

# MOTHER INDIA

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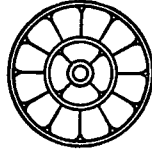
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXV

No. 1

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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# THE OPENING SECTIONS OF THE 1936-37 VERSION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

*(Continued from the issue of December 1982)*

## PART ONE: EARTH (*Contd.*)

### BOOK I (*Contd.*)

#### The Book of Birth

- 4.\* ALONE he moved across infinity,  
Met by the myriad structures of the Self,  
Seeking a clue amid things measureless,  
Till there arose what seemed a mountain tier  
Of the ascending steps of consciousness,  
A ladder of delivering Descent  
And rungs which Nature climbs to Deity,  
A many-patterned ground of all we are.  
Our being here is an entangled web  
Made from the borrowed stuff of numberless worlds. 630  
A pittance of their light to earth is cast  
And with small straying fragments of their force  
Some blind laborious Spirit strives to make  
A little image of the mighty Whole.  
A calm and luminous Secrecy within  
Approves his work for this frail changing sketch,  
When once its mystic lines have met their source,  
Shall stand out from the background of long Time  
A glowing epitome of the eternities,  
A little point reveal the infinitudes. 640  
A Seer within him knew an ordered plan  
Hidden behind our momentary steps

#### \* From Sri Aurobindo's Notes

"These are very long sections and their divisions also are very long, chapters rather than paragraphs..." (12.11.1936) "The subtitle 'Ascent to Godhead' covers the two sections, the one just finished and the one now begun . It seems to me that these chapters are growing very long, so put this one as a separate section without a name." (15.11.1936) "I am not quite sure of the sections (titles) yet—the fourth section is obviously a continuation of the Ascent to Godhead—it is the realisation of Godhead with which it will end—after that the Unknowable Brahman, then the Purushottama and finally the Mother." (19.5.1937)

And this ascent a thread of the great weft.  
 Assailing range by range the endless tier  
 He mounted towards an indiscernible End:  
 Above him was the white immobile Ray,  
 Around him the eternal silences.  
 Across a subtle Matter's reign he drove,  
 Peopled with types of all our world attempts  
 And in the attempt half-forms or forms amiss. 650  
 Immune from the inertia of our clay,  
 Plastic and passive to the all-shaping Fire,  
 Its substance lifted by a larger breath  
 Embodies the perfection earth demands,  
 Pursues the heart of beauty to its home,  
 Captures the fugitive sweetness we desire.  
 All here we slowly build from gathered parts  
 Or with long labour stumblingly evolve,  
 Springs there self-born in its spontaneous right.  
 A splendour of significant thoughts above, 660  
 A cosmos of harmonious forms between,  
 A chaos of dissolving shades below,  
 Its roots plunge down to our unconscious base.  
 Out of its fall our denser Matter comes.  
 Passed from this fine material paradise  
 At once he entered great disputed fields  
 Where Life is master of herself or slave,  
 Tortured by her own powers or proud and blest.  
 Above him was a wider radiant air.  
 A lively ether quick with joy and flame 670  
 Uplifted in its vivid floating hues  
 A gleaming world of strange felicities.  
 In griefless countries under purple suns  
 A finer happier sense had there its home,  
 A fierier force than earthly limbs can house,  
 A beauty and greatness of unfettered Life.  
 Free, uncondemned to struggle with her mould  
 As here in our inapt material frame,  
 Life there was substance, matrix and content.  
 No alien Night was here to blind her eyes, 680  
 No fall debased the godhead of her steps.  
 Innocent and candid and divinely pure,  
 Abandoned to her rapid fancy's moods,  
 In the rich coloured riot of her mind

Magician builder of unnumbered forms,  
Her law was her unbound creative will.  
Overflowing from her own magnificent plane  
Here too the mighty gracious Angel poured  
Her splendour and her swiftness and her thrill,  
Hoping to fill this new fair world with her joy, 690  
Smite with her charm and passion mind and nerve  
And force delight on earth's insensible frame.  
But while the magic Breath is on its way,  
Before her gifts can reach our prisoned hearts,  
A dismal intervention dims her powers  
And mars the winged and wonderful passenger;  
Its dreadful and misshaping crucible  
Turns all her glory into littleness  
And all that sweetness to a maimed desire.  
A rayless region swallowed him in its swathes. 700  
In strange domains where all is living sense  
Unordered, every darkling impulse counts  
And random shapeless energies seek for form  
Taking each wisp-fire for a guiding sun,  
His eyes, piercing a phosphorescent air,  
Beheld the secrets of the shifting flux  
That rules the thought and passion of our flesh  
And throws into earth's dull tenacity  
This ferment of desire that cannot sleep,  
These wandering unsure steps and push for change. 710  
Always they hint some nameless joy that flees.  
But vain for ever is the sacrifice,  
Its priest an ignorance that only makes  
Paltry mutations in the altar's plan  
And casts blind hopes into a changeless flame.  
There are the fountains of our animal self,—  
A field of fickle mists and figures and hues  
Thronged with bright prompters passionate and small,  
Trivial scene-shifters of the human play  
Who urge the act, combine the circumstance 720  
And toss man's frail desires from hand to hand  
In their inconsequent and devious game.  
Imps with wry limbs and carved beast-visages,  
Movers of petty lusts and wraths and hates,  
And others fairer but unsouled and poor  
Weaving the earth-bound loves that cannot last,

The hopes that fade to drab realities,  
 Set the mosaic of life's comedy.  
 Inordinate their hold on human hearts.  
 Against all higher Light their stuff rebels, 730  
 Instinct and passion are their norm and rule:  
 Only to Titan strength their will lies prone.  
 Yet behind all a secret sweetness lives,  
 An urge of miniature divinity  
 That planned our nature's hidden happier scheme,  
 And sometimes it breaks out through the sordid screen  
 And kindles a flame that makes us half divine.  
 Our smallest parts have room for deepest needs,  
 And when the greater Self comes sealike down,  
 All shall rise up in its delight transformed 740  
 And, captured by the unconquerable flood,  
 Submit to beauty and to light and love.  
 But first life's heavenlier path we must create,  
 Cleaving the darkness with the mystic Fire.  
 Across the dangerous haze, the pregnant stir  
 He through the astral chaos smote his road  
 Besieged by sorceries of its fluent force.  
 Thence he emerged into pale freer skies  
 But shadow-swept or dubiously lit,  
 Where flowed a stream of forms and happenings 750  
 Burdened with meanings mind cannot pursue,  
 Crowded with undertones of Life's rhythmic cry.  
 Life laboured in a strange half-real air  
 Denuded of her sweet munificent suns,  
 Conscious of fall and her diminished flame,  
 And, driven by scanted light and faint dream-brush  
 To use a sparing and impressionist art,  
 Portrayed her signs in dual twilight hues  
 On a grey background of incertitude.  
 Although, checked, barriered in at every step, 760  
 Still she remembered her inherent power,  
 Still strove to embody with her sorcerer's wand  
 Her surge of fanciful realities,  
 Dim renderings of the splendour she had lost,  
 Beings and shapes and scenes innumerable,  
 Torch-carriers of her pomp of Space and Time.  
 For even oppressed, half-blinded, she obeys  
 A hungry need to lavish everywhere



Her myriad symbol and significance  
 Of Spirit in its many-mansioned self, 770  
 Capturing its great-winged wandering thoughts to dwell  
 In figures of her million-impulsed Force.  
 Over vague ever-shifting borders drawn,  
 He crossed her countless fields and provinces,  
 And met the leaping springs of death and birth,  
 Saw thread-beginnings of her skein of works,  
 And watched her weave her tangled weird design,  
 The screened and difficult theorem of her clues,  
 The dance-fantasia of her sequences.  
 Much marvelling at her skilful intricate craft, 780  
 Her puissances that move our heart and sense,  
 Her mind that toils unsatisfied with its fruits,  
 Her hundred baffling faces of the Truth  
 And rash unseizable freaks of leaping change,  
 Her mutable masks, her broideries of disguise,  
 He explored her riches more a thousandfold there  
 Than these poor caskets of earth-make can house.  
 Then sated with her quick and curious lore,  
 Out of her daedal lines he sought escape.  
 For of all things she knew the trace and law, 790  
 But hid in forms the being from its own view;  
 A Wisdom lacked that makes the Spirit free,  
 And nowhere was assured content or peace.  
 But neither gate of horn nor ivory  
 He found, nor postern of spiritual sight.  
 There was no issue from that dreamlike Space.  
 Far now from him the larger vivid air  
 That breathed round her free heart of joy and grace,  
 The bliss his eyes had glimpsed, his nerves had felt,  
 Where glowed unrobbed<sup>1</sup> by shadow and by mist 800  
 Her half-way Paradise of fulfilled desire  
 For which our suffering mortal nature yearns  
 As yearns the obscure moth to blazing Light.  
 Wherever he turned, beat a new flood of scenes:  
 Endless was the contrivance and the stir;  
 Each final scheme lapsed to a sequel plan  
 Of creatures and their doings and events,  
 Some city of the traffic of bound souls,  
 Some market of creation and her wares,

<sup>1</sup> Unriven

As if that turmoil were the whole of things, 810  
 And all existence' sum were only this—  
 A play without denouement or idea,  
 A hunger march of lives that have no goal,  
 The labour of an unaccomplished Force  
 Tied to her acts in a dim Eternity.  
 It seemed a tumult of half-realised might  
 Awaiting a golden Hand that never came  
 To raise them to Heaven's calm sublimities.  
 Always athwart her crowded eager steps  
 He felt a hostile and intruding Mind, 820  
 Effacing the signposts of her pilgrimage,  
 Barring with fierce hard disharmonic notes  
 Her rhythms, its will to afflict, unkey and spoil,  
 Baffling the half-blind chained divinity  
 That seeks itself amid the myriad cry  
 And hued bewildering wonder of her chant,  
 The uncertain signal of her swift events  
 And the hieroglyphic of her pageantries.  
 In field or way, in closed or open ground,  
 Wherever he went he marked the imminent eyes 830  
 And tiger sinuous prowl and come and go  
 Of armed disquieting bodied Influences  
 Walking like goddess figures dark and nude,  
 And ominous beings passed him on the roads  
 Whose very gaze was a calamity,—  
 Shapes that were threats alarming the dream-air  
 And bore a dreadful meaning in their lines  
 Or could in a moment dangerously change.  
 These following to find their secret's core,  
 In their returning wake he entered dun 840  
 Fell suburbs of those cities of dream-Life.  
 There she displayed, a dark and fallen Spirit,  
 Overtaken as if by a Gorgon spell  
 Her perilous face of evil beauty and charm,  
 Her rapture vision of infernal joys,  
 Her gargoyle masks obscene and terrible.  
 Around him pressed in sombre nightmare pomps  
 Deeds infamous, wild works of ruthless strength,  
 Scenes foul or cruel, hideous or macabre,  
 Thoughts that can poison Nature's heavenliest breath, 850  
 Acts that reveal the mystery of Hell.

Beings he met who seemed like earthly men  
 But bodied all that is subhuman, vile,  
 Though raised to human scale by the touch of Mind,  
 Yet lower than the lowest reptile's crawl,—  
 Oft, some familiar visage studying,  
 Discovered suddenly Hell's trademark there,  
 Or knew by the inmost sense that cannot err,  
 Though harboured in a soft or virile frame,  
 The demon and the goblin and the ghoul. 860  
 All too that is low, sordid-thoughted, base,  
 All that is weak and limp and miserable,  
 Found there its dismal harsh autonomy.  
 All lived in its own bond of norm and type  
 And breathed in dull content its native air,  
 Arrogant, gibing at more luminous states:  
 None felt the yearning, the divine release.  
 Each loved and hugged its dreary autarchy,  
 Glad of the freedom to be only itself 870  
 Or proud of its abysmal absolute.

*(To be continued)*

# WORDS OF THE MOTHER

## THE DIVINE

THE Divine is everywhere and in all, He is all. Yes, in His essence and His Supreme reality. But, in the world of progressive material manifestation, one must identify not with the Divine as He is, but with the Divine as He will be.

30 June 1952

*(Collected Works, Vol. 15, p. 297)*

## THE DIVINE PROTECTION

So many people doubt the effectiveness of the Protection, the safety of the Path, because others go astray. And in their egoism they tremble with fear instead of telling themselves... what is the cause of all catastrophes, small or great, which threaten those who follow the path of yoga without having taken the necessary care to be sufficiently pure and sincere.

No protection, no Grace can save those who refuse the indispensable purification.

And I would add this: that fear is an impurity, one of the greatest impurities, one of those which come most directly from the anti-divine forces which want to destroy the divine action on earth; and the first duty of those who really want to do yoga is to eliminate from their consciousness, with all the might, all the sincerity, all the endurance of which they are capable, even the shadow of a fear. To walk on the path, one must be dauntless, and never indulge in that petty, small, feeble, nasty shrinking back upon oneself, which is fear.

An indomitable courage, a perfect sincerity and a sincere self-giving, so that one does not calculate or bargain, does not give with the idea of receiving, does not trust with the idea of being protected, does not have a faith which asks for proofs—it is this that is indispensable in order to walk on the path, and it is this alone which can truly shelter you from all danger.

*(Questions and Answers 1956, pp. 261-62)*

## TRY...

Try, just for an hour, try!

“I want nothing but the Divine, I think of nothing but the Divine, I do nothing but what will lead me to the Divine, I love nothing but the Divine.”

12 May 1954

*(Collected Works, Vol. 6, p. 133)*

# AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

*(Continued from the issue of December 1982)*

MYSELF: I have observed that whatever I have decided to give up and am ready to fight out with all my strength tries in all possible ways to take advantage of my weakness, thwart me and baffle my resolutions. In other words, it tries to entangle me in its clasp. Is this the rule?

SRI AUROBINDO: That always happens; when one gets the definite release, then they fall away. 9.12.1933

MYSELF: Mother, today my concentration was amusing. When the mind was becoming one-pointed various thoughts began to enter in and when I took interest in them, I observed with a startle that the consciousness was moving from inward to outward: the concentration was all on a sudden losing itself in various useless thoughts and then again getting collected—so, there is a tendency for the movement to get externalised. Am I right in my observation?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the present nature of the physical mind—its motion is outward. 9.12.33

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, when I heard that letters to Sri Aurobindo would be discontinued, then at first I felt very sad that we were going to miss Sri Aurobindo's contact, but immediately felt how selfish I was, and at once I started feeling in the other way and was really glad that Sri Aurobindo would have a little rest; Mother, through writing letters to him regularly for such a long period I came so near to you and him, but at the same time I understood quite well that I must be more intimate inwardly.

SRI AUROBINDO: The books and letters are not going to be discontinued—but I shall have to take one day off in the week (Sunday). The volume of the correspondence is becoming enormous and it takes me all the night and a good part of the day—apart from the work done separately by the Mother who has also to work the greater part of the night in addition to her day's work. It is this that makes the Pranam later and later, for we do not finish till 7-30 or after. Also much work falls in arrears and piles up and many things that have their importance have had to be discontinued. Some relief is necessary. If all sadhaks were more discreet it would be better. But this does not apply to you, for you keep always within the limits. 19.12.33

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, I am thinking of giving up writing to you regularly—can I do so? I shall write whenever I need to write: in my difficulty, or about work or permission, or concerning my sadhana, otherwise I do not want to take up

Sri Aurobindo's time in this way. I am really feeling so very sorry for you both.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think it would be good for you to discontinue altogether like that. Your discontinuing alone would not make any appreciable difference, and besides your book was not part of the heavy baggage. At the least you could write every second day and on other days whatever may be urgent. But I would prefer to have a few lines from you at least each day. 20.12.33

MYSELF: Gracious Mother, surely I will take rest as long as you want me to do so. I am feeling really sorry to think that as it is you have so much work to do and I increase your work because of mere negligence and carelessness on my part. In this way I help to prolong my own physical suffering instead of allowing myself to be cured soon. Anyhow from now on I shall remain very quiet without doing any work. So from now kindly let me know frankly if you have any objections to anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: After an illness like the one you had, the body remains very sensitive especially where it has been touched in the illness and one should be very careful for some time afterwards. This weather is very bad for these things and it is easy to catch a chill in it. I don't think there is any other cure; it is a physical struggle which is going on and of which all this illness is the result. These were the reasons for which we were urging you to be careful for some time. 21.1.34

MYSELF: Mother mine, I know it is my weakness and carelessness and laziness too to make a constant effort for rejection, I haven't enough will to undergo the discipline of constant effort and it is because I wanted to give up all these small habitual things that all these old things have come in my way; anyhow, I don't want to deceive myself in any way. If I am unable to see anything hidden behind this movement of self-deception, pray make me conscious.

SRI AUROBINDO: The vital in the physical easily slips back to its old habits if it gets a chance. It is there that they stick. They go entirely only when that part gets equanimity and a simple natural freedom from all desires. 22.3.34

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I am physically all right by your grace today; only, I am not feeling so cheerful. I am not doing properly the things which I ought to do. I am neither sincere nor serious about the sadhana etc. etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Whatever you see, don't get disturbed or depressed. If one sees a defect one must look at it with the utmost quietude and call down more force and light to get rid of it. 3.4.34

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, out of the two methods which is better: either to go on writing poems till one comes in contact with the original source of inspiration or to concentrate first till one gets the contact? It seems to me (if I have understood aright) the Mother approved of the second method when I had asked her. But my concentration leads me to deep meditation; and I meditate not only when I concen-

trate—the result is that whenever I sit with closed eyes I fall into meditation. However, whatever the means, the point is the opening. And so long as it doesn't happen I can take up your poems and try to translate them as an exercise. What do you say? I would then live in your atmosphere. Until the inspiration comes down, I can go on with concentration as well as the translation of your poems. Please give me your frank opinion.

SRI AUROBINDO:<sup>1</sup> Dhyān is perhaps the best way—for if you can get into the consciousness which makes all poetry which proceeds from its original, that is the best, even if it means postponement of the actual writing of poetry. The habit of writing no doubt increases the skill and mastery of verse, but then it might only be verse such as all good *littérateurs* write. A higher inspiration is necessary. As for translation I don't know—if anyone has the translator's gift like Dilip or Nishikanto then it is all right—but otherwise translation is more difficult than original writing.

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, one question: it is about poetical expression. Our poet has written in one of his songs, "What a numerous crowd of water-maids are playing Holi with diamond powder in the sea!" Is such a combination permissible? For, "diamond" indicates a bright whitish something while "powder" here indicates red, for the Holi is played with a red powder and gives a different impression. "Diamond", which means sparkling white cannot possibly qualify something which is red: it is contrary to fact. Are we then to understand that even something inconsistent and having no resemblance to reality can be poetically used? When the sun rises or sets, poets usually describe it as "The disc of red powder" or, during the sunset when the entire sky is red and red, the poets say, "The body of the sky is sprinkled all over with red powder." Such images have no incongruity and the impression is just. The truth of reality takes its proper form there. The red being called powder doesn't destroy the impression, since the powder is red. Nevertheless, I don't know what is permissible in poetry and what is not. So I would like to know, learn and understand.

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on what the poet wants to say. The scattering of red powder or liquid is the outward traditional sign of the Holi and when the poets so describe the sunrise, that is the image they want to bring out. But the poet may want to express something else, something which has the force and reckless play of the Holi, the spirit of that play but it need not be in the exact outward form—from this point of view there may be a Holi-play in which what is scattered is not red colour but a spray of diamond hue. A poet is not bound always by the physical outward fact, he can play variations on things, provided he expresses some essential truth of them in his image.

14.4.34

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> The original of this letter cannot be traced. The transcription seems faulty in places.

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of December 1982)

## The Mother's Message

This is the  
interesting story of  
how a being became  
the Divine Life



18

THE new month—September 1956—began with a spell of slightly cool weather which fortunately held on. The Mother sent me a card illustrating flowers—*Impatiens balsamina*. Underneath the picture she had written: “Generosity!” She continued with these words:

16



"Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,  
I shall be able to see you Tuesday morning the 4th September at 10.45, as you told me that my dress would be ready.

"My love and blessings and the Grace are constantly with you."

The Mother went to the Prosperity Room at about 3 p.m. as on every 1st of the month. Afterwards she went to play tennis. Then at the Playground she gave interviews to people.

That day there was also a movie. Thus the day came to an end.

The succeeding morning I received from the Mother a card with a printed flower on it—Sunflower, *Helianthus*,—along with these sentences:

"Here is the consciousness turned entirely to the Supramental Light, the Divine.

"In the constant presence of the Grace, my love and blessings are always with you."

The Mother has conveyed the meaning of this pretty flower:

"Consciousness turned towards the Supramental Light. It is a thirst for Truth and will find its satisfaction only in the Truth."

Since it was Sunday, I remained in my room and stitched the Mother's dress which was to be given to her on Tuesday.

Monday elapsed with the same routine except that I finished stitching the Mother's dress and gave it to the embroidery department for ironing.

The next morning a card came, revealing the flowers—*Gaillardia Pulchella*—underneath which the Mother had inscribed "Future Success", accompanied by these words:

"À tout à l'heure at 11.45.

"With love and blessings and the Presence of the Grace always."

The Mother has beautifully explained about "Successful Future" in the book, *Words of the Mother* p. 81:

"Do you know what the flower which we have called 'successful future' signifies when given to you? It signifies the hope—nay, even the promise—that you will participate in the descent of the supramental world. For that descent will be the successful consummation of our work, a descent of which the full glory has not yet been or else the whole face of life would have been different. By slow degrees the Supramental is exerting its influence; now one part of the being and now another feels the embrace or the touch of its divinity; but when

it comes down in all its self-existent power, a supreme radical change will seize the whole nature.”

At the appointed time the Mother saw me in the Meditation Hall upstairs. I opened the box in which I had kept her dress. She took it in her hands and examined the stitches minutely. The happy expression on her face told me more than words could ever have conveyed. The Mother smiled at me and nodded her head and laid her hands for a moment over mine, with a light, firm pressure that was reassuring. Her extraordinary deep blue-grey eyes were full of a strange brilliance like moonlight. She closed them for a few seconds, then she got up from her chair, gave me flowers and embraced me warmly.

In the evening when I went to the Mother at the Playground, she pointed out to me the dress she was wearing. My happiness was reflected in my broad smile.

We meditated for quite a long time. After that she told me that she intended to show me her own paintings very soon so that I could have some idea about oil painting. And she gave me a charming smile.

The morning after, a card indicating the flowers *Antirrhinum majus* arrived. Underneath the picture the Mother had written: “Power of expression”—and these words followed:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta.

I am sending back your note-book corrected. It was good this time and expressed fairly correctly what I have said.

“My love and blessings with constant Grace present are always with you.”

Now she saw my notes regularly. If she could not manage to see them in the Playground, she took them to her own apartment in the Ashram. On the card dated 7th September 1956 she wrote:

“I am sending your book corrected. It is good—but I forgot to tell you that it must not be shown to others as it contains many private things.

“My love and blessings and the constant Presence of Grace are always with you.”

I had been cautious as regards the note-books, but now I was more vigilant.

In the evening when I sat at her feet, the Mother went into a trance for more than fifteen minutes. She awoke and pressed one hand across her eyes, then slowly raised her candid eyes to meet mine, and with a smile she said:

“Child, I am not thinking and using my memory; whatever comes from above to the heart, I am doing exactly according to that and automatically the things go on wonderfully. Nothing to remember and no botheration about anything.

"If the head is completely blank, still and peaceful, and, if you open yourself to the Divine's Light, you can receive it, and afterwards there is no brain-work, no headache, no thinking and active mind; whatever comes from above is true and all happens without any struggle; also it can happen at every moment. Thus automatically the Divine's Light works on the brain and things become easier."

I thought to myself, I had still a long way to go to achieve that wonderful state of consciousness.

\*

On the 9th it was Sunday. The Mother wrote:

"I would like you to come today to the Playground at 5.15 instead of 5.30, because from 5.30 on I shall be terribly busy with a lot of people to see and a lot of things to do, and I wish to see you before.

"With my love and blessings in the constant Presence of the Grace."

I went to the Mother at the appointed time. We meditated together. It was nice to be with her even for a few minutes.

The succeeding morning a picture card of the flowers *Hibiscus miniatus* came from the Mother. Underneath the flowers she had written "Eternal smile—the smile that disperses all clouds." She had continued on the same card:

"I am sending back your book—it is getting better and better daily.

"With my love and blessings along with the constant Presence of the Grace that are always with you."

I was extremely pleased to have my notes corrected by the Mother. Sometimes she used to send my note-book in the afternoon before she went out.

One afternoon she sent me the note-book with these encouraging words:

"I am sending back your book with my appreciation of the effort to emerge from the darkness and my certitude of a good success."

I was exceedingly touched by her words. I never knew at that time that she had in her vision the plan of *The Story of a Soul*, but a year later I came to know that she did have it.

Before the French lesson the Mother saw me in her room at the Playground. After a short meditation, she gave me a kiss and some flowers.

She got up from her divan. We started for the class. Suddenly she came very close to me, turned me round and while pressing my back with her two hands said:

"Child you must walk straight. Tuck your tummy in, with chest out and chin up. Then you will look taller."

I stood on my toes and said: "Look, Mother, this tall?"

She laughed softly and nodded.

Round shoulders were hereditary in my family. I could not help it. But, certainly, I could improve my posture. Besides, I was self-conscious. Most girls are.

I used to stoop very much, but gradually I tried, by doing certain exercises, to walk straight as the Mother had wanted.

\*

On the 11th the Mother gave her answer to me about Laljibhai's letter:

"I have seen once more the letter of Laljibhai and it is as I told you—it concerns the business and things are getting on well here. Send my blessings and love.

"In the constant Presence of the Grace, my love and blessings are always with you."

Laljibhai was now trying to obtain a licence from the Government of India to instal a sugar mill in Pondicherry. The Mother was helping him in his venture.

In the evening she asked me whether I had written a letter to Laljibhai. I told her that I would write soon.

On the morning that followed, a lovely card displaying a flower—*Clitoria ternatea*—came from the Mother accompanied by these words:

"This is Radha's consciousness. Let it come to you.

"With all my love and blessings in the constant Presence of the Grace."

The following two sentences from the Mother's Cent. Ed., Vol. 15, p. 16, suffice to know about Radha and her consciousness:

"Surely she has lived and is still living."

"Radha's consciousness symbolises perfect attachment to the Divine".

\*

On 12th September the labourers of the Ashram went on strike. They all stood under the balcony and loudly repeated slogans. God alone knew what they spoke, because their language was double Dutch to me. At that time I could not understand

or speak Tamil save for a few words.

The Mother was extremely kind and considerate towards the workers. She helped them generously. But unfortunately on their side they were so ungrateful and selfish that they would not try to understand the noble gesture of the Mother and her good will and sympathy for them.

Not only the labourers but the whole human race failed to perceive her Light. This reminds me of a few lines from *Savitri* Bk.I, C.I, p.7:

“Earth’s grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears  
Rejected the undying rapture’s boon:  
Offered to the daughter of infinity  
Her passion-flower of love and doom she gave.  
In vain now seemed the splendid sacrifice.”

\*

I was now absorbed in writing all that the Mother explained to me as regards spirituality and painting.

Day after day she went on seeing my note-books and correcting them.

A fine card came from her indicating red and yellow flowers—*Amaryllis*—and these lines followed:

“I am proceeding with your book and have reached the part concerning painting—but this will take a little more time because many things have to be explained.

“Meanwhile you can write on your other note-book.

“My love and blessings with the constant Presence of the Grace are always near you.”

In the evening I saw the Mother in her room at the Playground. We had a nice meditation together. She reminded me to go to her the next morning in her apartment in the Ashram to see her paintings. And she smiled lovingly.

The next morning, 15th September, the Mother sent me a card saying:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,

“I am sending the book of yesterday, corrected. It is good. With a new blotting which I think you will like.

“À tout à l’heure at 10.45.

“With my love and blessings.”

I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs. I stood there, taking in the whole scene at one glance and gasped in sheer wonderment. Many paintings lay all over the place

—some were on chairs, some others on tiger-skins, a few on a divan and the rest on small stools. In fact, this display gave me the impression of a tiny exhibition.

The Mother entered the Hall with a bunch of white roses, which she gave me. Then smilingly she started introducing each of her paintings.

First she pointed to one of them and said:

“This is the interior of the *Manoir de Cantepie* in Normandy, France. I spent some time there and did some paintings.

She added:

“In Normandy there are some ancient castles which are more than 1000 years old. I saw them.”

The painting gave me the feeling of a comforting warmth.

The Mother held my hand and led me to another painting and said:

“This is a musician’s room. I painted the picture in the house of Erlanger, the composer of *Fils de l’Etoile*, in 1902-1903 in France. You can see in the painting a play of light and shadow.”

I found it impressive and lively.

Then there was another picture—a nude woman sleeping on a divan. Here there were also fruits, roses, a charming antique jar and a glass on a low stool.

This painting certainly gave an effect of happy luxury and harmony.

We moved on. There was a painting of the Mother’s son André, when he was just a child of five years. She said with tenderness:

“Somebody gave a postman’s suit to André. I painted him in it.”

And she laughed softly. There was also another portrait of André. Both of them were very expressive.

Then the Mother showed me a painting of black and green grapes, other fruits, pots and a glass. The whole composition was superb. I let my eyes rest again and again on the picture. I saw in her shining eyes a spark of delight as she said with a sweet smile:

“Ah! you see, I won the first prize for this painting in Paris.”

I said: “Mother, no wonder I find it so vivid and full of light.” A smile still hovered upon her lips.

Next a portrait of a beautiful woman half turning her head to look over a bare

shoulder as if she would speak presently.

Then there was a portrait of a Japanese man, Hiraswa—one of the Mother's best paintings. She did this painting in 1917 when she was in Japan. She told several people that the portrait came out very well.

There were yet four more paintings. Two showed exquisite landscapes and two exemplified Japanese ladies—one lady in her room and the other on a veranda.

I have read about Japanese arts in the book, *The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, compiled and edited by Joseph Head & S.L. Cranston, p.85:

“Lafcadio Hearn says:

‘Architecture, painting, sculpture, engraving, printing, gardening—in short, every art and industry that helped to make life beautiful—developed first in Japan under Buddhist teaching.’”

Then the Mother took me to the corridor which is between Sri Aurobindo's room and the Meditation Hall upstairs. There I saw several big and small paintings which hung on the walls. Time had really ruined them a great deal. They had lost their original colouring and turned almost black. Nevertheless they were still full of subtle light and vibrations.

She said with a sigh:

“These paintings have become dark but still you can see the composition and the play of light and shadow.

“In some paintings the colours have cracked. Somebody here rubbed heavily against the pictures with a rough cloth in order to clean them. But they are not to be treated so.”

And she shrugged her shoulders philosophically.

The Mother and I came back to the Meditation Hall. She finally showed me a small, half-finished painting of one of her visions—a heavenly garden in which roamed two ethereal beings. The whole scenery was so concrete that I was totally lost in it for a few moments and felt as if from the garden there had drifted the perfume of exotic flowers. The Mother brought me back from my reverie when she said with regret:

“Child, unhappily I could not finish this painting when I was in France, because there was no time for it. I had so many things to do.”

She remained silent for a while and then spoke:

“I truly love to do painting, but where is the time? Indeed, I did some paintings

in France and I remember that a very rich man, Monsieur Pellerin, a manufacturer and art-collector who used to have a huge collection of paintings, purchased one of my paintings. After his death, the whole of his collection was auctioned. As far as I know, my painting was sold at a much higher price than what the rich man had given me for it."

After a pause, she continued:

"My paintings were sent to several art galleries and exhibitions. I had my own personal collection of them in France, but for the rest I do not know what has happened, because towards the end of the nineteenth century their track was lost.

"Later, I did some paintings and sketches in Algeria at Tlemcen where I learnt occultism. Then after many years I did some paintings and sketches in Japan. You know, mostly I used to stay in a temple and I remember sketching a view of the front of the temple on a Kakemono with black ink. Many of my paintings I brought to Pondicherry, but they got damaged in transit. Also the passage of time has spoilt them. Some of the paintings are in the Japanese exhibition at our Golconde,<sup>1</sup> some are in my stores and the rest in various rooms of my apartment."

I listened to her attentively and then said: "Mother, your paintings must be preserved nicely." She smiled at me and slightly shook her head and said:

"Well, I am not interested in my paintings, because there are so many good artists."

I raised my eyebrows and said: "Mother, I marvel at your modesty. Nevertheless, I like your paintings very much. I find a divine touch in them." She gave an enchanting smile, her face suffused with a delicate blush.

Later I saw many of her sketches which she had done in France, Algeria, Japan and in the Ashram. Here is the record of her work:

The Mother's paintings:

A musician's room, 1902-3 in France.

A lady coming down a staircase in Normandy, France.

André at the age of five in a postman's suit.

A portrait of a woman looking back over her bare shoulder, before 1910 in France.

A nude, before 1910 in France.

Grapes, pots, glass, before 1910 in France.

Chairs, table, vase, etc. before 1910 in France.

\*

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese exhibition is now no more at Golconde and the Mother's paintings are kept in several places—especially in the Ashram Art Gallery.



In 1907 the Mother was in Tlemcen, a town in Northern Algeria. She stayed at the place of Max Théon, a Polish-Jewish cabbalist, from whom she learnt occultism.

She painted his house in 1908, as well as a portrait of him.

The Mother went to Japan in 1916 when she was 38 years old. She stayed up to the beginning of 1920. There she did quite a number of paintings and pencil sketches.

Hirasva, 1917.

Snow on a tree, 1917 in Kyoto, Japan.

Front of a temple surrounded by trees and flowers, 1916 in Kyoto.

A Japanese lady in her room, 1917-18 in Kyoto.

A Japanese lady on a veranda, 1917-18 in Kyoto.

\*

The Japanese Goddess Kwannon, the Goddess of mercy, 1925, in Pondicherry.  
The Divine Consciousness emerging from the Inconscient.

The Mother's pencil sketches:

The Mother's grandmother (maternal), 1905 in France.

A gracious personality, very aristocratic-looking.

Max Théon, 1908, in Tlemcen, Algeria. He had a scanty beard and remarkably powerful and penetrating eyes and a strong personality.

Rabindranath Tagore, 1916 in Japan.

James Cousins, Irish poet.

Nobuko Kobayashi, 1916-19 in Japan. She was a great friend of the Mother and came from Japan in 1959 to see her in the Ashram.

A daughter of the Prime Minister of China, 1916-19 in Japan.

Hayashi, 1916-19, Japan.

Portrait of a girl—no identification.

Portrait of a man—no identification.

Portrait of a man relaxing.

Portrait of Eric Basse in black ink.

I came to know that one of the Mother's sketches, which she had done in black ink, is still kept in a temple in Japan.

Painting portraits of people reminds me of a joke:

An artist to an old farmer: "I will give you Rs. 10/- if you let me paint you."  
"Okay," agreed the farmer hesitatingly. "But you will have to tell me how to get the stuff off when you have finished."

When the Mother came from Japan in 1920 to stay near Sri Aurobindo, she did many pencil sketches of the Sadhaks and Sadhikas in the Ashram in the course of the years:

Barin Ghosh, 1920. Suresh Chakravarty, 1920. Amrita, 1920. Kamala, 1928-30. Purushottam, 1931. Chinmayee, 8-7-31. Chandulal, September 1931. Nolini, 1931. Anil Baran, 1931. Doraiswamy, 1931. Vasudha, 1931. Champaklal, 2-2-35. Romen, 1936. At Highland (Ashram—Pondicherry Agriculture Farm). A village woman who asked the Mother to draw her portrait, 9-6-47. Ali, 11-6-47. Alice, 13-6-47. Bilquis, 1947. Ambu, 14-6-47. Shanti, 14-6-47. Dyuman, 19-6-47. Pranab, 22-3-49. Tara, 4-3-49. Bratati, 27-3-49. Priti, 28-3-49. Debou, 29-3-49. Minnie, 30-3-49. Amiyo, 1.4.49. Violette, 2-4-49. Gauri, 4.4.49. Bina, 25-4-49. Chitra J., 12-10-51. Tarina, 1952. Gauri, 29-6-57. Agami, 26-8-58.

Portrait of a dog, 1931. Portrait of a cat, 1931. Portrait of a lion, 1931. Portraits of cats, 1931—in order to show that cats too have human expressions.

The Mother also did sketches of a few visions as well as of some landscapes.

While teaching me how to draw, she did many pencil sketches. Sometimes she used crayon for sketches. She also did portraits of me. Later when we were doing the paintings of *Savitri*, she made numerous sketches so that I might acquire ideas of the higher worlds. On that base the whole of *Savitri* was later expressed in colour.

I was very much impressed by the Mother's portraits of herself and of Sri Aurobindo. She had also done a sketch of her left foot adorned with a gold anklet, which I found most adorable. Much later she gave me a photostat copy of it on one of my birthdays.

*Ascent to the Truth* is a well-known sketch of hers.

When the Mother was sixteen she joined one of the best studios in Paris to learn painting. She was the youngest student there. The name of the studio is *Beaux Arts*. According to a French proverb:

“Only where the *Beaux Arts* is, is there art.”

The Mother met quite a number of well-known artists in her lifetime. Among them there were the Impressionists—Monet, Renoir, Degas and so on. She also met Rodin—perhaps the greatest sculptor of the age. Rodin used to visit the Mother. She has written about him in her *Cent. Ed.*, Vol. 6, pp. 72-73:

“...I remember a very amusing story that Rodin told me. You know Rodin—not

the man but what he has done? Rodin put a question to me one day; he asked me, 'How can one prevent two women from being jealous of each other?' I said to him, 'Ah, here is a problem indeed! But won't you please tell me why?' Then he told me, 'It is like this: most of my work I do in clay, at least much of it, before sculpting it in stone or casting it in bronze. And so this is what happens: At times I go away for a day or two or more. I leave my clay models covered with a wet cloth because if it dries up it cracks and all the work is lost, I have to do it over again.' All sculptors know this. And this is what happened to that poor man: he had a wife, and he had his favourite model who was quite... very intimate in the house, she came in when she liked—she was the model he used for his sculptures. Now the wife wanted to be the wife. And when Rodin was absent, she came early every morning to the studio and sprinkled water on all the cloths, all the heads or bodies, everything. It was all covered up, wrapped in wet cloth. Water is sprinkled upon it as on plants. So she came and sprayed them. And then, after a while, two or three hours later, there came the model who had the key to the studio. She opened the studio and she sprayed them. She saw very well that it was all wet, but she had the privilege of looking after the sculpture of her sculptor—and so she sprayed it. 'And so,' said Rodin to me, 'the result is that when I return from my travels, all my sculpture is flowing and nothing of what I had done is any longer there!'

He was an old man, already old at that time. He was magnificent. He had a faun's head, like a Greek faun. He was short, quite thick-set, solid; he had shrewd eyes. He was remarkably ironical and a little... He laughed at it, but still he would have preferred to find his sculpture intact! I do not remember now. Perhaps I answered by a joke. No, I remember one thing, I asked him, 'But why don't you say: this one will sprinkle the water?' He then pulled at the little hair that was left on his head and said, 'But that would be a war to the knife'."

I was fascinated to read the book, *Naked Came I*, a novel about Rodin by David Weiss. I think this is the best novel I have ever read.

In the book Rodin thought sadly that the world was not orderly as man lived in it, but constantly falling short. Man was not governed by beauty and truth, but by anxiety, doubts, sin. Even the body, so beautiful and inspiring at its best, destroyed itself much of the time, with its excesses of lust, vanity and greed. Love became a destructive frenzy. Desire often went from ecstasy to torment. Frequently the more voluptuous the body, the more it damned itself.

He also states: "God is a great sculptor, His model is the universe..."

Indeed, his way of working was extraordinary. He used to make his models run vigorously and in that movement he captured the reality of human bodies. He also felt their naked limbs, their warmth and vibrations so that, he might make his sculptures living.

He worked sincerely and uncompromisingly. He observed and contemplated the splendour of Nature.

Sri Aurobindo has explained pointedly about the sculptor and the painter in the Cent. Ed. Vol. 14, pp. 242-43:

“...The sculptor must express always in static form; the idea of the spirit is cut out for him in mass and line, significant in the stability of its insistence, and he can lighten the weight of this insistence but not get rid of it or away from it; for him eternity seizes hold of time in its shapes and arrests it in the monumental spirit of stone or bronze. The painter on the contrary lavishes his soul in colour and there is a liquidity in the form, a fluent grace of subtlety in the line he uses which imposes on him a more and more mobile and emotional way of self-expression. The more he gives us of the colour and changing form and emotion of the life of the soul, the more his work glows with beauty, masters the inner aesthetic sense and opens it to the thing his art better gives us than any other, the delight of the motion of the self out into a spiritually sensuous joy of beautiful shapes and the coloured radiances of existence. Painting is naturally the most sensuous of the arts, and the highest greatness open to the painter is to spiritualise this sensuous appeal by making the most vivid outward beauty a revelation of subtle spiritual emotion so that the soul and the senses are at harmony in the deepest and finest richness of both and united in their satisfied consonant expression of the inner significance of things and life. There is less of the austerity of Tapasya in his way of working, a less severely restrained expression of eternal things and of fundamental truths behind the forms of things, but there is in compensation a moved wealth of psychic or warmth of vital suggestion, a lavish delight of the beauty of the play of the eternal in the moments of time and there the artist arrests it for us and makes moments of the life of the soul reflected in form of man or creature or incident or scene or Nature full of a permanent and opulent significance to our spiritual vision. The art of the painter justifies visually to the spirit the search of the sense for delight by making it its own search for the pure intensities of meaning of the universal beauty it has revealed or hidden in creation; the indulgence of the eye's desire in perfection of form and colour becomes an enlightenment of the inner being through the power of a certain spiritually aesthetic Ananda.

“The Indian artist lived in the light of an inspiration which imposed this greater aim on his art and his method sprang from its fountains and served it to the exclusion of any more earthly sensuous or outwardly imaginative aesthetic impulse....”

Now back to the Story. After seeing the Mother's paintings I went on brooding endlessly on them. I wondered whether I could paint as the Mother did. However, I was prepared to learn painting from her.

In the evening she and I had a quiet meditation in her room at the Playground. The next morning she sent me a card depicting the flower *Sesbama grandiflora*, with these words:

“Here is a ‘beginning of realisation’ which is becoming more and more true.

“My love and blessings along with the constant Presence of the Grace are constantly with you.”

I went to clean the Mother’s private Stores. I was pleased to see the decorated idols. Soon they would be exhibited.

As usual I saw the Mother in the evening for meditation. I felt concretely that she was working constantly in my whole being in order to organise it harmoniously.

In this period the Mother did not distribute sweets and groundnuts on the days of classes. It was Wednesday and she answered the questions put by the students.

After seeing her in the Ashram, I went to Golconde.

The following morning she sent me a card: a painted flower—Camel’s foot—and these words followed:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,

This is vital contentment that comes through consecration to the Divine. I send it to you with my love and blessings, always near you with the constant Presence of the Grace.”

Sri Aurobindo has written aptly in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 20, p. 79:

“...It is nothing less that is meant in the end when we speak of the absolute consecration of the individual to the Divine. But this total fullness of consecration can only come by a constant progression when the long and difficult process of transforming desire out of existence is completed in an ungrudging measure. Perfect self-consecration implies perfect self-surrender.”

I cannot resist quoting Shakespeare:

“My crown is in my heart, not on my head;  
Not deck’d with diamonds and Indian stones,  
Nor to be seen: my crown is called content.”

(*To be continued*)

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# MINNIE

IN MEMORY OF AUGUST 10, 1982

## To Her

HEART whose each beat cried "Brother" to my heart,  
Love that shone ever from a depth of gold—  
Could such keen life fall victim to time's dart?  
Surely some secret of the Timeless came,  
A sweet undying vibrance, to unfold  
Infinity's hue to richen your own flame.  
Clear sign you had borne of high God-given birth—  
Those lips of beauty touched by truths unseen!  
Verse winging free beyond the nights and days  
That smile or sigh a short spell over earth  
Revealed the Immortal's trance to be your gaze...  
Yet from the white of visionary space  
Your mystery shared our common grey and green,  
Throbbled to each ache of the dust and, till your death,  
Sistered my body and soul in one warm breath.

14.10.1982

## From Her

"Let the pang pass!  
Why must you grieve  
When the gold summons came  
For the small life to leave  
  
"All its dim joys and tears?  
I am one with the Heart in whom  
My wandering days and nights  
Sought infinite room.  
  
"But, from that godlike glow,  
Still my arms stretch to you,  
Bridging the loneliness between  
Earth's eye and heaven's hue.  
  
"O let their dream-touch wake  
Your sleep to an inmost sight  
That clasps in my loved face  
The dawn of a deathless light!"

16-10-1982

AMAL KIRAN

## Dr. V. K. GOKAK AND SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

IN the *Indian Express*, Saturday, September 11, 1982, p. 14, Dr. V. K. Gokak was interviewed on his latest literary work, an epic in Kannada due to be published in November of the same year. Asked why, being an English scholar who had taught the language for more than three decades, he wrote his epic in Kannada, Dr. Gokak was quoted as replying:

“...I was hesitant to write in a language which I have not mastered completely. Aurobindo who had mastered the language wrote his *Savitri* in English and, though it contained most beautiful passages, I felt the language was a bit awkward. If a scholar like Aurobindo can have problems in English, what about an ordinary man like me?”

Dr. Gokak's humility is to be appreciated. And, if we study the four pictures of him, three small and one big, reproduced on the page, we can at once observe that he has not only admiration but also devotion for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, for behind him there is an open photo-folder bearing the pictures of the Mother and the Master. So we cannot attribute to him any prejudiced and hostile attitude such as found in a number of poets and critics of a much smaller stature than he. A clique of so-called modern-minded writers never loses an opportunity to have a dig at Sri Aurobindo who, while fully conversant with all modern moods and techniques, refused to confine himself to them. He used the English language in varied ways to express high spiritual visions and experiences in the framework of a Legend that is a Symbol in the nearly 24,000 blank-verse lines of *Savitri*. It is therefore very surprising that one holding no truck with this coterie should label as “a bit awkward” the English of Sri Aurobindo's epic.

The surprise becomes sheer puzzlement when we notice that Dr. Gokak's phrase is in flagrant contradiction of his own accompanying remarks. First of all, if somebody admits that he has not mastered English completely and grants that another has done so, it is anomalous for the former to adjudge the latter linguistically unskilful to a small extent everywhere. Again, how can one who is declared to have mastered the English language be said to make it move with a slightly clumsy gait throughout? Lastly, is it not odd to refer to “most beautiful passages” as being couched in a speech that is a trifle ill-adapted for use in them? Dr. Gokak has cut the ground from under his own proposition that Sri Aurobindo had “problems in English”.

Surely, he has himself been “a bit awkward” in the verdict he has given. What he should have said is that he, unlike Sri Aurobindo who had mastered the English language and shown his mastery in *Savitri*, could not venture on this language for his own epic but stick to his native Kannada over which he had a hold such as he could not claim over English. The propriety of a statement on these lines as regards Sri Aurobindo is driven home to us not only by the context of his present unfortunate in-

consistency. It is driven home also by all that he has pronounced on other occasions apropos of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

When we open his Introduction to that admirable compilation by him, *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry*, published by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, in 1970, what do we read? " 'The Book of Love' (the fifth Book of *Savitri*) combines the freshness and lyric bloom of *Romeo and Juliet* with the idealism and platonism of Shelley and fuses them with a philosophical and mystical profundity all his own (p. xxxi)... His *Savitri* is an epic which sets forth with great precision and fidelity some of the highest states of mystical awareness (p. xxxiv)... Sri Aurobindo developed many kinds of style before 1950 and the best of them are all illustrated in *Savitri*. The style in this epic is flexible and varies according to its context and theme and *Savitri* is rich in its contexts and themes. It can be 'neoclassical' or 'romantic', symbolic or modernistic. There is his narrative or dramatic style employed when he has to present a character or situation, an encounter or a debate. His reflective style is of three kinds—the balanced and antithetical style employed when the matter is familiar to the reader, the paradoxical style where he writes at a more intense level or where the thought is subtly metaphysical, and the learned style where he is out to capture in precise words the contours of a theme which is likely to be difficult or unfamiliar to the reader. Then there is the expository or analytical style employed while presenting rare perceptions and levels, introducing the structuring and ordering of the intellect into the mystical consciousness. There is also the lyric style rising to a great height of intensity and passion. Lastly, there is the allusive style. As T. S. Eliot uses literary quotation to enrich his own meaning, Sri Aurobindo uses literary allusions to throw a bridge of understanding before the reader and to communicate to him effectively the thrill and the ecstasy which he himself has experienced at a higher level of consciousness" (pp. xxxvi-vii).

In all these detailed and penetrating encomiums Dr. Gokak is not merely referring to Sri Aurobindo's manifold subject-matter, his diverse "contexts and themes". He has in mind, too, Sri Aurobindo's manner of dealing with them in English, suiting his style flexibly to each. The very term "style", along with phrases like "freshness and lyric bloom", "precision and fidelity", "height of intensity and passion" and along with a mention of the means adopted "to communicate effectively" to the reader the writer's own spiritual "thrill and ecstasy"—the term "style" itself, repeated appreciatively, implies that vision, word and rhythm are fused together in successful self-expression in the tongue chosen by the poet. Not even the ghost of any awkwardness can be slipped in as a suggestion into Dr. Gokak's elaborately considered and expounded opinion of *Savitri*'s achievement in English poetry.

If Dr. Gokak is here to be believed, *gaucherie* in the ordinary accepted sense should strike us as the last thing to be hinted at—no matter how moderately—for Sri Aurobindo's epic. Could he be having in view a special significance? It would seem impossible that a fellow-poet should complain in a generalising tone if Sri Aurobindo is in some places a little complicated in verbal turn or structure and may



thus be regarded by those who make a fetish of the simple and the straightforward as in some degree unnatural, artificial, awkward. Milton, speaking of Satan's expulsion from Heaven and interposing nearly four and a half lines between a "him" and the "who" related to it can have those three adjectives shot at him—and yet the passage is one of the peaks of grandeur in English poetry:

Him the Almighty Power  
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky  
With hideous ruin and combustion down  
To bottomless perdition there to dwell  
In adamant chains and penal fire,  
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

Similarly, Keats's supremely exquisite evocation of a moment of breathless silence might be charged with awkward English because he has used a double-negated indirectness to enforce the subdued key set by an opening negative:

No stir of air was there,  
Not so much life as on a summer's day  
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

Especially in presenting occult or spiritual vision one may appear complex and out-of-the-way, not open to immediate understanding, but if one transmits the true afflatus from an inner or higher world the reader is bound to be carried along by a surge of felicitous audacity, as in that snatch of mysterious imagery from Sri Aurobindo's long description of his heroine

As in a mystic and dynamic dance  
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies  
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault  
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods  
A heart of silence in the hands of joy  
Inhabited with rich creative beats  
A body like a parable of dawn  
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity  
Or golden temple door to things beyond.

Such a breath of beauty and profundity sweeps through these lines that, whether we catch the exact drift or not at the first reading, a categorisation like "a bit awkward" for the English seems utterly irrelevant.

Sri Aurobindo, however, is not always so directly mystical in expression. He has numerous clear-cut pictures of unusual insight like that seizure of symbolism in

what another poem of his calls "the dawn-moment's glamour". The picture in *Savitri* runs:

Into a far-off nook of heaven there came  
 A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.  
 The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch  
 Persuaded the inert black quietude  
 And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.  
 A wandering hand of pale enchanted light  
 That glowed along a fading moment's brink  
 Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge  
 A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.

It is a matter of astonishment how Dr. Gokak could have fallen foul of Sri Aurobindo's masterpiece when he has acknowledged the outstanding merit of even the earlier poetry of Sri Aurobindo: e.g., the blank-verse narrative *Love and Death* written in 1899. Dr. Gokak's discriminative faculty is seen almost at its true function and as at least free from any quirk when he writes in that Introduction on which we have already drawn: "Some of Sri Aurobindo's lyrics in [the youthful] *Songs to Myrtilla* have the preciousity of 'Decadent' poetry in them. But his grand manner asserts itself in *Love and Death...*" (p. xxxi). If, as far back as the end of the last century, Sri Aurobindo could write grandly in an English unsullied anywhere even by "preciousity", how could he at the top of his development persistently stumble a little in his language? Mind you, the tendency to be "precious"—that is, over-refined in the choice of words—which Dr. Gokak notes in part of the production of Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge-days is not at all pointed at as "a bit awkward" in its English embodiment. The English of *Songs to Myrtilla* is nowhere found un-English in the least measure. All the more amazing, then, that a highly respected and responsible critic should commit such a gaffe about *Savitri*.

If he had shown us Sri Aurobindo facing "problems" in managing on a large scale the type of blank-verse he had selected—the end-stopped variety instead of the kind that flows over or is enjambed—he would have drawn our attention to a difficulty Sri Aurobindo himself envisaged at the start of his epic. Again, if he had touched on "problems" connected with rendering the English tongue more and more plastic to the stress of what Sri Aurobindo designates the "overhead planes", levels of Yogic consciousness beyond the mental, he would have justly indicated the reason why Sri Aurobindo rewrote some portions of *Savitri* nearly a dozen times. But it is quite another matter to speak of Sri Aurobindo, who was educated in England from his seventh to his twenty-first year, as having "problems" in English as such in the whole course of his crowning poetic performance. The dictum is extremely gratuitous in itself no less than against the background of Dr. Gokak's other remarks in the present interview and all that he has carefully written as a scholar in the past.

K. D. SETHNA

# MORE LIGHT ON ANDRÉ MORISSET AND HIS WORK

## INTRODUCTION BY NIRODBARAN

APROPOS of my article on the Mother's son, André, in *Mother India*, some people asked me if more light could be thrown on him, particularly in regard to his work for the Ashram. I am happy to say that a good deal of information has been available such as the three talks delivered by him: two at our Centre of Education and one at the Calcutta Path Mandir. One of these is a deep appreciation of the Mother's work for the Ashram. It emanates such a delicate sweetness and such a true understanding of the work that one wonders how during a short stay he could enter so well into the spirit. His elder daughter Janine has very kindly sent us much precious information about his work for the Ashram. We give the English rendering of her letter:

...His concern was to extend all his efforts to the service of the Mother in France in order to realise the vast projects that she had conceived for this country. I know how attached he was to the Ashram, so much so that one day he asked the Mother (in 1955-60, probably) for permission to settle definitively in the Ashram. The Mother answered: "No such question! I need you in France." If André has done anything for the Ashram, it is work more of a general nature which the Mother had assigned to him.

For example, he founded in 1956 the Franco-Indian Union Association that had for its aim the development of all sorts of exchanges between France and India. Though there already existed in Paris and France many cultural associations which interested themselves in ancient Indian art, the traditional dance and music of India, none had for their object the growth of commercial, industrial and technological exchanges. Now the Mother said that France and India could give to the world an example of what the two countries could do together, each one bringing to the other its particular riches; that an active collaboration in their practical problems was possible and even necessary for maintaining the equilibrium of the world. The Association is functioning all the time; it brings together persons who without having a particular interest in the Ashram have a benevolent attitude towards India and all that happens there, above all in the scientific and technical domain. It is also in 1956 that André founded the Sri Aurobindo Study Centre—it is this small association which sends teaching materials, class textbooks, etc. to the Ashram school.

This small association could not increase in size for a particular reason. In the statement approved by the Mother about the textbooks in the Centre of Studies, we read: "The role of the Centre is to serve as a link between the Ashram and the French people, etc." The link functions in such a manner that

the Centre could never have more than a hundred members: as soon as that number was reached, some of them decided to settle permanently in Pondicherry...

You know very well that André maintained his contact with the banks and editors in France and he also carried on a sustained correspondence with Pavitra (there is a big file in Avenue Carnot and of course double the volume in Pavitra's office). At that time André was much more active; you are likely to find many interesting details about his activities in this correspondence.

I hope Nirod-da will not be disappointed by my answer which may be different from what he expected. I am quite ready to elaborate any point if he so desires.

Fraternally yours,  
Janine.

We get further significant information from an article by Arun Basak in the Bengali Journal *Srinwantu* to the effect that André joined the First World War in 1916. In a very short time he received a number of titles of honour by virtue of his perseverance and competence, among which were the Cross of the War 1914-1918, the Cross of the Voluntary Fighters, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour which is regarded as the highest honour conferred by the State.

Then in 1919 he joined l'École Polytechnique; passing out of it in 1921 he occupied a high position in *Le Carbone-Lorraine*. Next he joined the "Industrial Company of Battery Cells" and became its honorary President. He was connected with many foreign and international organisations. It is to be noted that André, while speaking of his war service, avoided mentioning the distinctions he had gained.

NIRODBARAN

## FROM ANDRÉ'S WRITINGS

### Remembrances\*

My earliest remembrances date back to the very beginning of this century and lack clearness. They centre round two spots. One is Beaugency, a little town on the river Loire, where I lived with two aunts (my father's sisters), my grandfather and my nurse. The other is 15 rue Lemer cier in Paris where my mother and father had a flat and their painters' studio which I considered the most wonderful place in the world.

Beaugency is still in my mind for the garden which was at the back of the house and separated from it by a small courtyard. I also have a recollection of my foster sister, Geneviève; but what struck me most were the visits which mother and father paid to us in their motor car. It was a Richard Brazier and had not to bear a number

\* *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 34th Number, 1978

plate because it could not do more than thirty kilometres per hour. I cannot remember if I took this fact as a big advantage or, on the contrary, the sign of an irretrievable inferiority. My parents used to carry with them a couple of bicycles "just in case". As a matter of fact, on the first hundred-and-fifty kilometres trip to Beaugency, the steering gear broke after fifty kilometres, at Etampes, and the car stopped inside a bakery. They stayed there overnight, used the cycles to visit the place and left the next day, the car having been repaired by the local blacksmith.

In Paris, my parents leased a flat on the first storey of the house, a fairly large garden at the back of it and a big studio in the garden. The studio had a glass roof high enough for a foot-bridge to link the flat and the studio at first storey level. An inside staircase climbed from the studio ground level to the foot-bridge. It was therefore possible to reach the studio from the outside either through the hall of the house and the garden or by climbing to the first floor of the house and getting into the flat, crossing a small drawing room and catching the foot-bridge. It was in this drawing room that Mother introduced me to Madame Fraya who was to become a very renowned seer. She appeared to me a very pretty lady with a very big hat and a pleasant way of talking. While Mother was still living at 15 rue Lemercier, I was brought to Lausanne, in Switzerland, to meet my great-grandmother: Mirra Ismalun. My grandmother, Mathilde Alfassa, was to introduce me to her and I was rather impressed by the "service" given to Mirra Ismalun at Grancy Villas, a good residence in Lausanne. I was duly introduced to my great-grandmother who then addressed me more or less like this: "Bonjour, mon petit André, tu me trouves bien vieille, n'est-ce pas?" ("Good morning, my little André, you find me very old, do you not?"), to which I replied with all truth in my voice: "Oh! oui!" ("Oh! Yes!"). The interview did not go much further.

Later, my father and mother divorced, and mother married Paul Richard. They came to live at rue du Val de Grace and I used to go and have lunch with them every Sunday. After lunch, specially when the weather was bad, we went to the studio, Paul Richard stretched on a couch, lit his pipe, and they started working. That is, my mother wrote in her own handwriting what he dictated. I could not help but notice that Mother was rectifying most of Paul's dictation. This small house, at the back of a garden, or more precisely of a fairly large courtyard, with a few trees, stretching in front of a big apartment house, was strikingly cosy and very comfortable.

Then the Richards went to Pondicherry and came back in 1915, Paul Richard having been called as a reservist at Lunel, in the South of France. When he was freed from military service, they settled nearby, at Marsillargues, where I came to stay during the school holidays in July and August. There I heard of Sri Aurobindo for the first time and I learned to play chess with Paul Richard.

The First World War was going on; in the spring of 1916 the Richards went to Japan and I joined the army in October. From then on I always felt protected and the continuous play of "luck" was amazing. Letters from my mother came regularly from Japan but the military rule forced me to destroy them soon after they

were received. Otherwise they would now be a priceless collection. I shall only mention two cases of this amazing "luck" which are probably important as regards their consequences but are only two cases out of many.

First, I caught the flu in May 1918 and was treated, as several others, with a heavy dose of aspirin, and we all fully recovered after forty-eight hours of rather high fever. None of us caught later the Spanish Flu for which aspirin was not any more a cure. It seemed that we had been more or less vaccinated by the first attack of what was not yet called the Spanish Flu.

The second case is more directly linked with the War. During the night of the 15th July 1918 the battery of 6" howitzer in which I was serving was submitted to a very heavy gunfire. The way from the Command post to the battery was limited to a narrow footpath by rolls of barbed wire. While I was walking there I was caught in one of the rolls which had been thrown on me by the explosion of a shell. As I was trying to extricate myself from the mess a further roll, thrown by another shell, was dropped on me, then some more, during about two hours. Three months later, when we were progressing some two hundred and fifty kilometers on the North-West of our 15th of July site, we found a German battery which had obviously been left in a hurry. In a batch of maps I found one of La Main de Massiges—where we were in July—and the location of our battery shown as a target, but with a mistake, the four guns being shown at both ends of the footpath so that the very place where I had been pinned to the ground was shown as the actual target.

Then there was a period of at once high relaxation and heavy intellectual work. I was admitted to the École Polytechnique and stayed there from December 1919 to August 1921 and started my industrial career immediately after.

In the meantime, my mother went back to Pondicherry and resumed her real work with Sri Aurobindo. She kept me regularly aware of the development of the Ashram and of their Sadhana. I was thus more and more interested until the Second World War broke out and the collapse of France cut all relations between the Mother and me... and this lasted until the liberation of Paris.

Then the opportunity arose for me, in 1949, to make a round trip to India which the Mother monitored through Bombay, Delhi, Agra, Calcutta and Madras, eventually greeting me at the room 3EI at Golconde.

After this, my recollections are more or less one with the life of the Ashram.

14.11.1977

### **A Visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram\***

When my trip to India was decided during the summer of 1949 Mother instructed me to make arrangements for staying at Pondicherry from November 20th to December 2nd. I would thus be present for the November Darshan and also for the anniversary of the Ashram school. Soon after my arrival in India, Mother wrote to me and stated that I was to drive with Mahadeolal Dalmia from Madras to Pondi-

\* *The Advent.*

cherry and arrive at the Ashram at 5 p.m. on the 21st. She explained that she had all set to be able to spend then a little time alone with me. Mahadeolal and myself were therefore quite perturbed when, due to some delay in getting my papers in order at the Madras police station, we were not able to leave before 2.30 instead of 1.0' clock as was intended. Though the car made quite a good speed and in spite of the courtesy of the Customs officials who had been asked not to delay us, the sun was setting when we arrived at the Ashram. There Pavitra told me that Mother was expecting me at Golconde in the room where I was to live for a few days. It was quite dark when I arrived at Golconde, I hastily climbed two storeys and then, in the dim light of the corridor, I saw a white shape with her back against the door in a very familiar attitude.

Though we had not seen each other since Mother left France in 1915, we were at once in full understanding and I had the strong impression of being still a small boy seeking safety in his mother's lap.

During my trip through India I had often heard the opinion expressed that Sri Aurobindo's Ashram was somewhat of a puzzle as it seemed against all common ideas to combine spiritual life and comfort. This is undoubtedly the Mother's achievement. What strikes one first in the Ashram is the perfect harmony of the whole. All details fit together and it is impossible to imagine them fitting so well without the Mother's presence in all of them. Vice versa, the spiritual leadership of Sri Aurobindo through the Mother cannot be imagined without the total surrender of all disciples to the Mother in the most minute details of their life.

This surrender does not, of course, mean the abdication of one's own will; on the contrary, it is the way for each one towards the fulfilment of his own self, means by which he gets a clearer view of his goal. For anyone who would feel disheartened or even only hesitating between different ways, the Mother's blessing is the greatest help.

That the Mother is always present, that she knows everything which happens in the Ashram, every preoccupation of each disciple, is probably the fact most striking to the new-comer. Another fact is that anyone who is totally devoted to the Mother very quickly acquires an ability of better understanding and a clearer view of his own aspirations.

It is therefore not surprising to find out that anything which is done or made at the Ashram is pretty near to perfection. Those who have freely chosen to contribute in manual work do it with the will to satisfy the Mother. If they are skilled workers they find out that their skill has improved. If the job is new to them they make it a point to master it thoroughly. All work is done with an evident pleasure and not as a necessary duty. This is also true of the physical education which is now an important part of the Ashram life. The marching which takes place every evening in the Mother's presence and is followed by a concentration brings to all who take part in it a wonderful feeling of physical and mental relaxation. The children too are susceptible to the atmosphere and look strikingly happy.

The various displays which took place on the sixth anniversary of the Ashram school were remarkable achievements. There was nothing amateurish in the theatrical show and the display of physical education was surprisingly athletic if one takes into account the comparatively small number of people who received the training.

The most extraordinary experience which one can get at the Ashram is however the luck of being present at the Darshan. No words can describe the overwhelming impression of benevolence, knowledge and strength which radiates from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sitting on their thrones. It is not at all surprising that so many people undertake long journeys in order to have the privilege of paying their tribute of devotion. What they get in return is a glimpse of a higher and truer life which responds to the most innate aspiration of human nature.

### Plain Ideas\*

Many things have been written since the withdrawal of Sri Aurobindo about two years ago. In Europe emphasis was put on the idea that he was a link between East and West, and very likely the only real one for centuries. In fact, Sri Aurobindo is not a bridge between the two mentalities but rather a tree with its roots extending eastward as well as westward, its top towering over the two sides and its foliage breathing from the uppermost strata.

Some people in the West have tried to express Sri Aurobindo's views by explaining what Indian spirituality is. On the other hand, Indians are frequently surprised to see all western conveniences and comforts linked in his Ashram with the high spirituality of the Master's teachings. They both forget that Sri Aurobindo is not a compromise and no tendency is entirely wrong or entirely true. Whenever two opinions contradict each other on any level, the truth lies at a higher level and embodies both opinions.

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In spite of all its deficiencies western civilization has brought in achievements which cannot be overlooked. Nor is it advisable to ignore the fact that religions fulfil their scope only as long as they retain their Divine inspiration and do not degenerate into mere rites. All that has been said of the drying-up effect of reason when unduly considered as the highest human faculty applies equally to religious teaching if it is not aimed at making man conscious of his higher and divine self. To consider that there is a Divine law enforced upon the human individual under penalties either before or after death, that the Divine is nothing more than, so to speak, a super-policeman as well as a super-lawmaker, may be useful to a certain extent, but only to a very limited extent. It can help in checking, at least partly, the evil effects of an unethical use of the power which Science has given to man. But the egoistic trend of the individual is thus left entirely unchecked and his inner conscience therefore

\* *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 9th Number, 1953.



by no means awakened. If, on the other hand, the inner consciousness is awakened in such a way that the individual neglects entirely the physical plane and even despises his body, withdraws from the community and takes no part in its activity, devotes all his energy to the somehow selfish cultivation of his soul, this will be of no help in the running of the social and technical machinery. On the contrary, any assumption that to attain spirituality one has to reject everything of the physical plane, tends to put the powerful scientific machinery more under the control of evil forces.

Is there any hope for humanity to get out of this deadlock? To this question, as well as to so many others, Sri Aurobindo's message provides an answer, and very likely the only satisfactory one. The ever stumbling and apparently erratic progress of humanity through the ages takes its full significance if it is looked at as the preparation for the descent of the Supramental. The present state of chaos, the great peril of complete destruction which threatens humanity through its recent scientific discoveries, have to be considered as signs that the descent is imminent. There remains to be seen whether the human race will be prepared to receive the Supramental. If the Supramental is not recognised and accepted, there will be very little hope for humanity to carry on in its present form, the human race would have missed the opportunity it was offered of ascending a step further towards its realization.

The best way of preparing for the descent is the spreading of Sri Aurobindo's teachings. But they have to be correctly understood, because misunderstandings would do more harm than good. If the Master's message is considered as "another philosophy" and subjected to rational analysis, or if it is accepted merely as a convenient creed without the full aspiration of the inner consciousness, very little headway will have been made.

Here comes the University Centre. By awakening in the child the various faculties of observation, judgment, self-respect as well as those of analysis and reasoning; by making the adolescent discover the various parts of human knowledge instead of imposing on him the absorption of a standardized concoction of magisterial statements, the Centre will prepare the students for a more complete realization. No doubt many of them will not go all the way to Yoga, but they will have acquired an understanding of the real meaning of Sri Aurobindo's message.

That is why the University Centre is linked with the Ashram. The presence of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother is an absolute necessity for the Centre to fulfil its scope and the Centre itself is essential to prepare humanity for the descent of the Supramental.

## SEVENTY-FIVE APHORISMS\*

1. Aspiration is the herald of fulfilment.
2. Victory is the consciousness of fighting courageously for the triumph of Truth.
3. Defeat is the touch of frost on the manhood of man.
4. Defeat in life may sometimes be a victory in disguise, but defeat in the spirit is the chill breath of Death.
5. Misplaced sympathy is worse than cold indifference.
6. Dogmatism is the armour of the doubting mind, as bluster is the shield of the craven.
7. Display proclaims the poverty of the soul. It is the resounding noise of the hollow drum, the strut and swagger of the shallow pigmy.
8. Fear is the worst infirmity of the human mind as courage is its best bloom of health.
9. Sink not your love of God in the love of liberty, nay, nor in that of self-perfection.
10. Make your life the music of His Light and the dance of His ecstatic Delight.
11. The lover of the Infinite can never be the paramour of the finite, however exalted and glorious it may be.
12. The sun of Knowledge rises in the sky of aspiring silence.
13. Life's barque would glide dancing upon the waters of consciousness if the storms of passions did not tear its sails asunder.
14. Nobility is the reflection of the soul's inner royalty.
15. Forgiveness is the benevolent wisdom of the strong soul.

\*The author, Rishabhchand (1900-1970), a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, wrote these aphorisms during 1942 and 1943. All but the last three are dated; the others are presented here in chronological order.

16. Forgiveness is a natural impulse of self-confident strength.
17. Keep your end well in view, so that you may not lose yourself in the mazes of the way.
18. Yogic silence is the sleep of the ego and the luminous waking of the soul.
19. What man desires most ever eludes him, so that what he desires not but secretly is may claim him.
20. Silence is the golden gate to the heaven of the Spirit.
21. Yogic work is always a means and never the end of sadhana—means, in the beginning, to a dynamic union with the Divine, and, after the union is achieved, to His manifestation in the world. The end, the supreme, solitary end, is the Divine.
22. Admiration of greatness is a secret aspiration for it.
23. Let your intuition speak or thought, but never the inveterate plagiarist and bungler, memory.
24. Life's purpose has not been served if life's Life has not been found and lived.
25. Judge a man not by his achievements but by his aspiration.
26. Lust is love putrefied in the gutter of the lower vital.
27. Aspiration realised is attainment and attainment fructified is fulfilment.
28. All extremes find their supreme reconciliation in the harmony of the golden mean.
29. To feel insulted is to insult one's own nobility.
30. Difficulties are but hurdles in the race of the valiant.
31. Difficulties are but friends in disguise that smile upon the brave while feigning to frown.
32. To bother about one's own progress is the wrong way to advance.

33. In silence are forged the words that shake the world to its foundation.
34. Our desires desire everything but the All-desirable.
35. Open your heart only to those who open theirs to you. An unfriendly eye may blight its bloom and damp its fire.
36. Revolt against mediocrity is the privilege of greatness.
37. Chastity is the conquered immunity of the inner flame from the contamination of the surrounding smoke.  
     Virginity is the innate freedom of the flame from the smirch of the surrounding smoke.
38. Sincere admiration betrays an affinity with the object admired.
39. Adoration is the homage of greatness rendered to its own superior prototype.
40. Humility adds grace to greatness and teaches softness to strength.
44. When our pride falls to the ground, our spirit soars into its native sky.
41. To cloak our imperfections is to render them more hideous.
43. Words are but vapour if they do not embody some thought or feeling. Let the Mother send luminous thoughts, brilliant ideas, godly feelings; they will naturally clothe themselves in fit expressions. Not that the beauty and music of expressions are to be loved less, but the beauty and music of thoughts and feelings are to be loved more, prayed for with a greater insistence, for they are the very soul of expression.
44. Utter not a word that does not spring from the truth of your inner perception. That is the way to be original in speech and not a mere echo.
45. If you want your words to be measured expressions of truth and not a mere falsetto flourish or a trickery of speech, make of them an offering to the Divine, as you utter them. The consciousness of offering will purge them of all alloy and artificiality and overcolour.
46. Imagination gives wings to the intellect and romance a rainbow-richness of hues, but neither of them should be allowed to impair the perfect rectitude of the expression of truth.

47. Unmeasured expressions betray a lack of the sense of values. They are an outrage on truth.
48. Neglect of details leads to neglect of essentials.
49. Self-offering is self-transference from subjection to Nature to freedom in the Divine.
50. Language is but the dress of one's thoughts and feelings. What would you think of a gorgeous attire that clothes a skeleton?
51. Preparation is always a much longer process than actual performance; and who prepares best performs best.
52. Genius is the intervention of a higher power in the normality of human nature, and talent is the heightening of one or more of its normal faculties.
53. Thought is to language what the mind is to the body.
54. To contradict a dogmatist is to harden him in his dogmatism.
55. Dogmatism falls flat when it is not fed with contradiction.
56. Where sympathy is wanting criticism is but carping.
57. Display of knowledge is a common but contemptible habit in a cultured man. Generally it betrays an unassimilated learning and is an insult to the intelligence of others.
58. The richer, the wider, the more complex and comprehensive your self-offering, the richer and more complex and comprehensive will be the contents of your union with the Divine.
59. Life has not been rightly lived if Death has not been conquered in it.
60. Avoid listening to gossip. It is the lower vital in us that likes to gloat over the weaknesses of others. Regard others' frailties as your own and do not forget that it is the Divine who stumbles and falls in the sinner—the Divine for whom you can have no other feeling than love.
61. God's denials sometimes prove the greatest of fruitful affirmations, as His frowns the kindest of His smiles.

62. Let a smiling, kindly silence be your reply to the glib cackle of the unreflecting world.
63. Singularity imposes itself as a virtue in an age in which the common is so commonplace.
64. Let the light of your soul and not the feeble glimmer of your mind be a beacon to those who surround you in life.
65. Perfect security lies in transcendence of evil and not in the power of resistance to it.
66. Man's real greatness lies not in what he sees or knows or says, but in what he is.
67. Peace is the stable base for the varied play of Power.
68. Without Power, Love is a soft-hearted cripple, purity a bloodless virgin and peace a sterile blank of repose.
69. If you allow other voices to constantly speak in you, when will your own voice get its chance?
70. He alone can manifest the Divine whose consciousness has soared beyond all manifestation.
71. The best homage you can pay to greatness is to reproduce it in yourself.
72. To create foam-bubbles and send them flying into the public mind is the vocation of modern literature.
73. Language is a mould forged by thought for its own expression.
74. The compact unity of the poetic vision is broken up in the prism of prose.
75. There is nothing so fickle as fashions.

**ABDALLAH: 20. 7. 1982**

O, IF I had known in May  
You would depart so soon,  
I would have found a means to stay  
With you and our cherished Indian moon.

I could have felt the danger's shade  
And not have let it clutch at you.  
I would have hurried to your aid  
Or sunk deep down in silence too.

Then hand in hand we would have soared  
Out of the surging capitor, sea,  
And joined the homeland of the Lord  
Where souls are one in love and free.

Yet I am here and you are there,  
And you don't like I mourn and weep.  
You have ascended lone the stair  
Which is for me still high and steep.

But sometimes, in the worlds of dream,  
You come to visit my abode  
And give my life a higher gleam,  
A helper on my endless road.

17.11.82

U. G.

## HOW I BECAME A HINDU - 7

*(Continued from the issue of December 1982)*

I WAS back to square one. My faith in Gandhism had lost the battle to Marxism. Now I was no longer a Marxist. I asked myself again and again: Where do I go from here?

The business of life can go on very well without an ideological frame of reference. One eats and mates and sleeps and makes a living. One reads books and papers and gossips and goes about passing conventional judgements on current events. One has a family, a vocation, a circle of friends and some hobbies to keep one occupied in leisure time. One grows old, collects his own share of diseases and looks back with anguish towards earlier times when one was young and active. For most of us ordinary mortals, this is the whole of human life. We take very seriously our successes and failures and our loves and hates, without spending a thought on what it is all about.

I have always been an ordinary man with ordinary aspirations. Left to myself, I would have led an ordinary life. I was a good business executive by then, having acquired considerable experience in export business. I could have achieved more success along the same line. Maybe I would have been invited by some millionaire in Calcutta to become his junior partner and earned my own millions in due course. That was one of the fond dreams which my father had dreamt for me. Maybe I would have over-estimated myself in the business world, crashed and spent the rest of my life cursing those who had conspired to bring about my failure in the final bid. I had met quite a few specimens of such failure in Calcutta.

But I met a man who would not let me be. He was Ram Swarup. He had tried his best to rescue me from the twin morass of a false self-esteem and a degrading self-pity. He had encouraged and assisted me with timely advice to take an impersonal interest in higher ideas and larger causes. As I shared his ideas and concern for social causes, I could not question his command for action.

Now I was invited by him to join a group to serve the new values we shared with him. The cultural and political atmosphere in India had become, over the years, chockfull of communist categories of thought. Many myths were afloat about a heaven having descended in Soviet Russia, Red China and the East European countries occupied by the Soviet armed forces and ruled dictatorially by Soviet puppets. The Communist Party of India was using these myths in order to appear as the harbinger of a wholesome social order in India. The communist categories of thought were helping the Communist Party of India to infiltrate national life in various fields with the ultimate aim of subverting Indian democracy and reducing the nation to the status of a Soviet satellite.

The main task we took upon ourselves was to expose communist categories of thought as inimical to human freedom, national cohesion, social health, economic development and political and cultural pluralism to which we were wedded as a people.



Simultaneously, we went out to explode the myths about communist countries so that our people, particularly our national and democratic political parties, could see them as they were—totalitarian tyrannies with low standards of living and regimented culture. This we did simply by telling the truth about communist regimes with the help of citations and statistics compiled largely from their own publications.

Our expectation was that the information supplied by us would help the national and democratic parties to see the evil that was communism and the conspiracy that was the Communist Party of India. It was for these parties to fight the political battle against the evil creed and the foreign fifth column. Our work proved useful to a certain extent. Some parliamentarians, trade unionists and political workers in the field used the information supplied by us and put the communist cohorts on the defensive all along the line. Some journalists and intellectuals welcomed our work and helped us carry on the battle. One of them complimented us by saying that we had placed anti-communism squarely on the political map of India.

But we discovered in due course that our friends expected from us much more than the limited role we had chalked out for ourselves. The socialists who were our greatest fellow-fighters against communism wanted us to fight many more battles on many more fronts. The Congressmen, by and large, had either no opinions at all on any ideological issues or wanted us to fight against communalism by which they meant the RSS and the Jan Sangh. The RSS and the Jan Sangh, who were always sympathetic, friendly and helpful, wanted us to place India's national interests above everything else. We listened to them patiently, pointed out our limitations, tried to soften animosities amongst political parties wedded to nationalism and democracy and highlighted the international nature of the communist conspiracy.

As the battle against communism progressed, I became acutely aware that a positive frame of reference was badly needed if communism was to be kept at bay. What could be that frame? Democracy? We had all the democracy we needed. But the communists alone were making a purposeful use of it towards its ultimate subversion. Socialism? We had already adopted it as a state policy. But the communists had succeeded in confusing the language of socialism so that socialism got equated with an ever expanding public sector which was inefficient, wasteful and horribly corrupt. Free enterprise? But in the mouths of many it was only a euphemism for capitalism with a free licence to loot the public for private profit. Moreover, India in the middle of the 20th century was neither an America nor a Britain nor a Germany nor a France nor yet a Japan to try out a nineteenth century experiment. Her problems as well as resources had different dimensions.

I had a strong inclination to settle in favour of nationalism as a strong antidote to communism. My country, right or wrong—that seemed to be emerging as my main motto. But my bubble was one day pricked by Ram Swarup to whom I listened as he talked to a friend of RSS-Jan Sangh persuasion. This friend was laying too much emphasis on eschewing everything that was foreign. Ram Swarup said: “But foreign should not be defined in geographical terms. Then it would have no meangni

except territorial or tribal patriotism. To me that alone is foreign which is foreign to truth, foreign to the Atma." This touched some chord in my own heart. That was the end of my tether. I did not know which way to turn next.

Ram Swarup was now becoming more and more meditative and reflective in his comments on the current political scene. He often talked of a cultural vacuum which communism was using to its great advantage. Communism, he said, was deriving support from a deeper source, a new self-alienation amongst our political and cultural elite advancing with the help of forces which on the surface seemed to be allied against communism. It was not our democratic polity alone which was under attack from communism. There were several other forces which had come together to suffocate and render sterile the deeper sources of India's inherent strength.

Meanwhile, we became acutely aware of the progressive degeneration of politics in India. Our politics was no longer national politics. It was getting increasingly ridden with many fissiparous factors like caste, language and provincial parochialism. Nation-building was no longer the aim of this politics. Winning elections and grabbing power and privilege without a corresponding shouldering of responsibility or accountability to the people was becoming an end in itself. A politics which was no longer informed by a larger and deeper culture was likely to become pretty poisonous.

A similar degeneration was taking place on the international plane as well. The United States was prepared for a hot war which might not have taken place. But it was not at all prepared for an ideological contest in which the issues may be decided in the long run. The Soviet Union was supplying a lot of ideas, ideology and categories of thought in a stream of books, pamphlets and periodicals. The only response which the United States could muster against this menace was economic aid. It was widely believed amongst U.S. thinkers and rulers that a man was likely to become better wedded to freedom and democracy if his standard of living was raised. Ram Swarup remarked one day: "The Soviet Union swears by dialectical materialism. But what it practises is idealism. On the other hand, the United States swears by idealism. But what it practises is dialectical materialism. There is a neat division of roles between the two powers. The Soviets take care of our heads. The United States takes care of our hearths and homes."

In this atmosphere of declining political standards, we decided to withdraw our anti-communist campaign as we had conceived it to start with. We were convinced that a larger battle, couched along deeper cultural contours, was needed if the nation was to be saved from the corrosion of its soul.

It was at this time that I fell seriously ill and lost a lot of weight which I had never had in plenty. A Catholic missionary whom I had known earlier in connection with our anti-communist work came to visit me. He was a good and kindly man and had a strong character. He had insisted upon his religious right to sell our anti-communist literature in *melas* and exhibitions in spite of his mission's advice that this was no part of his ordained work and that, in any case, the government of India frowned upon it.

The Father, as I called him, found me in a difficult condition, physically as well as financially. He felt sure that it was in such times that Jesus Christ came to people. He asked me if I was prepared to receive Jesus. I did not understand immediately that he was inviting me to get converted to Catholicism. My impression was that he wanted to help me with some spiritual exercises prescribed by Christianity. Moreover, I had always admired Jesus. I had, therefore, no objection to receive him. Only I was doubtful if someone was really in a position to arrange my meeting with him. But I became aware of the Father's true intentions as I travelled with him to a distant monastery. He asked every other missionary he met on the way to pray for his success.

At this monastery, which was a vast place with very picturesque surroundings, I was advised by the Father to go into a retreat. It meant my solitary confinement to a room. I was not supposed to look at or talk to anyone on my way to the bathrooms or while taking my morning and evening strolls on the extensive lawns outside. And I was to meditate on themes which the Father prescribed for me in the course of four or five lectures he delivered to me during the course of the day, starting at about 6.30 in those winter mornings. I was not used to this way of life. I had never lived in such solitude by my own choice. My only solace was that I was allowed to smoke and provided with plenty of books on the Christian creed and theology.

I tried to read some of the books. But I failed to finish any one of them. They were full of Biblical themes and theological terminology with which I was not familiar. Most of the time they made me recall Ram Swarup's observation about mere cerebration. Or they were simplistic harangues to love Christ and join the Catholic Church. They had a close similarity to communist pamphlets which I had read in plenty. The Father had asked me again and again to invoke Christ and meditate upon him. But he had not told me how to do it. I had no previous practice in meditation. I did not know how to invoke Christ, or any other godhead for that matter. All I could do was to think again and again of Christ preaching the Sermon on the Mount or saving an adulteress from being stoned to death. But my thoughts would wander away after every few minutes.

The Father asked me before the start of every new lesson if I was feeling drawn towards Christ. In my exasperation I told him on the evening of the second day that the only deity towards whom I was feeling drawn was Sri Krishna. This was not true. I had told a lie for which I felt ashamed immediately after. I had felt drawn towards nothing, far less Sri Krishna. Most of the time my mind was busy in free association in the Freudian sense. I told the lie because by now I was fed up with the Father's lectures. They had no relevance to any of the problems with which I was faced. I wanted to get out of that room and be myself. I wanted the Father to frown at the mention of Sri Krishna and say something unkind about him so that I could pick an argument, defy the discipline he had imposed on me and get out of his clutches.

But the Father did not frown. Nor did he say anything unkind about Sri Kri-

shna. He became thoughtful, almost pensive. He told me at last that in his own experience of conversions Jesus had never tarried so long. He asked me to make another attempt that night. I promised. But I went to sleep immediately after he left. I was dead tired. Little did I know that my release from that prison was to come about next morning. While delivering a lecture about creation, the Father said that God in his wisdom and kindness had made all these fishes and animals and birds for man's consumption. I immediately rose in revolt. I told him very emphatically that I was a *vaishnava* and a vegetarian and that I had absolutely no use for a God that bestowed upon man the right to kill and eat his other creatures simply because man happened to be stronger and more skilled. I added that in my opinion it was the duty of the strong and the more skilled to protect the weak and the less wily.

The Father also suddenly lost his self-possession. He almost shouted: "I can never understand you Hindus who go about seeking a soul in every lice and bug and cockroach that crawls around you. The Bible says in so many words that man is God's highest creation. What is wrong with the higher ruling over the lower?"

I kept quiet. I could see the pain in his eyes. I did not want to add to his anguish. He recovered his self-possession very soon and smiled. Now I went down on my knees before him and asked his forgiveness for my lack of strength to go on with the retreat. He agreed, although rather reluctantly. His sense of failure was writ large on his face. I was very sorry indeed. I now thought that it would have been better for both of us if Christ had come to me.

On our way back to the big city where his mission was housed, he became his old normal self again. There was not a trace of bitterness on his face or in his voice as we talked and joked and discussed several serious and not so serious matters. Now I took my courage in both my hands and asked him my final question: "Father, am I not already a Christian? I do not normally tell a lie. I do not steal. I do not bear false witness. I do not covet my neighbour's wife or property. What more can a man do to demand God's grace and kinship with Christ? Why should you insist on a formal conversion which in no way helps me to become better than what I am?..." His reply was very positive and it estranged me from the Christian creed for good. He said: "It is an illusion that you can become a Christian if you practise Christian virtues. One cannot claim to be virtuous unless one is baptised in the Church of Christ. He is the only saviour. No one outside his fold can claim salvation. The only thing the heathens can look forward to is eternal hell-fire."

That evening I had a chat with the librarian in the mission's library. He was young but looked very sad and far-away. His surname was Hindu. But he told me that he had become a Christian a few years before. He continued: "I fell seriously ill. There was no money in the house. I was earning a small salary and had a wife and two children to support. My relatives were also poor like me and could not help much, what with the cost of medicines and a prescribed diet. It was at this moment that the Father appeared on the scene. I had known him earlier as he frequented our street in search of converts. He brought all the medicines and fruits

for me. I was very grateful to him. And one day in a moment of my mental weakness he baptised me. My wife refused to become a Christian. She was an orthodox Hindu. But she did not desert me. After I had regained my health, the Father insisted that my conversion was not complete unless I ate beef. As a Kayastha I was already a non-vegetarian. I saw no harm in eating yet another type of meat. But as soon as my wife learnt of it, she left with our two children and went away to her father's place in another town. I went after her. But I was turned out of their house. I have been excommunicated. No one in our community or amongst our relatives will share with me so much as a glass of water. I have nowhere to go. This mission is my only refuge till I die."

I was reminded of Vivekananda's description of Christianity as churchianity. At the same time I was ashamed of the society to which I belonged. For ages past, this society had perfected the art of losing its limbs, one after another. But what could I do for that young man? I was myself in search of a refuge, in the physical as well as the ideological sense...

SITA RAM GOEL

*(To be continued)*

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## A QUIVER

A SWEET swift sliver of a movement—  
 Like a slim ray finding its way  
 Through deep dark-green dusk—  
 Slices through forms in search  
 For a mind and a heart that at its touch  
 Would blossom and burst into a bloom  
 Of giving and loving and growing  
 With a rapture-rhythm that would reveal  
 The Eternal Face in each transient moment.

DINKAR

## A STRANGE PHENOMENON

WHEN I was living in "Fenêtres" (the flat now used by Mona and Udar) I must have been for some time the only person who knew Western music. Later we had the accomplished pianist whom Sri Aurobindo named Suryakumari. The Mother whom I was seeing every day asked me if I would teach Arjava (John Chadwick) to play the piano. I was surprised, because Arjava was a poet of a high order and a mathematician, but he had not so far shown any great liking for music.

"Yes, Mother dear," I replied, "if such is your wish." So Arjava became my pupil, and used to come to me for practising on the piano. One day he suddenly turned round on the piano-stool and said to me, "Why can't we write music in a mathematical way instead of following these tedious rules?" I thought for a moment and then said, "There will be no room for inspiration then. And what about the music we hear inwardly? How shall we arrange that in a mathematical way?"

He laughed, turned round on the piano-stool to his former position and went on with his practice.

I had composed some music for a few of his poems and I used to sing the treble part to the Mother when I would see her in the evening before she went for her drive. Some of it she approved and some she asked me to correct or change. This went on for a long time. Then I got boils in my armpits. Our doctors here could not cure them, so the Mother sent for a specialist from the General Hospital and asked him to help me.

He was a good man and very clever, but he poked his needle in one of the boils (which made me scream with pain) and took out some blood. He said he would prepare some special serum and inject me with it.

When I went to see the Mother in the afternoon I told her everything. She consoled me in her own sweet way, and the pain ceased. The doctor gave me the injections and I got cured slowly.

Arjava had stopped coming and I learnt later that he too had the same disease. But his boils were not in the armpits. He suffered a lot and finally the Mother decided to send him to a very big British hospital in Bangalore.

I am told that Jayantilal and a doctor accompanied him, but he passed away before he reached the hospital. Evidently he had many internal complications.

The Mother sent a telegram to his parents in England, asking them if they would like his body to be sent to them at her expense. They refused, so it was buried in the cemetery at Bangalore. I knew nothing of this till much later.

A couple of months after this, I commenced to hear some music every night from my piano; it was not as if somebody was playing on the keys, but as if somebody was passing a hand over the strings at the bottom. I thought that probably it was a lizard or a rat, so I opened the bottom part and searched, but there was nothing.

Finally I told the Mother about it. She was quiet for some time, then she said softly, "It is Arjava", and told me how he had suffered and finally passed away, I

was shocked to hear this. Then the Mother went inside and brought some incense sticks. "Take these," she said, "and before you go to bed light one or two of them and go round everywhere taking Sri Aurobindo's name and mine, and the sounds will stop." I did what she had told me and indeed they stopped. But I could never forget Arjava the perfect gentleman who treated me with so much respect and affection and whose poems I still read with great admiration.

Evidently, what haunted my piano was some remnant of his vital being, for his psychic must have gone straight into the Mother.

LALITA

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## SET THY SIGNATURE

ON each moment of my being  
Let Thy signature be inscribed.  
Illusory is every thought,  
Every emotion a passing wave,  
On my very self-being  
Imprint Thy own divinity.  
This twilight shall melt into Dawn,  
In each atom Thou art inherent,  
Implant Thy kiss transfiguring all.  
Oh Immortal! Let immortality  
Impart to each substance eternal youth.  
Let Death, the aeonic companion,  
Depart from here to a destination unknown.  
Let Thy signature of Awakening  
Be everlasting now on this Earth.

SHYAM KUMARI

*(Translated by "the Mother's Gardener" from the Hindi)*

# **WORK AND PLAY**

## **TWO SONNETS**

### **Let Him Do it for You**

THE powers of no man works but His Will alone,  
To make it active and effective be truthful,  
What value has anything done or undone,  
If not for His great purpose solely fruitful.

In all one ever does or does not do  
Let Him the gatherer be of all the gains,  
No profit or loss belongs to me or you,  
We come and go, for accounts He ever remains.

Always He calculates unerringly,  
Keeps ready for any instant reference  
Each book with full responsibility  
Where slip or error has no place or sense.

Abandon your charge and give your worry to Him,  
He'll do much better than all your will and aim.

### **It's Cricket All the Play**

It's cricket, cricket all the way, it's cricket  
When you honestly play life's ball in the world-field,  
You may hit it for a sixer or sideways flick it,  
Your uprightness alone can true victory yield.

All foul-played game is always a half-lost game  
You can never be happy, 'twill never give you peace,  
Win fairly and bravely, nor to lose is a shame;  
After all, none's eternally at the crease.

Standing on your feet or running 'twixt the wickets  
Keep humble before Him your being on its knees,  
Who wins in His Will and in His Will makes nick-hits  
Wins most, though never scoring centuries.

Hours pass, get speedy runs before you're caught,  
Or bowled unawares or suddenly run out.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH