

MOTHER INDIA

AUGUST 15, 1971

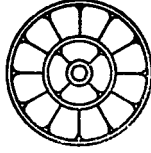
Price : Re. 1.00

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Subscription rates: Annual Rs. 10/-, Sh. 20/-, \$ 3/-
Single copy Re. 1.00 in India.

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MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2, India.
Phone: 782

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

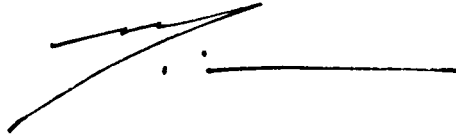


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIII

No. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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Editor: K. D. SETHNA
Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR
Published by: P. COUNOUMA
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY-2

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-2

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO SERVE THE DIVINE

Glory to Thee, O Lord, who triumphest over every obstacle.

Grant that nothing in us shall be an obstacle in Thy work.

Grant that nothing may retard Thy manifestation.

Grant that Thy will may be done in all things and at every moment.

We stand here before Thee that Thy will may be fulfilled in us, in every element, in every activity of our being, from our supreme heights to the smallest cells of the body.

Grant that we may be faithful to Thee utterly and for ever.

We would be completely under Thy influence to the exclusion of every other.

Grant that we may never forget to own towards Thee a deep, an intense gratitude.

Grant that we may never squander any of the marvellous things that are Thy gifts to us at every instant.

Grant that everything in us may collaborate in Thy work and all be ready for Thy realisation.

Glory to Thee, O Lord, Supreme Master of all realisation.

Give us a faith active and ardent, absolute and unshakable in Thy Victory.

23rd October 1937

THE MOTHER

(Translated by Sri Aurobindo from the French)

TO AN AMERICAN WELL-WISHER OF THE ASHRAM
A REPLY BY THE MOTHER

None of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The wide world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with the human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation.

It is only by its shortcomings, its deficiencies and its failures that the Ashram belongs to the present world.

None of the present achievements of humanity have the power to pull the Ashram out of its difficulties.

It is only a total conversion of all its members and an integral opening to the descending Light of Truth that can help it to realise itself.

The task, no doubt, is a formidable one, but we received the command to accomplish it and we are upon earth for that purpose alone.

We shall continue up to the end with an unflinching trust in the Will and the Help of the Supreme.

The door is open and will always remain open to all those who decide to give their life for that purpose.

13 June 1964

THE MOTHER

A STATEMENT BY THE MOTHER

La tâche de donner une forme concrète à la vision de Sri Aurobindo a été confiée à la Mère. La création d'un monde nouveau, d'une humanité nouvelle, d'une société nouvelle, exprimant et incorporant la conscience nouvelle, est l'œuvre qu'elle a entreprise. De par la nature même des choses, c'est un idéal collectif, réclamant un effort collectif pour se réaliser dans les termes d'une perfection humaine intégrale.

L'Ashram fondé et construit par la Mère a été le premier pas vers l'accomplissement de ce but. Le projet d'Auroville est le pas suivant, "plus extérieur", cherchant à élargir la base de cet essai d'établir l'harmonie entre l'âme et le corps, l'esprit et la nature, les cieux et la terre dans la vie collective de l'humanité.

The task of giving a concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's vision has been entrusted to the Mother. The creation of a new world, a new humanity, a new society, expressing and embodying the new consciousness, is the work undertaken by her. In the nature of things, it is a collective ideal calling for a collective effort to realise it in terms of an integral human perfection.

The Ashram, founded and built up by the Mother, has been the first step towards the fulfilment of this goal. The project of Auroville is the next step, "more exterior", seeking to widen the base of this endeavour to establish harmony between soul and body, spirit and nature, heaven and earth in the collective life of humanity.

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE ONLY WAY

The whole world is steeped in falsehood, so all actions that arise will be false, and this situation may continue for a long time and will bring much suffering to the people and the country.

The only thing to do is to pray from the heart for Divine Intervention as that is the only thing that can save us. And all people who can become conscious of this must decide very firmly to stand only on the Truth and to act only in the Truth. *There should be no compromise.* This is very essential. It is the only way.

Even if things seem to go wrong and badly for us, as indeed they will because of the present prevailing falsehood, we should not be deterred from our own determination to stand on the Truth.

This is the only way. (8.7.1971)

(A Report by Udar, approved by the Mother)

KNOWING AND FOLLOWING THE TRUTH

As long as people are not determined to follow the Truth I can do nothing for them outwardly.

Not the Truth as they see it, but the Truth as it is.

To be able to know the Truth you should be without preferences and without desires, and when you aspire for the Truth your mind must be silent.

(8.7.1971)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of July, 1971)

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give in a new English translation the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

APRIL 18, 1956

"At one pole of it the seeker may be conscious only of the Master of Existence putting forth on him His energies of knowledge, power and bliss to liberate and divinise; the Shakti may appear to him only an impersonal Force expressive of these things or an attribute of the Ishwara. At the other pole he may encounter the World-Mother, creatrix of the universe, putting forth the gods and the worlds and all things and existences out of her spirit-substance. Or even if he sees both aspects, it may be with an unequal separating vision, subordinating one to the other, regarding the Shakti only as a means for approaching the Ishwara. There results a one-sided tendency or a lack of balance, a power of effectuation not perfectly supported or a light of revelation not perfectly dynamic. It is when a complete union of the two sides of the Duality is effected and rules his consciousness that he begins to open to a fuller power that will draw him altogether out of the confused clash of Ideas and Forces here into a higher Truth and enable the descent of that Truth to illumine and deliver and act sovereignly upon this world of Ignorance."

(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 142)

YES, if he sees the two aspects (that is to say, the Master of Existence and the World-Mother), he may see them with an unequal vision, which would mean that he still separates them and gives importance to one or the other. And in that case there is a one-sided tendency; he sees only one

side or there is a lack of balance between the two perceptions. And so the power of effectuation is not perfectly supported, that is to say, the action of the Mother does not have the support of the one he calls the Master, the action of the Mother does not have a sufficient basis of support from the Master; or else it is the light of a revelation (that is, the Consciousness of the Master) which is not realised, not perfectly dynamic, that is, it is not translated into a creation.

Either the creative power is not supported by the revelation, or the revelation is not expressed in the creative Power. That is what Sri Aurobindo means. There is the tendency to go to this one or that, instead of having both at the same time, no longer separating them in one's consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo says that when one succeeds in not separating them in one's consciousness, one can fully understand who the Lord of the Sacrifice is. Otherwise one leans on one side or the other and naturally what one does is left incomplete. He says very clearly, doesn't he?, that if one leans on the side of the Master without insisting on the Shakti or the Mother, one goes off into the Impersonal and out of the creation, one returns into Nirvana. He says that this tendency towards the Impersonal may exist even in the yoga of works, in Karmayoga, and that impersonal force, impersonal action is always considered as the liberating aspect which frees you from the narrowness of the person. And that is why there is nothing surprising in the "overwhelming" strength of this experience.... Till today this is what has always been considered as yoga: to abandon the personal and enter into the consciousness of the impersonal. Sri Aurobindo speaks of it as an overwhelming experience, for it gives you the impression of liberation from all the ego's limitations. And later, he describes the union; insistence on the personal side and union with the divine Person; then the world is no longer an illusion nor a passing thing which will disappear after a while, but the constant and dynamic expression of the eternal divine Person.

That is the other side.

And when one experiences the two together, one is perfect.
Anything else?

Sweet Mother, what is this "fine flower of the cosmic Energy" of which he speaks here: "This fine flower of the cosmic Energy carries in it a forecast of the aim and a hint of the very motive of the universal labour"?

(Ibid., p. 144)

It is the soul which he calls this fine flower of the cosmic Energy.

(The Mother reads): *"...that personality, like consciousness, life, soul, is not a brief-lived stranger in an impersonal Eternity, but contains the very meaning of existence..."*

The presence of the divine Person, it is that.

"This fine flower of the cosmic Energy carries in it..."

It is the soul.

"...carries in it the forecast of the aim and a hint of the very motive of the universal labour."

The realisation of the conscious and living Eternal. It is that. It is a hint of the aim.

And the very motive of the labour.

Immediately afterwards, Sri Aurobindo writes: "As an occult vision opens in him (the seeker), he becomes aware of worlds behind in which consciousness and personality hold an enormous place and assume a premier value."

And so, what do you want? We have spoken about this I don't know how many times. What do you want about this? You want a description of these worlds, or the means of going there — which of the two?

The means of going there.

The means of going there, oh! oh!

Do you know how to exteriorise yourself?

Do you even know what it means to exteriorise oneself (not philosophically or psychologically, I mean occultly)? Are you conscious of your exteriorisation, do you do it at will? Do you know how to leave your body and live in a more subtle body, and yet again leave that body and live in another more subtle body, and then again leave that and live in another subtler body — and so on. Do you know how to do all that? Have you ever done it? No. So, we shall speak about it again another day.

That happens in dreams, Mother.

In dreams? Do you know where you are in your dreams?

A little.

A little? This is becoming interesting!
And where do you go in your dreams?

Often in regions...

What regions?

Vital regions.

Oh! Oh! You go into the vital world — and nothing unpleasant happen to you there?

Most often.

Ah! and how do you manage to get out of it?

Fly back into the body!

That's where your knowledge ends?

No. Sometimes there is a call and then one sees there is no need to run away. But that does not remain long.

It does not last.

But do you enter, do you go out at will?

Not at will.

Can you return to a place where you have often been before?

No, Mother.

Do you not find the same place again several times?

Not at will.

Ah! but there are children who know this, they continue their dreams. Every evening when they go to bed they return to the same place and continue their dream.

When I was a child I used to do that.

You are no longer a child, that's a pity!

Because I had no other occupation then.

Ah, well, become a child again and you will know how to do it once more.

There is nothing more interesting. It is an occupation for the night which is very pleasant. You begin a story, then, when it is time to get up, you put a full stop at the last sentence and come back into your body. And then the following night you start off again, re-open the page and re-begin your story the whole time you are out; and then you arrange things well — they must be well arranged, it must be quite beautiful. And when it is time to come back, you put a full stop once again and tell those things: "Remain very quiet till I come back!" And you come back into your body. And you continue this every evening and write a book of wonderful fairy-tales — provided you remember them when you wake up.

But this depends on remaining in a quiet state during the day, doesn't it?

No, it depends on the candidness of the child.

And on having trust in what happens, on the absence of the mind's critical sense, and a simplicity of heart, and a young and active energy — it depends on all that —, on a sort of inner vital generosity: one must not be too egoistic, one must not be too greedy, nor too practical, too utilitarian — indeed there are all sorts of things one should not be, like children. And then, one must have a vivid imaginative power, for (I seem to be telling you stupid things, but it is quite true) there is a world wherein you are the supreme maker of forms: that is your own particular vital world. You are the supreme fashioner and you can

make a marvel of your world if you know how to use it. If you have an artistic or poetic consciousness, if you love harmony, beauty, you will build there a marvellous thing which will tend to come into the material manifestation.

When I was a child I used to call this "telling stories to oneself". It is not at all a telling with words, in one's head: it is a going away to this place which is fresh and pure, and... building there a wonderful story. And when you know how to tell yourself a story in this way, and it is truly beautiful, truly harmonious, truly powerful and well co-ordinated, this story will be realised in your life — perhaps not exactly in the form in which you have created it, but as a more or less deformed physical expression of what you did.

That may take years, perhaps; but your story will tend to organise your life.

But there are very few people who know how to tell a fine story; and then they always mix up horrors in it, which they regret later.

If one could create a magnificent story without any horror in it, nothing but beauty, that would have a *considerable* influence upon everyone's life. And this is what one doesn't know.

If one knew how to use this power, this creative power in the world of vital forms, if one knew how to use this when yet a child, a very small child...for it is then that one builds his material destiny. But generally, those around you, sometimes your own little friends even, but most of all parents and teachers, dabble in it and spoil everything for you, so well that it is very seldom that the thing can succeed completely.

But otherwise, if it were done like that, with the spontaneous candour of a child, you could organise a wonderful life for yourself (I am speaking of the physical world).

Dreams of childhood are realities of ripe age.

(*To be continued*)

SRI AUROBINDO ON RUSSELL, EDDINGTON, JEANS, LOGIC AND TRUTH

UNPUBLISHED NOTES OF AN UNFINISHED LETTER

(These notes by Sri Aurobindo date back to the early forties of the century. At that time a discussion was going on among a few sadhaks about the much-publicised “revolution in science” — due in particular to Einstein. The position taken up by one of the disputants — Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) — was that relativity theory made no fundamental difference to scientific materialism and that hence there was no real revolution. Later, this position was given up, as is shown by his Mysticism and Einstein’s Relativity Physics as well as by Einstein’s Four-Dimensional Continuum and some other articles, though a critical attitude was still kept towards popular anti-materialistic interpretations of both relativity and quantum theories. In the course of the early arguments Sri Aurobindo was consulted: he pronounced in favour of the claim for a revolution, in the sense that while science strictly speaking did not make for either vitalism or mentalism or any other “ism” it now left open the road which had once been blocked by a materialism founding itself on science’s discoveries. Among the sadhaks, the claim for a revolution was mainly advanced on the strength of books by Eddington and Jeans. As against these writers, Bertrand Russell was quoted to Sri Aurobindo. It is apropos of the passages from Russell that he started making notes for a letter to the person through whom the quotations had been conveyed to him. The notes, most of which are in sequence, were never sent to anybody. They were found, unfinished and unrevised, among Sri Aurobindo’s papers. A number of sentences from them on Logic and Truth were published in Mother India some years ago. Now we are printing all that is available of the projected letter.)

I DON’T understand why Amal expects me to bow to the criticism of Bertrand Russell.

(1) Russell’s opinions are as much determined by his upbringing,

temperament etc. as those of Jeans or Eddington. He was born in the heyday of the most uncompromising materialism; he is unwilling to change the ideas which have got embedded in his nature. It is [this] that determines his view of the result of the recent developments of science, it is not a clear infallible logic; logic can serve any turn proposed to it by the mind's preferences. Nor is it a dispassionate impersonal view of facts dictated by unbiassed reason as opposed to Eddington's personal outlook, imaginative fancies and idealistic prejudices. This idea of pure mental impersonality in the human reason is an exploded superstition of the rationalist mind; psychology in its recent inquiries has shown that this supposed impersonal observation of pure objective facts and impartial conclusion from them, an automatic writing of truth on the blank paper of the pure mind is a myth; it has shown that the personal factor is inevitable; we think according to what we are.

(2) Russell is not, I believe, a great scientist or preeminent in any field of science. Eddington is, I am told, one of the finest authorities in astrophysics. Jeans and Eddington, though not great discoverers, are otherwise in the front rank. Russell ranks as a great mathematician, but there too Eddington has one superiority over him; he is supposed to be the only one, so say some, one of the only five, say others, who have a complete understanding of Einstein's mathematical formulation; Russell is not counted among them and that perhaps disables him from understanding the full consequences of Relativity. Russell, however, is an eminent philosopher, though not one of the great ones. I would count him rather as a strong and acute thinker on philosophy and science. Here he has an advantage, for Jeans and Eddington are only amateur philosophers with a few general ideas for their stock in trade.

(3) As for their general intellectual standing Russell is a clear and strong materialistic intellect with a wide and general play of its own kind and range; the others are strong in their own field, trained in scientific knowledge and judgment, outside that they do not count: Eddington's mind is more intuitive and original in its limits but often shooting beyond the mark. Russell, when he goes outside his limits, can flounder and blunder. Well, then where is there any foundation for exalting the authority of Russell at the expense of the other two? I disagree with the conclusions of all three; I am neither a mentalist nor a vitalist nor a materialist. Why then throw Russell at me? I am not likely to change my decision in the matter in deference to his materialistic bias. And to what does his judgment or his argument amount to? He admits as against

Amal that there has been a "revolution" in science; he admits that the old materialistic philosophy has no longer even half a rotten leg to stand upon; its dogmatic theory of Matter has been kicked¹ out. God knows where. But still, says Russell, Matter is there and everything in this world obeys the laws (? whatever they may [be] or become from time to time?) of physical science. This is merely a personal opinion on a now very doubtful matter: he is fighting a rearguard action against what he feels to be the advanced forces of the future; his gallant but tremulous asseveration is a defensive parade² not an aggressive blow; it lacks altogether the old assured self-confidence.

As for Russell's logic, a dry and strong or even austere logic is not a key to Truth; an enthusiastic vision often reaches it more quickly. The business of logic is to give order to a thinker's ideas, to establish firm relations between them and firm distinctions from other people's ideas, but when that is done, we are no nearer to indisputable truth than we were before. It is vision that sees Truth, not logic — the outer vision that sees facts but not their inner sense, the inner vision that sees inner facts and can see the inner sense of them, the total vision (not belonging to mind) that sees the whole. A strong and clear and powerful intellect, Russell, but nothing more — not certainly an infallible authority whether in science or anything else. Jeans and Eddington have their own logical reasoning; I do not accept it any more than I accept Russell's.³

Let us, however, leave the flinging of authorities, often the same authority for opposing conclusions, Russell quoted against Russell and Darwin against Darwin, and let us come to the point...

¹ Tentative reading (Editor).

² *Ibid*

³ Where this paragraph should go is not quite certain. It was written separately though meant to be part of the letter. We have put it where it seemed to be most in place (Editor)

AGNI AND THE MOTHER'S FORCE

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q: Sometimes in my forehead I feel as if a burning spark has entered, though it remains within only for a while. What is this spark?

SRI AUROBINDO: A spark of the higher dynamic force, I suppose.

7-9-1934

Q: Since the early morning I have been receiving something from above through the forehead. It descends swiftly and powerfully.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the higher consciousness sending its force down into the inner mind centre.

8-9-1934

The lines [that I had drawn in my letter] indicate the connection between the higher centre and the inner mind centre in the forehead.

8-9-1934

There is an increasing Power descending — but to change the whole atmosphere will take time.

8-9-1934

Q: The higher flow that descends through the top of my head — the Brahmic centre — was felt till now only upto the inner mind centre in the forehead. Now it has extended and runs into the nose.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is coming down towards the externalising mind centre.

8-9-1934

Q: I do not understand how the higher pressure is coming not only with intensity and power but also burning like a fire.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the Agni-force in it.

8-9-1934

Q: While leaving the Ashram building, I experienced the descent through the whole head and not merely through the Brahmic passage.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is simply the force of the higher consciousness descending in a greater mass.

10-9-1934

It is the Agni fire that you feel. Agni is at once a fire of aspiration, a fire of purification, a fire of tapasya, a fire of transformation.

10-9-1934

Q: Yesterday I wrote to you that I feel the spiritual experience in the flesh and the teeth becoming more and more dense. Does it then mean that peace is added in the working of the force?

SRI AUROBINDO: The force can also be dense in that way; but probably it is establishing the solid calm in that way.

12-9-1934

It is the Mother's Force that works in the Agni.

18-9-1934

All that is simply the burning of the Agni in various parts of the being. It prepares it for transformation.

18-9-1934

Q: Cannot the passive and the active Self be harmonised so as to govern and change my nature properly? Either one of the two does not seem sufficient to handle the whole of the human nature.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but the Peace, Purity and Calm of the Self must be fixed — otherwise the active Descent may find the forces it awakes seized on by lower Powers and a confusion created. That has happened with many.

16-10-1934

Q: Can the active Descent take place even if Purity, Peace and Calm are not sufficiently established?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can, — but to have the peace and calm first is better. Many call down the superior Force first.

18-10-1934

Q: Is it not possible at my present stage to maintain my central consciousness in the pure-existence all the time and let my external ac-

tions be directed by the Mother's Force so that they may come automatically from the true consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is not yet possible. The true consciousness must be there in the mind and vital before that is done and the true consciousness is the psychic and the higher. What one can do before that is to use the mental will to direct the actions in the right way or reject the things that have to be rejected. But this you had stopped when the silence, emptiness etc. came down.

20-10-1934

Q: Some people speak of a Divine Darkness.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't believe much in this Divine Darkness. It is a Christian idea. For us the Divine is Peace, Purity, Wideness, Light, Ananda.

1-11-1934

Q: Today my inner being collected all its diffused energy of will-power and fought out the inertia massed within me. Was the force used rajas, the vital push, something unspiritual? It was not a silent duel. There were strong vibrations all around me.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing unspiritual in that — the use of this force is very good — it is tapas, not rajas.

27-12-1934

Q: You once wrote: "As for the submind etc., these things have a habit of sticking, so long as the higher dynamic activities are not established." What are the higher dynamic activities?

SRI AUROBINDO: Knowledge, higher Will, Force, universal Ananda.

From NAGIN DOSHI

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of July 1971)

(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November, 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.

We are interrupting the sequence of the Talks with a few that were somehow left out. Once these have been published, we shall resume the usual series.)

NOVEMBER 30, 1939

N (*while Sri Aurobindo was waiting for the Mother to come*): Nolini Sen is practically all right. Yesterday I told you that he was feeling a vague irritation and restlessness and a sense of weeping all the day, and badly needed assistance. He didn't know the cause of the irritation but his mind yesterday began to think of what wrongs he had done to others in the past. Then he felt as if somebody had touched him on the shoulder, after which he felt calm. He didn't know whose hand it was!

SRI AUROBINDO (*after laughing*): He seems to be receptive.

N: He doesn't understand what is meant by mental, vital, physical consciousness. As for his wife, she says the intensity of pain and pleasure seems to have diminished in her. But at the same time she feels disinclined to any work.

SRI AUROBINDO: Does she feel like that after taking up yoga?

N: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That often happens. When the motive that supplied the incentive to work or energy in the ordinary life is lost, such a con-

dition sets in until that energy is replaced by another energy.

C: How to know whether it is not *tamas*?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a certain element of *tamas* in it. The physical is being driven by the Rajasic vital energy and when that energy is not there the physical may fall into *tamas* or inactivity.

N: What to do in such cases?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on circumstances. If one has no work to do, he can retire into the silence.

N: But she can't do that with so many children to look after!
(*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: No, she can call in the higher energy and do whatever she has to do without being involved in the work or getting attached to it.

N: I told her that she could do everything as the Mother's work.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

At this point the Mother came. While sponging P took up the previous day's talk about the blue colour.

P: I asked Lalji about the woman. She seems to be a devotee of Sri Krishna.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then it is clear.

N: But why is only the face blue?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because it is the mind that gets the light as she talks of the Gita and of other things in her ecstatic mood.

S: You said yesterday that the blue colour might be of Vishnu or of Krishna. What is the difference between them?

SRI AUROBINDO: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva manifest certain powers of Cosmic Consciousness. Krishna manifests the Ananda. Krishna is said to be an Avatar of Vishnu, which means that he manifests the Vishnu aspect rather than the Shiva.

S: Are Vishnu and Krishna Gods of the Overmind?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is, they manifest through the Overmind.

P then related a few more experiences of that Mahratta lady. There was no remark from Sri Aurobindo. After some time Sri Aurobindo himself started to speak.

SRI AUROBINDO: About Nolini Sen. I don't understand what is the

difficulty about the "vital". What is it he doesn't understand? Just as there is the mind with its ideas and perceptions, so is there the vital with its forces of action, emotions, aesthesis. Is it so difficult? Perhaps he wants to know by experience?

N: Probably. He gave me one instance. He wants to know, when he hears music and gets joy, whether it is due to the song or the singer.

SRI AUROBINDO: That has nothing to do with the vital. If there was no music but only the musician, would he feel that joy? Of course it is his vital — aesthetic — that feels it and the musician also may be expressing his songs through his vital.

P: What he told me is of difficulty with his thoughts.

SRI AUROBINDO: What sort of difficulty?

P: No, it is not any difficulty of intellectual ideas or perceptions; simply control of thoughts.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the life-mind. Of course his irritation and restlessness are due to the pressure of the psychic on his vital. His brooding or thinking on the wrongs he has done and the yearning within means that.

N: But the wrongs were done in the past.

SRI AUROBINDO: That doesn't matter. It means that the psychic is putting pressure on the vital to change. (*After some time*) Restlessness, irritation don't matter, but he must have some sleep.

N: He says he can't understand your English; he has to translate it into Bengali first to understand.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Doesn't he know English enough?

N: He says like that. He was a Science student, a classmate of Satyen Bose.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which Satyen Bose?

N: Dilip's friend, the scientist. I think it is your terminology that he finds difficult to grasp — mental, vital, physical.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a demarcation which is not rigidly fixed. Each overflows into the others. In man, ultimately all are differentiated aspects or states of the mental consciousness in general.

EVENING

The Mother (*bringing in a telegram to Sri Aurobindo and smiling*): Another problem to be solved.

The telegram was "...praying permission for our residence."

The Mother: Permission for residence where? Shall I ask back?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know. Does residence mean the Ashram?
(*Laughing*) It can be asked "Who are you?" (*General laughter*)

Then P read the radio news about Russia attacking Finland, etc., etc. and about the All-India Sugar Conference being postponed.

S: Plenty of sugar has been destroyed because of surplus.

SRI AUROBINDO: Instead of destroying it, they could have given it free to the Ashram. (*Laughter*)

While sponging Sri Aurobindo P brought in the war talk.

P: Molotov said Russia has no territorial claims.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who? Vallabhbhai? (*Laughter*)

P: No, Molotov.

SRI AUROBINDO: No territorial claims? Is it just a territorial walk then? Or is he going to deliver the Finnish people as he did the Ukrainians? I don't understand why these people don't clearly speak out their objects.

P: I hope the Americans will do something.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think so. They can only talk.

P (*when the others had gone away and Sri Aurobindo was resting*): There's a lady who used to feel your presence in her own home, just as at Darshan; but last time on her way back from here she saw Raman Maharshi and then lost that previous feeling.

SRI AUROBINDO: Naturally

P: At first she couldn't detect the reason. Then she suspected the cause and I also told her the Mother didn't approve of mixing up things. Now she thinks it must be due to that visit.

SRI AUROBINDO: That was another influence. Besides, if Maharshi had been alone, it would have been different. But there are other people around.

N: But the purpose is the same — seeking for spirituality — and it is in the same line.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is not the question. (*After some time*) P received something from Lele.

P: Oh yes, I know to my cost. He gave me a terrible fever just when I was in the pink of health; the fever went only after I received a letter

from here. My encounter with another yogi gave me vomiting, giddiness, etc. Otherwise I got nothing from them.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): But Lele did give you something after all.

P: Yes — but I didn't go any more to him. Another friend after coming here asked me if he should go to see some yogi. I told him he should not. He replied, "What's the harm? It is the same spirituality." I explained, "Maybe, but there are different spiritual energies and one may oppose another."

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so.

P: But the man didn't believe me. And he has paid the penalty for five years. Even now he can't come here again!

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF MAY-TO-NOVEMBER 1926

(Continued from the issue of July 1971)

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in these talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But, in reconstructing from memory, the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

IN America some people are getting the same influence and touch, the same experience as the Sadhaks here, — though not of the supramental.

Q. Is there a subtle reason behind this?

The American mind is more alive and open to new things than the English or any other, but what at present is going on is only a new movement of ideas, some elementary Yoga; what they call Yoga is nothing in the true spiritual direction.

It was only after ten years in my Yoga that I fully saw the meaning of the supermind. Before, I was aware in general of the supramental. Knowledge and force used to come from it — of course, not from the supermind directly but through the higher mind — as, say, during the Great War, when the Germans were about to attack Paris. The knowledge came to me that the Germans must be stopped; I looked at the map and actually saw the place where they were situated and I sent my old vital force. It had its effect.

But generally we cannot trust the vital force to do our business with surety and at the right moment; there is always the chance of confusion; on several occasions I found that whenever I put the vital force to do a thing at a certain time, it was done some time after and the result was not what I had wished, though some of the details were there.

Since my childhood I had desired that France should get back Alsace-Lorraine and it so happened when I no longer thought of it.

We are only chosen by the Power as instruments. Everything is intended above: for example, the movement in Russia was so intended; it was an experience which the human race needed to have for its evolution. The Chinese Revolution¹ too was so intended. Things may not turn out intellectually and morally perfect according to our standards, but they are beautifully prepared beforehand.

In the supramental there are no hostile forces. It is only in the mental and vital that they exist. That is why the knowledge of the decision is not given to these planes beforehand. The hostile forces may come up.

Q. Have the Gods form?

As for the Gods of the higher and supramental worlds, they have their own form, that which expresses them, their *nitya rūpa*. They may come in their original forms, or the devotee's consciousness, mental and vital, makes the forms and the Gods may assume them, or else the two elements may be mixed. The Gods may also manifest in their own forms on the mental or the vital plane.

When man passes the limit of human consciousness, he sees an eternal, universal form of God — what Bala Bharati in his book calls the eternal form of Krishna. Krishna was Bala Bharati's chosen God-aspect (*iṣṭa devatā*)....If man attains the impersonal state beyond mind and then approaches God, he sees God in a human-looking form. That is perhaps why the Upanishads call God Purusha.

Q. Can man become God?

Man is only the tail end of God (God in a wide sense). But if he finds his God-self on the supramental plane, that is, his divine personality on that plane, and if he can bring it down to transform the lower being he becomes God in a sense: he becomes an aspect of God.

Q. What is the distinction between Gods and Goddesses?

As here in this world, so also on the higher planes, there are two sides of creation. But there is no fundamental distinction. The Gods and Goddesses are different aspects of one God.

Q. Do the Mantras represent the swarupa, the "self-form" of the Gods?

Only one or two Mantras; the rest give merely symbols of the Gods. You don't mean to say that the Gods will always be walking about with

¹ The reference is to the movement initiated by Sun-Yat-Sen (Editor)

those weapons in their hands!

Q. What is the truth behind the Cycles, the Manwantaras, in the Puranas, the Bodhisatwas, the Dhyani Buddha of Buddhism?

When I was in Alipore Jail, there was a period during which I saw all these Cycles. But I am inclined to think that they were only a vital formation. Repetition is a law of the world, we see that, but not the mechanical repetition of which the Puranas or Buddhism speak. According to them, precisely the same things happen, only the persons are different. The Dhyani Buddhas may represent different planes.

Q. Is there any truth behind the Rakshasa Gana and the Nara Gana, which astrologers speak of in the matter of marriages?

There is a truth behind them. In married life and the sexual act, there is the greatest interchange of vital force. If one member of a married couple draws out much of the other's vital force, it is not a happy match. It is said Rakshasa and Nara are not a good match, while Deva and Deva are good. But these things, like omens, are only interesting so far as we can find out the truth behind them. But if you make it a rule of life, you had better hang yourself! Worse, if you are afraid of omens, you may even invite the result. The best thing is to take your chance, and that may be better than all the calculations which often go wrong.

Q. What is the difference between the national unity of India and that of Europe?

India has a more defined collective personality than Europe. For example, England and France have their defined personalities, but not so Europe as a whole. Mazzini saw Europe as a personality, but the several countries of Europe have now to create that super-personality. The case is different in India, the super-personality of India is there already and it is taking form or manifesting itself. The several provinces in India are like Wales and Scotland in England. Because there is such a personality in India and it is not a making of today as it has to be in Europe, there is every chance of the political unity of India. But not so with Asia, Asia is like Europe in its relation to its constituent countries. To try to achieve the political unity of Asia therefore would be a grievous mistake.

Q. It is said that common opposition to an external enemy would bring about human unity and that therefore humanity has to fight with another planet!

It is a vital way of creating unity.

Q. What is meant by super-personality?

There is a super-personality in man putting together his different personalities. It is the same with a country.

Q. Is the super-personality a God, a Shakti?

Why not?

Q. Is it supramental?

No. We may say it is an emanation of the Gods.

Q. What are the Gods?

They are powers of Maha-Shakti. Maha-Shakti is the power of the Supreme—Maha—who is more than the Gods. The Gods are different personalities of God. You can see all this only when you transcend the three lower planes.

Q. What is the truth behind the Platonic theory of Ideas?

Plato must have had a dim intimation of the supramental world. But he gave it a rational and geometrical mould; his Idea is almost geometrical. The Greek mind was always rational and mathematical. There are several elements in the theory of Ideas:

(1) Behind this world of forms, there is an Eternal (Universal) Form. And behind every class of forms there is an Archetypal Form.

(2) Things, before they are in matter, are in consciousness.

(3) There is a plane, a divine world, in which the things we see here are in their purity as what I call Real Ideas. The Real Ideas are existences, not abstractions of the mind. They are potentialities which work themselves out here. This is what is meant by the text about Vijnana, Truth-Consciousness: *sarvānī vijñānā vijrmbhitānī* — “all things are born together from Vijnana.”

But Plato's mind represents all this in a very rational mould. It is always so with mind. Mind, when it gets a glimpse of reality, tries to represent it to itself in abstractions. Abstractions belong to the mind only. There is nothing abstract above mind. Everything is real and concrete.

Q. That which has no form, say, the supermind — is it not abstract?

How do you mean? There are forms in the supermind. The Gods have forms, they differentiate themselves from one another by means of form.

Q. What is meant by the Arupa Loka (formless world) of Buddhism?

It is only a mental distinction, only an abstraction of our mind. It is our mind's way of representing a certain truth to itself. But if you enter into the Mind-world you will see even mind as something concrete: it is

more concrete than matter; before it, matter pales into a shadow. The supermind is something harder than diamond and more fluid than gas. That is what the Vedas mean when they say that Agni is vast, light and strong. That is why, so as not to be misunderstood, I spoke of Real Idea, meaning existence and not an abstract idea.

Q. "The Kingdom of God is within you," says the Bible. What does it mean?

It may be the moral kingdom that is meant.

Q. The ancient system of education is said to have had a residential university.

That is nonsense. It is the fashion to read modern ideas into the old days. Students gathered round a Guru who was often a Yogi. That does not mean a residential university; and the education in ancient times observed the spiritual life. It was also intellectual but not in the sense that the students learnt from textbooks as in the official routine system of education nowadays. The intellect was encouraged to grow from within. More education was got by the student through what went out from the Guru, and through his example, than from his learning. It was so in Greece and it was also aesthetic. Satyakama got his education by looking after his Guru's cows and not listening to him. If you practised that system nowadays it would be absurd; there are no such Gurus. In the classical days, any classical period, say, that of Kalidasa, the system of education was more elaborate and was mainly intellectual. It was not always the same system of education that prevailed in India; it changed with the times. Gurukul was in the ancient days. In between the classical and the ancient days there were the Buddhist Universities like those of Nalanda and Taxila, where numbers of students from all Asia were gathered, where there were discussions on philosophy. In the days of Kalidasa, even women were accomplished in many subjects.

Individualism was insufficient in India; the community was topmost. The idea of Swadharma was in spiritual matters, but in social life it was the communal idea that was dominant.

There is tremendous Tamas at present in the Indian people. It began at the time of the European Companies and came to stay when the empire was fixed. Everywhere, in the intellectual life, in the aesthetic or the social life there was disintegration: the disintegration is still going

on. It is because there is such a Tamas that in spite of Vivekananda, Tilak, Das — no ordinary persons, these — India has not properly awakened. If there had been such men and such force in the Western countries, they would have progressed marvellously. What force you put into our people is simply spilled; the vessels are too weak and cannot hold them.

If a Yogi has to do work in the physical world he must come down from his higher consciousness, there above, into the physical world; otherwise from there he can only send down some influence (as a Guru sends his influence to his disciples who are open). If the work is to be directly and immediately effective he must come down to the physical plane. That is why I insist so much on transformation of the whole being.

The inner guide may fail after a time in the Sadhana. I had attained an inner calm, before I took help from Lele. But when I came to Pondicherry, there was no help from within, and I was seeking for some illumination from an outside thing or person. Then Mirra¹ came; and, had she not come here, I would have been still fumbling....

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

¹ In those days the Mother's name was spelt this way. She had also not yet taken charge of the Ashram (Editor)

HAPPIEST HEAVEN

We are living in the happiest heaven here
With Absolute Beauty brooding over us;
We are free from damning darkness and from fear,
And guarded by a grace miraculous.

For God has chosen this most blessed place
As His abode on earth to deal with Death,
Assuming as His mask a human face
And living as it were a life of breath.

In Him the Highest One lived for our sight
And lives for ever close to hearts of love,
Bestowing bliss on human days made bright
With suns undying shining from above.

His glory has been deep impressed on clay,
His peace supreme pervades horizons far;
A rune-word is His name, a power's play
That can accomplish all, break bar on bar.

Him we adore with all our heart and soul,
And serve His will embodied in the Mother;
For Him our all, His service is our role,
He is our Guru eternal and no other.

His Presence is with us, a life-long lease,
His Grace befriends us closely day and night;
He leads us on to far beatitude's ease
And fills our weakness with world-conquering might.

We are for ever His, and ours He is,
Our Father, Comrade, Lord, our all in all;
He is our realised Self of bournless bliss,
Responsive ever to our aspiring call.

Eternally with Him we work His will,
From life to life and world to world we go,
One stream, one song, one speed increasing still,
Into His mould our human self we throw.

PUNJALAL

SRI AUROBINDO — THE MODERN AVATAR

A TALK

FRIENDS, you will excuse me for the flashy title I have given to my talk, but I hope to justify it.

I begin with some unpublished portions of my correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, sometime in 1936, when an unaccountably good relation was established between the Supramental Godhead and the mental dog-head that was still the former's own human portion.

At the time of the following exchange, I was in charge of the dispensary:

QUESTION: My big photo requires Sanjiban's treatment. Granted permission?

SRI AUROBINDO: What? which? where? how? what disease? what medicine wanted?

The next day I had to give Sri Aurobindo a little more light on my cryptic language:

QUESTION: I send you your big photo, it is your photo that would be drawn by Sanjiban.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are always plunging me into new mysteries. If it is a photo, how can it be drawn by anybody? And what is the tense connotation and psychological and metaphysical connotation of "would be" here?

You will mark two things: the looseness of my expression and the tone of Sri Aurobindo's reply, which are signs testifying to our good relation. As time passed this good relation increased little by little until one day it became familiar — all good relations take this turn — and I heard a thundering from him: "Why the devil do you want to know of my life?" Well, instead of being intimidated, my heart leaped for joy and almost popped out of its chamber! Because the thunder had no edge, it was full of sweetness. Then followed a series of such members of the nether family of terms as "damn", "hell", "deuce", etc., along with their higher counterparts "Eternal", "Jehovah", "Shobhan Allah", "Good Hea-

vens", "Good Lord", and so on. So you can ascertain from these ejaculations the depth, the intensity, and the extent of the good relation between us. Not only doghead, but many other epithets he hurled on this head — wooden-head, blockhead, ass, idiot. I took them all with a good face, waiting for the day when I could pay him back with quip and jibe at his Supermind. The day did arrive. But the verbal looseness did not end there, certainly — I had committed quite a bit of it, and he had to pull me up again and again.

These few snatches of correspondence should convince you of the appropriateness of my title, for Sri Aurobindo is a modern Avatar. He may be viewed from various angles; but my own point of view is this: only because Sri Aurobindo is a modern Avatar am I here. A materialist such as myself could have no place in a spiritual institution unless it was a modern Ashram and the Guru was modern too, in the form of Sri Aurobindo. And I am happy to say that there are many others who share this opinion. So from this proof, I am sure everybody will acclaim with one voice that there can be no other Ashram more modern than this one. Place it side by side with Raman Maharshi's Ashram or Sri Ramakrishna Missions — our modernity will be too patent a fact. Take the Mother playing tennis, for example. And yet, when Annie Besant's Messiah, Krishnamurti, started playing tennis, we laughed at him. Or take Sri Aurobindo's correspondence — that voluminous correspondence that he carried on from year to year, day by day, explaining the same subject at length to various people — trying to persuade them, to argue with them point by point, to bring them to his point of view. Some people, such as myself, were attacking his Yoga and denying his Avatarhood, and yet with infinite patience he tried to understand the modern mind and the modern spirit, and explained things to us until we were convinced. Or if not able to convince us, he tolerated us until one day he wrote in one of his letters about the sadhaks in his Ashram: "It is as it were a favour is being granted to us by their remaining here!" At another time, in a fit of self-revealing jocularly or whatever it was, he wrote: "The very fact that I am carrying on a correspondence with the sadhaks for eight or nine hours every night should be enough to prove that I am an Avatar."

Then there was the case of a sadhak who, in the early days of the Ashram, was given charge of gate-keeping. Instead of keeping the gate, he was always busy reading and, when he wasn't reading, he slept. He didn't bother about who came and went. The fact was reported to the

Mother, who sent someone to inquire: "It seems you are reading instead of doing your duty?" The gate-keeper replied, "Well, I can't help it, it is my weakness." There the matter ended. And I have even seen one or two instances of sadhaks abusing the Mother to her face — which staggered us all; but she kept quiet, digesting all the insults hurled at her.

Well, I don't want to go into a deeper philosophy of Avatarhood to show that Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, or to fix his place on the list of Avatars; or demonstrate the modern character of his Yoga. All this is not my domain. I am a humble man and I deal with humble things. What I have invited you for is to share with me and to enjoy a feast of Supramental Levity in our correspondence, which ranges over various topics — spiritual, medical, poetic, etc. The portions I have chosen are short — sharp like jets of water, and sparkling, scintillating with humour. We shall be reminded of one mighty pen in this context—that of Shakespeare. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me: "It is not every spear that shakes!" I would venture to say that Sri Aurobindo's spear shook even more than Shakespeare! I would go even further and say that Sri Aurobindo surpassed his own self, for it is my firm belief that Sri Aurobindo *was* Shakespeare. It has also been said of Shakespeare that he never blotted a line. The same may be said of Sri Aurobindo with more justice and accuracy, and greater credit to him, because the entire volume of his correspondence was written with a lightning spontaneity, sometimes coming in a flood like the Ganges or the Brahmaputra. There is one more modern trait, which our friend Purani has noted. During the early years of the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo's foot once touched Amrita's inadvertently. Sri Aurobindo sat up in the chair and said, "I beg your pardon." Well, the Guru telling a shishya "I beg your pardon" — if that's not modern, I don't know what is!

To further demonstrate the looseness of my expression, I offer the following: "The word 'focus' was unintelligible? But you understand all right. I adopt the device and 'your attention' to save your time and mine as well, as is obvious."

Sri Aurobindo wrote in reply: "Good Lord! Is this Hebrew or Aramaic or Swahili? I can't understand a word. Which device? which attention? Some reference to something I wrote? If so, it has clean gone out of my head. That, by the way, is a manner of speaking, for I never have anything in my head."

The next day I wrote him an apology: "I am sorry for the last elision. I wanted to write — 'I adopted the device and dropped "your atten-

tion" to save time' — I find I have chopped the word 'dropped' altogether, so it has become Hebrew, Aramaic or — ? I can't read this last word."

His reply: "Swahili. African language, sir, somewhere in West Africa."

So much for my slips. One day I found a slip in his writing. I wrote to him: "What, Sir! 'Expect' has become 'except'? Is it a supramental slip? Hurrah!"

Sri Aurobindo answered: "Do you mean to say this is the first you have met? I used to make ten per page formerly in the haste of my writing. Evidently I am arriving towards a supramental accuracy — spontaneous and careless in spite of the lightning speed of my epistolary movement."

One day I sent him a pen and wrote: "You will find something in my famous bag, Sir, which may startle you. The size will suit you best though the nib may not; I am sending it to you so that your writing in my notebook may flow in rivers from the pen, not in a few stingy lines."

Sri Aurobindo: "Good Lord! What a Falstaff of a fountain pen! But it is not the pen that is responsible for the stinginess; the criminal is Time and with a fat pen he can be as niggardly as with a lean one."

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Now we come to the subject of Pranam. I am sure many of you are familiar with the numerous letters that Sri Aurobindo has written on the abuse and misuse of Pranam committed by the sadhaks and sadhikas. In a recent issue of *Mother India* there is a letter on this very subject. Instead of Pranam being a spiritual function we made it, to our shame, a dramatic function. Far from absorbing what the Mother was giving us, we tried to watch her movements *vis-à-vis* each sadhak and sadhika — whether she was smiling at one sadhak or was not smiling at all; how much she smiled; if she touched the disciple with one finger or two, or only the tip of a finger; if she didn't touch him at all; if she looked at me; why she didn't look at me, what crime had I done?, etc. And the whole function and the entire day were spoilt. I was no exception, and here is a letter that proves it:

QUESTION: Guru, I don't know why Mother looked at me like that. Was I anywhere in the wrong?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother knows nothing about it.

QUESTION: I went over the whole incident and didn't find anywhere that I have misrepresented facts in the Dispensary.

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

QUESTION: ...or was it because I was bothering myself and you over a trifle?

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

QUESTION: It was not an illusion. Some meaning was there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes? But then it must have been a meaning in your mind and not the Mother's. So only you, its mother, can find it out.

Another excerpt follows on the same subject:

QUESTION: Today Mother looked at me in such a way at Pranam — as though she 'said' something.

SRI AUROBINDO: She didn't; she only looked at you a little longer than usual.

QUESTION: Ah! there you are then! Mother did look longer — that's a point gained!

SRI AUROBINDO: Just Jehovah, man! What of that? Can't Mother look longer without being furious?

QUESTION: There must have been something. I can take any amount of thrashing with grace, even with good grace, as you know, but to take it without knowing the why or the how of it, that goes a little too deep, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: No thrashing at all — not even the natural yearning to thrash you.

QUESTION: For an earthly reason, I found that I have accepted an invitation for lunch. Is that the reason then why Mother focussed her fury on my dreadful soul?

SRI AUROBINDO: Know nothing about it. Never dreamed even of the lunch — was thinking of B,* not of any delinquency of yours.

QUESTION: As I was positively conscious that there was something, you can't say there was nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can and do.

QUESTION: I was positively conscious that there was something and I only want to know it so that I can rectify the error.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only fancy, sir, dear delightless fancy. Nothing

* One of my patients—(Nirodbaren)

more deceiving than these psuedo-intuitions of Mother's displeasure and search for their non-existent reasons. Very often it comes from a guilty conscience or a feeling that one deserves a thrashing, so obviously a thrashing must be intended. Anything like that here?

QUESTION: It may be the thing about which I wrote you long ago and got a smack!

SRI AUROBINDO: Consider yourself smacked this time also.

QUESTION: Thrashing, fury, I accept all if that was what it was for.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was not. As there was no thrashing and no fury, it could not be for that.

You cannot fail to notice throughout this passage the disciple's dog-headedness and the Guru's inexhaustible patience. Any other Guru, ancient or even modern, would have cut me short!

* * *

Now for something about Darshan. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me about "exceptional circumstances"; so quoting his phrase, I opened our discussion:

QUESTION: "Exceptional circumstances"! Whatever they may have been they have disappeared.

SRI AUROBINDO: Make them re-appear.

QUESTION: Expected many things, or at least something from the Darshan, but don't see anywhere any sign of it!

SRI AUROBINDO: Many Americans at least, what was not expected. It is always the unexpected that happens, you see.

(By the way, at one Darshan, an American had a vision of the whole of America lying at the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's feet. I heard of it and, as was my wont, I wrote asking Sri Aurobindo for confirmation. He replied, "Yes, Mother expects much from America." This was in 1936. Those friends who come from America will be glad to learn this.)

The next day, I wrote:

QUESTION: The result of Darshan in some other quarters leaves me staggered and staggered! I can't imagine such an incident taking place in the Ashram, as N's gripping M's throat. It makes me rather aghast. Coupled with that incident of R rushing to shoe-beat P. Good Lord! but I suppose they are all in the game!

SRI AUROBINDO: You seem to be the most candid and ignorant baby going. We shall have to publish an "Ashram News and Titbits" for your benefit. Have you never heard of N's going for K's head with a powerfully brandished hammer? Or of his howling challenges to C to come out and face him, till Mother herself had to interfere and stop him? Or of his yelling and hammering in a rage at C's door till D came and dragged him away? These things happened within a short distance of your poetic ears and yet you know nothing??? N is subject to these fits and always has been so. The Darshan is not responsible. And he is not the only howler. What about M herself? and half a dozen others? Hunger-strikes? Threats of suicide?... to leave the Ashram, etc., etc. All from the same source, sir, and, apparently, part of the game.

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Then there is Depression, which used to come over me very often. To quote a line from *Savitri*:

'I sat with grief as with an ancient friend.'

In such a mood I once wrote: "I realise every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit, nor for any big endeavour in life."

Sri Aurobindo wrote back; "Man of sorrows! man of sorrows! knock him off, man, knock him off!"

At another time I wrote:

QUESTION: Wretched, absolutely done for.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Disburden yourself!

QUESTION: Disburden? You mean throw off the burden or place the burden at your door?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both!

On another occasion:

QUESTION: I am thrown out of joint, Sir. Madam Doubt still peeps from behind. Anyhow no chance for me! Kismet, Sir! What to do?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why out of joint? It ought to strengthen your joints for the journey of Yoga. Not at all, sir. Mind, sir, mind. Madam Doubt, sir, Madam Doubt! Miss Material Intellectualism, sir! Aunt Despondency, sir! Uncle Self-distrust, sir! Cousin Self-depreciation, sir! The whole confounded family, sir!

QUESTION: Please ask Mother to give some blessings to this hopeless self.

SRI AUROBINDO:

Vin. Ashirv.	m. VII
Recept. Chlor.	gr. XXV
Aqua Jollity	ad lib
Tinc. Faith	m. XV
Syr. Opt.	zss

Twelve doses every hour.

(Signature)

QUESTION: What's this second item in your prescription, Sir? Too Latinic for my poor knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO: Chlorate of Receptivity.

QUESTION: And I would put Aqua at the end to make it an absolutely pucca academic prescription.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I thought of the two last ingredients afterwards.

QUESTION: And 12 doses every hour — these tinctures and vinums?

SRI AUROBINDO: Twelve doses -- every hour (one each hour. Plagiarised from your language, sir).

QUESTION: And where is the cost to be supplied from?

SRI AUROBINDO: Gratis — for the poor.

You can't beat him!

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Then there was our correspondence about writing and poetry.

QUESTION: But do you really mean that till 7 a.m. your pen goes on at an aeroplane's speed? Then it must be due more to outside correspondence. I don't see many books or envelopes now on the staircase. Is the Supramental freedom from these not in view?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your not seeing unfortunately does not dematerialise them! Books are mainly for the Mother and there is sometimes a mountain, but letters galore. On some days only there is a lull and then I can do something.

I wrote to him, "My nights are again becoming heavy; I don't know how to deal with them." He replied, "So are mine, with a too damnably heavy burden of letters to write."

Then once I warned him: "Tomorrow, by the way, I am going to burst. ATTENTION!" "Eh, what! Burst?" He replied, "Which way? If you explode, fizz only — don't blow up the Ashram."

The next day I wrote; "I am sending my explosion — the result of Darshan!" He responded: "Man alive (or of Sorrows or whatever may be the fact), how is it you fell on such a fell day for your burst? There has been an explosion, as X merrily calls it, beginning in the...¹ but reaching now its epistolary climax and have been writing sober letters to Y for the last few hours. Solicit therefore your indulgence for a guru besieged by other people's disturbances (and letters) until tonight. Send back the blessed burst and I will try to deal with it."

That reminds me of something else he once wrote me, when one day in a fury I attacked his Yoga — "Karmayoga is all bosh," etc. He wrote. "You will excuse the vein of irony or satire in all this — but really, when I am told that my own case disproves my own spiritual philosophy and accumulated knowledge and experience, a little liveliness in answer is permissible."

I often corresponded with him on the subject of poetry. Here is one occasion.

QUESTION: By the way, you didn't like my Bengali poem, or you hesitate to call it mine because of so many corrections by Nishikanto?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was very good; mixed parentage does not matter, so long as the offspring is beautiful.

Here is another:

QUESTION: It seems I am not very rich in the faculty of image-making. And without that hardly any creation worth the name is possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this superstition? At that rate Sophocles, Chaucer, Milton, Wordsworth are not good poets because their poetry is not full of images? Is Kalidasa a greater poet than Vyas or Valmiki because he is full of images?

Then on April 1st he wrote something about Virgil and myself, so I asked him:

QUESTION: I hope you didn't intend to make me an April fool. Otherwise Virgil and Nirod to be mentioned in the same pen-stroke!

But I couldn't read his answer to this, so I wrote:

¹ Word indecipherable (Editor)

QUESTION: Absolutely illegible, Sir. Even Nolinida couldn't read the words.

SRI AUROBINDO: I repeat then from memory: What a modest poet! Most think in their heart of hearts that they are superior to Homer, Virgil, Milton and Shakespeare all piled upon and fused into each other.

QUESTION: You referred to "circumstances being exceptional as regards my early success in English versification." But how are they exceptional?

Then I wrote a doggerel:

Let me know
How 'tis so
A dullard like me
Bursting like a sea,
With the heart of the Muse
Makes his rhythm fuse?

SRI AUROBINDO: You are opening, opening, opening
Into a wider, wider scopening
That fills me with a sudden hopening
That I may carry you in spite of gropening,
Your soul into the Supramental ropening.

N.B. — Surrealist poetry.

QUESTION: You have delighted my soul with surrealist poetry but not my intellect — "widening, widening" is not the cause, but the effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but that's just it — Widen, widen, scopen, scopen, and the poetry may come in a torrent roaring and cascading through an enlarged fissure in your and the world's subtle cranium.

QUESTION: Now I don't see poetry anywhere on the horizon.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know? It may be hiding behind a cloud.

QUESTION: The tragedy is that I know nothing of Inspiration's reasons for arrival and departure.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only unreason or superreason. Keep your end up and it will arrive again and some day perhaps, after Jack-in-the-boxing like that sufficiently, will sit down and say, "Here I am for good. Send for the priest and let's be married." With these things that is the law and the rule and the reason and the rhyme of it and everything.

QUESTION: At times I wonder why the devil I bother my head with poetry? Have I come here for blessed poetry?

SRI AUROBINDO: You haven't. But the poetry has come for you. So why shout?

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Here are some excerpts from our medical correspondence:

QUESTION: X has got phimosis, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: What kind of medical animal is this? My dear sir, if you clap a word like that on an illness do you think it is easy for the patient to recover?

On another occasion:

QUESTION: A doctor says that one has to be firm, stern and hard with women. They may not like it superficially but they enjoy it and stick to the doctor who gives them hard knocks. Is it the cave-man spirit? Dr. Y seems no less a firebrand than myself, but women seem to like him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He must have been a he-man. She-women enjoy it from he-men. But all women are not she-women and all men are not he-men. Moreover, there is an art as well as a nature in that kind of thing which you lack. He is a he-man. Even so the women have ended by saying, "No more of Y."

Once Sri Aurobindo sent me the following letter in which he gently hinted at my reputation as a doctor;

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I don't know why but you have the reputation of being a fierce and firebrand doctor who considers it a sin for patients to have an illness! You may be right, but tradition demands that a doctor should be soft like butter, soothing like treacle, sweet like sugar and jolly like jam.

QUESTION: If tradition demands it we shall try to be softer than butter, but we may be too tempting and evoke a response from the patient's palate for making delicious toasts. Who will save us then?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, if you are too, too sweet. You must draw the line somewhere.

QUESTION: I wanted to be as soft as possible, but couldn't touch Z without making her shed tears. What heartless brutes, patients must be thinking now!

SRI AUROBINDO: Much safer than if they think, "What dears these doctors are, darlings, angels!"

We corresponded on the subject of medical tests:

QUESTION: We examine chemically first a sample of urine, i.e., by chemical reagents — which is called a qualitative test. You ought to know that from your English Public School chemistry, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO. Never learned a word of chemistry or any damned science in my school. My school, sir, was too aristocratic for such plebeian things.

QUESTION: It is very strange, Sir, your school had no chemistry; but for I.C.S., you had no science? Perhaps these new-fangled things hadn't come down then?

SRI AUROBINDO: It (chemistry) may have been in a corner, but I had nothing to do with such stuff. Certainly not. In I.C.S. you can choose your own subjects. They were new-fangled and not yet respectable.

Once I asked him about a patient of mine — an Englishman:

QUESTION: Why the devil does that patient write all these things to you? Are you prescribing medicines, or are we? And what is the use of his knowing the medicines and doses, pray? He could have asked me.

SRI AUROBINDO. Well, what about the free Englishman's right to grumble?

This is not London and there is no "Times" to write to. So he writes a letter to me instead of to the "Times".

QUESTION: Surely there is a twist somewhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: There always is a twist, sir, always.

QUESTION: Well, I won't fume any more or tear my hair.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't. Losing one's hair is always a useless operation. Keep your hair on.

QUESTION: Only tell him, please, that he ought to let us know himself instead of sending a boy with an empty bottle.

SRI AUROBINDO: Dear sir, tell him yourself, tell him yourself. I will pat you on the back in silence from a safe distance.

I used to suffer from chronic boils, so I acquainted Sri Aurobindo with the fact:

QUESTION: Nose boil boiling down, terrible headache, fever, feeling fed up, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Cellular bolshevism, probably.

QUESTION: What's this "cellular bolshevism"?

SRI AUROBINDO: Bolshevism of the cells surging up against the Tsar

(yourself), also the Bolsheviks carry on their propaganda by creating communistic "cells" everywhere, in the army, industries, etc. You don't seem to be very much up on contemporary history.

"Contemporary history" reminds me of a different subject. A friend of mine working in a Corporation confessed to having tampered with the figures. I wrote about him to Sri Aurobindo: "Guru, C writes to me to ask your opinion on his tampering with the figures. I suppose in the worldly life such things are necessary?"

Sri Aurobindo replied: "Not in the worldly life, but perhaps in the Corporation life. All this promises a bad look-out when India gets Purna Swaraj. Mahatma Gandhi is having bad qualms about Congress corruption already. What will it be when Purna Satyagraha reigns all over India?"

In another letter written in 1935, I brought up a topic of great importance. It was after a reference to Hindu-Muslim riots going on at that time in Calcutta.

QUESTION: In your scheme of things do you definitely see a free India?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is all settled. It is a question of working it out only. The question is, what is India going to do with her independence? The above kind of affair? Bolshevism? Goonda-raj? Things look ominous.

Well, I don't need to tell you how Sri Aurobindo's prophecy came true. Neither need I point out wherein lies his modernity. If you have not discovered it, I hope at least you have enjoyed this feast of humour I have offered to you.

NIRODBARAN

REMINISCENCES OF SRI AUROBINDO AND IMPRESSIONS OF HIS ASHRAM

(P.B. Chandwani, the author of the two following articles, is a member of "Servants of the People Society". He sent them to Norman C. Dowsett, Department of Information and Research, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, along with a letter, saying: "You may have forgotten me but I cannot easily forget your courtesy in coming out of your room to show me the Hall of Harmony on the eve of my departure from Pondicherry in February. You and one more Professor, as also a few other Ashram friends, wanted me to record my reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo. So I enclose a short note for whatever use you may like to make of it. Another note, a little longer, is also enclosed, giving my impressions, as a sympathetic observer, of the Ashram, for publication in one of your journals if found fit for that favour.")

I

SRI AUROBINDO — A FEW REMINISCENCES

WAY back in 1905, I had the rare privilege of learning at the feet of Sri Aurobindo, known at that time as Aravinda Ghose, at the Baroda Arts College, when he took charge of it as Acting Principal. I was then in the Intermediate Class and he used to take us in English and teach us Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*. He would often keep his left hand on the table with the thumb touching a finger and pour out his deepest thoughts. While many a student complained that he made no effort to coach us for examination, I felt that his teaching was so exhaustive that no examiner could ever ask a question which we could not answer with the flood of light thrown on it by the learned Principal. And while many of us, including this writer, used to poke fun at several Professors, all the students without exception looked up to him with awe and respect.

In common with a few other students, such as the brilliant K.M. Munshi and A.B. Purani, who were a couple of years senior to me, I happened to be his favourite student and had free access to him at the

college as also at his residence, where he once introduced me to his younger brother, Barindra. Once on a moonlit night, he attended a party organised by me in his honour at the College tennis courts. At the end of the year, having secured a 1st class, a rare distinction in those days, I was offered a handsome scholarship by the Elphinstone College, Bombay, and though I left Baroda contrary to his wishes, he gave me a glowing testimonial in his own handwriting.

Principal Ghose struck us in those days as somewhat reticent and shy. He invariably wore a white suit and turban with a black tie and though he shaved his beard, he sported a luxuriant moustache. Above all, he had the eyes of a mystic and his mind seemed to be in a ferment, as if in preparation for the coming event of his total renunciation at the altar of the motherland. Due to the accursed partition of Bengal, the whole country was seething with unrest and responding to the demand of the times. Sri Aurobindo soon resigned his lucrative office at Baroda, to take over as Principal of the newly started National College and also, a little later, as Editor of *Bande Mataram*, at Calcutta. Every Saturday we used to be on the tiptoe of expectation for his Weekly and avidly pore over its contents. Even six decades and a half have not wholly effaced from my mind the impact created by one of his Editorials under the caption, "The Wheat and the Chaff", in which he described in his own inimitable style the difficulties and dangers ahead and promised his countrymen nothing but the glory and the nameless joy of a life-and-death struggle for India's freedom "and the storms would blow in all their fury and the wheat would be sifted from the chaff".

Soon after, most probably on his way to the ill-fated Surat Congress, he halted at Bombay to deliver three lectures. Without any effort at oratory, his impassioned eloquence held us spell-bound and steeled our will to suffer and sacrifice for the liberation of the motherland from the fetters of foreign rule. Though he had by then risen to the pinnacle of national leadership and despite his heavy schedule of engagements at Bombay, he graciously found time one afternoon to accept my humble invitation to tea with a small gathering of Sindhi students, ascending three flights of stairs, and I still remember how he cut short my eulogistic address of welcome with the remark that individuals did not count — they would come and go — but Mother India would live for ever.

A couple of years later, as we all know, Sri Aurobindo was arrested and tried in the famous Alipore conspiracy case. In common with millions of our countrymen I used to follow the proceedings with bated breath

and was thrilled by his Counsel's address to the jury in which he spoke of our uncrowned king as "a poet of patriotism, a prophet of nationalism and a lover of humanity". No less were we thrilled by Sri Aurobindo's own magnificent letters read out in court — letters, charged with deep emotion, to "dearest Mrinalini", inviting his wife to shed all thought of luxury and brave all privations for the sake of the country. By a singular coincidence, the trying Judge was Mr. Beachcroft who had passed the I.C.S. in the same year as the illustrious accused and the whole country heaved a sigh of relief when the Judge acquitted him. Along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he was the first leader, *par excellence*, to kindle the flame of patriotism in our warm, young hearts and in those eventful years I looked upon him as a demi-god and, even while walking on the public road, would often, with religious fervour, chant his name — "Aravinda, Aravinda" — in a spirit of adoration.

II

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY — SOME IMPRESSIONS

In February, 1971, in the course of my Bharat Darshan Tour, I paid my sixth visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram. This institution stands in a class by itself and as a visitor in quest of Truth, I was profoundly impressed by some of its distinguishing features and felt greatly refreshed in body, mind and spirit.

First and foremost, the Ashram believes in integral Yoga, conducive to the attainment of a higher level of consciousness and the harmonious development of the human personality on every plane, physical, vital, mental and spiritual. Here life is treated as an integral whole and there is no divorce between spirit and matter — only the body and the mind have to remain linked to the spirit and to acknowledge in their behaviour its supremacy. The central aim is no less than "to work out the will of the Divine in the world".

Far from being belittled or denied its natural needs, as is done in the common run of our religious institutions, the body is very rightly treated here as a sacred instrument of the indwelling divine power and, as such, has to be brought to perfection. To make it supple and agile, a Physical Education Directorate has been set up to promote physical culture with all modern appliances. Sports and parades are a daily feature, often followed by thrilling songs. The Ashram has its own farm, bakery and dairy and the food supplied is pure and sattwic — plain but whole-

some and nutritious — and is cooked with scientific precision.

Similarly, to cultivate the mind and beautify the emotions, there is the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education where education is imparted free, from the kindergarten to the post-graduate stage on new lines and students are guided in the study of various subjects according to the level attained in each, supplemented by a variety of cultural activities including music, theatre and cinema.

What is more, these and other multifarious activities are by and large conducted by the Ashramites themselves in a worshipful spirit under the overall direction of the Mother, on the principle of "Each for all and all for each". The workers draw no pay and are in fact expected to surrender all they are and have to the Divine and in return the Mother takes care to supply their individual needs. "From each according to his ability and to each according to his needs" is the guiding motto. The Ashram is thus a shining example of cooperative living and of Socialism in action as distinct from empty socialist slogans.

Lectures are few and far between and attendance is optional. The Sadhaks are left free to study and meditate in their rooms or in the Central Library and Meditation Hall. The whole atmosphere is one of freedom, tempered with voluntary discipline, and therefore conducive to harmony and tranquillity as well as to spiritual awareness. This is true also of the playground and the dining hall. In the latter, where about 1500 persons are fed daily in perfect order (and the number is trebled during the Darshan weeks), even the manner in which the food is served and taken invests such small ordinary acts with spiritual significance.

The Ashram attracts inmates from different parts of India and the world, who live and work together in a spirit of fellowship. "To realize human unity", a new city, "Auroville", is being built at a distance of four miles, "where men and women from all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony".

A wonderful organizing genius, the Mother, silently from her room, continues even at 93, to control and guide all the activities, deriving strength and wisdom from her inner reserves. Besides giving Darshan from her terrace to thousands of eager devotees on four specified days in the year, she sends out sparks from her radiant spirit in the shape of crisp daily messages to the inmates who adore her as the Divine Mother, ever present and watchful over their doings in life from day to day. Even a layman with limited faith like me is prone to feel a new awareness of his own secret thoughts and actions, under the uplifting influence of the Ash-

ram atmosphere and the Mother's soul-stirring messages.

Admissions to the Ashram are sanctioned by the Mother, two indispensable conditions being that the candidate resolves "to dedicate his life unconditionally to the Divine" and is prepared to do approved work for at least six hours a day. For the rest, the Mother, blending wisdom with compassion, sometimes grants admission even to poor, helpless widows and their children who are then accorded parity of treatment with the élite, regardless of all distinctions of class, colour, community or nationality. One other condition observed is that "all those who join the Ashram must leave politics behind", but I was reliably informed that this does not mean that politics as such is looked down upon, provided that the object is not self-glorification or party-advancement but to take up such work, as any other, under divine guidance. Power politics has so vitiated the whole atmosphere in our hapless land that it seems all the more necessary for those who believe in integral life to organize, outside the Ashram but with its lofty inspiration, a sort of a political cell in charge of chosen intellectuals-*cum*-patriots in an endeavour to purify and even spiritualize politics.

Needless to say that the Ashram plays a significant role in sustaining the economy of the town as a whole.

Finally, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother rank among the great seers and sages of the age. Some of their teachings — though ancient as the hills — are expressed in a strikingly original style and therefore go straight to the aspirant's heart. Says Sri Aurobindo: "To fulfil God in man is man's manhood." Of a piece with this was the Mother's birthday (21-2-71) message: "A life fully consecrated to the Divine is the only life worth living." This seems to me to be a more rational approach to life than the traditional belief that Mukti or freedom from rebirth is the goal of life, for if that were so, "Why O Lord, would you have sent us out from the original source into this world?" Again, the dignity of work — including manual labour down to the cleaning of utensils — is aptly recognized in a pithy sentence, pregnant with deep spiritual value: "Work is the best prayer of the body to the Divine."

I should like to conclude with a few beautiful passages culled from *The Mother*, one of the smallest, simplest and sweetest books of Sri Aurobindo:

"There are two Powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unflinching aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from

above that answers. But the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth.

There must be a free and voluntary, a sincere and total surrender, seizing all the parts of the being. "Reject...the false and indolent expectation that the divine Power will do even the surrender for you. The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it. Your surrender must be self-made and free; it must be the surrender of a living being, not of an inert automaton or mechanical tool." There must also be "an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power,...a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood..."

P. B. CHANDWANI

THE MOTHER'S BEAUTY

O Beauty bright! Thou art infinity.
 Unparalleled in the ages of the earth
 Thy grace, compassion and resplendent mirth.
 Thou livest sole for all eternity.

Because Thy Joy is at the root of things
 Therefore we live in joy, in joy we end,
 From other worlds in joy we here descend,
 In our ear Thy joyous cry for ever rings.

In Nature's birds and beasts Thy beauty shines
 And in the flowers of various shapes and hues;
 Thy youthful form in life itself renews
 In Supramental's glorious splendid lines.

Thy beauty stands upon this sordid soil,
 In wonderment we gaze, but Thine the toil.

PRITHWI SINGH NAHAR

THOUGHTS ON SAVITRI

Si propius stes
Te capiet magis.*
Horace, *Ars Poetica*.

THE temptation scene in the New Testament begins with the words: "Jesus was led away by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. For forty days and nights he fasted, and at the end of them he was famished. The tempter approached him and said: 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'Scripture says, Man cannot live on bread alone; he lives on every word that God utters.'" A very tersely phrased and cryptic answer and yet we taste the ambrosia of a deep vital truth which is worth a thousand tracts of spiritual exhortations. Satan did not press for further elucidation but went on to pose other temptations. Probably he, too, knew that such a word has its own authenticity, a self-validating force which does not need to be backed up by any ascertainable empirical evidence for its confirmation.

Christ himself does not elaborate the implications of this epiphany of truth in this confrontation but later in the Gospel of St. John while admonishing the bunch of followers around him he observes, 'You must work, not for this perishable food, but for the food that lasts, the food of eternal life.' And further on, 'The bread that God gives comes down from heaven and brings life to the world.' And when they said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread now and always', Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty.' And who was Christ? In the same gospel it is recorded, "So the word became flesh; he came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of Grace and Truth." This is the power and glory of Jesus Christ that he embodied the unalloyed divine word in himself and became its transmitting vehicle for millions of struggling human beings

On this anguished and precarious field of toil.

(Savitri)

The poet Iqbal also says in a couplet (in the original Urdu):

* "If you stand closer, more will it capture you." (Horace, *The Art of Poetry*)

“Unless thine eyes are fixed on the deeper truths of life, O man, thy existence brittle as a glass will not be able to withstand the hard knocks of this brute material world.”

Yes, man if he feels himself a mere effigy of clay cannot but be filled with a sense of insecurity in front of the immensely destructive forces that threaten his existence day and night. It is the presence of the Divinity within that can fortify him and enable him to walk with some faith and certitude in his destiny. And it is this immanent divinity which recognizes without any external proof the voice of Truth. Where the soul is thickly encrusted over, this word falls like a seed on hard ground and where the flame of the soul is powerful to melt down this crust the seed of the revealed word gets full nourishment and grows in full strength meeting with confidence the challenges of hostile attacks. Sri Aurobindo invokes this eternal word-force in his powerful lyric *Musa Spiritus*:

O Word concealed in the upper fire,
 Thou who hast lingered through centuries,
 Descend from thy rapt white desire,
 Plunging through gold eternities.
 Into the gulfs of our nature leap,
 Voice of the spaces, call of the Light!
 Break the seals of Matter's sleep,
 Break the trance of the unseen height.

The spiritual word exists eternally above, waiting for a certain evolutionary growth of the human psyche and at each stage of our upward spiral we receive the word necessary for our next step in ascent. The writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother give us the word that answers our aspirations in the present age in which the life on our planet has achieved an unprecedented richness, complexity and subtlety. The élite of humanity imbibes nourishment from the forgotten achievements of all the past cultures, as well as the numerous ideals and scientific discoveries of the modern world. Even when one ideal clashes with another it draws to itself something of the truth that opposes it and is yet its complementary. I intend to study *Savitri*, the great spiritual epic, from this point of view to begin with and then its artistic and architechtonic grandeur and nobility.

The first para of the first chapter in *The Life Divine* ends with these words, “The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last, — God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.” In the world we live in we find only the opposites of this quaternary. God is invisible, Light eludes us, bondage

and death are the hallmarks of our earthly existence. Therefore, the word of negation finds the readiest response. Yama in *Savitri* embodies the word of negation and Savitri opposes him with the word of affirmation.

Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient disputants encircled her
Like giant figures wrestling in the night.

This opposition between our present state of existence and what we strive to realize is the source of our deepest anguish and on this steep ascent we need again and again the word of affirmation to sustain us when weariness and despondency overtake us, to fortify us when faith is shaken and reassure us when self-confidence falters and seems to be ebbing away. This word if it is charged with the power of 'the upper fire' can unseal the hidden springs of light and might and reinvigorate us to negotiate the difficult fences and barriers and refresh ourselves with the whiffs of the upper regions of etheric purity. The high spirits are bringers of

Fire-intimations from the deathless planes.

(*Savitri*, Bk.IV, C.2)

And what is this yearning that raises its flame? Well, here is the answer —

That asks a perfect life on earth for men,
And prays for certainty in an uncertain mind
And shadowless bliss for suffering human hearts
And Truth embodied in an ignorant world
And Godhead divinising mortal forms.

These lines sum up in a most straightforward and unadorned manner the goal set forth by Sri Aurobindo's yoga. The truth and perfection are not to be experienced in periods of earth-forgetting trance but to be brought down here in this material world. Nor are the mortal forms to be discarded after one's liberation from the meshes of ignorance but to be divinised and transformed by the power of the Truth. Sri Aurobindo does not place the consummation of a better human life in some never-neverland of the future or in some celestial Goloka and Brindavan but on this hard and solid earth and 'here and now' is the order of the day that rings in these pages. Therefore there is not a single problem of our age that is not resolutely and squarely spelt out, examined and faced in his various writings. The blackest doubts are raised and then penetrated, dispelled and chased away with rays of hope and certitude. About Aswapathy,

the hero of the first three books of *Savitri*, he writes:

In the unapproachable stillness of his soul,
Intense, one-pointed, monumental, lone
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.

(*Savitri*, Bk.III, C.III)

This verse-paragraph of four lines gives to the aspirant of Sri Aurobindo's yoga the guidelines on the path and the basic requisites of the upward journey. In all mountaineering adventures those who set out on the expedition must provide themselves with equipment capable of facing blizzards and blasts and the necessary alertness and circumspection lest they fall into deep crevasses. In the same way the spiritual ascent is fraught with perils and there are endless ordeals and storms and stresses. We cannot face them unless by tireless concentration we pierce through the thick veils that conceal the divine soul in our hearts. This divinity is immune against all inner and outer assaults of the lower nature. Once stationed in that sanctuary we can face all the temptations and terrors that seek to blow us away from the upward path. The first line gives us the most impregnable citadel which no siege of the hostile forces can approach. Whatever the fury and blasting power of the enemy's fusilade we will remain calm and unruffled and no amount of suffering and privation will be able to erode our faith in the Divine Grace. But our aspiration has to be one-pointed, intense, firm and free from all attachments. The third line is exemplified in the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Only perfect embodiments of hope could have kept the torch of faith blazing in a battle so wearisome and long drawn-out. This infinite patience can stem only from a source of undimming hope. And lastly the aspirant will find that when all his strength to reject and extirpate deeply-entrenched powers of ignorance has been sapped his most powerful weapon will be prayer, invocation to the higher powers. And ultimately in spite of all setbacks and failures this will break the resistance of the lower vital and clear his path. His famous sonnet, *The Iron Dictators*, turns the tables on the hostiles with this mantric prayer:

Thou, only Thou canst raise the invincible siege,
O Light, O deathless Joy, O rapturous Peace.

A word about the perfect artistry of the four lines from *Savitri* is also called for. Notice how the massive power of 'monumental' is recaptured and reinforced by the rhythmic inversion of 'Motionless' in the last line and this is further given stability by the short vowels and heavy con-

sonantal weight in the word 'pedestal'. After the slow, clogged and over-weighted movement of the second and third lines the word 'prayer' with an almost unclosed vowel-movement gives us the sense of a final breakthrough. One feels as if a tunnel that was being hewn out patiently has been finally dynamited and the gleam at its far end has justified our unquenchable hope and the promise made elsewhere:

Our soul shall justify its chequered walk,
All will come near that now is nought or far —

(*Savitri*, Bk.I, C.IV)

What greater assurance can be given than the one shining out from these lines?

The heavens accept our broken flights at last.
On our life's prow that breaks the waves of Time
No signal light of hope has gleamed in vain.

(*Savitri*, Bk.X, C.III)

What a solace is contained in the first line! How many times one makes frantic efforts to soar beyond the pull of gravity and yet because of some hidden or overlooked weakness falls plumb to the ground crestfallen and despondent! At such moments it seems all the efforts have ended in a limbo of futility. And in that mood of utter frustration to know that

The heavens accept our broken flights at last
is to be bucked up again and to restart the journey with the joyous faith that God has not turned away his face from us.

(*To be continued*)

RAVINDRA KHANNA

OF THE UNSPOKEN THINGS

It is of the unspoken things I write;
Of fragrances and essences distilled
In morning's marbled air and evening's light,
The pure desire, the heart that leaps in flame,
The ardor of a soul to meet Thee full
And steady in Thy Blazing White and merge
In Thee, becoming Thee, yet worshipping Thee,
And pass unending eons at Thy Feet.

RICHARD EGGENBERGER

INDIA'S NATIONAL LANGUAGE

"Sanskrit ought to be the national language of India..."

Languages taught at Auroville...English as an International language..."

The Mother

"A fallen nation recovers its nationhood through a sense of its past greatness and its future mission."¹

How is India going to recover a true sense of her past greatness unless her sons know at first hand something at least of her past record? Interpreters we have had in plenty; they have distorted more than they have explained. Translations of Indian works are soulless things; they convey little of the beauty and power of the originals; sometimes they create a distaste for the text, because the translator, usually a learned grammarian and philologist, "could construe Sanskrit well enough but could not feel the language or realise the spirit behind the letter".² A gross misunderstanding of the whole body of the Vedic hymns is a classic example of what a translator might do. He can be tolerably useful when he deals with the Dharmashastra or Arthashastra literature, perhaps even in his translations of philosophical polemics — though he dare not touch the more abstruse styles like that of the Navya-Nyaya for example. But when he comes to Kalidasa or the other classical poets, he turns out productions that are hardly better than schoolboys' cribs.

It is no wonder that most of our educated men are ignorant of India's past greatness; their normal reaction is to turn away in apathy from the records of our past.

And yet, "ask the Indian of the obscurest village, 'Which is the greatest country in the world?' and he will unhesitatingly answer, 'India'. Press him for a reason and he will tell you, 'It is because this country has produced the world's finest men, the Rishis of old who founded a religion and a social system the like of which has never been heard of amongst the other nations of the earth.' It is this deep-rooted faith of a people in its ancient greatness that is the surest guarantee of its future. The instinctive reverence of the people for the past must however be converted into a reasoned conviction.... Once you have built out of a nation's

¹ Bandemataram, 19.6.07., 'The Main Feeder of Patriotism'.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Eight Upanishads*, "On Translating the Upanishads".

past the sure prospect of its future, the national mind is certain to apply itself passionately towards the fulfilling of that future...."³

What Sri Aurobindo says here about the unlettered villager applies with equal truth to the young children in school. "Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him, and through them let them master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history."⁴

But how is all this to be done, if the educator is not sufficiently familiar with what he is going to teach? How can he talk convincingly about something he does not know at first hand? This makes it imperative that every educated Indian should be made to learn Sanskrit, and master the language as well as he knows his mother tongue or English. Anything short of that will not serve. The one main reason why Sanskrit has failed to make any impression on our educated youth so far, in spite of it being made a compulsory subject in some regions like Bengal and Bombay up to the Matriculation level, is the paucity of the instruction given, the lackadaisical attitude of both Pundit and scholar towards the Sanskrit lessons, and the general contempt in which Sanskrit studies have been held among the "higher" educational circles in our country. To be a Sanskritist is to be dubbed a "Pundit", which is another name for rustic if not worse.

All this must change, if India is to become India again and recover her rightful place among the nations of the earth. "Nothing has stood more in the way of the rapid progress in India, nothing has more successfully prevented her self-finding than the long overshadowing of the Indian tongues as cultural instruments by the English language...."⁵ Most of the modern Indian languages have now recovered from this eclipse. It is a strange irony of fate that the oldest of them all, the richest and most powerful, one from which all the rest derive their lustre — this ancient Sanskrit language should have been relegated to this position of neglect. If, as Sri Aurobindo has suggested, "language is the sign of the cultural life of a people, the index of its soul in thought and mind that stands behind and enriches its soul in action",⁶ then where is the language with a better claim to recognition in India than Sanskrit?

"The language itself, as has been universally recognised by those competent to form a judgment, is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments developed by the

³ *Bandemataram*, 3907, "The Nationalist's Faith and Hope"

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education*, Chapter 4.

⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Chapter 28 ⁶ *Ibid.*

human mind, at once majestic and sweet and flexible, strong and clearly-formed and full and vibrant and subtle.... It is perhaps the most remarkably finished and capable instrument of thought yet fashioned, at any rate by either the Aryan or the Semitic mind, lucid with the utmost possible clarity, precise to the farthest limit of precision, always compact and at its best sparing in its formation of phrase, but yet with all this never poor or bare...."⁷

It will be hardly an exaggeration to say that this language, Sanskrit, more than any other single agency, has helped to build this ancient Indian race. "One might almost say that ancient India was created by the Veda and Upanishads, and that the visions of inspired seers [transcribed through this language] made a people.... The Mahabharata and the Ramayana [the grandest products of the classical tongue] have played a great and well-recognised formative part in the life of the Indian peoples."⁸ The later creations of the Indian mind — the great classical literature in Sanskrit, the scientific and philosophical writings of the later period, the colossal compendia of the age of decline — bear ample evidence, if evidence is needed, of the contribution of Sanskrit to the growth of the Indian mind. It remained *par excellence* the national language of educated India for a much longer time than has been the case with any other language in the world; the only comparable instance is that of Mandarin Chinese, neither Arabic nor Latin has had such a long and glorious past.

If Sanskrit is to regain its old position as the national language of India, it will do so not by virtue of any constitutional amendment but because it will make for a real, psychological and spiritual unity. But in order to fulfil its true function, it must be rid of certain defects of decadence. "A language passes through its cycle and grows aged and decays by many maladies: it stagnates perhaps by the attachment of its life to a past tradition and mould of excellence from which it cannot get away...."⁹ The tendency to look erudite and sound difficult was one of these signs of decadence in Sanskrit. "It must get rid of the curse of the heavy pedantic style contracted by it in its decline, with the lumbering impossible compounds and the overweight of hair-splitting erudition...."¹⁰

One way might be to co-educate the Pundits, a rather forbidding task. Another way might be to take up the teaching of Sanskrit as a

⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Book 3, Chapters 10, 13.

⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, Chapter 28.

⁹ *Ibid*, Chapter 32

¹⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *Arya*, 1916 "Sanskrit Research".

spoken language, on lines now adopted for the teaching of the modern European languages, eschewing grammar as far as possible and using the "direct" method. The grammar of the Sanskrit language as it was developed under the auspices of the great Panini centuries before Christ, remains one of the monuments to linguistic scholarship in the whole range of human studies. But this grammar has become a formidable obstacle in the hands of the Pundits, the time normally allotted by them for this one particular subject being nothing less than twelve years! The grammar has obviously to be very much simplified if it is to be of any use to the ordinary mortal. It is indeed a sad thing that a simplified grammar that Sri Aurobindo is said to have prepared once for the study of Sanskrit has been lost. Studies could certainly be undertaken to simplify the grammar, reducing the number of tenses and moods, making a greater use of the simple participles, minimising the use of *sandhi* and *samāsa* to the barest essentials, perhaps even cutting out the dual number in the paradigms, with a greater reliance on the possessive in place of many of the cases (as was sanctioned by the old grammarians when Sanskrit was a spoken tongue) — these are some of the changes that occur to mind.

Vocabulary presents another formidable barrier. The ordinary method of the Pundit is to memorise the whole dictionary — *amara-kosa* and the others — before beginning to read. One is reminded of a Pundit who actually tried this method (with the Gem Dictionary) for the study of English. But here too an easier approach is possible. Sanskrit is enormously rich in synonyms and the test of the pedant is how many of these he can command in polemics or poetry. For the less exalted purposes of ordinary conversation and simple exposition, one need not master the entire dictionary. If Basic English can do with only about a thousand words, why should Sanskrit be an exception? A list of such basic words as are essential for ordinary purposes could easily be drawn up and taught through interesting lessons.

There is also the question of script: one has to consider the merits of the Devanagari and the English scripts for the writing of Sanskrit. And pronunciation will always present a minor problem, as in every spoken language. Solecisms — like the Bengali fondness for the *j* and the *n* and the *ś* and the complete disregard for the long and short in vowels, the Benares insistence on pronouncing the *sh* as if it were *kh*, the West Indian and South Indian use of the *ru* in place of the difficult *r* — may have to be condoned for the time.

Two questions of immediate importance arise. How is this simplified

Sanskrit to be made to pupils in school and college, and what should be done about the adults who are strangers to it? It may be suggested that Sanskrit, always in the simplified form, should be taught at the secondary and college levels, upto the degree standard, as a compulsory subject for all, throughout India. Those whose mother tongue is Urdu may find it a little more difficult than the rest; but this difficulty could easily be surmounted, as was surmounted the difficulty about Persian in Turco-Afghan and Mughal India. Adults brought up on English alone will find the switch-over a painful task. But given a sufficient amount of time, and opportunities of study — again, it must be emphasised on practical modern lines — the difficulty of adaptation could be minimised. After all, what is expected of the learners is not to become Pundits but to be able to talk and write a simple language with so many roots in their common past.

“It will not be a good day for India,” says Sri Aurobindo, “when the ancient tongue ceases entirely to be written or spoken.”¹¹ One can ensure that this contingency will not arise. This will also set at rest the long controversy which has unfortunately taken an ugly political turn, for nobody can object to a simplified Sanskrit as our common national language.

This by no means implies that the regional vernaculars should lose their importance; far from it. These have by now been fully assured of a continued and vigorous existence, thanks to the work of great literary figures over the last century. Encouragement must continue to be given by the State and cultural agencies, to all kinds of faithful work in these languages. Their robust and independent existence is one of the surest guarantees of India's national integrity, “since it is on the solidarity of its regional and race units that the greater Pan-Indian unity can alone be firmly founded”.¹² And nothing makes for solidarity more than language. The surest way of ensuring this solidarity would be to impart education at the primary and secondary levels, as far as possible through the medium of the regional vernacular. At the higher levels, the vernacular literatures will continue to be studied, as a specialist discipline for those who choose, but there should be no compulsion, as there is at present.

The English language and its literature — the two could hardly be separated in the educational process — should on the other hand receive a great deal more of attention at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Bandemataram*, 6 8 07, “The Seventh of August”.

One would make bold to suggest that, contrary to all present trends, English should be made the sole medium of instruction at these higher levels, and may therefore have to be begun as a compulsory language study at the secondary stage. The reasons are plain. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "the English language and literature is practically the only window the Indian mind...possesses into the world of European thought and culture..."¹³ We cannot afford to shut ourselves up in a narrow shell. "The world is changing rapidly around us and preparing for more colossal changes in the future. We must rise to the greatness of thought and action which it will demand from the nations which hope to live.... We must necessarily be in it and of it, with a large place in the human future."¹⁴ Already the future is upon us. India "stands already as a considerable international figure and this will grow as time goes on into vast proportions; she is likely in time to take her place as one of the preponderant States whose voice will be strongest and their action determinative of the world's future. For all this she needs men whose training as well as their talent, genius and force of character is of the first order."¹⁵ One of the main ingredients of this training must necessarily be a thorough acquaintance with and a full mastery of all that is valuable in modern knowledge, in humanities as well as in science. This needs a solid background of linguistic and literary training, at least in the English language; no amount of translations can keep pace with the tremendous advances in these fields.

There is another and probably more important reason why English should be a firm possession with us. To this Sri Aurobindo draws pointed attention. "The world is making itself anew under a great spiritual pressure, the old things are passing away and the new things ready to come into being...."¹⁶ It demands a poetic "speech that opens more constantly the doors of the intuitive self in the caverns of light of our nature..., the speech that shall come by the rending or removal of the golden lid between our intelligence and the effulgent supra-intelligence and effect a direct and sovereign descent and pouring of some absolute sight and word of the spirit into the moulds of human language".¹⁷ In this respect, English poetry "has an unsurpassed power of imaginative and intuitive language and has shown it to a very high degree in the intuitive expression of

¹³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, Chapter 1

¹⁴ Sri Aurobindo, in an interview to the *Hindu*, in 1915, reproduced in *The Advent*, November 1966

¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Message to the Andhra University*, 1948

¹⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, Chapter 32

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Chapter 31

the life-soul and to some degree in that of the inspired intelligence. It seems therefore a predestined instrument for the new poetic language".¹⁸ If then "our aim is to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and experience of all kinds, the English tongue is the most widespread and is capable of profound turns of mystic expression which makes it admirably fitted for the purpose; if it could be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying."¹⁹ This gives a special value to the study of English in our institutions of higher learning that is apt to be missed.

English must therefore continue to remain with us; our highest patriotic sentiment demands it.

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter 32.

¹⁹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Third Series, Section 6.

YES, FIAT

When sweeps the moulding fire the verse is free,
 However intricate and finely made;
 The solid ground is dug, the beams are laid,
 The towers raised in one percurrence,
 One mastering truth and easy urgency
 That is the power and grace that cannot fade,
 The piercing, carving of the tempered blade
 That swings in lifting light and majesty.

Not flaccid, shapeless, mud-game smeared and spread
 Like hogs and little boys, nor hacked and strained
 And picked at, twisted, overworked, born dead:
 Not noise the secret is, or splush, or pained
 And sweaty labor at the forge, where gloams
 The smoke-thick dulness, curse of dwarfs and gnomes.

JESSE ROARKE

INDIAN COTTON, THE WORD *SINDHU* IN ASSURBANIPAL'S LIBRARY, AND THE SANSKRIT *KĀRPĀSA*

(This article was written some years back. Dr. H. D. Sankalia, the well-known Indian archaeologist, sent it to a South Indian historical review for publication. But somehow it never saw the light. Perhaps it was lost in transit or misplaced by the editors of the review. The author lately found a spare copy among his papers and thought it advisable to feature the article in Mother India without delay. The subject is of long-standing interest and importance in Indian history.)

I

IN book after book on ancient India we read what we may conveniently summarise with a passage from A. D. Pusalker apropos of the contact between India and the West in olden times:

“The word ‘sindhu’ found in the library of Assurbanipal (668-626 B.C.), which has been interpreted to mean ‘Indian cotton,’...shows contact with India....Hebrew *sadin*, cotton cloth, Arabic *satın*, Greek *sindon*, all come from *sindhu*...”¹

Pusalker’s next sentence reads, “Hebrew *karpas* and the Greek *karpas-os* are from Sanskrit *kārpāsa*, cotton.”

On the face of it, the double piece of information looks rather self-contradictory. If *kārpāsa* for cotton could travel West and impress itself sufficiently to give birth to *karpas* in Hebrew and *karpas-os* in Greek, what need was there for the word *sindhu* to arise in Assyrian for the same stuff and produce similar effects with the Hebrew *sadin* and the Greek *sindon* (as well as the Arabic *satın*)?

Our question becomes all the more pertinent in view of two facts. First, *kārpāsa* is a genuine Indian term for cotton, whereas there is no *sindhu* to mean the same in Sanskrit. Second, do we not find, among the names of plant products Assyria has contributed to Western languages, “cotton” from *kitu*?² With *kārpāsa* and *kitu* present, *sindhu* seems to lack

¹ In *The Cultural Heritage of India*, edited by several hands (Calcutta: 1958), Vol 1, p. 148

² R C Thompson, *Classical Review* (No, 38, 1924), p. 148 I take this reference as well as the next from R A Jairazbhoy, *Foreign Influence in Ancient India* (Bombay 1963), pp 22, 30

support and sounds spurious.

However, it is not impossible that the Assyrians, importing the cotton-tree from the Indus region, came to know its product as *sindhu*. And the likelihood of this increases when we learn that the cotton-tree arrived in Assyria just a little before Assurbanipal's time. It was during Sennacherib's reign (704-681 B. C.) that the cotton-tree was introduced from India: he is reported to have said that trees bearing fleece were sheared and shredded for garments.³

And if *sindhu* did signify Indian cotton, there arises the momentous issue of how far back in time the word first appeared in Assyria. Since many things in Assurbanipal's library — for example, the Gilgamesh epic — are copies from older documents, may not *sindhu* be derived from ancient Babylonian times, which were partly contemporary with the Harappā Culture of India? The cotton-tree, no doubt, appeared only at the beginning of the seventh century B.C., but cotton itself must have been exported to Mesopotamia by its earliest known cultivator, the Harappā Culture, which traded commercially with that region during the period 2300-1700 B. C. If the term *sindhu* were derived from such antiquity, it would definitely mean that the civilisation which could give rise to so Sanskrit a term for one of its products must have contained an Aryan element and been post-Rigvedic.

Hoping that this word had its origin in early Mesopotamia, I wrote to the famous Assyriologist, Dr. Samuel Noah Kramer. He was kind enough to send a prompt reply — clear, unpretentious and touched with humour. It was written on an offprint of an article of his, *The World's Oldest Known Prescription*:

Dear Mr. Sethna,

The only expression I know for cotton is used by Sennacherib — “the wool-bearing tree”; if *sindhu* is used in the cuneiform lists for “cotton”, I am not acquainted with it. You might write to Professor Bruno Landsberger, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Ill., for more up-to-date information. As for cotton in India in the third millennium B.C. from a Mesopotamian source, you will find an interesting note by Père Scheil in *Revue d'Assyriologie* 22 (year 1925), pp. 55-6, which depicts an Indus Valley seal probably from the city of Umma which carries an impression of what may have been cotton stuff.

³ L. W. King, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 909, p. 339.

Sorry I cannot be more helpful, but perhaps these prescriptions may be — though I would not try them.

Samuel Noah Kramer

I was surprised that Dr. Kramer had nowhere come across *sindhu*. Could it be that such a reading was unrecognized now among specialists, as distinguished from general students, in Assyriology? To make sure, I directed Dr. Kramer's attention to the specialist who had first brought the term into vogue. He replied from the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania:

July 15, 1961

Dear Dr. Sethna,

I have now examined carefully the Sayce reference — it is on page 138 of his Hibbert Lectures on *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, and it is my conviction that Sayce's statements are erroneous. The Akkadian word to which he refers is not *sindhu*, as he writes it, but *sinṭu*. Its exact meaning is still uncertain, but the indication from the syllabaries is that it refers to a specially processed wool or woollen garment; it has nothing to do with India or the Indus.

Respectfully,
Samuel Noah Kramer

I wrote back, expressing my thanks for an authoritative pronouncement on a popular belief. I enquired about the antiquity of the word, mentioning also its alleged Greek and Hebrew forms. Finally, I asked Dr. Kramer's permission to quote his name in the Note I was intending to write for some historical journal. I received his answer:

September 30, 1961

Dear Mr. Sethna,

Please forgive my delay in answering yours of 25/7, since I was away from my desk for a while.

It is quite all right to quote me (you should also mention my assistant M. Civil who did the "footwork" on the lexical material).

The word *sinṭu* (not *sinṭu* as I wrote it in the letter of July 15, where the apostrophe over the "s" was accidentally omitted) is found in several syllabaries from the Ashurbanipal library, but there is

every reason to believe that at least some of them were current in the Old-Babylonian period, that is, about 1800-1600 B. C.

Greek scholars no longer agree that *sindon* is derived from *sindhu*, cf. e.g. *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie*⁴ under *Baumwolle*; nor is there any justification for the equation with the Hebrew *sadin*.

Sincerely,
Samuel Noah Kramer

Thus my hopes of Aryanizing the Harappā Culture by means of *sindhu* from Assyria were dashed, but a wide-spread and long-repeated mistake was at last rectified. It no longer has any reason to appear in books on ancient India.

II

The Indian *kārpāsa* is the only word with which we are left. We cannot trace it to very early times in the West, but that would scarcely cancel the possibility of its having been fairly ancient in India herself. We may legitimately ask, "Does it derive from those who, insofar as we know, were the originators of cotton-cloth, the Harappāns? If so, what would its ethnic implications be for the Harappā Culture?"

It is certainly not from any Sanskrit root. S. K. Chatterji⁵ tells us that it derives from the Austric language and that the weaving of cotton cloth was an Austric or Proto-Australoid invention. In that case, the Harappā Culture, which was the first known weaver of cotton-cloth, must have coined the term *kārpāsa*. But would this prove that the Harappā Culture was Proto-Australoid, and rule out the possibility of other elements, particularly Aryan traces?

According to the skeletal material, the Proto-Australoids were only a part of the Harappā population. There were also Mediterraneans, Alpines and Mongolians — pure or mixed — and the first-named type seems to have been predominant. But culture and race are not the same thing. The predominant culture could have been Austric, even though the Mediterraneans or the Alpines may have been in the majority. Can we take *kārpāsa* as an indication that this was precisely the case at Harappā and Mohenjo-dāro?

⁴ The full title is: Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altethumswissenschaft*, 942-43

⁵ In *The Vedic Age*, edited by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker (London, 1952), p. 50.

Hardly. Even severely restricting our universe of discourse, all we can say is that the element in the varied Harappān population which first concerned itself with cultivating the cotton-tree was Austric. But this is not very enlightening; for Vedic society itself included the Austrics in its fourth caste, the Śūdras, among whom were the labourers who did cultivation. And, if we look at the actual sentence in which Chatterji gives us his information about cotton, we shall realise that the Rigveda, too, had relations with the Austrics: "The Sanskrit names for cotton (*karpasa*, *karpata*) and silk-cotton (*śālmali*, *śimbali*) are of Austric origin." Now, both *śālmali* and *śimbali* — the latter under the form *śimbala* — are found in the Rigveda. The fruit of the *śālmali* is regarded as poisonous (VII. 50, 3), but the car of the bridal procession is made of its wood (X. 85, 20).⁶ *Simbala* denotes the flower of the *śālmali* (III. 53, 22).⁷ Nor are these terms the sole Austric ones in the Rigveda. There is, for instance, the far more common word, *bāna*, for "arrow", which Chatterji⁸ declares to have been equally an expression supplied by Austric speakers to Indo-Aryans. So all the less need we assume that *kārpāsa*, as an Austric term, must bespeak a predominant Austricism of culture: the culture within which it occurs could even be Rigvedic.

Lastly, we may remember that for all its Austricism and its Harappān origin, the term in question has come down to us through the documents of a society whose Aryanism can never be challenged: the Sūtras. Hence, on the strength of it, there is not the least call for the non-Aryanisation of the Harappā Culture.

Of course, if we assume from the outset — as most historians do without direct archaeological testimony or definitive linguistic-literary evidence — that the Aryans invaded India *circa* 1500 B.C., and developed the Rigveda between 1500 and 1000 B.C., the Harappā Culture is bound to be non-Aryan sheerly by its having preceded the Rigveda. But, on the assumption that the Rigveda was post-Harappān, how are we to explain the most curious fact that cotton-cloth is utterly unknown, not only to the Rigveda but also to the three other Vedas, and to all the Brāhmanas, Āranyakas and Upanishads; and that the word *kārpāsa* is encountered only when we reach the Sūtras? Can we believe that what was in constant use for 1000 years (2500-1500 B.C.) in the centres of the In-

⁶ A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, *The Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (London, 1912), II, p. 366.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 380

⁸ Chatterji, *Op. cit.*, p. 50

dus Civilisation according to the conventional chronology — or at least for 550 years if the new shorter estimate, 2300-1750 B.C., proposed by D. P. Agrawal is accepted — could fall into total disuse for nearly a millennium, the time between the earliest Mantras and the earliest Sūtras? The question is surely one to give us pause.

Should not the first occurrence of *kārpāsa* in the Sūtras suggest that the whole body of diverse Indian literature — extending over almost ten centuries and a large number of provinces — from all of which this word is absent, was anterior to the Harappā Culture, the first cultivator of cotton?⁹

K. D. SETHNA

⁹ A more extensive and detailed treatment of the subject is under preparation by the author.

"LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL"

LIFE IS A BATTLEFIELD

(Continued from the issue of July 1971)

"Our life is a march to a victory never won." — *Savitri*

LIFE is a perpetual battle between what is and what should be; one has to find a way out. So long as life is under "the siege of the lower nature" it is bound to be a battle.

When the spiritual mind wants to establish control over life's activities and the vital being rises up in arms, then what battle ensues he only can say who is in the field of Sadhana.

Sadhana means a call to battle, the battle with one's own nature. It is no less fierce than a hot war.

Then why plunge into Sadhana at all? Without effort, without struggle nothing can be gained in this world. No Sadhana, no lasting peace.

One must bear in mind these uncompromising words of the Mother: "...it is you who should walk, nobody will take you on his back and carry you."

We ourselves are the makers of our destiny. The choice is left to us whether we take a flight to the skies or pass our life crawling like worms in the dust. All depends on what we want to be. Says the Mother, "On the quality of your aim depends the quality of your life."

There reside in each of us "two people". One wants to keep us tied down where we are and as we are. It prefers the *status quo* and stubbornly resists any change. It compels us even to do "what we abhor". The other wants us to reach the status of God Himself. It is this silent desire of the soul that does not permit one to remain satisfied, however lavishly life's hopes and ambitions may be fulfilled.

A question agitates the minds of many: why do those, who hunger for the Divine, encounter suffering throughout their lives?

Let the Mother give the answer:

"In life you are unconscious... you know nothing of yourself... you are and remain always incapable of filling your mission, therefore you do not meet troubles, you are not in the core of the difficulty. Your defects are small, your virtues are small, your capacities mediocre and your

difficulties mediocre totally, constantly.

"It is only when you begin to walk on the path of realisation that your possibilities become real and at once your difficulties become much greater.

"Difficulties are sent to us exclusively to make the realisation more perfect."

It may further be asked: Who is fit for Yoga?

All those who are fed up with this mechanical life which has reduced man to "a machine among machines".

All those who are fired by the desire to bring a change in their lives, a change in the world in which they live.

Man is free to shape his destiny as he likes. For each of us God has fixed a role to play. The more man becomes conscious of his destined goal the more he is likely to realise his affinity with the Divine. "The nearer one is to the Divine the more his destiny puts on divine qualities."

It is the ego that does not allow us to hear the call of the Divine. "Most people live in their ordinary outer ignorant personality which does not easily open to the Divine."¹

Blessed are those whose life is offered like a flower to the Divine right from their childhood.

Fifty per cent of the children whom I asked individually said that they did not know what they wanted to be. It is the mothers, teachers, guardians who must implant the seeds of greatness like Madalsa into the soil of these youngsters in their very infancy if they want to see them victorious in their battle of life.²

Asked what he wanted to be, a little one gave the prompt reply: "I want to be a teacher", and when he came of age the Mother wanted him to take up the work of teaching. He was a brilliant boy but his mother did nothing to arouse in him any kind of high ambition in life.³

Seeing how well-to-do boys and girls went to schools and colleges, a young boy of poor parentage decided that he would obtain the degree of M.A., whatever be the cost, and he became an M.A. His life is now

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p 2

² A Russian girl claimed, "I know how to educate my son as no teacher can do. I teach him Russian, his father speaks with him in French and the nurse in English." (The sense was this, I do not remember the exact words)

³ In an interview the Mother said to Dilip Kumar Roy: "I always blame people for not being ambitious enough. I always tell people — be more ambitious — ambitious to grow, ambitious to be divine warriors, ambitious to achieve things really worthwhile . . . Let it be your ambition to be content with nothing less than the highest."

(*Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*)

a blessing to those students who come seeking his help, which is given free of charge.

A little bit may be told here of Rishabhchand's life. In his college days he took the decision as to how he would mould his life, and decided upon his future career. He resolved not to go into service. Though a graduate with mastery over English he started selling silk from door to door, not minding the opinion of others. Furthermore he vowed never to tell a lie (a rarity these days) or resort to unfair means of making money. He took care to choose the best quality goods and hence his prices were higher than the market rate. People at first refused to pay more but he stuck to his choice. Another restriction that he imposed on himself was that he would visit only four or five places even if he had to return empty-handed. Thus began his Yogic discipline, while in business, in the heart of Calcutta.

How long could such sterling qualities in life fail to make a mark? The seed of honesty and truthfulness that he had sown in business blossomed in time into a flowering tree and his children are now enjoying the fruit. Two shops are now in their name.

When Rishabhchand turned to Yoga, he at once rose in the estimation of others. I need not speak more of him here.

A youth from Gujarat entered life on a monthly salary of four rupees. By taking a keen interest in textile mills he soon came to represent a number of mills in Calcutta. And this he did for 25 years. He achieved great success in spite of heavy odds against him and paved the way for his children to become men of crores.

A young boy used to accompany his mother whenever she paid a visit to a Sannyasi. The Sannyasi was held in high esteem by the townspeople. "Why is he worshipped by people like a god? Can I also become like him?" rose the delightful question in the mind of the youngster again and again. He grew up to be a Yogi of a stature that called forth a biography of 300 pages. What a price he paid to conquer the evils of life! If he had not dared the devil with a will to do or die, could he have risen so high?

The only thing needed is to "push oneself forward into the light."¹

"What do you want the Yoga for? To get power? To attain to peace and calm? To serve humanity?

"None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the Path.

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome II.

"The question you are to answer is this: Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine? Is the Divine the supreme fact of your life, so much so that it is simply impossible for you to do without it?... If so then only it can be said that you have a call for the Path."¹

These few lines of the Mother, though read in their rendering in Hindi, happened to change the destiny of a young woman serving in the Defence Ministry and drawing a salary of Rs. 350 a month.

"I felt fired," she said in a chocking voice. "These words of the Mother showed me the way where lay my future and what the Divine demanded of my nature. All in me seemed to be ready to take up the challenge.

"In 1956 I happened to visit the Delhi branch of the Ashram. The moment my eyes fell on the Mother's photo my memory went back to the dream I had had four years earlier."

"Before coming here, did you see the Mother in a dream?" There was pleasant surprise in my tone.

"Yes, sir," she continued, "the Mother came into my life four years ago but my soul lay fast asleep, my ears were sealed, I could not respond to her call. When I read the above lines I seemed to be awakened from a deep slumber.

"From that time I gave myself to the reading of Sri Aurobindo's books eight hours a day. His writings didn't appear unfamiliar to me. The most valuable thing in my life is Sri Aurobindo's books and now I have all of them, including *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. I don't like to spend money on anything except his books."

To draw her out a little further, I interposed: "I hope this enthusiasm will not drop down soon?"

"You are free to take it as you please." She seemed to be touched by my remark. "My heart is burning with the desire to give all to the Mother, all, all, the very cells of my body, but I don't know how to do it.

"First I got my only son admitted to the education centre of the Ashram. That was the greatest joy of my life. In 1971 I applied for permission to find a permanent abode at the Mother's feet."

"What did she say?"

"All facilities were granted to me. The one abiding ache in my heart is that the Mother has done so much for me but I am not able to give myself wholly, fully to Her. Mentally I am very weak, hence unable to

¹ *Words of the Mother* p 5.

do what I wish to do.

"I have not yet had the joy of her physical touch, but I yearn more for her inner touch than the outer. I don't feel void, nor is there any depression in me. Time and again there arises a cry from my grateful heart; 'The Mother has done so much for me!'"

There is one among us who is very frank and outspoken. On my request to say something about himself he retorted, "Tell me something about yourself first."

"No wealth of experience. Nothing spectacular to boast of. My attempt is only to glean and record the life lived at the period when the earth is blessed by the touch of the Mother's feet," was my quiet answer.

"My Sadhana," he said "is that of a warrior. When my vital being refuses to co-operate I give it a kick and force it to do my bidding. At times, not only does it revolt but attacks vehemently. I don't care. A warrior must bear blows with a smile on his lips. We have to move on whatever the cost."

This attitude is not very congenial to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Effort is necessary, yet one must not rely most on one's personal effort, but on the Divine's aid. The true warrior (true vital being) must emerge from the inner recess; then only light can conquer and the struggle end.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TWENTIETH SEMINAR, 26TH APRIL 1970

THE Twentieth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 26th April 1970 at the Centre of Education from 8.30 to 9.45 a.m. The subject chosen by the Mother was:

IS THE AIM OF LIFE TO BE HAPPY?

The following five members participated as speakers:

Aveni, Ayati, Kumuda, Selvi, Subhash.

The Seminar began with a short piece of the Mother's recorded music. Then Kishor Gandhi read out the following answer of the Mother to the question contained in the subject of the discussion:

"Is the aim of life to be happy?

"This is just putting the things topsy-turvy. The aim of human life is to discover the Divine and to manifest it. Naturally this discovery leads to happiness; but this happiness is a consequence, not an aim in itself. And it is the mistake of taking a mere consequence for aim of life that has been the cause of most of the miseries which are afflicting human life."
(28.3.1970)

After this the five members delivered their speeches. Then the Seminar ended.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

NIGHT DESCENDS

As the darkness filled my head
Shapes of unknown size and quantity
That never stay stable but are always moving,
Drifting — over, around, beneath —
Through the dark folds
Of the unknown velvet blackness —
Emotions so great that I cannot fathom them,
Always pulsing with unreal reality
And yet always there.

JAMIE KEWLEY
(About 13 years old)