TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

The sudden rise in printing costs because of an unavoidable change-over from letter-press to photo-offset from the March issue obliges us to raise our inland subscription by a small amount—that is, from Rs 42 per year to Rs 47 and accordingly our inland life-membership from Rs 588 to Rs 658. Those who have already become life-members need not pay anything more unless they themselves feel inclined to do so. Our subscribers, both old and new ones, are requested to understand our difficult situation and be kind enough to send us Rs 5 more. We shall be very thankful.

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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.
"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER
TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 5 MARCH 1958

Mother, won’t you please speak to us about the “reversal” you have already mentioned to us several times? You said that a reversal was necessary to obtain the new consciousness.

A reversal?

What kind of reversal do we need, now? You said “a reversal of consciousness”.

That is a way of speaking. It doesn’t mean that you should walk on your head! . . . It is an image.

Yes, Sri Aurobindo has said this too, so . . .

So, if the image leads you to some kind of perception, it is good, but it is not with this (Mother points to the head) that you can understand. If it gives you an impression which explains things to you or makes you understand them better, it is all right, but it is not with many words and by going through the brain that you will understand them better.

It is this kind of sensation one has of seeing things in an altogether different way—then one speaks of reversal. It is like . . . it is always compared with a prism if you look at it from one side, the light is white, and if you turn it over, it splits up into all its elements. This is something similar.

Words are not good and useful unless through a special grace they put you into contact with the Thing, but in themselves they have no value.

In fact, the ideal condition—which has already been partially realised by some people—is to transmit the essential idea and even something that is higher

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1 "The necessary condition for the change from the normal animal human character of existence would be a development of the physical organisation which would capacitate a rapid progression, a reversal or turnover of the consciousness, a reaching to a new height and a looking down from it at the lower stages, a heightening and widening of capacity which would enable the being to take up the old animal faculties with a larger and more plastic, a human intelligence, and at the same time or later to develop greater and subtler powers proper to the new type of being, powers of reason, reflection, complex observation, organised invention, thought and discovery. Such a reversal has been made in each radical transition of Nature. Life-Force emerging turns upon Matter, imposes a vital content on the operations of material Energy while it develops also its own new movements and operations. Life-Mind emerges in Life-Force and Matter and imposes its content of consciousness on their operations while it develops also its own action and faculties, a new greater emergence and reversal, the emergence of humanity, is in line with Nature’s precedents, it would be a new application of the general principle.

*The Life Divine*, pp 838-39
than the idea: the state—the state of consciousness, of knowledge, of perception—directly through the vibration. When you think, the mental substance vibrates in a certain way in accordance with the form your consciousness gives to your thought, and it is this vibration which should be perceived by the other mind if it is well attuned.

Indeed, words serve only to draw the attention of the other consciousness or the other centre of consciousness, so that it may be attentive to the vibration and receive it; but if it is not attentive and doesn’t have the capacity to receive in comparative silence, you may pour out miles of words without making yourself understood in the least. And there comes a time when the brain, which is very active in emanating certain vibrations, can only receive vibrations which are clear and precise, otherwise it is a kind of vague mixture of something confused, imprecise, which gives the impression of a cloudy, woolly mass and doesn’t evoke any idea. So one speaks, the sound is clearly heard, but it conveys nothing—it is not a question of sound, it is a matter of precision in the vibrations.

If you can emanate your thought in a very precise way, if it is something living and conscious emanating from your consciousness and going to meet the other consciousness, if, so to speak, you know what you want to say, then it arrives with the same precision, it awakens the corresponding vibration and with the corresponding vibration comes the corresponding thought or idea or state of consciousness, and you understand each other; but if what is emanated is woolly, imprecise, if you do not know very well what you want to say, if you yourself are trying to understand what you want to say, and if, on the other hand, the attention of the hearer is not alert enough or he is busy and active somewhere else, well then, you may talk to each other for hours, you will not understand each other at all!

And in fact this is what happens most often. When you are able to see in the consciousness of others the result of what you have tried to communicate, it always gives you the feeling of... you know what distorting mirrors are? Have you never seen distorting mirrors? Mirrors which make you look taller or fatter, which enlarge one part and reduce another, you are faced with a grotesque caricature of yourself—well, this is exactly what happens in the other person’s consciousness you have an altogether grotesque caricature of what you have said. And people imagine that they have understood each other because they have heard the sound of words, but they haven’t communicated.

So, if you want to exercise the least effect on the mental substance, the first thing is to learn how to think clearly, and not a verbal thought which depends on words but a thought which can dispense with words, which can be understood in itself without words, which corresponds to a fact, the fact of a state of consciousness or a fact of knowledge. Just try to think without words, you will see where you stand.

Have you never tried it? Well then, try.
You have an absolutely clear and precise understanding of what you want to communicate to others—it vibrates in a special way, it has the power to give a form to the mental substance; and then, *afterwards*, as a concession to human habits you organise a certain number of words around it to try—there, much lower down—to give a verbal form to the vibration of consciousness. But the verbal form is entirely secondary, it is a kind of covering, a rather crude one, for the power of thought.

*What provides the words?*

Ah! no. Think clearly, I don't understand you. It is coming like that, like whirls of cottonwool, and it makes no sense to me.

*I see, the word comes out before the thought is formed.*

Exactly!

The illustration of this power of thinking is what used to be called the gift of tongues. And in fact, this phenomenon did take place and can still do so. You think—that is to say, what I call thinking—quite independently of words, with the clear vision of things and the power to communicate this vision, this phenomenon of consciousness which can be transmitted, now, you are with a large number of people or with a few people, who speak different languages and are used to thinking only in one particular language, for they have been brought up like that; but you project the vibration of your vision, of your understanding, of your experience of things. To attract the attention of the audience you pronounce some words—any language at all, the one most familiar to you, that's of no importance—but your vision and your emanation are precise enough to be transmitted directly to the brain of the others, and in their brain to be automatically translated into their own language. So, outwardly, you are speaking in French or in English, but each one understands in his own language. People think this is a legend—it is not a legend. And it is quite understandable, it is something almost elementary when one goes into the region which I call the region of thought. I am not speaking of supramental things; mind you, it is not a supramental power, it is simply the true realm of thought. That is, you begin to think.

And if you had an audience which also thinks, the phenomenon would take place automatically; only there are very few people who really think. But when they do it powerfully enough, it breaks down the obstacle in the altogether superficial and down-to-earth perception, it rises up like this (*gesture showing a curve*), it goes up into a higher region of perception, and then, in each one, it falls back into the domain of his own language. And each one says with all the sincerity of his experience, "Oh! this person is speaking this language", and
another says, "Excuse me, he is speaking that one!" and the third one says, "No, no! He is speaking that other one...." And in fact each one is telling the truth; he probably does not speak any of them except the one he normally uses, or one or two others.... But, it's that, it does this (same gesture) and then falls back... like radio-waves.

There, we are going to try. I am going to tell you something, we shall see if you understand.

(Meditation)

SLOWLY THE NIGHT HOURS WEAR ON

SLOWLY the night hours wear on
And as the silence deepens,
You hear the delicate sounds
Drowned in the day's turbulence.

A black moth's wing brushing
Against the leaves, a low cry
And the heart's slighter movements
Passed over in the hurry.

And you hear the unsaid words
Of someone far away now;
Their meaning becomes clearer
Than all that was said aloud

Slowly the night hours wear on
The opal light comes into the room,
And in the hour before dawn—
Humility of the spirit

MARTA GUHA
THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1989)

The Mother’s prayers reveal that her service is a life-transforming process. There are many ways in which different schools of teachers have interpreted the gospel of the divine work known as Vedanta, Buddhism and Jainism. The Vedanta interpreted by Shankara is a rejection of life in the world. Jainism, Mahayana Buddhism accepted action as a preliminary means of purification. According to them the final aim is a release from all action into an extra-cosmic, immobile peace and silence. The teaching of the Gita is that service is an initial purificatory stage. It is a radical preparation for infinity and impersonality. But it is not the final stage. The final stage is mirrored in many prayers of the Mother. True service is the only way we can transcend our earthly nature and make it a tool of God’s manifestation.

What Sri Aurobindo says about the work of the Supreme Shakti may be applied to our Mother: “When she takes up the transformation and new-building of the nature, her action is laborious and minute and often seems to our impatience slow and interminable, but it is persistent, integral and flawless.”

In the Mother’s prayer dated 12 July, 1914 she writes:

“In all states of being, in all the modes of activity, in all things, in all worlds, one can meet Thee and unite with Thee, for Thou art everywhere and always present. He who has met Thee in one activity of his being or in one world of the universe, says ‘I have found Him,’ and seeks nothing more, he thinks he has reached the summit of human possibilities. What a mistake! In all the states, in all the modes, in all things, all worlds, all the elements we must discover Thee and unite with Thee and if one element is left aside, however small it may be, the communication cannot be perfect, the realisation cannot be accomplished.

“O sweet Master, sovereign Transfigurator, put an end to all negligence, all lazy indolence, gather together all our energies, make them into an indomitable, irresistible will.”

The true service depends upon supreme unobstructed and luminous love for the Divine and an integral self-surrender to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo says about the universal action of the Divine Shakti: “It is necessary for our Sadhana that we should thoroughly realise this truth in order to escape from the pressure of the limiting ego-view and universalise ourselves even on these lower levels where ordinarily the ego reigns in full force. To see that we are not the originators of action but that it is rather this Power that acts in ourselves and in all others, not I and others the doers, but the one Prakriti, which is the rule of the Karmayoga, is also the right rule here. The ego-sense serves to limit, separate
and sharply differentiate, to make the most of the individual form and it is there because it is indispensable to the evolution of the lower life. But when we would rise above to a higher divine life we must loosen the force of the ego and eventually get rid of it—as for the lower life the development of ego, so for the higher life this reverse movement of elimination of the ego is indispensable. To see our actions as not our own but those of the divine Shakti working in the form of the lower Prakriti on the inferior levels of the conscious being, helps powerfully towards this change.”

The Mother records on April 17, 1914 her self-surrender in Pondicherry:

“O Lord, O almighty Master, sole Reality, grant that no error, no obscurity, no fatal ignorance may creep into my heart and my thought

“in action, the personality is the inevitable and indispensable intermediary of Thy will and Thy forces

“The stronger, the more complex, powerful, individualised and conscious is the personality, the more powerfully and usefully can the instrument serve. But, by reason of the very character of personality, it easily tends to be drawn into the fatal illusion of its separate existence and become little by little a screen between Thee and that on which Thou willest to act. Not at the beginning, in the manifestation, but in the transmission of the return, that is to say, instead of being, as a faithful servant, an intermediary who brings back to Thee exactly what is Thy due—the forces sent forth in reply to the action,—there is a tendency in the personality to want to keep for itself a part of the forces, with this idea ‘It is I who have done this or that, I who am thanked ..’ Pernicious illusion, obscure falsehood, now are you discovered and unmasked. That is the maleficient canker corroding the fruit of the action, falsifying all its results....

“O my sweet Master, my divine Lord, tear out from my heart this illusion so that Thy servant may become pure and faithful and faithfully and integrally bring back to Thee all that is Thy due In silence let me contemplate and understand this supreme ignorance and dispel it for ever. Chase the shadow from my heart, and let Thy light reign in it, its uncontested sovereign “

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

1 Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 15. p 35
2 Ibid., Vol 21. p 734
GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

3. THE BUILDERS (1)

The conditions under which Golconde was constructed emerge from the personal accounts of some of the people involved in the work. The most extensive to hand is that of Mrityunjoy Mukherjee, an elderly sadhak of the Ashram. Aware of the interest and significance of that venture, he set out some years ago to write a record of his memories of that time. Much of the material in this second part is closely based upon the various versions and drafts of his “A Look Behind”, which he has deposited with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library.

Mrityunjoy: “The story of the construction of Golconde, the guest house of the Ashram, is quite interesting. It took more than six years to build the structure and another five to six years to complete the details—and perhaps even now it is not quite complete. The work, as it started physically from the plans on paper to the digging of the earth, revealed itself as an opportunity for the disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who volunteered for the work, to make an attempt towards an all-out offering to serve the Divine through a new type of service, different than that hitherto done in the Ashram, by coming in contact with people of the most materially developed countries with their technical knowledge and corresponding formation of mind and nature. So the story of Golconde’s birth and growth is revealing.

“It required a supreme boldness on the part of the Mother to push through her idea, knowing very well the limited and obscure conditions in which it had to be worked out—through an inexperienced engineer,* a handful of assistants with little or no technical training, and a few unskilled labourers who had never even seen a reinforced concrete building, let alone worked on constructing one.”

1: The Chief Architect, Antonin Raymond

Mrityunjoy devotes a great part of his reminiscences to the three foreign architects who designed Golconde. The chief architect became involved in this way: One day, probably in 1935, the Mother said to Pavitra, “If your friend in Japan still remembers and is willing to do some work for me, I have something now in which he could be helpful.” Pavitra then wrote to Raymond, who indeed was interested. From the limited amount of information at present available to us, it

* Chandulal, the only civil engineer in the Ashram at that time, who, though inexperienced, was as Mrityunjoy remarks elsewhere “one of the rare few most obedient and faithful disciples of the Mother that I have ever seen”
appears that Raymond, despite his French-sounding name, was actually born a Czech, and then became a U.S citizen. The bio-data given in the photo-essay on Golconde in *Progressive Architecture* (referred to in Part One) states “Came to the US in 1910; practiced in New York, then in the Orient Returned to the US in 1938, making his headquarters at New Hope, Pa Also maintains a New York city office with L.L. Rado.”

It seems that Raymond worked under the celebrated American architect Frank Lloyd Wright and that he accompanied the latter to Japan in 1923 or 1924 when Wright was invited to design several important buildings after the great earthquake of 1923 which destroyed much of Tokyo. When Wright returned to America, Raymond remained in Japan and was able to establish a private practice there which continued up to 1938. It was in their first years in Tokyo, that Raymond and his French wife Noémie came to know one M. Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire, a highly qualified civil engineer who had graduated from the prestigious École Polytechnique of Paris—who later became Pavitra, of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry About Pavitra and the Raymonds, Mrityunjay notes:

**Mrityunjay:** “It seems that shared ideals, aesthetic tastes and perhaps some inner affinity soon made them close friends. Pavitra left Japan in 1925, ostensibly to return to Europe via India, but in fact, as he himself tells,* in pursuit of his inner quest, then, instead of proceeding to France, he remained in Pondicherry at the feet of Sri Aurobindo as his disciple His friends the Raymonds were naturally eager to know the reason behind it And when they heard that serving the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was the thing that Pavitra found most worthwhile and fulfilling in life, they too, though they did not share his spiritual aspiration, felt willing to do some work for the Mother, and in what capacity but as architects?”

For long it was an enigma to them; they found it impossible to understand why an engineer so gifted and qualified as Pavitra, who normally would never look on a small colony like Pondicherry as a place to carry out his profession, should wish to stay there and do the kind of work he did in the early days preparing orders for the Ashram’s stationary requirements from France, looking after one or two old cars belonging to the Mother, taking her for a drive in the afternoons, and keeping her small accounts To them—a leading architect and his accomplished wife who had taken to designing furniture and finishings for her husband’s buildings—it would have seemed like being transferred to prison But their faith in their friend made them feel ready also to help this person, the

* In his autobiographical talk to the students of the Ashram school, published in translation in *Mother India*, 1988
Mother, for whom he had such a high regard. Evidently Pavitra communicated this offer of his friends to the Mother and at the right time she remembered it. This was when she came into possession of a few adjoining plots of land whose total area was the biggest ever, in those days, for the Ashram. She wanted a plan made for a building where she could lodge selected sadhaks for serious sadhana and work, with art-galleries also for the artists. She herself being an artist, she always encouraged those who had that gift in them.

Pavitra’s appeal to Raymond had a prompt effect. The architect replied enthusiastically, accepting the Mother’s offer. He enquired about the climatic conditions and other matters concerning the building he was planning to design from Japan. The answer he received—though it had been carefully written by the engineer Chandulal, helped by Pavitra, on the basis of information in the archives of the “Travaux Publiques” or Public Works Department of Pondicherry—did not seem to him sufficient for starting his work, he did, however, prepare a rough plan and a small model of the future building and sent them to Pavitra to show to the Mother. To get the practical details he needed to know for his work, Raymond proposed to send one of his assistants, a young Japanese-American architect named George Nakashima, to the Ashram for some time to study on the spot. The Mother agreed.

Accordingly Mr. Nakashima came, remained for some months, and, returning to Japan, gave a detailed report to his chief. The plot was a long and narrow one, surrounded by streets on three sides, in the vicinity of local inhabitants and only three blocks from the sea to the east—the Bay of Bengal on the Coromandel Coast—from where the salt wind was directly blowing; also there were typhoons and periods of rainy weather, although mostly there was a blazing sun; the climate was hot and damp.

By the end of 1937 Mr. Raymond had already sent to our Ashram engineer Chandulal the details of the preliminary preparations, such as the laying of the foundation works, which included small excavations and driving large stakes into the earth to support the foundation of the building, and making experiments with various types of concrete blocks for the building. We gradually began to understand that not only the planning of the building, but its actual construction under Raymond’s direction had been accepted by the Mother. Accordingly, the necessary materials and equipment, such as combustion engines running on oil, winch parts, wood-sawing and planning machines, were shipped from Japan, unloaded at the Pondicherry pier and brought to the Ashram.

All these jobs required helping hands. Among the sadhaks in those days there were not many who were young, energetic and at the same time free to undertake such heavy work. A few of us volunteered part-time service, as we could not leave our regular jobs.

And, of course, from the very beginning everything concerning the construction of Golconde—each person to work there, whether sadhak of the
Ashram or employed workman, each material to be used, whether bought locally or elsewhere in India or ordered from abroad, down to the smallest detail—was controlled and guided by the Mother. It is almost impossible to imagine the magnitude of the task that the Mother undertook. In addition to her detailed management of the rest of the Ashram with its thousand and one odd problems, and her personal contact with the hundreds of Ashramites in various forms both psychological and physical.

In December 1937 or January 1938, the chief architect himself came to the Ashram accompanied by his wife, Mme. Noémie, and their only child, Claude, a charming little boy of eleven, full of life-energy. They were accompanied by an assistant architect, Mr. François Sammer, a Czechoslovakian who, like Mme Noémie, was French-speaking. George Nakashima had already returned to Pondicherry from Japan a few weeks earlier.

Now the real work began in full force. Raymond’s original idea was that the entire construction of the building should take about six months. The total estimated cost was one lakh of rupees, of which Rs. 75,000 was for the actual construction, Rs. 25,000 to cover salaries and other items. Steel bars of various lengths and diameters were ordered from France; zinc sheets to be used for the window-louvers were ordered from Italy; electrical and sanitary appliances and most of the other fittings were to come from Japan. As mentioned earlier, the Mother was looking into every detail of the work; and now and then there were meetings of the engineers and architects with her presiding and settling the problems.

The first shock to the chief architect, and a formidable one, came when the Mother announced that Sri Aurobindo did not approve of his proposal to employ four to five hundred workmen daily for the work. Sri Aurobindo had said, she explained, that employing outside workmen would bring in some “labour movement” which would spoil the Ashram atmosphere, and this could not be allowed. Now of course, as the architect pointed out, if such a huge building was to be finished within six months, it could not be done in any other way. In a meeting in Pavitra’s room that evening the Mother answered that she understood the practicality and reasonableness of this argument, but that she could not for any reason on earth allow Sri Aurobindo’s orders to be disobeyed. That decision immediately slowed down the tempo—and it meant that the cost of construction would also necessarily increase.

One primary thing that technicians very often overlook is that circumstances and surrounding conditions must be taken into account, as well as the best scientific knowledge. Raymond was particular about the technical knowledge, and was scrupulous in having the local physical conditions thoroughly studied, and that shows the genuine chief in him. Yet what he did not reckon with was the local labour conditions, and he does not seem to have been fully informed about them while he was in Japan. The fact is that from the first stage of the real
concreting work, the unskilled labour and lack of modern equipment proved to be a big obstacle to the planners. And the basic question of economy—originally calculated on a scientific approach with rapid skilled manpower—was at stake. Raymond’s solution was to take on a few hundred paid labourers. But in that meeting in Pavitra’s room, the Mother said that Sri Aurobindo wanted the work to be done with the workmen that our engineer Chandulal already had. Those who were in tune with the Ashram atmosphere and had become like a part of the family. Here the Mother affirmed herself strongly but discreetly, by delicately enforcing the order of Sri Aurobindo—a challenge to Raymond’s settled calculations. The gigantic project was to be undertaken with only a handful of men. Later, when the work was going on in full swing, some more paid workmen were sanctioned, but only a very few. But anybody who has the knowledge and experience of such a huge construction will not be able to believe that it was actually done with so few labourers. Of course it was not possible to complete the building within a short time as had originally been planned.

And then, soon after the construction of Golconde got under way, the Second World War broke out. That hindered everything beyond imagination, at every step of the work. The price of materials began to shoot up almost daily, and the hope of receiving the consignments already ordered from France, Italy and Japan had to be abandoned. The work moved on at almost a snail’s pace. Yet the morale of the people behind the work—the engineers, architects and others—remained ever high, with the constant help and encouragement of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who were kept in constant touch with the daily details. The work never actually stopped, we were all kept busy, although the output was much less, due to the world-circumstances.

During concreting days we had to be on site more than twelve hours a day. Instead of six months, it took about six years to finish the concreting, it ended somewhere towards the end of 1945. Fixing the louver-blades, the doors and other fittings took another few years, but the workers of the first era were not so much involved by that time. New people had come and shown their competence, so the Mother had put them in charge of completing the building and making it habitable.

Meanwhile, all the three architects had left. Raymond and his family were the first to leave, in the autumn of 1938. Because of the deterioration in the international situation, they wound up their office in Tokyo and reestablished themselves in the United States, where Raymond continued a distinguished practice for more than twenty years.

(To be continued)
WITH BATED BREATH...

With bated breath now each heart-beat
Traces the soft cadence of Her luminous feet
They implant within me a seed of Her name
To bloom into a vast flower-flame
Neither strange stars nor fate inexorable could
Now mar my soul’s birth from Her eternal Motherhood.
Not unto you I strain, O ineffable height;
My repose in Her shall be my might.
I yearn not to lose myself in an ecstasy above
But for this heart’s remoulding into unquestioning love!

Vikas Bamba

MEDITATION

A LONELY vigil for the Eternal’s call,
Through day and through night
A poised incandescent moment of innerness
Ever awake, matching Eternity with its patience eternal
In the sunless darkness, as if in Knowledge steeped,
A conviction fecund with the Timeless’s being,
It waits. In silence bare and still,
An ocean-awareness rises, a quiet tide,
Till, slowly, all is mute; even vision is surpassed,
Only the honed-tranquil edge of Consciousness penetrates deeper,

And an encircling invisible horizon is breached
At all points at once
A footfall sound, a tremorless Light, perchance,
And a vast superb stillness that never can dissolve.

Arvind Habbu
HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

The lines of growth of some souls are predetermined and clearly laid out. The Divine holds the reins of their destiny tightly, never letting them out of sight. One such is Beni Madhava Das. He was born in a farmer’s family of Udhoora village in Bihar—one of the most backward states of India. But the rich spiritual legacy of India is still safe in these villages which are seemingly bereft of joy of life, of education, of prosperity, drifting from century to century like aimless exhausted stars.

He does not remember the year of his birth. It was most likely 1895 or 96. In his childhood he used to go out into the fields and sit quietly. Sometimes he would fall into a trance and hours passed in that joyous state. It was so intoxicating that he wanted to meditate all day long but at times the state would elude him.

His whole outlook was different from his playmates’. He used to say to himself, “What is the significance of victory or defeat in games? One should rather conquer desire, anger and greed.” Nobody taught him all these things, he felt them naturally. He used to ponder, “Why is man unhappy?” He would decide, “Due to desire.” Then he would go around telling his friends, “Do not desire anything but the Divine.” Some of the young sophists would answer back, “Even the desire for the Divine is a desire.” Beni Madhava didn’t know what answer he should give. He used to be baffled by the queries, “From where have I come? Why have I come to this world? What should I do?”

He heard his father recite “Rama-Sita” and one day he asked him, “Father, what is it that you recite?” His father replied, “It is the name of the Lord.” Since that day child Beni Madhava constantly repeated the name of Lord Rama. He could not bear to tell a lie. Noticing that many a time his mother told lies, he said to her, “If you tell lies I’ll not call you mother.”

As he grew up, gradually the automatic meditation became less and less. Near about 1910 his father admitted him to a school. He was fifteen years old at that time. He discontinued meditation but Japa repetition of Rāma-nām continued. Though the old meditation stopped, a new type of spontaneous meditation started of itself. At meal-times his whole body filled with a strange consciousness, even the veins and nerves became conscious. He felt an overwhelming ecstasy and an automatic meditation. Thus time passed. He studied up to the fifth standard at school and then for a few years privately at home up to the 9th standard. He spent one year in Buxar school. After that he discontinued his studies and helped on the family-farm.

In 1922 he secured a job as the gatekeeper of a godown in Calcutta. A strange chapter of his life began. He started many austerities. He ate food
cooked by himself. Even on going to his parental place he cooked his own food. He drank only Ganges water. From 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. he used to do *nāma Japa.* During the day he had to tell lies, he was taking bribes and was also stealing. His life was full of *Ashānti:* he was tormented by lack of peace.

At that time he read a book written by Swami Shivananda, *Celibacy is Life.* From that day onwards he started to observe celibacy. But his inner turmoil increased. One day he heard an inner voice say, “You tell lies, you steal and deprive others of their share. How can you hope for Peace?” At that moment he took an inner decision and bought a diary. In this diary daily he noted each of his falsehoods, thefts, ugly thoughts and actions. Within six months, falsehood, stealing, etc. fell away from him naturally and he felt an indescribable peace which continued for a long time. He decided that every person should get such peace, and took an inner decision, “I will leave the slavery of the world and will become the slave of God.”

In those days Beni Madhava used to wear *Khaddar,* hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. One day during 1929 the police took him for a Satyagraha. The police herded him with common criminals, murderers and robbers. He didn’t touch even a drop of water, what to say of food, in that living hell. After two or three days he could not bear the pangs of hunger and ate a piece of thick coarse jail chappati. After this three-days’ fast that bread made of flour which was liberally mixed with sand and grit tasted like a food of heaven and Beni Madhava says he has never found so much joy in eating any of the best preparations of the world. On begging pardon he was released from the jail.

He lived in heavenly peace and one day became very proud of his achievement thinking, “I did ṣādhanā and achieved peace. What has the Divine got to do with it?” At once that very special peace vanished and he never recaptured it in that intensity even after he became a monk.

He used to go to a religious concourse daily. There he met a devotee and with him left for Ayodhya, where he found his Guru—a great, well-revered Saint who gave him a mantra and accepted him as his disciple. After sometime he started on a pilgrimage from Ayodhya to Badrinath via Hardwar. In Badrinath he prayed to the Lord Badri Narayan with folded hands, “I aspire to become a sadhu, for I want to conquer desire, anger, greed and attachment. Please, Lord, help me.” The Lord Badri Narayan gave him Darshan. Thus blessed and fortified he returned to Ayodhya and started a life of tapasyā.

Baba Beni Madhava tells a story with his eyes twinkling with amusement. He had always had a fear, “How would I get food if I became a Sadhu?” While in service once he had gone on a month-long pilgrimage on foot. During that period he went to Ayodhya, Vindhyachal, Allahabad, Kashi, etc. One whole day he didn’t get anything to eat. But on reaching Ayodhya a mahant gave him a huge laddu and in the morning he received halwā and pooni. After this he was fully reassured that he would get food and that too special food. One day he saw in a
dream that two boys were walking with him. Thereafter during his travels he always had the feeling that two boys were his companions. During these travels, one night he reached a village. The villagers had been cheated by a traveller so they had become wary and nobody would open his door to shelter the youth. Beni Madhava recited in a ringing and carrying voice a couplet from \textit{Tulsí-Ramayana}. On hearing this the villagers came out of their huts and welcomed him with open arms. After becoming a Sadhu Beni Madhava decided to read Tulsí Das’s epic \textit{Ramayana} a hundred and eight times continuously. But a strange thing happened. As soon as he opened the book and started reading he would go into a trance. With great difficulty he could complete the reading. During this period one night he had the Darshan of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna—the four divine brothers Rama was giving him a huge dish full of wonderful sweets and dry-fruits. He prayed to Sri Rama, “Lord, don’t give me sweets. If you please, give me true devotion.” As his seal of approval Sri Rama extended his foot and placed it on Beni Madhava’s head. That whole night his being throbbed with a living ecstasy.

He remembers that while in service in Calcutta he used to have many experiences, whatsoever he wanted to know would come in front of his inner eyes. He used to hear many voices revealing many things. One day his friends gave him a strong intoxicating drink but he remained in full control of his senses and did not feel any effect. To test this claim, his friends gave him the \textit{Rámâyana} to read. He read the part where Sri Ram and Sita see each other for the first time in the Royal Gardens of Mithila. While reading the epic he saw the whole of this Divine lila of the \textit{Rámâyana} with open eyes.

During this period he had heard, “There is a yogi Sri Aurobindo who lives inside the earth. He is doing sádhana to make a new creation.” He aspired to have Sri Aurobindo’s darshan but the time had not come yet.

\textit{(To be continued)}

\textit{Compiled by K}
THE SHROUD OF TURIN AND THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

As the result of several years of strict scientific examination of the famous Shroud which is now kept at Turin (Italy) by the Roman Catholic Church and which shows the figure, front and back, of a crucified man as if on a photographic negative, we are at last certain that the Shroud was not worked upon by any painter. It carries a genuine image produced by means unknown to science today: some sort of radiation effect beyond our current technology may be presumed.

The crucified man, about five feet ten inches tall, with a beard and long hair is of the Caucasian type—more precisely, like a Sephardic Jew. The fibres of the Shroud’s linen have yielded 48 samples of pollen of a kind found only in Palestine, Southern Turkey and a few parts of Europe. So at some point of time they must have been exposed to the air of any of these locations. Dr. Robert Buckley, the deputy medical examiner and forensic pathologist of Los Angeles County, has listed the lesions suffered by the crucified man. There are blood flows from numerous puncture wounds on the top and back of the scalp and on the forehead. There is a wound on the left wrist, the right one being covered by the left when both the hands were placed together just below the abdomen. Scourge marks can be observed as if caused by a Roman whip called a flagrum. A swelling is apparent on both shoulders, with abrasions that indicate the carrying of something heavy and rough across them before death on the cross. A narrow incision is to be seen in the right side and the sign of a spike driven through both the feet.

Enthusiastic students of the Bible at once drew parallels between this report and the Gospel accounts and the Shroud was taken to be the linen in which the body of Jesus was said to have been wrapped after the crucifixion. The past history of the Shroud as well as the fact that it was not an artist’s forgery seemed to lend credibility to their claim. Although the Shroud was first recorded as late as 1389 when the widow of the French nobleman, Geoffrey de Charney, held a public showing in Lirey, France, it was reported to have been confiscated in a raid on Palestine during the crusade of 1204.

However, it is curious that at the time of its first exhibition, the local Bishop of Troyes denounced it as false. He cited the charge which a predecessor of his had made that “after diligent inquiry and examination he had determined the cloth was cunningly painted, the truth being attested by the artist who painted it.” Obviously, in the light of modern findings the predecessor was misled in speaking of any artist having painted it and having confessed his trick. But the accusation of falsity holds in the sense that recently a special Carbon-14 test made independently by three laboratories, each in a different country, has proved the Shroud to date with 95 per cent certainty between 1260 and 1390. The earliest date possible is 1200. And it is interesting that the announcement of the
dates was made by the Turin Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero in October last year, thus upholding the declaration of the Shroud's falsity by the Roman Catholic Church's first spokesman. The Cardinal termed it a medieval fake.

Still, devout Christians are loth to give up their faith. They urge that somehow the present scientific chronology may turn out mistaken. Their plea is to the effect: "How can we not believe the Shroud to be Christ's when there are so many points of agreement between the scientific assessment of the crucified man's lesions and the details of the Crucifixion-story in the Gospels? Do we not know that Christ was made to carry the cross on his shoulders and had been whipped and forced to wear a crown of thorns before the crucifixion and, after his death, received a Roman soldier's lance-thrust in his side?"

Even Dr. John Heller, a key-member of the team of investigating scientists and the chronicler of their various decisive investigations in the fascinating Report on the Shroud of Turin which was published before the triple Carbon-14 test made last year, said in that book: "Nothing in all our findings over three years contained a single datum that contravened the Gospel accounts." He was simultaneously careful to add, face to face with the question as to exactly whose body had been represented: "Science has no way of determining the answer. We just do not know." As he remarked a little earlier, quoting his co-worker Ray Rogers, "In science, you're entitled to any hypothesis you choose. But if you don't have a test to examine that hypothesis, it's not worth anything. We do not have a test for Jesus Christ." Yes, there is a distinct reservation here, but the full assent to the alleged correspondences in the Gospels is striking.

It is worth looking into the popular pro-Christ claim. First, we must observe that there are four Gospels—Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's and John's. The first three are designated "synoptic" because of the substantial agreement among them in content and in form despite several divergences in details. The fourth stands rather apart. Most of its matter is peculiar to itself and its differences from the Synoptics are great enough to permit the question whether it can be classified in the same literary form of "Gospel." And it is by its differences that it provides much of the parallelism popular Christianity puts forth. Thus it is the only Gospel which mentions nails as having been used in the crucifixion. As the Roman Catholic authority John L. McKenzie says in his Dictionary of the Bible,¹ the fastening of a condemned man's limbs to the cross was done either by ropes or by nails. Nowhere in Matthew, Mark or Luke do we have a reference to either ropes or nails. Only in John do we learn of nails when Jesus is said to appear before his disciples after his death and to show his wounds (20:25) John alone recounts of Jesus when he had died: "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came there out blood and water" (19:34). This second detail is crucial in any comparison of Jesus with the man in the Shroud. So we may legitimately affirm that John's is the Gospel which is most relevant.

¹ Indian Edition by Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore 1984 p 162 col 1
But once this inevitable conclusion is drawn we are in for a couple of surprises which too can be considered crucial. In John, after the apostles in the absence of Thomas have seen Jesus appear before them and show them his wounds, Thomas said: “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (20:25). And Jesus, when he appears to Thomas along with the other apostles, says: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing” (20:27). With this clear reference to hands, let us attend to some words of Dr. Buckley, on whose information we have already drawn: “There is a wound in the left wrist, the right one being covered by the left hand. This is the typical lesion for a crucifixion. The classical and legendary portrayal of a crucifixion with nails through the palms of the hands is spurious. the structures in the hand are too fragile to hold the weight of a man.” John does not bring in wrists anywhere. Palms are made prominent

Even more serious than this discrepancy is the same Gospel’s story of the disciples going to the sepulchre of Jesus: “Then cometh Simon Peter... and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie. And the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself” (206-7). The Shroud of Turin is one single piece covering both body and head. Jesus, according to John, had his body and head wrapped separately. The other Gospels do speak of only one linen piece—Matthew 27:59, Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53, but as they are “synoptic” and derive centrally from a common source, their evidence here is not really threefold: it is one testimony quoted three times. Except for this solitary agreement with the Turin Shroud, they have nothing to match John’s pronouncements. But John fails at the heart of the possible parallelism.

Nor does he give his evidence of separate wrappings in one context alone. There is the story of the resurrection of Lazarus after he has lain in his tomb for four days. Jesus calls him out. “And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin” (11:44).

What is further worth noting is that even the body was not wrapped in a shroud. The word employed is not sūndōn as in the Synoptic Gospels, connoting an all-enveloping single piece of linen: it is othonia both when Joseph of Arimathea wraps the dead body of Jesus (19:40) and when Peter looks into the tomb. McKenzie comments. “The nature of the wrapping is not clear; the word used by John suggests that the body was wound in linen bands. A similar word ketra is used of Lazarus (11:44), and such binding is further suggested by Jesus’s command to untie him.”

Finally, to those who would make much of the single shroud mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke, what J. A. T. Robinson has written may be repeated.

\[^{1} \text{Ibid., p. 110, col. 2}\]
This Biblical scholar, who has attempted to reconcile *othonia* with *sindōn*, has yet honestly raised a serious obstacle in the way of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Jesuit scholar Raymond E. Brown' presents the situation very well: "... the *othonia* ('cloth wrappings') of John are sometimes assumed to be a collective which could possibly be the same as the *sindōn*; or the *soudaron* ('piece of cloth') of John is either identified with the *sindōn* or interpreted as a chin band which some find depicted in the Shroud. Be all of that as it may or may not, J. A. T. Robinson has a point when he says that only with great difficulty from a reading of the Gospels would one imagine the burial cloth of Jesus to be in the form in which the Shroud is preserved. The lengthwise image of front and back, so that the Shroud is folded over the head rather than folded sidewise, is rather startling granted the Gospel descriptions". So even the burial cloth of Matthew, Mark and Luke hardly tallies in the mode of its use with the Shroud.

Surveying the general field, Brown adds: "In his excellently balanced book, Ghiberti makes a point that a true biblical critic cannot assume that any of the Gospels necessarily gives us exact details about the burial of Jesus. Each evangelist may be describing that burial (which took place decades before the Gospels were written) in terms of the Jewish customs he knows in his time and in his area. Therefore, lack of agreement between the Shroud and the biblical accounts is really not a major feature if one argues that the Shroud is the historical burial garment, even though most Shroud enthusiasts seem to think that agreement with the Gospels is a matter of life and death. More important is the issue raised by Robinson which may be used in an inverse way. If the Shroud were known to any of the evangelists, would he have described the burial in the way he did? Certainly the Synoptics should have described a wound in the side of Christ, and John should have been more clear about the nature of the burial cloth. But above all, any evangelist who knew the Shroud should have mentioned the marvellous preservation of the image of Jesus. Silence on this point is particularly startling in the Fourth Gospel which makes a point of describing the burial clothes left by Jesus in the tomb. (I for one do not find convincing that a conspiracy of silence existed among the early Christians lest they give offense to the Jews about having a human image of the Saviour in their midst.) In the early argumentation about the resurrection, the Shroud would have been a marvellous apologetic proof over against the Jews; but no mention of it is found in the Gospels, nor even a description that betrays a knowledge of it. This argumentation does not disprove the Shroud but should make us aware that the history of its preservation is more mysterious than one could guess from discussions of where it was before exhibition in France in the 14th century"

All in all, it seems futile to hope that the Carbon-14 result will be faulted in the future and a concordance brought about between the scientific observations

and the Biblical evidence from any source. The mystery remains, but all members of the various Christian Churches would be well advised to concur with the authoritative proclamation of Cardinal Belestrero in tune with the laboratories of Switzerland, England and the U.S.A.

K. D. Sethna

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**FILL ME...**

Fill me, Lord,
In the contours of your flute,
then touch the body
of my spirit,
to melt me in melody.

Gently, blow your breath
into my mind,
to swell my soul
with the ache of your echo

Possess my life-forces,
in a marriage with
your creative reality,
fulfilling the created
with the creator,
in a divine moment
of breathless extinction.

Sonal
NEHRU BIRTH CENTENARY YEAR 14.11.1889/14.11.1989

AN ACCOUNT OF JAWAHARLAL’S THREE VISITS TO THE ASHRAM
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIMANGSHU NIYOGI

This story began in 1942. In that year when the world’s future hung in the balance with Hitler becoming the seemingly invincible arm of the Axis forces and with the Allies fighting with their backs to the wall, to mobilise India’s vast human and natural resources for their war-effort and responding to the persistent demand of Indian Nationalists the British Government offered Dominion Status to India. It was only one step less than full freedom. Sir Stafford Cripps was the bearer of this package. Sri Aurobindo saw a divine inspiration behind the move and, with his inner gaze which could penetrate the future, found that from both the international and national angles the proposals were advantageous and should be accepted by India. He broke his self-imposed long silence on political matters and on 31st March 1942 openly supported the Cripps offer. He also sent a special envoy to the Indian National Congress High Command advising them to accept the proposals.

The rest is history. Today everyone with historical insight concedes that to spurn the Cripps Proposals was a blunder with terrible consequences—the partition of the country and the attendant holocaust in which millions died and many more were uprooted. Himangshu Niyogi, then a young man, was appalled that the National leaders did not pay any attention to the words of Sri Aurobindo. Realising the enormity of their blunder he wrote an impassioned letter to Nehru saying, “Why did not any of you go and question Sri Aurobindo as to why he supported the Cripps Proposals? After thirty years of silence and seclusion he came out and asked you all to accept it. I urge you to go and meet him. Travelling is nothing new to you...” and some more in the same vein. Nehru wrote back, “Yes, somebody from Pondicherry came, but I could not gather that it would be particularly worthwhile to go there. At present my hands are full and I cannot leave my work.”

Years passed. In 1949 Himangshu went to Japan on a business trip. In Japan every year they had a children’s conference. That year the children passed a resolution requesting the Government of Japan to get an elephant for the Tokyo zoo since many of the children had never seen an elephant. The only elephant in Japan had died during the war.

On the night of this conference Himangshu was attending a party with his business friends. Some of them requested him, “Niyogisan, why don’t you present an elephant to the children of Japan?” Himangshu replied, “It is not a big question to send an elephant but how to send it? Japan is still under occupation. The person who can really present it is our Prime Minister. But how to approach him? Who will write to him? Who wants the elephant?” His business
partners answered, “It is the children who want the elephant.” Then he suggested, “Let them write to the Prime Minister of India.” Himangshu was to leave shortly for India. There was not much time. How could the children be contacted in such a short time? His friends solved the problem. They published the news in Ashahi Shimbun—a mass-circulation newspaper of Japan along with Himangshu Niyogi’s photograph. Thereafter he was stormed by telephone calls from children and children’s schools. He was asked, “How to address the Prime Minister? Should we call him ‘Your Excellency’?” Himangshu replied, “Who is writing the letter?” “The children,” they answered. He replied, “What do the children care if it is ‘His Excellency’?” “But he has to be addressed in some way,” they said. “Then address him as Uncle Nehru,” Himangshu answered.

Hundreds of letters were made ready. They insisted that these letters should be presented to Himangshu Niyogi by the children not in his hotel room but in the cage where the elephant had died. A date and time were fixed for the ceremony. On the appointed day Himangshu reached the Ueno Zoo. There he heard the loud-speakers announcing something in Japanese with each sentence ending with the words “Niyogisan.” Somebody explained that the zoo was full of children and the loud speakers were calling them to collect near the empty cage since Niyogisan had arrived. In the cage a boy and a girl aged seven or eight awaited him with packets of letters. They did not at once hand him the letters but asked him, “You must be very happy because you are returning to your country. We hope you liked our country. You must admit it is beautiful. We hope you will present the letters to the Prime Minister. Tell him we will take good care of the elephant and in winter we will contribute our share of coal to keep him warm.” (At that time in war-ravaged Japan everything was in short supply.) Himangshu answered, “I am very happy to take this consignment and as soon as I reach home I will take it to our Prime Minister. He is very fond of children. Since the request is from you he will surely respond. Your country is very beautiful but my country has what few countries have—the highest mountain, the longest river and other such things.”

The following day Himangshu flew back to India. The morning papers of India were full of the story, even the American Time Magazine published this news. Then Himangshu went to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and handed over the children’s letters and photocopies of the letters published in newspapers. In that file there was a photograph of Himangshu receiving the letters from the children of Japan in the cage of the dead elephant. Himangshu very much wanted to show this photograph to the Mother. Now Nehru took this photograph from the file and kept it with him. Himangshu almost asked him to return it but had the good sense not to do so. Nehru was very happy and excited. He took up two phones and when his secretaries came he said to them, “Send an elephant.” The secretaries were puzzled. “Yes, here are the letters. Send an elephant to Japan.” Then he turned towards Himangshu and said, “Leave your
name and address so that if there is any need they can contact you.” While writing down his name and address Himangshu remarked, “My name is not altogether unknown to the Prime Minister.” Everybody was surprised. “Yes, if I refer to a letter, I am sure the Prime Minister will remember me,” he added. Himangshu’s cousin who was then Commerce Minister said, “Ah! letter? do you know he has been receiving thousands of letters every day?” Himangshu said, “Maybe so, but it is a very particular letter and I am sure Panditji cannot forget it.” All those who were present, including the Prime Minister, became curious. Himangshu had all their attention and continued, “Sir, do you remember somebody wrote to you at the time of the Cripps Mission to go to Pondicherry?” Nehru at once said, “So you were that gentleman?” Everyone was surprised by this exchange between the two.

Afterwards Himangshu presented him with two paintings made from the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo by a Japanese artist and added, “The letters are from the children of Japan. These are from me.” Nehru was pleased and after looking at the paintings remarked, “They are beautifully done.”

Soon the elephant was dispatched with much fanfare. Himangshu’s friends from Japan wrote to him, “At least one lakh people were there on the first day to see the elephant ” They also sent him photographs of the Welcome Ceremony. The photograph which Himangshu especially wanted to show to the Mother and which Nehru had kept with him was published in the newspapers and it was shown to the Mother by someone. Later Himangshu showed the Mother the photographs of the Japanese children handing him the letters and also the photocopies of the other letter published in the newspapers. She looked at them with a broad smile. Afterwards due to Himangshu’s connection with this story Bula-da always addressed him as “Hati māmā” (“Elephant uncle”).

The second time Himangshu met Nehru in connection with an import-export license, Nehru enthusiastically said, “Give him the full license.”

Himangshu’s third meeting with Nehru took place when he went to invite Nehru to inaugurate the convocation of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. Nehru replied to his plea, “I’ll not put my foot in Pondicherry as long as the French are there.” Himangshu said, “Then give a message.” Nehru answered, “You do not understand, it will complicate matters.”

After the freedom and merger of Pondicherry Shri Surendra Mohan Ghosh, went and invited Nehru to visit Pondicherry. There he revealed to Nehru what the Mother had said to him during the pre-independence days, “We are not bothering about independence, because it is decreed. What we are worried about is who will take charge of the country. Show me the photographs of all the possible leaders.” Shri Surendra Mohan gave her the photographs. The Mother saw them one by one and then took out the photo of Nehru and said, “He is the man.” Nehru agreed to come
On January 16, 1955 at 11 am Nehru came to visit the Ashram. The Ashram accorded him a cordial welcome. The Ashram boys and girls (J S A S A) beginning with the youths and ending with the infant section formed a Guard of Honour lining his route from the street through the inside courtyard up to the Meditation Hall. Nolmi-da and others received him at the Ashram Gate. Nolmi-da introduced Himangshu saying, "He is our representative at Calcutta." Nehru shook hands with him remarking, "We have met before."

In the Ashram Reception-room Nehru was shown a plaster model of Pondicherry state which was intended for the 26th January parade at Delhi. The model was conceived by the Mother and made by the Ashram artists and craftsmen. It stood on a boat to remind the spectators of the seaboards of the four once-French settlements of Pondicherry, Karikal, Yaman and Mahé. Four lions, symbols of India, guarded the boat at both ends. The four sides of the central platform were adorned by four statues representing the four continents. Buddha stood for Asia, Pallas Athene of Greece for Europe, Isis of Egypt for Africa and the Statue of Liberty for America.

In the centre, surrounded by these statues, there were eight columns decorated with white and red lotuses which signify the spiritual power at work for the victorious realisation of the divine destiny of all mankind. On top of the pillars rested a globe of the world flanked on one side by an Indian woman holding in her hand a palm leaf representing victory and on the other by a French woman holding the olive branch of peace. The white bird of peace with its wings half spread out descended on the globe. Pandit Nehru was so captivated with this model in bluish granite finish that he asked whether it was possible to carry it to the capital.

After the official functions he came to the Playground in the evening. As he entered the gate, the Ashram band struck up the Bandemataram. The Mother received and seated Pandit Nehru by her side. The Ashram children gave a recitation of a passage of the book The Mother by Sri Aurobindo in twelve different languages. The Ashram girls performed the Swedish rhythmic ball drill which was unique of its kind in India. It drew spontaneous applause from Pandit Nehru. He also highly appreciated the vaulting and agility exercises as well as the little children's 'symbol drill.' The programme ended with the Band playing Jana Gana Mana, the national anthem.

A photo album was made of this visit. Himangshu went to Delhi to present it to Nehru. When he saw Himangshu, Nehru smiled and said, "You have come from there?" "Yes, Sir," Himangshu answered. Nehru took him to the verandah so as to be able to see the photographs one by one. Himangshu pointed out a photograph in which Nehru was laughing and said, "It is your best photograph."

In Delhi Himangshu had heard that there was a possibility of Nehru visiting Pondicherry, accompanied by Indira. After Nehru had seen the album
Himangshu asked him “I have heard that next month you are going to visit Pondicherry. In that case you must pay a visit to the Ashram.” Nehru replied, “I am not sure. It depends upon what programme has been fixed for me.” Himangshu said, “You are the Prime Minister. Who can make you come away without meeting the Mother?” Nehru replied, “We shall see, we shall see. Well, Indira is also coming with me. You show her around.” “Certainly I’ll show her around but you must also come and meet the Mother” Saying this, Himangshu came out. He found it very sad to hear that Nehru would come to Pondicherry but might not visit the Ashram.

During Nehru’s second visit to Pondicherry on 29-9-1955 his coming to the Ashram was no part of the official programme. The Chief Commissioner of Pondicherry made an extremely tight schedule for him, every minute was as if inexorably assigned to different activities and functions. There was no mention of the Ashram. The Chief Commissioner handed the proposed schedule to Nehru. On seeing it he exploded, “Kya mai adm1nahm hoon?” (“Am I not a human being?”)

Meanwhile Himangshu was very upset. He asked the Mother, “Mother, will he not come?” The Mother replied very softly and slowly, “He will come, he will come.” Himangshu had perfect faith in the Mother’s words. He became sure that since the Mother had said so, Nehru would come to the Ashram. He rushed and bought two gold symbols of the Mother and gave them to her—one for Nehru, one for Indira. The Mother asked him, “Don’t you want to give them yourself?” Himangshu replied, “No, Mother, you will give them.”

At his public meetings Nehru usually gave lengthy speeches. So the Chief Commissioner of Pondicherry had kept one and a half hours for the public meeting but Nehru finished his speech within half an hour. Then the next item on his programme also he finished quickly. The next appointment was after two hours. When the Commissioner informed Nehru about this, suggesting that he should come to Rajbhavan to rest, Nehru replied, “Now we will go straight to the Ashram Playground.” The bewildered security people had trouble in catching up with him. The Mother was awaiting him and Indira.

Nehru’s third and last visit to the Ashram was on 13th January 1963, after the Chinese invasion of India. He was ill and inwardly wounded by the Chinese attack. On coming to the Ashram he went straight to the Mother. The Mother gave him a beautiful yellow rose, Shri Surendra Mohan Ghosh prayed and pleaded on Nehru’s behalf, “Mother, give him some health and peace.” Pointing towards the golden rose she said, “I have given him everything.”

An old sadhak saw Nehru both arrive in the Ashram and leave it. It is remarkable that Nehru looked thin and emaciated on arrival but when he returned from the Mother he seemed filled with peace and healthy and didn’t look thin any more. Of course this sadhak did not know what had passed in the Mother’s room.
After coming down from the Mother's room Nehru paid homage at the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and then went to visit the International Centre of Education where all the students and teachers were assembled. In the evening he saw our sports activities, and commented on them in his speeches at public meetings in Pondicherry and Madras.

Long before Nehru came into power Sri Aurobindo wrote about him to Dilip Kumar Roy, "... he bears on himself the stamp of a very fine character, a nature of the highest sattvic kind, full of rectitude and high sense of honour, a man of the finest Brahmin type with what is best in European education added, that is the impression he gives."

After Nehru's passing on 27-5-64 the Mother gave the following message, "Nehru leaves his body but his soul is one with the Soul of India that lives for Eternity"

**SHYAM KUMARI**

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**NAMELESS**

On the mysterious slopes of a mighty mountain,
Where stately trees held in lofty fingers
Myriads of white flower-censors
Trying to coax out the very heart
By the mellifluous notes of his flute
A youth reclined against an ancient elm
The drowsy murmur of the slow-footed wind
And the far-off splash of the unseen stream
Drew an enchanted circle around the pilgrim soul
He dreamed of climbing an upward glow
Towards some crystal pool, in whose sacred depth
He hoped to quench his age-long thirst
Thus opened the vistas of some inner tunnel,
Where one listens to the tread of the Unexpected
And suddenly meets the Unknown.

**SHYAM KUMARI**
'GLORIA'—DYUMANBHAI'S GIFT OF
'CONSCIOUS' FOOD

Farming, as conceived in ancient India, is not for profit-making. It is much more. It is a *yajna* of self-giving. It is both an invocation to the mother-earth and an involvement in its processes of evolution. It enriches earth-nature even as it seeks nourishment for man's physical nature. The food that we produce can become the integral elixir of human existence if only we could identify ourselves totally and perfectly both with the truth of Nature and with its growth-process. The more we pour into its bowels our love, our consciousness and our care, the greater would its produce become wholesome. True food can truly promote a new life and existence.

Life has many spheres of activity and seeks to move in an integral way provided its self-conscious instruments support it in its manifold endeavour. Agriculture is one such way of helping the soil as much as the sons of the soil. It is a profound mechanism of mutual growth. Indeed, there is rarely any other realm of human activity which is so directly connected with the physical and psychological growth processes than agriculture, for many aspects of our life are taken care of by the earth.

Agriculture seeks primarily to support the organic expression of the earth; the process can be strengthened only by organic means and not by any other, particularly the mineral. That arable farming yields greater dividends by chemical fertilizers is an erroneous theory as it soon exhausts the productive capacity of the earth. Moreover, it is a rapacious approach, it not only negates its onward creativity but tends to pull body-growth in non-human and unhealthy and disease-prone directions. It disturbs dangerously the ecology of Nature's evolution.

The humus content of the soils as well as the nutritional value of foods produced is increased by improving the organic structure of the earth and by guiding its organic processes in new and healthy directions, whereas chemical fertilisers infuse into the earth a negative vibration and sow seeds of sheer physical need and psychological greed, utterly oblivious of the secret purpose of body-existence. Literally and positively it is “artificial manuring” that sooner rather than later destroys the truth of the earth's holistic nature. Admittedly, it is this chemical and mineral approach and “thinking” that when applied to the phenomenon of body-life totally destroys the eco-growth of the earth. It is this recent twisted attitude toward agricultural production stemming from an utterly secular and materialist view of life that is responsible for the deterioration and breakdown of the eco-system in Nature. There is no reason to feel proud about the induction of this view and method in agricultural production in our times as it has only aggravated a dangerous hunger—the insatiable animal hunger for ever more.
The chemical processes taking place inside an organism are the bare minimum necessary to overcome its in-built material recalcitrance and to promote its growth. It is the descent of life into the material-physical plane and its consequent working for the emancipation and manifestation of life concealed within that sets in motion the chemical processes in Nature. This is indicative of the collaboration of the material-physical with the vital leading to physical transformation. Any over-dose of the chemical-mineral is bound to disturb the delicate balance, negate the secret eco-structure and throw overboard the general purpose of creative evolution. It is harmful to the totality of the phenomenon of life itself. It affects the growth-processes of both the human and plant kingdoms, it affects people’s understanding of life and its purpose, it affects their value-system and value-judgment, it affects their general awareness. In short, it is consciousness-pollution which has far-reaching consequences affecting the ethos of peoples and the growth of civilisations. Pollution of food at the very source of its production is one of the root causes of our psychological and physical malaise.

Agriculture, therefore, needs to be emancipated from the ‘barbarous’, rather criminal treatment of the earth by chemical fertilizers. In addition to nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash, the necessary quantities of minerals that plants need are already there even in average fertile soils. Depending upon the soil-texture any additional nutrients could be supplied through organic manures without in any way affecting the complex yield processes of the soil. Also, this would not jeopardise in the least the health of livestock and other dependent life. Arsenic compounds, urea and other fertilizer-chemicals have detrimental and dangerous effects on soils as well as on the produce. The same is true with D.D.T. and the many pesticides that are generally used quite indiscriminately. We need a comprehensive understanding of the truth of the earth-nature and of the organisms of the foods produced in relation to the integral and healthy growth of human and animal life.

The biological movement in agriculture is a welcome step in the desired direction of restoring to the earth its organic nutrients and its ‘natural’ state. The artificial and unnatural method of consumer-oriented over-production must be given the go-by. The earlier this is done the better for the restoration of the badly shaken eco-system.

Mineral or chemical fertilisers are not all perfectly soluble; the residue is passed on to the plants as well as to the produce. In addition, their secondary effects are equally harmful, and in the long run have negative consequences in relation to soil fertility. Organic farming not only helps soil conservation but also preserves the natural environment and strengthens the eco-system. Natural growth of plant-life takes place in a rhythmic cycle which is a self-nourishing, self-sufficient system. It is a totally closed cycle of growth, decomposition and organic feedback. Composts, organic waste, farm manures are a natural part of this cycle and maintain a healthy equation between the soil and the produce.
necessary for body-growth. It is in this living context that agricultural dynamics will have to be comprehended. Steady maintenance of balance in the eco-structure, system-building, organic fertilizers, positive and insightful tillage method and crop-disease remedial measures constitute ideal organic agriculture.

Yet, something more needs to be done. No doubt, bio-dynamic agriculture gives back to the earth its healthy creative capacity, and happily rejuvenates it. It is a self-propelling, self-fulfilling method but keeps the earth in a repetitive cycle without helping it to evolve further. Yes, the earth also has to evolve, has to become more and more receptive to a higher Light and Force. It has to be introduced to the dynamics of consciousness too, and helped to become more and more conscious of its own true identity. Matter is a mode of Brahman, and must increasingly realise this secret truth of itself.

It is time humanity joined forces with the great consciousness-march that has been in progress subterraneously in Nature. We may at first be inclined not to believe it, as we do not see it on the surface, and more so because of our so-called scientific orientation. Nonetheless, the evolutionary nisus is there and has been instrumental in the manifold evolution of the earth since its beginnings. The history of the workings of the earth, though apparently strictly cyclical and repetitive, is spiral and evolutionary. There is much more to it than what our static abstract knowledge can comprehend.

In one way all of humanity is collaborating with Nature, and Nature with the Divine Mother in this cosmic mahā yajña—the adventure of world-consciousness. But the Mother’s children especially in the Ashram have been participating in this supreme effort in a concerted and concentrated way. They all are engaged in the yajña of self-offering of their conscious energies which supports the task of new-creating the earth.

The great and secret experiment going on at Gloria has been towards the discovery and manifestation as well as progressive perfection of a new equation of conscious physical growth and of body-mutation. Food promotes growth, and conscious food should promote conscious body-growth. Our ‘erstwhile’ Nature was capable of building and perfecting a body-complex capable of holding and manifesting the highest and truest mental consciousness. The wide range of nourishment that it offered—from animal-food to flower-essences—was at its best supportive of the manifestation of sāttvic—mental—consciousness in the physical. It could neither help the body to defy death, nor was it ever expected to do so. It helped the body to survive and to flourish creatively within the parameters of space and time. If gross and animal food was capable of building a strong and muscular body, fruit, honey and the like promoted a subtle and pliable physical, but neither could ever give or take the body on the road to immortality.

Our body belongs to the old creation of which Yama is the king and supreme dispenser. We need a new Brahma—the supramental new creator—to
re-structure the universe, to new-create the earth that could yield the new nourishment of nectarean nutrition. We need a new and 'conscious' food that would facilitate the process of body-transformation,—that of a new and conscious mutation of cells. We need a new annam that can build the ādhāra fit enough to support and to undergo supramental transformation.

Towards this, the earth needs a new feedback—that of Truth-consciousness. Now that Nature has agreed to collaborate with the Divine, as the Mother declared, it needs at least a few children of the Mother, who have consecrated their all for the work, to feed the earth with their prayers, their consciousness and their service.

Dyumanbhai, a loving instrument, is one of those whose energies and dreams are consciously directed towards the establishment of peace, love and harmony in the earth-nature. Gloria is that part of our earth which has been made ready to come into contact with the New Consciousness. Earth cannot and should not any longer remain dead matter, Dyumanbhai would say. Annam has to realise the Divine. annam must manifest the super-nature of the Divine so that the 'new food' it would produce might be more and more helpful to the 'new body.' Dyumanbhai puts all his faith and love in such an eventuality, and strongly feels that Gloria has chosen to respond to this radical change. Even cattle and plants at Gloria, he feels, are responding to the new dispensation, and the effect is becoming more and more pronounced and has spread in the atmosphere stretching over 25 miles around the farm. Now, it is only a matter of time; through the inscrutable process of cosmogenesis more and more areas of the earth will be touched by the Truth and get changed. And mother-earth will have a new birth to feed her children with the manna of Immortality.

Hail to thee, Glorious Mother
And to thy heroic children!

V Madhusudan Reddy

MIRACULOUS GRACE OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

By Kripavikshu Aml Mohan Price Rs 40/- Discount 20% Available from the AUTHOR, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry - 605 002

From the Indian Express: "The non-believers and rationalists confine all knowledge to the parameter of the senses, and to the process of logic and human reasoning. To them the occult experiences described here as playing a great role in making the author a yogi are highly instructive."
It was 1960. Spring merged into summer, but still there was crispness in the air. The days were slowly growing longer, warmer and brighter. I was longing to get back to India. My studies folded up sooner than
expected. The courses of flower-making, bead-work, drawing and painting were about to close. The examinations in LTC were near. I was busy with my work.

During week-ends I invited Doris, Aunt Margaret, Ursula and Sudha to my bed-sitter either to lunch, dinner or tea. I enjoyed cooking. We relished strawberries and cream.

One week-end Aunt Margaret and Ursula came to my place. Aunt had worn the painted sari I had given her. I looked at her, then suddenly uncontrollable mirth escaped me, because I saw on her the ill-fitted blouse her dress-maker had produced. It gave the impression of a sack!

Ursula presented to me a skirt and a blouse which I tried on. She and Aunt expressed the same view: "Why don't you wear the European dress? It becomes you—especially as you have pretty legs." I said: "Eh, no. I like saris."

When Aunt left after tea, Ursula did the "Cha-Cha" dance and showed me a few steps. I exclaimed: "My God, if I go on doing this twisting and turning dance I'll certainly break my ankles. This is not my cup of tea."

* *

When I had a terrible bout of 'flu in 1959, Mrs. Bee took me to Dr. Bernard Hatchick who was in the Health Service. He wrote me a prescription. I spoke to him about my toothache. He gave me a note for Dr. Phillip Wise to check my teeth. The dentist extracted the upper wisdom tooth in my left jaw and filled a few cavities in my teeth. He wanted to remove my other upper wisdom tooth. I refused and said with a smile: "Doctor, if you'll do so I'll become unwise and you'll become extra wise as already you are wise." He laughed and warned me: "Miss Hindocha, don't blame me if it pains." I said: "O.K."  

* *

The blue sky, the green trees, the colourful flowers and the sound of birds singing madly on this glowing June morning. That day—20 6.60—my examinations started at LTC. I did well in them. But during my paper in English literature I started having a pain in my remaining upper wisdom tooth. It grew by leaps and bounds—I felt as if hot needles were pricking me. I thought I would faint.

I left the paper and rushed to Dr. Phillip Wise without an appointment. I had to sit for some time. I tried to divert my mind to a small Fish Aquarium which was in the waiting room. There were weird fishes—gauzy, pink-striped, flat-heads, snub-noses, spear-like, round—every type of tiny creatures moving swiftly among miniature rocks, anemones and plants. I was so absorbed watching them that I forgot my pain for a while.

Then the nurse called me. The dentist said: "Ah, I told you so!" I kept
mum. He removed the tooth and cautioned me that there were two lower wisdom teeth which needed extraction. But the operation could only be done in a hospital and I would have to stay there at least a week. For, the removal of these two teeth would not be easy. I said: "Goodness, no, I can't, because soon I shall be leaving England." He shrugged and said: "Well, suit yourself. But you must be careful. They will trouble you in the near future and they will be a most difficult case."

I thanked him and went to Sudha's bed-sitter. She made tea for us. We talked about our courses. Her examinations at Pitman's College would start in July.

That night I brooded over all that the dentist had predicted for the wisdom teeth. I thought that I should not worry now since I had no complaint.

Days flew too quickly. Now I started preparing to leave England.

Aunt Margaret and I went to Selfridges. I bought among other things a very becoming red wool-coat.

I was amused to see small children were harnessed by their mothers with long leather straps in order to stay their wandering.

Aunt also took me to her hair-dresser who set my hair. She wanted to coiffe my hair in a bee-hive style which was at that time the fashion. I refused.

A few days later along with Sudha I went on a shopping spree. We did not go for something sophisticated and slinky. We entered a shop and asked for some women's wear. A saleswoman smiled broadly and said: "Madame, haven't you read the board outside the shop? Here we sell outsize garments."

We suppressed our laughter and walked out with poker faces remarking: "No wonder the woman herself is of that size!"

We went to another shop. A slim salesgirl took our measurements and gave clothes accordingly. We fingered the fragile lace underwear which looked so exquisite.

We marched into yet another shop where we came across a beauty parlour. There a beautician advised us as to which colour foundation, powder, rouge and lipstick would suit our complexions. We bought a few items of cosmetics.

We visited many big shops like Harrods, Selfridges, Woolworth, Marks and Spencer's.

We needed glasses. So we went to Dr. Leopold Lyons, F.B.O.A.—Ophthalmic and Dispensing Optician.

The shape of my frame was like a butterfly and its colour was milk-white. Sudha also had a fine frame.

We enjoyed each other's company. So we spent our spare time seeing many movies. Among them was "The Brides of Dracula" which haunted me for a
couple of years. The life of Oscar Wilde was fascinating. This reminds me of his words: “Misfortunes one can endure—they come from outside; they are accidents. But to suffer for one’s own faults—ah, there is the sting of life.”

We also heard a Piano Concerto at Albert Hall.

Time and again we took refuge in our favourite self-service restaurant—Lyons.

Our courses finished in flower-making and bead-work. Both Sudha and I made elegant evening bags studded with seed-pearls and bugle-beading. Our teachers congratulated us. For we had learnt the technique in record time. We gave our teachers some parting gifts. I also presented to Dr. Phillip Wise two brass cobras—on their hoods there were candle-holders.

All of them wished me good luck. I thanked them profusely.

* * *

One day the Indian gentleman from Nairobi whom I had met at East Africa House ran into me. He greeted me and insisted that I should take coffee with him.

We entered one of the coffee bars and sat in a far corner. He ordered Espressos. We sipped the beverage. Meanwhile he asked me: “Where did you disappear—of late I haven’t seen you around Marble Arch with your friends.” I said: “I changed far too many places—that is why.” Then he asked me about my studies and about my leaving England. I satisfied his queries, and inquired about his studies. He laughed and said: “Oh, in Lincoln’s Inn we eat and talk!” He sent me into a soft ripple of laughter.

What is your future plan?” he asked. I said. “As a matter of fact, I don’t have any. But first I will go to East Africa to visit my parents and then to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram where I belong.”

He leaned forward and questioned me: “Wouldn’t you like to get married and settle nicely? Will you be my companion if I propose to you? I am prepared to do my practice anywhere you prefer—here, America, East Africa, except India.”

His astounding proposition robbed me of speech. I was terribly embarrassed. Then quite unexpectedly he reached out to cover my hand with his. I felt the warm hardness of his fingers. Shyly I tried to withdraw my hand but he held on to it.

Still I was silent. A wave of desire to say “Yes” to the gentleman was rising higher and still higher and just about to sink me. In the meantime I felt in the depths of my heart the flame of aspiration steady and sweetly warm which gave me comfort and courage, reminding me of my supreme goal: the Divine.

“Have you nothing to say?” he asked, his voice deep, vibrant and caressing. His dark brown eyes held mine steadily, searchingly.
Eventually I answered, “No, I am honoured by your offer. Thank you so much. But I cannot accept it, because I have given my heart and soul to the Supreme Lord who is my Companion and will be so life after life.” His eyebrows rose as he remarked: “Don’t be crazy. You are young—full of vitality, hopes and enthusiasm. Why do you want to waste your precious time in this fantasy and unrealisable reverie?”

A sad smile hovered on my lips. I said: “You don’t know my life. Once I have chosen, I’ll stick to it. Life is too complicated when one is young. But, thank God, I don’t own my life.”

He said: “You amaze me. I like your innocence and ignorance.” I said: “Thank you.” “Do you mind if I smoke my pipe?” he asked. I did not object. He lit his pipe and leaned back in his chair. He puffed on his pipe. A cloying aroma of fine tobacco hovered pleasantly in the room. I watched him. He looked very handsome and debonair in his immaculate suit of pale grey and his silk tie. He smiled charmingly and said: “Please tell me all about the Ashram.” I told him in a nutshell. He seemed impressed. I said: “When I was in my early teens I knew that I was not seeking transient sensations—momentary desires—I believed in an ideal, true and pure love that was service, devotion, unselfishness. But, alas, my mad dream never came true. I could not find my match, because my life was meant to receive the divine love which is incomparable, priceless.”

He said: “You give me quite a turn— you do fascinate me. You see, I wish to marry a girl for her inner quality and refined culture. I don’t go in for flamboyance. You have made a deep impression on me.”

I rose from the chair expressing my thanks for the coffee. He fell into step beside me after paying the bill. He said when he saw me off to the nearby tube station: “Here is my visiting card. In case you change your mind, please let me know.” I took it and said: “Thank you once again. Please do come to the Ashram and meet our Divine Mother, will you?” He nodded. We parted—perhaps never to meet again.

On my way home, countless thoughts whirled dizzily through my mind. Then from nowhere a small silly voice whispered: “You fool, how awful to let the first bright flame of romance flicker down to cold grey ashes?”

Indeed, physical attractions were a snare. But they had no real base. Human love could never be sincere, one-pointed, true and pure.

That very night I wrote a letter to the Mother regarding the proposal and my refusal. I also wrote a letter to my friend Mrs. Saralaben Shah of Bombay:

“Never do I want to get married, never do I want to fall into that delusion. The Divine Mother wrote to me in 1956:

‘You are born for the Divine and you will find the Divine.’ This was true and will always remain true. Let the Mother’s Will be done. I will make the most of my life.”
I know my loyalty was put to the test. But Huta will always remain Huta—'The offered one.'

During my stay in the Ashram for almost four years I met with hideous difficulties both outward and inward. I was aware of hardships in the Ashram. Besides, my parents were anxious about my life as I was young. They had permitted me to get married to a person of my own choice.

If any girl would have been in my place she might have succumbed to this irresistible offer from such a wonderful person—full of vivacity, versatility, virile, devastatingly attractive, rich, intelligent and so forth. He deserves these adjectives and many more.

Indeed, some men are most attractive. They are well dressed, well mannered and there is something dashing and jaunty about them.

I might have easily accepted the gentleman’s proposal, got married and settled in London. But my soul stood its ground.”

(To be continued)

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A NEW YEAR GIFT

1989 leads us nearer the 21st Century. The 21st Century shall be the Century of the true Man. And the Child is the Father of the Man. Let us, therefore, build up the Ideal Child who will obviously become the Ideal Parent.

Let us read what The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, says in

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“RELAX—LET GO”

A SURE WAY TO HEALTH

The benefits of releasing ourselves to the Mother, through relaxing our thoughts and feelings in quiet practice of regular prayer, can never be truly measured. Those who have done this know its fruits well and rejoice. Those who have not are missing one of the greatest blessings they can ever experience.

Without consciously knowing it, we burden ourselves every day with thoughts of concern over our personal affairs and over someone else’s ways of doing or living. We weigh ourselves down with emotional pressures and criticisms of self and others, with doubt and fear and anxiety. As these thoughts and fears accumulate and as we carry them over from day to day, the body then bears the weight and shows the effects of it. The muscles, the organs, the glands, the myriad cells and atoms within the body-temple become burdened.

The tremendous truth, however, is that this is not necessary. There is a way of release from this kind of pressure. The way is one of true spiritual relaxation, letting go all to the presence and power of the Divine Mother. “I will give you rest” is the invitation and the promise. We have only to take Her word and release ourselves to the presence, make a habit of doing this in order to live in lightness, ease and peace.

If we want to live as unburdened and as free, light and strong as She, we must be willing to give up all the burden of our personal self for Her sake. The easy way is the narrow way, the way that is so narrow there is no room for the “BAGGAGE” of the human self.

We must “LOSE WEIGHT”, the weight of the personal mind, the human feeling, until all such baggages are dropped in deference to the Divine Mother. We think we are willing to do this, but we need only look at our own thoughts and emotions through one day to realize that we have hardly begun to do it. We are continually looking for a place to “lay our head” and for a situation in which to settle, and for a condition outwardly on which we may rest our hopes and dreams and desires. As long as we do this we are not relaxing or letting go.

If you wish to begin to help yourself mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually, here are a few suggestions. Find a quiet time and a place where you will not be disturbed for a few minutes. Relax your body physically, either in a chair or a bed or on the floor, whatever is the most comfortable for you. Next, begin the process of release by starting with the thing, person or circumstance that is giving you the most difficulty.

Now talk to the Divine Mother as if She were near you. “Mother, I release myself into your keeping. I give up my mind and all its thoughts.” Be still, utterly quiet for a moment. Then whatever has been within your mind needing release, release it specifically. Be exceedingly specific in every release. Let all thoughts
come to the surface as you continue to repeat a statement such as the above.

Do not hurry or gloss over what should be released. You will find that the more thoughts you let go, the more will others, for a while, gradually come to the mind—little petty comments made, small human opinions or judgments of the past. Let them all come forward without fear. Be impersonal in this and do not be afraid to face them. Look at the worst in your self and in others. Face all the dragons of the human mind with calm assurance, whether these concern the emotions or the body or the life. Do not try to work on them, for they are the Mother’s responsibility, not yours.

When you have finished releasing that which you most wish to accomplish, whatever you have the time for at the moment, go on about your work of the day with thankfulness and do not look back. If you tend to return to thoughts about the situation, say to yourself “This is in your hands, Mother, and further release will come in my next quiet moment with You; thank you, Mother.” Then let go of the problem as completely as you can. When your next quiet time of prayer is permitted, resume where you left off and begin again, going through the thoughts of the mind, releasing one by one the thoughts that need release, all the desires, needs, ambitions, goals, unhappinesses, happenings, trials, challenges, longings—good, bad and indifferent. Release everything, hold back nothing.

You will find this becomes a time of great joy. you will hardly be able to wait from one prayer time to the next to release yourself into the Mother’s hands. Yet you will even release the appointed time of prayer to Her Wisdom. You will truly find there is nothing in which to be anxious, nothing in which to be sorrowful, nothing about which to be disturbed or angry, because you are delighted to give up your mind, heart, soul, body and life to the One who knows just what to do about them.

She is indeed The Way, and The Truth, and The Life. When you have released all to Her Way, to Her Truth, and to Her Life, holding nothing back—when you have given all to Her—you will see what you have wanted to see for so long—that you are free with the Freedom of the Mother.

G. J. VyAs
Rishi Markandeya recounts the story of Savitri to Yudhishthira essentially with the intention of consoling him and encouraging him out of his plight of grief and melancholy. He has lost his kingdom in a game of dice and has been ordered to stay in the forest for a period of twelve years which is to be followed by one year of dwelling incognito. Exiled and stripped of the kshatriya pride, all the five brothers, and with them their common wife Draupadi, accept the lot that has fallen on them. But their miseries are not yet over with this ordeal alone. Even in the forest the Pandavas are constantly harassed and chased by their arch-enemy. The loss of royalty is no doubt very painful to them, but the evil treatment given to their wife is more distressing and is the main cause of their suffering and agony. There can be no greater insult to an upright person than to witness in a state of unmanly helplessness the humiliation of a woman. On an earlier occasion, Draupadi was dragged into the Assembly Hall with none of the elders coming to her rescue; later on, in the forest, she was abducted by Jayadratha. It is in this mood of dejection that Yudhishthira enquires of Markandeya whether he had met or heard of any woman who, despite being chaste and virtuous, had to bear the inner wounds the way Draupadi did. The Rishi's narrating the story of Savitri is not only to provide a parallel by way of an illustration. He pronounces the ideal of womanhood and elaborates further how conduct in the dharma can be a means of proper salvation in all the circumstances of life. Virtue never goes unrewarded. The great sorrow by which Savitri had been afflicted turned finally into happiness. By her devotion and by suffering greatly for the sake of her husband, the pious lady had not only saved him from doom but also brought prosperity to both the houses. Markandeya assures that Draupadi too, because of her nobility and chaste conduct, shall prove to be a fortune-bringer to the Pandavas.

Alleviation of suffering is the one immediate purpose of the narration, but suggestions are made at various levels ranging from the mundane-social to the profound occult-spiritual. A whole culture, based on truth-values, and the two interpenetrating each other, is what this little episode brings vividly to us from a time that itself was moulded by the thought-vision of a Rishi-poet. A kind of heroism emerges in upholding all that is noble and elevating, a heroism that brings prosperity not only in life here but afterwards too. Righteous conduct turns out to be its own reward. To follow the Path of the True in an evil circumstance of existence is itself the process of eliminating that circumstance and transcending it. The great have done it and made the way sure and safe. They have accepted miseries and misfortunes of life only to deal with them in the conviction and strength of their ideals and principles. In the economy of nature a positive gain is registered by their actions. A firm new ground is conquered for the spirit's glory. To know of such path-finders and leaders is also to walk in the safety of their lead.
It appears that in the midst of life's harshness Yudhishthira's faith in the efficacy of the dharma, though sterling and incontingent, got shaken. In that mood of despondency, a situation almost amounting to a crisis of consciousness has arisen in him. He is puzzled how Draupadi, fair and noble, ever virtuous in her conduct, could have been a victim to the cruelty, the uncouthness of the world. She was born from the Fire-Altar without undergoing the trauma of the ordinary mortal birth and yet it looked as though she was subject to Time and Fate and the workings of Nature. She had never committed any sin and from the worldly vices she was free, she had never misbehaved nor was she guilty of any selfishness. Her chastity was that of a sacrificial flame and she always offered her services and obeisances to the learned and the wise, to the Brahmans and to the noble and the holy. Why then did she suffer? This could be the real query of Yudhishthira but he puts it in a different sense: he wants to know whether in the entire history of earth there was any woman who was afflicted in life like Draupadi and had to brave misfortunes such as hers, whether there was another woman beaten with the "rods of grief and pain" in spite of being straight and pious in life's conduct.

Markandeya's answer in the course of the narrative, while assuaging Yudhishthira's grief and suffering, moves over to the triumph of dharma in the conflict of life. Savitri's case is taken as an example to illustrate the point. Her woe is as though it has become the quintessence of the woe of the entire world. She has made her choice in Satyavan as her husband but he is doomed to die one year after their marriage. She had the foreknowledge of the event and yet she did not deviate from her decision. Savitri, when advised by her father to choose another youth for a husband, asserts her firm resolve and tells him:

"May he be of a short life or a long life, with virtuous qualities or without them, I have chosen him as my husband and I shall choose not again. By perception does one first come to a certain conclusion and then one speaks of it; only afterwards is it put into action. That perception of mine for me is the one single authority."

It is this inner perception, the dharma of her soul, that is more sacred to her than all the gains of life or death. She cherishes it as the best guiding principle and is willing to sacrifice everything else for its sake. Narad immediately recognises the very spiritual quality of her statement and tells the King:

"O Great among men, firm and unperturbed is the discernment of Savitri and none can swerve her from that; and in every respect it is in conformity with the dharma."

He recommends Savitri's marriage with Satyavan and blesses them. Values more
than even love are thus held supreme, values for which alone life becomes worth living. Compared with Savitri’s calamity, knowingly to face the consequences of an evil edict, Draupadi’s plight was of a relatively minor character. It was therefore possible for the Pandavas, and for Draupadi, to take help from the fortitude of righteousness upheld by Aswapati’s daughter. She has shown the way “Driven from within she followed her long road.” She finally succeeded. The path of truth-virtue, difficult and slippery though it be, has been proved to be the path of happiness and salvation. The sage enjoins on Yudhishtira to accept it and to take courage by it. Indeed, he is suggesting Savitri’s being “driven from within” as the true motive-force in all actions and Yudhishtira too must live by it. Therein are the greatest and surest values. It is in them that the commerce of the creation can really flourish. Leaders and thinkers of society, the wise and the learned, the law-givers and the sages, Rishis and Yogis, even the gods, therefore strive to establish these values, this conduct of righteousness, this being “driven from within”, for life’s fulfilment. Participation of the gods in this endeavour can be to a very large extent a guarantee of its success. Guardians of the Law of the Truth, they actively support and promote this adventure of the soul’s progress in the Light of a greater Destiny. In this earthly welfare is also their own welfare. It is towards this that there is the common commitment of Man and God to uphold the Dharma.

King Aswapati is issueless. He is a performer of the Yajnas, is skilful in work, has the welfare of the State at his heart, gives away great charities, is a follower of the dharma, has subdued his senses, is of a forgiving nature, and is always a speaker of truth, but he has no child. This is a blemish in the fulfilment of the dharma and therefore must be removed. To beget a son is to assure the continuity of the ancestral line; it is only then that the duties in the conduct of the dharma can perpetuate the order intact. The maintenance of the Aryan race, of a heroic community, is the social concern of a righteous ruler and he must see that there is no break in it. There will be a breakdown of the structure otherwise. It is also the pride and fulfilment of man’s manhood, the grihastha-glory, by which he establishes his superiority in life. To beget children is man’s manliness. Indeed, without it he cannot enter into the next stage of life, of Vanaprastha. After his death the funeral rites have to be performed by his son and without them entry into heaven is also not possible. Tradition upholds the propagation of the race as a part of the dharma. The ancient Rishis prayed to the gods for a long life and for plenty and progeny. They considered the richnesses of the earth without children to be incomplete. And the gods too, understanding the necessity for the maintenance of the Law, granted to the aspirants such boons. There is in fact a relationship of mutuality between the two. It is in sacrifice that the gods grow and, for the sacrifice to go on, the race of the righteous must continue.

Retiring to the forest for a period of eighteen years Aswapati resorts to
severe austerities. He performs Sāvitrī-Yajna and offers to the Goddess a hundred thousand oblations every day. It is by the alchemy of sacrifice that a wish or a desire can receive a boon. Aswapati’s desire for a son was actually of a noble character and was meant for a noble cause; it was for the continuance of the holy Yajna itself. Besides, and more importantly, there was a great devotion in the performance of the sacrifice. The Goddess Sāvitrī, therefore, exceedingly glad as she was with the worship, emerges from the sacrificial flames and speaks to Aswapati; very graciously she tells him to ask for an appropriate boon:

O King sovereign, I am immensely pleased by your purity and chastity, by your abstinence and self-restraint, the observance of the rules of austerity, and all the mind with which you worshipped me in devotion O Aswapati, Ruler of Madra, ask what you desire for a boon; falter not in that, in performance of the duties of the dharma.

It is indeed in the spirit of non-faltering that Aswapati reveals the purpose of his long and arduous tapasya and prays to Sāvitrī:

O Goddess, it was with the intention of begetting children that I had initiated this holy sacrifice, grant several sons that the line of my ancestors may grow If pleased thou art, O Goddess, grant this one boon that I entreat of thee; the wise of the world, the twice-born, ever hold the proper begetting of progeny a great dharma.

The Goddess is ready with the boon; she had already talked to Brahma, her Father, about Aswapati’s performance of the Yajna for a child. Brahma in his all-wisdom bestows on him, through Sāvitrī, the boon of the birth of an effulgent daughter. It looks as though the Goddess herself has taken this birth. Sāvitrī’s taking birth as a princess is therefore charged with the mission of maintaining the dharma in the world. And because this birth is a sanction from the Supreme himself, it is the highest Dharma that she will uphold here, even in the face of death Mortality shall therefore know the most benevolent Law for its redemption. Dharma’s triumph in this creation is Sāvitrī’s one single concern and task. She has hence accepted suffering in life for the fulfilment of the most praiseworthy purpose.

Aswapati was a strict follower of the path of the dharma. Even in his conjugal relationship he had adopted the prescribed injunctions. When a daughter was born to him he attended to her birth-rites, jāta-karma, and named her Sāvitrī, as was advised by the family-priests. Sāvitrī was brought up in a holy spirituo-religious atmosphere and was given good education in the various branches of learning. She not only knew the worldly lores but also acquired great mastery in the Yoga of Meditation. On a certain festive occasion when she
carried prasād to her father, she paid obeisances to him and stood respectfully by his side. When she went from place to place, she visited several hermitages and gave away great wealth to the Brahmins and the learned. When her father had asked her to go in search again, after Narad had made the prophecy of Satyavan’s death, she quoted sayings from the scriptures and stuck politely to her own decision. After her marriage she served her parents-in-law most affectionately though they were exiles and were living a life of forest hermits. Then, abnegating her own self, she made her life a sacrifice for the sake of her beloved husband. By her sweet and loving humble manners she had become dear to the sages of the Ashram. Indeed, she was ever “driven from within” and her utterances always rang a Yogic note. A large share of credit of such an upbringing must certainly go to her father. The daughter’s education in the Vedic tradition is a responsibility of the father and Aswapati had fulfilled it well. A kind of completeness in the worldly duties is a part of the dharmic conduct which he followed fully. Aswapati’s accepting Narad’s advice to arrange for the marriage of Savitri with Satyavan only shows his high regard for the sage who was his teacher and preceptor. It needs indeed tremendous courage to stand by his words when the doom is made known. Aswapati is aware that what is decreed is unavoidable and must be borne with the fortitude of the dharma. A very exceptional aspect of Aswapati’s character emerges in his abiding by the words of his guru in the most adverse situation of life. There is a secret foundation of faith in the dharma, and in values of noble conduct, on which the entire visible edifice is built. Aswapati has that faith and he carries a conviction within him that ultimately everything will turn out to be beneficial and happy. Narad’s unexpected visit to him at this crucial juncture is itself a pointer in the direction of a happy ending. It looks as though a high predestined concern is there in every detail of life for the establishment of dharma here. He ever listened to “other sounds than meet the sense-formed ear.” Thus, though “like one who ever sits facing Fate”, he remained calm and contented. This poise in dharma is the real key to success irrespective of the adversities of this world or of other invisible ones.

(To be continued)

R. Y Deshpande
4. Interpretation of the Text

Now that the background of the verse in question (2-45) is fully given, let us try to understand the teaching of the Gita in the right perspective.

\( traigunya \ visayā \ vedā \ mstraigunyo \ bhavārjuna \)
\( nirdvandvo \ nityasattvasto \ nirogaksema \ ātmavān \ (2-45) \)

Literally translated, the verse says—

The action of the three gunas is the subject-matter of the Veda; but do thou become free from the triple guna, O Arjuna, without the dualities, ever based in the true being, without yokasema, possessed of the Self.

Obviously the verse begins with a statement about the Veda and goes on to give several instructions one after another. But to get the right sense out of them we have to bring out their natural connections by an appropriate method of interpretation.

It seems that the verse may be interpreted in two ways: one way is to take it as the Gita’s adverse criticism of the old view of sacrifice and the other way is to look at it from the Gita’s own view of sacrifice and yoga.

1) The opening words of the verse, \( traigunya \ visayā \ vedā \), are obviously in reference to the preceding verses which deal with the position of Vedavada. That the Gita is averse to the teachings of Vedavada is clearly indicated by its adverse comments. The Vedavadins are described as men without discernment, \( avipashcitaḥ \), and their words are referred to as flowery words, \( pusptām \). Evidently the first line of verse 2-45 is intended to put aside the old idea of sacrifice in favour of a new idea to be put forth by the Gita. In fact, the first line sets the tone for the whole verse.

The action of the three gunas is the subject-matter of the Veda because all sacrifices keep the sacrificer within the limit of the triple guna, \( traigunya \ visayā \ vedā \), but you must disregard the Vedic sacrifices and refuse to be limited by the three gunas in your works, \( mstraigunyaḥ \). The Vedic sacrifices insist on fulfilling the desires which express themselves through the dualities, but you must eliminate the desires by eliminating the dualities, \( nirdvandvah \). The Vedic sacrifices

1 Based on Sri Aurobindo’s rendering. See Essays on the Gita (1972), pp. 81 and 95
take man to be a soul of desires; but you must cease to be a soul of desires and dwell always in the true being, nityasattvasthah. The Vedic sacrifices concentrate on good things to be obtained here and in heaven beyond; but you must give up getting and preserving those possessions in your life, niryogakṣema. The Vedic sacrifices keep man's life to the surface; but you must go within and possess the inner Self, ātmavān.

Thus the whole verse becomes a well-connected argument for rejecting Vedavada in favour of an alternative view preferred by the Gita.

2 The other method of interpreting the verse is to look at it in the light of the Gita's view of sacrifice and yoga.

The subject-matter of the Veda is the three gunas, because all Vedic sacrifices and their performance are determined by the action of the triple guna, tragunya visayā vedā. The Veda cannot help us in getting the knowledge of the supreme Lord established in the sacrifice as the sacrifices are not done according to the true law. Therefore, knowledge of the Self must be obtained through sacrifices not bound by the action of the three gunas, nistraigunyah. A subsequent verse speaks indirectly to this effect when it says that the three gunas are a triple cord which keeps the imperishable Self in the body under bondage, nibandhanti dehinam avvayam (14-5).

The second line of the verse has two parts, the first combining nirdvandvaḥ and nityasattvasthah, while the second putting together niryogakṣema and ātmavān. The combinations seem to suggest a clue for the right interpretation of the line. The first part may be taken to mean "to be always based in the true being by giving up the dualities"; likewise, the second part may be given the meaning "to be possessed of the Self by giving up yogakṣema". Let us see how far these interpretations are supported by internal evidence.

The first part says that in order to be always based in the true being one has to overcome the dualities. Since the dualities bind the true being to the action of the three gunas, one recovers it and abides in it by overcoming the dualities and the bondage. Another verse in the Gita supports this interpretation, when it says that he who is free from the dualities is indeed easily set free from the bondage, nirdvandvaḥ hu mahābāho sukham bandhāt pramucyate (5-3).

The second part of the verse tells us that the Self is possessed by giving up yogakṣema. The word 'yogakṣema' is a compound of yoga (getting) and kṣema (having). It stands for getting possessions and preserving them for enjoyment. Therefore, the second part says that the Self is possessed by giving up the getting and preserving of personal possessions. We shall now pass on to see if this meaning is justified by internal evidence. Another verse in the text says that a spiritual seeker should practise union with the Self after becoming free from personal possessions, aparigrahah (6-10).

Thus interpreted, the whole verse presents itself as a progressive development of the idea of conquering the Self.
The Meaning of Niryogaksema

In the beginning we referred to the issue raised by niryogaksema, but we had to postpone the work of finding a solution to it till we had prepared the whole background and put a right interpretation on the text. Now we are ready to take up that work.

In the first reading of verse 2-45 the expressions fall into two groups, those consisting of the first quarter of the first line and those comprising the rest in the verse. While the first group, traigunya visayā vedā, sums up the essence of the popular Vedic religion, other expressions in the verse have one purpose in common, i.e., each of them aims at rejecting a corresponding aspect of the ancient religion. Thus the expressions of the second group form a coherent whole on the basis of a common purpose, though each of them stands apart making an independent reference to a particular aspect of the ancient religion. Not referred to by the other (vide section 4). Viewed in this light, the question of relating the expressions of niryogaksema and ātmavan does not arise. As a result, the question of an ascetic abandonment of possessions for the sake of the spirit does not also arise.

But there is another way to look at all the expressions of the verse, i.e., to regard them as explaining a common idea. Evidently, the second reading is based on this approach. It looks upon the whole verse, not excluding traigunya visayā vedā, as unfolding progressively the central idea of conquering the self (vide section 4). Since our special emphasis is on the last quarter of the verse, niryogaksema ātmavan, let us refer to it now: “In order to possess the Self unaffected by the triple guna, you have to give up personal possessions.” Obviously this reading reinforces the view that the last quarter of verse 2-45 insists on an ascetic abandonment of personal possessions. If so, how do we understand the other parts of the Gita and the Epic which run contrary to this teaching? This takes us back to the original question with which we began our study.

It is now clear that the two readings of the verse have not helped us much in resolving the issue raised by niryogaksema, although they were helpful in achieving clarity to some extent. Now we are left with only one alternative: we have to search for a solution to the issue by analysing the components of niryogaksema and bringing out its appropriate sense.

Let us now understand the function of the prefix nir in Sanskrit. It admits of two meanings. (1) Generally, it refers to an absolute negation of the sense of the word it qualifies, guna, for example, the prefix refers to an absolute negation of qualities, guna. (2) In certain cases, it stands for a significant negation, i.e., a negation of a particular aspect of the sense of the word to which it is attached. To take the same example, nirguna, the prefix here signifies not a negation of qualities but a negation of the limitation by qualities.
It is now evident that niryogaksema can be interpreted in two ways. It may mean (1) an absolute negation of personal possessions or (2) a negation of the limitation by personal possessions. The second alternative stands in need of clarification, for it is not yet clear what the limitation by personal possessions actually means. If out of egoism and desire an individual is completely identified with his personal possessions and does not realise that he exceeds his possessions as a possessor, then he is said to be limited by them. Therefore, by a negation of the limitation by personal possessions is meant a negation of the psychological identification with personal possessions. This is borne out by a verse in the Gita: “without desires, with heart and soul perfectly controlled, he is not attached to any possessions”, nṛṣīr yatacittātmā tyaktā sarva parigrahaḥ (4-21).

In verse 2-45 niryogaksema may, therefore, be understood to mean a physical renunciation of personal possessions or a renunciation of the psychological identification with personal possessions, as a precondition to possessing the Self, ātmavan. We have to find out which of the two meanings is intended by the Gita.

Before we bring to light the true sense of niryogaksema, we have to turn to certain relevant verses in the Gita which have a bearing upon verse 2-45. Referring to the objects of sense, the Gita says: “it is by using the mental organs on the objects, ‘ranging over them with the senses’, visayān indriyaścaran, but with senses subject to the Self, freed from liking and disliking, that one gets into a large and sweet clearness of soul ” Here the Gita clearly affirms that it does not favour physical renunciation. Rather it insists on a complete control over the senses and liberating them from the desires. In other words, it insists on renouncing the soul’s subjection to the senses as well as the subordination of the senses to the desires, while dealing with objects. Apart from this, the Gita itself makes a distinction between samnyāsam and tyāgam, physical and psychological renunciations, and explicitly affirms that the latter is superior to the former, vishisyate (5-2). In fact, the real samnyāsin is one who has renounced all will of desire in the mind which binds him to the objects of sense, sarva samkalpa samnyāsi (6-4).

If we now look at verse 2-45 in the light of the above references in the Gita, it is not difficult to fix the true sense of niryogaksema. The intention of the Gita in the above verse is to teach that the Self is to be possessed by a renunciation of the psychological identification with personal possessions. In other words, the Gita does not intend to teach physical renunciation of personal possessions.

Now that the meaning of niryogaksema is clearly fixed, we shall turn to the original question of an ascetic abandonment of personal possessions. The question can no longer arise, because, as we have said, the Gita does not intend to teach asceticism in regard to personal possessions. Not an outward rejection of personal possessions, but an inward renunciation of the egoistic attachment to
them is the real teaching of the Gita. Though this gives us the desired solution, the other aspect of the question still remains unresolved. For we have yet to show how nryogaksema, though it does not support asceticism, agrees with the other parts of the Gita and the Epic (vide section 1)

We shall now go back to the second reading of nryogaksema ātmavān. It runs as follows. “In order to possess the Self unaffected by the triple guna, you have to give up personal possessions”. But this has to be modified in the light of the true intention of the Gita. In its modified form it reads thus “In order to possess the Self unaffected by the triple guna, you have to give up the psychological identification with personal possessions.” Stated in clear terms, when Arjuna is asked to give up yogaksema, the intention is to teach that he should come out of his lower self by removing the ego and desire which have buried his true being in the possessions of the world, so that he may reach the Highest, āpnoti param (3-19) and possess, besides the good things of the world, the good things of the spirit also, rāyam samrddham (11-33)

Now we are in a position to answer the other questions raised in the beginning of our study. Arjuna’s presence in Kurukshetra and the aim behind the war are not against the teaching of verse 2-45, because Arjuna is not asked to give up personal possessions. Rather he is asked to exceed his worldly possessions so that he can also be a possessor of the spirit. The reason why Krishna took great pains to persuade Arjuna to fight the Kauravas is that he did not want Arjuna to lose a great opportunity, an opportunity not only to win the war and recover his kingdom but to enjoy the rare spiritual benefits which he is likely to get by serving God. In the same way, the various initiatives Krishna took in the Epic in order to restore the original kingdom to the Pandavas are not contrary to the teaching of verse 2-45, because the intention of the verse is not to teach asceticism with respect to personal possessions. The reference to Janaka is obviously aimed at telling Arjuna that there is no need to give up worldly possessions in order to practise yoga and possess the true self.

Now there is one more question which remains to be answered. It relates to verse 9-22 where Krishna says that he brings yogaksema to his devotees. This verse does not run counter to verse 2-45 in so far as the latter does not ask Arjuna, who is a devotee of Krishna, to renounce personal possessions. But it leads to another question: If Arjuna is not really asked to give up yogaksema, why should Krishna bring it to him? This supposes that God’s bringing of yogaksema to the devotee becomes superfluous when the devotee has previous possessions. But such a supposition is wrong, because here the act of God is not in relation to what a devotee has or has not, though He demands that attachment to possessions be given up as an essential condition for spiritual life. His act is determined solely by one consideration—the devotee’s exclusive identification with Him and total dedication to His work, ananyāścrintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate (9-22). So we now find that the question itself has become meaning-
less. In Arjuna’s context, verse 9-22 seems to say that if Arjuna takes part in the war in a spirit of devoted service, with his mind completely identified with God, the Avatar will bring yogaksema to him, not only the empire he once had but every good in life and spirit.

However, our answer to the second question leads to a third. Since verse 9-22 mentions devotees in general and not Arjuna in particular, is it not necessary to modify our answer to the second question in such a way that it may apply to all devotees and not merely to Arjuna?

Before we try to answer the last question, we have to take into account the meaning of the expression ‘yogaksema’ as it occurs in verse 9-22. Sri Aurobindo takes the expression to mean not only all good things of life but also all good things of the spirit. Commenting on yogaksema vahāmyaham, he says, “God himself becomes the spontaneous bringer to him (the devotee) of every good and of all his inner and outer getting and having.”

Now we are in a position to answer the above question. All devotees, before they turn towards God, are subject to the action of the triple guna and, therefore, to the senses and the desires which bind them to the good things of life or personal possessions. But once they become free from the senses and the desires they concentrate on God as the whole object of their thought and devotion. And God brings every good to them for their possession and enjoyment. To these devotees who already possess good things of life, he gives all other good things so that they do not ‘miss anything of the fullness of life’ 2. To them he gives all good things of the spirit so that they are firmly established in the highest spiritual perfection, parām siddhā (14-1)

(Concluded)

N A Jayashanmukham

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1 Essays on the Gita (1972), p 317
2 Ibid, p 317
THE IMAGE OF "ETHER" IN SRI AUROBINDO’S WORKS
PRACTICAL AID IN MEDITATION

(Continued from the issue of September 1988)

We have to see Him as one Existence, Being gathered in itself and Being displayed in all existences, as one Consciousness concentrated in the unity of its existence, extended in universal nature and many-centred in innumerable beings, one Force static in its repose of self-gathered consciousness and dynamic in its activity of extended consciousness, one Delight blissfully aware of its featureless infinity and blissfully aware of all feature and force and forms of itself; one creative knowledge and governing Will, supramental, originative and determinative of all minds, lives and bodies, one Mind containing all mental beings and constituting all their mental activities, one Life active in all living beings and generative of their vital activities; one substance constituting all forms and objects as the visible and sensible mould in which mind and life manifest and act just as one pure existence is that ether in which all Conscious-Force and Delight exist unified and find themselves variously. For these are the seven principles of the manifest being of Sachchidananda

(Sri Aurobindo’s Birth Centenary Library, Vol 20, p 403)

A transcendent Bliss, unimaginable and inexpressible by the mind and speech, is the nature of the Ineffable That broods immanent and secret in the whole universe and in everything in the universe. Its presence is described as a secret ether of the bliss of being, of which the Scripture says that, if this were not, none could for a moment breathe or live. And this spiritual bliss is here also in our hearts

(Vol 21, p 568)

The ideal equal peace and calm of the Infinite will be the wide ether of our perfected being, but the ideal equal and perfect action of the Infinite through the nature working on the relations of the universe will be the untroubled outpouring of its power in our being. This is the meaning of equality in the terms of the Integral Yoga.

(Vol 21, p 680)

Nothing to the supramental sense is really finite: it is founded on a feeling of all in each and of each in all. Its sense definition, although more precise and complete than the mental, creates no walls of limitation; it is an oceanic and ethereal sense in which all particular sense-knowledge and sensation is a wave or movement or spray or drop that is yet a concentration of the whole ocean inseparable from the ocean. Its action is a result of the extension and vibration of being and consciousness in a supra-ethereal ether of light, ether of power, ether
of bliss, the Ananda Akasha of the Upanishads, which is the matrix and continent of the universal expression of the Self,—here in body and mind experienced only in limited extensions and vibrations,—and the medium of its true experience

(Vol 21, p 835)

The psychical sight receives characteristically the images that are formed in the subtle matter of the mental or psychical ether, cittākāśa. There may be transcriptions there or impresses of physical things, persons, scenes, happenings, whatever is, was or will be or may be in the physical universe. These images are very variously seen and under all kinds of conditions; in Samadhi or in the waking state, and in the latter with the bodily eyes closed or open, projected on or into a physical object or medium or seen as if materialised in the physical atmosphere or only in a psychical ether revealing itself through this grosser physical atmosphere, seen through the physical eyes themselves as a secondary instrument and as if under the conditions of the physical vision or by the psychical vision alone and independently of the relations of our ordinary sight to space.

(Vol 21, pp. 844-45)

The substance, the conscious ether of being in which the mental or psychic consciousness and sense live and see and feel and experience is something subtler, freer, more plastic than that of the physical mind and sense. As long as we are dominated by the latter, psychical phenomena may seem to us less real, hallucinatory even, but the more we acclimatise ourselves to the psychical and to the ether of being which it inhabits, the more we begin to see the greater truth and to sense the more spiritually concrete substance of all to which its larger and freer mode of experience bears witness. The supramental transformation again changes the whole substance of our consciousness, it brings in an ether of greater being, consciousness, sense, life, which convicts the psychical also of insufficiency and makes it appear by itself an incomplete reality and only a partial truth of all that we are and become and witness

(Vol 21, pp 850-51)

The subliminal or psychic self can bring back or project itself into past states of consciousness and experience and anticipate or even, though this is less common, strongly project itself into future states of consciousness and experience. Or it may receive the impress of these things and construct a transcriptive experience of them in the subtle ether of psychical being.

It can receive before its sight the etheric writing, ākāśa-lipti, that keeps the record of all things past, transcribes all that is in process in the present, writes out the future

(Vol 21, pp 862-63)
Mental Formations and Visualization

The Mother has often stressed, in her talks, the utility of positive mental formations. You create an image in your mind how things should truly be and fill this image with life, until it gets realized on the physical plane, no matter how long it might take.

Methods based on this knowledge are often used by “alternative” healers in medicine. Thus, cancer patients are given the following advice: you create, in your imagination, a huge army of leucocytes (healing white blood corpuscles). You tell yourself that they are very powerful and send those millions of soldiers to attack the tumour. You visualize how it is virtually eaten up and finally dissolved.

There is evidence that this method has helped many people and even some doctors have admitted its positive effect, although mostly they will not go further than stating that it has improved the psychological well-being of incurable patients since it gives them the feeling they still can do something about their fate.

Meanwhile, there is further evidence from AIDS patients. American doctors discovered that there is a small number of “long-term survivors.” They were infected and started developing the symptoms which signalize the actual outbreak of the virus disease so that they were expected to die within one or two years or at least suffer a considerable progressive deterioration of their health. But all those survivors have continued to live in reasonable health, which surprised the doctors. So they interviewed the people and found out that they all used alternative methods such as mental formations, positive thinking, individual disciplines to concentrate their energies, diet, etc. They imagined that there was an enemy in their body whom they had to face and defy, and they realized they had to start their battle in keeping their minds intact and building positive images there to check the disease.

It is quite remarkable that in this case representatives of the “school medicine” had no choice but to acknowledge the undeniable effectiveness of methods which have no place in their official thinking.

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American neurologists have made an interesting discovery. They realised that
autosuggestive formations can only be successful if they are positive. By measuring subtle brain currents with highly sensitive electronic sensors, they found that the brain did not respond when it was given negative orders such as “do not smoke” This information remains virtually lifeless in the nervous system, because it cannot be translated into a vivid image. Accordingly, some psychologists have changed their approach. They tell smokers they should imagine a package of cigarettes always at a distance of 1 m, then 2 m, 10 m, etc. until it is further and further away. All these are images which the brain can easily store and assimilate.

Reportedly, the new method is quite successful and has helped people to get rid of several kinds of addiction.

Medical Tourism

It is well-known that many Indians go to the West for medical treatment in order to use the superior facilities there. There is no doubt that many of them get helped, through sophisticated diagnostics, surgery, etc.

On the other hand, there are millions of people in the West who have all those facilities available and face no financial problems either (mostly, their insurance will cover all the costs). Nevertheless, the conventional systems of medicine cannot help them and therefore they try their luck with alternative healers who prefer nature-cure methods of various types.

Recently, an excellent German TV report “Ayurveda—Knowledge of Healthy Living” showed that there are also Germans who travel to India in search of a better medical treatment. The TV reporter said, “At a rheumatic clinic near Trivandrum we met patients from Germany who could not be helped any more in their home country.” (It was the Shri Shankara Ayurveda Vaidyasaala, Mannam Road, Changanacherry - 2).

An elderly German lady was shown who said that she used to have all the worst symptoms of rheumatism and could not bend down any more to lift things or even move her fingers. After three weeks of treatment there was a remarkable improvement, after three months she was practically cured. At present, she said, she was in the clinic for post-treatment care.

Then an elderly man was shown who had suffered from polyarthritis for two decades. He said literally, “what our (German) school medicine could not achieve in 22 years, Ayurveda has done in just three months.” He said he got rid of all his terrible suffering and that his blood test had confirmed the objective changes which had taken place.

The treatment at the clinic is integral. The patients are made to live in seclusion and have to follow a strict regimen. They are given oil massages, mud packages and the traditional medicine.

Few Westerners may be prepared to go through that programme, but those
who are will probably share the experience of those Germans.

Supramental Language

A German Professor of English Language has spent more than half a decade preparing a new edition of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. He suspended most of his other work during this period and took the help of several assistants as well as a computer. Then the new edition was published, but, alas, his text drew the most violent criticism from English colleagues. The last news item was that his publishers were considering to withdraw the new edition and re-publish the old one.

It is quite relevant, in this context, to read Sri Aurobindo’s following commentary on Joyce:

“I use the language of the mind because there is no other which human beings can understand,—even though most of them understand it badly. If I were to use a supramental language like Joyce, you would not even have the illusion of understanding it, so, not being an Irishman, I don’t make the attempt” (*On Himself*, pp. 152-3)

Perhaps an Irishman rather than a computer might have had the required competence to help prepare the new edition.

Sri Aurobindo has another reference to Joyce which too may be considered relevant. A disciple wrote, among other things: “The English reader has digested Carlyle and swallowed Meredith and is quite willing to re-JoyCE in even more startling strangenesses of expression at the present day. Will his stomach really turn at the novelty of that phrase which you wouldn’t approve ‘the voice of a devouring eye’? ‘The voice of an eye’ sounds rather idiotic, but if the adjective ‘devouring’ is added the phrase seems to become effective.” Sri Aurobindo wrote back:

“Can’t accept all that. A voice of a devouring eye is even more re-Joycingly mad than a voice of an eye pure and simple. If the English language is to go to the dogs, let it go, but the Joyce cut by the way of Bedlam does not recommend itself to me.

‘. Poetry is permitted to be insane—the poet and the madman go together: though even there there are limits. Meredith and Carlyle are tortuous or extravagant in their style only—though they can be perfectly sane when they want. In poetry anything can pass—for instance, my ‘voice of a tilted nose’:

   O voice of a tilted nose,
   Speak but speak not in prose!
   Nose like a blushing rose,
   O Joyce of a tilted nose!

That is high poetry, but put it in prose and it sounds insane” (5.5 1935) (*Life-Literature-Yoga*, 1967 Ed., pp. 157-58).
Green Power

A few dozen people are gathered somewhere in a conference hall. A bearded young man, wearing a sweater, jeans and jogging shoes stands on the podium before the microphone and holds the script of a speech. There is also a large number of women. Some of them are seen busy knitting, whilst others mend woollen socks. Suddenly a baby cries somewhere. His mother takes him to her breast and feeds him.

This could be the idyllic scene witnessed by someone who attends a meeting of the Greens, the new (and meanwhile established) political power in W. Germany. Eight years ago, when their party was founded, they were ridiculed or pitied, now they are represented in the national assembly (Bundestag) as well as most state assemblies and local councils.

The Greens have realized that our prosperity has been achieved at the cost of Nature. We are like a drugged athlete at the Olympic Games who sets a fabulous record on 100m, until it is discovered that he has manipulated his body with anabolic steroids. The public realizes he has cheated and he is disqualified. As he has exploited and misused his body with possibly devastating consequences for his health, we have exploited and misused nature through a wrong approach. As a result, forests are dying, there is no river left in which you can swim, the air in the cities is full of smog, pesticides sink into the ground water and make it more and more difficult to prepare (!) drinking water, the ozone layer is being destroyed which threatens to upset the world climate, numberless species are dying in the North Sea, whose biological health is near total collapse—there is no end to the list of ecological misdevelopments.

Now the Greens become active. They point out that with good will all this can be changed. They put the Government under pressure and make their concrete proposals. There is wind energy, solar energy, bio-energy, all of them only in their initial stages of development. You can re-cycle materials. You can introduce fuel without lead and construct cars with exhaust fume filters. You can make laws which force industries to reduce their polluting emissions.

At first there is a determined resistance from the ruling parties. They don’t like the idea of a “change of consciousness” and a new approach, smile at the “Umweltbewuβtsein” (ecological awareness) of the Greens. But the response of the public is so tremendous that they have to react. Suddenly a Minister of Environmental Affairs is appointed and appears regularly in the news. It is no longer ridiculous to have Umweltbewuβtsein. On the contrary, most politicians are new eager to show that they have it. All kinds of products appear in the supermarkets which are “umweltfreundlich” (compatible with Nature), like washing powder without phosphates, or sprays without ozone-killers, to give just two examples. The conservative parties steal parts of the program of the Greens and adopt it in their platform.
The movement of the Greens gathers momentum. They enter the assem­blies and committees. They are now entitled to make parliamentary enquiries and put uncomfortable questions to the administration which have to be answered in all detail before the public. Numerous scandalous practices in the chemical and nuclear industries are unveiled. *Nature has an advocate.*

This is only a small beginning with very limited results, the beginning of an integral approach. We used to ask, how much profit does this give us, how many more cars, refrigerators, chemical products, without ever bothering to examine the side-effects of our industrial efforts which were often devastating.

Meanwhile, the Greens are a respected force in W. Germany, although other European Governments still feel amused at their concern for dying forests and rivers. This amusement will not last long. Already precious historical monuments such as the *Acropolis* in Athens or the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris are so much affected by the polluted air that expensive measures have to be taken to save them. Here even conservative politicians become thoughtful for a moment, because their substance is touched.

The success of the German Greens has encouraged their colleagues in other countries. The Swedish Greens have just managed to enter their national assembly, as the second ecological party in Europe. Even the Pope has started discussing "green" subjects. In October '88 he said in a speech at Strasbourg that there should be determined efforts against the pollution of the Rhone whose water had deteriorated due to unwise exploitation. Man should learn his lessons from the effects of certain industrial activities and adopt a respectful attitude towards nature. *Voilà*

[Author's note: This report ignores all the negative aspects of Green Party life, such as self-destructive internal disputes, lack of organization ("happy chaos"), some financial irregularities which are under investigation and certain immature positions in non-environmental matters.]
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE


Mother India, Sri Aurobindo’s own paper as he called it, has been responsible for the blossoming of a number of poets in the Ashram and sometimes outside it. One of the chief qualities of the poetry appearing in Mother India is an intensity of aspiration for the Light and Love embodied (in the literal sense of the word) by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

It is that aspiration that achieves a fine expression in Shri Kamalakanto’s Petals and Sparks:

Burn me with Thy secret fire,
Kindle me with Thy Light!
I will be a torch of Thy desire,
Flaming with deep delight.

The poem The Golden Eagle presents the aspiration with a remarkable power of word and rhythm in some parts

Whither with thy outstretched wings,
O Golden Eagle, the Bird of Sacred Fire?
Stop thy flight a moment, for my heart sings,
To soar with Thee is my sole desire

Thou art winging towards the undying sun,
Where gold-red light in splendour burns.

For sheer rhythmic power we may turn to Argul’s Prayer:

O lift me,
O shift me,
O soak me in rain,
Again and again
Hold me,
Mould me
On thy wheel.
Let me feel
And trace
Thy Grace
In my speck,
Till my crust
As it must
Shake,
And break

Kamalakanto's imagery—Potter and the Wheel, Ocean and the drop of
dew, Circe and siren song, the symbolism of red-gold, lotus, lion, etc pulsate
with life in spite of our familiarity with them elsewhere.

There is a great variety of subject matter in this small sheaf of poems. Besides the central theme and subject of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which are treated with the love and adoration of a true seeker, we have nature poems like *To a Bulbul, Marigolds in Rain*, a patriotic song *A Canticle of the Freedom Fighter*, etc. There are moreover, two short prose plays which are as poetic as the poems both in vision and presentation. There are also translations of Rubaiys of Sarmad and Farid.

That Kamalakanto should be called the "Sacred Poet of India" by the United Poets Laureate International is no accident. On the one hand he contrasts with the secular poets who, sometimes in their eagerness to break away from the past, become profane. On the other he is different from religious poets who stick to doctrine and dogma and forget the Divine. To Kamalakanto even the twenty-fifth of December becomes significant though he is no Christian. He is a Sacred Poet because his poetry transcends all religion.

K B Sitaramayya
TWO BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE U.S.A.


If you have studied yoga psychology long enough you probably have been told by a “Jungian” that yoga is no good for the “Westerner”. Finally we have a book that spells out in detail Jung’s relationship to Eastern thought in general and Indian yoga in particular. Unfortunately, the result is comparative chaos. I have rarely seen a book that so horribly misrepresents Indian culture and spirituality. If this book has any value it is as a demonstration of how not to approach the living faith of another spiritual tradition.

Examples. In the first chapter the ‘Westerner’ is admonished not to “make the mistake of attempting to cope with the strangeness of Eastern ideas ..” How is that for a blatant ethnocentric statement? It is my conclusion that yoga psychology is eminently rational, it is Western religion with its crucified messiah, elected popes, and its blood-drinking rituals that seem rather odd to me. That might seem like I’m being fussy, but let’s go on: “The European seeks to raise himself above the world, while the Indian likes to turn back into the maternal depths of Nature.” That statement is just plain silly.

The most blatant example of Jung’s incapacity to grasp yoga psychology is his almost comical rearrangement of the chakras to suit his own psychological system. Jung suggests that for the ‘Westerner’ the muladhara chakra “might be, not down below in the belly, but up in the head.” In the first place, the muladhara is not in the belly—it is at the base of the spine. In the second place, the chakras are not symbols of ‘psychic’ phenomena, they are actual subtle organs of the consciousness. Talk of their rearrangement is nonsense.

Jung’s entire premise is based on the notion that “The occidental world should leave (yoga) alone and instead develop or rediscover its own spiritual practice” What, I ask, are we to rediscover? Christian mysticism? Alchemy? The joke is that as soon as we examine the writings of mystics like St. John of the Cross or St. Teresa of Avila, we find their manuals uncannily yogic in content.


The first book of K D Sethna’s that I ever read was a small volume entitled Light and Laughter. Some Talks at Pondicherry. I was in Pondicherry at the time and I remember laughing and laughing and laughing. That book is a series of talks in which he shares many priceless tales of Ashram life. The title is an example of truth in advertising. I read it three times in a row and was still laughing after the third reading.

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K D. Sethna is a remarkable example of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His writings are a brilliant tribute to the light of an illumined mind and the joy and laughter of an awakened psychic.

The volume under review is the product of precise mental discipline and expression. It is a very important book in that it compares the world-vision of Sri Aurobindo and that of Teilhard de Chardin from a perspective not found elsewhere. Certainly Beatrice Bruteau’s excellent work *Evolution toward Divinity* is a valuable contribution to spiritual futurism, but this volume, written by a seasoned sadhak of the yoga, provides a richness of understanding not available to those outside of the tradition.

An extremely valuable aspect of this text is its detailed critique of R C Zaehner’s interpretation of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard. Zaehner, I have felt for years, is one of the disappointments in the field of comparative religion. A converted Catholic, he somehow manages to sprinkle his relatively lucid exegeses of Indian spirituality with inexcusable mistakes. For example, Zaehner commits perhaps the blunder in Sri Aurobindo studies by attributing Sri Aurobindo’s 1926 withdrawal to “inner despair”. Such blunders, symptomatic of a dogmatic mind, are effectively countered by the wide and free vision of Mr Sethna, a true spiritual futurist in the best sense.

**Thomas D Noonan**

*Courtesy SWADHARMA, 3 15.1986.*
WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE ASHRAM

Speech by Aravinda Das

This year I will be completing my studies at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. I have been studying here and staying in the Ashram for eleven years, which is a very long period, long enough to change one's life-style, attitude and character. And that is what the Ashram has done to me. I joined the Ashram school at the age of ten and from then on the responsibility of my growth was taken up by the Ashram. It has given me mental and physical education of a unique type and built my character, and living in this atmosphere I have imbibed certain things of which I am not fully conscious, but which I know are doing me continuous good.

Now, as I look back and ask myself: “What I have learnt from the Ashram” or rather “What the Ashram has done for me”, I realise that the Ashram has revealed four major secrets to me which will help me wherever I go. The first secret is discipline. In the Ashram discipline plays a very important role. I may say that the Ashram runs like a quartz watch due only to discipline. If the dairy members were not disciplined and did not milk the cows daily around 1.30 to 2.30 a.m and send the milk to the dining room by 5 a.m, there would be no milk for that day! Or take the example of the ladies who arrange the flowers on the Samadhi; whether it be summer or the rainy season, they are there every morning at 3 30 a.m. doing their work. This discipline is not imposed but rather cultivated. In our Ashram there is hardly any external pressure and yet over the years students become quite disciplined. Discipline and regularity are two great forces. A fully disciplined person has an admirable and respectable character.

Let me narrate here a small story from the Zen life of Japan. Once there was a young swordsman who was quite able and talented, but he was a big show-off and talked a lot about his glories in public. One day he challenged a Zen master who was a great swordsman. The veteran only smiled and said: “First defeat my monkey whom I have trained, then fight with me.” The young man fought with the monkey but was badly defeated. The young swordsman went back to the Zen
master and asked him “What do I lack that I got defeated by a monkey?” The Zen master replied: “You only know the outer side of the art, that is, the skilful handling of the sword, but you lack discipline; discipline your life and mind, control your thoughts, do not aim for fame but become a true learner of the art.”

A few years later, the young man went back to challenge the monkey, but this time as soon as the monkey saw him, it ran away in fear, for it had felt the strong force of discipline in the young man. In Indian stories, Bharata of the Ramayana is a striking example of a disciplined man. He had disciplined not only his outward life but his emotions and his mental being too. For fourteen years he had led the life of a Sannyasi, he never even once thought of glory and fame and the rights of the kingdom, even though he was staying in the midst of them. Discipline is a magic key for most great men. A disciplined life is not a suppressed life but rather a self-controlled, methodical and efficient way of living.

The next secret that I have learnt from the Ashram life is to take care of material things. In the Ashram the care given to material objects of daily use is indeed remarkable. In our school one can find in many places a notice given by the Mother:

“Not to take care of material things which one uses is a sign of inconscience and ignorance.

“You have no right to use any material object whatsoever if you do not take care of it.

“You must take care of it not because you are attached to it, but because it manifests something of the Divine Consciousness.”

If we develop this attitude, we will be more conscious and calm. This is also a practical advice, for if we want to get the best service from our material objects we ought to treat them well. I have observed that whenever we go for an outing, one particular person always gets some trouble with his cycle, whereas when others use his cycle there is no problem! This happens because the owner always says that his cycle is junk and that he must buy a new one and that he never takes care of it. I have not observed this very scientifically to be able to establish a proper theory but I feel that our attitude towards material things plays an important role in the service they render to us.

The third secret is to trust in the power of prayer. Prayer can produce miracles. One of the most striking examples of the power of a sincere prayer is Draupadi’s prayer in the assembly hall of the Kuru brothers and Krishna’s aid to save her from humiliation. In the atmosphere of the Ashram, surcharged with the living presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, prayers produce quick and astonishing results. In fact, this is its speciality. Someone remarked that in the

1 Collected Works of the Mother (Cent Ed.), Vol 14, p 345
Ashram we get our fruits in the morning (there is the fruit distribution for the Ashramites and the boarding members in the morning). Quite true; here prayers are realised very early in life’s day!

Before going to the fourth secret, I would like to say why these three secrets combine quite harmoniously in the Ashram. It is due to the insistence on work. The Ashram’s principle of yoga is based on Karma or work and not on secluded sadhana, away from the bustle of life. The whole idea is to be an ideal worker for the Divine. So the first step is to have a sincere attitude which implies a disciplined approach. Next, to do it as perfectly as one can brings automatically the respect and care for the instruments one uses. And as we are humans, while doing the work, the ego intervenes and there is disharmony leading to conflicts and crises. So the solution is to pray to the Divine to help us and guide us. Through work these three key secrets are revealed. Of course, these are not taught in our academic courses but are the natural consequences of the Ashram’s spiritual and dynamic atmosphere.

Finally, the fourth secret is that I have been exposed to Sri Aurobindo’s teachings. And this is mainly through academic studies, but partly also through life in general here. It is immaterial how we conceive of him: some call him an Avatar, some a guru, some only a philosopher or thinker. The only thing which is of prime importance to me is his teachings. The world cannot ignore him, for at present he is the only mystic with a new vision for the world and the only one who can explain rationally his ideas to us. I consider this exposure to Sri Aurobindo’s teachings as the supreme contribution of the Ashram to my development. Had I been outside, I might have been aware of the first three secrets but about my exposure to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother I cannot say so. Let me explain more clearly. Discipline and taking care of material things can be something quite hereditary; if these qualities run in a family, then generally they are also present in the next generation. Of course, they can be developed faster in the right environment. I would have also known the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and would have had faith in them, for even before my birth my parents were devotees of them and I have seen the Mother many times. But the exposure to their ideas is a different thing. Studying outside amidst the heavy academic burden, to take interest in Sri Aurobindo’s works (which are definitely not easy to understand) needs a different kind of intellectual stamina which I doubt I have. But here without much effort we come in contact with their works. I can only say that I have not taken sufficient advantage of this place, even then the little that I have been exposed to the Master’s works has helped me considerably, has broadened my views, has given a purpose to my life. I know that I am far from being perfect but I hope to discipline myself more, take greater care of material things and trust more fully the Divine. I am grateful to the Ashram for all that it has given to me.