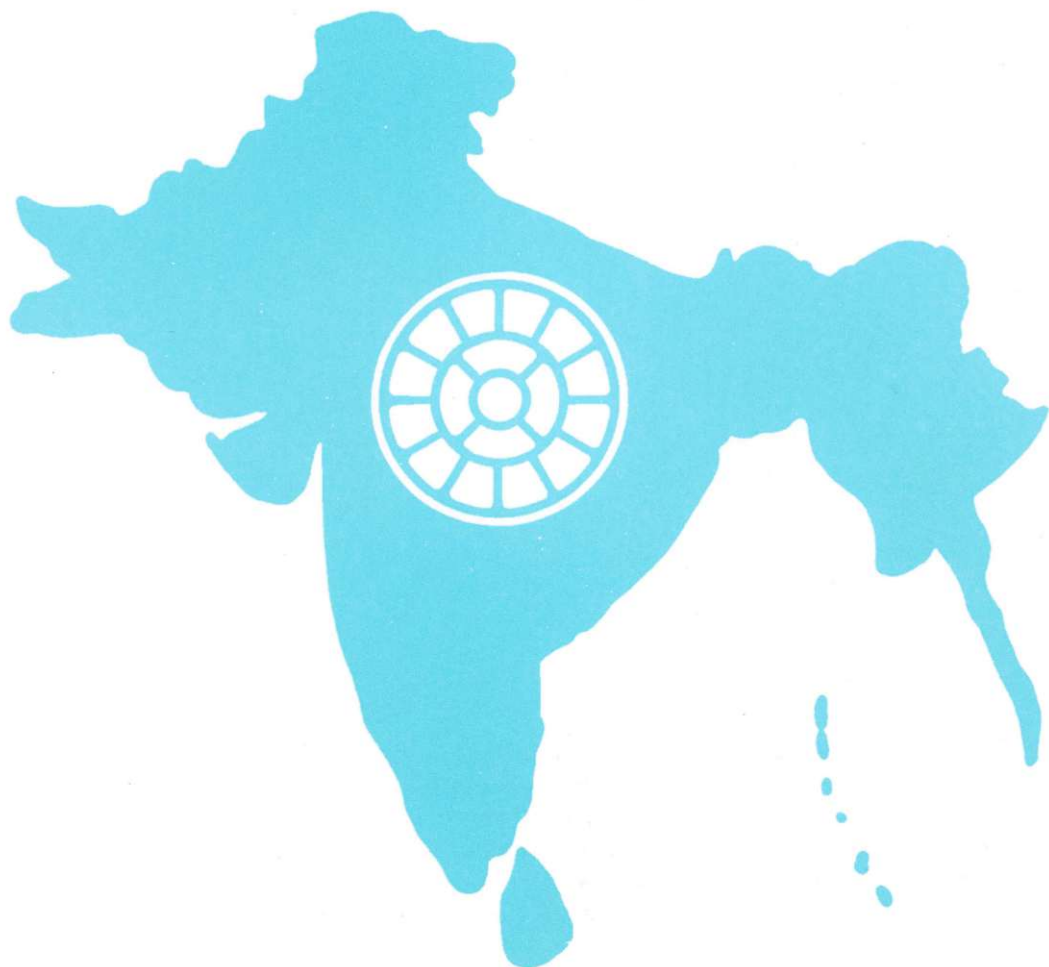


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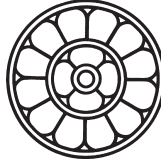
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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No. 4

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE UNIVERSAL INCARNATION

There is a wisdom like a brooding Sun,
A Bliss in the heart's crypt grown fiery white,
The heart of a world in which all hearts are one,
A Silence on the mountains of delight,

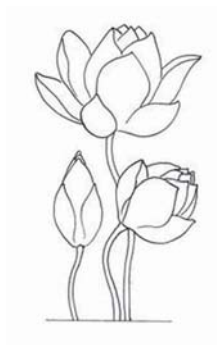
A Calm that cradles Fate upon its knees;
A wide Compassion leans to embrace earth's pain;
A Witness dwells within our secrecies,
The incarnate Godhead in the body of man.

Our mind is a glimmering curtain of that Ray,
Our strength a parody of the Immortal's power,
Our joy a dreamer on the Eternal's way
Hunting the unseizable beauty of an hour.

Only on the heart's veiled door the word of flame
Is written, the secret and tremendous Name.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 607)



THE MOTHER'S COMING

It is not clear what your Guru meant by my sitting on the path; that could have been true of the period between 1915 and 1920 when I was writing the *Arya*, but the sadhana and the work were waiting for the Mother's coming. (S35: 269)

*

Before the Mother came all were living in the mind with only some mental realisations and experiences. The vital and everything else were unregenerated and the psychic behind the veil. I am not aware that anyone of them at that time entered the cosmic consciousness. At that time I was still seeking my way for the transformation and the passage to the supramental (all the part of the Yoga that goes beyond the ordinary Vedanta) and acted very much on a principle of *laissez faire* with the few sadhaks who were there. X is one of those who have never ceased regretting that *laissez faire* — he regrets the vital liberty and absence of discipline they then had. (S35: 269)

*

In the meantime, the Mother, after a long stay in France and Japan, returned to Pondicherry on the 24th April, 1920. The number of disciples then showed a tendency to increase rather rapidly. When the Asram began to develop, it fell to the Mother to organise it; Sri Aurobindo soon retired into seclusion and the whole material and spiritual charge of it devolved on her. (S36: 103)

*

Until I went to Pondicherry I took no disciples; with those who accompanied me or joined me in Pondicherry I had at first the relation of friends and companions rather than of a guru and disciples; it was on the ground of politics that I had come to know them and not on the spiritual ground. Afterwards only there was a gradual development of spiritual relations until the Mother came back from Japan and the Ashram was founded or rather founded itself in 1926. I began my yoga in 1904 without a guru; in 1908 I received important help from a Mahratta yogi and discovered the foundations of my sadhana; but from that time till the Mother came to India I received no spiritual help from anyone else. (S36: 98)

*

The Mother comes in order to bring down the supramental and it is the descent which makes her full manifestation here possible. (S32: 34)

*

There is no difference between the Mother's path and mine; we have and have always had the same path, the path that leads to the supramental change and the divine realisation; not only at the end, but from the beginning they have been the same. (S32: 81)

*

I wrote once before that these ideas about the separation between the Mother and myself and our paths being different or our goal different are quite erroneous. Our path is the same; our goal too is the same — the Supramental Divine. (S32: 81)

*

Mother was doing Yoga before she knew or met Sri Aurobindo; but their lines of sadhana independently followed the same course. When they met, they helped each other in perfecting the sadhana. What is known as Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the joint creation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; they are now completely identified — the sadhana in the Asram and all arrangement is done directly by the Mother, Sri Aurobindo supports her from behind. All who come here for practising Yoga have to surrender themselves to the Mother who helps them always and builds up their spiritual life. (S32: 81-82)

*

The Mother is not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo.¹ She has had the same realisation and experience as myself.

The Mother's sadhana started when she was very young. When she was twelve or thirteen, every evening many teachers came to her and taught her various spiritual disciplines. Among them was a dark Asiatic figure. When we first met, she immediately recognised me as the dark Asiatic figure whom she used to see a long time ago. That she should come here and work with me for a common goal was, as it were, a divine dispensation.

The Mother was an adept in the Buddhist yoga and the yoga of the Gita even before she came to India. Her yoga was moving towards a grand synthesis. After

1. *This letter was dictated by Sri Aurobindo, who referred to himself in the third person. — Ed.*

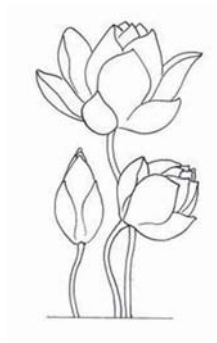
this, it was natural that she should come here. She has helped and is helping to give a concrete form to my yoga. This would not have been possible without her co-operation.

One of the two great steps in this yoga is to take refuge in the Mother.²

(S32: 36)

SRI AUROBINDO

2. When Sri Aurobindo was asked, on a later occasion, what the second great step is, he replied, "Aspiration of the sadhak for the divine life." — Ed.



DARSHAN

Admission to Darshan

Write that usually Sri Aurobindo sees on these days only his disciples, whether those residing in the Asram or those who come to him from outside, and a few others who are either connected in some way with the Asram, its work or its members or else are given permission for special reasons. Permission is not given to all who would like to come, as that would mean an impossible number and it would besides entirely break the principle of Sri Aurobindo's retirement.¹

*

You can write to him that he can have permission for himself and his wife — but for the children it depends on their age, whether they are young children under ten or not — young children are not allowed for darshan.

*

Nobody should ever be *asked* to come for Darshan or Pranam or meditation. If somebody spontaneously asks, it is another matter. Here too as a rule, there should be no eagerness that they should come. Encouragement should be given only in those cases where there is a good or special reason for it. The number of people coming especially in the August darshan, when the Pondicherry people also come, is already very large and we are kept for 7 or 8 hours at a stretch receiving them, so it is not advisable to go on increasing the numbers under the present circumstances. If a man is especially deserving or likely to be a helper or sympathiser of the Asram or there is any other reason for encouraging him, then of course this general rule does not apply.

*

I have heard about you and read your books and feel impelled to ask for your help. In case you think your darshan will help better, I most humbly request you to grant me one at your convenience.

1. This and many other letters in this section were written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent.

Tell him it is not necessary. Transformation comes only by inner sadhana and development. A darshan can at best only give some strong experience.

Several times when my mind has become blank I have experienced light descending from higher planes — probably supramental.

But he has the root experience already in the descent of the Light in the state of blankness. The Light is the Divine Light from the plane of spiritual consciousness above. The supramental comes only at the end of a long sadhana.

*

It is a mistake to bring sick people or the insane to the Darshan for cure — the Darshan is not meant for that. If anything is to be done or can be done for them, it can be done at a distance. The Force that acts at the time of Darshan is of another kind and one deranged or feeble in mind cannot receive or cannot assimilate it — it may produce a contrary effect owing to this incapacity if received at all. If the force is withheld, the Darshan is useless, if received by such people it is unsafe. It is similar reasons which dictate the rule forbidding children of tender years to be brought to the Darshan.

Making Pranam during Darshan

There is no obligation on European visitors to make the pranam [*during darshan*] — very few have done so, none perhaps. Even from those who have stayed here, it was not asked — they were left free to abstain unless they asked for it — e.g. X, Y, Z and A. B must not get the impression that we exact it from anybody. I do not know whether a mere “look” at us will help him — it is only in some cases that that happens, and these usually when there was a previous disposition or habit of response to supraphysical Light or Power as in the case of C. These days have been arranged with a view first to their main object, viz. for myself to give the darshan and blessing to the disciples, and the form of it is designed for that — visitors first came in as a superfluity, though now except in November they are more than half the crowd. But as they are mostly Indians accustomed to this form of the spiritual contact and aware of its meaning, it does not usually matter. It is only when a European comes that this difficulty arises — but it need not be any as he is not asked to make the pranam.

As for the rest, there is nothing much to say. The distance between the man and the Power manifesting through him is not an idea that can trouble the eastern mind, to which the gulf does not exist, but it is natural to the modern intelligence.

*

Is it possible for darshan to do pranam on behalf of X, Y, my mother, etc.?

It is not possible to make separate pranams. There are nearly 700 people this time, and if all is not rapidly done we shall have to be there till the afternoon 2.30 or 3. Even one minute for each means 6 hours for the first 350.

Remarks on Darshan

It would be very good if you could come out to give Darshan once a month instead of only three times a year.

If I went out once a month, the effect of my going out would be diminished by one third.

*

When I came for your Darshan, it seemed as if it was Shiva himself I was seeing. I felt Ananda too. The consciousness of these things remained for two or three days, and then as if evaporated.

There is no reason to be discouraged by what you call the evaporation of the consciousness that you got on the darshan day. It has not evaporated but drawn back from the surface. That usually happens, when there is not the higher consciousness or some experience. What you have to learn is not to allow depression, but remain quiet allowing time for the assimilation and ready for fresh experience or growth *whenever* it comes.

Difficulties at the Time of Darshan

I have heard that at the time of Darshan all our hidden subconscious desires and attachments are thrown up.

There is no such inevitable rule. It is true that attacks are frequent at that time, but one need not admit them.

*

It very often happens that when the Darshan day is approaching the adverse Forces gather themselves for an attack individually or generally in order to prevent what

has to be individually received from being received and what has to be generally brought down from being brought down. Also very often there is a strong attack after the darshan day because they want to undo what has been done or else to stop it from going farther. But as far as the individual is concerned, there is no need of undergoing this attack; if one is conscious of its nature, one can react and throw it away. Or if it still presses one can keep one's will and faith firm and come out of the temporary obstacle with a greater opening and a new progress. The Mother's force and mine will be with you always.

(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 520-25)

* * *

The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur take my breath away, making my heart palpitate!

O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing that I never was! I groan in an unAurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all of you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least common sense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation — not imagining wild imaginations — or for that matter despairing “I know not why” despairs.

*

The mistake was an old obstinate suggestion returning so as to bring about the old reactions which have to be got over. It is your old error of the greatness and “grimness” of God, Supramental etc. which was used to bring back the wrong ideas and the gloom. All this talk about grimness and sternness is sheer rot — you will excuse me for the expression, but there is no other that is adequate. The only truth about it is that I am not demonstrative or expansive in public — but I never was. Nevinson seeing me presiding at the Surat Nationalist Conference — which was not a joke and others were as serious as myself — spoke of me as that most politically dangerous of men — “the man who never smiles” which made people who knew me smile very much. You seem to have somewhere in you a Nevinson impression of me. Or perhaps you agree with X who wrote demanding of me why I smiled only with the lips and complained that it was not a satisfactory smile like the Mother's. All the same, whatever I may have said to Y or Y may have said to you, I have always given a large place to mirth and laughter and my letters in that style are only the natural outflow of my personality. I have never been “grim” in my life — that is

the Stalin-Mussolini style, it is not mine; the only trait I share with the “grim” people is obstinacy in following out my aim in life, but I do it quietly and simply and have always done. Don’t set up some gloomy imaginations and take them for the real Aurobindo.

By the way, if you get such imaginations like the Nrisinha Hiranyakashipu one, I shall begin to think that the Overmind has got hold of you also. I don’t know the gentleman (Nrisinha) personally, but only by hearsay; if he was there I certainly did not recognise him. I always thought of him as a symbol — or perhaps a divinised Neanderthal man who sent for Hiranyakashipu (whoever H. was) and cut him open in the true Neanderthal way! For myself I was sitting there very quiet and as pacific as anybody at Geneva itself — more so in fact and receiving the stream of people with much inner amiability and, outwardly, a frequent “lip-smile”— so where the deuce was room for Nrisinha there? Besides it seems to me that I have long overpassed the man-beast stage of evolution — perhaps I flatter myself? — so again why Nrisinha. At the most there may have been some Power behind me guarding against the stream of “grim” difficulties — really grim these — which had been cropping up down to the Darshan eve. If so, it was not part of myself nor was I identified with it. So exit Nrisinha.

*

I do not know that I can say anything in defence of my unlovable marbleness — which is also unintentional, for I feel nothing like marble within me. But obviously I can lay no claims to the expansive charm and grace and lovability of a Gandhi or Tagore. For one thing I have never been able to establish a cheerful hail-fellow contact with the multitude, even when I was a public leader; I have been always reserved and silent except with the few with whom I was intimate or whom I could meet in private. But my reference to Nevinson and the Conference was only casual; I did not mean that I regard the Darshan as I would a political meeting or a public function. But all the same it is not in the nature of a private interview; I feel it is an occasion on which I am less a social person than a receptacle of a certain Power receiving those who come to me. I receive the sadhaks (not X or others) with a smile however unsatisfactory or invisible to you — but I suppose it becomes naturally a smile of the silence rather than a radiant substitute for cordial and bubbling laughter. *Que voulez-vous?* I am not Gandhi or Tagore.

All that I really wanted to say was that the inwardness and silence which you feel at the time of Darshan and dislike is not anything grim, stern, ferocious (Nrisinha) or even marble. It is absurd to describe it as such when there is nothing in me that has any correspondence with these epithets. What is there is a great quietude, wideness, light and universal or all-containing oneness. To speak of these things as if they were grim, stern, fierce and repellent or stiff and hard is to present not the

fact of my nature but a caricature. I never heard before that peace was something grim, wideness repellent, light stern or fierce or oneness hard and stiff like marble. People have come from outside and felt these things, but they have felt not repelled but attracted. Even those who went out giddy with the onrush of light or fainted like Y, had no other wish but to come back and they did not fly away in terror. Even casual visitors have sometimes felt a great peace and quiet in the atmosphere and wished that they could stay here. So even if the sadhaks feel only a terrifying grimness, I am entitled to suppose that my awareness of myself is not an isolated illusion of mine and to question whether grimness is my real character and a hard and cold greatness my fundamental nature.

I suppose people get a sense of calm and immobility from my appearance. But what is there terrifying in that? Up till now it used to be supposed that this was the usual Yogic poise and that it could soothe and tranquillise. Am I to understand that I have turned it into something fierce and Asuric which terrifies and is fierce, grim and repellent? I find it rather difficult to believe. Or is it that I live too much within and have too much that is unknown and incomprehensible? I have always lived within, and what else could be expected of me? There is something to be manifested and it is only within that it can be found — there is a world struggling to be born and it is only from within that one can find and release it.

*

All this insistence on grandeur and majesty makes me remember Shakespeare's remarks — the greatness that is thrust on one. I am unaware, as of grimness, so of any stiff majesty or pompous grandeur — the state of peace, wideness, universality I feel is perfectly easy, simple, natural, *dégagé*, more like a robe of ease than any imperial purple. Between X's palpitating testimony to my grandeur and your melancholy testimony to my majesty — it appears I sit like the Himalayas and am as remote as the stratosphere — I begin to wonder whether it is so and how the devil I manage to do the trick. Unconscious hypnotism? No, for I begin to feel not like the juggler but like the little boy who has to climb his rope and perch there in a perilous and uncomfortable elevation — and it seems to be rather a self-hypnotism by the spectators of the show. All the same it was a relief to find someone writing of a beautiful and “loving” darshan and others who describe it in a similar tone. From which I conclude that the quality of the object lies in the eye of the seer — নানা মুনির নানা মত.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 48-51)

‘THY WILL WHICH IS ALL LOVE’

June 30, 1914

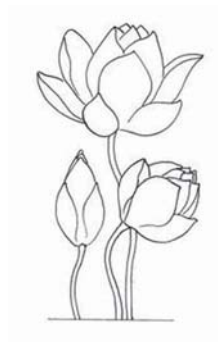
Each activity in its own field accomplishing its particular mission, without disorder, without confusion, one enveloping the other, and all graded hierarchically around a single centre: Thy will. . . . What is most lacking in all beings is clarity and order; each element, each state of being, instead of fulfilling its function in harmony with all the others, wants to be the whole in itself, perfectly autonomous and independent. And there lies the ignorant error of all the universe, a global error repeated in millions and millions of forms. But under the pretext that these activities are separate and in disorder, to want to suppress them so as to let only Thy single Will subsist, which in its solitude would no longer have any reason to exist, would be an undertaking as absurd as it is unrealisable. It is easier, indeed, to suppress than to organise; but harmonious order is a realisation far superior to suppression. And even if the final aim were a return to Non-Being, the return would seem possible to me only through a highest perfection of the being. . . .

O my sweet Master, grant to them that they may feel Thy infinite tenderness and in the calm repose that it brings, be able to see and realise the supreme order of Thy law.

Let Thy will which is all love manifest, let Thy peace manifest.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 190)



THE MOTHER'S ARRIVAL

Myself and My Creed

I belong to no nation, no civilisation, no society, no race, but to the Divine.

I obey no master, no ruler, no law, no social convention, but the Divine.

To Him I have surrendered all, will, life, self; for Him I am ready to give all my blood, drop by drop, if such is His Will, with complete joy; and nothing in His service can be sacrifice, for all is perfect delight.

Japan, February 1920

(M13: 38)

*

How I Became Conscious of My Mission

When and how did I become conscious of a mission which I was to fulfil on earth? And when and how I met Sri Aurobindo?

These two questions you have asked me and I promised a short reply.

For the knowledge of the mission, it is difficult to say when it came to me. It is as though I were born with it, and following the growth of the mind and brain, the precision and completeness of this consciousness grew also.

Between 11 and 13 a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence of God but man's possibility of uniting with Him, of realising Him integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine. This, along with a practical discipline for its fulfilment, was given to me during my body's sleep by several teachers, some of whom I met afterwards on the physical plane.

Later on, as the interior and exterior development proceeded, the spiritual and psychic relation with one of these beings became more and more clear and frequent; and although I knew little of the Indian philosophies and religions at that time I was led to call him Krishna, and henceforth I was aware that it was with him (whom I knew I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done.

In the year 1910 my husband came alone to Pondicherry where, under very interesting and peculiar circumstances, he made the acquaintance of Sri Aurobindo. Since then we both strongly wished to return to India — the country which I had always cherished as my true mother-country. And in 1914 this joy was granted to us.

As soon as I saw Sri Aurobindo I recognised in him the well-known being whom I used to call Krishna. . . . And this is enough to explain why I am fully convinced that my place and my work are near him, in India.

Pondicherry, 1920

(M13: 39)

*

. . . when I first began to work (not with Théon personally but with an acquaintance of his in France, a boy who was a friend of my brother), well, I had a series of visions (I knew nothing about India, mind you, nothing, just as most Europeans know nothing about it: “a country full of people with certain customs and religions, a confused and hazy history, where a lot of ‘extraordinary things’ are said to have happened.” I knew nothing.) Well, in several of these visions I saw Sri Aurobindo just as he looked physically, but glorified; that is, the same man I would see on my first visit, almost thin, with that golden-bronze hue and rather sharp profile, an unruly beard and long hair, dressed in a dhoti with one end of it thrown over his shoulder, arms and chest bare, and bare feet. At the time I thought it was ‘vision attire’! I mean I really knew nothing about India; I had never seen Indians dressed in the Indian way.

Well, I saw him. I experienced what were at once symbolic visions and spiritual *facts*: absolutely decisive spiritual experiences and facts of meeting and having a united perception of the Work to be accomplished. And in these visions I did something I had never done physically: I prostrated before him in the Hindu manner. All this without any comprehension in the little brain (I mean I really didn’t know what I was doing or how I was doing it — nothing at all). I did it, and at the same time the outer being was asking, “What is all this?!”

I wrote the vision down (or perhaps that was later on) but I never spoke of it to anyone (one doesn’t talk about such things, naturally). But my impression was that it was premonitory, that one day something like it would happen. And it remained *in the background of the consciousness*, not active, but constantly present.

As for Théon, he was European and wore a long purple robe that wasn’t at all like the one in my vision. (I’m not sure, but I think he was either Polish or Russian, but more probably Russian, of Jewish descent, and that he was forced to leave his country; he never said anything about this to anyone, it’s only an impression.) When I saw him I recognised him as a being of great power. And he bore a certain likeness to Sri Aurobindo: Théon was about the same size (not a tall man, of medium height) and thin, slim, with quite a similar profile. But when I met Théon I saw (or rather I felt) that he was not the man I saw in my vision because . . . he didn’t have that vibration. Yet it was he who first taught me things, and I went and worked at

Tlemcen for two years in a row. But this other thing was always there in the background of the consciousness.

Then when Richard came here he met Sri Aurobindo (he was haunted by the idea of meeting the 'Master', the Guru, the 'Great Teacher'). Sri Aurobindo was in hiding, seeing no one, but when Richard insisted, he met him, and Richard returned with a photograph. It was one of those early photos, with nothing in it. It was empty, the remnants of the political man, not at all resembling what I had seen — I didn't recognise him. "It's strange", I said to myself, "that's not it" (for I saw only his external appearance, there was no inner contact). But still, I was curious to meet him. At any rate, I can't say that when I saw this photograph I felt, "He's the one!" Not at all. He impressed me as being a very interesting man, but no more.

I came here. . . . But something in me wanted to meet Sri Aurobindo all alone the first time. Richard went to him in the morning and I had an appointment for the afternoon. He was living in the house that's now part of the second dormitory, the old *Guest House*. I climbed up the stairway and he was standing there, waiting for me at the top of the stairs . . . *exactly* my vision! Dressed the same way, in the same position, in profile, his head held high. He turned his head towards me . . . and I saw in his eyes that it was He. The two things clicked (*gesture of instantaneous shock*), the inner experience immediately became one with the outer experience and there was a fusion — the decisive shock.

But this was merely the beginning of my vision. Only after a series of experiences — a ten months' sojourn in Pondicherry, five years of separation, then the return to Pondicherry and the meeting in the same house and in the same way — did the *end* of the vision occur. . . .

(Conversation with a disciple, 20 December, 1961)

*

[*The next day she wrote in her diary:*]

March 30, 1914

In the presence of those who are integrally Thy servitors, those who have attained the perfect consciousness of Thy presence, I become aware that I am still far, very far from what I yearn to realise; and I know that the highest I can conceive, the noblest and purest is still dark and ignorant beside what I should conceive. But this perception, far from being depressing, stimulates and strengthens the aspiration, the energy, the will to triumph over all obstacles so as to be at last identified with Thy law and Thy work.

Gradually the horizon becomes distinct, the path grows clear, and we move towards a greater and greater certitude.

It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.

O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds.

My adoration is beyond all words, my reverence is silent.

(M1: 113)

*

[About the period between her departure from Pondicherry in 1915 and her return to India in 1920]

. . . the importance of the departure: how he [*Sri Aurobindo*] was present the whole time I was away; how he guided my entire life in Japan; . . . he participated in a whole series of experiences, experiences of gradually growing awareness. This is partly noted in *Prayers and Meditations* (I have cut out all the personal segments). But there was one experience I didn't speak of there (that is, I didn't describe it, I put only the conclusion) — the experience where I say “Since the man refused I was offering participation in the universal work and the new creation and the man didn't want it, he refused, and so I now offer it to God . . .”

(Conversation with a disciple, 20 December, 1961)

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[Mother is probably alluding to this passage in Prayers and Meditations dated September 3, 1919]:

Oiwaké: September 3, 1919

Since the man refused the meal I had prepared with so much love and care, I invoked the God to take it.

My God, Thou hast accepted my invitation, Thou hast come to sit at my table, and in exchange for my poor and humble offering Thou hast granted to me the last liberation. My heart, even this morning so heavy with anguish and care, my head surcharged with responsibility, are delivered of their burden. Now are they light and joyful as my inner being has been for a long time past. My body smiles to Thee with happiness as before my soul smiled to Thee. And surely hereafter Thou wilt withdraw no more from me this joy, O my God! for this time, I think, the lesson has been sufficient, I have mounted the Calvary of

successive disillusionments high enough to attain to the Resurrection. Nothing remains of the past but a potent love which gives me the pure heart of a child and the lightness and freedom of thought of a god.

(M1: 377)

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I don't know, I'm putting it poorly, but this experience was concrete to the point of being physical. It happened in a Japanese country-house where we were living, near a lake. There was a whole series of circumstances, events, all kinds of things — a long, long story, like a novel. But one day I was alone in meditation (I have never had very profound meditations, only concentrations of consciousness — *(Mother makes an abrupt gesture showing a sudden ingathering of the entire being)*); and I was seeing . . . You know that I had taken on the conversion of the Lord of Falsehood: I tried to do it through an emanation incarnated in a physical being and the greatest effort was made during those four years in Japan. The four years were coming to an end with an absolute inner certainty that there was nothing to be done — that it was impossible, impossible to do it this way. There was nothing to be done. And I was intensely concentrated, asking the Lord, "Well, I made You a vow to do this, I had said, 'Even if it's necessary to descend into hell, I will descend into hell to do it. . . .' Now tell me, what must I do? . . ." The Power was plainly there: suddenly everything in me became still; the whole external being was completely immobilised and I had a vision of the Supreme . . . more beautiful than that of the Gita. A vision of the Supreme.

And this vision literally gathered me into its arms; it turned towards the West, towards India, and offered me — and there at the other end I saw Sri Aurobindo. It was . . . I felt it physically. I saw, saw — my eyes were closed but I saw (twice I have had this vision of the Supreme — once here, much later — but this was the first time) . . . ineffable. It was as if this Immensity had reduced itself to a rather gigantic Being who lifted me up like a wisp of straw and offered me. Not a word, nothing else, only that.

Then everything vanished.

The next day we began preparing to return to India.

It was after this vision, when I returned from Japan, that this meeting with Sri Aurobindo took place, along with the certainty that the Mission would be accomplished.

(Conversation with a disciple, 20 December, 1961)

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[On 24th April, as the boat neared Pondicherry, Mother had an experience which she recalled thirty years later:]

I was on the boat, at sea, not expecting anything (I was of course busy with the inner life, but I was living physically on the boat), when all of a sudden, abruptly, about two nautical miles from Pondicherry, the quality, I may even say the physical quality of the atmosphere, of the air, changed so much that I knew we were entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo. It was a *physical* experience . . .

(M4: 223)

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. . . in the experience I was speaking about, what gave it all its value was that I was not expecting it at all, not at all. I knew very well, I had been for a very long time and continuously in “spiritual” contact, if I may say so, with the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo, but I had never thought of the possibility of a modification in the physical air and I was not expecting it in the least, and it was this that gave the whole value to the experience, which came like that, quite suddenly, just as when one enters a place with another temperature or another altitude. . . .

(M4: 229-30)

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Only after a series of experiences — a ten months' sojourn in Pondicherry, five years of separation, then the return to Pondicherry and the meeting in the same house and in the same way — did the *end* of the vision occur. . . . I was standing just beside him. My head wasn't exactly on his shoulder, but where his shoulder was (I don't know how to explain it — physically there was hardly any contact). We were standing side by side like that, gazing out through the open window, and then *together*, at exactly the same moment, we felt, ‘Now the Realisation will be accomplished.’ That the seal was set and the Realisation would be accomplished. I felt the Thing descending massively within me, with the same certainty I had felt in my vision. From that moment on there was nothing to say — no words, nothing. We knew it was *that*.

(Conversation with a disciple, 20 December, 1961)

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[About the different stages of her development]

I have seen that the different stages of my development occurred in twelve-year periods, though I don't recall the exact dates. The first period, from the age of five

(I can't start earlier than five!) to about eighteen, dealt with consciousness. Then came all the artistic and vital development, culminating in the occult development with Théon (I met Théon around 1905 or '06, I think. Then right around this time an intensive mental development began — from 1908 to 1920, or a little before; but it was especially intense before coming here in 1914.

And 1920 marked the beginning of full development. Not spiritual development — that had been going on from the very start — but *action*, the action with Sri Aurobindo. That was clearly from 1920 on; I had met Sri Aurobindo earlier, but it really began in 1920.

And the realisation of the inner Divine?

The dates . . . I am no good at dates! And I don't have any papers left to give me precise details. But the realisation of the inner Divine must have been in 1911, because that's when I started writing my *Meditations*. But since my earliest childhood, you know, this presence was always there, with an initial emphasis on consciousness, then on the vital and aesthetics, then on the mind . . . From 1911 or '12, up to 1914, there was the whole series of inner experiences, psychic experiences, preparing me to meet Sri Aurobindo (so this ran parallel to my mental development).

In practice, these periods overlap, but approximately every twelve years a particular type of development predominated, in this order: consciousness first, then the vital (mainly from the aesthetic point of view, but a study of sensations as well), then the mind, then spiritual realisation. And in between the vital and mental phases came the brief period of occultism, serving both as a transition and a basis for spiritual development.

(Conversation with a disciple, 28 July, 1962)

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[*The Mother once explained the significance of 24th April:*]

The anniversary of my return to Pondicherry, which was the tangible sign of the sure victory over the adverse forces.

24 April 1937

(M13: 62)

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The Mother's victory is, essentially, the victory of each sadhak over himself. It can only be then that any external form of work can come to harmonious perfection.

(S32: 331)

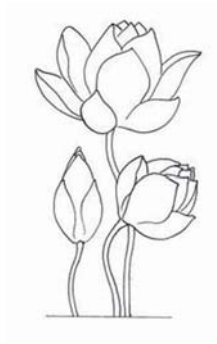
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How should I prepare myself for the April 24th Darshan?

Look attentively into yourself to find out what for you is the most important thing, the thing you feel that you couldn't do without.

It is an interesting discovery.

(M16: 334)



ON THE MOTHER'S COMING

DR. MANILAL: Why did you retire? Was it to concentrate more on your work?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. It was in order to withdraw from the general physical atmosphere. If I had to do what the Mother is doing, I would hardly have found time to do my own work; besides, it would have entailed a tremendous labour.

NIRODBARAN: The Mother's coming must have greatly helped you in your work and in your sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, of course. All my realisations — Nirvana and others — would have remained theoretical, as it were, so far as the outer world was concerned. It is the Mother who showed the way to a practical form. Without her, no organised manifestation would have been possible. She has been doing this kind of sadhana and work from her very childhood.

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NIRODBARAN: Is what he [Barin] says about the Mother true? He says that what would have taken you ten years in sadhana was done in one year by your contact with her.

SRI AUROBINDO: I may have said something like that — not these very words but the same substance.

(Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 6; pp. 507-08)

THE FIRST 24th APRIL DARSHAN

[Nirodbaran narrates how, after the accident of the previous year, Sri Aurobindo's leg was now improving.]

Thanks to all these arduous and assiduous exercises, the limb gained in solid strength, and the body its requisite tone. He began now to read the daily papers himself. One day as I was passing a rapid glance over the morning paper, assuming that he was not yet ready, he enquired, "The paper hasn't come?" I promptly handed it over to him. "Have you digested the news?" he asked. I smiled abashed! Quiet casual humour, characteristic of Sri Aurobindo.

We reached the month of April. Sri Aurobindo's rapid progress became widely known and people began to clamour for a Darshan; they had already missed two of them, and for the next one in August it would be too painfully long to wait. The Mother also began to plead on behalf of the bhaktas, though not much pleading was needed. For we know that when the Mother's heart had melted, the Father's would not take long to do so. Besides, the Mother probably wanted Sri Aurobindo to take up his regular activities as soon as possible. Even for him she would not make any exception. Her dynamic nature cannot brook too long an ease. April 24th was then fixed for the Darshan, as it was the day of the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry. Thenceforth the April Darshan became a permanent feature. The date well suited the professors and students, since it fell within the span of the summer holidays. But the darshan time had to be changed from the morning to the afternoon and it would be a darshan in the true sense of the word. For the devotees would simply come and stand for a brief while before the Mother and the Master, have their darshan and quietly leave. Sri Aurobindo tersely remarked, "No more of that long seven-hour darshan!" Formerly the Darshan was observed with a great ceremonial pomp. Starting at about 7.30 a.m., it ran with one breathing interval, up to 3 p.m. The devotees offered their garlands and flowers, did two, even three or four pranams to the Mother and the Master who remained glued to one place throughout the ordeal, and endured another martyrdom under this excessive display of bhakti even as Raman Maharshi suffered from the "plague of prasads". Now, all that was cut down at one stroke by the force of external circumstances, and all expression transformed into a quiet inner adoration which is a characteristic of this Yoga. Sri Aurobindo's accident made the ceremonial Darshan a thing of past history.

On the eve of the Darshan, the Mother washed Sri Aurobindo's hair with our help. It was such an elaborate and complicated affair that had it been left in our hands, it would have ended in confusion, particularly because it had to be done in the bedroom. Hot and cold water, basins, soap, powder, etc., etc., had to be kept

ready. What a ceremony really, this washing was! No wonder ladies go in for bob or shingle. Formerly, Sri Aurobindo, it seems, used to wash his long hair every night, but I am sure he did without all this paraphernalia. His secluded life had, of course, simplified the whole complex process. Later on when a bathroom adjoining his living room was built, washing lost its formidable character. Sri Aurobindo bore all this torture as a part of the game, I suppose.

The Darshan day at last! In the morning, the Mother arrived in his room with a flower, probably a red lotus, knelt before the Lord, placed the lotus on his bed and bowed down to receive his blessings and his sweet smile. This was the second time I saw her doing pranam to him. The first time was on her birthday, February 21. It was a revelation to me, for I did not expect her to bow down in the Indian way. On every Darshan day since then I enjoyed the sight. On other days she used to take his hand and lightly kiss it. With her customary drive, she chalked out the Darshan programme, the time for Sri Aurobindo's lunch and of her coming for the Darshan. We had to be ready and keep the Master ready too. From the early morning time began to move fast, the Mother was seen rushing about, she had so many things to attend to! Everything finished, clad in a lovely sari, a crown adorning her shapely head, looking like a veritable Goddess, she entered Sri Aurobindo's room with brisk steps, earlier than the appointed time, as was her wont. She gave a quick glance at us. We were all attention. The entire group was present, it being the first Darshan after the accident. She was pleased to find us ready. Sri Aurobindo was dressed in an immaculate white dhoti, its border daintily creased, as is the custom in Bengal; a silk *chaddar* across his chest and his long shining hair flowing down — a picture that reminded us of Shiva and Shakti going out to give darshan to their bhaktas; Sri Aurobindo was in front and the Mother behind. They sat together as on other Darshan days, she on his right, a glorious view, and the ceremony began.

It was, however, a simple Darshan. One by one the sadhaks stood for a brief moment before the One-in-Two, and passed on quietly thrilled and exalted by their silent look and gracious smile. The feelings of the sadhaks can be imagined when they saw their beloved Master restored to his normal health! The Darshan was over within an hour, and when Sri Aurobindo was back in his room Dr. Rao remarked in his childlike manner, "Sir, you looked grand at the Darshan!" Sri Aurobindo smiled and we retorted, just to tease him, "At other times he doesn't?" Rao, nonplussed, replied, "No, no, I did not mean that." Truly, Rao had expressed the sentiments of hundreds of devotees who had had a glimpse of him during the Darshan. What a grandeur and majesty in his simple silent pose! What a power, as if he held the whole world in the palm of his hand! If ever a human being could attain the stature of a god, he was there for all to see and be blessed by. Many have had a deep change after just one touch of his God-like magnificence. "A touch can alter the fixed front of Fate." Many had visions and boons they had long been seeking for,

and for the sadhaks each Darshan was a step to a further milestone towards the Eternal. Sri Aurobindo had said: “Darshans are periods of great descents!” It was not for nothing that Hitler chose the 15th of August for his royal ascension in Buckingham Palace and got the first heavy blow. Nor was it for nothing that India gained her independence on that immortal day.

(Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, 2005, pp. 30-34)

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At the time when I came here, Sri Aurobindo along with the Mother granted three Darshans every year — once on his birthday on the 15th of August, once on the Mother’s birthday on the 21st February and once again on the 24th November. It was on this date in 1926 that there happened the “Descent of the Overmind” and from that date he withdrew into seclusion. He later wrote to Nirodbaran — “It was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the Supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya, he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards Ananda.”

“It was also proclaimed that I was retiring — obviously to work things out.”

A few years later, from 1939 onwards — on the 24th April, the day of Mother’s final arrival, another Darshan was granted making four Darshans every year.

Let me relate here what it was that occurred, ushering in the Darshan in April as also of our painful feelings. Sri Aurobindo could be seen only on the Darshan days and no other. Therefore to get his Darshan was something to eagerly look forward to — to wait from one Darshan to another with a thirst in the heart beating eagerly but not easily appeased. Can one ever have his expectations fulfilled, having seen Sri Aurobindo only once? Just seeing him cannot be called a Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. Each Darshan in our life was an experience, nearly a supra-realisation. It brought to us the golden opportunity to reach out to the unattainable. He instilled into us something that no one else could. Thus as the Darshan day approached our minds too leaned to a self-gathering, with a view to receiving rightly; this occupied the whole of ourselves. Darshan was to start at seven o’clock in the morning. I had a room, those days, in a small one-storied building across the road, opposite to the Darshan room. I lived alone. The room where Darshan used to be is the very next one to the Mother’s room, just above the gate of that building, easily visible from my room. The decorations of the Darshan room began usually from the previous night. From my room I could hear the hum of those engaged in the work and see the arrival of flowers in abundance and other paraphernalia. The awareness of all this gave rise to waves of joy in me to feel that as soon as the morning broke I would see Sri Aurobindo, approach him and receive his touch — things of such wonderful

feelings. As I was proceeding for Darshan on the morning of 24th November 1938, someone told me, “There will be no Darshan today.” I was shocked and promptly said, “What rot are you talking?” The speaker in a pale and hurt countenance said, “Please inform yourself”, and moved away with his head lowered. In the meanwhile I had recovered myself enough to realise that I had been unnecessarily rude. I approached Nolini to find out what the matter was, meeting on the way many who had come for Darshan loitering with dejected mien. What I heard was that as Sri Aurobindo got up from his chair after replying to our letters, he stumbled on the stuffed head of a tiger skin. The fall was the cause of fracturing the bone above the knee. One could easily surmise the mental anguish of the ashramites at this news. A dark dejection enveloped me, I felt as if all daylight had been extinguished. I can hardly recollect how the day passed. In the evening the Mother alone gave Darshan in the hall just in front of Amrita’s room. Her compassion flowing in a hundred streams began to wash away the dejection from our minds. She filled all the profound emptiness in our hearts with her incomparable heavenly smile. We were uplifted by her inspiration and strength and we found our feet to rise again. Still I must admit I could not bear for long to see her giving Darshan alone. The next Darshan was to be on the 21st February 1939, but this too did not take place. Then after these two lapses the first Darshan was on the 24th April 1939, which has become since then a regular one.

(Sahana Devi, ‘Forty Years Ago’, *Breath of Grace*,
Edited by M. P. Pandit, 2011, pp. 115-17)

A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 578)

“A LIVING FACT, A REALITY”

REFLECTIONS APROPOS APRIL 24

It was on April 24 in 1920 that the Mother came finally to settle in Pondicherry by the side of Sri Aurobindo and work with him to establish on earth what he called the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness. It was on April 24, 1937, that she described her “return to Pondicherry” as “the tangible sign of the sure Victory over the adverse forces”. And it was on April 24 in 1956 that she at last announced the event which had taken place nearly two months earlier: the manifestation of the Supermind in the earth-atmosphere — that is, in the subtle-physical layer of terrestrial existence — as a new Power permanently settled to evolve the Divine Superman. In her message she called it “a living fact, a reality” and said that a day would come when even the blindest would recognise the presence of this Power.

Several years have passed, and the question has often been put: “No mahatma anywhere in India has felt the supramental manifestation. How is it that what the blindest in the future will recognise is unperceived by the spiritual seers of today? Are we to hold that the great Yogis are no seers at all? A scepticism either about spiritual faculty or about spiritual phenomenon threatens the unbiased inquirer.”

The answer is that the problem is founded on a wrong conception. The Supermind is a Power on whose quest Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were launched for almost three decades after compassing all the realisations of traditional spirituality and finding those indubitable splendours still inadequate to bring about a complete transformation of earth-life. It is a supreme Creativity of which only rare glimpses have been caught in the past: the bringing down of it for a new collective divine world was never envisaged, though the vague drive that has always been in human history towards entire knowledge of the world-process, towards unflinching energy of earthly achievement, towards secure stability of the embodied being was the secret Supermind’s in an indirect and secular instead of a direct and spiritual way. The Supermind, in *persona propria*, has been a stranger, a magnificent X.

Its presence, therefore, in the earth-atmosphere is a special vibration, as it were, to which not even the usually developed spiritual sense is responsive. It is the ultra-violet which transcends the traditional mahatma’s vision of light. Whether the ultra-violet be far away in some remote star or down here in our own radiation-field, the vibration remains the same and hence equally elusive in essence to spiritual sight unless that sight has been in some manner *en rapport* with the Supermind above.

The great Yogis God-realised in the old ways are sensitive as much as the consciousness of the highest spiritualised mind allows; and each of them is further

conditioned by his own specific mode and sphere of inner experience, the particular infinity opened to a particular finite door. Each has a sympathetic connection with other experiences and realisations, other expanses of truth attained by Godward turns similar in general to his own. But when a Truth that is beyond the past ranges makes its appearance, it cannot be perceived until those who are familiar with the Spiritual on the mental plane extend their sensitivity and scope or until the new Truth itself breaks upon them and makes them see. If neither of these two possibilities has become actualised as yet, we must not conclude that the non-supramental Yogis are no Yogis. Their authenticity cannot be impugned. But much less can we conclude from their non-perception that there is no Supramental Truth or no manifestation of it.

One may add that the manifestation of the Supermind cannot remain hidden for long. The supreme dynamic Creativity cannot long seem as if static. The common saying “Truth will out” is all the more applicable when the Supramental Truth is concerned. Even now there is action, an intensely effective one, but mostly *incognito* and through natural-looking circumstances. So we may legitimately hope that before the blind of the future recognise it the seers of today will at least feel its heavenly heat and infer its luminosity.

But let not those who are followers of Sri Aurobindo forget in the midst of the Supermind’s unlimited potentialities that the demand of all evolutionary process in man, the conscious soul, is conscious consent and co-operation. The need of a vigilant personal effort is a law inevitable: nothing can become organic in its absence — a superimposed and therefore impermanent miracle will be even the Supermind if the mental does not give itself to the Supramental. What, however, the new manifestation may have altered even in the law of evolution is that the effort required is an endeavour less to do things oneself than to let the Supermind do all. In other words, formerly one had to put in one’s own work side by side with the larger movements of the higher Consciousness: now one may have merely to stop resisting and the higher Consciousness will do its miraculous work without depending on our smaller movements. Here is indeed a great difference, but even to stop resisting is a serious and all-time occupation and cannot be taken up as if just the thought of it were enough. Just the thought of it is insufficient not only for those who are still aspirants: it is so for those too who are spiritually advanced. Compared to the Himalaya of the Supermind, all mountains and valleys of soul-accomplishment are grades of one and the same abyss.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

(Reprinted from *Mother India*, April 1977, pp. 261-62)

THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE OF APRIL 24, 1957

This Message of the Mother —

In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation —

has prompted in some minds the question: Is the work of establishing the Supermind on earth not the work of the culminating Avatar, not the fulfilment of earth-existence but only a step further, like so many earlier steps, on an endless path where every realisation proves to be imperfect in comparison to what comes after it?

Behind this question there are a number of misconceptions. It is indeed true that no end can be set to the Divine's manifestation on earth. If the Divine is the Infinite, then His manifestation can never be exhausted: depth after depth must keep disclosing itself. When the Supermind, the Vijnana-plane, has established its splendour amongst us, it will serve as the beginning of a movement towards establishing the wonder that is the Ananda-plane. After that, other secrets of the Supreme will work out their revelation. But we must not overlook a great difference between the Supermind's manifestation and the manifestation of divine powers that have preceded it. And we must not omit to note that the Mother's April Message, in its complete form, has a second sentence running:

And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.¹

This sentence makes us throw a glance backward at man's spiritual history and it suggests in relation to the Supermind the error of sticking to past realisations as if they were ultimate instead of preparatory of the Supermind's epiphany. The opposing tendency spoken of can take two forms. One is to deny the supramental revelation and make a jealous cult of what Rishi and Saint and Prophet have taught in ages gone. The other is to consider this revelation of today nothing save the old truth retold in novel terms and therefore fit for acceptance by those who like novelty but not imperative for acceptance by all.

1. In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation.

And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done.

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 22)

Of course, as we have said, the supramental realisation also is not final. And the Mother's second sentence does not imply its finality. But by the word "past" contraposed to the word "future" it brings the generality of the first sentence to a certain particularisation which, without making a fresh fetish of today against tomorrow, flashes out the need of opening the eyes to the new Day of God that has dawned.

The new Day can be seen in proper focus by divesting the epithet "supramental" of all looseness of significance. Every Yoga has sought for what is "supra", or superior, to the mental. But Sri Aurobindo attaches a special meaning to the epithet he has brought into use. People not intimate with his thought understand by it one of two things. Either they apply it to an infinite and eternal Silence exceeding all cosmic activity and making the whole cosmos seem an inexplicably created enigma that has no basic reality — or else they apply it to a spiritual Force beyond the mind, standing against the background of that Silence and governing its own creation, this universe in which the souls of creatures rise from birth to birth but in which, despite all spirituality, a certain imperfection is inherent and irreducible. The first conception culminates in a sense of *Maya*, World-Illusion; the second in a sense of *Lila*, World-Play. But both point in the end to a fulfilment above the earth — the one to a merger in the sheer Absolute, the other to a heavenly abiding within the Godhead.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Supreme is totally defined by neither of these conceptions. Each has certainly a validity in experience. The sense of World-Illusion comes by experience of the utter freedom of the Divine from the universe of forms, an entire independence that can be asserted by turning away from the phenomena of body, life and mind as if they were trifles and even phantoms adding nothing to the essential self-existence of the Spirit. The sense of World-Play comes by experience of a constant sustainment of phenomena by that self-existence as if they emerged from its own being and lived by its conscious force and expressed, overtly or covertly, its boundless delight.

But the Supreme, for Sri Aurobindo, is not only the utter freedom above cosmic existence, not only the inalienable divine presence within cosmos and the Lord and Lover of it: He also renders possible a fulfilment of the terrestrial adventure in its own terms of mind, life and body. The Supreme holds a divine mentality, a divine vitality, a divine physicality awaiting to manifest by a descent from above where they stand in open glory and by an emergence from below where they lie hidden in the profundities of all that appears the very opposite of the Divine. The Supreme, as unfolding from His absolute freedom this threefold Truth of Nature and dynamising this Truth in an evolutionary self-expression, is the Supermind. By the Supermind a godlike evolution in the most literal sense can result: the formation of an earthly being who by his very nature shall be free from ignorance, incapacity and the deathward movement that is all embodied life at even its most puissant.

Once the Supermind is realised on the earth we have no longer a disparity

between Spirit and World. Nothing of Here and Now will fall short of the Divine who is infinite and eternal. The division of basic reality from phenomenon, of the Creator from the creation, will be abolished without putting away form and becoming. Thus a radical change will take place which will distinguish the supramental realisation from all others. Hence to say that this realisation is not final is never the same thing as to say that the realisations before the Supermind's advent are not final but part of an endless process of world-perfection. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, there is conversion before the Supermind and progression after it. Until the supramental change has occurred, something of the phenomenal and the created remains imperfect and needs to be converted. With the occurrence of that change, what remains is only the inexhaustible exploration of the perfect: what remains is the "more perfect" in the sense of more quantity, as it were, of the perfection hidden in the Divine and not the "more perfect" in the sense of a superior quality. After the supramental realisation the Divine cannot be diviner but He can still be various and show design on miraculous design of ordered flawlessness in an eternity of becoming.

This fact should also clarify the problem of Avatarhood. Avatarhood, essentially manifesting the supreme Godhead, takes place from various planes of being by an incarnation of the central Divine Personality poised on a plane. It can take place from the Mind plane to establish the rule of an ideal and Spirit-touched Dharma answering to the finest mental aspiration; or from the Overmind plane to bring a many-sided direct impulsion from a spiritual state that is vaster than the mental and beyond all merely ethico-religious rule. Again, it can take place straight from the supreme Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind, where the ultimate marvel of the Transcendent is organised for time-creation and the all-transformative archetype of earth-existence is dynamic. The Avatarhood from the Supermind carries not only in the inward but also in the outward the utter Godhead and all potentialities of future Avatarhood are continuous with those which it manifests and come not so much from a higher plane as from a plane in its own background. A new form or incarnation for a new manifestation is no longer a necessity. It is the intuitive inkling of this absence of further embodiment, rather than the anomalous idea of putting a term to the Infinite's manifestation on earth, that has led Hinduism to speak of Kalki as the last Avatar.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

(Reprinted from *Mother India*, May 1957, pp. 2-4)

ON THE 24TH OF APRIL

Once in 1932 we arranged for a special musical performance on the 24th April. The Mother gave the following message written in her own hand:

To all those who took part in today's singing and music: Sri Aurobindo and myself have felt that there was a great progress this time. It was not only from the external point of view of execution, but in the greater aim of the concentration behind and in the inner attitude. May the day bring its benediction to all.

(24.4.32)

(Sahana Devi, 'Forty Years Ago', *Breath of Grace*,
Edited by M. P. Pandit, 2011, p. 163)

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On 24th April 1932, the Mother moved to her room on the first floor, i.e., next to Sri Aurobindo's Room.

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[*The April Darshan of 1940 was still not certain as we see in the following conversation.*]

SATYENDRA: There is a talk of the Darshan taking place in April now. People are asking us about it. If we say, "We don't know," they get angry and retort, "Oh, you are having Darshan every day and so you don't care." (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know myself. Maybe. (*Purani was signalling from behind to Nirodbaran that there would be Darshan.*)

SATYENDRA: Purani knows.

SRI AUROBINDO: He does?

PURANI: There is a chance. The Mother perhaps doesn't want to say anything because many people may ask for permission.

SATYENDRA: If the sadhaks know, it's sure to leak out.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Spreading news has become a yogic siddhi. (*Laughter*)
Even before anything is decided it leaks out!

NIRODBARAN: We tell friends and say, "Don't tell it to anybody else." The friend repeats the same to his friend and everybody keeps his secret except from one friend.

SRI AUROBINDO: So it becomes a universal secret.

DR. RAO: The swelling of the leg is about the same as when I saw it last.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is because I am doing the exercises now. At one time it became almost normal like the other leg.

DR. RAO: Perhaps the circulation hasn't been fully established yet and that may also be the cause of deficient flexion to a certain extent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

NIRODBARAN: What has circulation to do with flexion?

SRI AUROBINDO: It has something to do with it, because after the exercise I feel the joint getting stiff and feel there is no circulation.

NIRODBARAN: That may be to a certain extent.

10 March 1940

(A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks*, pp. 543-544)

*

[Another] topic that I discussed with the Mother was about my old ailing friend Nishikanta. He was at this time suffering from T. B. and had been admitted to the Jipmer hospital. I often used to visit him and inform the Mother about his condition. A new aspect of the poet Nishikanta was revealed to me. Living for days in a T.B. ward among patients from a very ordinary class of of people, . . . amidst the loud lamentations of relatives, Nishikanta remained supremely detached and preserved his native wit and humour. One day, however, something went wrong and all on a sudden his urine stopped flowing. The surgeon wanted to remove his enlarged prostate but he refused to undergo any operation. At last he agreed provided the Mother gave her consent. When I put the case before her, she asked, "What does he say?" "He doesn't want it, Mother," I replied. "Well, then, there is no question," she said in a firm tone. Then looking at me she added in a grave voice, "Do you remember what happened five or six years ago? Nishikanta was dying. All of you brought him to me in that critical state. He took hold of my foot, placed it on his chest and prayed, 'Mother, I want to live.'"

"Yes, I remember, Mother. It is much more than five years. Now, he would like to see Sri Aurobindo's centenary before he passes away. You have to fulfil his prayer," I replied.

"If he has faith," she answered with a smile. And with that faith he carried on till the year 1973, when on 19th May, leaving behind a lifetime's trail of poetic splendour, he disappeared from our earth.

My visits to the Mother were also cut short as had happened before, owing to her illness. I do not recollect when exactly the contact was re-established. Very probably from the next year, i.e. 1968. I used to see her once a week which again came to a halt because of her ill health.

I may give a brief account of the miraculous intervention to which the Mother

is referring here. I have already dwelt upon it at length in my article on Nishikanta. He had fallen seriously ill. It was a matter of life and death. The Mother said to me: “Tell him that I want to see him on the 24th. Gathering all his strength, he must come on that occasion.”

The occasion was 24th April, 1956. In 1955 the Mother had spoken to me about the manifestation of the Supermind which, she was expecting, would take place on 24th April, 1956. But then it manifested on 29th February, 1956; and on the 24th of April of that year it was first announced. Nishikanta had written to the Mother to keep him alive till that date and the Mother had given him her word. Now there were only three more days to go and he was on his death-bed. Somehow he survived till the Darshan day. Just after the darshan was over, we brought him on a stretcher for the Mother’s darshan. The stretcher was placed at the foot of the staircase. She came down followed by Pranab and others. We raised the stretcher. Nishikanta stretched out his feeble hands. The Mother at once clutched them with both her hands and, drawing them towards herself, silently smiled into his wide open supplicating eyes. Then with her delicate fingers she smoothed his anguished brow, wiping away, as it were, all the dark karmic scripts from it. Suddenly Nishikanta, pointing to his chest, whispered haltingly, “Mother, your foot here!” The stretcher was put down. The Mother holding Pranab’s arm for support placed her right foot gently upon his chest. Nishikanta pressed it with his trembling hands. Sri Aurobindo’s mantric verse came to my mind:

Heal with her feet the aching throb of life.

In the evening when I went to see Nishikanta, there was no longer that fevered restlessness; the face and body breathed serenity. In a low voice he said, “That hell-fire within has subsided. Ah! the body has become ice-cool. Every cell is soothed with peace and peace.”

This was the miracle that happened before our eyes in 1956. Nishikanta lived on seventeen years more!

(Nirodbaran, *Memorable Contacts with The Mother*, 2nd Ed., 1991, pp. 118-21)

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At the time of the Darshan on 24 April 1949, all the members of the Playground sporting programmes in their group uniforms filed past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and it was truly a heart-warming and inspiring sight.

(K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *On The Mother*, Third (Revised) Edition: 1994, p. 469)

*

On 24th April 1948, Mother wanted us to do a march past in front of Sri Aurobindo before the Darshan (in the Darshan Room). Our elderly members wanted to have some training before the actual March Past. So I had to give special marching training to our elderly members, so that they could walk smartly before Sri Aurobindo. The March Past on 24th April 1948 was very successful so Mother fixed up 24th April every year for the March Past in front of Sri Aurobindo. We had this privilege up to 1950 when Sri Aurobindo left his body. Then for some years we did the March Past on 24th April around the Samadhi.

After the first March Past on 24th April 1948 our elderly members wanted me to continue the marching as an exercise every day. I thought that marching as an exercise every day would seem monotonous. So I introduced some free-hand exercises for the whole body into the marching and it was very much appreciated. I called it “Gymnastic Marching”. Mother herself had translated my English commands of Gymnastic Marching into French.

(Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, *I Remember*, 1st Ed., 24th November 1993, p. 286)

*

The first photographs to be taken of Sri Aurobindo since the early 1920’s were by Henri Cartier-Bresson, the famous French photographer, in April 1950. Among the Cartier-Bresson photographs is one taken on the occasion of the darshan of 24 April 1950.

(A. B. Purani, *Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 239)

*

It appears that a certain journal in France reported that a curtain was hung at the time of Darshan and that only the feet of Sri Aurobindo were allowed to be seen from the little space between the lower end of the curtain and the floor.¹ To contradict this, Mother asked that the Darshan photo (No. 59-7-33 in the album) be sent to the paper. For in that photograph sadhaks are seen standing in a line in front of Sri Aurobindo at the Darshan of 24th April 1950.

(*Champaklal Speaks*, Edited by M. P. Pandit,
Revised by Roshan, 3rd Ed., 2002, p. 215)

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1. Alexandra David-Neel, a Buddhist friend of the Mother who met Sri Aurobindo in 1910 on her way to Tibet, wrote in *L’Inde où j’ai vécu*, Paris, 1951: “. . . recent visitors tell me that . . . once or twice a year the Master placed himself behind a curtain beneath which only his feet emerged. His admirers . . . prostrated themselves before the feet. [This] information [came] to me from several different sources.” — *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*, April 1987, pp. 115-16.

Henri Cartier-Bresson, held to be “the father of modern photojournalism”, was at the time travelling through India with his Indonesian wife. He had read French translations of some of Sri Aurobindo’s books and requested in writing permission to photograph Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the photo agency Magnum, which he had founded with war photographer Robert Capra and others. After the Mother, herself not photographed since her stay in Japan, had seen an album with work of Cartier-Bresson, he got permission to shoot freely during a couple of days in the Ashram. At his instance the Mother asked Sri Aurobindo’s permission for him to be photographed in his room and even during the darshan proper. Thus came about the by now famous photographs of Sri Aurobindo in his big armchair, and the only photo of him together with the Mother, taken during the darshan of 24 April 1950, without special lighting and fairly hazy.

(Georges Van Vrekhem, *Beyond Man*, 1999, p. 279, fn)

*

Once, Henri Cartier-Bresson came from France to photograph Sri Aurobindo. As a press photographer, he had made a name for himself during the Korean War. He had a very expensive Leica camera. Mother wanted to buy me a similar one. Mother wrote to Elizabeth, a disciple who ran a centre in Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s name in America, to buy a Leica and send it here. But she could not get one. Then Mother got Chimanbhai to buy a beautiful Leica for me.

Now let me tell you about Cartier-Bresson’s taking photos here.

Once, in Europe, and especially in France, there was a strong rumour that Sri Aurobindo had left his body long ago and that in his place a dummy was being dressed up and shown to people four times a year. This was because for a very long period Sri Aurobindo did not allow himself to be photographed.

These false rumours came to Mother’s ears and she thought that a famous international photographer like Cartier-Bresson was the best person to silence them by taking his photos.

That is why Mother permitted him to take Sri Aurobindo’s photos on certain conditions. One, all the pictures by him would be shown to her and only after obtaining her permission would they be made public. Two, all the negatives had to be deposited with us. If his photos were to be printed abroad prior permission had to be obtained from Mother and similar other conditions.

Bresson agreed to all her conditions and took the photos.

We offered to get his negatives developed here in ‘Chimanbhai’s dark-room. But Bresson did not agree to this. He said he would have them developed in France and send them to us.

He left for France. For a long time we didn’t hear from him. We wrote many letters but there was no answer.

We started worrying a little.

After quite some time we were surprised to find Sri Aurobindo's photos both in Indian and foreign newspapers. Even the Darshan photos of Mother and Sri Aurobindo had been reproduced. *The Illustrated Weekly of India* too published some pictures.

So we wrote to Cartier-Bresson to send us the photos. What he sent us were some small photos of half-passport size. They had a lot of scratches and no copies could be made.

In the meantime Sri Aurobindo left his body.

In despair, we wrote to Cartier-Bresson that there was no question of not paying him as these were priceless negatives and we were willing to pay him any price. But on condition that the negatives be deposited with us.

He did finally send them but for those few negatives he charged us eighteen thousand rupees.

Later, Mother remarked that if she had had the photos taken by us, it would have been much better.

(Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, *I Remember*, 1st Ed., 24th November 1993, pp. 42-44)

*

Almost the first development after Sri Aurobindo's passing was the summoning of the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention to Pondicherry. The meeting, attended by a representative and distinguished gathering of leaders, intellectuals and educationalists from all over India, was held on 24 April 1951 at the Tennis Ground of the Ashram, and concluded its deliberations the next day. In her inaugural message the Mother said:

Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life. (M12: 112)

(K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, pp. 762-63)

*

As regards the University Centre, the Mother confided to Munshi that she was building up "slowly, step by step, but firmly". For one thing, the entire adventure of education from Kindergarten to the Higher Courses was a single spectrum; and the whole arc,

from physical to spiritual, was an integral whole. If in May 1951, she had opened the Sports Ground, now on 24 April 1952, she opened a section of the University Centre which was to house the temporary library and music and dance room and some additional classrooms. Then she opened the weight-lifting and body-building sections of the gymnasium at the Playground. The diverse limbs of the new International Centre thus started taking their significant shapes and performing their allotted functions. The Mother herself had at no time any doubt whatsoever regarding the crucial role the International Centre was expected to play in the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future man.

(K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *On The Mother*, Third (Revised) Edition: 1994, pp. 537-38)

*

. . . the Mother gave on 1st January, as the Message for 1956, a declaration that was somewhat puzzling at the time:

The greatest victories are the least noisy.

The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum.

On 29 February 1956, a conversation took place between the Mother and the Ashram children. A passage from *The Synthesis of Yoga* was under discussion:

The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation. This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter so that it may inform and illuminate them, is the seed of redemption of this world of Inconscience and Ignorance. . . . The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. It is its admission that, even in this much fragmented existence, there is beyond itself and behind that which is not its own egoistic person, something greater and completer, a diviner All which demands from it subordination and service. (S23: 106)

Towards the end of the discussion, the Mother said:

It is the Divine in the inconscient who aspires to the Divine in the consciousness. That is to say, without the Divine there would be no aspiration; without the consciousness hidden in the inconscient, there would be no possibility of changing the inconscience to consciousness. But because at the very heart of

the unconscious there is the divine Consciousness, you aspire, and . . . the sacrifice is made. (M8: 79)

And this is the force behind the prophecy or divine decree in *Savitri*: “Even the body shall remember God”. It was during the meditation that followed the discussion — or exposition — that the Mother had the singular mystic experience of the descent of the Supramental Light and Force, and she recorded in her diary:

This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that “the time has come”, and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow. (M15: 94)

This was the “Golden Day”, the Day of the Lord. But the actual announcement came only on the next Darshan Day, 24 April 1956:

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.

(M15: 96)

Again, under the dates “29 February - 29 March”, the following appeared in the *Bulletin* of 24 April 1956:

Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled. (M15: 95)

What had been but a promise on 25 September 1914 — “shall break” . . . “shall be born” . . . “shall be fulfilled” — now became in Mother’s consciousness, an accomplished reality. But, of course, it was not equally obvious to others. After all, great must be the chasm between “the unthinkable realities and the relativities of the physical world”, and any happenings, emergents or even revolutions in the

realms of consciousness were unlikely to prove easily amenable to physical perception or measurement. When the children asked her about it, the Mother said:

Only the like can know the like, only the Supramental Consciousness in an individual can perceive this Supermind acting in the earth-atmosphere.

(M8: 127)

(K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, pp. 756-58)

*

Exactly a month later, on 29 March [1956], the Mother distributed at the time of Pranam a print of “The Golden Purusha”, a painting by Krishnalal, with the familiar quotation from her prayer of 25 September 1914:

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
A new Light shall break upon the earth.
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.

A little later, when some of the sadhaks met her upstairs, she took back the message and made a few alterations before returning it:

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

The first was written by the Mother about six months after her first meeting with Sri Aurobindo on 29 March 1914. The plain sense was that the supramental change had been decreed by the Divine. The rest was for future unfoldment and realisation. Forty-two years to a day after her first meeting, on 29 March 1956, the Divine’s decree had been declared fulfilled, the manifestation had taken place, and the Mother became the executrix of the details of the new dispensation. The promised bud of the future — “a new world” — had already burst forth from the stem of past aspiration and tapasya, and was now in its white radiance of progressive efflorescence.

A few days later, on 5 April, the Mother told Sethna explaining that, what had come down was the supramental Light, Force and Consciousness and not the Ananda; and since the event concerned the whole universe, and not individuals, it would be appropriate to call the phenomenon a manifestation rather than a descent. A descent is in relation to the framework of an individual’s existence in which various things

are below and above — the mind centre, the heart-centre etc. and the “overhead” planes . . .

Doubtless there was some rumour-mongering and not a little bemused speculation in the Ashram, for the changes made by the Mother by hand in the printed message of 29 March were meant to be kept a secret. On 24 April, however, she permitted the altered message to be published in the *Bulletin*, along with this explicit announcement:

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.

(M15: 96)

Naturally enough, this came up for discussion at the weekly evening meeting in the Playground on 2 May. The Darshan on 24 April had attracted nearly two thousand visitors, and in the Playground talk on 25 April, the Mother made a distinction between approaching the Divine for the satisfaction of one’s egoistic desires, and making a total surrender to Him. The latter is the wiser way. On 2 May, one of the questions asked was, well, since the supramental manifestation was “a living fact, a reality” where was the new race? The Mother . . . returned this answer:

The new race? Wait for something like . . . a few thousand years and you will see it!

When the mind descended upon earth, between the time the mind manifested in the earth-atmosphere and the time the first man appeared, nearly a million years elapsed. Now it will go faster . . . But faster means still thousands of years probably. (M8: 126-27)

(K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *On The Mother*, Third (Revised) Edition: 1994, pp. 617-19)

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The future expectation had become the present realisation. At the same time she had the following declaration published, under the date 24 April 1956: “The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

“It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.”

“Was this advent unexpected?” asked Indra Sen, a disciple. “Absolutely,” answered the Mother, “but all my greatest experiences have come like that. I am in

my usual consciousness and they come suddenly, as if to show their reality in the fullest contrast and vividness. They have the best value when first received in this way. When one is informed beforehand, the mind begins to play a part . . .”. And she added: “The working of the Supermind in my body has gone on since the 5th December 1950. It has been a progressive individual working; so I thought things would go on like that. But in January of this year Sri Aurobindo appeared to me two or three times and it was as if he indicated that the Supermind was coming on a universal scale. What has come has become engulfed at present and it has to work itself out. Nature did not reject — she could not. The Supreme decided that the time had come and He released the Force.”

(Georges Van Vrekhem, *The Mother*, 2000, pp. 417-18)

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On the 24th, how long will it be? . . . Forty-one years since I came here. And I haven’t moved since.

It’s really strange: there is no space between that time and now. I don’t know how to explain it. . . . I have no feeling of time, none at all, none.

(long silence)

I live in the constant feeling of *pushing* against a world of tremendous obstacles, with the certainty that — suddenly — the resistance will give way . . . and there will be enlightenment — no, far more than that!

That’s all.

I have become only this (*Mother slowly moves her arm forward with clenched fist, as if to show all her force tensed and pushing, inexorably pushing*).

(Mother gets up)

All night long and whenever my attention is not being drawn away by something or other — and even then, it’s there as if behind a veil — I am nothing but a force that pushes. That’s what I have become.

(silence)

Don’t worry. You definitely haven’t gotten worse.

Oh, I feel we are constantly betraying — betraying you.

Betraying? Oh . . . I also feel that I am betraying myself, so you see! . . .

Actually it is because, without knowing it, you are becoming aware of the true Self, and that awareness always produces a sense of betrayal. But it's neither 'you' nor 'I' nor 'he' nor anything other than *that* which is being betrayed. All that we are is a betrayal of That. This is what it is. And we are constantly pushing, pushing, pushing to go beyond.

It's all right. Don't worry. When you are a little upset, you only have to think: Oh, Mother is here, and she will do the work.

(Conversation with a disciple, 15 April, 1961)

*

The same experience came back to me later; it isn't another "version" or another way of saying it, it's the experience that suddenly came back so acutely, so intensely (*Mother reads her note*):

"Human beings are so powerless, so imperfect, so incomplete!"

The 'incomplete' was the strongest of the three — so incomplete!

"Only the all-powerful rule of Truth and Love upon earth can make life tolerable."

It's like a continuation — but it didn't come as a continuation: it's the experience that came back. As if something in the consciousness of *the earth* felt an urgent and irrevocable need for this change — for the change, for the new creation. As if the consciousness of the earth . . . The aspiration grows so intense, you know, so acute, so constant, so concentrated — under pressure — that something has to burst.

So these are poor words. The experience translates itself into words at a given moment: first, there is the intensity of the experience, then spontaneously — spontaneously — it takes the form of words, so I note them down. But the words are thin and flat, they're poor. But it's . . . like when you are about to come into contact with your psychic being and you feel the ego's obstruction; there comes a point when you push and push to get through, it's so acute that you feel as if everything is going to burst. And in fact something does burst.

It's the same thing for the earth, the same experience.

It's the consciousness of the earth pushing away like that, absolutely disgusted with what is there, and feeling the need for . . . for *the thing* to come.

—

Soon afterwards, Mother files another note:

“You ask for the story of their death — but some deaths have no story. It is the tranquil transition from one state of consciousness to another, peacefully entering a silent wait for another period of activity.”

There are some things, like this one, that I wrote but never sent. I remember, there were people who had bombarded me with letters; I wrote this immediately, and then it stayed.

—

Another slip of paper:

“I do not have faith in ceremonies and rites.”

(Conversation with a disciple, 24 April, 1964)

*

Sweet Mother,

We aspire to work all together towards the goal that Thou hast proposed to us.

Grant us the rectitude, the courage, the perseverance and the goodwill necessary to accomplish this sublime task.

Kindle in us the flame which will burn out all resistance and make us fit to be Thy faithful servants.

My children,

We are united towards the same goal and for the same accomplishment — for a work unique and new, that the divine Grace has given us to accomplish. I hope that more and more you will understand the exceptional importance of this work and that you will sense in yourselves the sublime joy that the accomplishment will give you.

The divine force is with you — feel its presence more and more and be careful never to betray it.

Feel, wish, act, that you may be new beings for the realisation of a new world and for this my blessings shall always be with you.

24 April 1961

(M12: 272)

*

Yesterday, the 24th, there was a meditation. It was intense and formulated itself thus:

“Suffocated by the shallowness of the human nature, we aspire to the knowledge that truly knows, the power that truly can, the love that truly loves.”

The words are poor; the experience was strong. I am with you always, in love and joy.

25.4.64

(Mother’s note to a disciple)

*

(Regarding the Darshan of April 24, 1967:)

How was the 24th? Did you stay at home for the meditation?

No, I always come.

It was rather peculiar.

Here is the sequence of events: someone living here had a very bad cold some seven or eight days before the darshan. I said to myself, “I must not catch it.” So I did a special prayer not to catch it. But it has had consequences.

I told you about that experience, which has been growing increasingly concrete and constant, of the Vibration of Harmony (a higher harmony expressing the essential Consciousness in its aspect of love and harmony and, as it draws nearer to the manifestation, of order and organisation), and of the nearly constant and general vibration of disorder, disharmony, conflict — in reality, Matter’s resistance to this Action. The two vibrations are like this (*Mother slips the fingers of her right hand between those of the left*), as if they interpenetrated each other and a simple movement of consciousness sent you to one side or the other, or rather, as if the aspiration, the will for realisation, put you into contact with the Vibration of Harmony, and the *slightest* slackening made you lapse into the other. It has become constant. So then, on the 24th, right from morning there was a constant aspiration, a constant will for the triumph of the Vibration of Harmony. Then I sat down at my table as I always do, some five or ten minutes before it [the meditation] began. And instantly, with a power — a power capable of crushing an elephant — this Vibration of Harmony came down like that, in such a mass . . . that the body lost the sense of its own existence altogether: it became That, it was conscious of nothing but That. And the first quarter of an hour literally flashed by in a second. Then, there were three people in the room; one of the three, or maybe all three, felt ill-at-ease (nothing to

be surprised at!), and that woke me up: I saw the light (I burn a candle on my table) and I saw the time, but it wasn't me — something saw. Then there was a sort of pacifying action on the place, and then — gone again. And one second later, the call of the end!

It's the first time that has happened to my body. It always used to remain conscious. Sri Aurobindo, too, told me the same thing, that he never, ever had samadhi in his body. Neither did I: I always, always used to remain conscious. While that . . . only Force remained, there was nothing left but Force at work: there was a concentration here, a concentration on the whole country, and a concentration on the whole earth. And it all was conscious, like that (*vast gesture above the head*), at work. But something massive, as powerful as an elephant — enough to crush you.

I didn't say anything to anybody, I wanted to know (because when I speak, people try to find something, while I wanted to know the spontaneous reaction). The first thing I received was a letter from G saying that he was at the Samadhi, and just before it started, a force came down on him so strongly that he fell (he was sitting, he fell forward). So he asked me what it was. I haven't replied yet. Then there have been other people, other things.

That was unique for me, because it's the first time it has happened to me. But it has had a result: all that still clings within to that old habit of disorder and disharmony — which is the cause of, oh, everything, all mischief, all illnesses, everything — that has been . . . Yesterday afternoon, I saw there was something that needed to be done away with, and it changed into a head cold. It's nothing.

It's nothing, and it has given me an opportunity to see that all the cells everywhere, even those that according to the old habit should be in discomfort because of the cold, are all in a blissful aspiration of transformation. And they truly and spontaneously feel that what's happening to them is to make things move a little faster. So they are very happy.

But things should move still faster; that is, all these things such as colds and so on should pass very quickly — come in and go out.

There are still lots of bad habits — that will pass.

And there was the consciousness — the Total Consciousness, in a light . . . a light without any equivalent here, yet it was quite material. If you like, it might be like molten gold — molten and luminous. It was very thick. And it had a power — a weight, you know, like that, it was astonishing. And then, no more body, nothing anymore — nothing anymore, nothing but That. And the vision of That, like this (*gesture widening out above the head*), in its immediate action, its action on the country, and its action on the whole earth. An action that doesn't cause any movement, I don't know how to explain it. A sort of pressure — a pressure in which nothing is displaced.

The pressure went away after the meditation, but the effect has remained, and

when, out of the old habit, I got up afterwards to take something on the table over there, I nearly fell! The body no longer knew how to walk! I had to concentrate, then it came back.

Something still remained (but not as strong as that), something remained when I went to the balcony [in the afternoon of the 24th]. At the balcony I was different from what I usually am. I don't exactly know what it was. But then, the photographs are very different; there is something in the photographs that wasn't there before. There was a special atmosphere.

(*silence*)

I remembered something Sri Aurobindo told me sometime during the last months; he told me, "When the supramental Force" (which he was constantly calling down, of course), "when the supramental Force is there and for as long as it is present, you get a sense of all-powerfulness — an unconditioned all-powerfulness: an *all*-powerfulness." But he said, "*It goes into the background*" when the pressure of the Force is removed.

(Conversation with a disciple, 25 April, 1967)

*

Last time I told you about those two vibrations. . . . There is a constant effort to bring everything under the true Vibration. And the subtlety of the work is very interesting. The whole night is spent like that, too.

I feel something is really being prepared: there is a very strong pressure — but what? I don't know. People ask me, "What's going to happen on 4.5.67?"² I tell them, "Wait and see."

There is a very active influence from Sri Aurobindo, and then this constant work [of the two vibrations]: even during the visits, when people whom I don't know come, it goes on. It's like a sort of sifting.

(Conversation with a disciple, 29 April, 1967)

*

Pavitra has been filing old letters, and . . . I told you, didn't I, that since the 24th there was a *constant* insistence, every minute, on giving full support to the Harmony and not allowing disorder, disharmony and confusion to manifest — from the physical, vital and mental points of view. Like that, like someone pounding something since

2. May 4, 1967. In a letter of February 2, 1934, Sri Aurobindo declared: "4.5.67 is the year of the complete realisation." It seems he also said that from 1967, governments would obey the supramental influence. The sequence of figures (4.5.67) is what appears to have a special occult significance.

the 24th (I told you the other day about the Force that came; it's been like that since then). And yesterday or the day before, Pavitra, while sorting out those letters, came across something I had written to someone in English:

“Yes, the goodwill hidden in all things reveals itself everywhere to that one who carries goodwill in his consciousness.

“This is a constructive way of feeling leading straight to the future.”

I found this very interesting (it was written years ago, at least more than a year ago, and Pavitra told me he hadn't even found it in a letter: it was loose among the files). And it was as if to tell me, “See, you were already speaking like this before.” Because the “goodwill” is the Harmony (on the psychological level, of course), it's the will for everything to go well psychologically. I found this rather interesting.

And it's good it came back; it's a form quite within everyone's grasp, which they can understand — you aren't asked extraordinary things: you are asked goodwill. When I found this again, I smiled and found it amusing, I said, “Well, I could have written the same thing about cheerfulness! I could have said, ‘Be cheerful and you will see cheerfulness everywhere.’” — One can say many things (*Mother rotates her hand slowly as if to present various facets*), it always makes me think of a kaleidoscope with colour arrangements to express something else which, as soon as it is expressed . . . shrinks, becomes diminished, generalised and finally within everyone's grasp. But there is one thing: like a *formidable* conflict taking place over the earth at this moment, with this wonderful divine Grace always helping, always striving for the better and exerting a pressure: “Come now, be cheerful, come now, have goodwill, come now, have, yes, have that inner Harmony of contentment, hope, faith. Do not accept the vibrations of . . . decomposition — the vibrations that diminish, degrade and lead towards destruction.”

It's everywhere, everywhere like that (*gesture of pressure on the earth*).

So, naturally, the “wise men” Sri Aurobindo speaks of ask, “What does 4.5.67 mean? What's going to happen on 4.5.67? Why . . .” It comes from every side into the atmosphere. So yesterday I said to someone, someone with great faith and some authority over a large number of people (they ask him all these stupid questions; he didn't tell me but said it mentally, so that I received it mentally), when I saw him in the afternoon I said to him, “So, you have been asked all these questions; well, here is what you are going to answer them very gravely (!):

- 4 means Manifestation
- 5 means Power
- 6 means New Creation
- 7 means Realisation.”

Now, let them do whatever they like with that!

It's to keep them quiet.³

And indeed, he told me this morning (I replied, "You need not tell me, I know!"), he said to me, "Oh, as for me, I'd rather wait and see." I answered, "That's the true attitude, it's better to wait and see."

In any case . . . I don't know — I don't know anything and don't want to know anything, I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised if nothing happened, but . . . Because, for me, it has *already* happened. It came on the 24th, I told you, I had had all kinds of experiences (you too told me!), but never this one: the material personality, the body — absolutely dissolved. There only existed . . . the Supreme Consciousness. And that, I must say, has remained. It has remained in the sense that . . . I can no longer eat, I can almost no longer rest, I see really hundreds of people and things and papers and . . . This poor body might say, "Phew!" — but not at all. And if the tension in others happens to cause a slight loss of balance, the body spontaneously says like this: "Oh, but You are here" — and it's all over. It's all over right away. So this is something.

We will see.

(*silence*)

With this 4.5.67, there are quite amusing things. Some people have the attitude of "righter of wrongs" (there are people like that) and take their own example of a wrong they have suffered which must be righted; and they say, "This will be the Mother's symbol." Another would like cameras to be sensitive enough to photograph the "presence" invisible to the human eye. That also comes, they are things that come in the atmosphere [*of Mother*]. Another (several others, it seems) thinks that on that day the Indian new year will begin. Others . . . everyone thus imagines something, and it comes into the atmosphere. It's amusing.

And I always think of that passage in *Savitri* in which he says, "God shall grow up . . ." Grow up in Matter, of course (and you see the Divinity grow up in Matter, and Matter being made more and more capable of manifesting the Divinity), and he says, ". . . while the wise men talk and sleep."⁴ It's exactly that. And it's charming.

(*silence*)

3. Among the questions put to Mother, let us note these: "In 1967 the Supermind will enter the phase of realising power. What does realising power exactly mean?" (Mother:) "Acting decisively on the mind of men and the course of events." "Does this date – 4.5.67 – mark the beginning of what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have called the new race – the race of superman?" (Mother:) "Since a few months the children born, amongst our people mostly, are of a very special kind."

4. *Savitri*, I.IV.55.

Sri Aurobindo once told me that one of the first results would be that governments would come under the supramental influence (not that WE would govern! But that governments would be influenced). And these last few days I have seen three ministers and five members of parliament! And I have received an offering from the prime minister [*Indira Gandhi*]. So it's going well! It's quite amusing. . . . Some come from Delhi just for a day, only to see me and go back. So one hopes — one hopes — that they will grow a bit wiser (!)

(Conversation with a disciple, 3 May, 1967)

*

The other incident is about the special descent or manifestation that took place on the 4th of May, 1967, briefly represented as 4-5-67. Pradyot was to leave for Calcutta and he wanted to know what was the significance of these figures so that he could, if he were asked, tell people about it. When Pradyot went to see the Mother, she said:

“You came to me this morning in a dream, and asked me the meaning of 4-5-

67. You can tell them:

- 4 Manifestation
- 5 Power
- 6 New Creation
- 7 Realisation

This will keep them quiet.

“I am not sure that it didn't happen on 24th April. The meditation on that day was unique in my life. The very cells of the body were totally conscious. After the meditation, I should have sat down for a few minutes but I got up to reach the table and I nearly fell. Something was happening from the New Year's day, very, very concrete. 24th April might have been a preparation for 4th May.”

(Nirodbaran, *Memorable Contacts with The Mother*, 2nd Ed., 1991, pp. 122-23)

*

But this message of Sri Aurobindo about the Grace has almost been a revelation to me.⁵ I thought, “What! There are people who refuse the Grace. . . .” And since then, several people have told me so. It was something almost unthinkable for me.

But the impression is that things are moving fast and a very radical change is taking place — in people too.

(Conversation with a disciple, 26 April, 1969)

5. Message given for the April 24 darshan: “The best possible way is to allow the Divine Grace to work in you, never to oppose it, never to be ungrateful and turn against it - but to follow it always to the goal of Light and Peace and unity and Ananda.”

SOME MESSAGES AND ANSWERS

499 – God is our wise and perfect Friend; because He knows when to smite as well as when to fondle, when to slay us no less than when to save and to succour.

There is only one true wisdom, the wisdom of the Supreme Lord. Thus, to surrender all personal will and to want only what the Divine wants, is the only way to be truly wise.

24 April 1970

(M10: 350)

*

Is there any harm in my reading novels in French?

Reading novels is never beneficial.

24 April 1937

(M12: 143)

*

[About 24 April 1920]

The anniversary of my return to Pondicherry, which was the tangible sign of the sure Victory over the adverse forces.

24 April 1937

(M13: 62)

*

I am puzzled. My heart is pulled towards you and I want to come back. But certain things are keeping me here and I feel that they will keep drawing me even if I return at present. What should I do? But please know that whether I come just now or not I cannot ever break away from you. I pray to you not to abandon me.

My dear child, blessings of the day. . . . Just received your letter of 21st; it came to me directly (without the written words) three days ago, probably when you were writing it, and my silent answer was categorical: remain there until the necessity of being here will become so imperative that all else will completely lose all value for you. My answer now is exactly the same. I want only to assure you that we are not

abandoning you and that you will always have our help and protection.

24 April 1939

(M13: 130-31)

*

A friend wishes to collect money for you. He says he will be very much helped if you write for him a statement about approaching people for monetary help.

I am not in the habit of writing for money from anybody. If people do not feel that it is for them a great opportunity and Grace to be able to give their money for the Divine cause, *tant pis pour eux!*¹ Money is needed for the work — money is bound to come; as for *who* will have the privilege of giving it, that remains to be seen.

24 April 1938

(M13: 149)

*

India shall take her true place in the world only when she will become integrally the messenger of the Divine Life.

24 April 1972

(M13: 372)

*

[*Message for the “Home of Progress”, an Ashram hostel*]

If in man the seed of aspiration is watered with the true spirituality then he will grow into Divinity.

24 April 1966

(M14: 75)

*

Addressed to People of Ill Will

The evil you have wilfully done always comes back to you under one form or another.

24 April 1969

(M14: 214)

*

1. So much the worse for them!

For the Supreme Lord, sin does not exist — all defect can be effaced by sincere aspiration and by transformation.

What you feel is the aspiration of your soul that wants to discover the Divine and live Him.

Persevere, be more and more sincere and you will succeed.

24 April 1964

(M14: 234)

*

About Peace

It is only by the growth and establishment of the consciousness of human unity, that a true and lasting peace can be achieved upon earth. All means leading towards this goal are welcome, although the external ones have a very limited effect; however, the most important, urgent and indispensable of all, is a transformation of the human consciousness itself, an enlightenment of and conversion in its working.

Meanwhile some exterior steps may be taken usefully, and the acceptance of the principle of double nationality is one of them. The main objection to it has always been the awkward position in which those who have adopted a double nationality would be in case the two countries were at war.

But all those who sincerely want peace must understand that to think of war, to speak of war, to foresee war is to open the door to it.

On the contrary, the larger the number of people who have a vital interest in the abolition of war, the more effective the chances towards a stable peace, until the advent of a new consciousness in man makes of war an impossibility.

24 April 1955

(M15: 59)

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Without care for time, without fear for space, surging out purified from the flames of the ordeal, we shall fly without stop towards the realisation of our goal, the supramental victory.

24 April 1956

(M15: 97)

*

The disciples judge the forms by the Master.

Outsiders judge the Master by the forms.

24 April 1950

(M15: 183)

*

In the eternity of becoming each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect future realisation.

24 April 1957

(M15: 185)

*

There are two complementary aspects of the liberating action of the Divine Grace upon earth among men. These two aspects are equally indispensable, but are not equally appreciated.

The sovereign immutable peace that liberates from anxiety, tension and suffering.

The dynamic all-powerful progress that liberates from fetters, bondages and inertia.

The peace is universally appreciated and recognised as divine, but the progress is welcomed only by those whose aspiration is intense and courageous.

24 April 1958

(M15: 185)

*

Needless to say that those who aspire to Truth must abstain from telling lies.

24 April 1971

(M15: 187)

*

Beyond man's consciousness
 Beyond speech
 O Thou, Supreme Consciousness
 Unique Reality
 Divine Truth

24 April 1973

(M15: 188)

*

A small booklet is being published in Geneva, containing a talk I gave in 1912, I think. It is a bit out-of-date, but I did not want to dampen their enthusiasm. I had entitled it "The Central Thought", but they found this a little too philosophical, so it has been changed to "The Supreme Discovery". Rather pompous for my taste, but . . .

24 April 1937

(M16: 9)

*

Because others are mean is no reason to be mean yourself.

24 April 1933

(M16: 29)

*

My last few nights have been very restless. When I wake up in the morning I feel tired! How much longer will this go on?

Getting upset and impatient certainly will not help this bad period to end any sooner. On the other hand, if you can maintain a little inner calm, you will get out of your difficulties more quickly. It is only in a state of calm that one can enter into contact with one's psychic consciousness.

Will my life always be as it is now?

I hope not! But if you could be a little more peaceful within, your troubles would end more quickly.

24 April 1935

(M17: 92)

In human life the cause of all difficulties, all discords, all moral sufferings, is the presence in everyone of the ego with its desires, its likes and dislikes. Even in a disinterested work which consists in helping others, until one has learned to overcome the ego and its demands, until one can force it to keep calm and quiet in one corner, the ego reacts to everything that displeases it, starts an inner storm that rises to the surface and spoils all the work.

The Mother

(On Education, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 12, p. 355)

SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN — “LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA”

(Continued from the issue of March 2020)

1. KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

(Part 7)

Through his personal interactions with Sri Aurobindo, Nirodbaran has shown in his article¹ how Sri Aurobindo met all the requirements of Newman’s definition of a gentleman. However, by delving into Sri Aurobindo’s actions in the political field, we determine how he has gone beyond those traits, embodying other virtues like courage, selflessness, strength of character and resoluteness.

Sri Aurobindo’s deep devotion to India and concern for his people impelled him to sacrifice an easy, respectable, secure, well-paid academic career in a prestigious princely state and instead enter into a life of grave danger as a political and revolutionary leader. That he abandoned a comfortable life and directed his energies to “protect his weak and suffering countrymen against the oppressor”² reflects his compassionate nature. Nor did he want his compatriots to be “debased souls”, with “body and soul helplessly at the mercy of alien masters.”³

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo’s solicitude for his people was apparent when he spoke about his arrest in the Alipore Bomb Case:

When I was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bazar hajat I was shaken in faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of His intention. Therefore I faltered for a moment and cried out in my heart to Him, “What is this that has happened to me? I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done, I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge?”⁴

Sri Aurobindo’s sympathy for his fellow-citizens brings to mind a couple of his aphorisms:

1. Nirodbaran, ‘Sri Aurobindo – Perfect Gentleman’, *Mother India*, August 1970.

2. CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 238.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 5.

After all when thou countest up thy long service to God, thou wilt find thy supreme work was the flawed & little good thou didst in love for humanity.⁵

This is a miracle that men can love God, yet fail to love humanity. With whom are they in love then?⁶

As to his time in the Baroda Service, Sri Aurobindo noted:

These were years of self-culture, of literary activity . . . and of preparation for his future work.⁷

The future work referred to was largely political. Over the next few chapters we will be covering some of Sri Aurobindo's political activity during the Baroda years and its continuation thereafter. We are including some of his political action under the section of 'Kindness and Compassion' because after his initial quiet years of "self-culture", and "literary activity" at Baroda, his love got more universalised since he entered the political field with the sole purpose of liberating his nation and uplifting his countrymen.

Besides being honest, considerate and charitable, a noble person is someone with a strong character and high morals and ideals. We shall discover that despite the constant vicissitudes and duplicity of political life, Sri Aurobindo resolutely remained the consummate idealist.

In the last chapter we had touched upon Sri Aurobindo's strength of character, whilst in this one we shall focus on Sri Aurobindo, the idealist. The basis for both these values lies in the virtues of heroism and courage.

Sri Aurobindo's self-effacing idealism left a life-long impression on many of his Baroda students like K. M. Munshi, P. B. Chandwani, Shankar Balwant Dismishe, R. S. Dalal, G. H. Gokhale, M. H. Kantawala, Rajaram Patkar and others. Indeed, Dinendra Kumar Roy remarked that the Baroda students treated Sri Aurobindo like God.⁸

At the time of his departure from Baroda, Sri Aurobindo had advised Rajaram Patkar to never compromise with his conscience. It was an unforgettable lesson, and in 1956, fifty years since their last meeting, Patkar distinctly recalled Sri Aurobindo's words:

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 12, p. 495.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 5.

8. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, p. 25 (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

. . . you are a good boy; continue to be good throughout your life. . . . You will come out successful and triumphant only if you remain honest and good and obey the dictates of your conscience. If you observe this dictum your path will be smooth and you will be happy.⁹

The Maharaja of Baroda, too, respected Sri Aurobindo, both for his superlative talents and for being a man of impeccable character. Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, the Maharaja's great grandson and the Maharaja of Baroda from 1951 to 1988, records the respect the Maharaja had for Sri Aurobindo:

The position was that, even if the British had already branded Aurobindo as a revolutionary, Sayaji had no intention of asking him to leave his service. . . .

When while still in his travels, Sayaji heard that Aurobindo had decided to leave Baroda for good, his reaction was characteristic. Anyone else might have been thankful that he was being rid of a man whose presence had been a major cause of his difficulties with the government. Instead, he dashed off a letter to his Dewan asking that efforts should be made to persuade Aurobindo "not to leave Baroda and the college". But Aurobindo had made up his mind. He "joined the staff of the Bengal National College on a salary of Rs 150/- per month, one fifth of his salary at Baroda".¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo himself admitted that he was an outright idealist. In a 1920 letter to a prominent politician he writes:

I am an idealist to the marrow and could only be useful when there is something drastic to be done, a radical or revolutionary line to be taken, (I do not mean revolutionary by violence) a movement with an ideal aim and direct method to be inspired and organised.¹¹

Unlike most of the Congress leaders whom he termed, as "men who live in ideas only, mostly secondhand,"¹² Sri Aurobindo was not merely an intellectual but also had the strength, an inexhaustible energy and dynamism to implement his ideals. As Henry Nevinston said, he was a dreamer who acted his dreams. In the *Karmayogin*, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

9. Reminiscences of Rajaram N. Patkar dated 30 September 1956; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

10. Cited in Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, March 2012, p. 203 (from *Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, Sayajirao of Baroda: The Prince and the Man*).

11. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 258.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 19.

It is not intellectual recognition of duty that compels sustained self-sacrifice in masses of men; it is hope, it is the lofty ardour of a great cause, it is the enthusiasm of a noble and courageous effort.¹³

Even the internationally renowned weekly, London's *Times Literary Supplement*, in an article on 1st July 1944, proclaimed not only Sri Aurobindo's greatness but also called him a "great idealist." We quote a short extract:

Indeed, Aurobindo is accepted by contemporary India as not even Tagore was accepted. There are no criticisms, only praise. . . . There is no doubt that he is a true patriot who would like to see his country free, happy and great; but he is no foe of Britain. . . .

That he is a great idealist goes without saying; but he is not an idealist in the Shankaran or Berkeleyian manner. He has achieved a reconciliation between matter and spirit. They are, in his opinion, one and indivisible. . . .¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo's attendant and close disciple, Nirodbaran has said: ". . . for my part I can say that in every fibre of his being, Sri Aurobindo was a perfect gentleman."¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo, however, has transcended the realms of being a perfect gentleman, for he was an idealist in every fibre and cell of his being.

Sri Aurobindo's idealism publicly took form in his political life through self-sacrifice, love for his country and his people coupled with an unceasing outpouring of noble and courageous effort.

Let us explore the depth and range of Sri Aurobindo's idealism, which manifested with such a striking effect during his political career. All his political writings during this period illustrate that he was an idealist to the core, blended with a steely determination and daring.

Even as a mere 21-year-old, soon after his return to India in February 1893, Sri Aurobindo was the purest of idealists. Alluding to this period, he has noted:

. . . the public activity of Sri Aurobindo began with the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash*. These articles . . . vehemently denounced the then congress policy of pray, petition and protest and called for a dynamic leadership based upon self-help and fearlessness.¹⁶

13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 387.

14. Website: <http://savitri.in/blogs/light-of-supreme/sri-aurobindo-a-philosopher-of-modern-india-times-literary-supplement-1-july-1994>, accessed on 30th January 2020; see 'Tributes to Sri Aurobindo from Celebrities', *Mother India*, August 1997, p. 614.

15. Nirodbaran, 'Sri Aurobindo – Perfect Gentleman', *Mother India*, August 1970, p. 407.

16. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 51.

The first article in this series, ‘New Lamps for Old’, started with a bang. He daringly called the four-time Prime Minister of Britain, the legendary William Gladstone, “a statesman who is not only quite unprincipled and in no way to be relied upon, but whose intervention in an Indian debate has always been of the worst omen to our cause.”¹⁷ If that was not enough, he branded General Booth, head of the British army, as “a vulgar imposter, a convicted charlatan, who has enriched himself by trading on the sentimental emotions of the English middle-class.”¹⁸ And for good measure the Empress, Queen Victoria, was also not spared: “. . . the Queen-Empress, — an old lady so called by way of courtesy, but about whom few Indians can really know or care anything”.¹⁹

In his second article in the same series, Sri Aurobindo strives to pull the nation out from its inertia:

Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism.²⁰

Sri Aurobindo concludes the article by decrying the impotence of the Congress, and questioning their leadership: “If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch?”²¹

In the third article of the series Sri Aurobindo charged “the Congress with inadequacy” daringly tearing away the mask of the Congress:

I say, of the Congress, then, this, — that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts, not the right sort of men to be leaders . . .²²

These articles were Sri Aurobindo’s first salvo in Indian politics where he was “trying to awaken the nation to the ideas of the future.”²³ The first two articles in the series were so fiery and provocative that he later commented that they

. . . made a sensation and frightened Ranade and other Congress leaders. Ranade warned the proprietor of the paper that, if this went on, he would surely be

17. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 14.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

23. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 67.

prosecuted for sedition. Accordingly the original plan of the series had to be dropped at the proprietor's instance.²⁴

In addition to the Congress Moderate leaders, a young prodigiously gifted Sri Aurobindo was noticed by others. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was so impressed by Sri Aurobindo's articles in the *Indu Prakash* that at the 1902 Congress Session at Ahmedabad he "took him out of the pandal and talked to him for an hour in the grounds expressing his contempt for the Reformist movement and explaining his own line of action in Maharashtra."²⁵ And such was the impact of the *Indu Prakash* articles on Sister Nivedita that her biographer, Lizelle Reymond, wrote:

. . . To her, he was the leader of the future, whose fiery articles in the *Indu Prakash* . . . had sounded the opening guns in the coming struggle . . .²⁶

Historian and Nationalist, Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee, who worked under Sri Aurobindo at the Bengal National College, writes:

Indeed, in his articles in the *Indu Prakash* Sri Aurobindo stands out as the first exponent of the new revolutionary thought and idealism which inspired national effort, struggle and suffering through half a century and achieved for India her full political freedom in 1947. . . .

This preliminary political thought of Sri Aurobindo as expressed in the *Indu Prakash* received a systematic presentation and propagandism in the columns of the daily *Bande Mataram* and also in its weekly edition, which became the most powerful vehicle for the creation of an all-India public opinion for the fundamental need of the country's total freedom.²⁷

The eminent historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar records:

It was a son of Bengal who first entered an effective protest against the Indian National Congress. Arabinda Ghosh, destined to attain immortal fame, but as yet unknown in political life, planned to write a series of articles under the title 'New Lamps for Old' in the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay, in order to voice the new sentiment.²⁸

24. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

26. Cited in Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1st Ed., pp. 194-95.

27. Prof. Haridas Mukherjee and Prof. Uma Mukherjee, *Sri Aurobindo's Political Thought (1893-1908)*, pp. ix-x.

28. Cited in [R. C. Majumdar: "The Genesis of Extremism" in *Shades in the Bengal Renaissance.*] Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, October 2012, p. 794.

Professors Haridas and Uma Mukherjee lay emphasis on Sri Aurobindo's articles in the *Indu Prakash*:

The writings of Aurobindo Ghose of the period of 1893-94 embodied this spirit of protest against the Congress. . . . In these articles Aurobindo not only laid bare the hollowness and futility of the prevailing Congress policy of prayers and petitions for the redress of national grievances, but also suggested a constructive line of action — the salvation of the country through “purification by blood and fire”.²⁹

Eminent historian Tara Chand remarks that Sri Aurobindo “had condemned the Congress as ‘unnational’ as far back as 1893.”³⁰

Subsequent to the *Indu Prakash* articles, “Sri Aurobindo suspended all public activity of this kind and worked only in secret till 1905”.³¹

“The political action of Sri Aurobindo covered eight years, from 1902 to 1910.”³² The thrust of his political action was the Swadeshi movement, which was entirely idealistic and far ahead of its time, since the country at that time was inert and had no aspiration whatsoever for independence. When Sri Aurobindo entered politics he noted that the ideal of independence was regarded

. . . by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British Empire was too powerful and India too weak, effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour.³³

Sri Aurobindo dreamed of a free India and thus co-founded the Swadeshi movement. Sri Aurobindo has written:

The “Swadeshi” movement prepared from 1902–5 and started definitely by Sri Aurobindo, Tilak, Lajpatrai and others in 1905. A movement for Indian independence, by non-cooperation and passive resistance and the organisation . . . of arbitration, national education, economic independence . . . boycott of British goods, British law-courts, and all Government institutions, offices, honours etc. . . .³⁴

29. Prof. Haridas Mukherjee and Prof. Uma Mukherjee, *The Growth of Nationalism in India*, pp. 121-22.

30. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 3, 1972, p. 165.

31. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 51.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Award-winning historian Leonard A. Gordon, in his *Brothers Against the Raj — a Biography of Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose*, writes:

Tilak became a national leader of the minority Extremist group within the Congress and one of his supporters was young Aurobindo Ghose who became one of the ablest Swadeshi publicists, a secret plotter of revolutionary violence, and the political hero of Subhas Bose's teenage years.³⁵

In the Swadeshi movement, Swaraj was the *sine qua non* of the Nationalists fourfold programme of "Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education".

In a speech Sri Aurobindo explained the significance of Swaraj and its linkage with Swadeshi and Boycott:

I have told you that Swadeshi and boycott are the road, the way which leads to the goal. Swadeshi and boycott are the way to the goal of Swaraj. . . . The meaning of Swaraj, in our ancient literature, is the spiritual condition of the soul which attains to Mukti. When the soul is independent of everything but itself, when it exists in the joy of its light and greatness, when it is Mukta, that is Swaraj. . . . All dependence upon others is misery; all dependence upon ourselves is bliss. This is the fundamental truth. To get rid of Maya, bondage, is the ideal of our ancient religion. It is the sole object of human existence, human life.³⁶

For Sri Aurobindo, Swaraj was an indispensable condition to be met. He has written:

Sri Aurobindo's first preoccupation was to declare openly for complete and absolute independence as the aim of political action in India and to insist on this persistently in the pages of the journal; he was the first politician in India who had the courage to do this in public and he was immediately successful.³⁷

Sri Aurobindo's decision to enter politics could be interpreted as an act of extraordinary selfless compassion. He opined in the *Bande Mataram* that without Swaraj the soul of man gets adversely affected:

Swaraj is the direct revelation of God to this people, — not mere political freedom but a freedom vast and entire, freedom of the individual, freedom of

35. Leonard A. Gordon, p. 38.

36. CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 840-41.

37. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36 pp. 55-56.

the community, freedom of the nation; spiritual freedom, social freedom, political freedom. Spiritual freedom the ancient Rishis had already declared to us; social freedom was part of the message of Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak and Kabir and the saints of Maharashtra; political freedom is the last word of the triune gospel. Without political freedom the soul of man is crippled. Only a few mighty spirits can rise above their surroundings, but the ordinary man is a slave of his surroundings and if those be mean, servile and degraded, he himself will be mean, servile and degraded.³⁸

Historians Prof. Haridas Mukherjee and Prof. Uma Mukherjee, historians who made extensive research on the Indian independence movement from 1905 to 1910, write:

Bengal was the main scene of operation of a mighty revolution more than fifty years ago. The hero of that revolution was Sri Aurobindo with his group of revolutionary youths whom he had been training up in the extreme forms of self-sacrifice in the service of the country and in achieving for it Purna Swaraj or complete freedom.³⁹

Noted historian Tara Chand writes:

Independence was Aurobindo's creed — a matter of belief and conscience, and therefore not capable of compromise. Aurobindo was so firm in his conviction that he even chose to break with the Congress rather than lower his ideal.⁴⁰

Jitendralal Bandopadhyay — who obtained first position in Master's degree, English Literature from Presidency College — in a long article wrote that Sri Aurobindo

. . . alone among Indian politicians displayed no nervous hesitation to claim freedom in the widest sense of the word, as the goal of all national progress.⁴¹

Professors Haridas and Uma Mukherjee wrote of Sri Aurobindo:

38. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 874-75.

39. Cited in Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1st Ed., pp. 221-22.

40. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 3, 1972, p. 165.

41. Cited in Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of a Mahayogi', *Mother India*, June 2016, p. 450. (Sourced from Sri Aurobindo Archives)

At first he stayed behind the scenes. Then when appeared [on the stage] he at once demanded swaraj. No middle path, no compromise — full independence. . . . Sri Aurobindo was in the strictest sense of the term, a true prophet, path-finder and pioneer of India's Freedom Movement. Of all the statesman modern India has produced, he had the clearest vision of Indian swaraj in its fullness as well as of the practical means to attain it by strenuous and sustained struggle.⁴²

Historian Leonard A. Gordon reiterates that Sri Aurobindo's first condition was independence:

Aurobindo's most coherent political statement was a series of articles entitled 'The Doctrine of Passive Resistance'. He argued that the immediate need was for political independence and that this had to precede the reconstruction of battered and exploited India.⁴³

Even a top British bureaucrat, F. C. Daly, Deputy Inspector General, Special Branch, wrote:

It was at Baroda, we believe, that he first began to adopt the idea of national unity and national freedom, and to form visionary schemes for the liberation of India from the foreign yoke.⁴⁴

And Judge Beachcroft noticed Sri Aurobindo's burning idealism and stated in his judgment of the Alipore Bomb Case: "His ideal is independence."⁴⁵

When Sri Aurobindo entered politics there was a "passive tamasic spirit of inertia" which he constantly tried to overcome. He publicly stated:

We are often ridiculed that a desire for Swarajya is nothing but a dream, a castle in the air, because our community has become weak, sapless, deranged and rickety. . . . Some people advise that because the achievement of Swarajya is beyond human strength, we must wait for some centuries and work before we are able to speak of Swarajya; but no nation ever came into prominence by helping a foreign government. . . . If we wait for centuries the weakness of our nation will increase.⁴⁶

42. Cited in Sujata Nahar, *Mother's Chronicles*, Book V, p. 380.

43. Leonard A. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj – a Biography of Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose*, pp. 38-40.

44. F. C. Daly, 'Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal 1905-1911' (See *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, Compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 7).

45. Cited in Sujata Nahar, *Mother's Chronicles*, Book V, p. 457.

46. CWSA, Vol. 7, p. 858.

Sri Aurobindo observed that “servitude is killing the nation by inches,”⁴⁷ and that a foreign domination “will lead to fatal decay and disorganisation.”⁴⁸ He revealed how the British were suppressing the spirit of the Indians:

British rule had no need for scholars, it wanted clerks; British policy welcomed the pedant but feared, even when it honoured, the thinker, for the strong mind might pierce through shows to the truth and the deep thought teach the people to embrace great ideals and live and die for them . . .⁴⁹

Through the columns of the *Bande Mataram* Sri Aurobindo tried to galvanise his countrymen:

What India needs especially at this moment is the aggressive virtues, the spirit of soaring idealism, bold creation, fearless resistance, courageous attack; of the passive tamasic spirit of inertia we have already too much. We need to cultivate another training and temperament, another habit of mind. We would apply to the present situation the vigorous motto of Danton, that what we need, what we should learn above all things is to dare and again to dare and still to dare.⁵⁰

We have quoted just a small selection of extracts from Sri Aurobindo’s extensive political writings in the *Bande Mataram*, to illustrate that he not only had an ideal for independence, but was also developing the consciousness of his people towards this ideal.

On 29th April 1907, Sri Aurobindo explained why developing the political consciousness of his people was important:

Is it credible that a foreign rule would either knowingly foster or allow the growth of that universal political consciousness in the subject nation which self-government implies? It is obvious that foreign rule can only endure so long as political consciousness can be either stifled by violence or hypnotised into inactivity. The moment the nation becomes politically self-conscious, the doom of the alien predominance is sealed.⁵¹

About developing the consciousness of a politically unconscious India, Sri Aurobindo noted:

47. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 236.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

49. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 1099.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 487-88.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 365.

Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal.⁵²

On 7th August 1907, the first anniversary of the *Bande Mataram*, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

The amount of support it has got in the first year of its existence surpasses all previous records in Indian journalism. The political ideal of the people has changed, the desire for freedom is a force to be reckoned with and if anybody has any doubt on the point, success of the *Bande Mataram* should set it at rest.⁵³

Veteran parliamentarian, economist and central minister, Arun Chandra Guha reveals that Sri Aurobindo was the driving force behind the revolutionary journals, which proclaimed the ideal of *Swaraj*:

To implement his objective of having a public propaganda “intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence” four papers were started: *Bande Mataram*, *Sandhya*, *Yugantar* and *Navashakti* which were persistently preaching the cult of Indian independence and of armed revolution. These papers had an informal common editorial board with Sri Aurobindo as its head. These papers were preaching the same gospel of national independence . . . These papers had a definitive contribution to the rousing of the conscience of the dormant people. The broad policy of these four papers was provided by Aurobindo — “Our ideal is that of *Swaraj* or absolute autonomy free from foreign control. We claim the right of every nation to live its own life, by its own energies and according to its own culture and ideals.”⁵⁴

According to Sri Aurobindo, a nationalist should have “the ideals of the ancient Aryan gentleman,” of “heroic self-sacrifice”:

Nationalism is or ought to be not merely a political creed but a religious aspiration and a moral attitude. Its business is to build up Indian character by educating it to heroic self-sacrifice and magnificent ambitions, to restore the

52. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 52.

53. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 629.

54. Cited in Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, December 2013, p. 1027 (Arun Kumar Guha, *Sri Aurobindo and Yugantar*).

tone of nobility which it has lost and bring back the ideals of the ancient Aryan gentleman. The qualities of courage, frankness, love and justice are the stuff of which a Nationalist should be made.⁵⁵

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) saw the virtues of an Aryan gentleman in Sri Aurobindo. In his autobiography, covering the period 1897-1920, he writes:

In my undergraduate days (1913-15) Arabinda Ghose was easily the most popular leader in Bengal, despite his voluntary exile and absence since 1910. His was a name to conjure with. He had sacrificed a lucrative career in order to devote himself to politics. On the Congress platform he had stood up as a champion of left-wing thought and fearless advocate of independence at a time when most of the leaders, with their tongues in their cheeks, would talk only of colonial self-government. He had undergone incarceration with perfect equanimity. His close association with Lokamanya B. G. Tilak had given him an all-India popularity. . . . Last but not least, a mixture of spirituality and politics had given him a halo of mysticism. . . . When I came to Calcutta in 1913, Arabindo was already a legendary figure. Rarely have I seen people talk of a leader with such rapturous enthusiasm and many were the anecdotes of this great man . . .

As a College Student it was not the mysticism surrounding Arabindo's name which attracted me, but his writings and also his letters. Arabindo was then editing a monthly journal called *Arya* in which he expounded his philosophy. He used also to write to certain select people in Bengal. Such letters would pass rapidly from hand to hand, especially in circles interested in spirituality-cum-politics. In our circle usually somebody would read the letter aloud and the rest of us would enthuse over it. In one such letter Arabindo wrote, "We must be dynamos of the divine electricity so that when each of us stands up, thousands around may be full of the light — full of bliss and Ananda." We felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary to effective national service.

But what made a lasting appeal to me was not such utterance. I was impressed by his deeper philosophy. Shankara's doctrine was like a thorn in my flesh. I could not accommodate my life to it . . . Arabindo came as an additional help. He worked out a reconciliation between Spirit and Matter . . . a synthesis of Yoga, as he called it. . . . It was so refreshing, so inspiring, to read Arabindo's writings as a contrast to the denunciation of knowledge and action by the latter-day Bengal Vaishnavas.⁵⁶

55. CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 975-76.

56. Cited in Nilima Das, 'Sri Aurobindo – The Soul of India', *Mother India*, May 1996, pp. 397-99.

Such was the impact of Sri Aurobindo's self-sacrifice on Subhas Bose that after passing his I.C.S., he wrote to his elder brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, in February 1921, informing him of his decision not to join the service:

A life of sacrifice to start with, plain living and high thinking, whole-hearted devotion to the country's cause — all these are highly enchanting to my imagination and inclination. Further, the very principle of serving under an alien bureaucracy is intensely repugnant to me. The path of Aurobindo Ghosh is to me more noble, more inspiring, more lofty, more unselfish, though more thorny than the path of Ramesh Dutt.⁵⁷

In another letter, a week later, to his brother Sarat, he writes:

The question of serving an alien bureaucracy is one to which I cannot reconcile myself. Besides the first step to equipping oneself for public service is to sacrifice all worldly interests — to burn one's boats as it were — and devote oneself whole-heartedly to the national cause. . . . The illustrious example of Aurobindo Ghosh looms large before my vision. I feel that I am ready to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me.⁵⁸

We shall now briefly touch upon the Swadeshi movement which was started by Sri Aurobindo, Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and others.⁵⁹ Sri Aurobindo has said that "Swadeshi and boycott are the way to the goal of Swaraj."⁶⁰ Besides, the Swadeshi movement wanted to alleviate India's poverty and suffering. Sri Aurobindo notes:

The Swadeshi movement was idealist on one side (no great movement can go without an ideal), but it was perfectly practical in its aims and methods. We were quite aware of the poverty of India and its fallen condition, but we did not try to cure the poverty by Khaddar and Hindi prachar. We advocated the creation of an industrial India . . .⁶¹

The significance of the Swadeshi movement was brought out when Sri Aurobindo was asked if the non-cooperation movement gave some life to the country? He reportedly said:

57. *Life and Times of Subhas Chandra Bose – as told in his own words*, Compiled and edited by M. Gopal, Vikas Publishing House, p. 86.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

59. See *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 14.

60. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 840.

61. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 19.

Do you call that life? It was based on falsehood — how could you expect it to create anything? It was sought to establish Swaraj by spinning — could anything come from such a false ideal? Some life was given to the country during the Swadeshi days in Bengal. You ought to have seen what this Bengal was before the Swadeshi movement to understand what it has accomplished. At that time we gave forms and ideals which have since degenerated. Mahatma Gandhi took up those forms and distorted them. . . .

The Satyagraha movement is only meant for Gandhi and a few men like him — it ought not to be thrust upon a whole people.⁶²

In 1938, Sri Aurobindo was asked if the then Indian Nationalist movement was following his strategy that was earlier conceived in Baroda. He said:

Surely not! India is now going towards European Socialism which is dangerous for her; while we were trying to evolve the true genius of the race along Indian lines and all working for independence.

Take the Bengal [*Swadeshi*] movement. The whole race was awakened within a short time. People who were such cowards and trembled before the sight of a revolver were in a short period so much changed that that the police officials used to say “That insolent Barisal look.” It was the soul of the race that woke up throwing up very fine personalities. The leaders of the movements were either yogis or disciples of yogis, e.g. Monoranjan Guha Thakurta was a disciple of Bejoy Goswami.

. . . Then there were Brahma Bandhava Upadhyay and others. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda’s influence worked from behind. The movement with the secret society became so formidable that in any other country with a political past it would have led to something like the French Revolution. The sympathy of the whole race was on our side. Even shopkeepers were reading *Yugantar*. I will tell you an instance: when a young man was running away after killing a police officer in Shyambazaar, he forgot to throw away his revolver. It remained in his hand. One shopkeeper cried out: “Hide your revolver, hide your revolver.”⁶³

In 1939 a disciple remarked to Sri Aurobindo that leaders in Bengal were dishonest. That the earlier era of the Swadeshi leaders were idealists became evident when Sri Aurobindo replied:

62. *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1978, pp. 28-29.

63. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, pp. 560-61.

What do you mean by sincerity? Ready to suffer for the cause, and to accept no bribe, is it not? But even during our Swadeshi movement, though the leaders were egoistic and quarrelsome, they were honest and sincere. Our fight was over principles, reform or revolution, or as someone put it, colonial self-government or Independence. We never fought on personal grounds as you now find between Bose and Sengupta or Khare and Shukla.⁶⁴

The distinguished historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar notes that Sri Aurobindo

. . . came to Bengal as the high priest of new nationalism shortly after the inauguration of the *Swadeshi* movement . . . threw himself heart and soul into turning the Boycott and *Swadeshi* into a mighty national movement. . . . This he chiefly did through his writings in the *Bande Mataram* which . . . gave a new meaning and new force to the *Swadeshi* movement.⁶⁵

During the movement Sri Aurobindo penned an enormous mass of political writings, he remarked:

Bande Mataram is designed to be the organ of the most advanced school of nationalism in India. It will endeavour to propagate the gospels of self-help and self-respect. It will oppose the habit of mendicant petitioning and inert dependence on the Government. . . . Its ideal will be Swadeshi in all things, — Swadeshi in politics, Swadeshi in commerce and industry, Swadeshi in education.⁶⁶

The importance of the *Swadeshi* movement has been brought out by Dr. R. C. Majumdar:

The *Swadeshi* movement that commenced in 1905 as a protest against the Partition of Bengal, was at first a purely local movement directed against a specific administrative measure concerning only the province of Bengal. But within an incredibly short time it led to, and merged itself in, a national struggle of All-India character against the British, which never ceased till India won her independence. This aspect of the *Swadeshi* movement is not always clearly recognised.⁶⁷

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 685-86.

65. R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, 1962, pp. 141-42.

66. *CWSA*, Vol. 7, p. 1132.

67. R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, 1962, p. xiii.

This chapter has expounded on Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy on Swaraj and Swadeshi, and for good reason. For Sri Aurobindo has written in the *Bande Mataram*:

If political freedom opens to him a wider horizon, he forgets the lesser ambitions. Moreover a slave can never be noble and broad-minded. He cannot forget himself in the service of his fellows for he is already a slave and service is the badge of his degradation, not a willing self-devotion. When man is thus degraded, it is idle to think that society can be free.

So too spiritual freedom can never be the lot of many in a land of slaves. A few may follow the path of the Yogin and rise above their surroundings, but the mass of men cannot ever take the first step towards spiritual salvation. We do not believe that the path of salvation lies in selfishness. If the mass of men around us is miserable, fallen, degraded, how can the seeker after God be indifferent to the condition of his brothers? Compassion to all creatures is the condition of sainthood, and the perfect Yogin is he who is *sarvabhutahite ratah*, whose mind is full of the will to do good to all creatures. When a man shuts his heart to the cries of sufferings around him, when he is content that his fellow-men should be sorrowful, oppressed, sacrificed to the greed of others, he is making his own way to salvation full of difficulties and stumbling-blocks. He is forgetting that God is not only in himself but in all these millions. And for those who have not the strength, spiritual freedom in political servitude is a sheer impossibility. . . . By our political freedom we shall once more recover our spiritual freedom. Once more in the land of the saints and sages will burn up the fire of the ancient Yoga and the hearts of her people will be lifted up into the neighbourhood of the Eternal.⁶⁸

This clearly indicates that Sri Aurobindo had a heart of gold and a magnanimity that one can only marvel at.

A disciple once drafted a para about an aspect of Sri Aurobindo's life in Baroda and sent it to Sri Aurobindo. The draft read:

Sri Aurobindo was preoccupied, even when he was but a conscientious teacher or an accomplished poet . . . with the problem of service and of sacrifice. . . . From the very first the idea of personal salvation or of individual felicity was utterly repugnant to him.

Sri Aurobindo remarked:

68. CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 875-76.

This is a little too strong. It was rather that it did not seem anything like a supreme aim or worth being pursued for its own sake; a solitary salvation leaving the world to its fate was felt as almost distasteful.⁶⁹

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

69. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 107.

For an age out of sympathy with the ascetic spirit — and throughout all the rest of the world the hour of the Anchorite may seem to have passed or to be passing — it is easy to attribute this great trend to the failing of vital energy in an ancient race tired out by its burden, its once vast share in the common advance, exhausted by its many-sided contribution to the sum of human effort and human knowledge. But we have seen that it corresponds to a truth of existence, a state of conscious realisation which stands at the very summit of our possibility. In practice also the ascetic spirit is an indispensable element in human perfection and even its separate affirmation cannot be avoided so long as the race has not at the other end liberated its intellect and its vital habits from subjection to an always insistent animalism.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Life Divine, CWSA, Vol. 21, p. 27)



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