of humanity, as an evolutionary race, would be concluded. One must continually break one's constructions, or be stifled by them: the moment any complex or set becomes established it begins to be restrictive; and that deeper part of the nature that responds to the evolutionary need and stimulus will not have it so.

Many factors enter the picture, beyond the purely technical or formalistic ones that have so far been mentioned. *What* is presented, the subject, in poetry and painting at least, is a primary consideration, and one that must determine the choice of technique, the manner of treatment and presentation. For example, a baroque Buddha is an impossible conception, an unresolvable conflict of terms: though much might be done in baroque style with the history of Gautama's life before he became the Buddha — or afterward, featuring his various enemies. The Buddha figure, with its various aspects, that has become established — one of the great achievements of painting and sculpture — however it may become conventionalized or be accepted conventionally, to the fully receiving consciousness is a great breath and power of a larger existence, that one can enter only at the cost of breaking all of one's accustomed samskaras. And then the Maitreya figures hint at the breaking of the new samskaras — greater, but still inadequate — that begin at once to be imposed. For even the highest traditional "enlightenment" is not enough, and Shankara composed a Vedanta that has become a haven for the dullest and most impenetrable kind of dialectical pedantry, a game of chess in which there is no purpose and no issue at all. If one is alive, one cannot be *settled*, short of the fullness of the truly spiritual; and in a living society, art will come to unsettle even what seems the very ultimate orientations and foundations of things; by its overt presentation, as well as its subtler qualities and means of expression. Some may recoil from what they feel to be a "palpable design" upon them: but art always has such a design, being itself some voice of the larger existence that is pressing for manifestation.

Lest all this would seem to exclude music, we must now come to the most profound factor of all : the inspiration. Genuine art is inspired — that is, kindled and fed from a greater world, giving its power for human development. The source, the strength, the copiousness of the inspiration are primarily what one receives in the experience of art, however little awareness of it one may have: this is the uncanny power in works of art that makes them operative, and keeps them alive. It is this that makes Milton continually rewarding, for example, though his theology be narrow and wooden and founded on nothing, his God the Father an unconscionable and unbelievable prig, his war in heaven ridiculous, not to speak of his angels' blushes over their digestive faculties, and so on through a host of limitations and reservations that do not touch the continuing and central power of his great poetry; even for those who delight in accepting or touting Satan as the "hero" of a work in which no one particular "hero" is in place or required. As we proceed, greater inspirations become operative, from greater sources, and greater subjects (or objects) for expression are brought forward, with subtler, larger, more powerful means of expression: being all the more exigent upon struggling humanity, pressing on it to measure up to grow.

Here mention of Sri Aurobindo's great epic revelation *Savitri* is in order, it being as yet our furthest evolutionary advance in art. To give oneself wholly to such a work is to liberate and remake oneself wholly : which is the reason that the work is never mentioned by the bright boys and girls of our literary "establishment". For they are not capable of reading it, and if they were to get some conscious idea of its power and its requirements, they would be appalled. Indeed, it is a frantic shrinking from everything large and genuine that has made "modernism" possible. Thus the future poetry of which Sri Aurobindo wrote is balked — there are no publishers and no readers, even though it is becoming increasingly apparent that the continually-the-same-nothing "modern" fribblings are a dead end, to say the least; and the great new world of music, of which the Mother has given us some hints, awaits its proper human instruments and heroic channels.

One can enjoy art, however, without being constantly on the stretch with the greatest strenuosities. A simple tea-cup, for example, or a bowl of porcelain or jade, may be the occasion of quite

authentic aesthetic experience: a kind of perfection opening glimpses to the greater world in which it would be most perfectly at home. To have any feeling operative within one that there *is* a greater world is to be to that extent alive, and capable of aspiring to greater things.

Having left Peckham far behind, it is only fitting that we now return to him and his limitations — his less than Dionysian power: for he was after all the occasion for our taking off into these rarefied regions. In some of his later writings he makes much (or at least much mention) of the fact that experimental psychologists have found indications that human beings “never get anything right”: it seems that the limitations of the human nervous system (or its characteristics) are such that there is always some variation between one person’s understanding and another’s. But this is Maya: one aspect of the illusion of existence. So long as one is confined to the “three worlds” of the physical, the vital and the mental (not to speak of confusing them all with the physical alone), one cannot be “right”. No human being can be *right*, because the mind, the distinguishing mark of humanity, is inadequate: it is not a fitting instrument of truth. And this is why art — the disintegration-and-reintegration that is the aesthetic experience — is so important. Without end one must alternate, growing larger: make constructions, and then break them to make larger ones — until at last one truly breaks through, into the realm of the wide-awake Apollo, and lives in the sun, firmly based, perfectly balanced, and endlessly creative, seeing, grasping, knowing immediately and without possibility of error, using all possible forms, formulations and means of expression masterfully and freely, confined to none. The prospect, the glimpse of becoming more than human, devastated Nietzsche; it would seem to have spared Peckham, because he has not felt it: but he has felt the power of art, and sometimes finds it almost more than he can bear. It is a necessary burden, he cries; but O, the burden! Yet the idea that mankind is here to be “happy” is only a piece of modern sentimentalism, coming from the release of all that “suppressed genius” that social reformers believed in awhile ago, the common man’s dull apprehension of existence: while the more it progresses, the more acutely modernity demonstrates that there *is* no “happiness” in human capacities and terms. The false principle of individuation, the ego, flourishes in humanity, and must be dissolved: the ego-consciousness that separates one in

ways that make union and oneness impossible. This is the dream from which we must awaken. The true individual, the immortal person, is at once the immanent and the transcendent, and lives intimately in everything, knowing the great world harmony of discords and bringing it within himself to the greater, the true, the divine harmony of harmonies. Growth or death is the story; and the least value of art is that it is somehow disturbing, stimulating or shaking by unsettlement, and so to that extent at least can help keep one alive; the burden of the "fever called living", as Poe called it, being essential for the creative transcendence, with its immanent glories and transformational powers, that awaits us. One must proceed by that rage, that oestrus for a chaos that is less an absolute disorder (meaningless concept!) than the great inexhaustible potentiality of all order and all creation, "void" because full.

JESSE ROARKE

THE PLANET AND THE PERSON

I

PLUNDERED PLANET

PRESSED between the soil and the sky, set amidst an incredibly ancient, vast, complex inter-relation of elements and the environment, is the dwelling of man, a latecomer on the evolutionary scene. He has not only inherited the environment but also, and inevitably, altered it. So far the changes have been slow and not too dangerous. But now, between them, technology and industrialism have tilted and broken the old balance. It is within our powers to damage, destroy and reverse the direction of billions of years of evolution. To avoid disaster one may have to demythologize the basic assumptions of an industrial society, its criminal policies and performance.

As Lynn White and others have shown, the idea that man was ordained to dominate nature is inherent in the Judeo-Christian world-view. Later, the post-Renaissance scientists gave their own non-religious blessings — and more lethal weapons of exploitation. The exploitative tradition is older than we know. The epic of Gilgamesh records a self conscious *Herrenvolk* mood, bordering on hubris: "I am committed to this enterprise: to climb the mountain, to cut down the cedar, and leave behind me an enduring name" (Also ruin, the hero conveniently forgot to add.) The dualism between man and nature has haunted the western imagination. As Tagore once said, a little uncharitably, the modern West denies that nature has a soul. But did not Beckett whimper: Nature ceased to exist?

LATE HOUR

All the same another, if opposite, view may be found in antiquity, in the East as well as in the so-called primitive cultures. The Yaqui Indian sorcerer expects to learn hidden wisdom from birds, beasts and trees, "if only he will be on good terms with them". In a Taoist parable a wise child reproves his elders for their non-vegetarian re-

past. The first century B.C. Chinese Book of Rites war agansinst the polluting of our surroundings. If still, at this late hour, we do not learn to live in harmony with All we may not live at all. In Moby Dick the mad captain pursues the whale, that is untamed nature. In the end the whale fights back and destroys the tormentor. The insecurity and rootlessness, neurosis and abnormality, the will-not-to-live among the world's urbanites, what are these but the death rattle of the doomed? Western society has come full circle and its wiser voices are now pleading for the supremacy of a moral order over the physical, a life of restraint rather than the illusion of endless euphoria, holding to get something for nothing.

The headache over resources is real. It started long before the pessimists of the Club of Rome. Malthus' Essay was one of the early signals that a growing population might outstrip food limits. Malthus' angelis recipe of "moral restraint" has of course gone the way of all unwanted advice. In the meantime the irresponsible and profligate use of non-renewable resources has led to second thoughts. Even affluent societies, they more than the "under-developed", have at last woken up. In 1908 President Roosevelt told a Governors' conference: "We want to take action that will prevent the advent of a woodless age, and defer as long as possible the advent of an ironless age".

Paradoxically, the prime agent of waste and spoliation, technology, promises new substitute sources of energy. The champions are confident that the loss of fossil fuels may be made up for by somewhat Panglossian techniques for tapping energy from the sun, wind, water, and above all nuclear power. The availability of fission power towards the end of this century has been announced. Yet the gloomy voices refuse to be silenced. This is how the MIT researchers of Limits of Growth conclude their requiem of mankind. "Given present resource consumption rates and the projected increase in these rates, the great majority of the currently important non-renewable resources will be extremely costly hundred years from now". The prediction may be deliberately darker than what facts permit. But it is disconcerting that the country from which it emanates, the USA, consumes four-fifths of the world's major resources. The only relieving feature is that this gives a bargaining point to some of the less developed countries. This was shown during the recent oil price rise engineered by the West

Asian countries.

All the while the hazards over pollution rise higher the cries of a plundered planet grow ever more shrill. Upsetting the "material balance", the muck of industrial waste befoul the universe and are returned, as ghostly presences, more powerful dead than alive. The indiscriminate use of pesticide is a classic. Other evidences of folly are no less depressing. Threatened with two large pulp mills on its shores (presumably for the production of Soviet pulp literature), Lake Baikal may soon be on a par with the dying Lake Erie. Ships and oil-drilling rigs bring their own quota, as was spectacularly demonstrated by the splitting of Torrey Canyon.

Behind the technological explosion is the idea of economics, that is its ideas of human goal and welfare. Writing in the twenties, Pigou had sounded a note of warning: "It is the clear duty of Government, the trustee for unborn generations as well as for its present citizens, to watch over, and, if need be, by legislative enactment, to defend, the exhaustible natural resources from rash and reckless spoliation." Standard of living cannot be an absolute index of either the standard of life or the absence of inequality. Naturally, in a goods-orientated society more goods are likely to be produced in the short run than are perhaps socially desirable or even perhaps necessary. People are urged to buy cars and TV sets, but little concern is shown for housing conditions, sanitation, public transport, libraries or playgrounds for children. Artificial life styles and thought-ways have given the modern era the look of an off-beat theatre of the Absurd.

TWO TOGETHER

Wealth and Welfare are not necessarily concomitants. There may be non-economic components of welfare, non-measurable sources of satisfaction. Misuse of and alienation from the land contribute, substantially, to the disease. As Poyani has pointed out: "Traditionally, land and labour are not separated: labour forms part of life, land remains part of nature, life and nature form an articulate whole." The economic function is but one of the many vital functions of the land. "It invests man's life with stability: the site of his habitation, it is a condition of his physical safety: it is the landscape and the seasons.

We might as well imagine his being born without hands and feet as carrying on his life without land."

It is a technique more than economics, rather the two together, that explain the present situation. A reductionist expertise, efficient, specialised, autonomous technology overlooks the subtler prices or sacrifice. Job satisfaction has gone overboard. Leisure is either dreaded or vulgarised. In a life from which meaning has been removed, success and failure have become synonyms. That most industrial policies and products are inimical or irrelevant to human welfare is too true to be good. Technique may have some rationale in an economy of scarcity; but less in an affluent society. Engineering skill is easier to acquire than insight into final ends or the law of consequences. The use of atomic weapons should teach the simple lesson to all but the unteachable.

Technical considerations alone determine decisions. By changing and choking nature technology has created a narrower, a monotonous universe. Even America once had 186 varieties of apple and 223 of pear. Unless halted in time the standardised technological world will grow at the expense of the natural world. The day is not far off when the entire environment may be invented or pre-fabricated. Already in Los Angeles one can see plastic trees along the Jefferson Avenue; in Washington State there is an entire plastic garden, because the owners tired of watering the trees.

A DUTY

Instead of the old "cowboy economy" of unending resources, more everything forever, we have to reconcile ourselves to the Space-ship Earth, where most of the resources, not renewable, may have to be recycled. This means that the three basic questions of optimum population, wealth and nature have to be looked into. For a control and review of technology a limit to growth seems inescapable. The era of conspicuous waste over, we may have to do with less. This does not mean a stationary, unrewarding society so much as a stable, self-restrained society. We have a duty to be wise, at least after the event, after the ruinous irrationalities of the Age of Reason and the Machine.

Understandably, it is in the affluent areas that the reaction has

begun. What shall we do to be saved? First, the god of Machine should be shown his place, which is to serve and not to dominate. Also in keeping with the archaic idea of the chain of being we must learn from and design with Nature, desist from matricide. Vitiated with vanity and short-sightedness, our approach to the problems of life on earth has to change radically in favour of the original and essential nature of our inter-existence. Late in the day we are realising that there can be no viable human society as long as the attitude towards nature is one of aggression; further, only by a return to an identity with her and life-sacredness can there be a hope for man. A sign of the change will be a return to the roots, the organic link snapped by indiscriminate industrialization. Another would be a future-oriented wholeness and sense of belonging. As Aldo Leopold once said, there are spiritual dangers in not owning a farm, that is in not being sons of the soil. For young people living close to the land and encountering hardship can be an inestimable training and safety-valve for the wildness that erupts so regularly and disastrously in almost all urban areas.

Only an awareness of the true nature of the maladjustment can help us in reaching solutions and getting rid of the error of a few criminally careless centuries. Luckily there are signs of recovery among scientists and sociologists, the reaching towards a profounder readjustment, a hopeful realignment with reality, not unknown to our ancestors whom we pretend to pity.

II

ECOLOGICAL HUMANISM

Rival humanisms, past and present, have been tested and found wanting. Man needs, continually, to be redefined. That which has helped to redefine the boundaries is the emerging perspective in further evolution. New maps of the mind, more comprehensive concepts of culture, are in the making. Evolution itself is a form of self-exceeding. All humanisms that leave out the universal urge for transcendence are in the end self-defeating.

Evolution, Science and values are no longer seen as separate.

Nature and self have a thousand affiliations. Except in "Cosmologies", values are woven into the world. Man and his consciousness are not fortuitous: on the contrary, they are, deep down, a deliberate development whose secret we have to decipher. The dependence of values on cosmologies, and vice versa, provides a new imperative; new, yet older than the hills. As a conscious sector in a conscious evolution, this alone gives man his lost centre and purpose, a rationale and a responsibility. Men are the universe grown conscious.

Linking the biological to the trans-biological, the descriptive to the moral, as matrix of culture, cosmologies provide the architecture of humanism. As is your worldview, so will be your world. Compared to the archaic *Anschauung* modern specializations seem to be "all in pieces, all coherence gone". Palladium turned into a tattered tent, the chorus of lamentations can be heard on all sides.

Is it enough to condemn ourselves as epigoni? Can we not go on to something better, more constructive? Against a de-sacralised Mechanomorphism, the slow attrition of the creative and the spontaneous, Schweitzer had hit upon Reverence for Life as an antidote. It was a seminal insight, even if the details have to be worked out. This is one of the tasks of Ecological Humanism. Henryk Skolimowski, who first used the phrase, has given it considerable analytical underpinning. It can take a little more.

COSMIC CRISIS

Most Lilliputian, all-too-human humanisms have reduced man to himself. Bound by religion, the traditional doctrines look upon man as terminal; scientific humanisms (La Mettrie, Marx, Skinner) are openly, sometime diabolically, deterministic. But, as Pico Della Mirandola knew, the dignity of man cannot do without the dimension of transcendence. Now, against the backdrop of a cosmic crisis, we have the evolutionary and ecological imperative.

The secular city, built on purely contingent and instrumental values, did not arise overnight. Did not Baudelaire, in some ways the first of modern poets, call the city a vast cemetery? An unprecedented event, its fearful finale is little understood: the uprooting of man. The house is a machine to live in, announced the unabashed Le Cor-

busier, not knowing that he was uttering a curse. No wonder we are all Displaced Persons. By separating values from cognitive knowledge scientism has kept us prisoners of a false and stunted self-view, according to which only quantifiable, physical knowledge exists or has the right to exist. The rest is either non-existent or unknowable, indeed not worth knowing. That cussedness has disconcerting consequences.

Instrumental culture, aided by technology, will always tend to large scale manipulation. It has no place for the person, none for the soul and its needs. Pace Oscar Wilde, the Soul of Man under Socialism is poised for disillusionment. Their abject surrender to the inorganic and the immature reveals an unexpected isomorphism between capitalism and communism. Had Marxism attempted a spiritual as well as a social revolution the history of the world might have been different.

PHYSICAL LAWS

Here the Kantian moral imperative (duly rejected by Marxism) comes to the rescue. While admitting the finality of physical laws (which is beginning to grow doubtful), Kant had posited the sanction of knowledge in the structure of the mind itself and its fixed categories. What set man, creature with a conscience, apart from other objects in nature was "The starry heaven above and the moral law within". From which it followed that no man was to be used as means to an end.

This imperative Technology Triumphant, aided by Ideology, has been consistently ignored. Nor has progress been, or can be, unilinear. Evidently from "Love thy neighbour as thyself" to the Hobbesian *homo homeni lupus* (man is man's biggest enemy) is not an improvement. Without the victor of transcendence a purely pugilistic view of life equals the recurring decimals of disaster and discontent. Forests precede civilization, deserts follow them — it's a sad comment, but true.

The ease with which the mailed fist, the law of struggle is admitted is amazing. Conflict in society has become the unwritten law, if not a programmed necessity. It is, however, possible to give

the Darwinian dogma a new interpretation. Nature's Free Enterprise system may have other modes and a more human sequel. The level of our being creates its own laws. Failure to distinguish between the planes of being is our chief pusillanimity, a mark of shame, a mark of woe. It is the cowards, the hellions of history, that cut each other's throat.

Instead of dwelling on our dependence on the laws of animal evolution one could also think of specially human values and potentials and how to nurture these. In the words of Dovzhansky: "From Darwin's time perhaps a quarter of a century ago it was necessary to prove that mankind is like other biological species. That task has been successfully accomplished. Now a different and, in a sense antipodal, problem has moved to the fore. This is to establish the evolutionary uniqueness of man. In several ways mankind is a singular, quite extraordinary product of the evolutionary process. Biological evolution has transcended itself giving rise to man, as organic evolution did in giving rise to life".

At every crisis there has to be a moral leap, an existential decision. Today that leap or decision calls itself ecological humanism. Here the insight of men like Lecomte du Nöuy, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin come in as a grave note, trumpets of Eternity blowing through time. But for their pointer readings the ascent and integration of man would remain an empty drama.

Ecological humanism dares to offer an alternative cosmology and an alternative technology, in some respects close to Gandhian economics. Mechanistic science, "ghostly silent about what really matters", cannot be the measure of man. Not biology but psycho-biology is the need of the hour. The new cosmology, we can see, will not be God-centered or man-centered but evolution-centered. Custodian of a process and a purpose, man spearheads the unborn future.

The New Imperatives are really one, but may be spelt in different ways. The *noblesse oblige* of an altered attitude will tell us how to behave in ways that will preserve life and human life and the ecosystem, also how to nurse such human potentials as compassion, creativity and consciousness. Unless we are to disappear as evolution's black sheep, a partnership in awareness is the only way out.

The Promethean passion, the strange necessity of transcendence, still burns. Without a controlling vision, technological civilization

will never be safe. Take away sanctity and man withers. We are to take care of the environment not because it will be pragmatic to do so, not even because we are part of it but because, as Blake said, "everything that lives is holy". In his last work (*The Human Situation*) Aldous Huxley had recommended that we should think of these facts not only in a practical way, but also in a kind of metaphysical and ethical and aesthetic way.

It is easy to see, wise after the event, that those who treat *natura naturans* as nothing but a reservoir of natural resources (which we are free to squander) must pay the price of being unwanted. No longer parasites but partners, not conquerors but caretakers, the visionaries of the new life will look upon the world as a sanctuary and knowledge as a link between man and the Creative Intention.

WATCHWORD

We must learn the language of total response to the symbiotic all rightness of the universe, must cooperate with the cosmos. Not exploitation but harmony shall be our watchword. If the exploitation of man is evil, the exploitation of nature can be no better. It is the dualism that we must get rid of unless the dualism were to destroy us.

In the integral view of life transcendence does not reject the world. Rather it fulfils and refines it in a constant miracle. Bliss is our birthright and *cri de coeur*; if we dare and deserve epiphany may be our normal mode of existence. Such is the basic belief of ecological humanism, that man can recreate himself and fashion anew the world in which he lives. As Skolimowski would say, we give meaning to life while attempting to transcend it.

Part of the higher dream of mankind, and moved by the energies of reverence and transcendence, ecological humanism brings a new hope to mankind. Retrospective but forward-looking, it is phenomenological choice in an age of crisis and not an irrational nostalgia trying to put the clock back. Equating energy crisis with a crisis in consciousness, it builds harmony on a wider basis, perhaps the only one that will endure.

And then:

Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
And spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.

(*Savitri*)

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

(Courtsey: "*The Statesman*")

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN'S RELIGIOUS SENSE

*There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will ...*

Hamlet

DURING the bustle of the daily round it is only too easy to forget that on *this* planet man has only just been created. While the earth is five thousand million years old, while "life" — i.e., biological as distinct from chemical activity — has existed here for about two thousand million years, man's age is little more than half a million years. Furthermore, if man's *cultural* development be compared with this — about a quarter of a million years — we are very early works indeed.

For if this cultural period be equated with twelve hours, we find that the Stone Ages occupy eleven and a half hours. Civilisations appeared only twenty minutes ago. The Industrial Revolution occurred only *five seconds* ago. So it is not really surprising if man's religious (as distinct from his superstitious) sense is not yet strong, and that, as a consequence, our inability to co-operate has brought us to the threshold of self-destruction....

However, if civilisation is only just appearing in the crystal ball, on the ticker tape of Time, the fact that we do culminate — at least for a while — what went before is encouraging. It has taken all the five thousand million years to make us. As Sir Julian Huxley has illustrated, the whole process amounts to one continuous stream of life. In fact, if life is synonymous with energy or activity, this stream extends back to the galactical origins, the inter-stellar gas, the cosmic dust — and the magnetic fields which give the dust direction in the course of making man.

From his first sentient moments, Man has wondered about the purpose of this process of which he finds himself, of necessity, a part. His wonderings fall into four stages; in accordance with evolution, each is higher, or more complex than the last, and more convincing, or co-ordinates the evidence, human experience, more intelligibly — not *intelligibly*, only *more intelligibly*.

The fourth or latest stage has become possible only with the advent of science and its methods. But it shows the same primary

principles of motivation or cause, and behaviour or effect, as the earlier stages, so that these must be examined to establish these principles. That is, we must establish the primordial principles governing what man does and revealing why he does it, in this continuous flow of activity called life or Evolution.

The first stage — still anthropologically accessible for study in the world's *very* primitive peoples — shows man interspersing his daily behaviour with ritual highlights. These embodied rhythm, pattern, and symbols, involving fear purged through pleasure to achieve freedom — i.e. a security, however temporary, from the fear. These rituals, no matter what environment moulded them, had many features of all aspects in common. So much for the "how" — but *why*? Why did man behave like this?

Great field workers in anthropology and psychology, such as Malinowsky and Carl Jung, have offered an answer, that is, they have put forward an hypothesis which is verified by the facts. Briefly, it amounts to this. Primitive man *felt* that all kinds of forces were in action all around and within himself, some trying to destroy him and some trying to help. It seemed to him advisable, in the interests of survival, to control the hostile and propitiate the helpful. To do this he had to make these forces as obvious as possible. This led to personifications. It seemed to primitive man that what pleased man would please the personifications and sacrifices were made accordingly — as a consequence of fear to obtain the security brought by the insurance policy of propitiation. Thus, even at the very beginning man did not create his magic haphazardly but out of the living tissues of his experience. He was using what resources he had — very little in the way of cortical or intellectual functions, but quite enough emotionally — to identify causes, and oppose or facilitate them in self-interest to survive. An important point here is that these rituals *worked* — they actually did purge fear and bring freedom or peace or happiness. The rituals pulled people together whom life was pulling apart.

Thus these rituals were practical in origin. The personifications concerned everyday tasks involving especially the crops; they cultivated discrimination in distributing taboos, if the emotions, too, were fundamentally involved. In fact, it was those who were most *sympathetic* to Nature who provided the most satisfying personifications, and created the most satisfying rituals; these formed the embryo priest-

hoods, the links between the mass and the gods. As pleasure was intensest during the ritual, the artistic process itself became important, as well as the catharsis it produced. As the whole business facilitated survival and involved distinguishing between the hostile and the helpful, a sense of obligation on behalf of collective security was also nurtured. So here we have not just the behaviour — ritualistic, rhythmic, and symbolic — but the principles causing it, Artistic, and Moral, all clarifying the positive and negative aspects of daily experience.

If anthropology shows the outer forms of this behaviour, it is psychology which reveals the inner compulsions producing them. This can be seen very clearly at the second or polytheistic stage. With Greek civilisation and its greater and more refined complexity, the personifications included not only the forces at work in Nature, but more precisely in man himself. The Greeks personified not only the electrical storms of Jove but the flashes of mortal passions too — and their effects for better or for worse. The polytheistic religions were a great advance; still through his patterned, rhythmic, symbolic rituals, man was identifying further those aspects now of *conduct* which destroyed or helped him. He was no longer putting all the blame on Nature.

Psychology shows the inner forces which produced these rituals, the inner forces of poisonous fear and the desire for its antidote in the interest of survival. We know now that the personifications of these rituals actually signify and illustrate — whether the artist realises it or not — sexual, carnal, or reproductive energy sublimated to produce social or domestic consequences in the evolution of higher forms of life. Activity, now social and sentient as well as biological and chemical, produces ideas which extend mastery of an environment. This, in supplying its external necessities, works hand in glove with the internal compulsions in man himself.

Some well-known symbols from the third or monotheistic stage may illustrate this. The apples of Eve (the Cockney's apples and pears up the stairs) signify not just forbidden fruit but Eve's breasts, in other words, an invitation to an expenditure of energy that is carnal, of the earth, not elevating; the serpent in this context is masculine and suffice it to say that it came between them. Excessive expenditure of energy carnally left insufficient for other things — hence the Fall

instead of the rise to higher levels of life. The consequence was not freedom but guilt, not harmony but discord, not peace but war. Adam and Eve were mortal and show the forces at work subconsciously within mortals. Prometheus is an immortal and gives an insight into the gods, i.e. a profounder view of the forces at work beyond merely finite limits. Prometheus, a Titan, robbed the gods of fire, stealing it from heaven to inject, with the aid of a tube, the dull clay, the apathetic natures, of mortals, and thus bring them to life, or a sense of urgency, or alertness, in the interest of survival. For this effrontery, Zeus, all-powerful Authority, made Prometheus suffer in chains, deprived of his freedom, on a rock and gnawed by a vulture until an immortal should agree to die in Prometheus' place. Chiron, half man, half horse, agreed to do this, whereupon Hercules, Zeus's own son, destroyed the vulture. Chiron was skilled at medicine; Hercules was renowned for his force or strength.

What do these symbols mean? How far did or do they articulate the forces at work in man's experience? The psychologist studied these words as never before. Prometheus, traced through its ramifications in Sanskrit and Indo-Germanic, was found to mean "the stick-rubber" as well as "robber". Its literal meaning was "fore thinker" — one who looks ahead. Anthropology has made it clear that the rubbing of sticks together was a world-wide ritual and may well explain the origin or discovery of fire.

But what made man rub things together for hours on end and, probably, at first anyway, only inadvertently produce sparks? The psychologist explains that Man's desire would lead him, incestuously or otherwise, to the most prominent woman. This could well be the Mother. She would be the best known and loom largest because she was the first source of sustenance and pleasure. Here would appear eventually a clash between carnal desire and the sense of social obligation — especially where the group was large and watchful and clubs still carried individually instead of by a police force. Prometheus would have to go away and indulge in substitute rituals, one of which involves circular rubbings, wood on wood, flints on flints or suchlike — in Australia e.g. one ritual became an elaborate dance wherein a hole in Mother Earth was stabbed by shafts. Why these rubbings? Because, says the psychologist, having been frustrated of the ultimate aim of mating, he could regress to the immediately preceding stage of

infantile breast feeding, an accompaniment of which are circulatory movements of the hands. Hours of rubbing with the sticks would be needed to expend the equivalent of the energy that would have been consumed in actual mating and to bring anything like the same solace or catharsis. But what a reward! Of fire, warmth and cooking.... So man appears to have been designed specifically so that he *had* to invent fire as a result of a union of external necessity with internal necessity which thus becomes the mother of invention — on the basis of a sacrifice, voluntary or enforced.

Thus emerged the rituals and their symbolism as energy was sublimated towards the sublime — man could not be mating *all* the time. Prometheus would be the leader in this process, the one who — to use the dictionary — is life-giving, daringly original, and creative. On the basis of self-sacrifice he controls carnal desire to sublimate his energy rather as a modern woman can find more or less fulfilment in social work — and be just as unconscious of the real roots of her motivations as the early Prometheus.

Thus the ancient myths articulated the conscious and unconscious aspects of experience in terms acceptable to the audience who, then as now, might not accept the truth except in parables. Just as occurrences thrust out of mind during the day return at night in the disguised symbols of the dream or nightmare, so Prometheus, the one most in tune with his sub-conscious, spoke through the collective dream of art as embodied in rhythm, patterned movement or ritual, and symbols which said one thing and meant another to make the truth palatable, a truth which was essential for fresh energy, the strength of health-giving catharsis.

We shall return to Prometheus, but consider now the third stage. This simplified matters by reducing polytheism to Monotheism. A single Godhead now replaced the many divine sources of power or force. This did make experience more intelligible but it left one major unresolved paradox. In fact where the Devil is given equal credence with God we do not really have monotheism at all. However, it was maintained that one God was the source of life, and the Devil was his opponent destroying where He created. Man was exhorted to invest in God rather than sup with the Devil as a matter of self-interest. Prometheus merged into Christ who — whether as a man deified, or God incarnate — gave the gift of eternal life and personified the beha-

viour necessary for this gift. The principles of conduct embodied in the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita* or *Song of God* are, as Gandhi maintained who also personified them, also biblical. The simplification of monotheism resulted in a further identification of man's behaviour now as "good" or "bad" with a commensurate increase in the need for personal responsibility even as behaviour was still seen as subject to divine or devilish intervention.

Here, in fact, is where we reach the unresolved paradox — of an omnipotent and good God who yet permits evil. This was the dilemma fought with so bravely by John Milton as he puzzled over a God whose countenance was so "contrarious" to man, 'with no regard of highest favours past from thee on them, or them to thee of service.' (*Samson Agonistes*, 669-685). Yet he made clear that Paradise — within finite limits, a pleasant state of mind — is lost by disobedience and regained by obedience. Disobedience or obedience to what? To God, i.e. to the dictates of conscience — as Providence speaks now from within.

Art still consists of a patterned, rhythmic, symbolic activity but the high priests, the Promethians, are now the poets, who look ahead, rather than those who look back with the rituals of symbolic ceremony and hymnal chant. Prometheus reappeared in Christ, Hamlet, Shelley (rejected by the professors) — a host of artistic manifestations over the centuries which, thus, constitute still an age of kings.

But what of this great unresolved paradox — of a good, omnipotent God who permits evil and its consequent suffering? This paradox embodies also the ambiguities of good and evil themselves, as in various circumstances good could produce evil and evil could produce good — and nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so. So, either with the abandon of Falstaff or the denials of Faustus, the way was cleared for the next and fourth stage in the evolution of man's sense of religion, in his attempts to ascertain what it is all about.

One of the first to lose patience with unsatisfying and unsatisfactory speculations was Sir Francis Bacon — whose life was ideally suited to an appreciation of the ambiguities of good and evil. He believed that it would help to ascertain God's purpose if we studied his methods. Thus began the process now fully launched as the scientific method of enquiry whereby, for example, a thermometer is preferred to guesswork for taking the temperature.

This process led, in the nineteenth century, to Darwin's Master Key, the theory of Evolution. This explained how species developed from a common origin. With this theory and its developments man has the "how" of life — the scientific knowledge of its development from simple to complex, from lower to higher forms in competitive struggle or classical conflict. Great minds building on this "how" bring us nearer to a more objective version of "why". In so doing, the fatal paradox left by all the higher religions in stage three can be resolved.

To understand this it is necessary first to see how evolution works. Many fine imaginations have illustrated this including Hegel, Marx, Engels, Spencer, T.H. and Sir Julian Huxley, Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead and Arnold Toynbee. Herbert Spencer's version is one of the most scientifically objective, that is, most open to experimental verification in any sphere of activity or evidence. Spencer's version could be the West's answer to Russia's Marxian dialectic. Marx's version emphasises the environment as the governing factor; Spencer elevates mind. Spencer notes the existence of God as a Cause of the Effects examined, God thus becoming if unknowable nevertheless 'a datum of consciousness' (*First Principles*, 1862, pp. 494-509). Thus Spencer's propositions seem genuinely fundamental where Marx's are not, just as Toynbee's version of History is profounder than those placing all emphasis on the influence of environments.

Spencer explains Evolution thus. Permeating the Universe is a single Force acting in two ways simultaneously through Matter and Motion. One aspect integrates while the other disintegrates. The Space-Time continuum is necessary to understand their effects in what could be called The Law of the Pendulum. This applies to all aspects of everything created whether our individual lives, political changes, or expanding galaxies.

Let us suppose this Force to be distributing itself in accordance with a moving pendulum. It starts, say, horizontally on the right, at rest or fully integrated. As it swings down Matter yields to Motion. When vertical, Motion or disintegration has most effect. The parts of whatever is engaged in the process will now be most diffused whether an army on the move or a child on a swing. As the pendulum moves on up to the left, Motion yields to Matter which is again re-

integrated when once more at rest. But while diffusing, the parts are multiplying as for example in population changes.

Spencer defines his law as follows: 'The concentration of Matter implies the dissipation of Motion, and... the absorption of Motion implies the diffusion of Matter.' While Concentration and Diffusion continue at the same time — and have their own secondary effects *ad infinitum* — each predominates alternately. When concentration predominates the result is peace, romance, philosophical synthesis, liberal and humane legislation. When Diffusion or Dissolution predominates then the opposite effects are found of War, realism, philosophical analysis, loss of values and reactionary legislation.

But as each sweep of the pendulum brings greater complexity of parts, the process is one of growth, and reintegration achieves a higher form. Where Force is lacking fossilization results.

In religious or symbolic terms Concentration is God while Diffusion, Dissolution or the Destroyer is the Devil. But as diffusion produces greater complexity which is a necessary prelude to growth then the devil becomes simply the means to God's triumph. Thus the paradox left by the higher religions is resolved in a single Force producing through periodic destruction periodic growth.

Whenever Spencer's law is tested the evidence seems to verify it whether in the infinitesimal rearrangements in the brain, the alternations of Romance and realism, or the evolving universe itself. Spencer offers the Master Key to the whole process.

Recently there has been a great increase in the information about man's relations to the universe. An entirely new synthesis is emerging as made clear by Guy Lyon Playfair & Scott Hill in their book *The Cycles of Heaven* (*Pan Books*, 1979) and the publications of the American Foundation for the Study of Cycles.

A central finding concerns the Sun and its cycles of sun spots. The sun spot cycles have been called a daily news bulletin which we are just beginning to decipher, about the operations of the great machine of the Solar System and life on earth.

A Russian scientist, Chizhevsky (1897-1964), found an average of nine mass-movement cycles every hundred years of just over 11 years each — this is also the average length of the solar cycle. The French Revolutions of 1789, 1830, 1848, the commune of 1870, and the two Russian uprisings of 1905 and 1917 all occurred near times

of solar maxima as did the outbreak of the second World War. It looks as if there is a powerful factor outside the earth governing the development of human events and the weather, etc., synchronising them with the Sun's activities.

This scientist also found that the Sun's activities could be divided into four parts governing man's human behaviour from peaceful and tolerant to maximum excitability leading to, among other things, war, persecution, and emigration.

The Foundation for the Study of Cycles has uncovered thirteen hundred phenomena related to the sun spot cycles from the auroras, comets and meteor showers through germ cell maturation and the electrical potential of trees, blood pressure and blood sugar content, water, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and radio and sound waves, to stock prices, fashion and creativity.

In fact, everything seems influenced as in a gigantic solar film with the sun as a kind of filament and the iron-cored magnetic earth and ionosphere as a kind of anode in a vast and infinitely complex television show in which all is predetermined from murder to the insemination of the seed. Even the voting trends in Britain and the U.S.A. seem cyclic.

Apparently we inhabit an electromagnetic web, ourselves emerging as *Homo Electromagneticus*. The human cell sends out electromagnetic radiation, radio waves, visible and invisible light frequency — different parts of the cell emit different frequencies; the nucleus emits invisible ultraviolet light. We appear to occupy our own little electromagnetic sheath influencing our behaviour. Our brains can be influenced by a distant quasar. The study of all this has been called reading the word of God. A study of cycles could help us to eliminate wars and recessions among many other things.

If this is right and all is predetermined we should not despair. Rather our Maker is moulding us through evolution and this must be for something better. Isaac Asimov has estimated that there are at least half a million advanced technological civilisations in our galaxy alone and there are millions of galaxies. The universe could well be teeming with genuinely intelligent life.

As Einstein has shown us matter is only patterned energy — all is really only interacting forces rooted originally perhaps in chaos at the sub-atomic level but soon subject to the Creator's cause and effect

procedure as God and the Devil work on us hand in hand or symbiotically from within through a transaction between the gene complex and the environment.

As far as man's religious sense is concerned, this theory must be used with such as Toynbee's *A Study of History* — which shows the challenge to be spiritual as must be the response — and Jung's interpretations of myths. These show that the true meaning of action is found not in its external appearance but in its inner significance. For example, military success may actually signify a breakdown as with Sparta. A spade may be a spade but a cross is not just a cross. What is carried up the hill is not simply heavy timber but symbolically the dual nature of Evolution.

In fact as Matter becomes revealed as nothing but arrangements of energy the world may be seen not only as a stage but as a television screen compounded of chemistry and mathematics worked out in accordance with the Law of the Pendulum in its infinite variations.

There is one other concept which must be taken into account in this fourth stage of the development of understanding. This is the concept of universal immanence. In the first three stages the prime Force or God and the Devil were seen to act arbitrarily from outside, intervening at will in man's affairs. Now however, immanence sees the force expressing itself from within all created. In man the internal drive would be through the sub-conscious Self interacting with the environment through the conscious or outer self.

If Immanence and the Law of the Pendulum are understood and accepted then all becomes Necessity with nothing left to Chance. Our individual performances though predetermined depend on the extent that we can work with Evolution and not with Dissolution although both are needed — sin is indeed original but in being immanent it belongs also to the Creator. Thus while there is now no blame there is still inadequacy....

Across the world are scattered the many millions of our species all at different stages in the climb to the summit of our spiritual Everest. Primitive tribes abound; those who have evolved civic consciousness in the frontal lobes to wake up from the nightmare of unconscious behaviour — where obstruction not co-operation rules — are few. "Good" has become simply that which pulls together; "bad" is that which pulls apart. Both are needed but the law of the

pendulum ensures that bad is the means to good as long as the swings continue.

In times of disintegration expression will be symptomatic of disease, reveal a loss of integrating values, encourage and excuse promiscuity and expediency — it will represent the carnal assault instead of self-sacrifice. The Devil, through Falstaff and Faustus, will triumph. The individual or society, if still possessed of enough Force must, as the pendulum moves up, pull itself together as batteries recharge. New ideas will again bring the control of mental mastery; art will again resurrect the healthy symbols or signposts pointing UP instead of downhill. As the disease is cured the vulture of guilt is removed and Prometheus the poet and the artist is free to tell the truth in a ritual which must be pleasing and well made.

So let us be grateful for and give all help to Prometheus or the imagination. For now he can be seen as the one who thinks efficiently in the frontal lobe whose task, according to Sir Russell Brain, is 'To integrate the cortical function which we may broadly call "knowledge", with the diencephalic function which we may broadly call "feeling".' The forethinker is thus not only one who can think ahead but one who can think in the frontal lobe; here the stolen fire from heaven, inspiration — breathed from within immanently — becomes the electrical impulse passing through the neural sheath to make clear the nature and purpose of existence.

The nature is shown by the Law of the Pendulum and is a process of conflict. Its purpose is to achieve a higher form of life, like that of the butterfly emerging from the grub in the cocoon or coffin.

DESMOND TARRANT

REVIEW

The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir — Vol I. by *Navjivan Rastogi*, pages 296 including preface, five appendices, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi. Rs. 55.00.

KRAMA is one of the three chief schools of philosophy and spiritual sadhana which are now generally grouped as Kashmir Shaivism, the other two being Kula and Pratyabhijna. In many essential respects they have got very similar doctrines and disciplines. At the same time each has its own characteristic features. This volume under review is the first full-length study of the Krama system. Even apart from its merits, it is welcome as a pioneer work on this important line of philosophical thought and spiritual discipline.

The author's PhD. thesis of this brings out into bold relief the especial Tantric character of the Krama System. Though he refuses precisely to say in what the Tantricism consists, he says that it is distinguished by the emphasis on rituals rather than on metaphysics. This is not to say, as the author makes it quite clear, that the Krama System does not have a well-worked-out world-view. In so far as the ultimate reality is concerned, it is seen as absolute dynamism, Shakti is put even beyond Shiva. The ultimate reality is called Kali, from the root *Kalana* which among other things means effecting, impelling, letting loose, calculation. Kali must not be mistaken as one of the deities but as a Supreme Reality and Goddess. Kali is the supremely effective Deity who lets loose the universe out of herself and is also the measuring of all things and their succession.

The System is called Krama because it believes in four, in some descriptions five or six, 'successions'. In fact it is defined as the 'succession of the cyclic Consciousness of creation, preservation, and dissolution'. It is to be noted that Samvit, Consciousness, is the foundation and source of the three functions of creation, preservation and dissolution, is also itself counted as a sort of succession. This does not mean that Samvit is only a process but that retaining its transcendent reality, it is yet in the very heart of the cosmic process.

Dr. Rastogi has shown why and how Krama is a distinct system, its nomenclature, its mutual reality with other systems of Kashmir Shaivism, exchange between itself and those systems, its sub-divi-

sions. In his discussion of these topics he has shed light on questions not studied before but only important for the understanding of not only this system but also other related structures of thought. In a long chapter entitled 'Sources and Literature', Dr. Rastogi has not only given the genealogy of the teachers of the system but also traced many hitherto unknown works on it. This chapter, a mine of information will be very valuable for other scholars who would pursue the study of this rewarding and fascinating philosophy and spiritual discipline.

The author has appended a chronological tree of the Krama authors which will be extremely useful to future historians of this Tantric system. There is also a classified bibliography which amply shows the author's extensive and sound scholarship, and indices of names, works and subjects. All of this shows the patient labour that the author has expended on the study of his chosen subject. We await the publication of the second volume of this welcome addition to the growing literature on Kashmir Shaivism.

ARABINDA BASU



The Advent

There is only one love -
the Divine's love; and
without that love there
would be no creation.
All exists because of that love
and it is when we try
to find our own love
which does not exist ^{that} we
do not feel the love, the
only love, the Divine's love
which permeates all existence.

Shivaji

J.J.

The ADVENT

August 1981

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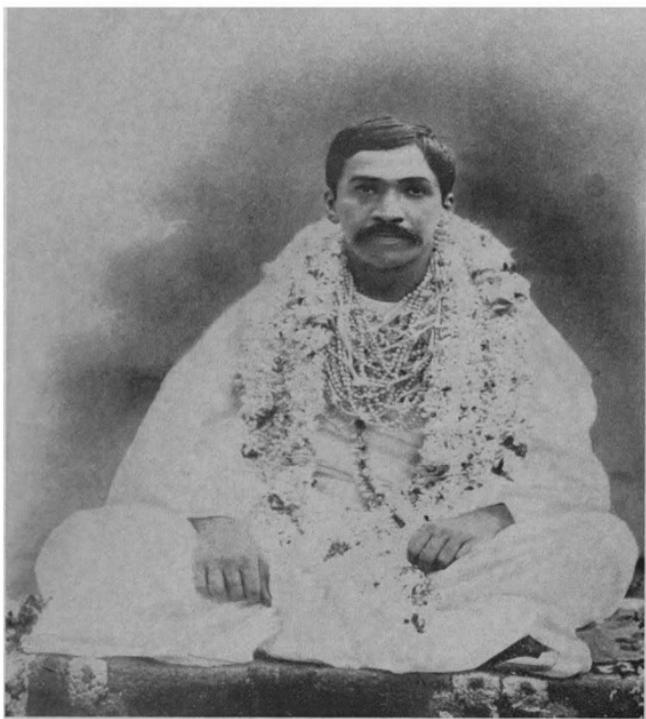
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The descent of the supramental can hasten things,
but it is not going to act as a patent medicine or
change everything in the twinkle of an eye.

SRI AUROBINDO



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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wide-ness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

EDITORIAL

NOT TO DESTROY BUT TO TRANSFORM

UP TO now, spiritual life or discipline usually meant a division — division between spiritual and unspiritual, between what is a help or what forms a base for the higher life and what hinders and takes one away from it. This naturally led one to develop the first and kill the other.

But for us there is no such radical division. For us everything in its truth is spiritual. Indeed there are deformations, disfigurations, wrong knowledge of things, but there is nothing anti-spiritual. All that we are to do is to wash, reform, change and transform, correct and fulfil — not to destroy or annihilate.

We do not uproot the past but replace. There is here no *niro-dha*, suppression with a view to abolition. That is not our way. Ignorance does not imply absence of the Divine. One can find the Divine even there, in the very depths of the unconscious the touch of the Divine can be felt. For not only is the Divine there but the Di-

vine is that. There can be really no cutting apart of the Divine from the non-Divine. Only we must find Him out, discover Him in His true form, shorn of the disguise. The guise grows transparent and He emerges resplendent in His light. Not to reject or discard but to replace the wrong appearance with the right is our way. We merge the human volition in the Divine Will, turn all the obscure movements of our ignorance into true movements of the Divine Consciousness. We adore and worship and approach the Divine in all things and everywhere, in His true light and form. We strive to see him established and revealed in all existence.

All is divine and all is in the Divine. This truth is to be realised in life. To let Him reveal himself in his own truth is our sa-dhana, our way. That is why for us 'All life is Yoga'.

Even Ravana is destroyed not to be simply destroyed but to become an adorer of Rama.

To sacrifice does not merely mean to slay but to dedicate.

(From notes taken in a class of Nolini Kanta Gupta)

SRI AUROBINDO, MINSTREL OF FAITH AND LOVE

Lecture II

*Only the Eternal's strength in us can dare
To attempt the immense adventure of the climb
And sacrifice of all we cherish here.*

(SAVITRI, II.12)

WILL Durant has written in his great book *The Story of Civilization* that Faith and Reason have been at war from the dawn of civilization, with victory changing hands alternately between the two eternal antagonists, till today science founded on reason seems to have driven faith to the wall. But the man of faith has by no means lost heart yet and sings on, contending that appearance is not always the ultimate reality. So while the primitive man's animistic credo has been supplanted by the verdict of the civilized intellectual, the sages and saints, seers and prophets, do still align themselves with minstrels of faith, demonstrating with their radiant lives that we walk with God not guided by the rushlights of reason but by the star-shine of faith, and that is why the denial of the materialist has not finally prevailed against the certitude of the God-rapt illuminate. Goethe was one of the elect who seized this when he sang:

Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen,
Denn die Menge gleich verhönet:
Das Lebend'ge will ich preisen
Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.

If tell you must, tell the wise alone who know,
For the others will but call it folly, not faith:
“I only worship the great souls who glow
To hail the fire as kin, defying death.”

This is not rhetoric: it is truth, attested by the glowing lives of saints and martyrs who sacrifice everything to make the cause live. Sri Aurobindo has proclaimed this eternal truth in *Savitri*:

“Men die that man may live and God be born.”

But this is the gospel not of the practical reasoning intellect which can see men die but not God being reborn like the Phoenix rising from the cinders of its funeral pyre. For that one must win to the third eye of Vision — the *divyacakṣu* which Krishna gave to Arjuna so he might behold the Universe in His *viśvarūpa*.

But alas, in this age of the triumphal pageant of Science and Technology the sages and saints who thrill in the glory of the “Great Sun-resplendent Being overarching darkling of life”¹ are at a disadvantage because they belong to a microscopic minority who have *seen* and as such can be easily outvoted by the vast majority who have *not seen*.

When Sri Aurobindo first initiated me in his Yoga of self-surrender he enjoined me to be lessoned in humility and cultivate the aspiration for faith first and last and in the middle. I was at a loss because though I had a genuine reverence for the man of God, I revered, withal, the intellectual — the utterly honest materialist, the man of science, who hails today so robustly the torch of Reason as the one and only reliable pathfinder in the labyrinth of life. So I went on questioning with my doubting mind the validity of what he termed the findings of the “psychic being”. In other words (I asked) could a stable faith be possibly based on the hearsay evidence of saints, an acceptance be recommended *before* experience?² He wrote back:

“First of all, faith does not depend upon experience, it is something that is there before experience. When one starts the Yoga, it is not usually on the strength of experience, but on the strength of faith. And it is so not only in yoga and the spiritual life, but in ordinary life also. All men of action, discoverers, inventors, creators of knowledge proceed by faith and, until the proof is made or the thing done, they go on in spite of disappointment, failure, disproof, denial, — because of something in them that tells them that this is the

¹ *Vedāhametam puruṣam mahantam
ādityavarṇam tamasah parastāt*

(SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD)

² I also asked him whether our illuminates in India were right in holding that in the domain of the soul, as against that of the mind, one must first *accept* before one could begin to *know*. He answered in the affirmative in his advocacy of faith.

truth, the thing that must be followed and done. Sri Ramakrishna even went so far as to say, when asked whether blind faith was not wrong, that blind faith was the only kind to have, for faith is either blind or it is not faith but something else: reasoned inference, proved conviction or ascertained knowledge."

His admonition startled me, the more so as it recalled to my mind an epistle of Paul in which he had averred: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I was reminded also of a simile I had heard somewhere, to the effect that faith is like the first roseflush in the sky before the dawn promising the advent of the sun. But Sri Aurobindo's pronouncement was more inspiring:

"Faith is the soul's witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realised, but which yet the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving... who is there that practised the Yoga and had not his periods, long periods of disappointment and failure and disbelief and darkness? But there is something that sustains him and goes on in spite of himself, because it feels that what it followed after was yet true, and it more than feels, it *knows*. The fundamental faith in yoga is this, inherent in the soul, that the Divine exists and the Divine is the one thing to be followed after — nothing else in life is worth having in comparison with that."¹

Apropos, I sent up to him a letter from a friend who chided me for turning to Yoga accepting the lead of blind faith which "right reason" has repudiated today, the world over, "hook, line and sinker." Gurudev wrote back at once:

"He upbraids you for losing your reason in blind faith. But what is his own opinion of things except a reasoned faith? You believe according to your faith which is quite natural, he believes according to his own opinion which is natural also, but no better so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to his reason? But so are the opinions of his political opponents according to their reason, yet they affirm the very opposite idea to his. How is reasoning to show which is right? The opposite parties can argue till they are blue in the face — they won't be anywhere nearer a decision. In the end, he prevails who

¹ *More Lights on Yoga*, p. 106.

has greater force or whom the trend of things favours. But who can look at the world as it is and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to *right reason* — whatever this thing called right reason may be? As a matter of fact there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions, there is only my reason, your reason, X's reason, Y's reason, multiplied up to the discordant innumerable.”¹

This letter has been acclaimed by hundreds of truth-seekers as one of Sri Aurobindo's most revealing pronouncements defining boldly the limits of reason which swears first and last by logic. In fact I was deeply shaken, because I had come to hail reason as the ultimate pilot to the harbour of Truth, Peace and abiding Harmony following unwaveringly the clue of Reason based on mental logic. When I received this letter I felt an electric shiver zig-zagging up my spine, as Sri Ramakrishna's simile flashed through my memory, that one has to extract a thorn with another thorn after which both the thorns have to be thrown away: ergo, the thorn of rational doubt must be plucked with reason to be led finally to the blissful truth of the spirit after which reason can be safely dispensed with. “Eureka!” sang my heart now coming home at last. “I must, from now on, accept faith and not reason, as the monitor in my quest for spiritual truth.” Sri Aurobindo shed more light on this question in another letter:

“You must get rid of an exaggerated insistence on the use of reason and the correctness of your individual reasoning and its right to decide on all matters. The reason has its place especially with regard to certain physical things and wordly questions — though even there it is a very fallible judge — but its claim to be the decisive authority in matters of Yoga or in spiritual things is untenable.... It has always been understood that the reason and its logic or its judgement cannot give you the realisation of spiritual truths but can only assist in an intellectual presentation of ideal; realisation comes by intuition and inner experience. Reason and intellectuality cannot make you see the Divine, it is the soul that sees... one can depend on one's reason in other matters... but it is not safe to depend on it alone in matters which escape its jurisdiction, especially in spiritual realisation and in matters of Yoga which belongs to a different order

¹ *More Lights on Yoga*, p. 107.

of knowledge.”¹

He went on explaining to me with an infinite patience which had to be seen to be believed, a feat which only his divine love could achieve. And it began like this.

It was I who first started asking him questions about the ideology and *modus operandi* of his Integral Yoga. But as he answered most of my pointed questions I showed his letters joyously to my brother disciples who, taking their cue from me, began, in their turn, to send him long letters bristling with all sorts of questions. That was understandable, but the amazing thing was that one who had declined Dr. Radhakrishnan’s repeated requests to contribute an article should have so readily responded to the likes of us and gone on answering our interminable questions not only about yoga, but about poetry, personalities, metres, the riddle of the world and what not! I often wondered how could a Colossus of his stature go on thus spending his precious time and energy on writing no end of letters to us, importunate Lilliputians! To think that one whom the Indian National Congress implored again and again to resume the country’s leadership, a savant whose writings were universally admired and, above all, a great poet whose verses inspired hundreds of litterateurs should have met half-way us his inconsiderate protégés who not only failed him but actually misunderstood his teaching over and over again! He wrote to me a few years later (during which time he had gone on writing numerous letters to us four or five hours nightly) that he had to cry halt with a sigh because his letters had not been of much material help to his questioning critics. I asked him lightly why on earth did he choose to complain of feckless critics — he being what he was: a deputy of the Divine. To that he replied gallantly: “But why on earth do you deny me the right even to a divine grumble?”²

But although he wanted to make light of the tragedy, I could not help but regret that he had to come down constantly to *our* level to give us the guidance we needed and yet refused to accept, which made him sigh and grumble!³ But then was this not the most convincing proof of his love divine which made him write in Bengali to a

¹ This famous oft-quoted letter is printed in full in Sri Aurobindo’s *Letters on Yoga* — Tome One, p. 158.

² Printed in my *Among the Great...* p. 341.

³ Once he wrote to me: “If they don’t want to follow me why do they ask me to lead?”

careless female disciple how to hold the broom while sweeping the floor? He wrote any number of such letters. He wrote about it all in a subsequent letter to me:

"It is only divine love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness to the Divine. The Gallio-like '*je-m'en-fiche'-ism* (I don't care) would not carry me one step."

He has improvised on this soul-stirring theme of love divine in his *Savitri*:

"The great who come to save this suffering world...
Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain...
On their shoulders they must bear man's load of fate,
How shall he cure the ills he never felt?
He carries the suffering world in his own breast,
Its sins weigh on his thoughts, its grief is his...
His march is a battle and a pilgrimage."¹

This assertion was intrinsically auto-biographical. He wrote to me in 1935:

"But what strange ideas again! — that I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities! Good God! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardships, starvation in England, and constant dangers and fierce difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry external and internal. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle..."

There was a time when a gang of goondas was appointed to kidnap him from Pondicherry to be delivered to the British C.I.D. in Madras. A dear friend of mine — one of his oldest disciples — told me that they had to stand guard at night with revolvers. A hair-raising drama, indeed!

But this was not all. He was at this time (1910-1913) such a complete destitute that he had to write again and again to friends to send him some money urgently. He wrote to one Anandarao (June 1912):

"At present I am at the height of my difficulties, in debt, with no

¹ *Savitri* V. 2.

money for the morrow and all who could help are¹... beyond communication."² To another (July 3, 1912): "I send enclosed a letter to our Marathi friend ... procure for me by will power or any other power in heaven or earth Rs. 50, at least as a loan." To another: "I need Rs. 50 for own expenses and Rs. 10 not for myself, but still absolutely indispensable." (5.5.1914).³

But his sigh notwithstanding, his letters to us, his accepted disciples, did serve a divine purpose in that they came to appease, albeit partially, our long-standing grievance that he had chosen to stay unapproachable and all but invisible. A poet friend of mine — now, alas, no more! — often wailed that Gurudev had grown into a legend in his life-time — an *akasher Bhagavan*, a Deity of the sky!

Yes, that was the crux of the trouble, the cause of sigh so many of us heaved intermittently to no purpose till once, after four years of self-conflict under his aegis, I finally decided to call it a day and wrote to him a valedictory letter saying that it was not feasible to practise his Yoga without any personal contact with him. So — I raced on in my jeremiad — I was going to leave him for good. I asked him to forgive me but he must dismiss me now, I wrote, if only to be relieved of a useless burden... and so on and so forth. To that he replied instantly. It was a very moving letter. He wrote: (10.5.32)

"It is quite impossible for me to dismiss you or consent to your going away like this from us. If the idea of this kind of separation is possible to you, for us it is inconceivable that our close relation should end like this. I had thought that the love and affection that the Mother and I bear to you had been made evident by us. But if you say you cannot believe in it or cannot accept it with the limitations on its outward manifestation that not our choice but inexorable necessity imposes on us for a time, I do not know how to convince you. I could not believe that you would really find it in your heart to go or take such a step when it came to the point. As it is, I can only appeal to you not to allow yourself to be swept away by this attack, to remain faithful even in suffering to your soul that brought you here and to believe in our love that can never waver."

I wrote back, of course, asking to be forgiven, upon which he

¹ Centenary, Supplement Vol. 26, p. 425.

² *Ibid.*, p. 426.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

wrote to me again, reassuring me: (16.5.32).

“You do not belong to yourself — you belong to the Divine and myself... I have cherished you like a friend and a son and have poured on you my force to develop your powers — to make an equal development in the yoga. We claim the right to keep you here as our own with us.”

It was this innate tenderness of his incredible love that held me captive at his feet for over two decades, enabling me to fend off the “attacks” of the demonic forces which strove sleeplessly to wean me from him because he *was* appointed by the Divine to divinise our human nature. It is to fulfil this mission that he employed his Messianic power, in prose and verse, to convince us about the utter reality of the Divine-Grace which alone could make the clod claim kinship with God.

That he was missioned by the Supreme to “make the earth a mate and peer of heaven,”¹ I did believe in my heart of hearts, especially in my breathtaking moments of flaming aspiration and ecstatic fervour when I was most vividly conscious of my blessedness in winning the love of such a king among men, but alas, there was the Old Adam in me that came in the way and made me hark back to what I had left to seek refuge at his hallowed feet.

This is no mere sentimental effervescence. Those who have once savoured his alchemic love and experienced its miraculous power of making faith flower in the mire of doubt could recant nevermore, still less disown the right of his love’s ownership, a love which never spoke *de haut en bas*, nor failed to come down to our abyss to elevate us to the peak of our natal home. At least I did feel in spite of all my recalcitrance that he was born with the Lord’s seal of authority to grant us the passport to heaven’s portals with the miracle signature of his love divine.

But his love was made not merely of tenderness: there was an element of intolerant fire in it which visited to purge the gold in our heart of all its dross. In a letter he wrote about his love which began with the human element but changed gradually into its divine counterpart:

“First about human love in Sadhana. The soul’s turning through love to the Divine must be through a love that is essentially divine,

¹ *Savitri*, The Book of Everlasting Day, Book XI.

but as the instrument of expression at first is a human nature, it takes the form of human love and *bhakti*. It is only as the consciousness deepens, heightens and changes that the greater eternal love can grow in it and openly transform the human into the divine."

Then referring to my "harking back" to what I still sometimes regretted to forfeit, he added :¹

"You describe the rich human egoistic life you might have lived and you say: 'Not altogether a wretched life, you will admit.' On paper it sounds very glowing and satisfactory, as you describe it. But there is no real or final satisfaction in it, except for those who are too common or trivial to seek anything else, and even they are not really satisfied or happy, — and in the end it tires and palls. Sorrow and illness, clash and strife, disappointment, disillusionment, and all kinds of human suffering come and beat its glow to pieces — and then decay and death. That is the vital egoistic life as man has found throughout the ages, and yet it is that which this part of your vital regrets? How do you fail to see, when you lay so much stress on the desirability of a merely human consciousness, that suffering is its badge? When the vital resists the change from the human into the divine consciousness, what it is defending is its right to sorrow and suffering and all the rest of it, varied and relieved no doubt by some vital or mental pleasure and satisfactions, but very partially relieved by them and only for a time. In your own case, it was already beginning to pall on you and that was why you turned from it."

Sri Aurobindo's letter recalled to my mind an inspiring poem of A.E. (George Russell) whom he loved and called a Yogi-poet:

What shall they have, the wise,
Who stay by the familiar ways...
Who shun the infinite desire
And never make the sacrifice
By which the soul is changed to fire?

Sri Aurobindo never belonged to this school of the worldly-wise who play safe; he aligned himself, first and last, to the Pleiad who cannot help but stake their all for the All-in-all, who put all their eggs

¹ Quoted from my *Among the Great*, p. 259 — also printed subsequently in his *Letters on Yoga*, Tome I, p. 80.

in one basket, hailing the “infinite desire”, set on sacrificing the certain for the great Uncertain. No wonder his soul has been transformed early by the fire of the reckless revolutionary to culminate, eventually, in the unquenchable Flame (*Agni*) of the born yogi who sang with the Upanishad: “*Nälpe sukham asti*” “that which perishes can bring no abiding bliss.”¹ Indeed, there is a very moving song of Dwijendralal’s which always reminded me of Sri Aurobindo’s mystic appeal to answer the Flute-call of the Infinite:

Oi mahāsindhur opār theke ki saṅgita bhese āse...

What haunting strains of music, hark, come wafted on the
breeze
From the other shore — beyond the bourneless deep? Who
calls to me
So tenderly: “O come away! here all is song and peace
In eternal spring, unmarred by death and dark disharmony:
The earth’s evergreen and gloom is banished everlastingly.

Why groan beneath life’s dismal load, and grasping at
shadows, cry,
When the Ocean of Nectar chants below and the Moon of
Grace on high?
Disown your chains, ’tis time now you returned to your
home again,
Nor blindly hug your pen, fool, by the Siren Maya
beguiled.
Know: only the ones who’ve loved me shall my termless
Bliss attain:
How can you still in exile stay in an alien world, my child?”

Shelley sighed: “Rarely, rarely, comest thou,/Spirit of Delight!”
Still more rarely comes down a Minstrel of His bliss and light and
love, a “Messenger of the Incommunicable,”² like Sri Aurobindo
whose flashes are —

¹ *Call of Brindaban* (translation mine) — Dwijendra Dipali, p. 33.

² *Savitri*, III. 4.

"Like angels' visits short and bright,
Mortality's too weak to bear them long."¹

But to revert once more to mortality... Yes, Sri Aurobindo did come down to us, "prisoners of a dwarf humanity"² to sing a thrill of the Vision accorded to him in Alipore Jail by Lord Krishna when he was in the dire throes of doubt as to the reality of the Spirit as well as the basis of material Life. It was presumably this apocalyptic epiphany, which burst upon him in his zero hour, that regenerated him radically, endowing him with the third Eye of Light and revealing to him the miracle truth of the spirit working as a hidden leaven to transform the dross of life, a call he wrote about in his inimitable vein:

"The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice. This alone is man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe."³

I was so moved by this great exhortation that I wrote to him a poem — or shall I say a paean — pledging my word that I would follow him to Journey's end. But incidentally, I asked him — to draw him out — whether the "ascent" he sang about stemmed from an indubitable experience as concrete and perceptible as our earthly light. He wrote in reply a long soul-stirring letter like a *Kindly Light* to lead me on:

"I will begin not with doubt but with the demand for the Divine as a concrete certitude, quite as concrete as any physical phenomenon caught by the senses. Now, certainly, the Divine must be such a certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience. When the Peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flowers out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a Light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was before dark, sorrowful and obscure, when all

¹ Rev. John Morris — The Parting.

² *Savitri*, IV. 3.

³ *The Life Divine: Man in the Universe*.

that is becomes part of the One Reality, when the Reality is all around you, you feel at once by the spiritual contact, by the inner vision, by the illumined and seeing thought, by the vital sensation and even by the very physical sense, everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine, — then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven — for of these physical things you cannot be sure that they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experiences of the Divine, doubt is impossible.”¹

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(Delivered under the auspices of the Poona University)

¹ Quoted from Sri Aurobindo's letter to me, printed in his *Letters on Yoga*, Tome One, pp. 161-162.

WHAT THE ASHRAM ESSENTIALLY IS

IN the gross physical way, the Ashram is the central building, where the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is, and all the scattered houses, large and small, where the various activities of the Ashram are carried on and where the sadhaks and the children of the Centre of Education live. Next, under the same perception of things, we are likely to think of the persons who run the various departments and manage the Ashram as a whole.

This is, however, all a matter of the overt form, of the apparent shape of things. And this, indeed, has its own significance. Yet the essential form and quality of the Ashram is different, the real power to soothe, to inspire, to give joy and confidence, to promote the spiritual pursuit and to turn men's minds, to God and Truth lies elsewhere. However, the apparent form of the Ashram is intended to be and should be a representation as best as possible of the essential reality. Yet the two are different and need to be recognised so in the interest of a clear-minded and steady pursuit of one's spiritual growth, unfoldments and fulfilment.

Sri Aurobindo had spoken of two atmospheres of the Ashram. He said:

"There are two atmospheres of the Ashram, ours and that of the Sadhaks. When people with a little perceptiveness come from outside, they are struck by the deep calm and peace in the atmosphere and it is only when they mix much with the Sadhaks that this perception and influence fade away. The other atmosphere of dullness and unrest is created by the Sadhaks themselves — if they were open to the Mother as they should be, they would live in the calm and peace and not the unrest and dullness."

Atmosphere is a wonderful reality of life, which we have learned to appreciate from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They primarily sought to create an atmosphere and through that sought to inspire the right thought, feeling and will in people. And indeed it works so wonderfully, pervasively, profoundly, decisively. An institution, a place and a person has a distinctive atmosphere, a distinctive vibration, a distinctive air and feeling, which represents the true quality and character of the institution, the place and the person and is independent of the professed quality and character.

Such atmosphere has a wonderful capacity to prevail over the vagaries, the disparities and the differences of the human egos. When we are caught up in the confusions of the differing egos, we can easily feel lost. But if we can stand apart, feel free and identified with the clarity of the deeper and the higher consciousness, then even the worst confusions cannot unhinge us. And in that case, our power to help the situation and to return to clarity is really very great. Through such persons can the Higher Power in Its own subtle way restore clarity, peace and best possible harmony.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, their consciousness, their will, their influence, their atmosphere is the Ashram essentially. A participation in this atmosphere is to live in the Ashram and enjoy its peace, its inspiration and its joy. And we serve the Ashram best when we are well aware of this atmosphere and its source and let the power of this atmosphere work and operate through us. Then we are truly, more or less, instruments of the Mother's Force. That is our best state individually as well as collectively. For this, we do need to be wide enough to feel identification with all that Mother felt identified with. Then alone can we receive Her wide and large divine Force and act as Its instruments.

But if we get caught up in the atmosphere of the sadhaks, an atmosphere of partialities, of likes and dislikes, of agitation, of complaint and blame, of all sorts of confusions, then even while living in the Ashram physically, we are not living in the spiritual Ashram of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and do not participate and share in its peace, its inspiration, its joy.

Obviously, it is so important for our spiritual welfare and the progress of our general work that we recognise the two atmospheres of the Ashram and make the correct choice for a happy growth in the adventure of spiritual life.

INDRA SEN

ARDHANARISWARA

(AN EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM)

“THE third layer is the intellect or buddhi, which is the real instrument of thought and that which orders and disposes of the knowledge acquired by the other parts of the machine. For the purpose of the educationist this is infinitely the most important of the three I have named. The intellect is an organ composed of several groups of functions, divisible into two important classes, the functions and faculties of the right hand, the functions and faculties of the left hand. The faculties of the right-hand are comprehensive, creative and synthetic; the faculties of the left-hand critical and analytic. To the right-hand belong judgement, imagination, memory, observation; to the left-hand comparison and reasoning. The critical faculties distinguish, compare, classify, generalise, deduce, infer, conclude; they are component parts of the logical reason. The right-hand faculties comprehend, command, judge in their own right, grasp, hold and manipulate. The right-hand mind is the master of the knowledge, the left-hand its servant. The left-hand touches only the body of knowledge, the right-hand penetrates its soul. The left-hand limits itself to ascertained truth, the right-hand grasps that which is still elusive or unascertained. Both are essential to the completeness of the human reason. These important functions of the machine have all to be raised to their highest and finest working-power, if the education of the child is not to be imperfect and one-sided.”

(SRI AUROBINDO — SABCL Vol. 17; p. 207)

Almost at the very beginning of this century Sri Aurobindo had drawn attention to the distinctive nature of the right and left sided functions of personality, and the need for a distinctive approach to the education of these two sides.

More than a half-century later information has begun trickling in from the neuro-physiological laboratories and clinics of the world, telling us that there is a very material and structural basis for considering the existence of the two distinct modes of function, and the need for separate attention to the two as much more than a poetic fancy or an aesthetic sentiment or an esoteric pronouncement worthy of admiration and worshipful quotation. During the last few years

the trickle has become a flood.

The contemporary neuro-physiological information on the functions of the two hemispheres of the brain can be broadly summarised:

1. The left-half brain refers to the right-half of the body. The right-half brain refers to the left-half of the body. This reference is merely with regard to the gross movements and sensations of the body.

2. A whole complex of information from within and outside the body is available to both halves of the brain. Moreover, the two halves of the brain are connected by a broad thick band of fibres permitting mutual influence.

3. However, the most significant difference lies in the distinctive manner in which the two halves process the information continually flooding into them through the various inner and outer sensory inputs. It is probable that the brain is capable of more direct reception, too, as apart from the gross sensory apparatus.

4. The left hemisphere is a verbal, logical sequential operator, linear in time. In fact, the whole verbal function is located in the left half. This verbal function is an outstanding example of the linear, sequential process in time: one word succeeding another in time. Naturally, this mode of functioning attracts material that suits its operational capacity and tends to ignore information that does not so fit.

As if to reflect the fact that it is the glib, clever, talking sophist who has ruled and continues to rule the world, the left-half brain had been designated as the Dominant or Major hemisphere, and the right as Non-dominant or Minor. One should not underestimate the disastrous consequences a socially determined terminology has on scientific progress.

5. The right hemisphere functions on a totally different basis. It has the capacity of instantaneous computation of a variety of information available to it without being rigidly bound by time sequence. It operates on the basis of perception of total patterns rather than linear sequence. It can be seen that a whole range of total bodily operations require this sort of constant, instantaneous computation of internal and external information. A simple operation like pointing out one's nose, which looks so simple, requires that information from the nose, finger and hand, position of the head and body, blood-supply

requirements for the various muscles involved and so on has to be instantaneously processed. This is an example of right-brain function. Only in disease or injury can the global importance of the right hemisphere be seen. Unfortunately, the right-brain cannot produce a verbal dissertation and logical support for its work. It cannot adjourn its operations pending legal sanctions.

It also appears that the right-brain participates in the work of dreaming — dreams having all the characteristics of a non-linear, intuitive, simultaneous, pattern-oriented direct perceptual quality.

6. Robert E. Ornstein, in his work on *The Psychology of Consciousness*, published by Jonathan Cape, London, in 1975, sums up the position thus:

If the left hemisphere can be termed predominantly analytic and sequential in its operation, then the right hemisphere is more holistic and relational, and more simultaneous in its mode of operation.

7. Evidence for these observations comes from many sources: observation on patients with known disease or injury of the separate halves of the brain; observation of the performance of patients in whom the connection between the two halves of the brain has been surgically severed, thus permitting observation of the independent operation of the two sides; electrical findings from the halves of the brain when one or the other half is being differentially examined.

Anyone can verify how the eyes of a person deviate to right or left depending on whether the person is tackling a mathematical problem or an emotional problem. The electrical activity of the right half is depressed while a verbal, logical or mathematical task is being solved; the electrical activity of the left half is depressed while an emotional or intuitive task is in hand.

8. There are about 5% of the population in whom the verbal function is not definitely situated in the left hemisphere.

9. While there is undoubtedly mutual influence one should have expected that the two halves work in harmony. The facts are otherwise. There appears to be a sort of unhappy marriage as it were with friction more in evidence than cooperation. This conflict may be at the basis of much disease in the individual and of major disasters in society.

Are we not educating the whole of the brain when we are educating a child? Is there a single educationist who does not proclaim his

adherence to total, integral education? Where is the need for such vociferous avowals from centuries excepting that in fact these avowals conceal woeful neglect in practice! One look at the world to-day amidst the magnificent mausoleums dedicated to education and the hatred, ugliness and rampant greed they seem to breed belies the profuse, verbal homage paid to integral education. It is not mind and body that require co-ordination: It is the two halves of the machine of the mind, says Sri Aurobindo, which require to be instructed to play their appointed roles in their evolutionary destiny.

It can be seen that, for centuries and more clearly to-day, the world's effective controls — political, economic, and naturally its educational systems — have been and are all left-brain oriented. The education of the right-brain has been sadly, almost deliberately, neglected with tragic consequences: Or else, it has been left to the various esoteric schools — of Yoga, Zen, Mysticism, Sufism and so on — all effectively sequestered from the main stream of life.

The verbally not-so facile individual, however brilliant he might otherwise be, is relegated to patronage, crucifixion or idle but profitable worship. From the very childhood, the person with prominent right-brain traits, with poor verbal expression has a tough time at home and school. The word, 'backward' is immediately applied and a highly patronising attitude displayed; the parents drag him around to specialists, and the child becomes the butt of ridicule amongst his fellows and teachers. Everything possible is done to smother his intuitive and inventive qualities under a spate of pedagogic, verbal garbage. If despite all this, the child survives and shows his usefulness, his talents are commercially exploited to the utmost. Genius and savant and explorer serve as grist for its skill in salesmanship, squeezing the maximum profit with minimum of effort. The word gymnasium refers in the west to both physical and mental education training centres: these are the outstanding monuments to the left-brain whose result is the mass production of clerks and soldiers under the guidance of the account-book. The left-brain dominated society has converted each spiritual and scientific contribution of the right-brain into a marketable commodity, and a veritable curse on humanity.

The destruction of large quantities of milk because of poor profits, while at the same time injecting cows with drugs to increase production of milk is one symbol: The bombing of whole popula-

tions and organising red-cross relief to the disabled and christian burial-service to the dead is another symbol: Fighting legal and armed battles to decide who has the right to give water to a particular tree while the tree is actually dying or dead is another symbol. A love-less and heart-less, cold, calculating commerce resting on a plethora of dead religious formulas of precept, precedent and respectable propriety are its sceptre and crown.

The smothered and fettered right-brain has become the slave of the left-brain. Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is just the reverse that is our goal.

The requirements for the education of the left-brain are too well known and well entrenched and too obtrusively dominant to require elaboration. However, they can be summarised: Slate and chalk; paper and pencil; class-room; debate; committee; conference; logical profundity resting on poverty and paucity of total information, and excision and exclusion of all data, evidence, objects and persons that contradict its well-oiled syllogisms; all supported by the keys to the treasury of patronage; further repetition of conference and committee to logically explain the disastrous consequences of its logic; a variety of well-furnished and upholstered rooms for its deliberations made sound-proof in order to block out the screams from life and love held in a strangle-hold emanating from these rooms.

Readers of Savitri of Sri Aurobindo will recognise the troll of reason.

It is more than eight decades since Sri Aurobindo observed the need for paying attention to this discrepancy. Educationists who desire to pay heed to his advice can ask themselves as to the steps they are taking in this direction. For instance what is the proportion of time the educational experts dedicate to verbal and non-verbal tasks? It will be good to recall the 1969 New Year message of Mother — 'No words, acts!'. It is also helpful to recall the admonition of the Mother to aspirants in Auroville that a person should devote at least five hours a day to the application of consciousness to matter, in actual work. This is the direction pointed to educationists.

The left-brain has been in saddle for centuries and it is going to be an up-hill task, a veritable battle to dislodge it. It will employ every trick, stratagem and weapon to perpetuate its dominance. As

soon as one hints at the education of the intuitive, verbally poor right-brain, the left-brain steps in and immediately organises a conference, seminar and debate, books of reference and precedent, and mouths poetic passages on how wonderful, mystic and spiritual the right-brain is, and meantime every facility, material and time necessary for its actual education is denied or dismissed as visionary idealism. This trick of the left-brain is so ubiquitous that it is hardly noticed, least of all by its operators — very much like environmental pollution, to be taken for granted.

It is clear that while for the operation of the left-brain all that is required is words, pencils, rooms and slaves to carry out its precise logical formulations based on precedent, the right hemisphere education requires the involvement of the whole bodily machine and all the information it can provide about the universe within and without, obtained not merely from the left-brain type of organised, sequential verbal or physical drills, but from an active participation in the whole business of living, in arts, skills and crafts of every kind where precise coordination of all or almost all the parts of the body are simultaneously called for and are inbuilt in the very nature of the work itself. It is where the right hemisphere meets its challenges and grows in meeting them.

The whole life of a person's apprenticeship with his guru illustrates the point. Years of elaborate physical or total bodily tasks — sweeping floors, hewing wood, drawing water, repairing and building huts and articles, tending to land and cattle, all conducted under the loving eye of the Guru and his Spouse — were briefly interspersed with a few words of spiritual guidance. However, especially after the invention of the printing press and the emergence of departments and professors of spiritual education, the business of spiritual guidance has become the delightful and lucrative business of elaborate verbal dissertation, glossing over the whole process by which the guru was preparing the disciple's brain to a state of readiness to become the direct and perfect instrument of love and intuitive knowledge of the needs of universal love. The arm-chair vendors of spirituality present all these various activities as occupational pastimes for the idle and not-so clever disciples of olden days and not meant for really advanced persons like themselves. The economists said that all these tasks were ways of keeping the disciples gainfully em-

ployed in running the Guru's house-hold, and to see that the disciples were really earning and deserving the food given to them. One might recall the life of Satyavan and Savitri in their daily action as described by Sri Aurobindo to get a glimpse of the role of work of a variety of kinds as the background preparation for spirituality.

It is often said that children do not like work. What is to be deplored is the tragic, love-less and mirth-less, commercial exploitation to which they are open, rather than any basic incapacity or lack of interest on their part. One has only to note the gleam of joy in a child's eyes when he is engaged in a useful task as a fully responsible member of a loving family. It is a grotesque educational system that relegates the verbally deficient but dexterous child to a second-rate, educationally backward category.

It is necessary at this point to underline the role of love in education of the brain. The left-brain measures, calculates. Each situation, object, tree, child, man and woman is measured and treated according to the measure of usefulness in terms of the market and balance-book, the profit that can be got by use or sale of the article in question, and the saving in space and maintenance that accrues by loss or death of the article in question. There is the story of a man who prayed to God and obtained the gift of being able to understand the language of animals. He found it very profitable. One day, he heard the cow telling the dog that the horse was going to break its leg in a few days' time. Promptly the man went and sold the horse. He went on profiting by such fore-knowledge of the fate of his animals. One day he heard the dog telling the goat that soon the master of the house was going to fall and break his neck. The man howled and frantically prayed to God. When God appeared, the man told him of his predicament. "Lord," he cried, "till now your gift has been most useful, and I profited greatly by selling my animals before they fell ill. Now what am I to do?" God replied, "Very simple! Go and promptly sell yourself!"

The favourite words of the left-brain, efficiency, discipline, perfection are all so many deadly weapons when they are not in the service of love. Two world wars have amply shown it. If a third is to be avoided one recalls that Sri Aurobindo concluded his *Savitri* asserting that love and oneness were the key of our transformation.

All this is not to denigrate the left-brain function, but to draw

forceful attention to the consequences of its having assumed the role of Master in the household.

The concept of right and left, intuitive and intellectual, female and male duality of cosmic and human personality has a hoary tradition. The Chinese Yin-Yang, the Greek Hermaphrodite, the Indian Siva-Sakti concepts are examples. However, nowhere has this concept reached such profundity as in the symbolism of Ardhanariswara, the male and female element in the same unity, who in the full harmony of their love give birth to Kumara, the eternal youth, the herald of the Divine Forces.

At this juncture it is appropriate to draw attention to the unique contribution made by Sri Aurobindo to the symbol. The careful reader would have noted that what Sri Aurobindo refers to as right and left hand functions really correspond to the right and left hemisphere functions of the physiologists' terms. By itself this might be taken as an accident. But Sri Aurobindo is said to have directed that his portrait be placed to the left of the Mother's portrait. This reverses the traditional placing of the male and female principles. I venture to surmise that Sri Aurobindo deliberately placed the Mother at the real seat of her power which is the right hemisphere, and not at the customary left side which is merely her external manifestation. I do not pretend any competence to guess at Sri Aurobindo's intentions, and this is not really germane to the present discussion.

Here we may briefly allude to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in its role as an instrument of integral education as expressed and expounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In the very process of its inception it can be seen that the Mother gave overwhelming importance to the training of the right hemisphere of the brain, an intimate, total bodily involvement of the disciples in a variety of creative activities, day and night, in an atmosphere of her ceaseless, tireless and timeless love — building work, farms, and so on, which have blossomed into the various full-fledged departments of to-day. In the Ashram we have all the ingredients necessary for the progressive and harmonious development of the two hemispheres of the brain, the right being given or expected to be given the dominant role.

First of all, in the Ashram, we have the over-all atmosphere of

love and mutual care and concern, the constant reminder of the Mother's unique compassion, understanding and highly concrete love and concern shown to each particular element of the Ashram, each tree, animal, let alone each sadhak as an individually valuable, loved and needed member — not merely some faceless private in a mercenary army; loved for their own sake rather than according to current-market rate of their carcasses as measured by the highly efficient and logical left-brain. The Ashram has the unique good fortune of having elders and guides who have matured in the abundant richness and warmth of Mother's unconditional love — Mother who defined true love as that which loves without expecting the object of love to change.

Secondly, as already pointed out, the Mother helped to create a variety of structure and function uniquely suited for the differential needs of the two hemispheres of the brain.

The departments of general and physical education embody some of the best principles of left hemispheric education. Even in these departments the close student will find an atmosphere of love and understanding, and a rich variety of attitude and technique developed over the years that enable the highly individual needs of the right brain great scope.

However, the multifarious functions fulfilled by the Ashram as a whole provide an extraordinary spectrum of possibilities for the education of the right brain. It is essentially in training the right hemisphere to inherit its role as the master of the house, that the various departments — kitchens, dining halls, farms, work-shops, buildings, repair-sections, etc. — assume importance. It is most misleading to think of these various departments as some sort of diversional or occupational, commercial or otherwise supportive structures kept for the maintenance of the Ashram. The injunctions of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and later day studies, show that the non-verbal, right hemisphere receives its full development only in the course of work of a variety of kinds, performed in an atmosphere of love. The left-brain dominated society uses the right-brain, non-verbal functions as servitors, employees or helpless servants to be supervised in being useful and well-behaved, and cleverly denigrates the importance of all such work and workers as inferior to the great art of sitting in arm-chairs working out the economic basis of the spirit. The words —

atmosphere of love — have to be underlined: Work done in love liberates and trains the right brain. Work done out of fear of any kind stifles the right brain, the seat of the Divine Mother. When unbearable limits are reached, Kali, the destroyer is the result.

A close observer of the Ashram will also be struck by the fact that at the Ashram there is a great flexibility and plasticity of roles available to its members including the students. Many individuals play more than one role — the same person working in a kitchen may be an economics professor; a person may be leader in one group and follower in another.

Sometimes, persons who give grants to the Ashram wonder why some money given for research is spent on buildings or dining halls. They forget that the Ashram as a whole is a unique laboratory which for the first time in history is working out the revolutionary task of educating the human brain in its proper, evolutionary perspective enabling the right hemisphere to inherit its role as the master. A left hemisphere oriented society wishes to judge the issues with an account-book. For instance, outside the Ashram, research is to be carried out in a building; in the Ashram, the business of constructing the building itself is an educational operation. The left-brain directed society, squandering billions of dollars in support of their wholly, totally irrational rationalities begrudges the morsels of money it hands out patronisingly for ventures of this kind, and expects the items to be checked by accountants who cost more than the morsels granted.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is not just one more sample of an educational endeavour to reform humanity. The Ashram as a whole is the dynamic interplay of forces, the visible operation of a consciously directed force aimed at the urgent task of releasing the functions of the right hemisphere for the salvation of mankind, and its preparation to receive the New Man.

The purpose of this article has not been to substantiate the truth of Sri Aurobindo's observations. His observations rest on direct experience, and their truth has to be apprehended by apprenticeship in the light of that experience. The purpose has been to strengthen the steps of those who wish to implement his teachings in the field of education.

The Ardhanari-Kumara symbolism is working out its unfoldment in the impetus given by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A bit

of this cosmic event is being enacted in each one of us. Those who wish to participate in this, the first real revolution in the history of mankind are indeed fortunate.

‘OM NAMO BHAGAVATE!’

SURYA

KEY TO SADHANA: THE PSYCHIC

IT is true that the Divine Reality, the Spirit, God, is everywhere and it is possible to become aware of the Divine anywhere and unite with it. But it is more true that it is easier to awake to the Divine in oneself and discover one's identity with it. That is because it is a matter of immediate experience, awareness in oneself which is direct and felt. I know that I am angry: it is a self-awareness which is instant, unlike my knowledge of things outside which is indirect and depends upon the instrumentation of the senses. That is why the central theme of spiritual traditions is 'Know Thyself'.

And who is this thyself? You are not the body; you are not the life-energy, *prāṇa*; you are not the mind, *manas*; you are not the stuff of emotions and feelings, *citta*. You are something else: you are the soul, a divine spark that is immortal. To know this divine entity in yourself is to know your real self.

The Upanishad speaks of five selves, *puruṣas*, of each individual: the *annamaya puruṣa*, physical self, *prāṇamaya*, vital, *manomaya*, mental, *vijñānamaya*, knowledge self, *ānandamaya*, bliss self. In most individuals, only the first three are well formed, articulate; the others form and develop as the spiritual evolution proceeds. Behind all of them, supporting them as it were, is the soul, the psychic being, *caitya puruṣa*, which is an individualised projection of the Divine Reality in the individual scheme of evolution. This psychic being, the soul in evolution, *antarātman*, participates in evolution and grows in stature and consciousness, birth after birth. As it develops and as it emerges from behind the veil of the instrumental nature, the divine element in the person increases its power and range and exerts pressure on the nature to change and grow into a new, divine dimension.

Each part of our being has its characteristic principle and power. Thus the physical body, based upon *tamas*, ensures stability, solidity and endurance. There is a system of body-culture that promotes these qualities and powers based upon them. Prana, life-energy, based upon *rajas*, gives movement, force, dynamism. Cultivation of Prana enhances these powers. The mind, essentially based upon *sattva*, is a many-tiered power seeking knowledge. Development of the mental faculties increases the range of knowledge. The soul, the psychic

Purusha, is the fount of purity, harmony, bliss, love. In the measure in which one opens oneself to its influence, activises it in life, one's life is governed by these qualities of a refined consciousness. Life becomes a progression from harmony to greater harmony, love to greater love, joy to greater joy as the doors of the psychic are opened and kept open.

And this is of capital value in spiritual life. For in Sadhana, the seeker is required to eliminate his animal elements, purify himself of the dross of lower nature, rid himself of the agitations and excitements of the Rajasic impulses. It would be an endless task if he were to proceed only with a mental will and impose on himself a discipline of negation. The upsurges of the subconscious and the inconscient are unpredictable and the way does, indeed, become a razor's edge. It is safer and surer to proceed on a firmer basis and that is the positive way of opening to the psychic, the *antarātman*, which is a perennial spring of purity, sweetness, compassion, and all Godward movements.

The value of the psychic being lies not merely in its purificatory role. It is also the seat of devotion, of true love. It is unerring in its perception and guidance inasmuch as it is divine at its core and is in touch with the truth of things. It is, again, a spearhead of the Divine Consciousness and radiates divinity at every moment. All our movements of deep devotion, surrender, joy are reflections — direct or indirect — of the workings of this psychic centre. The psychic perceives the Beauty of the Divine everywhere and communicates its high aesthetics to those who are, knowingly or unknowingly, open to its influence. It is also a kind of hot-line to the Transcendent Divine, enabling a direct ascent of consciousness to the Supreme if one chooses.

In a word, the psychic is the fulcrum upon which the sunlit path to the Divine turns. How to awake to it and how to reach the seat of the psychic is the next question.

The psychic centre is behind the traditional heart centre the *anāhata*. It is deeper. The heart centre is in the region of emotions and feelings. The psychic is well beyond them. It is at the core of the being, in the cave of the heart, *hṛdguhā*. It is what the Vedic Rishi lauds as the mystic flame, aspiring from the human station to its 'own home' above. This psychic is the seat of all upward aspiration, spring of spontaneous love, devotion, and a simple, natural joy. It always

feels a child. He in whom the psychic is effectively operating, feels himself a child — child of Nature, child of you and me, child of God.

Before one can hope to reach this psychic centre and make the psychic a governing factor in one's life, one needs to create a climate favourable to the awakening and emergence of the psychic. And that is done by recasting one's life movements in the mould of the psychic. It is a psychological transmutation that is called for. The mind and the heart must be subjected to a relentless discipline of purification. All that is opposed to the character of the psychic must be eschewed. All that is narrow, selfish, mean, ugly, harsh, cruel, hurtful, movements of vitiation e.g., anger, hatred, jealousy, ill-will etc., are to be eliminated from the mentality, from the volitional and emotional parts of being. A psychological purification is to be effected. Side by side with this negative operation, a positive effort must be put in to cultivate and establish the nobler soul-qualities e.g., selflessness, dedication, good-will, benevolence, compassion, love, integrity, straightforwardness, humility. In brief, the ego-desire complex must be steadily diminished and displaced by the psychic dominion of love and unity.

Bhārūpah satya-sāṅkalpah, light is the form of the Truth. Of this flame that is the soul, truth is the characteristic. Truth is the way to it: truth in thought, truth in feeling, truth in speech, truth in action. Un-truth clouds the soul, blocks the passage and in all ways obstructs its action. He who seeks the truth that is the soul, the divine entity within, has to opt for the way of truth in every sense.

Meditation upon this presence of the Divine, this concentration of pure divine consciousness within, helps to forge the inward path. One may conceive it in the form of a flame and meditate upon it. Or one may keep the Idea of this indwelling Divine and pursue its quest. One may keep a firm will and with intensity evoke it. One may offer one's devotion to the Indweller and wait upon him. The response usually comes after a sustained effort. There may be a feeling of increased purity, fuller surrender, an uncaused sweetness and joy, even a sense of eternity. There is first an influence which makes itself felt palpably. Even a moment of such emergence makes a tremendous difference in the Sadhana of the seeker. This influence must be cherished, nourished and given enlarging room in the being.

This influence, when it becomes fairly constant, turns into action

of the soul, the psychic, and the Sadhana takes on a distinct character of certainty, unmixed direction and effortless advance. There is, during the period of this action, an intense identification with the Divine, repulsion from all that is opposed to the Divine and a spontaneous choice of the truth and the right in every field of activity. Usually such periods do not last long at the beginning. The Day is soon overtaken by the Night. Lower nature, recalcitrant parts, not yet sufficiently exposed to the transforming action of the Light, overtake and a dry period follows. But this is only part of the process. In due course, with endurance and faith, these negative periods get less frequent and less intense and the brighter periods build themselves more and more till they become permanent. That happens when the psychic being has fully emerged into the open and assumed governance of the rest of the being.

Thereafter follows the next phase of the Sadhana and that is to conscientiously cast one's nature into the mould of the psychic. Just as the life of the average man in ignorance is governed by the ego, the life of one whose psychic is awake and active is turned into an image of the divine soul. This transmutation of one's nature in terms of the psychic is called psychicisation. All the activities of the mind, the heart, the life energies, the very physical body carry the stamp of the psychic being and ensure that nothing in them contradicts the central realisation, but in fact expresses its truth in a growing manner. Once this change in nature is effected, there is no going back. One can only move forward. Love and sweetness exude from such a person and all yearn after him, *enam samvañchanti*.

M. P. PANDIT

WHAT ARE THE VEDAS?

If, in our search for an understanding of the term *Veda* we start out in a somewhat unorthodox (or perhaps not so unorthodox) manner by consulting Webster's Third New International Dictionary, then the good book will inform us, perhaps to our pleasant philological surprise, that the word *Veda*¹ is cognate with the English word *wit*,² the absence of which we are prone to deplore in a scholar, indeed, in almost any person. It is also cognate, perhaps more pertinently, with the word *wisdom*.³ These connections become possible through the Indo-European heritage of Sanskrit,⁴ the word *veda* being derived from the root *vid*, to know.⁵

Webster's dictionary then proceeds to define the word *veda* as follows:

any of a class of the most sacred writings of the Hindus.⁶

On the face of it the statement seems direct and clear. Let us, however, probe below the surface of each segment of this statement and see what significant aspects of the Vedas lie concealed therein.

(1) *of the Hindus*: It is worth noting that the word *Hindu* is not a Hindu word. "The Persians who invaded India through the north-western passes of the Himalayas gave the name *Sindhu* to the region watered by the river *Indus*; the word 'Hindu' is only a corrupt form of 'Sindhu'."⁷ One of the indigenous names by which Hinduism is known is *vaidika dharma* and means the religion of the Vedas. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of Hinduism.⁸

(2) *writings*: Although one may now refer to the Vedas as something written down, it is worth noting that they were essentially transmitted orally and were reduced to writing very late, and with reluctance. As A. A. Macdonell observed around the turn of the century, "The Vedas are still learnt by heart as they were long before the invasion of Alexander and could even now be restored from the

¹ Philip Babcock Gove, editor in chief, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1971) p. 2537.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2625.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2624.

⁴ See Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954) p. 406.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

⁶ Philip Babcock Gove, editor in chief, *op. cit.*, p. 2537.

⁷ T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism* (Bombay: Chetana Ltd., 1960) p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

lips of religious teachers if every manuscript of printed copy of them were destroyed.”¹ “Max Müller once pointed out that the oldest manuscript of the Rig Veda does not date from 1500 B.C., the date generally assigned to its composition, but from A.D. 1500, three thousand years later.”²

(3) *most sacred*: The association of sacredness with the Vedas is very significant. Thus A. L. Basham describes the Rig Veda as “the oldest religious text in the world still looked on as sacred”³ and Surendranath Dasgupta, the famous historian of Indian philosophy, describes the Vedas as the “sacred books of India”.⁴

There are three key terms by which the Vedas are referred to within the Hindu tradition which account for their sanctity within the Hindu tradition. The Vedas are called *śruti*, they are called *nitya* and they are called *apauruṣeya*. “The Vedas are called *śruti* primarily because they are believed to derive from a ‘hearing’ *śruti* that is revelation; they are held to have emanated from Brahman, to have been breathed by God in the form of ‘words’, while their human authors, the Rishis or inspired sages, did no more than receive them by direct ‘vision’.”⁵

This revelation is *nitya* or eternal and *apauruṣeya* — not the work of man but rather divine, on the orthodox Hindu self-understanding.

As students of history we may understand these designations somewhat differently. Thus the Vedas may be called *śruti* “because the traditional method of studying and getting them by heart is by hearing them recited by the preceptor”.⁶ They may be called *nitya* not in the sense that they are eternal but on account of their “remote antiquity.” Though how remote is difficult to say. Some scholars have argued that the Vedas go back to as remote a period as the 5th millennium B.C. but according to what Louis Renou calls “moderate views”

¹ A.A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1968) p. 16. Also see Louis Renou, *Vedic India* (Calcutta: Susil Gupta (India) Private Ltd., 1957) p. 2.

² Benjamin Walker, *The Hindu World Vol. II* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968) p. 370.

³ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967) p. 234.

⁴ Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy Vol. I* (Cambridge University Press, 1957) p. 100.

⁵ Louis Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁶ Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *The Cultural Heritage of India Vol. I* (Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1958) p. 182.

the beginnings of Vedic literature may be placed around 1500 B.C.¹ The Vedas are called *apauruṣeya* "that is to say, they have not been written or composed like the Ramayana or the Mahabharata by man. Had they been so written, then the authors of the Vedas, like Valmiki and Veda-Vyasa, the authors respectively of these two books, would have been remembered by us. The Vedic teachers and disciples have maintained a continuous chain of study of the Vedas from time immemorial, but nobody ever heard the name of the author of the Vedas".² Therefore, according to the exponents of the system of philosophy which deals with vedic exegesis, "the Vedas must be regarded as self-revealed".³ This is the traditional view. From a historical point of view it could be argued that the Vedas may be so called because they are attributed not to individuals so much as to priestly families.

(4) of a class: One may begin by observing that "Opinions have varied concerning the definition of the Veda"⁴ within the Hindu tradition, both regarding their number and internal composition. Nevertheless, there is what may be called a standard version which recognizes four Vedas and looks upon each Veda as containing four layers. This enables the following diagrammatic representation to be made:

VEDAS

Vedas	Rig-	Sama-	Yajur-	Atharva-
Mantra	Rig	Sama	Yajur	Atharva
Brahmana	(Aitareya) (Kaushitaki)	(Chandogya) (Talavakara)	(Katha) (Taittiriya)	(Gopatha)
Aranyaka	"	(Aranyakana)	"	
Upanishad	"	(Chandogya) (Kena)	"	(Mundaka) (Mandukya) (Prashna)

¹ Percival Spear, ed., *The Oxford History of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) p. 45; also see Surendranath Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

² "The whole of Vedic literature can be placed between two dates, both unhappily inexact. It was composed as a whole before the Buddhist doctrine was preached; and on the other hand its beginnings were contemporary with or a little later than the entry of the Aryans into India. The various strata of the texts must be arranged in this interval. The attempt to do this made long ago by Max Müller, the basis of which has often been questioned, remains justified in principle. Now if it is assumed that the entry of the Aryans took place about the 15th-16th century B.C. the hymns must be placed about this date." (Louis Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 10).

³ Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 152.

⁴ Percival Spear, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 45.

Note: The names of the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads are illustrative and not exhaustive.¹

The Rigveda: the word *rk* means “any prayer or hymn in which a deity is praised. As these are mostly in verse, the term becomes also applicable to such passages of the Veda as are reducible to measure according to rules of prosody. The first Veda ... comprehending most of these texts, is called the *Rigveda*, or as expressed in the Commentary on the Index, ‘because it abounds in such texts (*rc*)’ ”.² It contains 1028 hymns arranged in ten books called *mandalas*,³ the first and the tenth *mandalas* in which the number of hymns contained is exactly the same, being later in point of time than the other *mandalas*,⁴ especially as distinguished from the seven family books connected with individual families.⁵ About half of the hymns of the Rig Veda are addressed to god Indra⁶ (the word having the same root as in Indira in Indira Gandhi) and Agni (which has the same root as in the English word ignition).⁷

The great Rig Vedic myth is of the slaying of the demon Vritra by Indra, which has been variously interpreted. The legend may be briefly narrated. It is summed up in Rig Veda I.32.1:⁸

I will proclaim the heroic deeds of Indra, which
the wielder of the bolt first performed; he slew

¹ For fuller listings see Thomas J. Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Co. Inc.: 1971) p. 141; Louis Renou, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

² Colebrooke, quoted by Percival Spear, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 45 fn. 2.

³ Louis Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 46; but also see R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁴ See James A. Santucci, *An Outline of Vedic Literature* (University of Montana: Scholars' Press, 1976) p. 2; Louis Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 45... the additions have “thus been made at the head and at the tail”.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶ See Vaman Shivram Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsi das, 1965) pp. 246, 247; “Indra is the favourite national god of the Vedic Indians. His importance is indicated by the fact that about 250 hymns celebrate his greatness, more than those devoted to any other god and very nearly one-fourth of the total number of hymns in the RV. If the hymns in parts of which he is praised or in which he is associated with other gods, are taken into account, the aggregate is brought up to at least 300.” (A.A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology* [Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971], p. 54).

⁷ Philip Babcock Gove, editor-in-chief, *op. cit.*, p. 1125.

⁸ For the text see Charles Rockwell Lanman, *A Sanskrit Reader* (Harvard University Press, 1971) p. 70.

the dragon lying on the mountain, released the waters, pierced the belly of the mountains.¹

This “essential myth” forming the basis of Indra’s nature and “repeated frequent and with variations”,² may be recounted in a summary fashion as follows:

Accompanied by the Maruts and exhilarated by Soma, he (Indra) attacks Vritra, often called the *Ahi* (serpent). He smashes Vritra who encompasses the Waters, and so deserves the exclusive epithet *apsu-jit* (conquering in the Waters). In this struggle, which is constantly renewed, he also pierces the mountains and releases the pent-up waters, like imprisoned cows. The demons, whom Indra throws down, dwell on the *parvata* or *giri* (mountain or cloud?) and an *adri* (rock) is said to encompass the Waters. The clouds containing the Waters are figured as fortresses (*pura*) of the aerial demons, described either as autumnal or as made of iron or stone, and as 90, 99 or 100 in number. He is, therefore, characteristically called the fort-destroyer (*purbhid*) but his exclusive and chief epithet is “Vritra-slayer” (*Vrtrahan*).

The release of the Waters is simultaneous with the winning of light, sun, and dawn. Independently of the Vritra fight also, he is said to have found the light, the dawn or the sun, and made a path for the latter. The cows mentioned with the sun and dawn must be understood to be the morning beams. The gaining of Soma is also associated with the winning of the cows and the sun and with the Vritra fight.³

Samaveda: the word *saman* means “melody”, and the *Sama Veda* is essentially a collection of melodies.⁴ It is half the size of the

¹ A.A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology*, p. 59.

² R.C. Majumdar, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 370.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371. Also see A.A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology*, pp. 58-60. For the various interpretations of the myth see Frederic Spiegelberg, *Living Religions of the World* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1956) pp. 92-98.

⁴ R.C. Majumdar, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 229. Louis Renou remarks that the “word *sāman* occurs already in the Rigveda. The true sense appears to be propitiation” (*op. cit.*, p. 19).

Rig Veda¹ and contains only 99 verses (not counting the repetitions)² which do not occur in the Rig Veda.

Yajurveda: the word *yajus* means a sacrificial formula and the Yajurveda contains these elements of prose such as "I worship fire placed in front"³ when the gods are invoked through the hymns. It is about 2/3rd of the Rig Veda in size.⁴ "One important feature of the Yajur Veda is that it supplies the formulae for the entire sacrificial ceremonial, thus differing from the Sama Veda (and to a lesser extent, the Rig Veda) which deals only with the Soma sacrifice."⁵

Atharvaveda: *Atharvan* means the fire-priest and the Atharvaveda is essentially a compendium of magical spells. It is half in size compared to the Rig Veda, from which it draws a fifth of its material. It is very different in character from the other Vedas; in fact "The Atharva Veda is utterly different from the three Vedas discussed above, for though an effort was made at a comparatively late date to absorb it within the sacred Sranta-literature... yet it was never accorded full recognition in the ritual of the Soma-cult, and to the last remained essentially what it was from the start — a prayer-book of the simple folk, haunted by ghosts and exploited by Brahmins".⁶

Our separate discussion of the four Vedas should not lead one to overlook the fact that they were ritually integrated, just as their trifurcation and subsequent incorporation of the Atharva Veda represented the process of sacerdotal specialization. Each Veda is associated with a particular officiant: the Rig Veda with the Hotri or the invoker, the Sama Veda with the Udagätri or chanter, the Yajur Veda with the Adhvaryu or performer and the Brahmana or High Priest with the Atharva Veda. Whereas the first three had to be well-versed in their own Vedas respectively, the Brahmana, as the general supervisor of the sacrifice, had to be conversant with all of them and

¹ Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 201.

² R.C. Majumdar, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 230.

³ Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200.

⁴ James A. Santucci, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵ Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 201.

⁶ R.C. Majumdar, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 232. It should be remembered, however, that "On the whole the *Atharvaveda* is the bearer of old tradition not only in line of the popular charms; but also to some extent, albeit slight, its hieratic materials are likely to be the product of an independent tradition which has eluded the collectors of the other Vedas, the *Rigveda* not excepted" (Bloomfield, quoted *ibid.*).

corrected such errors as might have been committed.¹

This completes our brief discussion of the four Vedas; we may next briefly refer to their four internal divisions or portions called the *mantra* or *samhitā*, *brāhmaṇa*, *āraṇyaka* and *upaniṣad*. The following remarks made by the well-known Vedic scholar R.N. Dandekar not only enable one to integrate the previous discussion but also to see the role of these internal divisions of the Vedas as well. Dr. R.N. Dandekar writes:

The religion thus developed by the Aryans from the time of their invasion of India until roughly 500 B.C. was embodied in a collection of hymns, ritual texts and philosophical treatises, called the *Veda*. From Aryan times down to the present, Hindus have regarded the *Veda* as a body of eternal and revealed scripture. Its final authority is accepted to some extent by all Hindus as embodying the essential truths of Hinduism. The earliest portion of the *Veda* consists of four metrical hymnals, known as *Samhitas* being the *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. The earliest of these texts is that of the *Rig Veda*, and it is this collection of hymns (*rc*) which constitutes the earliest source of knowledge concerning the Aryan religion. The most recent of these canonical collections is the *Atharva Veda*, which is somewhat more representative of the popular religion of Vedic times than are the other *Vedas*, which are more sacerdotal in character. The metrical hymns and chants of these texts gave rise to elaborate ritualistic prose interpretations called *brāhmaṇas* and *āraṇyakas* ("forest books"). Toward the end of the Vedic period, the earlier emphasis on ritual was translated symbolically. Thus, Vedic ideas of sacrifice and mythology were reinterpreted in terms of the macrocosm and microcosm. Cosmological inquiries of some of the later hymns of the *Rig Veda* were extended and an investigation of the human soul was undertaken. The speculations and interpretations along these lines were formulated by various philosophical schools in treatises collectively called *Upanishads*. Thus, the whole of Vedic literature consists of four *Vedas* or *Samhitas*, several exposi-

¹ See R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 442; Thomas J. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30 etc.

tory ritual texts attached to each of these Vedas called Brahmanas, and speculative treatises, or Upanishads, concerned chiefly with a mystical interpretation of the Vedic ritual and its relation to man and the universe.¹

ARVIND SHARMA

¹ Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition* Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) pp. 2-3.

REVIEW

Gitopasana by *Swami Iswarananda Giri*. p 203, Rs.8/- Samvit Vikas Kendra, 31 Krishna Rao Road, Bangalore 4. (Rs.12 inclusive of postage and packing charges)

INTRODUCING the Gita, Swamiji describes the various classes of literature in this field: '*Hridaya* literature expounds the form of the deity, while *Sahasranama* describes the various powers and manifestations *Kavacha*: the Upasaka invokes the deity in his own body as a prerequisite in worship. Stotras are songs in praise of the Divine. *Gita* is for intellectual understanding of the Godhood which the *upāsya-devatā* symbolises and hence most precious for an aspirant bent upon mystical communion or illumination.' Referring to the tradition of the *prasthāna trayā*, basic scriptural triad, he writes: Upanishads stand for *sadhyā paksha*, goal of life; Brahma Sutras speak of *siddhānta paksha*, philosophy of life; the Gita presents *sadhana paksha*, the path of life. (p. 28)

It is refreshing to find that this approach of the author is comprehensive. He does not foist any particular philosophy on the Gita as many others do. He cites Sri Aurobindo's warning against any such falsifying approach. He studies the text under convenient heads viz. Gita as the mother, the Objective, the Teacher, the practitioner, the practice, the finale. There is a special section on the key concepts in the Gita, chapterwise followed by the entire text of the Gita in bold *nagari* letters.

Swamiji draws upon authentic scriptures to support his argument and underlines the relevance of the work to the modern man. He narrates how Lord Krishna was asked, many years after the event, to repeat the teaching he had given in the Gita but he confessed he could not do it. The inspiration and afflatus that gave the Gita do not come to order.

A readable and rewarding treatise on the Gita.

M. P. PANDIT

My Truth by *Indira Gandhi*. Presented by Emmanuel Pouchpadass. Vision Books, 36 C Connaught Place, New Delhi-1. Pp. 200, Rs.100.

Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter Indira had called once on De Gaulle. He seems to have been rather cold though correct. Later, as Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi met the President again; he was very considerate. Later he remarked to L.K. Jha: "Politics are very difficult for a woman to manage but I think this one will make it!"

The General has more than proved to be a prophet. This is one of the several interesting sidelights on Indira Gandhi provided in this fascinating series of interviews originally published in French by a French Indian diplomat. Apart from throwing light on her many-sided participation from her childhood in the freedom movement of the country and thereafter, this account brings us close to the sensitive, 'very private' person of this unique leader who has baffled many an observer but has been loved by every one who has come into close contact with her. What is the secret of her appeal?

A few clues are found in her disarming answers:

"Even though I believe in privacy, and I think I have kept myself a private person in spite of my meeting thousands of people a day, I am always involved in what is happening around me, at any level. Now I happen to be more involved in politics. But there is no doubt that, had I retired in the mountains as I had planned to do, I would have been involved in some of the local problems of the people there. I can't imagine living in isolation." An instance to the point is how she found herself looking after Jewish girls in Lisbon when she was yet a student!

What is the secret of her phenomenal energy? "I don't separate work from relaxation. To me it is the same, just different aspects of the same life. Most politicians get very tense because they are playing a part, they are putting up a front. I am not, I am just me as I am. If I enjoy doing a thing I do it. That is why I am never anxious."

Also, "I think that being able to do several things at once without any tension is one of my main assets. If I am talking to someone, one part of my mind is with him, but if I have something else important, it doesn't mean that I have shelved it."

Her revelations of events behind the scenes during critical, tran-

sitional periods in the history of the Congress and of the nation give a totally different perspective on history than what is common and they should be given more publicity as a part of educating the demos.

Some of her observations on contemporary makers of history are worth noting:

When Bulganin and Khrushchev were in India, the changing roles of the two, with K. coming on top became apparent. When they arrived, they were equal but, by the time they left, K. was already awalking ahead.... In the beginning you couldn't take them through a small door because they had to walk side by side. (p. 76).

Mao didn't come to India. I was told later that he was waiting for an invitation. If only we had called him, many things would have been different. Had we known it then, he would have been most welcomed and honoured by this country. (p. 75).

Her assessment of the UNO reminds one of Sri Aurobindo's remarks on the subject. "India has always supported the U.N. It is not an ideal organisation, but no world organisation can be. What I have always said is that if you didn't have the U.N. you would have to have some other world body. There is no escape from some forum where everybody can meet... the forum is essential and the U.N. agencies are doing good work."

A remarkable document which will prove to be a significant page in the history of India with its own international overtones.

M. P. PANDIT



The Advent

You can be sure that the best possible will happen and
that the whole world is going as quickly as possible to-
wards its golden transformation.

THE MOTHER

The ADVENT

November 1981

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The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw
Near to the secret of their separate truth
And know each other as one deity.

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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

EDITORIAL

“Love the Divine alone and the Divine will always be with you.”

MOTHER wrote this to one of Her children. It is the key to solve problems, the magic mantra to cure the ills of human life and consciousness, the one remedy for all inner and outer ailments.

Take ego, for example. It epitomises, in a way, the problem of man, and all spiritual disciplines urge the need to get rid of it, to surmount or uproot it or to suppress or annihilate it. It is a dangerous and perilous pitfall, and must go. As to the methods by which it is to be done, well, the teachings vary: be disinterested, grow detached, serve others, forget yourself and your self-assumed importance, etc., etc., and all these methods are good : they help to control the ego, to tame it, to keep it under check, and even to master it. Yet the ego remains, it is there all the time, it is not uprooted, dissolved, annulled.

The method suggested here is simpler. Dissolve the ego through

divine love. First you love the Divine, — but you can love the Divine only when he has already entered into your heart, when he is already there — it is his Love that radiates through you and you love him. The fact that you love the Divine shows the Grace has touched you, has come down upon you; and it is this Grace that cures you of your ego to the extent you let it work. Grace alone can do it.

The Vedantist imagines he is rid of the ego when he merges into the Sachchidananda. It is not wholly true — for man is a complex being, an entity made of different parts and of different levels of consciousness — and even when one has attained the Divine with one part of his being, the other parts, however dormant, keep the stamp of ignorance and ego. If you want the Divine in its fulness, you must plunge whole and entire — or rather, you must let the supreme Consciousness come down and inundate your being, possess it and mould it into its own being — and what else is Grace if not this delivering approach and touch of the Divine.

To love the Divine means to open wide the gates of your house to this Grace, and after that there is nothing that is impossible, be it the effacement of the ego, or a new birth of the entire being.

LUMEN

La clarté de la lune est tendre et toute molle,
Elle dort sur les monts, elle dort sur les mers,
Elle souffle à l'étoile un doux trouble de chair...
O les fines langueurs d'une âme frêle et folle!

La lueur du soleil dissipe le beau rêve;
Mais un autre s'éveille au sein du jour brûlant
De gloire véhément et d'empire sanglant
Vanité d'un moment, bruit du flot sur la grève;

Ni Lune ni Soleil ne brûlent dans mon âme ;
Toute une autre lumière a su ravir mes cieux
Puissante est la douceur, aussi douce la flamme
Que me verse un lointain regard mystérieux!

THE LIGHT

The light of the moon is tender and soft;
It sleeps on the hills, it sleeps on the seas,
It breathes into the stars a sweet tremor of the flesh...
O the fine languors of a frail and wanton soul!

The light of the sun scatters the beautiful dream;
But another wakes up in the lap of the burning day
Of vehement glory and blood-soiled empire,
Vanity of a moment, noise of a surge upon the shore.

Neither Moon nor Sun shines in my soul;
Another light has learnt to ravish my skies
Powerful is the sweetness, sweet too the flame
Which is poured on me by a far and mysterious look!¹

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

¹ The poem originally written in French and first appearing in the local monthly *Collegien* in 1920 is reproduced here with an English translation.

SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM

(Lecture III)*

(MINSTREL OF HARMONY AND IMMORTALITY)

Preserve the knowledge that preserves the world,
Until Sri Krishna utterly returns...
The yoga shall be given back to men,
The sects shall cease, the grim debates die out
And atheism perish from the Earth,
Blasted with knowledge, love and brotherhood
And wisdom repossess Sri Krishna's world.

(Poem, *Kuthumi*, Sri Aurobindo)

Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds;
let all thyself be Krishna. This is thy Goal.

Thoughts and Glimpses, Sri Aurobindo

IT was not an accident that Sri Aurobindo had to be grounded from a child in Western culture at its best and most precious. It was really Destiny that took a hand and forced him in his boyhood to accept English, instead of Bengali, as his mother tongue and steeped him in his adolescence in Greco-Roman culture, urging him to write verse in Latin and Greek. The reason, though it was not obvious at the time, shone out clear and luminous in his youth, to wit, that he had been marked, at the turn of the century, to flower out into a herald in India as a new pathfinder to a rich harmony in every field of life and notably in the domain of the spirit. ("In every heart is hidden the myriad One" — he wrote in *Savitri*.) One of his earliest utterances made a deep dent in my youthful mind in 1922, a heart-warming message of harmony in his brilliant IDEALS AND PROGRESS (giving the lie to Kipling's pronouncement: "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet."):

"The message of the East to the West is a true message, 'Only by finding himself can man be saved,' and 'what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?' The West has heard the message and is seeking out the law and truth of the soul

* Under the auspices of the University of Poona.

and the evidence of an inner reality greater than the material. The danger is that with her passion for mechanism and her exaggerated intellectuality she may fog herself in an external and false psychism, such as we see arising in England and America, the homes of the mechanical genius.

"The message the West brings to the East is a true message. Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead; Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman and to deny life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient knowledge. The East also is awaking to the message. The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own law and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudenesses which are invading her."

The two paragraphs, placed in juxtaposition, help bring to the fore with crystalline clarity the value of the supreme panacea of harmony in this unhappy world of din, discord and strife. In his LIFE DIVINE Sri Aurobindo has stressed once more: "All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony". One of his masterly works is entitled SYNTHESIS OF YOGA — an opulent array of diverse forms and modes of human aspiration realising itself in seemingly disparate strands but ultimately resolving in a fecund unity, like the living cells of the human body, different and yet fundamentally conducting to the same Goal of the triumph of Matter, the temple of the Spirit. One of the reasons why Sri Aurobindo belauded the Tantra philosophy of life was that its outlook had a basic kinship with his own, in that the Tantra sage too believed in the welding together of alien elements of the human personality in the roles of cooperators as against antagonists, e.g.

*Ganayasi yadidam bandhanamātram
Paścāat drakṣyasi mocanadātāram*

*What now seems a cruel chain to you, O friend,
Shall lead you to deliverance in the end.*

Sri Aurobindo nodded in full approval and wrote to me once: "The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future." He emphasized this great truth in the opening chapter of his ESSAYS ON THE GITA: "We do not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future."

As the dictum was uttered in inspired prose, almost poetic in its rhythm, I wrote to Romain Rolland about him. He replied asking me to enlighten him more about the teaching and personality of Sri Aurobindo. I complied joyously emphasizing how Sri Aurobindo harmonised in his writings the star-gleams of Indian spirituality with the findings of Western culture. To my joy, he responded with alacrity, and I felicitated him as one of the first among Europeans to appreciate this contribution of Sri Aurobindo, and acclaim him as a great ambassador; "Here comes Sri Aurobindo," he wrote, "the completest synthesis that has been realised to this day of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe." (Thereafter, in a letter dated 1.10.1924, he wrote to me:

"Je vous remercie de ce que vous m'avez écrit au sujet de Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, et du numéro de la revue *Arya* que vous m'avez envoyée. Je partage entièrement votre manière de voir. Je connais trop peu encore de Sri Aurobindo; mais ce que je connais me suffit pour voir en lui une des plus hautes forces spirituelles du monde." (I thank you for what you have written to me about Sri Aurobindo as also for the monthly *Arya*. I entirely agree with your outlook. I know as yet too little about Sri Aurobindo, but what little I know about him convinces me that there is in him one of the highest spiritual forces of the world.)

Thereafter I met Sri Aurobindo's brother Barindra Kumar, the great revolutionary; he asked me to go straight to the fountainhead without beating about the bush. Encouraged, I wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking him whether he would accept me as his disciple. He replied inviting me to see him at Pondicherry. I was overjoyed. But when I saw him (January, 1924) he told me to wait till I felt an irresistible urge to tread the path of yoga.

Disappointed, I returned to Calcutta and had a long talk with Rabindranath who had described to me once how Sri Aurobindo used

to electrify the country with his marvellous articles and speeches. Then he had added, with a sigh: "But he is lost to us, Dilip, — soaring in the cloudland of mysticism — he won't return to lead the country again." When I met him I contended that he had definitely misunderstood Sri Aurobindo who was set on heralding a new age with a Light he expects to bring down with his Yoga, the light I had seen on his face. I quoted also a passage from his *Synthesis of Yoga*: "We must bear the burden of others in divine self-interest." The poet was impressed and said he would try to see him at Pondicherry if the occasion presented itself. It so happened that on his way to Europe he visited Sri Aurobindo in his sanctum sanctorum. Thereafter he wrote in 1928 in the *Modern Review*: "His face was radiant with an inner light... I felt the utterance of the ancient Hindu Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him: 'You have the word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world. Hearken to me... Years ago I saw Sri Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him: 'Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath.' Today I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence: 'Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath.' "

As the Poet had the eyes to see and the ears to hear, he saw in Sri Aurobindo the light of the 'Nameless love vested in Name's disguise,¹ and heard in his voice the voice of the Vedic Rishi who sang (*Mundaka Upanishad*):

Yasmin dyauḥ prthivī cāntarikṣamotam manah saha
prāṇaiśca sarvaiḥ
Tamevaikam jānatha ātmānamanyā vāco vimuñca-
thāmṛtasyaiṣa setuh

*The One in whom are woven heaven and earth,
With the interspace and all the currents of life,
Know Him as the One Self, to be attained,
Scout all this alien din of words, words, words:
For He is the Bridge to Immortality.*

¹ Chadwick wrote in our Ashram a beautiful poem on Sri Aurobindo, *Red Lotus*, in which he wrote this inspired line — "A nameless love is garbed in Name's disguise." (Poems)

Sri Aurobindo wrote to me afterwards that it was because he wanted to import in his blank verse this deep *mantric* vibrancy of the Upanishad that he had employed, by and large, the end-stopped lines and avoided enjambement. This resonance reached its peak power in his apotheosis of Love. To quote a few memorable lines by way of illustration:

*All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky,
And love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space,
A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God,
A body is his chamber and his shrine.¹*

How could it be otherwise since the body is the medium of love divine — in Sri Aurobindo's vision matter's kinship with the Spirit is blest by Heaven and so becomes the basis of His terrestrial manifestation. The reason is not far to seek,

*"For love must soar beyond the very heavens
And find its secret sense ineffable."²*

Only, for this consummation,

*"It must change its human ways to ways divine,
Yet keep its sovereignty of earthly bliss.²*

The legend of Savitri-Satyavan is well known: When Death came to pluck the soul from Satyavan's mortal body, Savitri followed in his wake. It was destiny, because Death, in the epic of *Savitri*, castigated our human ideals and aspirations. But Savitri answers:

*"A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:*

¹ *Savitri* X.3.

² *Savitri* XI.

*I am a deputy of the aspiring heart
My spirit's liberty I ask for all'*

And that great discovery is founded on Savitri's profound realisation that

*"Our lives are God's messengers beneath the stars;
To dwell under death's shadow they have come,
Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race,
His love to fill the hollow in man's hearts,
His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.
For I, the woman, am the force of God,
He, the Eternal's delegate soul in man"*¹

Therefore how can Death challenge her, Savitri, who is missioned by God to deny destiny since

*"My will is greater than thy will, O Death,
My love is stronger than the bonds of Fate."*²

Is it an unwarranted presumption?

Surely not, because Savitri knows in her illumined soul that

*"Our love is the heavenly seal of the Supreme,
I guard that seal against thy rending hands."*³

Death questions this as presumptuous but Savitri sings on with a bardic ardour:

*"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 Absolute."*⁴

That is why Savitri repudiates Death:

¹ ibid X.4.

² *Savitri* X.3.

³ *Savitri* X.3.

⁴ *Savitri* X.3.

*“O Death, who reasonest, I reason not,
Reason that scans and breaks, but cannot build
Or builds in vain because she doubts her work
I am, I love, I see, I act, I will”¹*

When I read it I felt a deep ecstasy and realised anew that Sri Aurobindo was sent to us from on high as a celestial Minstrel of immortal Love — immortal because it could change grim Destiny — to resurrect Love. And so I hailed him:

*Thou comst to announce : “Man must regain
The heritage he is born to win,
Soul, pent in matter, shall attain
Through aspiration the Evergreen.”*

I know of course that those who long to soar to the Empyrean on reason's feeble clay-wings must baulk at accepting his vision as valid. But those who have nursed even a spark of that Flame — aspiration, which is native to the soul, cannot help but be moved by his breathtaking prophecies because (as he put it in his inimitable language in Savitri): “*Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.*” So, knowing full well how our “blind thoughts” constantly flounder and land us in pitfalls, he showed us how we could grow to realise that Heaven visits earth (in Christ's words) “not to destroy but to fulfil” and in the words of Savitri: “Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth.” Apropos, I am reminded of a question I once put to him when I was all but heart-lost. He wrote back reassuring me (April 1936): “As for your question whether Heaven wants Man, the answer is that if Heaven did not want him he would not want Heaven.”

Years later, he improvised on this theme with the deeper inspiration of poetry:

*“A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as He put ours.”²*

Which is the reason why:

¹ ibid X.4.

² Savitri 1.4.

*"Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Arch-mason shapes his works"¹*

Therefore Savitri declines to come home to the world-oblivious bliss of heaven, contending:

*Thy servitudes on earth are greater, King,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.²*

Then, as though to bring out the full import of Krishna's famous dictum in the Gita:

*Nehābhikramanāśosti pratyavāyo na vidyate
Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*

*In the Yoga of action nothing you undertake
Can ever be vain, nor obstacles prevail.
For even an iota of dharma shall
Come to deliver you from cosmic fear.³*

Thus he declared that man was bound to attain the Unattainable because it was decreed that the soul's ascent to His peak would be answered ultimately by the Descent of His Grace for man's flowering fulfilment in life as

*"A deathbound littleness is not all we are:
Immortal, our forgotten vastnesses
Await discovery in our summit selves."⁴*

And he cannot halt or rest in a half-way house because

*"We are sons of God and must be even as He:
His human portion, we must grow divine,
Our life is a paradox with God for key"⁵*

^{1 2} ibid XI.

³ The Gita II.40.

^{4 5} Savitri I.4.

The time-old "paradox" has its roots in the deep hiatus between Matter and Spirit in that if one denied a superconscious Spirit sustaining earth-life, on the ground that nothing unattested by one's mind and senses can be accepted as 'real', then one lands plop into rank materialism and needs must repudiate any divine purpose in life. One must, because such a purpose being beyond the ambit of mental comprehension, the mind cannot help but dub the world an impossible creation which has, somehow, been fathered by chance. But no seer worth his salt can accept such a lame solution because he has *seen* what the Sage Narad asserts:

*"This world was not built with random bricks of chance,
A blind God is not destiny's architect:
A conscious power has drawn the plan of life,
There is a meaning in each curve and line."*¹

So why give in to despair bred by failures when the ultimate victory is certain, because:

*"The spirit rises mightier by defeat;
Its godlike wings grow wider with each fall,
Its splendid failures sum to victory."*²

They must, because

*"The high gods look on man and watch and choose
Today's impossibles for the future's base."*³

And so, Sri Aurobindo, the born Messenger of the Spirit, with the light of immortal aspiration in his eyes, teaches us everytime through his art and words, his acts and withdrawals — aye, even his

¹ ibid 6.2

The unattainable beauty
The thought of which was pain,
That flickered in eyes and on lips
And vanished again:
That fugitive beauty
Thou shalt attain. (Poem, *Promise*, by A.E.)

² ibid 6.2.

³ *Savitri* III.4.

gestures and long spells of silence — that when one is called by God one must leave aside all other appeals — of lesser loves and harmonies. Which is why he declines, when adjured by his countrymen, to come out of his Yogic seclusion to resume his political leadership. He had to, as a man must die to his old self of personal ambition and desires before he can be reborn to the creative freedom of the divine life:

*“All that denies must be torn out and slain
And crushed the many longings for whose sake
We lose the One for whom our lives were made.”¹*

It is not possible here even to touch on all that he, as a Messenger of Immortality, taught us through what he had become (He wrote to me once: “The ultimate value of a man is not to be measured by what he says nor even by what he does, but by what he becomes.”) But I feel that his greatest message was the one which, when he was in the Alipore jail, Krishna had so thrillingly missioned him to convey to us all. There, just when his faith had wavered, the Lord of the Gita had come to him in person and revealed to His “rare great-souled devotee that all was Vasudeva”² and said (to quote from his own rapturous message given after his acquittal, in 1908, in a public speech):

“...His strength entered into me. I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, they were grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arm of Sri Krishna around me — the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the Friend and Lover... of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them it was Vasudeva, it was

¹ ibid. III.2

² *Vāsudevah sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ* (The Gita.VII.19)
Rare is the great soul who sees Krishna in all.

Narayana whom I found in those darkened souls and misused bodies... He said to me: 'Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel'. I looked and... it was Vasudeva... it was Sri Krishna, my Lover and Friend, who sat there and smiled. 'Now do you fear?' He said: 'I am in all men and I overrule their actions and their works. My protection is still with you and you shall not fear'."¹

Thereafter, the Friend and Lover sustained him all his life through his endless trials and tribulations and gave him a beautiful Vision he has expressed poetically in one of his most moving poems, *Life Heavens*:

*"I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;
My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys...
By me the last finite, yearning, strives
To reach the last infinity's unknown,
The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives
And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone."*

But as I had failed at first to grasp what message exactly he wanted to convey in this poem (I had asked, how could our dismal earth-life be looked upon as glorious?) he wrote to me a long letter dated 19.7.1934 — from which I may quote a few relevant lines here as his answering commentary:

"Where do you find in the 'Life Heavens' that I say or anybody says the conditions on the earth are glorious and suited to the Divine Life?... The Earth is an evolutionary world, not at all glorious or harmonious... but sorrowful, disharmonious, imperfect. Yet in that imperfection is the urge towards a higher and more many-sided perfection. It contains the last finite which yet yearns to the supreme infinite... God is pent in the mire (mire is not glorious, so there is no claim to glory or beauty here), but that very fact imposes a necessity to break through that prison to a consciousness which is ever rising towards the heights. That is 'deeper power', though not a greater actual glory or perfection."²

This potentiality — intrinsically divine within the cadre of the

¹ *Uttarpara Speech* by Sri Aurobindo.

² This letter is printed in full in his *Letters on Yoga*, Second Series.

earth's terrestrial limitations — he stressed again and again in his writings. To give just one excerpt from his *Synthesis of Yoga, Introduction*: “The divine Power in us uses all life as the means... Every experience and outer contact with our world-environment, however trifling or however disastrous, is used for the work, and every experience, even to the most repellent suffering, or the most humiliating fall, becomes a step on the path to perfection”. And so, he posits: “All life is a Yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself.”

And enlarging on this theme, he wrote in another long letter to me: “I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits.”

He explained this view of his in answer to a doubt that once crossed my mind as to whether such an outlook did not seem to have a kinship with the western materialistic this-worldliness as against our spiritual other-worldliness.

“My own life and my Yoga,” he wrote to me, “have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life but, at the same time, since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences... For me all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere... In my Yoga also, I found myself moved to include both worlds in my view — the spiritual and the material — and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life, not for a personal salvation only, but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any, and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character.

“My Yoga,” he went on to add, “can include, indeed, a full experience of the other worlds... It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *Life Divine* and *Savitri*. If you accept Krishnaprem's insistence that this and no other must be your path, that it is this you have to attain and realise, then an exclusive other-worldliness cannot be your way... One must have faith in the Master of our life and works, even if for a long time He

conceals Himself, and then in His own right time He will reveal His Presence.”¹

He has, indeed, stressed in all his writings, both in prose and verse, that man’s last realisation flowering in manifestation would be the inauguration of the reign of God in the Kingdom of Matter:

*Although thou hide thyself behind thy works,
To be is not a senseless paradox,
Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God.²*

In the Upanishad we are heartened by the self-same prediction:

Atha martyomrrto bhavatyatra Brahma samaśnute³

That is:

*The death-bound mortal shall rejoice on earth
In the heavenly boon of immortality.*

I refer again and again to the Upanishads and the Gita to emphasise that Sri Aurobindo’s intuitions and findings had a fundamental affinity with the aspirations and pronouncements of our Indian Sages and Seers. In his epic *Savitri* he has attained his peak power as a prophet to be able to attest the blessedness of earth as a playground of the “Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers.”⁴ And he has underscored his Vision with the signature of the born Poet with such a soul-stirring afflatus as to take our breath away. Ever so many poems of his — not to mention his *Savitri* — are resonant with his oracular promulgations of the imminent redemption of human Fate by Divine Grace, especially in Savitri’s spirited refutation of the magniloquent arguments of Death as the supercilious dictator to us contemptible mannikins, puppet mortals. But Sri Aurobindo’s pronoun-

¹ Printed in my *Sri Aurobindo came to me* (pp. 245-248).

² *Savitri*. The Book of Everlasting Day. XI.

³ Katha Upanishad 2.3.14.

⁴ “I saw the Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth:
Forerunners of a divine multitude.” (*Savitri*. III.4)

ciamento about the final victory of human aspiration over God-hostile titans is one of his most eloquent vindications of the immortality of Divinity pent in death-ridden humanity. To quote in conclusion a few resplendent passages by way of illustration:

When the Supreme asks Savitri to come home to her native abode of divine bliss and "unhoured eternity," Savitri resolutely declines, contending that since

"Imperfect is the joy not shared by all",

She would fain pray:

*"Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts...
Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
To take all things and creatures in their grief
And gather them into a mother's arms.
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men."¹*

It is then, at long last, that the Supreme reveals that He was really testing Savitri, and grants her the boon she sought: the life of Satyavan. And He sings, pleased with her passing of the test:

*"O beautiful body of the incarnate Word,
Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice.
My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose...
Because thou hast obeyed my timeless will...
I yoke thee to my power of work in Time.
Because thou hast chosen to share earth's struggle and fate
And turned aside to help and yearned to save,
I bind by thy heart's passion thy heart to mine
And lay my splendid yoke upon thy soul.
O Sun-word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men...
O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
Become my cord of universal love."²*

¹ *Savitri*. Book of Everlasting Day. XI.

² *Savitri*. Book of Everlasting Day. XI.

Thereafter what shall happen? He announces:

*“Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,
My garden of life to plant a seed divine,
When all thy work in human time is done,
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.”*

Till lastly :

*“A heavenlier passion shall upheave men’s lives,
Their mind shall share in the ineffable gleam,
Their heart shall feel the ecstasy and the fire,
Earth’s bodies shall be conscious of a soul,
Mortality’s bond-slaves shall unloose their bonds,
Mere men into spiritual beings grow
And see awake the dumb divinity.”*

And then, at long last, the gulf between Matter and Spirit shall be bridged:

*“The Spirit shall look out through Matter’s gaze
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit’s Face.”*

A marvellous pinnacle fulfilment of terrestrial life prophesied by the great Rishi when King Manu appealed to him of yore to be given a Message.

The Rishi complied and sang assuring Manu that he *was* the Divine: “Thou art He, O King!”¹ It was, indeed, a celestial message of the Friend and the Lover through His Representative, the Ageless Illuminate, the Seer-cum-oracle:

*Hear then the Truth. Behind this visible world
The eyes see plain,
Another stands, and in its folds are curled
Our waking dreams.*

¹ Tat tvam asi Svetaketo — Thou art that, O Svetaketu — Chhandogya Upanishad.

*Dream is more real, which, while here we wake,
 Unreal seems...
To bring those heavens down upon the earth
 We all descend,
And fragments of it in the human birth
 We can command...
We are but sparks of that most perfect fire,
 Waves of that sea:
From Him we come, to Him we go, desire
 Eternally.*

DILIP KUMAR ROY

MEDITATION

A TALK*

MEDITATION, though not the only way, forms part, an important part of most of the ways to the realization of the Truth, the Divine Consciousness. But there are meditations and meditations, several lines and disciplines of meditation depending on what we want to achieve through it. Meditation is not an end in itself. It is but a means, a way of putting ourselves in tune with the consciousness that represents our ideal, what we want to achieve.

Necessarily, a meditation that seeks to realize the Divine as Bliss is somewhat different from that which wants to realize the Divine as Knowledge. A meditation that seeks liberation of the soul by a merging into Nirvana or the Joy or the Peace or the Bliss of the Ineffable has got to be different from a meditation for a collective realization, a building of a kingdom of God on earth. There are several goals and we must set for ourselves a definite one.

I know that in this world of constant and perpetual evolution, there cannot be anything like a final goal or a final aim. One fulfilment always opens up horizons for another fulfilment and so man progresses; even God in manifestation progresses. Keeping this in view that there is no finality about our effort, our achievement, we must nevertheless fix an immediate goal. Let other goals come afterwards and according to that let us choose the type of our meditation.

Meditation, I repeat, is a way of attuning our consciousness, our mind, our being to that which, if not itself what we seek, brings that nearer to us. Now, whatever the type of discipline, whatever the means of meditation, there are certain common factors, preliminary conditions to be fulfilled before meditation can be meaningful. There is a minimum psychological and moral purification which each one who seeks to meditate has to provide himself with. Many teachers give their own specifications, but by and large, the requirements listed by that old master of yoga, Patanjali,—the legendary Patanjali,—form the basic background that one must have before entering into the domain of meditation or concentration. There is a difference bet-

* At a Seminar held at the Krotana Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, U.S.A., on April 30th, 1977.

ween meditation and concentration, but to that we shall come a little later.

So let us first traverse the preliminaries and examine for ourselves how far we are ready, how far we are equipped, what the things are that still need some homework. The first condition is that we must cultivate and establish in ourselves non-violence, *ahimsā*. This non-violence does not mean only abstention from physical injury to others. It means that but not that alone. Physical violence, physical elimination of certain things may be necessary, may be indispensable in certain situations. We should not make a fetish or a fad of not hurting creatures because we may be indulging in violence. The whole life on earth is organised on the principle of the larger fish swallowing the smaller fish, only we must take care to see that we don't interfere with the economy of nature at higher levels. If we have to consume life, let it be at the lower grades of life; it would mean less loss to Mother Nature. The higher the level to which the organisation has proceeded, the greater the harm to the economy of nature if we kill that life.

Now this is only by the way because we in India have, among certain sects, gone to extreme limits, exaggerations in this matter. The kind of non-violence that is required from a practitioner of meditation is absence of violence in thought, in feeling — feelings of anger, feelings of vengeance, feelings of resentment. For these emanate certain vibrations which, when they strike the person or persons concerned, can cause greater violence than a physical blow. And they have repercussions on our own system. They poison our blood; they vitiate our consciousness. So there has to be a relentless weeding out of the thoughts, feelings, movements of violence, harmful to others.

Sri Aurobindo says somewhere that soul-violence can be a thousand times more disastrous than physical violence. There is soul-violence when you nurse a deep hatred, a deep anger and direct that force to others or exercise a kind of moral coercion on them. Take for instance, hunger strikes. When you start a hunger strike, whatever the declared objective, the real objective is to force the other person or persons to accept your point of view. There is a certain moral coercion. That is to be avoided.

The true test of whether we have really eliminated violence from our being is that when creatures normally hostile to each other come

into our presence, they forget their enmity and stay together. The spiritual history of India is replete with examples of how the snake and the mongoose, the tiger cub and the deer were found lying together in the environs of the hermitage of a rishi or a seer. And these are things that are happening even today in India. For one who has eliminated violence, there is no violence in his vicinity. That is the first step.

The second is non-stealing, *āsteya*. Not to help oneself to what does not belong to one. This non-appropriation of what belongs to others does not confine itself only to the physical level. It also includes non-appropriation of ideas, non-appropriation of other people's knowledge, techniques. A good deal of this stealing business is going on. There are so many pseudo-philosophies, movements, picking up a few things from here, a few things from there, passing them on as genuine philosophies or doctrines, harming many people. These are all frowned upon in the genuine tradition.

The third is truth. Now truth is a very, very slippery concept. There cannot be one truth for all. There is the Truth, but it renders itself in each individual as the truth relative to him. So, what is true to one at his stage of development does not apply to another. But there are certain common fundamentals. To speak the truth is not difficult. But to speak what one thinks, to do what one speaks, to keep a correspondence between the movements of the mind, the heart and the body, that is, the expression and the living of truth, organized around the divinity of the soul, a harmony between these different movements of the consciousness, is the practice of truth. And when one develops this habit of speaking only what one feels and what one has in mind, of never deviating from that principle, one attains after a certain time *vāksiddhi*, the power of fulfilment of speech. Whatever one speaks comes true. It is an occult truth that if one always speaks the truth, whatever he speaks fulfils itself. One does not however do this for that advantage, but I just mention the sure result of this discipline of truthfulness in speech. So this truth of speech, truth of feeling, truth of action, based upon one's perception of truth for himself — that is the third requirement.

The fourth is sexual purity. It has been interpreted in as many ways as is convenient to people. It means the conservation of sex-energy, economy in the utilization of sex-energy. It does not mean a uniform blanket rule of absolute continence for all. There is some-

thing like a legitimate use of sex-energy in nature. What is prohibited is an indiscriminate use of it. Once, however, one takes to the spiritual path and advances beyond a certain level and has no other objective except the spiritual, then it is imperative to excise sex-indulgence completely. And why? Is it just because of some religious superstition? Or is continence just a way of saving oneself from entanglements? No. There is a science, a rationale behind it.

In man (when I say man, I mean a human being, both male and female), there are a number of energies, but the dominant form taken by his life-energy is sex-energy. Normally, when sex-energy accumulates, Nature sees to it that it is thrown out for her own purposes. But when one seeks to conserve it, one does not throw it out and it gathers. Imagine that sexual fluids are like water. When they are conserved, heat is generated. It is called *tapas*. This generation of heat in the body dynamises the effectuating power of the person; he is able to exercise his will very effectively. When further conservation takes place, this heat converts itself into light. There is illumination, *prakāśa*, that is, the mind gets illumined, memory gets strengthened. There is a flash of intelligence and one is able to conceive things rapidly, transmit brilliant thoughts, understand things, function on the mental level remarkably. When the conservation is insisted upon still further, there is the generation of what is called *vidyut*, electricity, which combines both heat and light. So man is able to think brilliantly and effectuate himself remarkably, outstandingly. And still more conserved, the *vidyut*, the electricity, is converted into what is called *ojas*. *Ojas* is that primal ether that builds this universe, that creative energy at the ethereal level which can create. Now when man begins to live on that level, he has that *ojas* coursing in his veins. And more; the last stage is when this *ojas*, the primal energy of ether, renders itself into *vīrya*, a spiritual power which can lead one to self-realization.

Now these are the successive steps that the sex-energy takes in its sublimation till it is converted into absolute spiritual power. Naturally, this stage comes after one has sufficiently advanced, and it is a stage when sex becomes totally irrelevant. One does not have to make a deliberate effort to reject sex. Sex is no longer a temptation. It drops from him like a ripe fruit. The same situations which once excited a response do not evoke it any more. This lack of response to

sex does not depend upon one's age at all. People can be very lusty even at the age of 70, people can be free of sex even at the age of 40. It has nothing to do with physical age, but has much to do with inner maturity, the seeking and the intensity of the soul's aspiration and the readiness of the whole system to follow the soul.

The fifth is non-covetousness. You do not cast an eye, nor even a thought on what does not belong to you. You accept what one of the Upanishads, the Isha, says: *iśā vāsyamidam jagat*, all this is for habitation by the Lord. It continues, "Do not covet what does not belong to you. Renounce and by that renounced, enjoy." You get the right of enjoyment only when you recognize that all belongs to God. And when you renounce your personal claim on things and take the things that come to you as given by God, as gifts of God, and let God enjoy them through you, then you have the right attitude; and that enjoyment does not create bondage.

So also regarding what belongs to others. To really feel that all belongs to God and to recast your life in that perspective is a higher demand. But lower down, there is a social law which says that belongs to others, this belongs to you, and that to cast an eye upon what belongs to others is illegitimate. Your consciousness should not move to dispossess others of what they have for your own personal aggrandizement. And this applies not only on the physical plane, but even on the mental; even the thought of trying to acquire what belongs to others, is vitiating.

These then are the five prohibitions. The next set of five are what are called injunctions, more positive. And of these, the first is cleanliness. Cleanliness does not mean only external cleanliness, though that is also naturally included. It is the inner cleanliness of the mind and heart, of ideas, thoughts and feelings.

The second is contentment. One has to be content with what one has, not always reaching out to get what one does not have; this fevered excitement and yearning to possess more and more robs one of whatever little peace one has got. To be content does not mean that one should not make an effort and progress; one may do that, but there has to be a basic inner contentment with life. Not constantly complaining, constantly lamenting, "I don't have this, I don't have that." Take it that what is yours, is given to you by God and there is a meaning in your not having other things. This inner contentment,

what may otherwise be called acceptance of the circumstances with a certain inner happiness, is what is required to be gained.

The third requirement is *tapas*; that is, discipline. An aimless life, as the Mother says, is always a miserable life. One must have an aim and according to that aim one must discipline one's life-movement so that one's energies are devoted to that aim, organised to that quest, and this conservation of energies and organising them around a certain truth, is called spiritual discipline. We practise mental discipline when we concentrate on studying what we want to study, as we do when we have an examination to pass, we narrow our focus. Similarly, in spiritual pursuits, there is this necessity of discipline. It is all right for the moderns to speak of spontaneity. Both in India and abroad there are some people who consider discipline to be a curse and advocate spontaneity. They say, "Throw discipline to the winds. Discipline is something that interferes between you and Nature and whatever else. Let yourself go and you will begin to function as the Infinite." But it never happens that way.

While in India, a few months before I left, I received some books for assessment and for expressing my opinion of a new kind of movement that is spreading there among the younger people. I read one of them. It is a brilliant book, an excellent exposition. But the whole philosophy amounts to this: "Don't exercise any control over yourself. When you feel angry, become angry. When you feel like indulging in sex, do it. That way, when you do away with the control of the mind, the inhibitions of the mind, you become spontaneously attuned to the truth of your being, to Nature. Look at the animals, look at the plants, see how they are in tune with Nature; they have no problems and they are happy. Why should you be miserable with all these religious and spiritual disciplines?" It appeals to many minds, particularly to young people from the West a lot of whom have gone to India. They are fascinated by such talk and join such movements in hundreds.

Well, normally when I review a book I don't say a harsh word, unless the book is very mischievous and should be exposed. So within those self-set limits I pointed out that attunement with Nature is certainly a laudable idea. At the level of the animals and plants, this attunement is unconscious and automatic. But having evolved a self-conscious creature like man, Nature's intention is that this harmony,

this oneness, this at-one-ment, should not continue to be on a mechanical and unconscious level, but at a conscious level. And this conscious harmony with Nature cannot take place by going back to the animal stage, but by going a stage further than the human stage. One has to acquire control over nature and not become a slave of nature.

This emphasises a certain discipline. If you remove all controls which have been developed by Nature after aeons of labour, you always slide back. Actually you have to exercise control, discipline and get a step above so that from there you can dominate nature, control yourself and express only what you want to. This is the necessity of discipline. No meditation worth the name, no spiritual progress, is really possible unless you practise a certain discipline. But it is important that the practice of that discipline should not be a matter of self-punishment. You must not feel that you are constricting yourself. There must be a joy in observing that discipline because it yields certain results almost immediately and there is always a satisfaction in observing the results of the discipline. Discipline in this context becomes a movement of joy and progress. There is a mental discipline; there is an emotional discipline; there is a vital discipline; there is a physical discipline. Discipline is one of the major conditions that one has to fulfil.

The fourth condition is study. One must cultivate the mind, know what others have thought, open the mental being to this impact of the higher vibrations of knowledge. A mental knowledge is not tantamount to realization, it is true, but still one must know mentally where one is going, what has happened to others, how they have achieved, what are the hindrances and the helping points. This education of oneself by study, study of spiritual writings, *svādhyāya* as it is called, a disciplined reading and incorporation of the knowledge contained in scriptures and authentic texts — that is a very important part. Even when you don't understand a text, still if you persist at it, the force that is in that book creates certain new grooves in your brain and the second or the third time when you read it, it begins to make some meaning. This is the meaning of studying, of exposing your mind to the constant vibrations of higher levels of knowledge. Incidentally, the mind gets developed, a mental climate is created, a climate of spiritual culture.

The last condition is surrender, *Isvara pranidhāna*, surrender to the Lord, surrender to God. God may signify anything to you, but to that ideal, that truth you surrender. Humility, a realization that you yourself can't do much by your own efforts, placing yourself in the hands of a higher Power of consciousness, that fulfils these preliminary conditions. It is not done in a day. Usually it takes a long time. But it does not mean that you have to wait until you have fully completed this discipline. You start simultaneously on all the levels and as you progress, these things also organize themselves. It is enough if you mentally accept and sincerely try to practise this preliminary discipline.

And then comes the question of posture, the right position for meditation. There are certain postures which promote a stability in the body. Normally, if we sit for a length of time our limbs start moving unconsciously; there is a certain restlessness in the body. The mind may become quiet, but the body becomes restless. Now, to develop a discipline of the body, to sit in a certain state without much moving, without agitation or restlessness, certain postures have been devised, simple postures in which one can sit without movement or fatigue. And the true test of the right posture is that one forgets the body. Each person has his own posture. He has to experiment and find out what asana, what posture, is best for him and adopt it. It does not mean that one must always sit cross-legged in the Padmasana for hours together. Sri Aurobindo used to say that walking was the best asana for him. He was able to meditate best when he was walking. And he used to walk at least seven miles a day in his room. Some people can meditate better when they stand erect. Some need to sit in a chair. There is no rigidity about posture. That posture in which a person feels comfortable, in which he feels that the body can hold itself in a stable position, and he can forget the body—that is the right posture for him.

Once the asana is fixed, next comes what is called the breathing technique. Normally, we are never aware of how we breathe; we breathe very irregularly. There is no balance between the time we give for drawing the breath in and letting it go out. Now breathing is intimately connected with the mind. The movement of the life-force—of which breathing is a major operation—has a direct connection with the mind. When the mind is agitated, restless, full of

out-going thoughts, breathing is irregular. If the breathing is controlled, made regular, the mind too comes under control and becomes a little quiet. If, however, when you are breathing heavily, you see what is the condition of the mind, you will find it chaotic.

Since there is a rush of thoughts usually when you sit for meditation, you are asked first to control your breathing by equalizing the time taken to breathe in and the time taken to breathe out. Once you establish that rhythm, you must hold the breath in between for a while, in the same proportion to begin with — inbreathing, holding and letting it out. If you do this for some time, the whole system falls quiet, calm. There is further development of this science called *prāṇāyama*, which it is not necessary for the practitioner of meditation to know or study, much less practise. This elementary discipline of breathing is enough.

The next step, after you sit in a comfortable position, acquire a reasonable quietude of mind and balanced breathing, is to bring together the movements of your mind which are spread out in a hundred directions. If you stop any person suddenly and ask him, "What were you thinking about?", normally he will not be able to reply at once. He will need time to recollect. You have to exercise your will to bring together all the dispersed threads of the mental consciousness closer and closer and weave them together. This bringing together is called *pratyāhāra*. Once the dispersed mental consciousness is controlled, it can be fixed on one point. It may be an idea. It may be a form. It may be a sound. It may be a word. Whatever it is, there must be some object around which the mind can be focused. That is called concentration.

So concentration is a fixing of the mind on some one thing. In the very nature of things this concentration cannot be held for long. There is strain and the mind, the consciousness begins to flow on that theme, the object of concentration. If you concentrate on God as Love, the mind starts thinking after a time, "What is Love? How does God express himself in Love? What is the expression of Love?" Thus the mind goes on thinking about everything relating to that theme. Again, the concentration may be on God as Peace: "I want to realize God as Peace." Thinking of Peace, invoking Peace, imagining Peace — that way the consciousness flows on peace, like 'the flow of oil in a wick'. So the consciousness, the mind, flows from its

concentrated state, and this flow of consciousness around the object of concentration is called meditation.

It is a universal experience that as one begins to meditate, there is interference. People say, "As soon as we sit to meditate we are troubled by thoughts. Normally we don't have these thoughts, but when we sit for meditation, we are disturbed by a rush of thoughts." Actually, it is not so. The thoughts are always there, they are in the universal atmosphere moving this way and that, but we are occupied with something or other and we don't take cognizance of them. But when we sit for meditation we become aware of them. And how are we to deal with this invasion of irrelevant, foreign and distracting thoughts that upset our meditation? There are two or three ways in which it can be done. One is to let the thoughts flow. We let them run on the screen of our mind, but we do not participate in them. We just observe as they flow, and discover that they reveal much in our own nature which needs to be corrected. And by the very fact that we don't participate in the movement, it slows down and eventually comes to a standstill, and then we have a quiet mind. It takes time, but it works. The second way, if we have a strong will, is to treat each thought as an intruder and the moment it comes near our mind to shut it out. Doing this we build up what is called a vacant mind. The third way, perhaps more practical, is to ignore the thoughts and whenever they come, not to busy ourselves with them, but to hold our main attention to the objective of our contemplation. If we ignore them thus without paying any attention to them, they run about on the surface of our mind; the peripheral consciousness deals with them, and we continue to be occupied with what we wish to concentrate upon. Just as, when we are talking to each other, there may be some noises going on like those of passing motor cars, aeroplanes and others, but they don't interfere with our flow of thought or our flow of talk, though we are aware of those noises. Similarly, the outer mind, the surface mind deals with these thoughts, but we are concerned with what we are interested in. This leads in life to what may be called bifurcation of consciousness by which the main consciousness is always centred around our quest, our goal, and a mechanical, surface part of the consciousness deals with the day-to-day routine activities. The gulf between the outer life and the inner life is thus healed — a part of the consciousness

dealing with routine things and the bulk of the consciousness busy, always engaged, always bent upon the quest that we are truly occupied with. This is the technique that I have found most practical.

Once the meditation develops and gathers strength, one forgets oneself, one is conscious only of the object of meditation, which may be a feeling of peace, or of love, or a Divine Form, one just gets lost in it. This is the beginning of trance into which meditation culminates. There are a number of forms of trance, but we need not go deeply into that. It is enough for our purpose to know that ultimately one's consciousness becomes one with the consciousness of the object; the subject and the object become one. So meditation is a means and a technique that leads one to this culmination in a state of identity with the object.

Important consequences follow. During meditation, one is in a particular state of consciousness, a state of enlightenment, oneness, quietude. Now when one comes out of that movement, it is imperative that one carries the spirit and climate of the meditation into everyday life. Normally, one just puts meditation aside as a separate experience to be continued in the next session, and goes on living the old rounds of life, reacting in the same old way. Often it happens that people who meditate develop a new kind of sensitivity and become very resentful of the normal movements of life. They get angry and irritable more often, and they become more difficult to deal with, than ordinary, average people. The demand of the spirituality of today is that this inner gain, inner development, inner growth of consciousness should be related to the outer life. So the spirit and the climate of meditation must be prolonged as much as possible when one comes out of it till there is really no difference between life in the day-to-day world and the periods of meditation. The meditative movement must always go on irrespective of what a person is doing,—while walking, running, eating or working—somewhere at the back of his mind, in the depths of his being, the meditative movement must go on and that is when it can be said that meditation has become natural to him. He does not then need to have special hours of meditation; it is a continuous movement of consciousness. In the beginning, however, we have to have specific periods to discipline ourselves, to learn to put our minds and other parts of our being in

harmony with each other and to learn attunement with the Divine. But the purpose of meditation is truly fulfilled when meditation becomes co-extensive with the life-movement, when meditation becomes *natural*.

M. P. PANDIT

MYSTICAL SYMBOLISM OF THE SATAPATHA BRAHMANA : THE SOMA CUPS OF THE VAJAPEYA SACRIFICE

IN this short study, evidence is examined from the Satapatha Brahmana and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which is supportive of a spiritual interpretation of the symbols of the external Vedic Ritual. In particular, we focus on the Soma sacrifice to determine clearly the spiritual import of the offering of Soma in the external ritual. Taken in the light of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas, numerous hints are found throughout the Brahmanas which reveal a mystical-spiritual motivating power behind the Vedic ritual, though perhaps retained by the ritual only as potent symbols of the manifest reality known to the earliest Vedic mystics.

Before examining the evidence of the Brahmanas and Upanishad itself, we will familiarize ourselves with the spiritual interpretation of the Vedas as given by Sri Aurobindo. With even a cursory examination of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas, we shall find that the hidden elements of spiritual endeavour in the Brahmana stand clearly revealed. Though Sri Aurobindo primarily relied upon the Vedic mantras themselves for evidence of their spiritual import, he made the following comment on the element of ritual: "To those who came after them [Vedic Rishis] the Veda was a book of knowledge, a revelation, a great utterance of eternal and impersonal truth as it had been seen and heard in the inner experience of inspired and semi-divine thinkers. The smallest circumstances of the sacrifice around which the hymns were written were intended to carry a symbolic and psychological power of significance, as was well known to the writers of the ancient Brahmanas..."¹

Elsewhere, we find this further assessment: "...the experiences to which they [mantras] are the key and which were symbolised by the ritual are necessary to an integral knowledge and realisation of Brahman in the universe and prepare the knowledge and realisation of the Transcendent Brahman."² (Emphasis ours.) Keeping this in

¹ Sri Aurobindo, Collected Works, Centenary Edition Vol. 14, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1972, p. 261.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, 1971, p. 547.

mind, we may profitably examine the symbols of the ritual as found in the Brahmanas in an attempt to extract the spiritual experience represented by these symbols.

In particular we mean to examine the symbol of the Soma Cups as found in the Vajapeya Sacrifice, "...the last of the seven forms of a complete Soma-sacrifice..."¹ The principal object of offering to the Gods in the Vajapeya sacrifice is the Soma juice. This is offered as oblations by small cups of wood called 'grahas'. These 'grahas' of soma are offered to each of the thirty-three gods, with appropriate mantras, and the thirty-fourth is offered to Prajapati. Before further exploring the significance of the soma 'grahas', we will look at the comments of T.V. Kapali Sastry, well-known exponent of Sri Aurobindo's Vedic interpretation, on the significance of Soma. Sastry writes:

"Soma represents the Beatitude, the Delight of existence; he is the Lord of Bliss and Immortality. The Gods are Immortals because they live by the essential delight of all created existence. In man the... immortalising juices (*rasa*) are hidden and when by *tapasyā*, discipline, and with the help of the higher powers... these are extracted and offered to the Gods they get the needed nourishment in him, 'they increase him by themselves increasing in him.' "²

Let us also look to the Brahmana for corroboration of this spiritual interpretation of Soma. Some writers tell us that Soma was a liquor, an intoxicating brew made from the Soma creeper, which was drunk with joy by the sacrificer and the priests of the ritual. These writers would not have looked for a profound significance of the Soma offered in the sacrifice. Yet even in the external ritual, as revealed in this Vajapeya sacrifice, this crude interpretation does not hold up. For we find a clear distinction made between Soma being offered and the offering of Sura (intoxicating liquor). We read, "...He (the Adhvaryu) then draws seventeen (other) cups of Soma, and (the Neshtri) seventeen cups of (spirituous liquor), for to Prajapati [sic]

¹ *The Satapatha Brahmana according to the Text of the Madhyandina School*, Trans. Julius Eggeling (Part III, Books V, VI & VII) (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1894), p. xxiii.

² T.V. Kapali Sastry, *Lights on the Veda*, Madras, Sri Aurobindo Library, 1947, p. 32.

belong these two (saps of) plants, to wit the Soma and the Sura;—and of these two the Soma is truth, prosperity, light; and the Sura untruth, misery, darkness...”¹ In this one reference we not only find that Soma is declared to be different from the intoxicating liquor, Sura, but we see a clear symbolic interpretation of Soma as equivalent to ‘truth, prosperity, light’. The concepts of truth, prosperity and light are spiritual in import and the products of, at the least, a refined mentality.

With this clarification of the properties of Soma we look again to Sastry for further understanding of the mystical or spiritual significance of the Soma:

“...Even as the divine Truth-Light concealed everywhere even in this obscure physical world becomes manifest in places by reason of evolution, so too Soma concealed everywhere stands as the sap that is the quintessence in the earth, in the growths of earth, in the objects of the senses, in the experiences of their objects. And it is he, the soul of *rasa*, that is externally symbolised by Soma creeper, that is extracted, purified, and offered to the Gods. In the inner sacrifice the devotee of God, the sacrificer of Soma, extracts the flow of delight that runs in the experience of the sense-objects, divests it of his personal claims and enjoyments, and offers it to the Gods. This *rasa* becomes the food immortal of the Gods and thus do these eaters of the nectar, the Gods immortal, obtain nourishment in the sacrificer... This in substance is the truth of Soma.”²

Further examination of the Brahmana confirms this exalted conception of the significance of Soma. As Sastry indicates, the sacrificer is to ‘extract the flow of delight that runs in the experience of the sense-objects’ and offer it to the Gods. In the Fifth Brahmana are found the following references equating the various grahas (soma cups) with the various sense organs:

“The Ashvina Graha, forsooth, is his organ of hearing; hence in

¹ Trans. Julius Eggeling, Op. Cit., p. 8.

² T.V.K. Sastry, *Rig Veda Samhita*, Vol II, Trans. M. P. Pandit and S. Shankaranarayanan, M.P. Pandit Publ., Pondicherry, 1976, pp. 23-4.

drinking it he turns (the cup) all round, since with that ear of his he hears all round..."

"The Sukra and Manthin (grahas), forsooth, are his eyes. Now the Sukra, indeed, is he that burns yonder (the sun)... And the Manthin indeed is the moon."¹

One finds many other instructive references to the *grahas* in the Brahmana. Further evidence is found in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in which Yajnavalkya explains the *grahas*, equating them with the senses:

"'Yajnavalkya', said he, 'how many perceivers [grahas] are there, how many over perceivers? Eight perceivers. Eight over-perceivers'..." [Note of Radhakrishnan:] "The *grahas* are the organs of perception, graspers or apprehenders and the *atigrasas* are the objects of perception."

"...The nose is the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...Speech... is the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...The tongue... is the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...The eye... is the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...The ear... is the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...The mind... is the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...The hands... are the [graha] organ of perception..."

"...The skin... is the [graha] organ of perception..."²

So it is clear beyond doubt that the word *graha*, which is the technical term for the wooden soma cup in the external ritual, is identified with the mind and senses of the human being. This shows, then, that Sastry's words about extraction of the rasa, the flow of delight which runs in the experience of sense-objects and offering this to the gods, is a cogent spiritual interpretation of the offering of Soma juice in the *grahas* of the external ritual. In the inner and spiritual sacrifice of the Vedic Yoga, "The Soma that is pressed, purified, becomes the food of the Gods. Partaking of the Soma, according to their share, the Gods strong by its delight themselves increase in man and also

¹ Trans. Julius Eggeling. Op. Cit., pp. 272 & 278.

² S. Radhakrishnan, *Principal Upanishads* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 147.

increase him thereby and make him competent for the most excellent experiences.”¹ What is the nature of the ‘most excellent experiences’, mentioned here? According to the Shatapatha Brahmana, the Vajapeya sacrifice “confers on the sacrificer... paramount sovereignty (*sāmrājya*)”² We find references in the Taittirya Samhita (V, 6, 2, I) and the Brahmana (II, 7, 6, I), according to which the Vajapeya is a “samratsava or consecration to the dignity of a paramount sovereign...” Some interpret this to be a mere ritual for installation of a temporal monarch. That this external ritual may have been used in such a manner is not of great importance. What is of crucial importance is the spiritual experience represented by the symbols of the ritual. The sacrifice, when conducted inwardly by the disciple of the Vedic Yoga, culminates in the winning of a supreme spiritual realization which in turn confers upon the sacrificer the status of “*samrat*”. We find the following words of Sri Aurobindo as to the status of *samrat*:

“...He arrives at the larger light and order of a higher principle in himself and the universe which is the characteristic action of the divine Sachchidananda. Even, he is able to impose the influence of that light and order, not only on his own natural being, but, within the radius and to the extent of the Spirit’s action in him, on the world he lives in, on that which is around him. He is *svarāṭ*, self-knower, self-ruler, but he begins to be also through his spiritual oneness and transcendence *samrāṭ*, a knower and master of his environing world of being... So long as he remains in the world-existence, this perfection must radiate out from him,— for that is the necessity of his oneness with the universe and its beings,— in an influence and action which help all around who are capable of it to rise to or advance towards the same perfection, and for the rest in an influence and action which help, as only the self-ruler and master man can help, in leading the human race forward spiritually towards this consummation and towards some image of a greater divine truth in their personal and communal existence. He becomes a light and power of the

¹ T.V.K. Sastry, Rig Veda Samhita, Vol. II, Trans. M.P. Pandit & S. Shankaranarayanan, M.P. Pandit Publ., Pondicherry, 1976, p. 79.

² Trans. Julius Eggeling, Op. Cit., p. xxiv.

Truth to which he has climbed and a means for others' ascension.”¹

In this light, the symbols of the Brahmana reveal definitively their spiritual significance.

“...Thus they who of old used to offer the Vajapeya ascended to that upper region...”²

This is an obvious reference to a mystical experience of ascension to a higher realm of consciousness, the consciousness of Brahman in the universe:

“And whoever offers the Vajapeya, he *becomes everything here*, he wins everything here; for he wins Prajapati and Prajapati indeed is everything here.”³ (*Emphasis mine*)

As to the role of the gods in preparing the sadhaka for this supreme experience, the Brahmana states:

“And...thus to whatever deities he is now offering, they give an impulse to him, and impelled by them he wins.”⁴

By offering of soma to the gods he receives their help whereby he wins the upper region. For further elucidation we refer again to the words of Sastry:

“...When the human sacrificer sets on his inner sacrifice the life-substance is processed by the action of the Ashvins, the mental substance is processed by the action of Indra, the flow of delight indicated by the extraction of Soma is set going in the mind, life and body, the all-Gods who are invited, enter the libation, upbear it and become capable of bringing about the fulfilment of the Sacrifice... The culmination of the processing of

¹ Sri Aurobindo, Collected Works, Centenary Edition Vol. 21, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1972), p. 615.

² Trans. Julius Eggeling, op. Cit., p. 3.

³ Ibid, p. 3.

⁴ Ibid, p. 37

life and intellect by the Ashvins, Indra, All-Gods is in the attainment of the Truth-Consciousness and... the wealth of the Truth-Consciousness is the sole object of Yajna and its fruit to be obtained.”¹

We find the following references in the Brahmana supporting the view that the fruit of the Yajna is a supreme spiritual status: (These references make sense only in this light and can be applied with less relevance in an installation of a worldly king.)

“...He then touches the wheat...with ‘We have gone to the light, O ye gods! for he who offers the Vajapeya, indeed goes to the light.’”²

“...He then rises by... his head...with, ‘We have become immortal! whereby he wins the world of the gods.’”

“...Thereupon, while looking to the different directions he mutters...ours be your power, ours your manhood and intelligence, ours be your energies! ‘For he who offers the Vajapeya wins everything here, winning as he does Prajapati, and Prajapati being everything here — having appropriated to himself, the glory, the power, and the strength of this. All, he now lays them within himself, makes them his own...’”²

“...He then descends (and treads on a piece of gold): — gold is immortal life: thus he takes his stand on life immortal.”³

All of the above refer to the fruits of the Vajapeya sacrifice, the winning of Light, the world of the Gods, the All, Life Immortal, and the winning of Prajapati Himself. Within the Brahmana we find that Prajapati is the All, including the sum of all the Gods. Sri Aurobindo writes the following of this Reality called Prajapati in the Vedas:

“...all that is contained in the being of Surya, in the Vijnana which builds up the worlds is becoming of existence in the one existence and one Lord of all becoming, the Purusha, Sachchidananda. All becoming is born in the Being who himself ex-

¹ T.V.K. Sastry, *Lights on the Veda* (Madras, Sri Aurobindo Library, 1947).

² Trans. Julius Eggeling, Op. Cit. Pp. 32-3.

³ Ibid, p. 35.

ceeds all becomings and is their Lord, Prajapati.”¹

The winning of Prajapati, (known by later seers impersonally as Sachchidananda) Lord of all becoming, confers on the Yogi not only a supreme light, an infinite expansion of consciousness containing the All, but a Power of Mastery, a spiritual Lordship of the world around him. He may have neither crown nor sceptre, yet this realisation of the divine reality and all its powers gives him a sovereignty which nothing can take away, neither a temporal monarch nor Yama, the Lord of Death. He has ‘gone to the Light’, he has ‘become Immortal’ and has won the power of mastering the world forces. This paramount sovereignty is used for the benefit and uplift of the world about him. This experience is expressed in a dynamic way by the following words of the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, which help us grasp the state of the samrat yogin concretely:

“...to identify oneself so well with the divine Power as to be able to act constantly and consciously upon all vibrations circulating through the world. Then the undesirable vibrations no longer have any effect upon you, but you have an effect upon them, that is instead of an undesirable vibration entering into you without being perceived and doing its work there, it is perceived and immediately on its arrival you act upon it to transform it, and it goes back into the world transformed to do its beneficent work and prepare others for the same realisation. This is exactly what Sri Aurobindo proposes to do, and, more clearly, what he asks you to do, what he intends us to do : Instead of running away, to bring into oneself the Power which can conquer.”²

In the view of Sri Aurobindo, and seemingly well corroborated by our short study, the Vedic spiritual ideal was far from an ascetic running away from life. “...Also Yagnavalkya said, ‘Should we not rather draw them for the deities, since that is, as it were, the sign of

¹ Sri Aurobindo, Collected Works, Centenary Edition, Vol. 12. *The Upanishads*, (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1972) p. 126.

² The Mother, Collected Works, Vol. 4, *Questions and Answers 1950-51* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1972), p. 383.

conquest?"¹ The Vedic ideal was to bring into oneself, and thereby into life, the divine Power which could bring into this world of death and sorrow the Light and Truth of Immortality and the Unbroken Bliss of the Infinite.

The aim and goal of a modern day Spirituality is not essentially changed. The mastery sought in principle perhaps requires an even greater Power than before to conquer the world forces obstructing the manifestation of the Truth. Though one may now dispense with an ancient ritual, what is still required is a complete surrender of the human being to the Light, Bliss and Power of the Supreme at Its greatest magnitude, the Supramental. Thus flooding the world with the conquering power of Truth, the Divine Fulfilment of earthly life is to be quickened and brought swiftly to fruition.

"Even the body shall remember God,
 Nature shall draw back from mortality
 And Spirit's fires shall guide the earth's blind force...
 The Supermind shall claim the world for Light
 And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
 And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
 And found Light's reign on her unshaking base...
 The mind shall be God-vision's tabernacle,
 The body intuition's instrument,
 And life a channel for God's visible power...
 "But first high Truth must set her feet on earth
 And man aspire to the Eternal's light
 And all his members feel the Spirit's touch
 And all his life obey an inner Force...
 "The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze
 And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face....
 "Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
 The Spirit shall take up the human play,
 This earthly life become the life divine."²...

STEPHEN WATSON

¹ *Satapatha Brahmana — Madhvavandina School*, Part II, Books III & IV, Trans. Julius Eggeling (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 279.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri — A Legend and A Symbol*, (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1978), Pgs. 707, 708, 709 & 711.

THE INDIAN AND EUROPEAN EPIC TRADITIONS AND THEIR SUCCESSFUL SYNTHESIS IN SAVITRI

SRI Aurobindo's *Savitri* claims to be a cosmic epic which synthesises the techniques of Indian and Western epic traditions with subtle artistry using blank verse as the medium of expression. It is said to have succeeded in poetising a universal Indian theme in the European epic traditions using the stylistic and technical devices of both. It aims to demonstrate that epic poetry is possible in this modern age. It appears to falsify the modern myth that the authentic epic as a literary form is doomed. The present paper is an endeavour to substantiate the argument that Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is a successful synthesis of the Indian and European epic traditions.

The Indian Epic Traditions:

The Indian epic traditions have been beautifully summed up in the opening chapter of the *Mahabharata* where the epic is compared to a thriving tree with branches and trunk, fruits and flowers — the implication being that in the epic the parts are combined into an organic whole. Epic is called *Mahakavya* in Indian literature, according to which it is a long poem with a unified plot made out of a significant story: featuring a protagonist of lofty personal traits whose deeds are of decisive importance to the community and distinguished by spaciousness, seriousness, and emotional appeal. It implies the importance of making a plot out of a significant story in which the hero should be an outstanding person distinguished by birth and worth, courage and wisdom, skill and decorum. His personal life and public life indicates his double role as an individual and as representative of a people whose cause he espouses. It aims at contributing to the promotion of the four noble roles of human endeavour i.e. righteousness, wealth, love and salvation. It is expected to be replete with nine flavours *rasas* i.e. erotic, piteous, heroic, repulsive, furious, fearful, marvellous, peaceful and quietistic along with the actual emotions *bhāvas* which underlie them. There is an invocation at the beginning of the epic which presents a vivid description of diverse natural scenery. The epic is not supposed to be a long drawn out poem with long drawn out cantos. There would be a smooth transition to indi-

cate the awareness of form and content with an organic unity of the theme. These six qualities of an Indian epic tradition have been spoken of by Dandin in his *kāvya darśa* (View of poetry), as has been quoted by Prof. Keith¹. Vyasa, Valmiki and Kalidas are to be drawn upon among the greatest Indian epic poets finding their pinnacle in the seer poet, Sri Aurobindo, in the modern age.

A great literary epic marks the transition to a great age or arises in the course of or at the very end of the age. The rise of a great literary epic is organically related to an outstanding period of creative achievement in a nation's life. The vision of the creative epic poet is rooted in the legacy of the past as modified by the aspirations, ideals and actions of the present. The values imbibed from the vision of the epic poet rouse the people to try to excel themselves. It is this vision that the epic seeks to express. Epic has, therefore, generally been recognised as the acme of literary art or at least one of its twin peaks, the other being tragedy.

European Epic Traditions:

The European epic traditions are based largely on the seven qualities of an epic according to Aristotle's *Poetics*². The Western view of an epic postulates it to be heroic poetry with a significant and universally accepted plot giving a comprehensive portrayal of community life. Its hero, to be successful and victorious in the battle of life, must be a person of exceptional qualities and personality who is a cultural representative of national/human life. Its episodes are supposed to be topical with miscellaneous description using a grand style for expressing ideals of community and following a metrical unity throughout the poem. Such an epic writer is a person of exceptional calibre, artistic competence, vivid imagination and perceptive ingenuity. The theme should have a grand design for serving as a source of inspiration and encouragement for inculcating good, virtuous and moral character in human life. The four stages of growth of European Epic vary from heroic feelings (in Homer) to scriptural, religious and moral feelings (in Virgil, Dante, Cameas, Milton) to romantic feelings (in Spenser, Ariosto, Tasso) and to free lance verse of a metrical freedom (in Goethe, Tennyson, Browning, Victor Hugo, Hardy).

Eastern and Western Epic Traditions Compared and Contrasted:

There is no particular difference between Eastern and Western view points of epic traditions. However, there are certain telling contrasts between the two. First of all, Indian epic episodes are spread over several years whereas in European epics like *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the duration of time is some-what limited. Secondly, the Indian epics lay particular stress on the nobility of life and character in the hero. But in European epics, the hero sometimes tends to fall to low depths of degradation in character and morals. Thirdly the ancient Indian epics have different metrical styles in various cantos of the same epic. The European epics display a uniformity of metre in the whole epic. Fourthly, Indian epics show divine incarnation in epical stories. Few European epics show this strain, though they also depict gods and goddesses, myths and legends. Next, the European epic poetry is by and large heroic poetry. But Indian epics also embrace colourful revelry of make-up warring as well as peaceful strains of *rasas* (sentiments, flavours). Though there is a predominance of one *rasa* over others, the description of all the others is also given. Last of all, the European epics stress the physical aspect of culture. The Indian epics, however, lay more stress on renunciation, and detachment from worldly life. Their theme, aim and design, is to uphold values of righteousness, love, and salvation. There is always a vivid portrayal of practical philosophy of life in Indian epics. Inspite of these points of contrasts between the two epic traditions, there is a basic unity of common qualities.

In the words of M. Dixon "Yet heroic poetry is one; whether of East or West, the North or South, its blood and temper are the same, and the true epic wherever created will be a narrative poem, organic in structure dealing with great actions and great characters, in a style commensurate with lordliness of its theme, which tends to idealise these characters and actions and to sustain and embellish its subject by means of episode and amplifications".³

This position is made clearer by a great modern Indian poet, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, in his *ardhnārīśvara* where he observes in the following lines:

"The world epics are milestones in the path of humanity's prog-

ress. They portray the extent to which man has progressed in a given period of history.”⁴

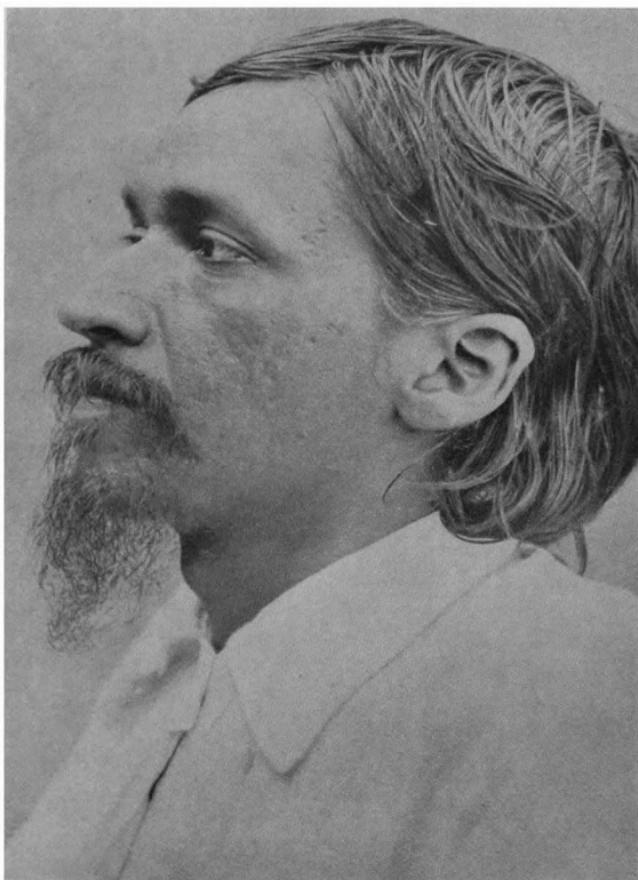
The Synthesis of Various Epic Traditions in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri:

It would now be fruitful to see *Savitri* in close relation to all other epics. Though it is a new epic, the epic of the destiny of man, nature and God; it has its affiliations with the epics and epic narratives of the past and the present times. It successfully compares with some of the great epics or epic compositions of the ancient, mediaeval and the modern worlds. It is a cosmic epic which is said to be the last word yet in presenting in poetical terms the drama of human quest for divine consciousness. It projects before us the ‘Divine Comedy’ of the “yearnings and battles of mankind for eternal life”, culminating in the victory, the certainty of “a great dawn”. It is a great epic which ushers in a new age in poetic creation. Its meaning, rather its reality, is to be felt inwardly as it is a great epic poem of humanity. “It is a symbolic and mystic epic, a great poetic story of man, world and God. It is an epic of the soul most in-wardly seen by an intuitive poetry. It is the song of the greatest flight that reveals from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the world”.⁵

Savitri employs all the paraphernalia of an epic. (a) It starts in the middle with the opening scene of ‘symbol dawn’ and closes with the promise of ‘a greater dawn’; the opening lines of *Savitri* are:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abyssm of the unbodied infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.

(b) The epic opens neither with any direct statement of theme nor



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with the invocation of the Muse as do *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* respectively:

“An angry Man — there is my story: the bitter
rancour of Achilles”. (*Iliad* — Rouse’s prose
translation.)

“Muse make man thy theme,... who
A wand’rer, after Ilium overthrown,
Discovered Various Cities....
Daughter divine of Jove, these things record.”

(*Odyssey* — Cowper’s translation in blank verse.)

“Arms and the man I sing...

O Muse, the causes and the crimes relate”.

(*Aeneid* — Dryden’s translation in heroic couplet.)

“Of Man’s First Disobedience and the Fruit....
Sing Heav’nly Muse”.

(*Paradise Lost*, Book I, 176)

The opening line in *Savitri* quietly focuses our attention on a particular hour of the night: “It was the hour before the Gods awake—” the hour between midnight and dawn — Dawn trying to emerge rocking the cradle of the drowsy child — the ignorant Force.

The opening lines, besides, it can be easily seen, contain the closing ones as well:

Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

(Book XII — Epilogue)

Dawn must emerge out of Night: Night must end in Dawn. There is a vivid Kalidasian description of Nature in Book IV (Cantos I and IV) and 1st Canto of Book V:

The life of the enchanted globe became
A storm of sweetness and of light and song,

A revel of colour and of ecstasy,
 A hymn of rays, a litany of cries:
 A strain of choral priestly music sang
 And, swung on the swaying censer of the trees,
 A sacrifice of perfume filled the hours.

(Book IV, Canto I, 124-130)

and

The white crane stood, a vivid motionless streak,
 Peacock and parrot jewelled soil and tree,
 The dove's soft moan enriched the enamoured air
 And fire-winged wild-drakes swam in silvery pools.
 Earth couched alone with her great lover Heaven.

(Book V, Canto I, 32-36)

Similarly, there is a vivid description of a heroic treatment of the love episode of Savitri and Satyavan, in Book V, Cantos II and III, having the purity of love scenes in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, distinguished by lustrous Platonism:

I caught for some eternal eye the sudden
 Kingfisher flashing to a darkling pool;
 A slow swan silvering the azure lake,
 A shape of magic whiteness, sailed through dream;
 (Book V, Canto III)

Book IX to XI depict the hero's epic journey through inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso respectively.

But Savitri replied to the dread voice:

"O Death, who reasonest, I reason not,
 Reason that scans and breaks, but cannot build
 Or builds in vain because she doubts her work.
 I am, I love, I see, I act, I will."

(Book IX, Canto II)

and

In a flaming moment of apocalypse
 The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.
 A little figure in infinity
 Yet stood and seemed the Eternal's very house.
 As if the world's centre was her very soul
 And all wide space was but its outer robe.—
 Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,
 Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.

(Book X, Canto IV)

and next,

Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
 The Spirit shall take up the human play,
 This earthly life become the life divine.

(Book XI, Canto I)

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* employs the medium of sonorous blank verse like that of Milton. There is the recurrence of epithets, similes and images in it (e.g., those of the sea — "like a great sea", "like a sea in ebb", "an ocean impulse", "a sea of white sincerity," "a magnanimity as of sea or sky", etc.). Like Homer and Milton, Sri Aurobindo's descriptions tend to be long. Sometimes he devotes several lines to paraphrase an idea. There is the sheer sweep of the verse and the amazing modernity of the thought content. Like Dante, Sri Aurobindo has fused in *Savitri* his philosophy with poetry in a harmonious pattern. Though planned as a minor *Ramayana*, *Savitri*, itself is full-bodied in its subject-matter. It has the sustained breath of inspiration and the high tone of poetical expression with intensity of vision, rhythm and style.

"*Savitri* has a greatness and amplitude of spirit and speech and movement. Like all the great epics, it has a high seriousness which it reflects in its inspired endeavour to understand the meaning, the purpose and destiny of life and of the cosmos. It has an amplitude and breadth which it shows in its treatment of life on a cosmic as well as on an individual scale, ranging from the simple sensibility to a susceptibility to the numinous. It has a chorric spirit which is evident in the hoary wisdom of a whole ancient people as in the intellectual

dilemma of the contemporary age, which it embodies. Finally, it has a sane and classical control of the contents.”⁶

Savitri is Sri Aurobindo’s celebrated epic which reveals the consummation of the many poetic styles attempted in all his works so far. It is an epic in twelve books, written in 23,813 lines of blank verse. It is the longest poem in the English Language, longer than Browning’s *The Ring and the Book* which has 21,116 lines. It is the longest poem in any European language, ancient or modern with the exception of Nicos Kazantzakis’ *Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* which is written in modern Greek in 33,333 lines. Only three other comparable epics exceed it in length, — *Shāh Nameh* (An ancient Persian epic of art by Firdousi), *The Ramayana* (An ancient true folk Indian religious epic of 44,000 lines by Valmiki) and the *Mahabharata* (An ancient true folk Indian heroic epic of 2,20,000 lines by Veda Vyasa). It is more revealingly autobiographical than Milton’s *Paradise Lost* or Keats’ *Hyperion*, more radiantly inclusive than Dante’s *Divina Commedia* and more intimately and intensely human than Homer’s *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*. More than Lucretius, Sri Aurobindo has recreated philosophy and poetry with the imaginative grandeur and intensity by throwing his *Life Divine* into the crucible of *Savitri* and remoulded it in its very essence. Like Dante and Milton, Sri Aurobindo produced in his *Savitri*, an epic of universal significance concerned with the theme of the destiny of Man and his relationship with the Divine. Like Goethe, he picked up an ancient story and developed it as a legend summing up the past, a symbol projecting the future and a philosophy based on his own experience. He fulfilled the promise of the inward or romantic subjective epic and of introspective lyricism which was exemplified brilliantly by Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, Keats in *Hyperion* and Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*.

In the words of a critic “He is free from the incoherence of Blake, the prosiness of Wordsworth, the vagueness of Shelley, the fragmentariness of Keats, the tortuous self-division of the later Yeats and the ‘retardation’ that the brain causes in the poetry of T.S. Eliot.”⁷ Above all, he is a seer poet who is essentially interested in the ‘White radiance’ rather than in the “Many-coloured dome”. In his *Savitri*, he exploits all gripping epic action for subtle and symbolic purposes. His epic has a cosmological and philosophical background which

mystically and psychologically delineates the heroic drama of divine life and its consummation in human form. The epic is replete with the poetical record of direct spiritual experiences of Sri Aurobindo as revealed through his ceaseless focus on the inner life and development of the characters of Aswapathy, Savitri and Satyavan.

"As we read the epic, Canto after Canto, with Aswapathy we become a traveller of the worlds of darkness below and the worlds of light above; with Savitri we adventure into the "inner countries" of the mind, heart and soul and meet the triple soul forces of Might, Sorrow and Light; and when at last the issue is between Savitri and Death in the dream kingdom of the Spirit we follow the vicissitudes of the struggle all through the spaces of Eternal Night, (The Inferno, Book IX), the Double Twilight (The Purgatorio, Book X) and the Everlasting Day (The Paradiso, Book XI). And when all is over, and Savitri and Satyavan retire for the night, there is the sure promise of another and 'a greater dawn.' "⁸

(Dr. K.R.S. Iyengar)

An epic records the exceptional courage of a hero. In the whole range of world epics, *Savitri* is unique in having a woman as its 'hero' :

Amid the work of darker Powers She is here
To heal the evils and mistakes of Space
And change the tragedy of the ignorant world
Into a Divine Comedy of joy.

And the laughter and the rapture of God's bliss.

(Book III, Canto II)

And in place of an external fight as is inevitably fought in the great epics of the world, the fight of Savitri is basically a fight in the realm of consciousness. The great spiritual drama unfolded in *Savitri* is thus really played in the theatre of the human soul. The epic is mainly and essentially a story of the spirit, and the action too mainly and essentially takes place within the heart of man and of Nature. Aswapathy's Odysseus-like journeyings are in the boundless extension of the psyche, and Savitri's great dialogue with Death is in her soul. In *Savitri* it is Sri Aurobindo, the Seer Poet who is 'seeing' and objectively reporting with the intensity of vision, rhythm and words in a piquant, felicitous and magnificent style. The poet is directly

reciting to Man — the mid-twentieth century egoistic, rationalistic, sceptic, nihilistic man. Its meaning is revealed on the level of direct statement. It bears the force of vision, a direct concrete realization. It is not written with the disposition of either a sworn Surrealist wedded to the obscurely entangled or a strict Symbolist cherishing a cult of the glimmeringly elusive. Behind the poet in him is the poet of Yoga whose aim was to enlighten the head and heart of generation of readers. Despite his deep roots in the highest spiritual ‘mantric’ poetry of the world in the Vedas and the Upanishads and Kalidasian imagery, he was yet a modern among moderns and the seer of a new mystical progression. The poem is personal history, as well as cosmic history and prophetic utterance. In the words of K.D. Sethna, “a democracy of Divine liberating the human was his goal,” as in those words he puts into the mouth of his *Savitri*:

‘A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
 A heart that has grown one with every heart:
 I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
 My spirit’s liberty I ask for all’.

(Book X, Canto IV)

From the “Symbol Dawn” of the opening canto to the last line of the last canto of the epic with its promise of “a greater dawn” — is verily a cosmic sweep of comprehension, a full circle. It appears that like Satyavan, we too have all “wandered in far-off eternities” and remained like him, “a captive in his golden hands.”⁹ In the end, one feels inclined to conclude in the words of Prof. Raymond Frank Piper:

Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* “is probably the greatest epic in the English language. It is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. *Savitri* is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man’s mind towards the Absolute.”¹⁰

O. P. MALHOTRA

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10. Raymond Frank Piper: *The Hungry Eye — An Introduction to Cosmic Art*, pp. 131-32.

REVIEW

Spanda-Karikas: The Divine Creative Pulsation by *Jaideva Singh*. Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1980, pp.210, Rs.50 (cloth), Rs. 35 (paper).

SPANDA-Karikas is a classic of the literature on the Shaiva philosophy produced in Kashmir. Sri Jaideva Singh, who has published translations of two other fundamental works of the same school of philosophy, *viz.* *Siva-Sūtras* and *Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam* (reviewed in this journal in November, 1980) has maintained the same high standard of translation and exposition as he set up in the other two works. The plan of the work is the same as in the other two books. It includes an introduction which discusses the question of the authorship of the book and mentions the different commentaries on it, explains clearly the basic concept of Spanda and gives a verse by verse analysis of the contents of the four sections of the original Sanskrit book. In the main part of the book there is a faithful translation of the text and the commentary by Kshemaraja, literary and philosophical notes and compositions of many abstruse points of the doctrine and discipline of the system.

Spanda, which literally means a throb or a slight movement, is really the I-consciousness of Shiva, the Supreme Self and Lord, the ultimate Reality. It is also known as Vimarsha and is described by Abhinavagupta as the heaving rapture of Shiva's self-knowledge. Spanda is thus identical with Shiva, his dynamic aspect and the fundamental Power by which he exercises his five-fold function of *nigraha* or self-limitation, *sṛṣṭi* or creation, *sthiti* or maintenance, *sainhāra* or dissolution and *anugraha* or conferring of Grace on his own self-limited form bound to the creation. Spanda is also identical with the whole universe. A spiritual aspirant by opening his consciousness to the Spanda can attain identity with Shiva. There are various ways in which this can be done. The book describes them clearly and in fair detail.

The philosophical aspect of Spanda-Karikas is explained very well by Shri Jaideva Singh who draws upon other works of the system to make difficult points clear and intelligible. Spanda by expansion of its creative energy becomes subject and object and also the

constituent categories, *tattva-s* of the universe. It does so by descent (of consciousness) and by ascent is again unified with Shiva. The closing, *nimeṣa*, of Shiva's self-knowledge is the *unmēṣa*, the opening or manifestation of the universe. The individual soul is none other than Shiva who has limited himself by exercising his Freedom, *svā-tantrya*, which is another name of Spanda. Introvertive meditation or *nimilana samādhi* is recommended for the realisation of Spanda as the essential nature of Shiva. Of the realisation of Spanda as identical with the universe, the method is *unmīlana samādhi* or extrovertive meditation. This can be achieved by the dawning of *sahajavidyā*, 'spontaneous knowledge' by means of which the spiritual aspirant can directly cognise unity in diversity.

Mantra plays a great part in the discipline expounded in the book. The author explains clearly and elaborately the inner mysteries of mantra. In this connection he throws a good deal of light on the Shaiva doctrine of language. The Sanskrit alphabet is discussed and it is shown how its letters represent the different categories of the universe. Supernormal powers are also discussed thoroughly. For example, it is claimed that when the yogi is firmly established in the Spanda principle, he can control the subtle body and can also become the lord of the circle of powers. But the aspirant is constantly reminded of the purely spiritual aspect of his sadhana even when supernormal powers are mentioned. For instance, it is said that the yogi can achieve *khecharī mudrā* or the power to fly through the sky. But *kha*, sky, is the symbol of the Supreme Self and thus the real *khecharī mudrā* is explained as being in the *bodha-gagana*, the firmament of Consciousness. This sadhana also speaks of transformation of man's ordinary nature. The *citta*, the ordinary empirical consciousness, is not dissolved or abrogated but transformed into *citi*, the eternal, self-existent and self-luminous dynamic Consciousness which is the same as Shiva.

The book cannot be too highly recommended to students of Kashmir Shaivism, indeed to all readers interested in spiritual philosophy, particularly those who are eager to know about discipline which enables its practitioners to attain identity with Shiva and the universe which is his self-manifestation held in identity in the integral I-Consciousness.

Vijnanabhairava or Divine Consciousness. Jaideva Singh. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1979, pp. 173, Cloth Rs. 50.00. Paper Rs. 35.00.

Vijñānabhairava is a well-known Agama of great authority. It is entirely devoted to *sādhanā*. The philosophy of non-dual Shaivism is pre-supposed and not expounded in this work. It is not possible, in the present state of our knowledge to determine its date of composition. Sri Jaideva Singh points out that the earliest reference to it is found in Vamananatha's *Advayasampatti Vārttika*. The author thinks that Vamananatha may be the same as Vamana, the well-known writer on Poetics who flourished during the reign of King Jayapida of Kashmir who ruled from 779 to 813 A.D. If this identification be correct, then *Vijnanabhairava* was well-known in the 8th Century A.D. and the author remarks that perhaps it was compiled a century earlier. There are three commentaries on this work known to the world of scholarship. The first commentator Kshemaraja flourished in the 10th century A.D. Bhatta Ananda himself mentions the date of the completion of his commentary according to which he lived in the 17th century A.D. Shivopadhyaya says that his commentary was finished during the reign of Sukhajeevana. Thus he lived in the 18th century A.D.

The title of the work is made up of two words, *vijñāna* and *bhairava*. Kshemaraja explains the esoteric meaning of Bhairava. He says that the word consists of three letters, *bha*, *ra* and *va*. The first stands for *bharāṇa* which means maintenance of the universe, the second indicates *ravaṇa*, its withdrawal, the third signifies *vamaṇa*, projection or manifestation of the creation. Thus Bhairava stands for all the three aspects of the Divine.

The ultimate Reality, Bhairava in this work, is the supreme Illumination, *prakāśa* and self-illumination, *vimarśa* which in this context is called Bhairavi. The essential nature of Bhairava is *vijñāna*, supreme Consciousness for which other words are *bodha*, *mahābodha*, *cit*, *caitanya*, the chief characteristic of *vijnana* is *svātantrya*, supreme Freedom and Autonomy which reveals itself in the three powers *icchā*, *jñāna* and *kṛyā*, will, knowledge and action respectively. The manifested universe which is a system of subjects and objects, knower and known, is a reflection in the Consciousness of Bhairava. The individual soul here is essentially Bhairava himself but under limitations.

The goal of man is to recognize himself as Bhairava who is his true Self.

The work is presented as a dialogue between Bhairava and Bhairavi. It is explained that Bhairavi or Shakti is nothing but the essential state of Bhairava which is full of the bliss of non-difference from the entire manifested universe. That highest state of Bhairava or indeed of Bhairavi is free of all concepts pertaining to space, time, particularity, direction or designation. Ineffable, beyond description by words, he transcends all categories which nevertheless proceed from him and are the constitutive principles, *tattva*, of the universe. One can realize this state only when one is free of all mental constructs, *avikalpa*. Being free of the limited empirical ego one realizes the integral I-ness, *purnāhantā*. As the method of realization of the seeker's identity with Bhairava, the work recommends one hundred and twelve *dhāraṇās* or contemplations or concentrations. These are described by Bhairava in answer to a question put to him by the Devi Bhairavi, "By what means can this highest state be realized?" There are three classes of means or *upāyas* of realisation in this system—*āṇava sākta* and *sāmbhava*. Each of the contemplations belongs to one or the other of the three kinds of means, some of them being a blend of both. In *āṇava-upāya* the *āṇu* or the atomic empirical individual uses his instruments i.e. senses, vital force and mind as means of realization. *Sākta-upāya* is the means of approach to the Divine through Shakti. And *sāmbhava-upāya* is the direct approach to Shiva the Reality. It is the sudden emergence of Shiva-consciousness.

Some of the contemplations may be briefly noted here. If the seeker is completely silent and immobile and gazes at the cloudless sky with fixed eyes, he will acquire the *vapu* i.e. the nature of Bhairava. Knowledge of the inner states of consciousness, viz. waking, dream and dreamless sleep as forms of Bhairava enables the yogi to be filled with the infinite consciousness. Then "If one recites the letter *a* without *bindu* or *visarga*, then O Goddess, *Parameśvari*—a magnificent torrent of wisdom appears suddenly", (verse 82, author's translation). With regard to desires two things are said which may seem to be contradictory. It is recommended that one should put an end to a desire as soon as it appears, and that it will be absorbed in that very place whence it arose. (verse 96) The next verse, 97,

lays down the idea that when there is no desire or knowledge or activity in a person, he is then verily that Reality itself which is described as the place from which desire arises. Thus verse 98 describes the contemplation in which the seeker should contemplate on the idea that desire, knowledge and activity etc. are really nothing essentially but the fundamental Consciousness or Bhairava. It may be said that the main point of the contemplations is that the seeker should always fix his attention on the basic reality of everything whether physical or psychological and not on the particular formation of it in the external or the internal world. Bhairava is the pure and the ultimate Subject, and practice of subjectivism is the main discipline in the contemplations. In verses 85 and 86 the contemplations require respectively that the seeker holds this thought in him that since he has the attributes of Shiva, he is the same as the Lord. And it is said that with this firm conviction, one becomes Shiva and that he looks upon the universe as something that has arisen from him. Thus he is to identify himself with both Shiva and the universe which is truly the manifestation of the supreme Self. The work says that ordinarily people get pleasure from sexual contact with women. But at the same time a person can obtain the same pleasure simply by contemplating on it subjectively within oneself. It is pointed out that this means that the presence of objects is not necessary for getting joy. In this connection the work says quite clearly that sexual pleasure is mentioned only as an example and not enjoined as part of spiritual discipline. "Just as being locked in embrace with a woman, one is totally dissolved in the feeling of oneness (unity) and one loses all sense of anything external or internal, even so when the mind is dissolved in the Divine Energy, one loses all sense of duality and experiences the delight of unity-consciousness. The *Sruti* (scripture) speaks of the union of man with a woman to illustrate the union with the Divine. It is only a fool who takes this illustration as an injunction for carnal pleasure." (Verse 69, pp. 66-67, author's translation). Concentration on the delight derived from listening to music, even from eating or drinking etc. is also praised as a potent discipline. But it must be clearly understood that it is on the delight, not on the objects as such that one must concentrate.

The verses are printed both in Devanagari and Latin script. A clear translation of each verse is given and the real significance of

the contemplations described in the verses is explained in Notes which have illuminating comments culled from the recognized commentaries. The more esoteric contemplations, for example, those involving the rousing of the Kundalini Power, the mysteries of the use of the vital energies, the proper method of Japa etc. have been very well explained with a good deal of clarity and conviction. A long Introduction, an extensive English Glossary of technical terms, a subject Index and an Index of Sanskrit words have enhanced the value of the book. The author deserves the heartfelt thanks of all readers interested in the Tantrik lore and also of students of Indian spiritual philosophy.

ARABINDA BASU

AN ADDRESS TO THE OUTGOING STUDENTS OF S.A.I.C.E.

(*Looking at the students assembled before him*) I know them all. But they were all young; now they have grown up.

(*Addressing the students*) So, will you sit down, all of you?...

I congratulate you all on your success, your success in having passed the Higher Course, which is all to your credit.

But this is not the important thing. What is important is that you have passed your youth here and have acquired something in the process, something that one does not gain by dint of merit but absorbs and imbibes with the atmosphere, in the same way as one sucks one's mother's milk.

You may hide it or veil it, but this thing is very singular. For, it is above all contradiction, all smirch and stain. It remains always shining and pure.

At times you will remember it in your outer material life. You will be entering now another order of material life. Perhaps, you will forget this precious thing, but this will not forget you: it remains for ever vigilant, watchful, resplendent.

And at any critical moment of your life, when you will be facing a danger, if there surges up from your depths the cry and call of the heart, then and there this vision will visit you and you will have the darshan of your soul.

This is all that I wanted to tell you. And it is enough, I think; isn't it?

15.10.1981

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA