MOTHER INDIA
MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JANUARY 1990

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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.
MOTHER INDIA
MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIII No. 1

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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STUDENTS’ SECTION

The New Age Association
Twenty-sixth Annual Conference
13 August 1989
““The Significance of Sri Aurobindo’s Birth” Speech by Devanshu Arya
... There is one thing you must learn, never to rely on anyone or anything whatever except the Divine. For if you lean upon anyone for support, that support will break, you may be sure of that. From the minute you start doing yoga (I always speak of those who do yoga, I do not speak about ordinary life), for those who do yoga, to depend upon someone else is like wanting to transform that person into a representative of the Divine Force; now you may be sure there is not one in a hundred million who can carry the weight: he will break immediately. So never take the attitude of hoping for support, help, comfort from anyone except the Divine. That is absolute; I have never, not once, met anyone who tried to cling to something to find a support there (someone doing yoga or who has been put into touch with yoga) and who was not deceived—it breaks, it stops, one loses one’s support. Then one says, “Life is difficult”—it is not difficult but one must know what one is doing. Never seek a support elsewhere than in the Divine. Never seek satisfaction elsewhere than in the Divine. Never seek the satisfaction of your needs in anyone else except the Divine—never, for anything at all. All your needs can be satisfied only by the Divine. All your weaknesses can be borne and healed only by the Divine. He alone is capable of giving you what you need in everything, always, and if you try to find any satisfaction or support or help or joy or... Heaven knows what, in anyone else, you will always fall on your nose one day, and that always hurts, sometimes even hurts very much.
THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of December 1989)

The diary entries of 1914 show a definite approach to the preparation of a Life Divine by the Mother. The year is a turning-point in her sadhana of divine manifestation on the earth. 1914 marked the meeting of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. During that year she made phenomenal progress in her sadhana and achieved a revolutionary result. She identified herself as the Mother of the sorrowing world. The First World War broke out in this year. She records in her prayer dated 18 August 1914:

"... I feel as if I have gone down very deep into an unfathomable abyss of doubt and darkness, as if I am exiled from Thy eternal splendour, but I know that in this descent is the possibility of a higher ascent which will enable me to span a vaster horizon and draw a little nearer to Thy infinite heavens. Thy light is there, steady and guiding, shining without intermission in the depths of the abyss as in the luminous splendours; and a serene confidence, a calm indifference, a tranquil certitude dwell permanently in my consciousness...."

On 21 August 1914 she further says: "O Lord, Lord, the whole earth is in an upheaval; it groans and suffers, it is in agony... all this suffering that has descended upon it must not be in vain; grant that all this bloodshed may produce a swifter germination of the seeds of beauty and light and love which must blossom and cover the earth with their rich harvest. Out of the depths of this abyss of darkness the whole being of the earth cries to Thee that Thou mayst give it air and light, it is stifling, wilt Thou not come to its aid?"

Is it not sufficiently evident that the Mother identifies with the sorrowing world caused by the horrors of the First World War? But she realised that in the midst of these adverse circumstances a new force had started to work in a very subtle way. She writes on 18 June 1914: "... The Force is there awaiting the possibility to manifest: we must discover the new form which will make the new manifestation possible. And Thou, only Thou, O Lord, canst grant us this knowledge. It is for us with our whole being to make the effort, to ask, to aspire. But it is for Thee to answer with the illumination, the Knowledge and the Power."

She received abundant strength of Grace to play the role of an intervening mediator. She prays to the Lord on 6 August 1914: "O Lord, O eternal Master, we entreat Thee, answer our endeavour, enlighten it, show us the way, give us the strength to break down all inner resistance and overcome every obstacle."

The meeting of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on 29 March led to the
launching of the Arya some months later. It foreshadowed the ultimate foundation of the Ashram for a divine man-making. This was indeed a revolutionary adventure but it was within the scope of the evolutionary process from the mental to the supramental race. Of course, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo will be "the first-born of a new supramental race" Sri Aurobindo in his epic Savitri expresses this truth in general terms:

The incarnate dual-Power shall open God's door,
Eternal supermind touch earthly Time
The superman shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demi-god
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force
Revealing the secret divinity in the cave"

With the First World War's opening shots, Sri Aurobindo in collaboration with the Mother and Paul Richard started the Arya journal. About this journal Sri Aurobindo gave the message: "My present teaching is that the world is preparing for a new progress, a new evolution whatever race, whatever country seizes on the lines of that new evolution and fulfills it, will be the leader of humanity. In the Arya I state the thought upon which this new evolution will be based as I see it, and the method of Yoga by which it can be accomplished" India has the courage to respond adequately to the new philosophy which is based on three principles:

1. For each man as an individual to change himself into the future type of divine humanity, the man of the new Satayuga which is striving to be born.
2. To evolve a race of such men to lead humanity, and
3. To call all humanity to the path under the lead of these pioneers and this chosen race."

Sri Aurobindo continues: "to do in the right way what Germany thought of doing in the wrong way". Then comes the observation, with which the letter concludes:

"While the war continues, nothing great can be done, we are fettered on every side. Afterwards things will change and we must wait for the development."

The Arya was launched on 15 August 1914. The Mother took up the managerial activities of it as well as of the French version—its problems which started with the complications of the First World War. She became calm within for the sanguinary holocaust and tried to find out the inner reason of the War.

On 6 August 1914, she writes: "O Lord, we know that it is an hour of great gravity for the earth: those who can be Thy intermediaries to it to make a greater harmony arise from the conflict and from its dark ugliness a diviner beauty, must be ready for the work."
It was a great beginning for the Mother to execute her divinely ordered plan for the future. She writes on 17 January 1915: “Now, Lord, things have changed. The time of rest and preparation is over. Thou hast willed that from the passive and contemplative servitor I was, I become an active and realising one, Thou hast willed that joyful acceptance be transformed into joyful battle, and that in a constant and heroic effort against everything which in the world opposes the accomplishment of Thy law in its purest and highest present expression, I find again the same peaceful and unchanging poise which one keeps in a surrender to Thy law as it is now being accomplished, that is, without entering into a direct struggle with all that opposes it, making the best of every circumstance and acting by contagion, example and slow infusion.”

*(To be continued)*

**Nilima Das**

**REFERENCES**

1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 29, p 704
2 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 27, pp 475-6
THE INTEGRATION OF PONDICHERRY WITH INDEPENDENT INDIA

Last month we published an account of an unusual interview with Sri Aurobindo: M. Schumann, who had led a mission from the French Government to India immediately after Independence in September 1947, described how the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had used their influence to avoid any threat of an immediate military takeover of the French possessions in India by the new government.

The continuation of that little-known chapter in Pondicherry's history is sketched out in the two passages that follow. The first is from Madhav Pandit, who, addressing a public meeting on March 29 1989, the 75th anniversary of the Mother's first arrival in Pondicherry, pointed out:

After independence there was a movement for the merger of what was French India with the Indian Union. There were hard positions on both sides. Through an emissary Sri Aurobindo sent the draft of a treaty. That was before 1950, according to it all the French areas were to merge forthwith in the Indian Union. But there was to be a special arrangement for Pondicherry to maintain its cultural link with France. Somehow that draft remained in cold-storage. Both the Governments of France and of India took up stiff attitudes and things became very difficult. A point of no return was being reached. As one who was present at that time, nearly 40 years ago, I know what hardships common people went through. Better counsels prevailed and a particular disciple of Sri Aurobindo, the deputy leader of the Congress party in the Parliament, Mr. Surendra Mohan Ghosh, was asked by the Government of India to help break the ice. Sri C. Rajagopalachari, the then Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, specially called Surendra Mohan Ghosh and told him: “You must do something: request the Mother on our behalf that she must help. Take my car and go to Pondicherry.”

So Mr. Ghosh came to the Ashram. By that time Sri Aurobindo had passed away. He met Mother and conveyed to her the strong desire of the leadership that she should do something so that the French India merged with the Indian Union with whatever suitable provisions. The Mother contacted her son, André Morisset, who occupied a high position in the concerned circles. The French Government sent a special emissary to Pondicherry, and within no time, arrangements were made by which French areas merged with the Indian Union and a treaty between the French and the Indian Governments on the lines envisaged by Sri Aurobindo was adopted by the respective parliaments. That was her contribution which is not commonly known.

(Reprinted from Sri Aurobindo's Action, October 1989, p. 5.)
Surendra Mohan Ghosh himself wrote about this matter.

"... All of us had to suffer for not having listened to Sri Aurobindo’s direction or advice. He sent me back saying, ‘Go and tell Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana, Sardar and Rajendra Prasad that it is for the good of India and ultimately for the good of the world that they should act on these lines and here is an opportunity I am giving them, let them accept and work on it.’ I went to Delhi—there was a meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress, everybody said, ‘A very good thing, very good,’ but it was never implemented... The draft which Sri Aurobindo had made about the integration was on this basis that all the French possessions should immediately merge with India, with a right for Pondicherry to maintain its cultural contact with France. Because we did not implement it, a serious problem arose afterwards. To solve it I was again asked to go to Pondicherry after Sri Aurobindo had passed away in 1950."

And with the Mother’s help and intervention the whole plan of integration with India was finalised here.

(Quoted in Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo by Nirodbaran, 3rd ed. 1988, p. 256.)
GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

(Continued from the issue of December 1989)

This series is an arrangement of material about Golconde that has been deposited with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library. The compiler and the Archives would be happy to receive additional information about this exceptional building and those who were the Mother’s instruments in realising it.

SHRADDHAVAN

12. THE BUILDERS

(8)

Another Ashramite closely connected with Golconde from the very beginning was Udar Pinto. His accounts about that work appeared in Mother India in August 1978 and October 1987. There are some discrepancies between the two accounts, and Udar freely admits that his memory is not infallible as far as details are concerned. The same is evidently the case with others, who might not be so ready to admit it. Here we give Udar’s later account which is the completer of the two, supplemented in a couple of places by points from the earlier one:

Udar: Mona and I joined the Ashram in 1937. The Golconde building was in the process of being built at the time; so, even from before it was finished, Mona and I have been associated with it. Mother gave charge of Golconde to Mona even then and she, with several ladies to help her, began to prepare the linen for the rooms and other things necessary. I was given the fine work of preparing the furniture.¹

The architecture of Golconde is a masterpiece but on the engineering side it was almost disastrous. George Nakashima admitted as much to me on his last visit here. Particularly with regard to the louvers and the brass fittings. In the original design for the louvers, they were to be made from imported zinc sheets, as was done in the model room. But this would have been disastrous as the zinc sheet would not stand up to the corrosion of the sea air. Also it would be impossible later to import the sheets. When the Mother was informed of this, she meditated for quite some time on it and then said that some other material should be used and suggested asbestos cement. Fortunately, I had good friends in the Asbestos Cement Factory at Coimbatore, where the Trafford Roofing sheets were made. I was able, with the Mother’s Force behind me, to get them to make the louvers specially to our design. These louvers are perfect and have served wonderfully.²
Later came the question of fitting up the louvers, and for that a large number of brass fittings had to be made and thousands of brass bolts, nuts, etc. We needed a foundry, as the blade handles, etc. had to be cast to the special shape designed by the architects. There were beautiful drawings of all these, in great detail, but they existed only on paper. All had to be made, and when I told this to the Mother, she said, “Well, make them then. You are an engineer.” She gave me the Harpagon place to set up my workshop for this. There was nothing there but a tumble-down country-tile-roofed shed and part of that was occupied by the Sanitary Service.... Anyway, there I was at Harpagon to make all the brass fittings for Golconde. These had to be cast in brass, so we first had to set up a foundry. I had been given some workmen, very good ones indeed, with a traditional competence, who turned their hands well to modern machine parts. The Mother gave me a large heap of old brass vessels which had to be broken down and melted and cast in the foundry and then machined. I asked her for some machines and she turned to Pavitra who was present and he said he could spare a hand drill. That was the only machine I started with. But Pavitra was indeed most helpful as he did all the machining work very, very well indeed in his Atelier in the Ashram Main Building.

Then I told the Mother that I would need some money to buy certain tools, etc. She went into her room and brought out one rupee which she gave me saying with a smile, “Here is money.” Though I was fairly new at the Ashram, I did not protest and understood at once what a great gift she was giving me and such a wonderful compliment. It was a challenge given by the divine Mother to me, who, she felt, could rise to it. Most foreign-trained engineers are desk-workers and give orders. I had no desk and no one to give orders to and so had to do most of the work with my own hands—and with one glorious rupee from the Mother as a channel of her Force into me.*

Then about the brass bolts and nuts. There were thousands needed, and every architect or design engineer first selects the sizes suitable from the vast array of lists of different specifications of brass bolts and nuts. But not so here. The architects made drawings even of the bolts and nuts, so these also had to be cast, toughened and machined. And as for the threads of these bolts and nuts, there are a large number of standards to choose from for which screw-taps and dies are available. But not here. There were pretty drawings which conformed to no standards at all. All this I explained to the Mother, and told her that I could choose something very close to the drawings for manufacture. But the Mother was adamant. “Not even a fraction of a millimetre must be changed. If taps and dies are not available for these drawing sizes, then make your own!” And this I did—very largely by hand and helped a great deal by Pavitra who had a lathe in

* In the 1978 account Udar mentions that the Mother later gave him an allowance of Rs 200 per month for running the workshop
his Atelier. I worked around 18 hours a day and did so much work with small files—without handles—that there grew a small hole in the palm of my right hand which is still there. It is my “glorious scar” of the Divine’s battle.\(^1\)

Then about the tea at Golconde. When we were working there we were so engrossed in our work that we did not even think of taking a tea-break or whatever. But the Mother, in her marvellous sweetness, though she herself did not drink tea, knew our habits and our likes, so she asked Mona to see that we got tea at 3.00 p.m. every day. This was the start of the Golconde Tea Ceremony

Why the name “Golconde”? To set up such a large building required quite a lot of money and, in those days, much money was not available. So the Mother spoke to Sir Akbar Hydari about it, and as he was the Dewan to the Nizam of Hyderabad he was able to get from the Nizam a donation of one lakh of rupees for this building through the Finance Department which was under Raja Shamraj. Today, one lakh does not seem much, but in those days it was indeed quite a large sum, as its buying-power was over twenty times what it is now. Especially at Pondicherry where things were remarkably cheap. A ton of cement, good Japanese cement, cost only around Rs. 25/- and steel about Rs. 200/- per ton. Pondicherry was then a free port and there were absolutely no Customs or Import charges or restrictions. And as we had then a good off-loading pier, shipments from Japan could come directly to Pondicherry. Hence with this large sum of money the building work was taken up. Now because the first money came from Hyderabad, the Mother wanted to give a name to the building which had some connection with Hyderabad and so she chose the name Golconde, the French rendering of Golconda, the famous mine in Hyderabad.

When Antonin Raymond, the renowned Czechoslovakian architect, came here, the Mother asked him to take up the work of designing and starting the building of Golconde. The area available was quite small for a building of any large size to be built in. Nevertheless, Raymond took up the challenge. As the length of the land lay from east to west, this suited him very well, and he designed the building oriented very strictly east to west, with all the openings only on the north and south, and he designed that both faces should be openable fully, so that it could get the fullest current of air, which is south to north in summer and north to south in winter. He also arranged that the sunlight should not enter any room directly and bring its heat directly with it. So the rooms are always cool and do not need any fans, etc. as other rooms do.

The lines of the building were so beautifully designed, with the roof made of large curved cement-concrete tiles, that the whole is truly a masterpiece of architecture. Mr Raymond brought with him his team of architects, consisting of George Nakashima, a Japanese, and Franticek (François) Sammer, a Czechoslovakian. George Nakashima made the first drawings of Golconde and even made a model of a room. Work was started on 10th October 1937. Later
Nakashima went to the USA and established himself there at New Hope, Pennsylvania, as one of the foremost furniture designers in America. François Sammer stayed on for several years and attended to the building and the finishing work of Golconde. I had the very happy opportunity of working with him and learning so much from him. François was a perfectionist and, very much in the manner of the Mother, believed in "perfection in detail". The perfection of the work done at Golconde added to the fame of this building.

Here are two outstanding examples of this approach. Normally, in reinforced concrete work where large areas are cast in form-work (or "shuttering"), when the form-work is removed, the faces of the cast areas are plastered over and made level and smooth. But for this work at Golconde, François insisted that the surfaces be left as they were, after the form-work was removed, and only smoothed over with a carborundum stone. In this way, the quality of the work could be seen, and so the work had to be done very carefully. There should be no holes and blank spaces and this was done by having the concrete vibrated at the time of casting. This was quite a new technique to us. The details of the formwork could be seen, the joints of the planks, the screw-heads and even the grain of the wooden planks. All this was part of the aesthetic detail in the architecture, and those who visit Golconde are impressed with it.

The other example was in the use of the wooden planks for the staircase hand-rails. François insisted that the planks should be left with all the defects in them, defects which all planks have and which are normally covered over. These small defects add to the beauty of the wood and show its intrinsic value.

In every single thing, François insisted on the utmost perfection and to me this was a wonderful training and such a great help in my own sadhana. I informed the Mother about all this and she was very pleased with such a way of working.

Another fine approach was how beauty and utility were combined. Around the building of Golconde there are water-tanks and water-canals connecting those tanks, with the use of underground canals from one side of the building to the other. This makes a very beautiful boundary for the building, as if it were tied with a silver ribbon. In the tanks and also in some of the canals there were water-plants, water-flowers, goldfish and such things. All this is so very beautiful. Also, these serve well in watering the garden. One does not have to carry the water from a distance. A pail is just dipped into the canal and the garden-area nearby watered. Thus is utility combined with beauty. Now for all this we needed a good supply of water, in addition to the town supply. So the Mother asked us to drill an artesian tube-well, and she indicated where it had to be done. When we were drilling this well, generally clay and sand were extracted; but once some black material came up, which was quite intriguing. As I then had free access to Sri Aurobindo, I took a handful of this stuff to show it to him and he asked me what it was. I said that it looked to me like half-formed...
On hearing this, Sri Aurobindo smiled sweetly and said, “Ah then! You want to pull down Golconde and have a coal mine there?” It was truly wonderful to hear him joke and smile. One would, perhaps, expect such a Mahayogi to be serious and ponderous, but He was always ready with a joke and a smile. He once said that one could be serious about a few small things, but about the rest, one should always laugh at them.

Years later we learnt that this black stuff was lignite and that it stretches over a wide area and forms the reason for the Neyveli lignite mining.⁶

(To be continued)

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1. Mother India, Vol 30, no 8, August 1978 pp 518-19
3. Mother India, Vol 30, no 8, August 1978 pp 518-19
5. Mother India, Vol 30, no 8, August 1978 pp 518-19
LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

PERSONAL LETTERS

It is hardly surprising that in the wake of immersing yourself in the grand passages I had sent you from Sri Aurobindo’s translations of the Rigveda’s hymns to the God Varuna you should dream of a deluge. This deluge is nothing else than the presence of Varuna with his all-enveloping infinity which at once overwhelsms and embraces us and washes away our small many-stained self from us and with wonderful waves of the ever-widenning resonance of a Mantra merges us in a supreme mystery of our own being,

Where Time flows inward to eternal shores

Naturally our normal consciousness is a little alarmed at such an enormous sweep of Divine Grace and we think of looking for a place of safety, as you did—but, thank God, there is no safety from God! Once we have taken His Name and invoked His endless secrecyes of a Bliss which turns all human happiness pale and poor, escape is impossible. Of course, we still want to cling to our tiny gleams of transient joy until billow on billow of a giant light breaks the bounds of our hearts and no longing to escape is left any more.

That is indeed the climax of our lives. And to live in the sense of it at all moments is to convert every occurrence of our day-to-day commerce with the world into a unique discovery of the Divine—either a truth that leads into the depth of things or a beauty that opens our eyes to ineffable dreams or a power clearing a path each hour for a love to smile at us out of whatever difficulty falls to our mortal lot. (6 10 1989)

*  

You have asked me not to give you “the slightest thanks”. But I cannot stop the Mother from giving expression to a gratitude from the depths of me. It was She who from your deepest part sent help through you—with that typical soul-quality: the sense of being only a channel of Grace. And it is with a spontaneous outflowing of happiness on recognising that soul-quality by a similar presence in me that I write this letter.

Perhaps you will query: “How can the Divine give thanks? All is rightfully the Divine’s!” But surely the Supreme Mother has concealed her divinity in the shape of an ignorant universe striving towards light and, whenever a spark of success is struck, a smile of humble bliss gleams out from her hidden greatness. It is as if she never expected to succeed—such was the stupendous gamble of looking for the infinite All through the play of infinitesimal dust—and thus most
naturally the Supernatural itself is surprised on being found again and there breaks forth a “Thank you.” Particularly is it so when the generosity is both spontaneous and substantial.

All this may sound like semi-Fichtean semi-Hegelian metaphysics but it is really Aurobindonian truth Amalianly poeticised. (25.9.1989)

* 

I have received all your letters and the photographs. They give me an insight into your soul and the general mood of your good friends. I can see that simple devotion to the Divine is the very life of your life. The ceremonies are no mere religious gestures. They are there because of tradition but there is true love of God finding expression through these old forms. And I am happy and proud that you have mingled me with the spontaneous approach you have to the World-Mother To be remembered in the movements of your inner being as at the same time a fellow-devotee and an inmate brother is indeed good fortune for me and gives an extra intensity to my own turning towards the Divine. Looking at the beautiful photographs I feel the past occasion a living reality. The consecrated expression on the faces of all the participants and especially on the face of my dear friend adds a new glow to the self-surrender I always aspire to make to Sri Aurobindo and to his Shakti, the transcendent and universal Creatrix who not only meets us as a close personal presence in the depths of our hearts but brought for year on sunlit year an embodied beauty and bliss to our adoring eyes and worshipping hands.

Someone has said that it is not by arguments that a man gets converted to belief in God. It is the sight of true believers in their spontaneous act of prayer and worship that turns a mere hypothesis of the Holy into a palpable reality and a life-enveloping radiance. (4.10.1989)

* 

You want to know the most memorable event for me this year (1986). In your earlier letter you said you were continuing the course in healing, and hope to be proficient enough to give me some healing influence when next you visit Pondicherry. This influence would have been quite welcome two months back when I had one of the worst tosses in my long life of many sudden and violent contacts with the ground, thanks to my inefficient legs. And this fall brought for me paradoxically the high-water mark of the current year in Yogic consciousness. Already I have written the story of this memorable event to some friends. Let me repeat it to you.

I have always valued old Confucius’s maxim: “Our greatest glory lies not in never falling but in rising every time we fall.” Of course, the Chinese sage was
not speaking in reference to treacherous lower limbs, but I found his words quite appropriate to my tumbling career. And I have ever been quick to get up. This time—at about 7 in the evening—I took long. The pain was so intense and widespread that I had to keep lying on the floor for nearly an hour My friend Minna happened to be watering my little garden which is of her own making. Hearing me gasp several times she rushed in and sat down on the floor beside me. I don’t know how the fall occurred. I was getting up from my chair, the same in which I had been sitting on the two occasions you had graced my flat with your visit. Suddenly my knees sagged. With a twist in my waist I fell backward and one of the corners of the small table fixed to my chair butted into me like a bull—or rather I was like an idiotic matador backing into the horns of a bull waiting for him. The butting was just near my spine and somehow it affected my breathing. The pain caused by it as well as by the contorted way I fell on the floor was of a kind unknown to me: it was as if swords of fire were slashing into me at a number of places. But as I lay supine in great physical distress I made a strange discovery. In the midst of the intense pain my mind and heart were absolutely at peace. Not a twinge of fear, not a tremor of anxiety!

Utter tranquility seemed the very substance of my consciousness. I had never realised that such perfect calm had been permanently established in me by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. To the inner being, nothing had happened. I am almost inclined to say that the fall was worth while just for me to discover this profound serenity.

In former days I had found myself facing calamitous events as if from what Sri Aurobindo has called

The silent Being within
Who sees life’s drama pass with unmoved eyes.

But I had never dreamed that my own physical disasters could be looked at in the same imperturbable manner. And this unshaken state was also different from the detached condition in which I had undergone the pain about 9 years ago when I had slipped on the wet courtyard of Dr. Sircar’s house and had hurt both my legs so badly that my wife Sehra had thought I would never be able to walk again. On that occasion of getting bedridden for a time I could draw myself inwardly away from my body’s lower part, but there was some link subtly left with the body. Now it was like standing quite apart from it. “Standing” may sound an odd word to use when I was lying flat on the floor. Yet it is really the mot juste to drive home the fact that my body and I were two separate things and that the toss still left me unfallen in mind and heart.

(1986)
You have stated your puzzlement over certain expressions in my little piece of poetic mysticism, "When Poems are Born." Let me first quote it, then cite your questions and then attempt an explanation step by step. Here are the 16 lines:

When poems are born
   No man and woman meet:
   A lion and a nebula
   Vanish in a single heat.

   A light that is nameless and formless
      Plucks up the master of life—
   Limbs of carved thunder take
      An infinite silence for wife.

   And, by the unfathomed fusing
      Of below with beyond,
   A mystery leaps out of slumber,
      Breaking time's bond.

   A cry like immortal honey
      Foretastes of the truth behind
   Our human grope—the almighty
      Body of Supermind.

You have written: "I know in the animal world examples of the female swallowing the male after conception. I have also no difficulty in understanding that a thought-parent is dissolved while the child—the words—is born from some brain cells, but I have never known both parents vanishing in a single instance while heat of conception and delivery are almost simultaneous. Obviously this does occur since you describe it so beautifully. Will you explain in some detail what your 'lion' and 'nebula' stand for?"

Now for my reply. Although hints are taken from the physical world of mating and breeding, the process described should not be judged according to what happens in biology. The very first line gives a warning that here is a metaphysical process pictured. But this process is envisaged in an extreme functioning—the creation of a mystic poem. However, such creation is still in the realm of poetry and what happens during its production is foreshadowed in all poetic activity. So I may begin with the nature of all poetry.

The near and the far, the earth and the empyrean, the conceivably concrete and the intuitively sensed, what is clear to sight and what is figured out by insight, the vital formative power and the spiritual creative élan from some depth or height of revelatory secrecy—all these go to the birth of a poem. The two
elements coming together from two ends, as it were, are imaged by my "lion" and my "nebula". These entities enclasp each other, interpenetrate, catch fire, grow one blaze of beauty, disappear as separate existences and forces, become something which at the same time combines both and is a different transcendent "third". This culmination gives point to the word "vanish" in my piece.

The first stanza is to be read in conjunction with the less radical expressions of the second and the third: "A light that is nameless and formless" is the "nebula", "limbs of carved thunder" are the "lion". The former—the empyrean reality—takes into itself the latter who is called "the master of life", while this master makes that reality, termed now "an infinite silence", merge with himself as his wife. The "lion" stands for the shaping energy in its extreme drive to incarnate a supreme perfection on earth. The "nebula" is "an infinite silence" which gives to the expressive shape hewn by the artist vitality an archetypal significance, a profundity of suggestion, a liberating atmosphere of the endless evermore. When matter's inconscience is made to meet by creative art the divine "beyond", then from that "below" of grandly moulded "slumber" the hidden Godhead—"a mystery"—breaks forth, setting earthly limitations ("time's bond") at nought. The result of the "single heat" in which the "below" and the "beyond" participate and lose themselves is the poem. That result is the "immortal honey" distilled into a lyric "cry", a flow of light and delight, a beauty that is truth and a truth that is beauty, conveyed by the magic of a form whose lines at once shine with a seizable message and shade off into those rapturous "reasons of the heart which the mind cannot know".

This chiselled yet shimmering shape comes as a blissful anticipation—in verbal terms—of that flawless formulation of the Divine Being, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supramental Body. The formulation without a flaw, while already existent in the empyrean as the guide of "Our human grope", is waiting to descend with its "almighty" artistry to refashion the outer no less than the inner life of earth.

In short, every authentic poem prefigures in one way or another in the world of words the Integral Yoga we are striving to practise in order to bring into the evolutionary products of the Supreme who has hidden in the Inconscient the all-transformative power of the Shabda Brahman, the Logos which articulates in time the marvels of the Eternal—the Aurobindonian Supermind. (4.7.1985)

I am glad to receive a photograph of your recently born son. Now an important part of your life is to see how the little one becomes a big one in the course of time. And when I say "a big one" I do not mean merely a growth in size. Of course, the bodily welfare has to be looked to, but equally momentous is the development of the inner being. And this development depends to a consi-
A child is extremely sensitive and easily absorbs something of the presence of things and of persons around it. An atmosphere of harmony and happiness is the best gift one can make to one’s child. The art of bringing up a child is in its own way a kind of Yoga. Faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is, no doubt, an important matter, so that the infant soul may catch their subtle presence. But faith is not enough. The manner of life counts a great deal.

Between the two parents there must be a play of sweetness and light, those two natural attributes of the Psychic Being. Also, one’s individual and personal habits create an aura of their own. The consciousness has to be calm, clear, bright and has to express itself in a certain attitude and activity of the outer being, which must practise poise, orderliness, bodily care, regularity, balance of movement. Spontaneously the child will take in through its twinkling eyes the drama of life around it and by its sensitive soul, which will be very much on the surface during its first few years, it will tend to be an image of its parents.

Please forgive me if I seem to be preaching a sermon. But I have no intention of putting forth goody-goody advice. What I have said is what I myself try to put into practice, although I have no baby to take care of (thank God!). Rather I am myself a sort of baby. But this baby feels very intensely Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as its parents and has tried to absorb something of their presence. So it knows how your own baby will be disposed to act in response to its physical and psychological surroundings.

I have written to you as your friend who has a great affection for you and something of this affection extends to both your wife and the child and I would wish all three of you to live in the vast creative sunshine which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have brought into the ordinary life. May this new year unfold a rich inwardness and outwardness for all three of you.

(12.1.1988)

Amal Kiran
(K. D. Sethna)
A LETTER ON A LETTER

RAVINDRA KHANNA WRITES TO THE EDITOR OF MOTHER INDIA

DEAR Amal Kìran (K. D Sethna),

I have been boning up on the letter of Sri Aurobindo that you have included in your series “Life—Poetry—Yoga. Some Personal Letters” in the 15th August 1989 issue of Mother India, p. 510. Let me refresh the memory of your readers by quoting it:

Pondicherry
13.1 39

Amal,

I write to get news about your progress in recovery—I hear that you are better. I hope you can confirm it.

I have not yet been able to answer Homi’s letter. You can tell him from us that the Mother and I were both extremely well-impressed by Bosanquet’s photograph which shows a remarkable personality and great spiritual possibilities. I may be able to write about his (Bosanquet’s) letter in a few days. If he comes here, we shall be glad to give him help in his spiritual aspiration.

There is nothing much to say in other matters. The Ashram increases always, but its finances are as they were, which is a mathematical equation of doubtful validity and is not so much an equation as an equivocal.

I have done an enormous amount of work with Savitri. The third section has been recast—not rewritten—so as to give it a more consistent epic swing and amplitude and elevation of level. The fourth section, the Worlds, is undergoing transformation. The “Life” part is in a way finished, though I shall have to go over the ground perhaps some five or six times more to ensure perfection of detail. I am now starting a recasting of the “Mind” part of which I had only made a sort of basic rough draft. I hope that this time the work will stand as more final and definitive.

In sending news of yourself, you will no doubt send news of your mother also. I saw a notice of a remedy (in the Main) for hernia which they say has succeeded in America and is introduced in France, very much resembling the defunct Doctor’s discovery¹ (the one who treated Lalita’s father), but perhaps more assuredly scientific; it is reported to get rid for good of belts and operations and to have made millions of cures. It will be a great thing for many if it turns out to be reliable.

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ Amal’s Note  Sri Aurobindo’s actual written word was “recovery”—quite obviously a slip of the pen in the context—I also personally know what the Doctor was at
I have found this letter a most valuable document brimful of the warmth and solicitude of friendliness. Here Sri Aurobindo has, for the moment, doffed the mantle of the spiritual Master and assumed the role of an intimate friend feeling concerned about the health of one very close to him—quite unlike Sri Aurobindo’s other letters to his disciples which are full of illumination and assurances of his unflagging help and solicitude in their spiritual endeavours.

The letter is dated 13.1.39, that is when the fateful accident to his right leg has taken place barely a month earlier. About his own fracture he just snubbed Dr. Manilal by saying, “Well, it has no importance for me.” One who could say,

Distant below me the ocean of life with its passionate surges
Pales like a pool that is stirred by the wings of a shadowy bird—

and who has been exploring the Triple Status of the Supermind and the state of the Divine Soul before it has plunged into the darkness of Ignorance is not expected to be waiting for a report about Amal Kiran’s “progress in recovery” implying that your being on the road to recovery is not in doubt but what he wants to know is “the progress” along it. He has heard that you are better but till it is confirmed by you yourself he will not feel relieved.

And yet the mutual give-and-take is so constant that he has not felt the need of writing a single word to cheer you up. You don’t need it, his help is a concrete fact as tangible as any solid experience, so why should Sri Aurobindo dwell upon it when there are other far more important things about which you would like to be kept abreast? Knowing you as I do and in this many others share my experience, you would feel more concerned about that ship of hope and promise i.e., the Ashram, which Sri Aurobindo has been steering through many a Scylla and Charybdis. Hence he switches the gear and the letter turns into a tête à tête or, as G Meredith rendered it, a you-and-me. And the tone is sotto voce, conversational and confiding. He is as if unbosomming himself about the Ashram finances and yet he does not forget that he is writing to one who weighs every word most meticulously and docket and analyses every nuance in the use of words, so he has flavoured it with some play on words and with words. “The Ashram increases always but its finances are as they were [evidently when you were in Pondicherry] which is a mathematical equation of doubtful validity, and is not so much an equation as an equivocque.”

Since you were the only person who could inveigle him to part with the secret of Savitri and were so profoundly moved by the first instalment, which in those early days began straight with the coming of the “symbol dawn”, as to write, “I was reading your verses, when I had a mute sense of big tears in the heart and a conviction that having seen what I had seen I could not possibly

2 “Trance of Waiting”, Collected Poems, p 558
remain a mere mortal. What do you say to my madness?” Well, after a lapse of more than five decades you owe it to later generations as to how far that aspiration as those “forbidden hopes profound” has been fulfilled. What could be more heartening for you than to know that the Pegasus of Savitri is going ahead full gallop and yet taking care of every step.

Having published this letter you have saddled yourself with the responsibility of elucidating what the difference is between “recasting” and “rewriting” and how he gave a “consistent epic swing”.

Sri Aurobindo’s readiness to help Bosanquet in that young Englishman’s spiritual endeavour and his concern about your mother’s hernia and desire to know how she is getting on are all in keeping with the friendly spirit of the letter full of the breath of the intimacy that immensity is capable of.

Much water has flowed down the Ganges and if Boswell could boast that he had Johnsonised the land you too have contributed through the years a great deal in Aurobindonising the land. Who has not felt enhanced after an evening spent in your company with your vigour, your wit, your unflagging love for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?

To conclude, the letter reveals “the human face divine” of Sri Aurobindo and its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is meant only for a disciple-friend and not for humanity or posterity at large.

Yours

Ravindra Khanna
IN 1952 the Mother granted R a second interview. R had been suffering from eczema. It ran in the family. His father had also suffered from the disease. When he went to the Mother there was some trace of eczema on his hands. He showed his hands to the Mother. She said, “It seems chronic. Doctors cannot cure it, rather they increase it.” “Then what should be my attitude towards it?” asked R. The Mother replied, “You should be indifferent to whether it comes or goes.” That very day the last traces of the disease disappeared. Only after eleven years when R was in the Middle East in connection with his business, did the disease appear again. He prayed to the Mother, “Mother, let me not be troubled in this foreign land.” Mysteriously his eczema disappeared, to reappear again on his landing at Bombay. After two or three weeks he came to Pondicherry and sent the news of the recurrence of the disease to the Mother who replied, “Perhaps the faith is dwindling.” The words were like a slap for R. He rekindled his faith and the disease vanished, never to recur.

In 1952 R told the Mother that he wanted to live in the Ashram and educate his children in the Ashram school. She replied, “Come, we will see.” Meanwhile at home, his eldest daughter, who had gone to visit her maternal grandmother, got typhoid. Her abdomen became distended and her very life was in danger. R received the news by phone and rushed to her bedside. There he earnestly prayed to the Mother to save the child. In the morning an old woman suggested a home-remedy which at once gave relief to the child. Later when he wrote to the Mother asking permission to come to Pondicherry the Mother replied that since the child was still weak he should come alone.

Finally on 13th April, 1953, on the auspicious Baisakhi Day, the family came to the Ashram. On 30th June when R took his daughter to the Mother on her birthday, the Mother admitted her to “Group” and later the girl joined the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. After the August Darshan, R went back to look after his business and returned in November. He thought, “Now I should also live here permanently.” But at that time he did not tell the Mother or anyone else about his intentions. The Mother does not need to be told about her children’s feelings and aspirations. She informed another sadhak Allan who needed help in the construction of Cottage Industry, “Let R work with you.” Allan protested, “But Mother, he is only a visitor!” The Mother replied, “Probably he will not go back now.” When Allan spoke of this to R he at once said, “Since the Mother has taken the decision, now I will ask her formally.” He asked for an interview and was called on 19th January. He expressed his
aspiration to live here. The Mother answered, "Yes, you can stay."

Now the question arose as to what should be the basis of his stay in the Ashram. The Mother said, "There are two ways—either pay and stay, or offer everything to me and I take all the responsibility." Full of psychic ardour R said, "Mother, I prefer the latter." "O.K. From this moment whatever you have belongs to me," said the Mother. Then she asked, "What about your business? Who will look after it in your absence?" "Mother, I have a business partner," replied R. The Mother further enquired, "What kind of person is your partner?" "As far as I know he is honest. But you know better, Mother," answered R.

Then the Mother said, "Better to continue the business. It will be a source of regular income and it will go on increasing. You have children, you will need money later on."

The Mother continued to guide him at each step in running the business. In the beginning R would submit his annual accounts to the Mother. Once one of his employees started gambling. R's partner wanted to dismiss him. But R wanted to get the Mother's instructions in this matter. R sent the young man's photograph with the relevant details to the Mother. The Mother sent her blessings and said, "Ask him not to repeat it."

The major portion of R's business was in N. Bengal and Assam. When the Indochina war broke out (on 20th Oct., 1962) he was naturally worried. His partner was to go there on 21st November, 1962. It was very risky. R asked for the Mother's permission through X. The Mother asked, "On which date does he want to go?" "On the 21st," replied X. "He can go," said the Mother. The ceasefire was declared on 20th November

R and his partner were afraid that the war would adversely affect their business. His nervous partner had asked R to accompany him this time. So they went together to Darjeeling and Sikkim in the beginning of 1963, after taking the Mother's permission. By the Mother's Grace they received so many orders (double the normal) that they were afraid they would not be able to supply, so they didn't go to Assam for taking orders from there but came back straight home. On hearing this the Mother commented, "When I am giving they are hesitating to take."

Once R, who was now working at the Ashram Cottage Restaurant, went to the Mother and placed some difficulties before her. The Mother had told him, "Everything should be tasted before serving." R obeyed her, but soon he found he was becoming greedy, so he stopped tasting the food. When he reported to the Mother that he was not tasting the food any more, she said, "That is the reason why I am getting complaints about the preparations of the Restaurant. If the cook knows that nobody checks the food, he becomes careless. What was the problem?" R answered that he found he was becoming greedy. The Mother retorted, "You Indians have asceticism in your blood. If there is a knot you want to cut it rather than undo it." "Then what to do?" asked R. "There is a thin line where tasting stops and greediness starts," said the Mother. R replied, "Mother,
I don’t know it.” “Then why didn’t you call me to tell you?” demanded the Mother.

She also said, “You people serve for a meal only one vegetable, dal, rice and curd, while Das Prakash of Madras serves three vegetables, curd, dal, rice—everything—yet charges the same amount as you charge.” “Mother, they use Vanaspati while we use pure ghee!” protested R. The Mother said, “You can charge a little more, but when the customers come out they should be happy.”

On one of his birthdays R aspired to make something new for distribution in the Playground by the Mother. A sadhak suggested that they should make cashew-nut toffees. So they asked the Mother, “If we make some toffees will you like them?” The Mother showed great enthusiasm and gave her approval.

The first sample they took to the Mother was made with cashew and sugar. The Mother tasted it and exclaimed, “Ah! very good.” Then gently, so as not to dampen their enthusiasm, added, “Can’t the sugar be reduced?” R and his fellow workers put only half of the sugar in the second sample. Again the Mother tasted and said, “Yes, it is better. Can’t we use glucose in it?” Liquid glucose was got from Madras and a third sample prepared. And this time after tasting the Mother exclaimed, “Excellent!”

In 1959, R and his wife went back to attend a wedding in their home-town. The outside atmosphere drags the consciousness down. The memories of wedded life overpowered them and she became pregnant. All through her pregnancy and delivery, she remained in their home-town. After the delivery of her child she fell down and broke her ankle. R who had come back to Pondicherry, leaving his wife with his mother, asked for an interview which was granted on 19th February 1960. On seeing R the Mother scolded him, “The first thing is: how did this (the birth of the child) happen?” What could poor R answer? He told her of his wife’s breaking her ankle and asked why the accident had happened. The Mother said, “She wanted something but got something else. She got confused and fell down.” (R had two daughters. His wife had hoped that this third child would be a son, but it was a daughter again.) R asked, “Mother, what is to be done?” The Mother answered, “What can I do from such a distance?” R asked, “Mother, should I call them here?” The Mother laughed and held out her hands as if holding a child and remarked, “Then people will ask from where did the child come? How will you answer?” Poor R was nonplussed. The Mother continued, “The child cannot come to me till she is two. Who will keep her?” R answered, “This mother of mine in Pondicherry. She will look after them.” “Then it is all right. Bring them (wife and the new-born) here.” 29 February, 1960—the first recurrence of the date of the Supramental Manifestation four years earlier—was only ten days away. R knew that the Mother would distribute a special medal to all the devotees, so he asked, “Mother, when I come, please give me an extra medal for my wife.” The Mother replied firmly, “No, we have decided to give the medal only to those who will take it from my hands.”
In April R brought his wife back. The Mother poured her love on her and after seeing her foot remarked, "Oh, there is lot of swelling! Show it to Dr. Sanyal." The doctor put her foot in plaster. R's wife says she always felt light and force pouring out of the Mother and reaching her even at a distance. She found it difficult to bear this Force. This simple lady remembers the Mother's love and help with deep gratitude.

In 1961, R bought a piece of land to build a house. He got a plan made and asked X to put it before the Mother for blessings. When X asked the Mother for blessings the Mother kept the plan with her and took it upstairs to study it later. Then in the afternoon she asked Udar, who was to construct the building, "Have you seen the plan?" He replied, "No, Mother." "What kind of contractor are you? You have taken a contract (for constructing a building) without even seeing the plan?" the Mother rebuked him. Then she spread out the plan before him and asked, "Tell me, from where will the breeze come in on this ground-floor house?" She rejected the plan and asked him to make a new plan with residential quarters for R and his family on the first floor while the ground-floor would be used as a godown.

In time a new plan was submitted and was approved by her. When the house was nearing completion, one day the Mother on her own asked Udar, "What name has been decided upon for R's house?" R had planned to name the house after his wife. Udar knew it but with great presence of mind asked, "Mother, you give the name." The Mother named it after R.

This shows the infinite love and detailed interest the Mother took in her children’s affairs. On his part, even for small things R consulted the Mother. Once he asked her through X whether he should buy a refrigerator, as his wife was keen on having one. The Mother replied, "If he has more money than what he needs, he may." R didn’t buy one till much later, when one of his daughters insisted and herself asked for the Mother’s permission.

R’s mother always felt sad because her only son had left her to live far away in Pondicherry. In November 1965 R went to the north to visit her. As he was preparing to leave for Pondicherry, she pleaded with him, "I may go any day. You must cremate me with your own hands." R reassured her, "Even if I have to come by air, I will come to cremate you." This was to be their last meeting for in December itself she became seriously ill. The telegram of her illness was sent to the Mother. She sent a message to R, "If you want to see her, go immediately." R sent a telegram to his mother that he would be reaching on the next plane from Madras. On hearing this message she said, "Oh, he is coming. There is nothing to worry about," and died quietly. R fulfilled his promise by cremating her.

R’s children and grand-children live in the Ashram. His final year here saw him slowly fading with cardiac problems. A partial recovery restored him to his customary contentment. However, ill health finally took its toll and he expressed a wish to be gathered up in her arms. His wish was granted.

Compiled by Shyam Kumari
“DYUMAN—THE LUMINOUS ONE”

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Here is the inspiring life story of a great servitor of the Divine whom Sri Aurobindo named “Dyuman—The Luminous One.”

To a certain extent it is the story of the growth of the Ashram, of “God’s Labour”, and the part taken in it by one to whom the Mother said, “You came down to serve.”

Shyam Kumari

19.6.62

To Dyuman

the wonderful worker

most faithful to her ideal

Bonne Fête!

with love and blessings

for a happy continuation

29
I do not remember anything of my early family atmosphere. All my life I have been a solitary person. In 1914, in the month of May, some Force told me, decisively, “Your life is not meant to be lived ordinarily. It is for something different, for something higher.” I was eleven then.

This Force continued to guide me. It never allowed me to deviate, it never allowed me to move towards the world and its life. Slowly the inner being began to develop, searching for something higher.

In 1920 I heard Sri Aurobindo’s name for the first time. I heard that Sri Aurobindo, a political leader, was doing Yoga and always remained six inches above the ground! Naturally I was impressed by this. But slowly the memory faded. Then I heard his name again. In our school we had several boy-scout troops. Each of them was named after some great person—Vivekananda Troop, Tilak Troop, etc.; our troop was called ‘Aravinda Troop’.

The higher Force which was leading me would not let me settle anywhere. I went to saints, sages and yogis. I went to Hardwar Gurukul, to Shantmiketan, to Belur Math... but nothing satisfied me. Then I came under the influence of Gandhiji and joined his Non-Cooperation Movement as a volunteer. I even tried to join his Sabarmati Ashram; but the Ashram-manager asked me, “Have you taken your parents’ permission?” When I replied, “No”, he refused to accept me.

The aunt of our Kamalaben, Bhaktiba, was fond of me. I worked with her, as a volunteer works for his leader. In January 1924 Bhaktiba returned from a visit to Pondicherry and went to stay at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s house. One afternoon I was spinning cotton in my hostel, for it was my day to do twenty-four hours’ non-stop spinning. Bhaktiba sent Sardar Patel’s nephew to me with a message, though it was four miles away from Sardar Patel’s house. He came and said simply, “Bhaktiba has come from Pondicherry. She wants to see you.”

I was spinning. The word ‘Pondicherry’ went on re-echoing in my being. And in one moment everything else dropped away: Gandhiji was gone, charkhā and khaddar were gone, all the yogis and other attractions were gone. Even Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, whom I had revered so much, were gone. Everything was obliterated from the canvas of my consciousness. Only one thing remained: ‘Pondicherry’.

In this state of mind I went to meet Bhaktiba. She knew of my inner aspiration and my way of life. I would have done anything for her. She said, pronouncing my old name, “Chunnibhai! your place is not with us. Your place is with Aravinda Babu. Go to him.”

I was only a youth. She was telling me to go to Aravinda Babu, but how should I go? Bhaktiba got permission for me from Sri Aurobindo and arranged everything for my trip. On 11 July, 1924 I reached Pondicherry with my wife Kashibai—we had been married at the age of eight.

We arrived at the Ashram, and sat at the place where the gate-keepers sit
now. Amrita, then a young lad, came and said, “Chunnibhai, go upstairs. Sri Aurobindo is waiting for you.” We both went up.

Dark-complexioned and lean, he was sitting in a massive chair. He asked “Why have you come?” I answered, “For Yoga.” “What do you know of Yoga?” he asked. But before I could answer, he started speaking about Yoga, and continued for almost an hour. He said many things, but I remember only this: that my heart simply became his, and has remained his up to now, even after sixty-five years. People have questions and doubts, but no doubt ever arose in my mind, my heart never questioned. I felt, “You are my all. This is my life, this is my home.” I did not call it the Ashram, I called it ‘home’. I had this unshakable conviction: “Sri Aurobindo is my Lord and Pondicherry my home. Whatever they have belongs to me. So I do not have to think of anything.”

Kashibai offered her gold bangles to Sri Aurobindo. He asked, “What shall I do with them?” I replied, “You decide. If you want, sell them.” And that one darshan changed everything. Everything was settled.

On that first visit I remained in Pondicherry for about two months. In those days there was no Ashram. Sri Aurobindo lived with the few people who had come with him from Bengal—Nolini, Suresh, Bijoy and Saurin. Some others, like Puranl, Poonamchand, Champaklal and Rajangam, also lived in the Guest House.

Then I saw Sri Aurobindo again and he asked me to go back home. I went back, and wrote to him every week, “I want to come there.” “No, you have to remain where you are,” he would answer. “I do not want to remain here,” I persisted. Once he became furious and wrote, “Who has given you the Yoga?” I sent my answer, “You are free, but for me—you are my final Lord.” He wrote, “When it is time you can come back.”

During the time I was away he prepared me. For me, even before I came here, Sri Aurobindo was more than Lord Krishna. Sri Aurobindo named Mirra Alfassa as the Mother in November 1926; but for me she had been the Mother since my first visit in 1924, even though I had not seen her then. In 1924 she was living in seclusion and people had to take special permission to see her. To some it was a question, “Who is the Mother?”, but never for me.

When I was a young boy, I went to study in our town, Anand. The first topic of study was, “What was the form of education in ancient Indian universities such as Taxila, Nalanda, etc.? How were the Ashrams run? What was the relationship between the students and the gurus?” I studied these questions deeply. Everywhere I read that the guru-patnis, their children, and the disciples who came to study, lived together. But there was always a difference between the children of the guru and his disciples. I could never accept that. And in Pondicherry I found it was not so. That is why even before I saw the Mother I loved her and called her ‘Mother’. Even though she had not come out at that time to take charge of the Ashram, I had this feeling, this perception.
And even though I did not know then about transformation and Supermind, ever since my childhood the old process of procreation through man and woman had no truth for me. My inner being knew that there was another way. In May 1919, when I was in the 6th standard, one day while I was standing with some friends under a neem tree, I suddenly picked up a piece of earth and declared, “I can make this a child.” There was an inner knowledge of this New Creation. Of course then I had no idea of how and where.

In 1920 I began to read the *Arya*; whether I understood it or not did not matter because I was very happy to read it. I read *The Secret of the Veda* three times. And even though poetry was not my subject, I liked to read *The Future Poetry*.

In 1926, after Sri Aurobindo’s retirement, I decided to join the Ashram. My parents put great hurdles in my way, but my young wife said to them, “Don’t stop him. He has taken a firm resolution. Even if you try to prevent him, he will go somehow or other.” My father was sick, my mother was sick and my wife had a fit of hysteria. They demanded, “What about us? Who will look after us?” “The Mother will look after you,” I replied. And the Mother did. My father died on Mahashivaratri, at the age of ninety-five. That day he had fasted, and as soon as he sat down to eat he passed quietly away. My mother also died peacefully at a ripe old age.

There was no conflict within me. It was a spontaneous decision.

My life has always evolved step by step. Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai Patel did not want me to leave the Non-Cooperation Movement because they would lose a trusted worker. I was very well known to them. I have always been friendly with people. In my college days I was working for the freedom-movement. In order to appear for my examinations, my presence in college was needed for a minimum number of days to make me eligible. I explained my situation to the Principal and he always got my presence marked for the required days. In the same way at Shantiniketan I was on friendly terms with C. F. Andrews.

The moment I joined the Ashram I never felt any pull towards the old life. The political leaders thought that I was wasting my life and wrote to me to tell me so. But the decision was in the hands of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Even when Gandhiji came to Pondicherry I did not go to meet him as Sri Aurobindo did not choose to see him. But I never break relations with anybody abruptly. My last letter from Gandhiji was in 1947.

I reached the Ashram in May 1927 and had the Mother’s darshan for the first time. Chandulal, Premanand and myself, we three came together. It was 10 o’clock in the morning. She came down to the room under Ravindra’s staircase. One look at her and all my past was done with. A chapter of my life was over; I had nothing more to do with it. Henceforth I was hers, totally and forever.

By this time Sri Aurobindo had shifted from the Guest House. There I was given the room where Parul stays now. I lived in it for a few days; then I was
moved to the Atelier. In August 1927 I was given the room where cardboard boxes are made now. The room was named ‘Entire Consecration’.

On 22 May the Mother said to me, “Chunnibhai, will you help Satyen in serving rice?” “Yes, Mother,” I replied. Thus my life of work in the Ashram begun.

After some years I had also to go to the market, find out the prices and submit an estimate; then the Mother would give me the required money, and I would go and buy what was needed. A few rupees, two rupees a day, would be more than sufficient. In those days there were very few people in the Ashram, and a hundred lemons would cost only twenty-five paisa, and a hundred bananas thirty-six paisa.

Work was of great importance at that time. The day the Ashram started, the first thing the Mother did was to allocate work to Nolini, Bijoy, Amrita and others. She said she wanted a divine life on earth, not an individual transformation. The whole stress was on discipline and work.

She asked Nolini to look after all the post. In those days there were separate French and British Post Offices. Nolini would go on his bike to the French Post Office to bring the Mother’s post. From the beginning to the end he was our postman. He was also a secretary to the Mother and he remained that for everything. When the Mother needed to ask something about translation or other literary problems she would ask Nolini; but he was so modest—he never spoke a word without being asked. Nolini, Saurin, Suresh and Bijoy had been like Sri Aurobindo’s four children. He used to give them vacations, as in schools or colleges; they used to go to their native places for one month each year. Amrita was known as the secretary of Sri Aurobindo. He was given the material work. He managed every single paisa. I was put in charge of food.

Once the Mother gave anyone some work she supported him. When we had been working for a long time in our respective fields, someone asked her, “Why don’t you change the work of these people?” She replied, “No, let them continue.” For she did not like to disturb those who had responded to the Force that she had put in them. And in spite of complaints she did not change the work of those who were fundamentally faithful to her. She put forth all possible Force so that the person would go through without any difficulty. Everything got organised within two months after 24 November 1926.

She gave me full liberty in my work, and I took full liberty. She never questioned anything; though people complained bitterly to her, “He is doing as he likes; he never asks you anything”, she would answer, “Yes, he asks me about everything. I guide him in everything and he follows what I tell him.”

It was not the Mother’s way to say, “Do this, do that.” Only once she spoke to me about work: “Chunnibhai, will you help Satyen to serve rice?” She said just this much. Afterwards the whole thing developed naturally over the years. All the work simply came. Work comes to those who are willing to work,
whether they like it or not. Whatever work came to me I simply accepted it. She always guided me not only from outside but also from within. Even in practical matters, such as which mushrooms to serve to her, I received inner guidance.

In those days our only means and our only aim were to serve the Mother. We understood yoga more and more through work. Let me give you an example of how much importance she gave to work. Darshan days are so important in our Ashram life—people prepared so much for Darshan; but I would just take my cap off, put it in my pocket and run for Darshan, do pranām and run back to my place at the food-counter. The Mother said to me, "You do my work; I do your work," meaning my sadhana. Work was the centre around which everything revolved because the Mother herself gave the work and was herself the most dedicated worker. Our motto was, "Let us work and cook with so much love and purity that we can offer this food to the Mother."

In that period we had no other activities. At 6 a.m., after she finished her bath, the Mother would go up on her terrace, and all of us would gather to have her darshan. Then at 7 she came for meditation, and at 8 she would grant interviews. After the interviews were over, there would be another meditation at 10.30. Then she would come at 11 or 11.30 to the dining-room (which was then in the main Ashram courtyard) to give us food. In the afternoon she would go out for a drive and again we would see her. Some time after she returned she would distribute soup to us. First she would stretch her hands over the cauldron to charge the soup with power. Then we would go to her with our cups. She would sip the soup from them to put in it materially as much of her consciousness as possible for us to receive. We were in direct contact with her every second of the day, so to say. Even if we had a headache, we went to her. We did not like doctors and refused to accept them because the body received the higher Force directly. Even though the Mother was physically with us for almost all the twenty-four hours of the day, yet inwardly she was always with Sri Aurobindo and her consciousness remained concentrated on the transformation of her cells.

In those early days we did not deviate from the straight path even a little. If somebody came to see a sadhak, he had to inform him beforehand or knock at the door. The sadhak would open the door just a little, discuss the subject in hand in as few words as possible, and then close the door. There was an effort at total concentration within. Our family, our country, everything, were Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Life was very strict. On my first visit to Pondicherry, my wife had come with me. But in 1927 when I finally came, I left her behind. In 1930 she came to the Ashram out of her own aspiration. The Mother arranged for her a house, food, work, everything. I was serving food to everybody in the dining-room; but the Mother asked me not to speak to Kashibai. I replied, "All right, Mother." Even though everyone had to come to my room and hand over his or her tin of sugar to me, I managed in such a way that I did not have to speak to her. Then she
decided to go back and wrote to the Mother, “I am going but I have not spoken with him. When I go home everyone will ask me, ‘How is he?’ How shall I answer?” Then the Mother told me to meet her. I asked, “Mother, will you be there?” She said, “How?” I said, “Mother, when people come to say good-bye you see them. Isn’t it so? In the same way she will come to you. I will also come and be with her in your presence.” The Mother agreed to this suggestion. So when Kashibai entered the room of the Mother from one door I came in from another and for a minute or so we met. This was in 1930. Afterwards there was no contact between us until about 1954. Then I heard that she had come on a pilgrimage to South India and might also come to Pondicherry. I informed the Mother and asked, “What do you want me to do?” The answer is interesting: the Mother said, “You see everybody; what harm is there if you see her also?” I replied, “Yes, Mother.” On that visit I again saw her for a minute or so. She went home and later came again for some time, and again went back.

Then Amba Premi from Baroda had some work in my village. He went to my house and was happy to see her. He arranged for her to stay here in Pondicherry. When I heard about this I wrote to him candidly, “Remember, she does not come here as the wife of Dyuman. She comes as an inmate of the Ashram. She must not think I will go to see her or help her as in ordinary life. Let us live as independent individuals.” This is how we lived in those days and live even today.

In 1928 I asked the Mother for a name. She said, “I can give you a name immediately in English or French; but Sri Aurobindo has said, ‘I want to give him a Sanskrit Vedic name. But I don’t know yet what to give. He has to wait.’ ” After some time I asked again, and the Mother was again told, “No, he has to wait.” Then the 24th November Darshan arrived. In those days a list used to be made of the people in the order in which they would go for Darshan. After the Darshan was over, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would talk between themselves about the people who had attended. When Sri Aurobindo mentioned me, the Mother took the opportunity and asked him, “Why not give him the new name?” Then Sri Aurobindo wrote in Sanskrit ‘Dyuman’, and in English, ‘The Luminous One’.

In June 1932 I was to move to my present room. Everyone expected that the
Mother would shift me on 19th June, my birthday. But instead of the 19th she wrote to me on 21st June, "Dyuman, shift to your new room today. Today being the longest day of light and you are 'light'."

To commemorate this occasion the Mother cut out and gave me the following two prayers from the precious and sacred manuscript of her *Prière et Méditations*.

À Dyuman

**Pondichéry 15 Décembre, 1914.**

Seigneur, Tu m'as donné la paix dans la force, la sérénité dans l'action et le bonheur immuable au sein de toutes les circonstances.

Pondichéry, le 21 Juin 1932.

À Dyuman

**Tokio — le 10 Octobre, 1918.**

O, mon Seigneur bien-aimé, quelle douceur de penser que c'est pour Toi et Toi seul que j'agis! C'est à Ton service que je suis; c'est Toi qui décides et ordonnes, et mets en mouvement, diriges et accomplis l'action.

Pondichéry, le 21 Juin 1932.

To Dyuman

**[Pondicherry 15th December, 1914.**

O Lord, Thou hast given me peace in power, serenity in action, immutable happiness in the heart of all circumstances.

Pondicherry, 21 June 1932.]

To Dyuman

**[Tokio — 10 October, 1918**

O my beloved Lord, how sweet it is to think that it is for Thee and Thee alone that I act! It is at Thy service that I am; it is Thou who dost decide and ordain and set in motion, guide and accomplish the action.

Pondicherry, 21 June 1932.]

I took these two prayers as a summing up of my whole life.

In 1934, several years after I had joined the Ashram, one day while I was writing my accounts to submit to the Mother she came to me and said, "Dyuman, is it necessary to submit accounts?" I replied, "No." Then she added, "Not necessary at all." From that day on I stopped submitting estimates and accounts. The Mother said, "If you have any problem, ask me."

But even before I could win her confidence, she said to Sri Aurobindo when she first saw me, "He will go far." She had put trust in me and I did my best to
justify it. Day by day our intimacy grew. For every smallest thing I asked for her instructions.

She told me to keep two notebooks; in one I was to write my inner movements, in the other my external activities—how many people I served food, how I served it, how the atmosphere was, and so on. One of these notebooks I submitted at midday, another at midnight. One day she said, "Is it at all necessary to write? Not necessary." I agreed, "Not necessary, Mother." She said then, "If you have any problem, ask me." So just as I had stopped submitting the accounts, I stopped writing the books. What tremendous confidence she had in me! I have nothing, no written orders from her. She gave me a photograph of herself taken in Japan and said, "Meditate in front of this photograph before you open the doors of the dining-room in the morning, and again before you shut them and come out at night.”

Srî Aurobindo, after he retired to his room, supported the Mother from behind the scene. After finishing her work she would rest at night. At that time Srî Aurobindo would keep watch and write letters. When she awoke, she would help him in answering whatever difficulties faced him while answering the letters. I know this because as soon as she got up she would open the main door onto the terrace and call, "Dyuman!" Immediately I would place a ladder against the wall and climb up and go to her. I would use the ladder because it would have taken much longer to go around by the staircase. Then she would ask me to clarify some points raised in the letters, and would go and tell Srî Aurobindo—then he would answer the letters.

Before the accident to his right leg in 1938 there was a sort of division of work between them: whatever offering was received on Darshan days the Mother would hand over to Srî Aurobindo. He would tally the amount, even to half a rupee. After the accident, all this work came to the Mother.

When Srî Aurobindo started to answer letters, everybody wrote to him. One day there were seventy-five letters—and at that time there were only two hundred and fifty inmates. Anybody could write to him. Those who did not know English wrote in their mother tongues: Gujarati or Bengali. Srî Aurobindo would read the letters himself. He knew a little Gujarati. He would read Gujarati letters with the help of a dictionary. Generally he answered in English, but to some he wrote in Bengali.

Previously the Mother used to visit sadhaks in their houses, when she stopped visiting people, the letters were started to maintain a contact. Later the departments began to send in their accounts, etc. The door to Srî Aurobindo’s room was kept closed but there was a gap through which one could throw the letters in. Sometimes I threw seven or eight letters in a day. Sometimes I wrote seventy or eighty pages but the only answer I would receive was silence. To some people Srî Aurobindo and the Mother wrote thousands of letters—for me there was a complete silence. So I had to develop an inner faculty; I had to learn to get
an answer from within. Rarely did I receive a written reply. When the letter writing started, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother divided the people to some she would write and to others he would reply—and always there would be piles of letters and notes. I always addressed my letters to the Mother. Once when she was unwell I stopped writing. When she recovered she asked straight away, “Why didn’t you send your notebook?” I replied, “How could I send it when you were not well?” She said, “It is not I who read them. He is looking after the correspondence. He looks after you.”

Sri Aurobindo kept a constant eye on everybody. During the Darshan he would notice even the young boys. There used to be a garland distribution after the Darshan at 5 p.m. Once during this distribution the Mother stopped Romen, then only a young boy, and said, “Romen! Sri Aurobindo was very pleased with you.”

The local people thought of us as revolutionaries and bomb-makers. In 1930 there was an exhibition of plants and flowers in the Botanical Gardens. We thought it was a good opportunity to participate and display our flowers and plants. When they saw our plants the local people were astonished. All the prominent citizens were there. They understood then that they had misjudged us, and changed their opinion of us. Our carnations impressed them most. “How can they grow such carnations here?” they wondered—for carnations are supposed to grow only in cool climates.

I used to work both in the Dining Room and in the Garden. For this exhibition Ambu and I went to the Botanical Gardens for three days. We were so young that we jumped up and down with excitement. We had no food for those three days. The person in-charge of the Dining Room said, “Let them come here to eat.” But we were so engrossed in the exhibition that we never gave a thought to food. When the Mother came to visit the flower-show she found out that we had not eaten for three days. She was very very strict about sadhaks not eating food outside, and she was the last person to buy food prepared outside. Still, she sent Venkataraman to the nearby market and said, “Purchase whatever you can get and feed these people.” In those days the Mother herself sometimes went shopping: she went to Appadurai’s and Manika Chetty’s shops.

(To be continued)
Sri Aurobindo continued.

"It is good, even necessary, to read books outside your school curriculum. But the books you read at an early age should fill your hearts and minds with the beautiful and the great. There is no harm in reading novels, but if there is no beauty in their vision and expression they will not only not help you, but even possibly harm you, because the excitement of the story may grip you completely. I just told you how in my youth *The Revolt of Islam* inspired so many dreams. The boys who joined the Indian Freedom Movement were similarly inspired by Bankim’s *Anandamath*. Nowadays I am told that the world is flooded with novels and short stories. Actually, you know, the secret of life is harmony. There must be a harmony in all you do. You may enjoy yourselves so long as you do your studies as well. Just as I did, which is why I won prizes after my final school examination."

"But in our case, there are a few difficulties which make it hard for us to find time for everything. Firstly we spend one or two hours every day in the playing field or the gymnasium. Then, at school too, our programme is packed with a great number of subjects. You didn’t have to study Science, did you?"

"No Subjects like Physics and Chemistry were just beginning to be discussed and written about in magazines and journals. Usually they were described as ‘new-fangled notions.’ But, in your case, even if you have more subjects to study, the amount of work you are expected to do for each is surely not much. And surely you don’t think that, though we may not have played games or done physical exercises, we sat at our desks all the time busy with the parrot-like repetitions of our lessons! Actually what is required from the outset is discipline. If you organise your time to follow a controlled pattern then you will find that your life will always be open to new opportunities and occasions. If you had to undergo even half the hardship and suffering that we three brothers had to face in our student days, you would think that the world was a trackless desert of misery!"

"That you should have had to suffer is something unimaginable!"

"You are too young to understand. Actually even the elders of the Ashram believe that both the Mother and I have grown up, from the beginning, in the lap of luxury. Now I want to ask you if you have even seen a banyan tree. It protects and shelters innumerable birds, beasts as well as travellers and passers-by. Hence, from its earliest age, its sapling must fight against wind and weather. The taller the tree the harder the blows it receives and yet when you admire its vast
silent strength, do you ever think of all the hardships it has faced as its boughs reached up to the sky? In just the same way, few people have had to face as much danger and difficulty both physical and psychological as we. It is due to our constant and sleepless effort that today your lives can blossom in such harmony and beauty and delight. But the hardships I had to face in my early years were of a physical order. They were simply due to poverty and hunger and, in fact, my brothers, especially Manomohan, felt this much more acutely than I. I never paid too much attention to what I ate or the clothes I wore and always found it ridiculous to preoccupy myself with food, be it a feast or a picnic. However, even in the Ashram, I find that the demands of the palate are very overpowering. I will tell you a story. There was once, here, a sadhika named Mridu. Have you heard of her?

"Yes. Wasn't she the one who made 'luchis' for you?"

"There you are! Food again!" (Laughter)

"She used to say, very proudly, it seems, that whenever she got annoyed or fed up with the life here and threatened to leave, you always stopped her by saying 'If you go away, who will make me luchis?'

"Yes, quite true. She was indeed a good cook. Once a week it was her turn to cook in the Ashram kitchen and she would cook wonderful Bengali dishes with all the best vegetables and spices. Everybody in the Ashram would wait eagerly for that day of the week."

"We also go out on picnics now and then, but not so much for the pleasure of eating good food. Food, after all, disappears so fast."

"That's just it, and how it should be. But the women in India seem to spend so much of their lives cooking, frying and crying, because so many types of dishes they have to make—eighteen types, as the saying goes—I have even attended a feast where there were more than a hundred! But when I left home to work for my country's freedom, I remember having survived on bread and bananas for about a month. The banana is an excellent food, both tasty and healthy. I have heard of an African tribe that survives on bananas alone. When, as boys, we were short of money, we had to live on bread and butter, cheap sausages and, even in the English winter, had to do without a warm coat. But this did not hinder me in my studies; my teachers were all praise for me and I even won prizes."

(softly) "But you are .."

"Different? Have you too learnt to speak like the old people here? It is not true. There is such a thing as human nature, and I had it too. But it can be changed. Do you think I started performing miracles from the day I was born, the way Krishna did? It will surprise you to hear how full of weaknesses and faults my nature was. I will tell you, then, about a few of them. I was very shy and timid in my dealings with others and my nature was very cowardly and selfish. At the age of 13 I became aware of this selfishness and I began to try my
best to rid myself of it. And whenever there were any quarrels or arguments to be faced, with a landlady for example, it was always Manomohan who stood up for us. I never dared to utter a sound. Then, one day, I decided to do away with this fear, and I began going forward into those very situations that, earlier, had left me quaking.

"I have already told you about how we almost starved because we had so little money. This began soon after we arrived in London. At the beginning, since we were staying with Mr. Drewett's mother who had come with us to London we didn't go hungry. Even when we couldn't pay her for our keep, she never complained, neither did this decrease in any way all the love and care she lavished on us. All the same, we felt terribly embarrassed and uncomfortable about the situation. I have already told you that she was a very pious Christian and wanted very much that we too be converted to her beliefs. So we were obliged to say grace before meals, read the Bible, go with her to church and do various other things like that, which we unwillingly did. Perhaps she still hoped to draw our souls into the Christian fold, and there were times when the tyranny of her religious zeal seemed unbearable. My eldest brother bore it all stoically, and I was too young and too timid to dare open my mouth against her. But one day there was a bombshell. We were at prayers and Manomohan, who happened to be in a bad mood that day, protested to the old lady by shouting—'The followers of old Moses did very well by disobeying him.' Moses was a prophet to the Christians. Horrified and furious, she screamed back at him, "These pagans! These unbelievers! If I stay a minute longer with them, the roof will fall down on my head." On hearing this, we all sighed with relief and looked gratefully at Manmohan. Actually, at that age, I was not specially attached to truth. Between the Aurobindo of those years and the revolutionary Aurobindo there was a world of difference. The friends and acquaintances I had then could never have imagined that the Aurobindo they knew would one day be at the head of a revolution and willingly risk his life for his nation's cause. You see, in my early years, there were many flaws and weaknesses in my nature. I had to fight against them systematically, at every step, before I attained a yogic stature. Have you heard how Hillary and Tenzing reached the top of Mt. Everest?"

"Yes, we have. We have even seen a film of it. What a struggle! Masses of ice, bone-breaking rocks, snowstorms and blizzards. And, at every step, the fear of slipping down from the smooth icy rock-faces. Terrifying! And yet magnificent. But, tell us, why do human beings do these things? What do they get by thus gambling with their lives? Is it for name and fame?"

"Why? Don't you understand the intense joy of knowing the unknowable and of doing the impossible? Do you think that name and fame and wealth are all that man seeks? There is, deep, in the heart of man, an unquenchable upspringing fire. This was what forced him to leave the early security of his cave in order to build up his enormous palace of Civilisation. This again is what is
behind his dream of moving earth and sky. Do you want, like Gandhi, Rousseau or Tolstoy, to return to that early state of Nature or would you sing with the Bengali poet?

'Dark is the night, O traveller!
Yet fearlessly must thou cross
Steep mountains and pathless seas,
Deserts and forests impenetrable.'

"Of course, the West has always tried to conquer the world around while Asia, particularly India, has sought to master the worlds within. And conquest of the peaks of the Spirit is far more difficult and dangerous than climbing up Mt Everest. You don't believe me?"

"But, why is it so? Why has the Divine made the way to Him so steep, so hard? If you had only wished it, you could easily have made our paths smooth and free, could you not?"

(Smiling) "These infantile notions are pretty widespread, I find. Questions such as 'Why does God test man so cruelly, why is He so merciless, to what end?' and so on. From the beginning of time, man has bitterly complained against God that He is unjust and unfeeling. But the Lord only smiles behind the veil, saying, 'How man misjudges Me—I who ceaselessly help and sustain him. He forgets me in his happiness, but when pain and misery make him cry out to Me, I always hold My arms out to him in protection. He has only to take one step towards Me and I reach out to clasp him.' However, though your question is rather childish, the answer is hard for you to understand. In a few words, it is that the Lord is the source and end of all love, joy, beauty, power, wisdom.

"And this infinite Marvel that He is—should it be cheaply won? Would that be right? If a priceless treasure were easily obtained, who would value it? Supposing gold and diamonds were strewn on the streets—as they were supposed to do in El Dorado—do you think the Government would then have taxed gold ornaments or would you have been attracted by them? The Lord is the purest of all golds, the Treasure of all treasures. Possess it even for a short while and you will find that all things else seem worthless. Have you read Tagore's lines where he makes the Brahmin say to Sanatana: 'That nameless treasure I beg of thee which makes all earthly gems dim and pale. Thus saying, on the sandy river-bank he cast away his precious stone'.

'This is absolutely true. Now for your next question. It is not that we cannot lighten your burden of pain and misery; in fact, we do it and I am sure some of you must have experienced this often enough. Since we are your Gurus, we are bound to help you. But if you demand that we clear your paths in a moment and lead you to the divine realisation straightaway, then, I'm afraid, we will not do so. I have just explained why. Secondly, we too are subject to the divine Law, a
Law which our whim or desire may not break or alter. Thirdly, there is the human nature that is full of impurities like jealousy and anger, restlessness, desires, fears and inertia, almost a zoo inhabited by the weirdest animals. The being, that is to say the lower nature, has to beGradually cleansed of all these. Otherwise, if the Light and Power and Joy were brought down into an impure nature, it would find itself in a situation similar to that of Hriday, the nephew of Ramakrishna.”

“Why? What happened to him?”

“Haven’t you read the Kathamrita, the Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna?”

“Some of it we have tried to read, though it’s often hard to understand. But we remember seeing Hriday in the film on Ramakrishna who used to call his nephew Hridé. He did look a bit stupid.”

“That he was, indeed. He looked after his uncle, it is true, but he also troubled him a great deal. Unwittingly of course and that shows he wasn’t bright.”

“Please tell us the story.”

“Well, you see, when he found that his uncle had granted to Vivekananda and others the vision of the Divine Mother, he complained to him loud and long, ‘I look after you all the time and never get to see anything in reward. It’s always others who are shown the divine visions.’ Sri Ramakrishna explained to him, ‘No, no. You continue working for me and looking after me. That will bring you all possible rewards.’ But when the young man, refusing to understand, continued to insist and complain, his uncle finally touched him with his finger. Merely touched him once, with one finger. But in that instant Hriday found himself surrounded by an ocean of light. Light everywhere, the whole universe had become only light, but since his being had not been purified and prepared for such an experience, he lost his head. He began to shout, “Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna, come, let’s set out to save the country.’ He had forgotten he was talking to his uncle. It was as though he himself was the Guru and Ramakrishna his disciple. The latter smiled to see how little was needed to make a man lose his self-control. So he touched his nephew a second time, and lo, the world of light was dissolved. Hriday, the great yogi, was once again the mousy little man he had earlier been.”

“Yes, we have heard about similar experiences. X told us how, in the early years of his sadhana, he had felt showers of joy coming down on him. This had lasted a bare 10 or 15 seconds but it was enough to make him feel completely intoxicated.”

“Indeed, it is so, particularly when the being is impure and small. Ramakrishna gives the analogy of an elephant who enters a pool and the water splashes all over. That is why the being has first got to be purified. This process is called Sadhana.”
“Oh then... for us... after all, we are so weak! There are even some of our friends who think that the very words ‘Sadhana’ and ‘Yoga’ are too difficult for us to understand, and are meant only for older people. All we need to do is to study and work, do whatever Mother has asked us to do and rely solely on Her, believing that She will do everything for us. Is that right?”

“Absolutely right, provided you have an unshakable faith and trust in Her. You must be like the little kittens, as Ramakrishna used to say. It’s just because you are not strong that we are here, with you. Man, however great he may be, cannot attain the Divine by himself. It is the Divine Grace that makes everything possible. As Sri Krishna says in the Gita, the Grace can make the dumb speak and the lame climb the tallest mountains. There is no miracle the Grace cannot perform.”

“There is one thing that seems strange to us. On the one hand, you say you were a timid boy, on the other you were winning all the big prizes and accolades!”

“But what has winning prizes got to do with timidity? So often, extremely intelligent students are quite incapable of achieving anything in life. Their minds are free and active in the world of thought and imagination, it is when these have to be translated into action that their timidity hampers them. You see, in my own world of thought, I do not have to fight any battles or face any opponent. No old Mrs. Drewett comes in there to lecture me, no authority to challenge my rights. One is always alone in one’s mind. One is one’s own friend, as well as one’s own enemy. But, then, to fight that enemy, no outside courage is required, it is there within the being. You understand me? Fear is something that dwells either in the vital being or in the body. You may call it man’s original sin, which can be conquered by the force of will. That is exactly what I learned to do when I grew older. Whenever I found myself afraid of any particular action, I would throw myself into it with greater fervour. My argument was that since one day we must, it was better to die bravely even a few days earlier than live longer, fearful and cowardly. As the Bengali poet says:

What a waste, to fall back,
To lie dead on the path!...

Have you heard of the French king Henry IV? It is said of him that he was full of fear, but to get rid of it he used to literally jump into the thick of the battle. You know, my body was not like yours, well-built and sturdy. It most definitely did not enjoy exertion and exercise in any form; and I am sure if I had had to undergo the training given by your Pranab-da, he would have indeed been very displeased with me. But, on the other hand, the power of my will was very great so that no amount of physical pain or suffering could get me down. I have played with death or lived dangerously, as it is said, just by this mental will-power. Not
only that! I have helped others to become brave, and seen so many youngsters go smiling to the gallows for love of their motherland.

"Caesar and Napoleon never knew the meaning of the word 'fear'. There is a widely known story about Caesar. When, during the battle with Pompey, word reached him that his army was completely demoralised and in disarray, he knew he must rush to the battlefield. But the sea lay between him and his men, a sea lashed by storm and rain. On the shore was one frail boat and the boatman was terrified to face those angry waves. He refused to carry Caesar across. But Caesar ordered him to set sail, saying 'How can you feel fear? Do you not know that you carry Caesar's fate in your bark?' And so Caesar reached the site of battle and won the war.

"But, of course, such men are different from their very birth, as were Arjuna and Abhimanyu. You surely know Abhimanyu's story?"

The children looked at one another, some said yes, many said no.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)
SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN
“EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”
A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of December 1989)

My grandfather died just a few months before my birth, as did C. R. Das and quite a few other great men all at almost the same time. My grandfather had very much wanted to see his grandchild before he died, but his wish remained unfulfilled. However, he blessed my mother so that she might have a daughter and not a son, which was very strange indeed, for everywhere in India sons are always preferred to daughters.

There was a reason for this odd preference, or perhaps it could be called a superstitious fear. It was said, though it had never been put to the test, that in his family, sons would not survive or live long because of a curse pronounced by a Tantric sannyasi. Once this sannyasi had come to settle in a corner of the huge garden of the house of my grandfather’s father-in-law, who was a very rich man with large properties. My grandfather was, in fact, his adopted son to whom, following a common practice, he had given his daughter in marriage and, consequently, my grandfather was living in the same house. Now, when his father-in-law saw this sannyasi settled in the garden and engaged in puja and meditation, he became incensed as he had no faith in sannyasis and took them to be charlatans. Forthwith he ordered the sannyasi to leave. Naturally, the sannyasi was highly offended and left, but only after flinging a curse at him: “I tell you, you will have no male issue to carry on your family line.”

That is why my grandfather wanted a daughter. My father himself died quite young and his death occurred under similar circumstances. About a week before his death a Tantric came to our garden and was engaged in doing his practices. People suspected that he was the cause of my father’s death, though he had done nothing to deserve this suspicion. My mother referred the matter to Sri Aurobindo through my uncle who was a resident of the Ashram at the time. Sri Aurobindo seems to have replied that death is not caused through anybody’s fault; death creates its own reasons to occur, or causes independent of anybody are created for death to take place.

Before his death, my grandfather stipulated in his will that his grandchild, male or female, would be heir to all his property and my father would act as guardian. If my father died and my mother did not remarry, she would get Rs 200/- per month by way of allowance. My father was given a sum of one lakh of rupees to use as he wished. When my father died, I was still a minor, so my uncle came from Pondicherry and made my mother my guardian till I came of age and this practice continued even after I had become a major. My mother did not
change it; I also let it remain as it was, but later it involved me in many difficulties after the death of my father.

Childhood

Sri Aurobindo seems to have said about me that I was an extraordinary girl. On hearing of it, my son used to remark, "I don't know about that, but she certainly is abnormal."

When, however, I look back I find that I was in many ways unusual which might have been due to various factors. First of all, I was the only child of my wealthy parents, living in a villa on the banks of the Ganga, surrounded by gardens and a lawn, cut off from the neighbourhood of 'common people.' So I had a lonely childhood and, being of delicate health from birth, my movements were restricted. To add to this, by nature and temperament, I was different from others. I did not like sports or playing with ordinary dolls. Clay idols of gods and goddesses were my playmates. Among them one of Sri Krishna was my favourite.

It seems I used even to sleep with my hands folded in the attitude of pranam, seeing which my father would tell my mother, "Why does the child always sleep like that? It would be better to separate her hands."

One day we went to a fair. In one stall there were beautiful dolls. I was attracted by a tableau of Sri Krishna as a boy (Bāla-Gopāl) standing with his right hand outstretched controlling a raging fire while his cowherd playmates cowered behind him, overcome by fear. I entreated my father to buy it for me. We had to go to Calcutta to buy its replica from the famous firm of N. N. Pal.

Father constructed a small chamber for my Thakur called House of the Deity (Thakur Ghar) and I installed the idol of Sri Krishna there. In the Thakur Ghar, I spent hours talking, dancing and playing with it. My mother taunted father, saying, "You go all out to satisfy the whims of your daughter while you yourself don't believe in gods." But when at times I was too absorbed in my games in the Thakur Ghar, father would cry out, "My little mother, you shouldn't spend so much time with your gods. In our family it is an anomaly. It is not done."

Naturally, I was not fond of studies. Once, when I was sent to a local school, the teacher said, "Today, you will be given tests." Tests? The very word made me miserable and I burst into tears and sobbed aloud. That was the end of my school-going. I never went back, but studied privately at home. As I had no friends my father, overcome with pity for my loneliness, looked for some suitable companion for me from among our relatives.

Another unusual feature of my childhood was that I came into contact with sadhus and sannyasis almost from my birth. When I was about two years old my parents used to take me with them on their visits to the Maharaj X, president of the Belur Math across the Ganga. My father had great respect for sadhus though
he had no faith in God. While my parents were talking to the Maharaj, I would fall asleep on his bed. At the end of the meeting, he would carry me, still asleep, and lay me in the boat nearby.

Whenever my uncle visited Calcutta from Pondicherry, he would come to hear my uncle sing. But the first thing the Maharaj would ask him was, “Where is so-and-so?” meaning myself. Once my uncle, quite annoyed, retorted, “Why do you always enquire about her?”

The Maharaj replied calmly, “You know, my ties with her go back to her babyhood. She would come with her parents and sleep soundly on my bed as if it were her parents’ bed.”

The Maharaj is still alive, now a hundred and two years old. He was Nolini- da’s college friend and met him when he visited the Ashram. A few years ago I went to see him, when he made a strange remark: “Dear ......., if you had not married, you would have gone very high in your spiritual life.”

In another context, when I was just a child of ten or so, the Divine Mother warned me, “Don’t marry.”

(To be continued)

“Satyam”
CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD
TRANSLATED BY SATADAL FROM THE BENGALI OF
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

8

Shanti, Suryamukhee, Kapalkundala*

Shanti

We have left for long the play of mortals, Sister, earth’s attachments have sunk deep into memory’s depths. Why then is this awakening? Have we been called for some work again? Will our penance then be accomplished? Shall we have to become embodiments of shakti again as life’s partner in life’s work?

Suryamukhee

I don’t know, Sister. Neither do I know what I have to do, nor did I search for the source of my power. But I must follow him alone birth after birth at whose feet I am surrendered in life and death. I am always and everywhere the shadow of my husband whether on earth or in heaven or even in hell. This is the dharma of a woman, this is her karma as well. What more can a woman hope or desire, what more can be her happiness and fortune? I am not curious to know the whereabouts of my husband. My only work is to serve him, my sole contentment is in pouring out all my love at his feet.

Shanti

Right you are, my Sister. To serve the husband, to fulfil him with her love—this is the ideal of a woman. But I say that she who knows what is the true service to her husband, and wherein lies his fulfilment, is the ideal woman. To serve the

* Shanti, Suryamukhee and Kapalkundala are the three main women characters from the three great novels, Anandamath, Vishabriksha and Kapalkundala respectively—by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

Shanti is the valiant wife of a hero-warrior who took a vow to remain a brahmachari till his motherland would be free from the clutches of the alien. He joined the group of ascetics who were organising an armed upheaval throughout the country. Shanti, eager to throw in her lot with her husband in his mission, took the guise of a young ascetic and entered that group, passed through a rigorous training and fought bravely for the great cause side by side with her husband.

Suryamukhee, the ideal chaste wife, allowed her husband, a rich zamindar, even to marry a young widow in order to make him happy and accepted self-banishment from her own estate. After a dramatic turn of events she was reunited with her husband—her only embodied god.

Kapalkundala was brought up from her infancy by a Tantric in the Sundarbans, was helped by a priest to secretly marry Navakumar—a benevolent young man who was left alone in the vicinity by his companions hurrying home after their pilgrimage to Gangasagar—and escape the evil motives of the Tantric. But this forest-girl, who was again a high soul full of detachment, could not happily adjust to the suffocating social and family environment and ultimately drowned herself to attain the final freedom, with her husband following suit.

—Translator
body is an inferior act of giving, the next higher is the heart's love, but the highest is spiritual force of the soul. Don't you know, Sister, why shakti is another name of woman? In life's mission we are companions, collaborators. If we cannot give shakti to the man, then we will even steal away whatever force remains with him. Upon what is based the godhood of Shiva? Upon the penance of Gouri.

Suryamukhee
I know nothing about the ways of the gods, but we are humans. The place of woman among humans is always within the household. Woman is a faithful wife. The battlefield of work outside, the tumult of effort and endeavour are meant only for man. Why should woman too dive into this outer field of life, oblivious of herself? Man needs a shelter, his life needs an indrawn nest; woman's work is to build only that and arrange it beautifully with deep peace and contentment and prosperity. Man always wants to rush outside, scatter himself rashly and slip away,—woman's work is to hold him self-disciplined with love and affection, with the heart's sap of sweetness. Woman's force is not meant for helping man in his outward rush but to pull him inward. Woman is the better half of man—she is the half of his inner being and there lie all the rights and duties of a woman.

Shanti
Woman is the better half of man, it's true, Suryamukhee. But a greater truth is that woman is Sahadharmini, she has equal rights with man to the laws of life. In the household, she is the wife of man but in life's work she is the heroic partner and co-worker of man. This is where lies the greatness of woman. As we are to give joy to men, in the same way we are to give force also. Why should men be left alone in the field of work? There too we should be with them, encompass them with body, life and mind. If we do not share the load of the husband's work and mission, will we not miss half of their lives?

Suryamukhee
But don't you know that the real womanhood of a woman is motherhood? This great mission of motherhood is the only mission of woman. As man has no right in this domain, similarly woman need not extend her hand to the outer life-work of man. If woman intervenes in the field of man, her own dharma will suffer immensely. To bring up the child, the future man, at home is the dharma and karma of a woman and her life's fulfilment.

Shanti
The father too, like the mother, has his duty towards the child. This is only one aspect of the relation between man and woman—but that's a completely different subject.
Kapalkundala
I can’t understand either of you. I am unable to catch the root cause of your
debate on man and woman. Why are you so eager to tie up man and woman
together? Man is a living being, woman too is a living being,—why must they
unite and mix with each other as husband and wife, as half of the being or better
half,—why? For what purpose? To which end?

Shanti
Kapalkundala! You are a creature of the forest, you are not aware of society.
Man has to live in a society And the very foundation of society lies in the
mystery of union of man and woman. The day the creator created humans,
society also came into being. That very day they united in pairs, built houses at
various locations and practised marriage.

Suryamukhee
Useless is the birth upon earth of the woman who has not led a family life.
Neither does she know or find herself, nor does she know or find others She
does not realise the delight which upholds the creation of the creator. She cannot
be made to understand, sister, the mystery of man and woman, of husband and
wife.

Kapalkundala
Is your society, your family, so very beautiful, so charming? But the experience I
had for a few days still haunts me like a nightmare Society! Family! O, these are
dreadful prisons. Marriage! It is nothing but bondage. Freedom, independence,
movement at will,—what else can be more satisfying, healthy and joyful? Oh! Is
there any more severe tyranny than the tyranny of love? To unite one’s life with
a man, O, what a life of impossible demands! Did I forsake that life out of fancy?

Shanti
Life is made up of these demands. You are unfortunate in that such a life of
yours could not flower. These claims and demands, this tyranny of love, are the
characteristics of a human, the fulfilment of human life. Through this inter­
change between the two, not only does the human soul attain to supreme delight,
but also gains a greater and more complete richness.

Kapalkundala
What you call the characteristics of a human, the fulfilment of human life, I call a
prejudice. Possibly man can make use of his life, can build his society in some
other mode too A human being is a human being whether a male or a female.
Don’t you know those words of the seers—tvam Kumārah uta vā Kumāri—Are
you a boy and a girl at the same time? Each and every human being has a way of
its own, a work of its own, a law of life of its own. In following the inspiration of its own free soul, in blossoming the riches of its free delight, lies the true fulfilment of each human being. Why should man lose his own self by being tied up with another? I feel that the life and society of man is not developing, rather it is becoming so poor and miserable, so confused because of his acting like this. By being in your society, man has lost his soul’s freedom, that’s why I see that age after age, in every country the great souls who could not agree to this sacrifice have abandoned the worldly life to become religious mendicants.

Suryamukhee

They had not the patience and capacity to perform the duties of man. The thing which has given life savour in an uninterrupted flow through ages in every country, that indeed is a prejudice, and a few like you who did not get an opportunity to enjoy that nectar are the ones dedicated to truth! Those who have tried to deceive the world like this, are egoistic and extremely self-centred—that’s why they have done like this. But they themselves were deceived in the end.

Shanti

I don’t go that far. Whatever they have done was the outward ideal of society. But the way to go out is necessarily through society. Though personally I don’t think that there is any positive necessity of going out thus—yet I say that there is no antagonism between the two, both are carry-forwards of the same road.

Kapalkundala

I never want bondage. Let man’s delight stand on its own, in its own glory. There is nothing more sublime than one’s own soul, one’s indwelling Divine. I want freedom, independence, autonomy of woman’s self also.

Suryamukhee

Man’s soul is a whole only when twined with another soul, otherwise it is a fraction. When two fractional living entities have become one by interchange of hearts, then they are truly, if not wilfully, liberated. Woman shows that way—in self-dedication, love and affection is her liberation and supreme delight.

Shanti

Woman is shakti—tapah-shakti, spiritual force! Kapalkundala! probably you are showing the path of knowledge to women; and Suryamukhee! you are showing the path of love, but I see the majesty of shakti above all in woman’s womanhood.
SRI Aurobindo wrote to one of his disciples, “The English Bible is a translation, but it ranks among the finest pieces of literature in the world.” In his essay on Quantitative Metre, he considers the rhythm of the Biblical prose (in what is known as the Authorised or the King James version) a kind of Quantitative Free Verse, that is a Free Verse in which along with the quality or stress, the quantity or the length of a syllable has also an important place. (It is not unoften that we are told about the writers of Free Verse like Walt Whitman recalling the majestic cadences of the English Bible.)

T S. Eliot falls foul of such praise. “I could easily fulminate for a whole hour,” he says, “against those who have gone into ecstasies over ‘the Bible as literature’, ‘the Bible as a monument of English Prose’. Those who talk of the Bible as ‘a monument of English Prose’ are only admiring it as a monument over the grave of Christianity.”

S. S. Curry says, on the other hand, “There is a strange feeling abroad that to regard the Bible as literature is in some way to degrade it. On the contrary the more exalted a book, the higher and the more sublime it is, the more does it belong to literature. In a sense, all literature is sacred.” Curry quotes from Prof. Genung, “The literature of a people is a Bible of the people. All literature expresses the exalted realisation of the human soul; it embodies supernatural feeling; it expresses man’s aspirations and ideals, their dreams and what their intuitions tell them they ought to do.”

Few would question Sri Aurobindo’s judgment. Few would deny that all literature is sacred. The word for poet in Sanskrit is Kavi, which means “one who hears or sees the Truth”. Yet none would equate Kalidasa’s works with the Upanishads. Eliot’s words gain their value and force because theologians and scholars speak of the Books of the Bible and the masterpieces of literature in the same breath. We find Paul Scherer, the expositor of the “Book of Job” in the monumental work, The Interpreter’s Bible, calling the Joban poet (the author of “The Book of Job”) “This Shakespeare of the Old Testament.” It is not Shakespeare alone. “All the great classics, Dante’s Divine Comedy, Milton’s Paradise Lost, Goethe’s Faust speak in the name of the ages. So does Job.”

Because we consider the Scripture as literature it cannot be in the same degree or even the same kind as the work of the human minds however great they may be in their genius or attainment. Sidney is the first, if not the only, literary critic to see the distinction. He speaks of three kinds of poetry. One of them is not poetry at all: it could be history or mathematics in verse. Of the two
other kinds, he sees no parallel to the work of “Daniel, Solomon, the author of Job, Moses and Deborah”, who “imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God” in the work of those who commonly go by the name of poets. He considers the Holy Ghost as the true author of the Scripture because he says, arguing against those who condemn poetry, “Against these none will speak that hath the Holy Ghost in due reverence.” Bacon also speaks of “the pencil of the Holy Ghost” describing the sorrows of Job. If we call the Power behind the Scriptures the Holy Ghost, and the Power behind poetry and Literature the Muse, in spite of modern critics, ignoring for the while Milton’s mental equation of his Muse with the Holy Ghost, how can we distinguish between the work of the two powers? Or, more simply, what is the difference between the Scriptures and Literature?

John Keats, in his “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, deals not with poetry but the art of sculpture; but what he says is true of all art and therefore of poetry and literature. He addresses the Urn on which he sees the sculptor’s art:

Thou silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!

We see, as Bowra points out, that the work of art teases us not only out of thought but also out of emotion and is therefore “cold”. It presents a vision of life beyond thought and emotion even as “doth eternity”. A work of art and therefore poetry cannot do all that eternity does but resembles it in the transcendence of the experiences of the mind and heart even while including them or presenting the transcendent experience through them. Earlier in the Ode, Keats addresses the work of art,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time.

The child of the artist’s creative imagination, art, grows in the artist’s inner silence and under the state of suspended Time, Time that is not transcended but which seems to move slowly because the artist’s contemplation is unaffected by the passing hours. It is only in eternity, a state in which there is no time, that the Scripture is revealed. We may, therefore, say that if our ordinary works belong to Time, if works of art grow in slow time, Scriptures have their origin in “no time”. Thought and emotion are the staples of our ordinary experience. Art includes them and takes us to a state when we can see them with our imagination and intuition. Scriptures too include them though soaring far above them and showing them as God himself sees them. Even art and poetry, in their rare moments, give us glimpses or touches of the ranges above the mind but the Scripture belongs to those ranges.

To word it slightly differently, Scriptures show life sub specie aeternitatis, art sub specie temporis in which tempus or time does not bind us, or a state in which
we view life from an angle of vision in which considerations of more lasting or permanent value than is usual with us in common life make us ignore Time, and other works merely sub spece tempors.

In this context it will be useful to remember another relationship between the Timeless and Time in the Scriptures and even in poetry. It has been said that the Scriptures include Thought and Emotion even when they transcend them. It must be added here that the Scriptures are addressed to a particular age, the age in which they are revealed, though they look at life under the aspect of eternity. This point has been made very well by Paul Scherer, the expositor of the Book of Job.

That speaks best to the ages which best speaks to its own age. Of what it speaks is one thing; to what it speaks is scarcely of less importance. Lift it out of the moment in the march of the years and its voice grows relatively muddled and indistinct. Eternity finds its only sharp focus in the transient. The temporal is the timeless on its way through the calendar.

It is splendidly phrased. Yet readers in every age must be able to sift the eternal from the purely local and temporal element in which a Scripture is clothed. The temporal elements happen to be "the system and the arrangement, the metaphysical and the intellectual mould, the precise expressions used" in order to express the eternal. We may also include the kind of life, domestic, social and political, etc.,—lived in the age to which the Scripture is addressed. It need not be laboured here to prove that the temporal and local elements do not make the Scriptures any the less great or less different in kind and degree from other masterpieces of literature.

II

There is another aspect of the Scripture in general and the Book of Job in particular as literature: the language and rhythm of the work. If the vision takes us beyond thought and feeling it can be expressed only in a language and rhythm matching it. The Authorised Version of the English Bible, whatever be its weaknesses and shortcomings, surpasses all the ingenious attempts of the moderns—especially those who try to bring the Word of God to the common man. They forget that it is the common man who must cease to be common and raise himself to a state of inner silence in which alone is the Word heard aright and thereby understood. They are no less common than those they seek to help in thinking that indiscriminate substitution of words can make the work beyond the Intellect intelligible.

It is not the moderns only who manhandle the Scriptures. From the earliest days, long before even the question of rendering them into other tongues could
be raised, and of course, after the work of translations began, the finite human
mind has tried to decide and determine the text. Milton regretted such attempts
in his *De Doctrina Christiana* Councils and Synods of the fathers of the early
Church dropped passages at will. Arthur Jeffrey shows such a work could be
seen long before the advent of Christianity. In his essay, “Text and Ancient
Version of the Old Testament”, he says, ‘Increased reverence for the scriptural
books led to a certain amount of correction made in the interests of piety. To
safeguard the divine name little alterations were made, names of heathen deities
were disfigured, small changes were introduced and anthropomorphisms and
euphemisms were substituted for words and expressions which the Sophorim
(“the bookmen”, the custodians of Scriptures among the Jews), considered as
offensive or inelegant. (Of the eighteen corrections two occur in the Book of
Job, 7:20 and 32:3) It is probable also that the curious uniformity of language in
the Old Testament, which is extraordinary in a collection of documents of such
varied dates, is due to an attempt by the Sophorim to secure linguistic uniformity
in their text, just as in the case of the Quran we read that Uthman’s Committee
was appointed expressly to secure such a uniformity in the final redaction. It
must be said to the credit of the Sacred Books of the Hindus, whatever one may
think of their meaning and ultimate value, that they have been handed down
without the slightest alteration.

Ernest C. Colwell in his essay, “Text and Variations of the New Testa-
ment”, shows how the corruption of the text of the New Testament commenced
with the rise of the Christian religion. ‘Almost all the early Christians,’ he says,
‘were travelling salesmen for their religion and this increased their demand for
copies of the New Testament. Imagine a citizen of Carthage converted to
Christianity while on a trip to Rome. As he starts back to Carthage, the members
of the church, his new-found brothers, equip him with helps for the maintenance
and the spread of his faith. Those helps may have included some books of the
“Bible” (which for them was the Old Testament in Greek) and a copy of the
Christian Gospel written in Rome by one of their own number, John, who was
also called Mark. This last would be copied by amateur scribes whose zeal
surpassed their ability. To them as to the modern ministers, it was the gospel that
mattered, not the exact wording.’

Other contributions to the corruption by the scribes are also pointed out by
Colwell. ‘The Christian scribe expected one Gospel to agree with another; he
anticipated that a New Testament Book would agree with an Old Testament
Book. Where he found disagreement, or inconsistency in the manuscript he was
copying, he automatically assumed that it was an error and “corrected” the error
by bringing the divergent passages into harmony.’ Colwell also speaks of
explanations to clarify the meaning of a text becoming a part of the text and
omission of lines beginning with the same word.

Many of these alterations, additions and omissions have no doubt influenced
the Authorised Version. And to that extent they affected the transcendent quality of the work and also reduced the possibility of language and rhythm matching the vision of the work, thus lowering the literary value. And yet on the whole the version has a superiority over all the others in the English language though sometimes other versions may be more faithful literally to the text of the original.

III

In the discussion of the Book of Job as literature no reference is made to any other version, not even the Hebrew original. In all the editions of the Book, it is pointed out that in the Hebrew original the Prologue, the Epilogue and a little portion in the main part of the work are in prose and the rest in verse. The technicalities of Hebrew versification are discussed with examples of different kinds of parallelisms. They have no relevance to the student of the Authorised Version, which is in a kind of rhythmic prose or, as Sri Aurobindo points out, a kind of Free Verse. It can rise to the sublimest heights of vision as in the Lord’s speeches, a lyrical intensity as in Job’s cries or a dramatic tension as in a few parts of the debate. There is no effect it cannot produce and all the time we feel that no Shakespeare nor even Dante not to speak of Milton can ever create better. To speak of the theme, the form and structure of such a work is not easy and divergent are the views of critics, scholars and theologians on the questions. The question of form may be briefly dealt with before theme and structure are taken up.

Some relate the literary form of the Book not to the well-known forms of Western literary tradition but to the forms in the Bible itself. It is commonly classed with what is known as Wisdom literature. It is objected, however, that the use of the dialogue and the combination of prose and verse in the same text are not usual in the Old Testament. The same objection may be raised against the linking of the Book with the Patriarchal tradition.

Attempts have been made to relate the work to certain Babylonian and Egyptian texts but the parallel between them does not seem to go very far. There is, certainly, no kinship with the Platonic Dialogues as Job is a far cry from Socrates.

The major form in the Western literary tradition to which it is related is the Greek Tragedy. Sometimes Job is considered a Promethean figure. The book is also described in terms of lyric, epic and other forms.

The complexity and the richness of the Book defying any definition are brought out by Robert Pfeiffer:

"All general classifications fail to do justice to the overflowing abundance of its forms, moods, thoughts; it is not exclusively lyric (as thought by
W. W. Baudissin, P. Volz), nor epic (J. F. Genung *The Epic of the Inner Life*, Boston, 1891) nor dramatic (*B. Szold, Das Buch Hiob*, p. xvii Baltimore, 1886; J. Ley, *Neue Jahrb. f. Philos. und Padagogik*, Vol. 154, pp. 126 ff.), nor didactic or reflective (most of the critics), unless the poem is cut down to fit a particular category (as F. Baumgartel and E. G. Kraeling are inclined to do). Even the more comprehensive characterisations, such as that of Friedr. Delitzsch (*Das Buch Hiob*, p. 15, Leipzig, 1902) 'a poem with dramatic movement and essentially didactic tendency' or better still that of J. G. von Herder (*Vom Geist der Ebraischen Poesie*, Vol. I, p. 148), 'an epopee of mankind, a theodicy of God' fail to do justice to the scope of the work."

There are certainly the elements of all the forms though no single label can do justice to the work, as Pfeiffer points out. If a label is necessary the best would be the title of Dante’s masterpiece: “The Divine Comedy”. The term suits the *Book of Job* in a greater way than it suits Dante’s poem, though it suits the Italian poem wonderfully well. The Book not only includes and transcends human suffering but presents a comedy enacted by God; it is the Lord who speaks of Job to Satan, it is He who permits Satan to make him suffer, it is ultimately He who not only admonishes Job but justifies Job before his friends who come to console him only to upbraid him with accusations of impiety and sin, and restores to Job all he has lost. But for Him Job would not have passed through the tortures of Inferno, the agonies of Purgatory before he has the bliss of seeing Him face to face and also gaining his earthly paradise.

*(To be continued)*

K. B. Sitaramayya
NEW AGE NEWS
COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

(Continued from the issue of November)

Ergonomics

You would require a very new or very large dictionary to find the term ergonomics, derived from Greek ergon (work) and nomos (law). The 1988 edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines the term as "study of the environment, conditions and efficiency of workers". This definition is, no doubt, correct, although in its shortness it cannot reflect the full meaning of the term. Actually, what hides behind it is a very useful science from an integral point of view.

Initially, ergonomic research served pure commercial purposes, by way of helping to increase work productivity. But in recent years the emphasis has shifted to other aspects. Man is seen no more as a mere instrument of making money, but as a human being whose physiological and psychological environment should be optimized. Thus doctors, engineers, psychologists and designers will collaborate, using their respective knowledge and skill to create the best possible working conditions for the individual.

In some fields, ergonomic research has achieved remarkable results, especially whenever it was able to demonstrate that even slight changes of a tool or a working environment could significantly improve the worker's condition. Thus it was found, for instance, in a test that 25 out of 40 workers, using the ordinary type of nippers for cutting wire etc., suffered from inflammation of the tendon after 12 weeks. When the handles were slightly curved into a kind of wave line, fitting naturally into the hands, only four such cases of inflammation were found in another group.

If you are a typist, you may ideally have a relatively low table so that the keyboard is hardly above the level of the elbows. On the other hand, there should be sufficient space for the knees. In W. Germany, the ideal height of the table was determined to be around 70 cm for men and 65 cm for women. For a table without typewriter, it should be 74-78 and 70-74 cm respectively. Naturally, these measures would vary from country to country, depending on the average height of individuals. What really matters is the awareness that it may be worthwhile paying attention to such details.

Ergonomics also plays an important part in modern electronics where we find this term more and more used in advertisements. If you buy a computer, for instance, you may enquire not only about its speed or memory, but also about the monitor. If it is ergonomically designed, your eyes will be thankful. And your
fingers move more naturally on some keyboards, whilst on others the keys simply seem to be wrongly placed so that you keep missing them. Here, too, it is often just minor corrections that can make an enormous difference for the user. In fact, the basic aim is forming a perfect unity between the person and the machine so that they can function as one unit, helping each other, avoiding mutual damage as far as possible.

Ergonomics has also other aspects such as vigilance research. Here we can find significant practical applications in monotonous work situations which inevitably create fatigue. Most long distance drivers, for instance, have experienced falling asleep for short moments, one time or another. A large number of accidents are caused in this way. Therefore, sophisticated methods are being developed for waking up drivers just before they fall asleep. Train drivers in modern trains regularly press a button or some other device. If they stop doing so, there will be an alarm signal. If still there is no reaction, the train will be automatically stopped. It can be assumed that many potentially serious accidents have been averted in this way. However, in cars this system would not work, because even seconds of sleep may be fatal. Therefore, the research focusses on monitoring the number of tiny (almost invisible) steering corrections that take place all the time, through a microprocessor, and establish patterns characteristic of vigilant as well as fatigue states of mind so that an alarm can be triggered in the latter case.

A very special type of ergonomical improvement was developed by an ingenious Indian student in Calcutta, a few years ago. The problem related to forest workers in the Ganges delta, attacked by royal Bengal tigers. Some sixty persons were killed every year. But actually the tigers were less royal than their reputation: a study revealed that all of them had attacked from behind. Now the student developed a plastic mask showing a human face with a little moustache, to be worn on the back of the head. The trick worked perfectly: none of the wearers of this mask has been attacked for the last three years, while many more unmasked workers kept being killed. Here too we can see how just a little inexpensive device could dramatically improve working conditions and save lives.

Ergonomics is a young science, worthwhile watching. If pursued with right intentions, it will be an indispensable discipline in future ages, helping man to achieve the maximum of harmonious relationship with the world of matter and create a smooth, helpful environment for workers in all the spheres of life.


**In Search of The Tyger**

Many authors in this century have written more books than K. D. Sethna, but
who else would discuss Einstein’s theory of relativity today, present a study on “Karpasa in Prehistoric India” tomorrow, and follow up with “Blake’s Tyger” the day after tomorrow, in between commenting on subjects of integral yoga, philosophy or comparative religion? This is an age of specialization which means, for K.D.S., specialization in every subject he writes about.

This becomes most evident if we start reading *Blake’s Tyger—A Christological Interpretation*. It could be best described as a Ph.D. thesis with no less than 654 references noted on the bottom of the pages. Only those who have done any similar work themselves would be able to appreciate what immense effort of organization it takes to handle such a mass of source material. Indeed, the English critic Kathleen Raine must be right when she refers to “the poem you and I both love and have studied perhaps more carefully than anyone else living in the present world of generation.” (p. 262)

Sri Aurobindo’s main commentary on Blake is to be found in *The Future Poetry* (revised edition), pp. 121-2. He points out that Blake is “not only a seer, but almost an inhabitant of other planes, another domain of being; or at least this second subtle sight is his normal sight.” “... he stands apart solitary and remote, a unique voice among the poets of the time; he occupies indeed a place unique in the poetry of English language, for there is no other singer of the beyond who is like him or equals him in the strangeness, supernatural lucidity, power and directness of vision of the beyond and the rhythmic clarity and beauty of his singing.”

The subject here is Blake’s poem *Tyger*, covering about one full page and discussed on no less than 250 pages. The first two chapters, in which K.D.S., the poet-scholar, analyzes the internal structure of the poem, are comparatively accessible even to the common reader. But then the scholar-poet takes over and presents a dazzling array of quotations and arguments supporting his Christological interpretation and at the same time dealing with other major lines of approach. Sir Geoffrey Keynes and Miss Raine do have a point when they suggest (in their otherwise favourable critique) that some condensation may have been advisable. But, as K.D.S. mentions in the preface, this book is basically meant for “Blake-cultists” (except for the first two chapters), and he obviously dislikes sacrificing quotations and subtleties which give an encyclopaedic completeness to his study.

If grandmasters analyze a chess game, beginners are glad enough if they can follow the arguments. In this sense the chronist abstains from any comment on the content of the book. But he can guess that this work will be greatly satisfying to the “cultists”, quite amazing to students, and slightly bewildering to laymen. All three categories of readers are likely to appreciate the beautiful front cover illustration by Ritam, showing Christ’s benevolent face on top and a fearful tiger’s head below, symbolizing a paradox discussed in this book: the paradox of merciful Christ expelling rebellious angels from heaven into hell. Thus, K.D.S.
the artist has seen to it that his scholarly study got a lively, inviting jacket, providing an opportunity of visual meditation to all those who cannot follow him on his mountainous paths of esoteric exegesis.

Wilfried Huchzermeier

THE CALL OF THE SEA

On silvery shores I stand alone
   Enthralled by the bewitching sea
That, seeming still, goes rolling on
   Towards the shore’s serenity.

The changing moods and tones and hues
   Of that unfathomable sea—
Each one so different from the rest—
   Calls to my soul incessantly

To leave the land, my hearth, my home,
   All known joys and security
And launch on her enchanting vast
   Until the waves envelop me.

Like a man who leaves a virtuous wife
   In search of some dark beauteous eye,
And, bored with the world he knows too well,
   Pines now for magic and mystery,

Ever do I wish to leave this land,
   Stripped bare and draped to man’s small taste—
To ride the rough untamable sea
   And toss myself to her breast.

Bertha Fernandes
THE BAD CHILD
A FAIRY TALE

Beyond the three ponds, there was a large field. On the eastern side of the field there was a house surrounded by trees. It was a little lovely house with a high red roof and it could be seen from far during the daytime and when you neared the lea you caught a glimpse of the white of its walls through the green. At night when crickets deepened the silence over the lea you could see a small spot of light in the distant darkness and there was a mystery about that light which was very bright in spite of its smallness and you could not withdraw your gaze from it.

A man lived in that house with his wife and son. The son was the leader of a group of boys who would steal fishes, fruits and vegetables, throw stones at passers-by, tease hawkers, disturb elderly people and abuse the priests. He seldom went to school and even when he went he was mostly outside the classroom, kneeling down. He would enjoy the situation and make faces at the first benchers who hated him vehemently.

One day his mother said to him, “Look, Mitul, this life is like a bubble. Everything comes and goes quickly. I’m not going to live for ever and your father will also die. Nobody knows when. What’ll you do then? Won’t you think a bit now? Can’t you change yourself?” “Oh, sure! I’ll be good from tomorrow,” he said.

But Mitul’s ‘tomorrow’ never came. He could do nothing to change himself.

The head-priest of the temple had a soft spot for him. Mitul knew that and he abused him in return. In times of trouble, he would go to him for protection. One morning, the head-priest was sitting on the steps of the Shiva temple that looked across the river to the forest. Mitul came and sat on the ground below the steps.

“You’ve the most wonderful eyes I’ve ever seen,” said the priest, “I wonder how the owner of such eyes can be so naughty.” The boy chuckled and said, “Don’t talk nonsense. I’ve come to you for Puri and Sandesh. I’m hungry.”

“There is nothing today.”
“There must be something.”
“Nothing.”
“Let me go to the store I’ll check.”
The priest smiled and said, “Okay, wait here.”

A few minutes later, he returned with some sweets made of coconut. The boy was very happy. “You eat these wonderful things,” he said. “You priests are the happiest people under the sun.” He waved at the priest and went away.

One day while he was kneeling down outside the classroom, he saw a big white bird winging through the blue sky. He watched it move across the whole sky and then it was out of sight. It gave him a strange feeling! He could not make
out why he was so moved. He saw boys playing in the nearby field. Three of them were his friends. He longed to be their companion at once. The teacher was sleeping. Very slowly, he moved to his left to elude the eyes of the first benchers. Then it was easy. His friends greeted him in the field.

“Aren’t you going back to the school today?” asked Bappa. “No,” he said quietly. “Let’s go to the Bose’s Garden. The berries are ripe.”

“The old lady must be in the pondside room now,” said Bhooto, “She’ll shout.”

Bubai was optimistic. He said, “We’ll go from the canalside and we won’t shake the boughs.”

They walked across the field, through the bamboo forest, over the bridge and into the big garden. There was a dense undergrowth around the thin clear track along which they walked. As he walked he remembered the white bird and wondered about its disappearance. It seemed to go towards the south. Then he was busy with the berries. His school-bag was full and it was stained here and there when he went back home in the afternoon. His mother was aware of his misadventures. Not that she did not try to change him. She tried very hard. He was incorrigible. Beating and weeping were fruitless. Of course, the boy loved his mother. When he was glad, he would always tell his mother the reason. When he scored goals in a football match, he would describe his feats to his mother. He could make beautiful toys with wood and he would always enjoy his mother’s appreciation.

That afternoon, he was feeling good. He thought about the bird and in the evening he talked to his mother about it and also told her that he would like to track it down.

“What a bird it was!” he exclaimed to his mother. “And how happily it flew towards the distance!”

“Don’t you like to read?” asked the mother.

“No, ma, I’m scared of books. I know they call me bad, but I’m really scared of books. Please don’t ask me to read. I’ll die then.”

The mother wept silently in the dark and the boy went to sleep.

That night he dreamed a wonderful dream. It was a woman in spotless white, with large blue eyes and lovely curled hair spread over her shoulders and the white bird sitting close to her feet. There was an oblique smile on her lips. The boy felt that he had been after this lady for ages. And there was a memory of achievement. Life was suddenly meaningful because the lady was there standing at a shake-hand distance. Then she disappeared and he was very sad and when he woke up he was still very sad. “It was so real!” he thought.

Two days later he left home. He did not know why. Maybe he was fascinated by the call of the far-away where the white bird had gone. Maybe he was drawn by remote places. But it was difficult to know exactly why he went off. There was a real mystery about that going off.
For sometime he worked in a rich man's house. They were nice people, but he did not enjoy working there. The rich man's wife was very kind and loving and she wanted him to go to school again. He was afraid of being trapped. At night, he had fearful dreams. He saw the books changing into dragons and chasing him. Books are for sick people, he thought. He thought of new places and the morning light sprinkled over the white walls of the houses. He thought of the blue shadow across the rippling stream on a bright morning. He also thought of the evenings, the queer blend of rose and gold over the Ganges and the vast quiet enveloping the earth. He was sick for the open road. One night he left the rich man's house.

It was a tough time for him. Now and then he would remember the kind wife of the rich man, the cool comfort and the warm security. But he also felt that it had been something like a cage. He wanted to be free under the vast blue, as free as the bird he had seen in his boyhood. Sometimes, he starved and sometimes he managed well. He worked mostly in wayside hotels and after working for a few months when he found that his purse was full he left again for another town or village. Not that he was very happy. He just did not want to go back. The only thing that made him happy was the thought of the white bird and the beautiful woman. He had the firm conviction that some day he would meet her. He longed to find her in his dreams, but she did not reappear. He was very sad about that, but he always expected her to come again in his dream.

When he was 20, he got a job on a ship. It was really exciting. An old sailor said to him, "You'll soon get bored by the sea and you'll start drinking within a few weeks." But he was never bored and surprisingly enough he drank rarely and only under compelling situations.

He saw many seas and many people and many wonders. And many birds winging leisurely over the island-hills. Birds reminded him of the great white bird he had seen in his village. The memory of the woman was also an ever-present reality. When old age came, he still remembered his boyhood dream and with age his love for the dream-lady deepened.

A day came when he felt the fatigue of living and decided to stop travelling and spend the rest of his life in his motherland. He built a small house in a village by the Ganges. He had some training in carpentry and he could use it now to earn some money. There was a developed town on the opposite bank of the river. Sometimes he would go there to sell his wood-work. Apart from tables, chairs and racks, he made lovely toys, calendars, vases and other fashionable things which sold well in the town.

One day while crossing the ferry he saw a beautiful woman standing on a mound by the river and waving at him. It seemed a familiar face, but he could not place her. She was a real beauty. There was just enough blue in her eyes to give you the glimpse of an October morning sky. The old man could not remember her till he reached the other bank. It was too late then to go back and
search for her. He felt bad. He also wondered about his luck. "It’s luck, I know," he thought. "The worst child may be the most lucky. Great men have run after you and great men have failed to see you. But I’ve seen you without effort." He thought and wondered about his luck. He felt a strange romance inside him.

Mikut had seen many countries and now there was no longer any call from the seas or the mountains. He just tried to remember the beautiful face. After the day’s work, he was very tired and there was a fine summer breeze from the river, which made him sleepy and when the sun went down he relaxed under a big banyan tree by the river and fell asleep. He dreamt a wonderful dream that night. It was that lady again. She stood on a white lotus and looked at him smilingly. He was soothed. There was just one thing more to hope for. "Mamma," he said, "You know what I want!" The lady smiled and lifted her right foot and planted it on his chest. There was a great "Ah" from his mouth.

The next morning when boatmen passed by the place, they saw a man dead under the big banyan tree. Leaves had made a lovely green cover over him. There was a fragrance coming out of his body and there was a smile on his lips. "He was drunk," one of the boatmen observed, "He drank too much," another remarked. A third said softly, "Yes, but look at his face. He must have drunk nectar."

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**THE IDEAL WORSHIPPER**

You brand me an atheist?
No, don’t. I’d like to be called a theist.
An idol-breaker is an ideal-worshipper.

No temple exists for me but my body.
My eyes turn inward to see my God.
My God in me is omnipotent but not omnipresent.

My God in me directs me to a life divine.
His strap stings me when I turn ‘I’.
One shall be there, harmless, immaculate, free.

P. RAJA
THE TIDES
A NOVELLA
(Continued from the issue of December 1989)

VII

A noisy discourse woke me up early in the morning. What was the matter? I sat up in my bed. No, nothing serious, Bose-da and Bela-di were simply settling a dispute between the cook and the servant. I cast a sleepy and lazy look out of the window. O what a marvel! Unlike yesterday, today nature was veilless, fresh, green and washed with a golden glow. A big ball of fire came into view through the branches of tall trees on the other side of the Ganges. Enchanted, I stepped out to the balcony to have a better look. The fiery disc was changing its size and hue at every moment and it appeared that the Goddess of dawn was advancing tip-toe with the offering of hope and warmth for the yearning earthly beings...

“So, you are already awake, very good. Listen, our programme has been fixed,” Bose-da came from behind and stood beside me. “Mr. Roy in his disguise will act in the role of the Sadhu and you will have to be his disciple. Please get ready and come down. We are starting for Hazigunj in no time.” “But Bose-da…” I had to swallow the question as he had already left the place. Soon after, I heard his voice issuing from the kitchen.

I went downstairs and found Bose-da’s Ambassador was about to start. I hurried into the car and sat beside Bose-da who was in the driver’s seat. He steered the car towards Mr. Gupta’s bungalow. An appetising smell made me ask, “Bose-da, whence is this fine smell?” “It’s nothing special, we are carrying with us simply meat-curry and golabjam, all home-made. Polao, chutney, fish-curry we will cook at the picnic spot. Our menu is very simple and will save time.” “Simple indeed!” I released a deep sigh. “Why, what grieves you?” “I am afraid if my role as a disciple will be as simple as this.” “Ho, ho, ho,... please don’t worry about that, it may so happen that your role will be with very little dialogue or none at all. So throw aside anxiety and be joyous, rise to the occasion.”

As soon as our car reached Mr. Gupta’s bungalow Mr. Roy and Manju Devi came out prepared to accompany us. Bela-di received them cordially. Archana regarded Manju Devi with appreciation, particularly her grass-coloured Sari and its artistic style. Alok on the other hand was fascinated by Mr. Roy’s monkey cap. Once he asked him, “Dadu, will you please tell us stories?” “Yes, I can tell you the story of court cases and criminals.” Alok was taken aback but immediately demanded, “No, please tell us a ghost-story.” “A ghost-story! Yes, yes, I remember to have encountered a ghost once.” Just then the car took a turn with
a jerk, left the city area and was speeding across a vast field. The expanse of the field bathed in the morning rays brought a relief to all of us and we, including Alok, kept looking on at it.

Suddenly Bose-da wanted to know if Manju Devi had brought Mr. Roy's disguise or not. On being assured, he addressed me, “It seems you still are worried about your role. But it is very simple. Perhaps seeing Mr. Roy in disguise the village elders will call out spontaneously, ‘Hail to Sadhuji, when have you come back from that place? Please tell us about your stay there.’ Immediately you will come to know the whereabouts of the great patriot Next your responsibility will be to take leave of them tactfully and return as soon as possible. Please don’t forget that Mr. Roy in the disguise of the Sadhu has been observing the vow of silence and that is why he had to bring this time his disciple as his mouth-piece. Mr. Roy should not open his mouth in any circumstances whatsoever. If he does, he will be caught as an imposter and the result will be serious danger for both of you. Do you understand?”

“Yes, but if they don’t mention the name of the place?” I asked. “In that case you will have to take recourse to your common sense and intellect and converse with them in such a way that they disclose the fact without their knowing it.” I have acted in different roles before in more than one drama, but this role seemed to me to be the most difficult of all and I could not help worrying, though I tried to conceal it from Bose-da.

After a drive of about an hour Bose-da suddenly spun the car to the right and slid into a road-side low-land and parked. “All of you please get down here,” he announced. Alighted, we noticed nearby an old tiled house on an elevated plot surrounded by rows of tamarisk trees and other bushy plants. “That is our picnic spot,” added Bose-da, “Ladies and children may move towards the house, we have got a bit of work to do here.” He collected Mr. Roy's disguise from Manju Devi.

Within ten minutes Bose-da finished our make-up. Mr. Roy with matted hair, beard, etc. and ochre alkhalla (long robe) turned out to be a typical Sadhu and I with a coloured gown and a thick, black moustache became his disciple. Bose-da observed us minutely from a little distance and then gave the green signal, “Now you can walk along the main road towards Hazigunj.” “Walk! not go by car?” I exclaimed. “Oh no, that will be very risky, the village is very near. You see from here that sugarcane plantation, just there you will have to turn right, you will be face to face with Hazigunj. Please make a move and with the grace of God come back as soon as possible.” Mr. Roy was all hope and energy and took the lead with quick steps, I followed him as a docile disciple.

Just as we turned to the right we saw the village, a few hundred yards ahead, thronged with working men and women. The most interesting sight was a group of children amusing themselves in a mango grove at the outskirts of the village. Some were playing hide and seek and others swinging on a rocking piece of wood
hung from the branch of a mango tree with a jute-rope. Eying us from a distance they all rushed forward shouting with joy, "Oh what luck! Sadhuji has come again!" They approached Mr. Roy dancing and jumping and the youngest ones caught his hands and went on pulling him towards the village. Mr. Roy's position was precarious, he looked high up to the blue sky and sought help from who knows whom. But my task was to save Mr. Roy from all untoward eventualities. His gesture helped me.

Instantly I remembered the great sadhak-singer Ramprasad. I was impelled, I don't know why, to sing in my hoarse voice (I was never a singer) one of his popular songs, the meaning of which was somewhat like this:

"O Divine Mother, how long will You keep me moving like a blindfold bull round and round a grinding tree? O You are whirling me incessantly and binding to the tree of the World..."

Lo, the magic power of the mantric words did a miracle. The children, leaving Mr. Roy alone, gathered around me. Nearby two bulls were turning around a machine for crushing out juice from sugarcane. They looked on alternately at me and those two bulls and were striving to make out the meaning of the song. Released, Mr. Roy advanced towards the village zealously, I followed him singing and surrounded by the children.

By then the commotion attracted the village-elders, they came down onto the street and exclaimed, "Oh Sadhuji, you have come! how happy we are that you remember us after so many days, come, please come." They led us to an open courtyard having a big thatched house on one side and on the other heaps of straws and crushed sugarcanes. Mr. Roy was made to sit at the centre of the courtyard under the shadow of a huge tree on a half-broken wooden chair. Before they could select a seat for me, I sat down abruptly on the ground just in front of Mr. Roy's feet. Seeing the disciple's depth of devotion they came one after another and prostrated themselves on the ground before Mr. Roy. I winked at him, suggesting not to open his mouth and then announced myself, "All of you please listen, for the last few days Gurují has been observing the vow of silence. But as he was anxious to know about your well-being he has come along with me this time as his mouth-piece. Please tell us about yourselves, we hope there is no outbreak of serious diseases anywhere..."

Immediately I came to know the blunder I had committed. Because instead of answering me they started giving practical demonstration. One by one the patients gathered around us, patients old, young, men, women, children suffering from fever, cough, asthma, bronchitis, dyspepsia, dysentery, stomach trouble and what not. I was at a loss to decide what to do. My common sense and intellect became blunt and inactive. I looked at Mr. Roy in despair and found that his eyes were wet and he was fidgetting on his chair. No doubt, he has been
assailed by compassion, I thought, like his brother. I inclined towards him and lent my ear to his mouth. He whispered very slowly, "The chair is buggy and my beard is itching a lot."

My God! that was the cause of his compassion! Oh what a pity! I got annoyed with Bose-da for not checking the false beard to know if white ants had been hidden in it or not. Meanwhile the patients were crying, "Sadhuji, give us medicine, give us medicine!" Then something beyond common sense or intellect impelled me to raise my hands and speak out, "How can Sadhuji prescribe medicine for so many diseases and patients just now? He has seen you all and will meditate for your recovery for two days and on the third day, if necessary, he will send you medicines." No sooner had I finished than Mr. Roy stood up and raised his both hands in the fashion of showering blessings on them. A smile of hope and satisfaction bloomed on the pale and suffering faces. I wasted no time; keeping Mr. Roy in front of me we turned round and hurried outside the village. As we crossed the turn near the sugarcane plantation Mr. Roy removed his beard and started scratching his cheek hastily with sounds of relief.

"What have you done, Mr. Roy? Somebody may see you," I exclaimed. "I am helpless," he replied, "The itching sensation was there but I could not scratch! What worse punishment can you imagine?" Just then a call came from behind, "Sadhuji, Sadhuji... wait a bit please." I looked back asking Mr. Roy not to turn his face and saw that two young villagers were rushing towards us. Had I been alone I would have run away but with Mr. Roy... However, I stood erect in self-defence screening Mr. Roy with my body. Fortunately they were two only, I also had two hands, once very much skilled and efficient in boxing at that. They came, not at all aggressive, rather looked very polite and submissive, each one carried quite a big black earthen pot.

"What's the matter?" I asked firmly. They bowed down their heads respectfully and said, "You left the village so quickly that we had no time to offer you these." They showed the two black pots. "What do they contain?" my voice still stern. "These are for Sadhuji, very ordinary things, yet if Sadhuji accepts we shall be highly obliged, one contains pure home-made ghee and the other fresh sugarcane juice mixed with ginger and lemon juice, very tasty, sir, please don't refuse." I relaxed and smiled, "If they are meant for Guruji I am very glad to accept them. Thank you very much."

Shortly after, we reached our picnic spot, the old dak-bangalow, and were greeted by all with outbursts of laughter. What was wrong, was it due to the black pots I was carrying? No, they were amused looking at our faces. Oh in a flash the thing became clear, instantly I freed my upper lip from the false moustache. Still the laughter went on, ho, ho, ho.... Manju Devi was busy helping Bela-di in cooking, she turned round and came forward, "Papa, what's this funny dress? You have no beard but have locks of matted hair, come, let me help you remove them." I was taken aback due to my carelessness but then got
very much annoyed also, “Bose-da, your plan has been a complete failure...” I could not finish my sentence; Mr. Roy interrupted, “Why failure? Consider the cost of a big potful of pure ghee, let alone the juice of sugarcane.” Alok and Archana wasted no time to take away the pot of sugarcane-juice and Bose-da called Bela-di, “Come, take this, please don’t grumble any more about shortage of ghee in the polao.”

But I went on grumbling within for my incomplete self-expression, Bose-da should know the terrible inconvenience and danger we were thrust into by him. When all were occupied again with the work of the picnic I sat alone under a tamarisk tree and calmly tried to recapitulate what had happened at Hazigunj.

While doing so the last event came first to my mind, the assurance of medicine I had given to the ailing villagers. Depending on my words they would anxiously await the arrival of their beloved Sadhun but their expectation would go in vain. The image of those deprived, pathetic faces made me conscious of my deceptive behaviour and action with them and my heart lamented in sympathy for those unfortunate poor souls.

“I am very sorry, young man,” Bose-da appeared from behind, “I have heard everything from Mr. Roy. I simply took a chance, though it involved a lot of risk to you, but you have done extremely well. I thank you for that.”

“But, Bose-da, I feel guilty of guile and deceit not only to them but also to myself and God as well.” “Never mind, your act has been a boon in disguise. You have opened the door for me to approach them and gather the much-needed information by hook or by crook.” “That is, of course, a good thing but what about the treatment of those poor, wretched fellows?” “So, you are influenced by the spirit of compassion of the great patriot. In fact that is a very difficult task for an individual like me to take up. However, I shall try my best to look after them and refer the matter to Mr. Gupta for Government intervention.” A burden was lifted from my consciousness and I grew as happy as ever.

Presently Alok and Archana appeared with a glass of sugarcane juice in each hand and offered them to both of us. A sip, and I knew that it was really delicious. Bose-da said, “It is a very good tonic for health if taken sparingly, let aside its excellent taste. Let me go now, Bela needs my presence and help while cooking.” Bose-da left, Alok and Archana sat beside me, I guessed their intention but remained silent. The sight of their soft and sweet faces made me forget Hazigunj. “Well, Alokbabu, anything new?” I asked casually. He made a pathetic gesture and added, “Dadu is busy reading a book, I dare not request him to tell us a story. Will you please finish telling us Deepu’s story? You have no work now.” Archana looked expectantly at me.

“But where did I stop yesterday?” I wanted to know. “Deepu was on his way to the city on foot,” answered Archana. “Oh yes, he walked on with a new spirit and energy for hours together across villages and fields and enjoying old scenes anew. He was up and doing to get rid of Ganesh. But the trouble came
when he went out of breath in the middle of a vast field. He was hungry, thirsty, perspiring a lot, his limbs gave way and he dropped down helplessly on the roadside to take rest. The sun was about to set colouring the sky with light-red and golden hue. He looked on at that to gain strength, energy and courage. He remembered that for some time he had hardly met a passerby. Alone in the unending field with no strength to move further he got afraid of the impending night. But then he heard approaching voices and two conversing persons neared him from the direction he was to go. He asked them about the city.

"City! are you mad? The city is far far away from here." 'But a pedlar told me that it was a few hours’ walk from the steamer station.' ‘Is it so?’ ‘Oh yes, the matter is clear now. He might have spoken of the bus station for the city which you will get at the village after this field, about an hour’s walk still.’ ‘An hour’s walk! but I am too tired to move even a few steps more.’ ‘In that case cross somehow the paddy field on the right and beyond those big trees you will find a very small village, take shelter there for the night.’ They departed in a hurry, resuming their conversation.

"Deepu got to the village with difficulty and was very happy to see the neat and clean simple cottages and their courtyards with gardens. He advanced following a sort of noise and found that in the twilight a few children were playing beside a pond from which women-folk carried water in pitchers. Deepu hurried down the slope of the pond and stooped to drink water in the cup of his hands when a female voice rebuked him from behind, ‘Who is this naughty boy drinking water like an animal? Don’t you know that this is an act of ill-omen for the villagers? Why such behaviour, eh?’ Deepu whirled round to see a lady with a pitcher on her hip. She continued, ‘Oh, a stranger boy it seems! From what heaven do you drop down here at this hour of the day? Alas! he looks very tired and hungry as well. Come, come, my boy, follow me.’

"Deepu obeyed, after a while they stopped in front of a closed-door cottage and the lady called, ‘Didi, please come out and see a new face, he badly needs care and attention.’ So saying she went back to fetch water. The cottage door opened a little, a face peered to watch him and then abruptly the full figure came out and clasped Deepu’s both hands with hers and exclaimed, ‘Deepu, you have come at last. Did I not predict that we would meet again? But from where could you get my address?’

"From nowhere, Smriti-di, it’s the working of that invisible hand which guides us all from behind the veil. I shall tell you everything, but first let me have a glass of water to drink.’ ‘Oh yes, come inside,’ she led him by the hand, made him sit down and then gave him a glass of water first and afterwards brought for him a big glass of warm milk, ‘Please take this and rest, my cooking will be finished soon.’ She went into the kitchen on the other side.”

At that time Bela-di called out, “All of you please come over, the food is ready.” “Let’s go,” I told Alok and Archana. “Oh no,” Archana requested, “A
bit more, what about Saroj-da?” Alok also asked at the same time, “What happened to Deepu after that?” I pointed in the direction of Bela-di’s call. Archana winked and said, “Let her call again.” Meanwhile please continue.” “I can tell you this much that, on asking, Deepu knew from Smriti-di that at the moment Saroj-da was not there. The ‘QUIT INDIA’ movement of 1942 was in the offing, big leaders were under arrest. As a result those outside prison had to be busy preparing for the movement. Deepu disclosed, ‘Smriti-di, Ganesh, Pishemashay’s servant, has been after me since I left the house, I saw him last in the steamer station.’ ‘Please don’t worry, Deepu, he will be properly dealt with by our men.’ ”

“Now let’s go to take food, Bela-di must be waiting for us. You can know about Deepu from the magazine Dharitri to which we have already subscribed for you and it is expected to come soon. Otherwise you can request Manju Devi or Mr. Roy to tell you the remaining part, they have read Deepu’s diary in full.”

The cooking was excellent and all praised Bela-di for it. But she politely objected that at least half the credit was due to Manju Devi. Manju Devi on the other hand burst into laughter, “Me! what do I know about cooking? I am simply an apprentice and have learnt a lot in one day. Bela-di is really a superb teacher in cooking.”

The picnic finished satisfactorily and we started homewards in Bose-da’s car. On the way Bela-di invited Mr. Roy and Manju Devi to stay with them for the night which they gladly accepted provided the matter was informed to Mr. Gupta in time. So Bose-da drove directly to his house and sent his compounder with a note to Mr. Gupta. He then busied himself removing things from the car with the help of the servant. We all moved to the drawing room and relaxed. After a while Bose-da joined us and Bela-di took her leave to arrange tea for us. I also went to my room and came back with Deepu’s diary which I handed over to Mr. Roy

Caressing it gently Mr. Roy observed, “Dr. Bose, your plan appears to have yielded no result, excepting of course the joy of the picnic and the novelty of the risky role acted by us two.” “Why so, Mr. Roy? At least you two have opened the door for me to go to Hazigunj and procure information about your respected brother.” I added, “Yes, there is no doubt about that, yet I have a plan of my own. We can very well give an advertisement in the local Hindi paper briefly to the effect that such and such a Sadhu is earnestly sought for by his younger brother. Any information about his whereabouts will be treated with great appreciation and the person giving it will be rewarded. This will have a double effect. The people of Hazigunj will be made aware of the situation and if by chance the great patriot comes across the advertisement he may be kind enough to reveal himself.”

I waited for Bose-da’s approval, but he remained indrawn and contemplative. Mr. Roy smiled at me meaningfully. Finally Bose-da opened his mouth,
“Yes, the suggestion seems to have some weight but I shall have to think over the matter deeply and from all angles.” Meanwhile the compounder came back from Mr. Gupta’s bungalow with a closed envelope in his hand which he delivered to Bose-da. He turned it over again and again and then murmured, “It’s redirected from Allahabad, the letter is addressed to Manju Devi.” He gave it to her. She opened the letter leisurely and looked into it. Suddenly she went pale, her hands trembled, she rested her hand on the back of the chair and closed her eyes.

Seeing her emotionally affected Mr. Roy stood up, agitated and perturbed and, stooping towards her, asked, “What’s the matter, Manju? Any bad news?” She did not reply, silently handed the letter to him and remained as before. Mr. Roy resumed his seat and, while reading the letter, his face brightened. He exclaimed, “After all, my plan has become effective, though too late, still better late than never.” Bose-da murmured to himself, “One has turned pale, the other is jubilant but none discloses the mystery. Strange!”

“Yes, strange indeed,” remarked Mr. Roy, “This letter is addressed to the Editor, Dharitri and he has forwarded it to Manju as it concerns her. Let me read out the relevent parts: ‘My Confinement’ by Atanu published serially in your magazine totally tallies with the writings of my diary lost from Howrah railway station along with my suitcase about four years ago. I have no objection to the publication. But my request to Sri Atanu is this that if the lost suitcase is still with him, may I hope to get it back with its contents? Necessary proof of the ownership will be provided. Please do the needful and let me know the correct state of affairs.

Deepshankar Roy, Palli Ashram, Mahanandapur, Dt. Burdwan.”

As soon as Mr. Roy stopped, Archana whispered into my ear, “Is the Ashram at the same village where Deepu went and met Smriti-di?” I replied in the same way, inaudible to others, “Oh no, how can it be? That is Barisal in East Bengal just before the 1942 movement, whereas this is in Burdwan about a hundred miles away from Calcutta or maybe a little less, and is a recent affair, much after we became independent.” Mr. Roy’s voice interrupted our whispering. He said, “Now, Manju, what is there to be morose about? This is the happiest of all possible news. Simply write to your beloved brother to come to Allahabad as soon as possible. Why should he be in an Ashram when we, his nearest kith and kin, are still alive?”

At this Manju Devi stood up and said pensively, “Papa, we must start for Allahabad today itself. Whatever has to be written to Deepu-da we shall write from there.”

They both left Ghazipur by the night-train for Allahabad whereas I waited till morning to go to Benares. At the time of departure Mr. Roy reminded Bose-da of the advertisement, “Please consider the proposal and do as you think best.
Manju has already got on the trail of her brother but I am unlucky to remain still in the same wilderness with regard to my own brother!"

(To be continued)

Chunilal Chowdhury
Students’ Section  
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION  
26th Annual Conference  
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(Continued from the issue of December 1989)  
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO’S BIRTH  

Speech by Devanshu Arya

My friend Dibakar, who spoke before me, has explained to you the profound significance of Sri Aurobindo’s birth anniversary, which we are celebrating at this Conference, in Sri Aurobindo’s own words by reading to you his birthday message given by him on 15 August 1947.

I propose to do the same, but in another way—by reading two talks of the Mother in which she has explained in her own incomparable words the momentous significance of Sri Aurobindo’s birth. These talks are of such unique value that we should read them again and again to imprint indelibly on our consciousness the supreme significance of Sri Aurobindo’s birth for earth and humanity. Especially, his birthday is the most appropriate occasion to recollect what the Mother has said in these talks. So I read them here.

The first is a very brief talk she gave on 14 August 1957, the eve of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. This is what she said:

14 August 1957

“This evening, instead of answering questions, I would like us to meditate on the remembrance of Sri Aurobindo, on the way to keep it alive in us and on the gratitude we owe him for all that he has done and is still doing in his ever luminous, living and active consciousness for this great realisation which he came not only to announce to the Earth but also to realise, and which he continues to realise.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of his birth, an eternal birth in the history of the universe.”

Then on 4 September 1957, the Mother explained at some length the meaning of the phrase “an eternal birth” which she had used at the end of the

1 Questions and Answers, 1957-58 (Collected Works of the Mother), Vol 9, p 171
talk of 14 August 1957 which I have just read. She did so because someone had asked her what she meant by these words in relation to Sri Aurobindo’s birth. This talk is so illuminating that I shall read the whole of it.

4 September 1957

“Today I received a question about a phrase I used on the fourteenth of August, the eve of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. And this question seemed interesting to me because it was about one of those rather cryptic phrases, that are almost ambiguous through simplification, and which was intended to be like that, so that each one might understand it according to his own plane of consciousness. I have already spoken to you several times of this possibility of understanding the same words on different planes; and these words were intentionally expressed with a simplification, a deliberate vagueness, precisely so that they would serve as a vehicle for the complexity of meaning they had to express.

This meaning is a little different on the different planes, but it is complementary, and it is only really complete when one is able to understand it on all these planes at once. True understanding is a simultaneous understanding in which all the meanings are perceived, grasped, understood at the same time; but to express them, as we have a very poor language at our disposal, we are obliged to say them one after another, with many words and many explanations.... That’s what I am going to do now.

The question is about the phrase in which I spoke of the birth of Sri Aurobindo—it was on the eve of his birthday—and I called it an “eternal birth”. I am asked what I meant by “eternal”.

Of course, if the words are taken literally, an “eternal birth” doesn’t signify much. But I am going to explain to you how there can be—and in fact is—a physical explanation or understanding, a mental understanding, a psychic understanding and a spiritual understanding.

Physically, it means that the consequences of this birth will last as long as the Earth. The consequences of Sri Aurobindo’s birth will be felt throughout the entire existence of the Earth. And so I called it “eternal”, a little poetically.

Mentally, it is a birth the memory of which will last eternally. Through the ages Sri Aurobindo’s birth will be remembered, with all the consequences it has had.

Psychically, it is a birth which will recur eternally, from age to age, in the history of the universe. This birth is a manifestation which takes place periodically, from age to age, in the history of the Earth. That is, the birth itself is renewed, repeated, reproduced, bringing every time perhaps something more—something more complete and more perfect—but it is the same movement of descent, of manifestation, of birth in an earthly body.

And finally, from the purely spiritual point of view, it could be said that it is
the birth of the Eternal on Earth. For each time the Avatar takes a physical form it is the birth of the Eternal himself on Earth.

All that, contained in two words: "eternal birth".

So, to conclude, I advise you, in future, before telling yourself: 'Why! What does this mean? I don't understand it at all; perhaps it is not expressed properly,' you could say to yourself: 'Perhaps I am not on the plane where I would be able to understand', and try to find behind the words something more than mere words. There.

I think this will be a good subject for our meditation."'1

1 *Ibid*, pp 177-78