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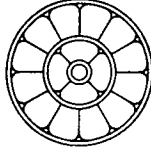
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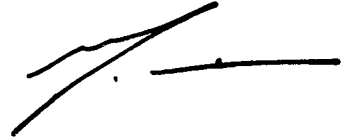
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

GRACE

EACH mind can have its own way of approaching the supreme Truth and there is an entrance for each as well as a thousand ways for the journey to it. It is not necessary to believe in the Grace or to recognise a Godhead different from one's highest Self—there are ways of yoga that do not accept these things. Also, for many no form of yoga is necessary—they arrive at some realisation by a sort of pressure of the mind or the heart or the will breaking the screen between it and what is at once beyond it and its own source. What happens after the breaking of the screen depends on the play of the Truth on the consciousness and the turn of the nature. There is no reason, therefore, why X's realisation of his being should not come in its own way by growth from within, not by the Divine Grace, if his mind objects to that description, but, let us say, by the spontaneous movement of the Self within him.

For, as to this "Grace", we describe it in that way because we feel in the infinite Spirit or Self-existence a Presence or a Being, a Consciousness that determines,—that is what we speak of as the Divine,—not a separate person, but the one Being of whom our individual self is a portion or a vessel. But it is not necessary for everybody to regard it in that way. Supposing it is the impersonal Self of all only, yet the Upanishad says of this Self and its realisation: "This understanding is not to be gained by reasoning nor by tapasya nor by much learning, but whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body". Well, that is the same thing as what we call the Divine Grace,—it is an action from above or from within independent of mental causes which decides its own movement. We can call it the Divine Grace; we can call it the Self within choosing its own hour and way to manifest to the mental instrument on the surface; we can call it the flowering of the inner being or inner nature into self-realisation and self-knowledge. As something in us approaches it or as it presents itself to us, so the mind sees it. But in reality it is the same thing and the same process of the being in Nature.

*

I should like to say something about the Divine Grace—for you seem to think it should be something like a Divine Reason acting upon lines not very different from those of human intelligence. But it is not that. Also it is not a universal Divine Compassion either, acting impartially on all who approach it and acceding to all prayers. It does not select the righteous and reject the sinner. The Divine Grace came to aid the persecutor (Saul of Tarsus), it came to St Augustine the profligate, to Jagai and Madhai of infamous fame, to Bilwamangal

and many others whose conversion might well scandalise the puritanism of the human moral intelligence; but it can come to the righteous also—curing them of their self-righteousness and leading to a purer consciousness beyond these things. It is a power that is superior to any rule, even to the Cosmic Law—for all spiritual seers have distinguished between the Law and Grace. Yet it is not indiscriminate—only it has a discrimination of its own which sees things and persons and the right times and seasons with another vision than that of the Mind or any other normal Power. A state of Grace is prepared in the individual often behind thick veils by means not calculable by the mind and when the state of Grace comes, then the Grace itself acts. There are these three powers: (1) The Cosmic Law, of Karma or what else; (2) the Divine Compassion acting on as many as it can reach through the nets of the Law and giving them their chance; (3) the Divine Grace which acts more incalculably but also more irresistibly than the others. The only question is whether there is something behind all the anomalies of life which can respond to the call and open itself with whatever difficulty till it is ready for the illumination of the Divine Grace—and that *something* must be not a mental and vital movement but an inner somewhat which can well be seen by the inner eye. If it is there and when it becomes active in front, then the Compassion can act, though the full action of the Grace may still wait attending the decisive decision or change; for this may be postponed to a future hour, because some portion or element of the being may still come between, something that is not yet ready to receive.

But why allow *anything* to come in the way between you and the Divine, any idea, any incident? When you are in full aspiration and joy, let nothing count, nothing be of any importance except the Divine and your aspiration. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of approach, absolute, all-engrossing, making that the one point with which nothing else must interfere.

What value have mental ideas about the Divine, ideas about what he should be, how he should act, how he should not act—they can only come in the way. Only the Divine himself matters. When your consciousness embraces the Divine, then you can know what the Divine is, not before. Krishna is Krishna, one does not care what he did or did not do: only to see him, meet him, feel the light, the Presence, the Love and Ananda is what matters. So it is always for the spiritual aspiration—it is the law of the spiritual life.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 23, pp. 608-610)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I THANK you and your wife for the grand box of presents. They will be very useful. Having come to the Ashram in the early days of its career and thus lived in Pondicherry when it was the capital of French India, I remember “Roger & Gallet” as almost a household word in those days. The most popular product under this double name at that time was the deep-red Eau de Quinine for the hair. I am sure I’ll enjoy using the two bottles you have sent as much as I did that lotion. I have never put any oil on my hair—not even the vastly popular but to my nose the rather plebeian coconut oil. It is a delusion that any oil makes the hair grow or prevents it from falling. I have not grown more bald than the multitude of old oil-fans around me. If anybody finds a real hair-grower, he will be a millionaire in no time. Even a hair-preserver will mint money.

A keen aspiration with the nerves calm: this is the best state of spiritual receptivity. You have a calm temperament, but it can easily lapse, as you yourself fear, into happy laziness. Without agitation you can still be alert to possibilities and not leave, as people say, everything to God. God needs collaborators—an active and not a passive surrender is asked for by Sri Aurobindo.

You have written of your practice of meditation. It seems to have proved fruitful. The humming sound may be a distant echo of the cosmic OM and the sense of slight pressure either between the eyebrows or on the top of the head is indicative, in however faint or small a way, of passing beyond the common day-to-day individuality into a deeper or a higher consciousness.

Both you and your wife have to remember that the kind of spiritual life most prized by our Gurus is a state of consciousness which is wide-awake but is not bound to the surface: there is a standing back of the being and an inner gesture of giving oneself to the Mother and laying all one’s actions into her hands. The standing back means bringing the hidden soul of us into contact with the field of our daily activity and the self-offering renders that poise a channel for the Divine to work His Will in the world. Of course, meditation with shut eyes is not ruled out, but it should serve only to plunge to inner self-discovery and a refreshing repose of the senses what is warm and glowing with the contact between the human and the Divine in the dust and din of common toil. I think you are doing fairly well in this matter and have taken the loss of the shop by fire as a spur to gain greater inner closeness to That which is ever full. (1.8.1994)

*

I am extremely sorry to have caused you pain and anxiety by my long silence for

45 days. What is absolutely unavoidable I carry out. There is no inner grumbling in doing the necessary: the grumbling complex does not exist any more in me, but often there is an inner resistance which I at times overcome and more often yield to. For, I seem to be in a no-man's-land I can't say I am stuck in it at one place. I move but I am not sure whether I move forward or go about in circles. There is sometimes a sense that, rather than moving, I am being moved in an unknown direction. It is neither forward nor backward, upward nor downward, inward nor outward. What then is happening? If one can imagine a state between living and dying, perhaps my condition may be gauged. This between-ness is as if knot after knot within me is being cut and yet there is no clear experience of standing free. Some huge shadowy past haunts me, a vast phantasmal future hangs in front of me. The present appears to be an all-covering uncertainty. Only of one thing I am certain. Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother have not left me nor am I wanting to leave them. But I do not have the feeling that I am going somewhere—a stillness is all around me, constituting even my own self and yet the ghost of a memory of my mobile past lingers as if at the circumference of my consciousness. To all appearance I must be the same Amal but if one were very percipient one may notice a lack of grip in my dealings with the world. Not that I have lost all hold on things; but the hold which is there is not a natural gesture of the very act of living. It is as if from an immense distance my fingers touch the passage of time and hold back momentarily one thing or another

Let me not bother you with my odd responses to life at present. Your plight worries me. If it is due only to my seeming neglect of my pet little girl, this letter should set you right. If a physical ailment is there, please consult a doctor at once. I don't want anything untoward to happen to you. Please keep it in mind that I never forget you. You are a permanent fixture in my inner life, a cherished fellow-pilgrim on the Great Path. (4 8 1994)

*

Some verses have been running through my mind seeking a bit of reflection. One set comes from A. E. Housman:

If men were drunk for ever
 With liquor, love or fights,
 Lief would I wake at mornings
 And lief lie down at nights.

But men at times are sober
 And think by fits and starts,
 And when they think they fasten
 Their hands upon their hearts.

Here we have the deep sense of an innate insufficiency in human fortunes, the impression of an inevitable tragedy haunting earthly existence and consequently the perceived need to win forgetfulness of the harsh reality, the call to stand away from all that acutely touches our feelings. Indeed everything is seen to be such as would pierce and wound us the moment we seriously attend to it.

Another sort of insight into life—alert not so much to its tragic colour as to its commonness, its routine nature, its rein upon the freedom we believe to be our right—faces us in some lines by an anonymous poet and, as it were, stops us in our tracks. Life's prose rather than its poignancy is now the target for a complaint, half humorous half pathetic:

To think that two and two are four
 And neither five nor three
 The heart of man has long been sore
 And long 'tis like to be.

Always this heart has dreamed of magical moments. The hope of the alchemist was always to find the transforming touch by which the rigour of iron added to common iron could be relaxed in favour of creating thereby a more precious metal. There is an attempt to actualise the feats of that unfettered faculty of man—imagination with its bodying forth of unseen things. Browning, adopting the role of Abt Vogler, has brought home to us the play of this faculty by picturing art's power to blaze forth some supernova of the mind, a power he particularly attributes to a musician—

That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.

On the one hand we are faced by the usual, the day-to-day and on the other we hear a call to focus what initially figures as the ever-nebulous. Reason tells us to leave the latter alone, yet something impish in us turns a deaf ear to the sensible. Crying for the moon has gone on for centuries—until in our time man succeeded in stepping on our luminary companion. Now we crave for other forms of

The joy that beckons from the impossible... (*Savitri*, 314:25)

Nothing except the "impossible" seems worth our quest. There are two reasons for this apparently mad endeavour. One is that only that which exceeds our capacity at present strikes us as ultimately deserving of our entire energy. The other is couched in those lines of Sri Aurobindo's:

Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,
 The impossible God's sign of things to be. (*Ibid.*, 52:8-9)

All our incredible dreams—our formulations of fantastic “myths”—a lion’s body with the head and wings of an eagle, which is the image of a “chimera”—are not mere exercises in unrealisable fancy. They symbolise the ultimate at which we must aim—a power and a perfection exceeding everything within our range at present but attainable in the final reckoning:

The high gods look on man and watch and choose
 Today’s impossibles for the future’s base. (*Ibid.*, 339:33-34)

The fundamental ideas in these two quotations are worth summing up. They summon us to the highest projects and assure us that we are not yearning for the unattainable. Not only daring possibilities but surprising certainties await us. They are certainties because it is not the mere mind of man that envisages them. Man’s mind catches reflections of what actually awaits him in the depths of the future. Prophetic distances are communicating with us. It is with a feeling of such distances of time, glimpsed under the image of farnesses of space, that Sri Aurobindo brings us those four lines boldly affirmative of realisable super-fantasies in *The Rishi* when the Rishi of the Pole tells the seeking King Manu from the height of his meditative vision:

O King, no thought is vain; our very dreams
 Substantial are;
 The light we see in fancy, yonder gleams
 In the star. (*Collected Poems*, p. 306)

With a fabulous future already seized in his luminous consciousness and partly actualised in his own life Sri Aurobindo gave us the call of his “Integral Yoga”. The seizure could be made because of the logic of the impossible which he discerned in the history of earthly evolution. Multi-sentient life-force appearing in brute-seeming matter, world-insighting and self-exploring mentality emerging from the life-force’s leap of desire: what are these except the impossible coming to pass? Why not then aspire after a mightier sequel to them?—

A Mind unvisited by illusion’s gleams,
 A Will expressive of soul’s deity,
 A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,
 A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade. (*Ibid.*, 51:34-36 & 52:1)
 (12.6.1995)

*

I am glad the book on Integral Yoga appeals to you. Some sort of isolation of a

theme serves to carry home the heart of it better. The Integral Yoga may look forbidding because of the word “Integral”, meaning “whole” or “complete”. One may ask oneself, “Am I expected to cover all the points which the term ‘Yoga’ has meant down the ages of spiritual practice in India? Must I do, one after another, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Tantra Yoga and even Hatha Yoga?” The fear is ill-founded. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have shown us a way by which a short-cut is taken across all these Yogas and we are led beyond them all. That short-cut is what they call the psychic opening—the response of a deep and calm emotion from the inmost heart: the inmost heart not only has a purity of feeling combined with an intensity of it—it also has a certain poise in which there is the play of what may be termed a childlike sage—wisdom distilled through many and varied births but never going to one’s head to puff one up—wisdom spontaneous and uncomplicated, always practical yet never mundane, independent in its ways and at the same time free from preoccupation with self-serving. I may add that by “practical” I mean a sense that keeps a balance between freedom from self-serving and overmuch neglect of one’s own interests. The psychic opening ensures a quiet smile lighting up one’s face and a persistent conviction that God as Father or Mother or Lover or Friend is always present by one’s side. Another characteristic is the spark of hope at all times. When the Mother saw the famous film of Satyajit Ray—“*Pather Panchali*”—she said in effect: “It is a masterpiece in directing, acting, photographing: it only lacks one thing—the soul. There is utter despair here. The soul never despairs, never believes that things are really hopeless, intrinsically tragic; it feels always the secret touch of a divine hand.”

Your semi-tearful account of your feeling of helplessness reminds me of my own state past and present. Once, during our sessions in the old Prosperity-room before the Soup-distribution downstairs, the Mother posed the question: “Who remembers the Mother most?” Two chaps were ultimately picked out: the Madras lawyer Doraiswamy, an old-time sadhak, and the recent initiate Amal Kiran. What did this choice mean? It meant that we two had the strongest and most constant feeling of helplessness and so had to appeal to the Mother to carry us through the call on us from moment to moment to make decisions. Years later I showed the Mother the double photo of her and Sri Aurobindo I carried in my wallet and made her read what I had written on its back: “Help of the helpless.” She smiled most compassionately. Do you remember where this phrase comes from? It is part of a Christian hymn whose three couplets have always haunted me:

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens—Lord, with me abide.

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me....

Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou who changest not, abide with me. (17 6.1995)

*

I appreciate the intensity of your resolution not to waste this life but to make the fullest use of it in spiritual endeavour. The Mother once told me: "People think that they can afford to postpone doing Yoga. They say, 'We are still young, there is plenty of time ahead.' But life moves on fast and soon they are old and very little is done." In the past I have myself tended to play with postponements, but the Mother has so arranged circumstances that I had to cry "Halt" to my sidetracks. After six and a half years of unbroken stay in the Ashram I went to Bombay for the first time. During my good-bye interview with the Mother I told her: "I have one favour to ask. Even if ever I try to leave you and Sri Aurobindo, please never let go your hold on me." She said: "I am like a fairy godmother who can grant all wishes. If you want me to hold on to you always, I shall do so." I think it is owing to her grip on me—as requested—that my heart is still at her feet.

Now to your questions. The near-death experiences strike me as genuine. Most of them are bound to relate to the "vital plane", for that is the plane on which people mostly function. Your question as to who experiences things when the body is as good as dead overlooks the fact that "senses" don't belong only to the consciousness functioning through the physical body. We have several bodies of a subtler substance than the one we are aware of as possessing at present and various degrees of consciousness with various senses going with them. In fact, these degrees are with us even now, but they have not emerged sufficiently into our outer normal being. Several sadhaks are able to leave their outer bodies and move in their subtler sheaths and explore the subtle-physical or the vital plane. For them the parting from the physical body is nothing new. But always a link is kept with that body. And that body serves also as a fortress into which they can resort for protection when the experiences on the other planes become unpleasant. Our inner connection with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother serves as an atmosphere of protection. (29 6.1995)

*

The sweet and sacred name "Sri Aurobindo" is now on the lips of thousands. And a movement of high veneration accompanied by a surge of deep devotion is the echo in our beings when this name is uttered. But it is not often that we hold in focus the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo. Not always do we realise wherein lies his uniqueness.

India has been rich in producing spiritual figures. And rightly do we revere

them for their call to us to keep before our eyes the revelation they have made of an infinite and eternal Beyond which is at the same time an infinite and eternal Within. But none of them has put so central a stress as Sri Aurobindo on the importance of the earth-scene. They have held earth to be a passage to a final fulfilment elsewhere. Sri Aurobindo is the first to insist that earth is the goal of our spiritual journey. All the splendours and powers of the so-called higher planes are to Sri Aurobindo the means for a supreme transformation of the consciousness of our earth-built bodies. To invoke the powers of those planes to remould this consciousness and these bodies, to prepare them to manifest those splendours: such is the goal of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. His Yoga is designated by him as Integral because it is meant to cover the whole of our existence. Nothing is to be left out. To leave out anything would spell for him a failure of the Divine, a falling short of the true spiritual realisation. One of the master-manifestos he has given us is: "I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco." The "old fiasco" is the enlightenment of the inner man and the leaving of the outer man to be the fumbler and stumbler and futile grumbler that he normally has been down the ages. (30.6.1995)

*

I am overwhelmed by the double honorific you have heaped on me. As if "dada" were not enough, you have preceded it with "Revered" Can such a light-hearted person like me be approached with a serious face bearing downcast eyes and whispering words of deep respect as if before a Himalaya of holiness? Of course, being light-hearted need not preclude the sense of a heart full of light. But I can't figure myself quite as archangelic—unless it be archangel Satan, fallen from heaven, yet, as seen by Milton, with a form that had not lost all its original brightness.

Whatever be my state of "glory obscured", I think your questions don't fall outside the little success I have enjoyed in trying to live up to the name Sri Aurobindo bestowed on me—"Amal Kiran" meaning "A Clear Ray". So let me attempt a bit of elucidation of your problems.

Your experience of finding the words "Om Sri Aurobindo Mira" spontaneously or rather independently of yourself repeating themselves is a profound pointer to the state of your sadhana. It shows that fundamentally it is not your mind but your soul that has taken up the sadhana. Your soul is no longer a spectator of your mind's attempt at Yoga: it is a direct participant in the Yogic practice. Rather, it has shown to you that your mind's Yogic turn is no surface orientation: the mind has merely caught within the circle of your usual consciousness the signal of a secret movement belonging to your basic self. This is a very valuable flash of knowledge, for it points to Yoga as your destiny.

Your second experience is an inner opening towards which in a permanent

form the first one seems to be pressing. The exact place where you find “something pressing in the chest”—in your case “the right side”—is not of prime importance. Ramana Maharshi always insisted on concentrating a little to the right of the chest’s centre. It is the location in general that is significant. In my early days in the Ashram, whenever I sat meditating with a focus on the heart-centre, I used to feel some pain—yes, physical pain. I reported it to the Mother. She told me she knew what was going on and asked me not to worry, adding that the pain would disappear. It did disappear after a time and the result was a powerful opening—an outburst of something inherently in love with the Divine and rising towards the intuited Divine with a cry of spontaneous joy. Occasionally the outburst was so intense that I was left breathless with happiness—a happiness which seemed independent of all life-occasions. Whatever inconvenience you feel in the chest-region will go. It is like the mild headache many people experience when they sit to meditate—a small resistance of the ordinary mind to the descending spiritual force.

You wish me to “live many more years”. I am about four months away from being 91. More years would be of real value if I could increase in the inner life—a greater deepening of the heart’s cry for the Ineffable, a greater widening of the mind’s listening when

Missioned voices drive to me from God’s doorway
Words that live not save upon Nature’s summits,
Ecstasy’s chariots.

Otherwise, even if I touched a century it would be

A hundred years of living
With no difference from death
Save the uselessness of moving
And the tediousness of breath. (7.7.1995)

*

At the moment I am supposed—healthwise—to be under a small cloud. For I have contracted what is called Herpes Zoster. The right side of the part between the nose and the lips became a little queer-looking four days back—and the queerness extended somewhat up the right cheek. The attack was evidently a mild one and has almost cleared by now. To quote your own words, as I have done also in a previous note of mine to you: “nothing to worry about.”

I had to keep at home for a few days, but since last evening I have started visiting the Samadhi again.

It was disturbing news that my sweet friend had been laid up with fever for

three days. I say “news”, but surely something in me must have felt uneasy at the onset of your illness and visited you in the subtle-body. That is why you saw me near you—in your waking state! You are often in my thoughts—and your doctor brother also sometimes walks in and out of them. What I said to you must have been something like the following:

“Time is passing—and its passage seems to grow faster and faster as we grow older. For growing older means less and less years left for us to find God. Sadhana can be done only on earth, for only on earth has there been an evolution and the opportunity is given to grow inwardly towards God. On the subtle planes there is only non-evolutionary typical life—and in the case of humans there comes a period of assimilation of the experiences passed through on earth. So let us do our best to live from within outward and irradiate the day-to-day life with the peepings-out again and again of our souls.”

I hope to hear happier and healthier news from you in your next letter. Any delay on my part in replying must not be attributed to my forgetting you. You are always a fragrant presence in the inner reaches of my being. (?.7.1995)

*

However disobedient and naughty you may be, I can't help loving you more and more. For, all your unruliness is born of extreme love for this funny old fellow who, for all his knowledge of his own incapacities, keeps on knocking at the silver gates of Sweetness within and the golden gates of Truth above.

I hope your health is improving. I always feel worried when I hear that my beloved friend is not feeling on top of the world. As for myself, I am having the experience of what doctors call “Herpes Zoster”. It is reported to be a very painful inflammation of nerve-ends with a burning sensation, and always affects one side of the body. The right side of my face is said to be affected, I see a slight reddish swelling above the mouth and beside the nose but I have neither pain nor burning. Some Grace—or shall I say “holy influence”—seems to be at work. In view of it I am disposed to call the ailment by a semi-spiritual name. Being a Parsi I dub it not “Herpes Zoster” but “Herpes Zoroaster”. I have taken the full treatment which is both internal and external: swallowing of tablets and application of an ointment, both carrying the name “Herpex”. Not looking really ugly but just a bit queer I go merrily about my daily tasks and pleasures.

I say “merrily”, but the full situation is not so simple. A part of me feels rather dull—stagnant or at least static, while another part is yearning to break free from this feeling and even gets impatient with bodily existence. Ordinarily seen, my wheelchair life is a bore which one would like to fly away from but I am not really troubled by it. Psychologically I am a constant voyager among what Keats calls “realms of gold”. But they are not enough for me. I want to be constantly “reborn” in the Yogic sense and, failing in this ideal, I get

world-weary and strain my arms towards horizons glimmering with rosiest reveries realised. Sometimes the urge to leave my body gets very strong but I understand that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would not approve of such an urge and that I must use to the full the opportunity which bodily life gives us to do sadhana.

(? 7.1995)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I looked upon Nishikanto as my elder brother and loved him dearly. He too looked upon me as his younger brother and loved me dearly. Our mutual relation was deep and abiding.

I have not yet written all I have to write about Nishikanto. Perhaps at a future date I shall do so. But since a controversy has been raised by my friends, I would like to keep silent for the present.

As the Mother says:

“In silence is the greatest strength.”

Please publish this letter in *Mother India* as my reply to Amarhari Gangopadhyay's letter to you.

Thank you.

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ABANI SINHA

AN INTERVIEW WITH NIRODBARAN

(Continued from the issue of October 1995)

Question: Let me now come to Sri Aurobindo's great epic *Savitri*. You are indissolubly linked with the composition of this epic, for you were the scribe of Sri Aurobindo. I would very much like to hear about your experiences in this respect.

Answer: I do not know whether such a thing happened in the case of other poets. The English poet Milton is known to have dictated his poetry; since he was blind and could not write, he dictated his poem to his two daughters. But it is not known whether he dictated all his poetry—I mean the whole of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. We do not know the process of it either. But in the case of Sri Aurobindo, I saw him dictating to me day after day, during a definite period of time each day; during that time he would go on dictating and I would take down line after line.

Q: But I have read in your book,—if I remember correctly—that towards the end Sri Aurobindo used to pause sometimes while dictating.

A: Oh, it was a very short pause. He went on dictating line after line. His entire temperament was calm and steady. Calmly and steadily he dictated, the way I am now talking to you. He had no dramatic manner; in simple words, in an easygoing way, he dictated, as if he was dictating prose. There was no tendency to recite, nor was there halting—with a lot of pauses—no, none of that.

Q: Do you mean that the dictation did not flow from the mind-plane, that is, it was not the case that Sri Aurobindo first thought out the lines and then dictated?

A: Yes, what we usually mean by thinking was not involved in the dictation—it came from the higher planes. This kind of dictation and writing usually went on for an hour. Before he started dictating from the point where he had stopped the previous day, he would ask me about the context; I read some lines and he began to dictate. Many poets in the world—take Shelley for instance—composed line after line. But I do not know if they could dictate in this way line after line. But I saw Sri Aurobindo could do that. I do not know whether such dictation that maintained the rhythm, the same height and inspiration had ever been possible in poetic history. To my mind, this is one of the aspects of novelty—from the standpoint of dictation—about the epic *Savitri*.

Take the eleventh book of *Savitri*—"The Book of Everlasting Day". Sri Aurobindo composed this book by simply dictating 400-500 lines of it. This is, I suppose, the longest Canto. Personally I would think this is the most magnificent of all the Cantos. Yet how naturally, spontaneously, he dictated about 500 lines of the canto at a stretch, of course on consecutive days. His mind became absolutely silent—the lines simply descended. But this did not make any

difference of levels. At the end of composition, he did make some revision—that too came from the higher inspiration.

And what a great poem it is! If you set apart for the moment the subject-matter of the poem, and simply think of its language and rhythm, you will see—as Sri Aurobindo himself pointed out—that different levels of inspiration had been at work here, in the initial phase of composition the Inner Mind, the Psychic, the Poetic Intelligence, the Higher Vital,—and in the later phase it's Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind. They are also called Overhead planes. But, in an overall sense,—particularly, in respect of rhythm—there is what Sri Aurobindo calls an 'Overmind' influence. This means that—in so far as the rhythm is concerned—this poem is something like a 'Mantra'.

Q. Does that mean that this epic, taken in an overall sense, is charged with what Sri Aurobindo has termed the 'Overmind' plane of consciousness?

A. Yes, that is true, especially for the rhythm and the atmosphere. When Sri Aurobindo revised later, as I told you, he did not do it by thinking it out. I saw that he waited in silence and called for inspiration—then words and lines descended. I do not know whether this type of composition from an entirely silent mind was ever achieved by any other poet. Perhaps it was possible in the case of Shakespeare; but, I am afraid, it was not such a conscious process for him, as it was for Sri Aurobindo. There are overhead lines in other poets like Milton and Wordsworth but not in a mass.

One more point: Sri Aurobindo did not take poetry as mere poetry—he took it as a part of his Sadhana. He constantly endeavoured to raise poetry to a higher plane, a higher consciousness. In a letter Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me: "... I used 'Savitri' as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. Moreover, I was particular—if part seemed to come from any lower levels I was not satisfied to leave it because it was good poetry. All had to be as far as possible of the same mint. In fact 'Savitri' has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative..."¹

Besides that, I asked him, in a rather lighter vein, why, himself being the master of inspiration and having all higher planes at his command and able to send inspiration to others, he should still have to work so hard. To which he answered: "The highest planes are not so accommodating as all that. If they were so, why should it be so difficult to bring down and organise the supermind in the physical consciousness? What happy-go-lucky fancy-web-spinning ignoramuses you all are! You speak of silence, consciousness, overmental, supramental, etc.,

1 See *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, Nirodbaran, 1973, for the full text of the letter

as if they were so many electric buttons you have only to press and there you are. It may be so one day, but meanwhile I have to discover everything about the working of all possible modes of electricity, all the laws, possibilities, perils etc., construct modes of connection and communication, make the whole far-wiring system, try to find out how it can be made fool-proof and all that in the course of a life-time.”²

So, these are some aspects of the technique of composition of the poem. As for the poem itself, well, it is not merely poetry, it is Mantra—the lines are prophecies, the poet is a seer and a prophet.

Q: I am told the Mother has said somewhere that the reading of *Savitri* can be a great help to Sadhana. Is that so?

A: Yes, certainly; but you have to read with that attitude, you have to remember that every line of this poem is a Mantra, it is the creation of a Yogi; keep it in mind that every word of a Yogi is charged with power, and then read.

Q: Does that mean that this poem too is charged with a high vibration, as it is the case with the Upanishads?

A: Exactly so. Sri Aurobindo is a great Rishi. As the Mantras of the Rishis descended from higher planes, so it is in the case of *Savitri*. The quintessence of Mantric Poetry is its rhythm, its rhythm is its very soul. Maybe it was Pythagoras who said somewhere: “The whole world was created with twelve rhythms.” That’s why I would advise you to read this poem in a meditative spirit, not in an intellectual way. If you read intellectually, you may see only the literary value and enjoy its flavour merely from a literary standpoint.

Q. Were all the images that Sri Aurobindo used in *Savitri* born of direct experiences?

A: Certainly. He himself said: “It is all written from experience.” Take, for instance, the Canto “The World Stair”. Whatever he wrote there about the different planes was seen and experienced by him. He went to those planes; when he wrote, he wrote from those planes. If that were not so, would it be possible to write all that stuff even for a highly fertile imagination?

You should note another thing: at the initial stage of composition, this poem was merely ‘A Legend and a Tale’. Many of the lines in it were from the vital-mental levels. Then the whole thing was transformed into ‘A Legend and a Symbol’. Most of the composition has gradually come from higher spiritual planes since 1930 or thereabouts. You will find some more hints in Sri Aurobindo’s letters written to Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna).

Q: Apropos of *Savitri*, could you kindly say a few words about the response and evaluation by the poets and critics from abroad?

A: There has been some response. You may find it in some issues of *Mother India*. The appreciative comments of Sir Herbert Read, H. O. White of Trinity

College, Dublin, and Professor Raymond Piper of Syracuse University deserve especial mention. Professor Piper's observations are recorded in *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*. White calls *Savitri* "truly a remarkable poem". Sir Herbert Read thinks that *Savitri* is a strange creation; but he is loth to make any 'public utterance'. You may find some of his observations on *Savitri* in a fine book containing the correspondence between K. D. Sethna and the English poet Kathleen Raine. [Taking the cue from Shri Nirodbaran, I have found the book to which he refers here; it is entitled *The English Language and the Indian Spirit: Correspondence between Kathleen Raine and K. D. Sethna* (1986), edited by K. D. Sethna; in this book Shri Sethna in a brilliant letter to Raine quotes excerpts from a letter written by Sir Herbert Read to A. B. Purani. Sir Herbert wrote: "It is undoubtedly difficult to find readers for poems of the length and sustained creative power of *Savitri* and the fault must be in the nature of our present western civilisation" (June 5, 1958). The observations of H. O. White whom Shri Nirodbaran quotes are also recorded in this book.]

Q: I would now like to pass on to a different topic. Please say a few words about the nature of the Sadhana that you are at present carrying on in the Ashram. Do you still receive guidance from your Guru?

A: We do receive guidance whenever needed. Besides that, as far as I am concerned, an inner perception has grown—I can see what I should do or what I ought not to do. In a way, now we are passing through a most difficult phase of Yoga—very difficult indeed. Initially when we started Yoga, we had a lot of spiritual experiences—now we have them rarely, one might say these are temporarily suspended (at any rate, this is my experience). Now the Sadhana is going on—how should I put it?—well, it's going on in the physical consciousness and in the subconscious. The consciousness of these planes is now in process of being gradually transformed. So, this is a very difficult phase—not so much for you who are young and full of energy, as for us. Therefore, one has to go on working now with the right attitude. If we probe deeper, we would see—to give you a bare outline—the subconscious and the Inconscient are the last hurdle on the way to transformation—this hurdle has to be removed. The supramental, or the Truth-Consciousness, is working there; as a positive outcome of the Sadhana of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the supramental consciousness had already descended and its manifestation too has got under way. Now, it remains to awaken or manifest the supramental that is involved in the subconscious and the Inconscient, or, to put it differently, the supramental consciousness which had descended has to be linked to the supramental consciousness covertly acting in the subconscious and the Inconscient, so that a total change of consciousness in all the parts of the being may become possible. This is, to be very brief, how our Sadhana is now going on here. So, we have to be prepared for this; this is the secret of their work. All the disorder and crisis that you see the world over is, in a way, the outcome of their work. The Truth-Consciousness is churning out all the

falsehoods and impurities deep down in the earth-consciousness and purifying it.

Q. Would you, now, say something about the Mother?

A. The Mother! What could I say of her? Frankly, I cannot find words if I try to speak of her. One just cannot imagine who the Mother was! Unimaginable! The Mother has said, "I am not the Guru, Sri Aurobindo is the Guru. I am only the Mother—the Universal Mother. To me there is no great or small. Whoever calls me, I accept him." Another thing which is remarkable is the Mother's command over occultism. A great occultist once said that there was no Occultist like the Mother in the past, nor will there be one in the future. To understand the Mother is very difficult!

Q: If one opens oneself to the Mother in a simple, sincere way, does her Force really work? Would you kindly explain exactly how you receive her help?

A: The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are living presences to us. Whatever is happening here, in each person,—well, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo know everything. People do not realise that, but the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are so united with everyone, that they know each movement—I can assure you of that. They know in the sense that their consciousness is indissolubly linked with us. Therefore, here we do not venture to take any step on our own—we leave it to the Mother; it is she who will decide.

Q: Do you then mean that even after the Mother or Sri Aurobindo have left their bodies, it is still possible for them to guide you from the subtle planes?

A: Certainly. If it is not so, what is spirituality? Spirit is always present; the Mother is not in her body, but her spirit is here—this is what you do not seem to understand. Spirit is immortal. Look at the matter from a different angle: many ashrams or organizations have grown after their spiritual leader passed away—take for instance, the Sri Ramakrishna Mission, the Christian Mission, etc.; the Buddhist Monasteries, however, started while Buddha was still present; but the Buddhist order flourished after he was gone.

Q: I could not come into contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their life-time, still I have turned to them; would people like me too get help from them like you?

A: Surely you would get their help. If you turn to the Mother, depend on her, have faith in her, she is always with you and you will come to know that during the times of crisis; have trust and rely on her—you should have an unwavering trust and surrender. Even if it is not possible to have it always, but, if for once you have opened yourself to her, accepted her, you may rest assured she is with you.

Q. But is that really possible when we have so many limitations?

A: Limitations? It is because you have limitations that you want the Mother. Sri Aurobindo once told us "It is the weak who want the Divine, not the strong"! I wish to transcend my limitations and aspire for perfection, but I cannot do so with my own limited power, hence I ask for the Mother's help. This

much I can tell you, that those who have accepted the Mother have got something in their life. If you accept her and surrender yourself to her all the time, then you are saved. You just cannot imagine what a great refuge it is! Sri Krishna says in the Gita: "Abandon all dharmas (i.e. standards) and take refuge in me alone"—this is the truth and it is constantly borne out here by our concrete experiences. I would, therefore, repeat that if you have really taken refuge in the Mother, you need not worry any more.

Q: Excuse me, still the question haunts me: is it really possible to realize concretely that the Guru is guiding the disciple even after he has left his body?

A: Quite possible—and I have already told you that.

Q: I mean I can see your point theoretically, but what I would like to know is how this contact really takes place after the passing away of the Guru—would you kindly explain that through some examples?

A: That they are really guiding you, you will get to realize, if you steadily go on with your Sadhana and keep your mind calm. You have to keep quiet under all circumstances, and have the faith that the Mother will arrange everything. Let me explain, with two or three examples, what a great refuge they are and how they continue to be in contact with us.

Let me relate to you first a small incident. Once it so happened that, for certain reasons, I had some fear. I did not tell it to anybody, but kept it to myself. The fear kept on haunting me from time to time, and I tried to shake it off. This went on for a few days; then, one day a friend of mine asked me: "Are you afraid of anything?" I said to him, "Why?" My friend said, "Sri Aurobindo told me: 'Tell Nirod not to have any fear'." This incident took place after Sri Aurobindo had passed away. Do you now understand how even with a small vibration in me, their help comes?—what a great burden of ours they have taken upon themselves!

To give you another instance to show how they continue to guide the Sadhana of their disciples. This incident took place within a few years after Sri Aurobindo had passed away. You know, I sleep in his room on the carpet. Suddenly it happened that in the silence of the night around 2-2.30 a.m. I was startled out of my sleep by a thundering voice calling out my name: "Nirod!" I understood that this was the voice of Sri Aurobindo. Only a call—I could not see at first what it meant. Then gradually I understood—from that time on, I meditate at night around 2-30 a.m. You can now surely understand how he guides the Sadhana of a disciple even when he is not physically present.

To give you still another instance to show how they protect us. This is not my own experience, but of someone wellknown to me. He was away from home. One day he saw in a dream that the place surrounding his house was on fire and his house too was about to catch fire. Suddenly he saw that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were standing on the roof of his house, and the fire could not ultimately reach his house. He thought perhaps it was merely a dream! Then,

one day someone from his family wrote to him saying that there had been indeed an outbreak of fire around his house, but his house had not caught fire and was intact! So, you see, how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother protect those who have really accepted them—again it brings to mind the supreme word of the Gita: “My devotee does not come to grief”—it’s true to the letter! Once you have taken refuge in them, once they have accepted you, rest assured that you need not worry. But, if you are to realize that they are really guiding you, you have to keep your mind calm, have faith in them, surrender yourself completely to them and purify your movements. Then, one day everything will become clear to you.

Q: Then, those of us who have not been able to come into contact while the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were physically present need not be discouraged at all?

A: No, not at all. What do you mean by ‘physically present’? They are here. He is now here—and he knows that I’m talking about all these things to you. So, all of you who have made your surrender to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, need not worry. You have a very bright future. Do your work for them and you will see what happens! But remember one thing: the Adhar must be purified—you will see that much disorder will surge up, but be quiet and have faith in the Mother’s Force and go on.

Q: Let me now pass on to another topic: what attitude should one adopt when one is ill?

A: Usually, what one should do is to have faith in the Mother that she will set one right; pray to her so that you may be all right. Besides that, you should remain calm, take whatever precautions are necessary; you may also do without medicines, if you have so much devotion for the Mother that you do not feel like taking drugs; but not all can have their physical consciousness at that level. Therefore, drugs are needed sometimes. But, above all, have this faith—the Mother is there, and she will protect you.

Q: This brings to my mind an incident you recorded in your book *The Mother. Sweetness and Light* (1978) [Revised Edition: *Memorable Contacts with the Mother*]: When the great poet and sadhak Nishikanta was seriously ill in 1956 and it was touch and go, he was taken to the Mother. Nishikanta wanted the Mother to place her foot on his chest and fervently appealed to her that he wished to live; the Mother quietly placed her right foot upon his chest and Nishikanta lived on seventeen years more! May I ask you: does the Mother’s grace really work like this with a mere touch of her foot?

A: Why did I write this if it was not really so? I gave a vivid description of all that I had seen with my own eyes. We had occasion to see lots of such incidents.

Q: Nishikanta fell ill thereafter from time to time; even so, he remained cheerful always, is not that so?

A: It is. He had Vairagya—a true spirit of renunciation. In that respect, he

was really a wonderful man—he had no attachment to his body.

Q: Don't you think his poems were of a very high order?

A: Yes, indeed. I should think the poems which he wrote towards the end are not all of that quality, but on the whole he has left behind a superb creation.

Q: Does that mean that he could have filled the void in Bengali poetry by creating an epic?

A: Yes, if he had lived on a few more years, he could have created an epic. But one has to bear in mind that poetry is not the main thing for us—what is important for us is Sadhana; if poetry is an aid to Sadhana, well, it's all right. You may see this in another way: we could write before Sri Aurobindo met with the accident to his right leg in November, 1938, because he gave us inspiration; after the accident, his sadhana took a different turn and our writing slowed down: for he had then to concentrate on himself, he had to concentrate on world affairs (because of the war). So, how could he concentrate on giving inspiration to us as he had done before?

Q: I think it is certainly true—as you describe in a brilliant chapter “War and Politics” in your book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* (1973)—that Sri Aurobindo played a major role in the Second World War.

A: Role?—Well, it's far greater than that. Many European journalists have later admitted that, had Sri Aurobindo not been there, England would have been crushed into oblivion! And who knows what might have happened to India!

Q: What was Sri Aurobindo's attitude towards Japan? Did he say anything about the bombing of Japan?

A: He did not say anything specific about the bombing, but it is true that he turned the growing tide of Japanese force with his yogic power. We understood Sri Aurobindo's strategy: When Japan had established its supremacy in the East, Sri Aurobindo had not taken it very seriously; for he thought that if Hitler turned his forces towards the East, Japan might be useful in checking the advance of Hitler. But when Japan's imperialist design on India became clear to him, he said: “Then I used my Force against Japan.” He also said that he “had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory, which had till then swept everything before it, change immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat”.

Q: I would now like to know about meditation. Is there any hard and fast method for meditation? Is meditation possible with the help of poetry, songs and music?

A: We have no fixed method. You may follow whatever method suits you—you may take the help of poetry, songs, music and so on. Whatever helps you to become concentrated and to go within—you may follow that. The name of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo can also be helpful. Any work done as an offering to them is another way. Someone once told Sri Aurobindo: “While I meditate, I feel that my head is in the lap of the Mother.” To that, Sri Aurobindo

said that this is the right meditation. Whatever helps you to make progress—progress in terms of consciousness—follow that way, there should be no problem.

Q: Thank you. I would now call it a day; but, before we close, please tell me something about our most respected Nolinida. Though you have paid your tribute to him in a fine article in the book *Atimanasjatri Nolinikanta* (1985), edited by you, I would still like to hear something from you here and now.

A: Nolinida was indeed a great Sadhak who attained the 'Overmind' level; initially he was somewhat aloof and brusque, but that did not matter much—he had a very soft heart.

Q: I should think that his writings, especially *Purnayoga*, *Sahityika*, *Shulpakatha*, *Banglar Pran*, *Smrutir Pata*—all these are unparalleled creations. What do you think?

A: Surely these are wonderful creations. Sri Aurobindo used to say of Nolinida that he had "A remarkable mind". He was, truly speaking, Sri Aurobindo's 'manasputra'. In fact, there was such a flowering of literary and many other gifts in him, because he had that rare gift: Sincerity. You may remember that I wrote in my article "Nolinida" that he too had his shortcomings. But he said that he had to work very hard indeed to overcome them and ultimately what saved him was his completely frank confession of them to the Mother. (See my article *Atimanasjatri Nolinida*, 1985)—So, you see, it is not impossible for even lesser mortals like us to try to attain perfection! We too can become like Nolinida, if we want to.

SUPRIYO BHATTACHARYA

MEMORABLE CONTACTS WITH THE MOTHER

BY NIRODBARAN

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PRACTICE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S INTEGRAL YOGA

How does one learn to practise Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga? One way, and perhaps the only way to learn, is through the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. All one needs to know regarding how to begin this yoga and all the necessary guidance for proceeding on the path, is available in their various books. The philosophical base of the Integral Yoga has been expounded in *The Life Divine*. Its aims, principles and methods have been explained in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Some central aspects have been discussed in *The Mother*. Thousands of questions relating to the method of practice and the difficulties and perplexities of the spiritual life have been explicitly dealt with in the three volumes of *Letters on Yoga*. Several shorter selections from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which help the spiritual aspirants in their search for self-perfection are also available.

Anyone who has tried to practise the Integral Yoga seriously knows from his experience that nothing can be of greater help than the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But some persons who begin this yoga inspired by the books often develop certain doubts after some time. This occurs more frequently in the minds of those who live outside the Ashram in different parts of the world. After some time they begin to doubt their understanding of Sri Aurobindo's writings: perhaps their interpretation is not correct, their manner of practice is wrong, perhaps a different method of meditation might have brought them better results. Many such questions gradually creep into their minds.

The reason for developing such doubts is not so much the insufficiency of one's knowledge as one's impatience—the desire to learn quickly. For one does not really need to know a great deal in the beginning—one gradually grows in knowledge as one progresses on the path. What actually gives rise to such suspicions is the desire to become knowledgeable without the necessary effort. As a result, instead of devoting more time and energy to reading Sri Aurobindo with greater attention and to putting into practice what one learns, one begins to look for a faster way. At this stage many try to find someone well-versed in Sri Aurobindo's writings. Such a person, they seem to believe, not only can explain to them the intricacies of Sri Aurobindo's yoga but may even be able to guide them and show them the right method of practice.

The help of an intermediary, a knowledgeable guru who can guide others both inwardly and outwardly to follow the original teaching, is considered to be most essential in many spiritual disciplines. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga, however, there is no place for such a guru as the traditions recommend. This is mainly for two reasons. First, in the Integral Yoga, unlike in other systems, one does not follow any rigid rules. There is no formal initiation, no daily rituals, no fixed method of meditation, no rigorous outward austerity to follow, nothing indeed is prescribed which can be learned as a formula and passed on to others.

Everything depends upon the inner needs of the individual. And since no two individuals are quite alike, the method of practice varies from person to person, according to the diverse traits of the nature

In Sri Aurobindo's yoga, so flexible and varied are the ways that nobody can really define the right method of practice. Each person must discover his own path, work out his own method, unique to his own inner needs. There is very little help that one can derive from others. For, however realised the other person may be, his knowledge applies only to his own field of experience. It may be, and most often is, quite useless for others and may even be totally contrary to their inner needs. In the Integral Yoga one therefore must not try to seek help from others, particularly concerning the method of spiritual practice.

Another reason for not seeking the help of a conventional guru in this yoga is still more transparent. In traditional systems of yoga a complete surrender to one's guru is demanded so that the guru can mould his disciple in the light of his knowledge. This surrender is actually made to the Divine within the guru, who acts as an intermediate vehicle between his disciple and the Supreme. An aspirant of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, on the other hand, makes his surrender directly to the Force of the Divine Mother—the executive power, the creative energy of the Supreme Divine. In the Integral Yoga, therefore, the Divine himself becomes the Guru. It is His force which guides and moulds the disciple. It is His grace that protects and carries him through the ordeal of spiritual life. And when the guidance and the protection of the ultimate Guru are with the disciple, what need is there for any other help?

The final aim of Sri Aurobindo's yoga is nothing less than the transformation of not only man's mind and life but also his physical body so that a new race of gnostic beings can emerge from man and a divine life can be established upon this earth. No human knowledge, no human capacity, no human endeavour—however mighty and great—can ever imagine accomplishing this formidable task. It is only the Force of the Divine Mother which has the power to effect in man this integral transformation. Man cannot hope to succeed in this yoga by the might of his own capacities alone.

Rather than turning to others for help the one thing that a person practising Sri Aurobindo's yoga must do is a constant self-surrender to the Force of the Mother so that it may descend into him and carry out the necessary work for transformation. For it is this transformative Force which actually performs the yoga of transformation in an aspiring human being. And all a person can do in this yoga is to remain steady in his aspiration and become a sincere and willing instrument for the working of this Force.

What is therefore important is not so much to develop the capacity or knowledge for doing this yoga in a supposedly right way but the basic sincerity of a person and his ability to remain open to the Force of the Mother. Nothing can be more contradictory than when a person, who is believed to be practising Sri

Aurobindo's yoga, cannot trust the Force of the Mother to accomplish the work which it alone can do, and turns to others for help and guidance.

KUSH

NEW BIRTH

A MEASURELESS, infinite universe
 Within which is scattered
 Galaxy on galaxy of stars
 Twinkling, twinkling, through eternity.
 And within one such galaxy
 One finds a solar system,
 Among countless others,
 Where a green-blue globe is seen.
 On that tiny revolving sphere
 Are born microscopic human beings,
 So insignificant in size
 Even on their planet Earth.

Man is born in time and space,
 Lives enclosed in his stereotyped nature,
 Fades away into nothingness—
 Like bubbles—forming, rising, bursting;
 Ceaseless, purposeless, blind.

But what if he opens his eyes
 And sees beyond time and space—
 What if this puny little creature
 Discovers in him the dormant Spark—
 And growing in strength and stature
 Outshines the million stars,
 Outlives the countless galaxies,
 Outgrows the infinite universe?

That... would be a New Birth!

D. L.

ABOUT WOMAN

9. IS MOTHERHOOD THE AIM OF WOMAN'S LIFE?

(Translated by Satadal from the Bengali of Nolini Kanta Gupta)

MOTHERHOOD used to be considered as the great ideal, even the sole ideal for women at one time. In modern times, a large part of women-folk has stood up in protest against it. It is not the sole aim of their life, they say. Just because they are imprisoned within that exclusive ideal, women are deprived of the very best of opportunities and advantages of life, which should be available to all without making any distinction between male and female. The sadhana of Knowledge, training in arts and science, taking part in the work for the good of people in one's own country and in the world—all these are not easily accessible to women. Most of their life-stream flows through a different channel.

The other side usually says (how far out of a dictatorial will and egotism is questionable) that this is the natural and general division of work between man and woman, willed by the Creator as a law of Nature—women will do the household work and bear children, remain occupied with “indoors” while men will handle the work of the external world. To glorify this story, to hide this unjust discrimination, it made a further clever statement: Man can create, but the creatrice even of the creator is woman.

One of the means discovered to solve this problem sounds like a joke. Probably, it originated first in Greece. Then Nietzsche came to accept it. The proposed ideal was that each man would have two women—one the married wife, the other a cohabitant. The wife's work would be to produce children, while the cohabitant would be the companion of the vaster and greater work of man. A strange ideal, with no cover in its mode of expression—but not completely estranged from some support by real life. We know about Yajnyavalkya, the Upanishadic seer. He had two wives. One remained occupied with household affairs, and the other became his companion in the pursuit of Brahman. Such an indication of a solution, however cumbersome it seems to be, may lead us to the road of a new solution. Consequently, those women, who will accept motherhood as the ideal of life, naturally must follow that course. But those who will venture on other paths—paths taken for granted as fit for men only—should also have the complete freedom to tread them at their will. In case of men most of them take up the ordinary life and only a very limited few leave the worldly life to enter the spiritual, and they get ample freedom, chances and advantages and even encouragement. Similarly those women who will accept this so-called men's path should also have corresponding chances and advantages, encouragement and help. Legally women are not barred from living a spiritual or ascetic life (of course history tells us about other types of laws in a particular

epoch in some particular society) but even then these are always considered to be exceptions. They are hardly a few in this path, and the conditions imposed on them to get entry this side are almost insurmountable. These conditions tend only to support that unjust discrimination. In India women sannyasins lead comparatively a freer life though the case of the Nunnery under the Catholic Church is different.

But we want to say something else. The demand of the modern age is a radical and revolutionary change of attitude. It stresses that the distinction made between man and woman is mostly, if not wholly, artificial and therefore should be rejected. This sense of distinction has been allowed to grow and establish itself through habit, biased and restricted education and blind conventions taken to be one's own nature. All these could be changed if a transformation is brought about in the culture, if we acquire new habits, cultivate new manners and customs and a new nature. Right to vote, coeducation, mechanical skill and employment for women—all these are various manifestations of that very movement which wants to wipe out the distinction and inequality being imposed as a principle of nature.

We can cite the example of Jeanne d'Arc in this connection. Her advent is a marvel in history. Jeanne d'Arc is the symbol of a supra-terrestrial force and a future possibility. She brought with her the imagination and the possibility of a relation between human beings which did not get its proper respect and recognition. Rather, she was accused of being unsocial, even anti-social! Those who come to organise humanity have to bear this torture of the cross. Probably there is no other way to deliver Nature. Socrates used to urge the youngsters to think independently, to reason before coming to a conclusion, never to accept anything as true without passing it through a hard test of analysis—be it with respect to existence of the gods or anything whatsoever. So Socrates was accused of misleading the youth. Similarly Jeanne d'Arc, dressed in male uniform, fighting as a soldier on horseback, became one with the male and brought about a terrific revolution by even forgetting that she was a woman—that means shattering all social and moral ideals in vogue. This reminds us of the Greek goddess, Diana, the huntress. Ever virgin, dressed like a hunter, attired as a male—all her movements and postures expressed the integral beauty of man. Of course one may say that gods are gods, it is not possible for a human to imitate the inhuman or the superhuman.

Is it really so? This is the question which needs to be answered. A human being who follows the ideal of ordinary humanity may at will follow the course of the past, organise social systems according to its liking, maintain the distinction between man and woman as per dictates of the mental light and under the pressure of body and life. But if we want something superior surpassing humanity, want a divine collectivity, then the more we forget the past the better; or if at all, we shall remember the utterance of the most ancient of the seers, the

representatives of universal man: *tvaṁ kumāra uta vā kumārī* (Thou art a boy and a girl).

There is no distinction of man and woman in the human soul; the luminous body which will contain this soul must to some extent be of a similar nature. That does not mean having no distinction anywhere. There will surely be some in a deeper sense and that distinction is not of this physical difference. It is not that the criterion of the real difference between man and woman has to be only the gross physical difference. That was true for human beings so long as they were pre-eminently animals. Whatever distinction may appear in future will not depend necessarily on the gross external body; but it is not necessary to rack our brain about it. The first thing needed is to remove the discrimination owing to ignorance. Then along with the increase of knowledge, due to the advent of Light, by the action of the force of transformation the dharma of unity in diversity of Nature will itself appear. There is no cause for apprehension that everything will get mixed up and be devoid of any diversity—that is something opposite to both Nature or Over-Nature.

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“COME”—THE LOVING CALL

“COME”—his loving and tender call still rings in my ears. With Grecian features—cultured voice—soft and amiable: that was our Amrita-da. The moment you stood on the doorstep of his office, he would look up at you and call, “Come”. Of course he knew why we “came” to him! Our day-to-day problems—our anguish—our demands—our anger—our quarrels: those were the things we came to pour on to him. Though knowing fully well that he had to hear only the problems and the troubles, he would never let his first words be “What do you want?” He spoke only one word “Come” and with that single utterance we knew we could confide in him—tell him of our problems, entreat him or even threaten him—he would listen to all our outbursts calmly and give advice or act accordingly, whichever he felt right. There never was any distinction between his room and his office. He was available at any odd hour—we could just walk in and he would be there, not disturbed in the least that his rest was interrupted—ready to listen and to help. He personified the word “AMRITA” —“Nectar”—the name given by Sri Aurobindo.

Born on 19th September 1895 in a Tamil orthodox Brahmin family he was named Aravamudhu. He was a school-going boy when on his repeated requests he was introduced to Sri Aurobindo in 1913 on August 15th, Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. As Amrita-da himself wrote in *Old Long Since*: “As he looked at me, in a trice all gloom vanished from within me, and his image was as it were installed in the sanctum sanctorum of my being.” Once his soul chose the Guru, it never wavered. Then onwards he started frequenting Sri Aurobindo’s house and the work of posting letters was given to him by Bejoy Nag. He writes: “Feb. 1915. A crucial stage arrived in my life. Along with this came a quietude of mind, a constant memory of something which was fundamental.” He was barely twenty years old at that time.

He joined the Ashram permanently in 1919 and dedicated his service to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother till the end which came on 31st January 1969.

He was the bridge between the Mother and us. With her he was her child—when he came down he was our support—our elder brother. How unassumingly he mingled the two roles he played.

Yes, sometimes he was sad and hurt. After all he was also human like us. But his aristocratic nature would never permit him angry outbursts or revenge or abuse. That was the sweetest part of him—soft and tender and full of forgiveness.

One cannot think of Amrita-da without his sense of humour. Suffering from severe heart ailment, he used to joke about it and say “My sweet heart is giving me trouble.” Very often he went for his haircut, with a nearly bald head—what was the necessity? If asked he would give a naughty smile and say “I go for after-haircut.” We wondered what that could be. Well! It was the massage of his neck

and back given by our Manodhar-da, every time Amrita-da went for his haircut. That was his only recreation.

If a day could have had more than twenty-four hours, he would have worked all through those hours also. An unassuming disinterested worker fully engrossed in work alone, he asked for no recreation. So unassuming was he that when a visitor inquired about his work he replied, “I look after the needs of the Ashramites.” Much later the visitor came to know that he was a Trustee and the Manager of the Ashram on whom the Mother relied for her day-to-day work. How humble indeed! His dedication—his sadhana—can best be understood in the words of the Mother when she wrote on his birthday in 1958:

“1914-1958

To Amrita

After 44 years of faithful service, I greet you at the threshold of Realisation, with love and confidence.”

He used to be late very often for the French-translation class which the Mother used to take in the playground. One day when he was late and stood at the doorstep of the class the Mother asked, “Amrita, how far is the Divine from you?” He did not reply immediately but counted the steps till he reached the Mother and said, “So many steps, Mother.” Like Ganesha undertaking the Pradakshina of Parvati and saying that He had gone round the world and thus winning the race against Kartikeya—for Amrita-da too the Divine was very near—just a few steps to reach Her!

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTY

Some Letters from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

(on day-to-day matters)

BY SAHANA

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A TRIBUTE

You stood in grandeur—sombre, austere, still! A little pale and worn out but MAJESTIC like our MASTER!

Oh! what joy it must have been—what a thrill—when He touched you for the first time. Did you ever imagine even in a dream that the Master of the Universe would come one day and you would serve Him? What a splendid fate! What did you feel when His gaze caressed you—an inner joy indeed! And when He opened your doors and searched for something—opened this drawer or another—surely you must have pushed the object forward into His hands so that He might not have to search. Didn't He look surprised and smile His beatific smile? Weren't you *proud* of your service? Indeed! How could you not be? And when He wrote His immortal works sitting in the same room—the room vibrating with His thoughts—you must have felt that vibration and tried to respond in your own way. What a splendid life!

And then one day He left the Shankar Chetty house. Were you sad? No, never. How could you be? You had also become a yogi in your attitude. You just stayed in that house still in meditation—doing your own Sadhana whereas other objects used by Him went pell-mell here and there.

Then when His 75th anniversary of coming to Pondy was celebrated, you looked out with eagerness for some old once-familiar faces—His associates. Oh! how can that be? We are human beings, we serve Him and pass away to come back again in new forms. Not like you, solid and firm in faith and body!

Perhaps you grew a little weary—perhaps not? Years passed. You remained in the same house as a sentinel to His memory. His 85th anniversary of arrival passed quietly and lo! here you are in His Ashram's main-building—solid, majestic—ready to serve Him again! Men will come and go but you will go on in your service to Him, the great Lord.

AN ADMIRER

*(Of the Admirah used by Sri Aurobindo when He came to Pondicherry
and stayed in the Shankar Chetty House.)*

WHY THE MOTHER SET ASIDE THE PAINTING
OF CANTO EIGHT OF BOOK TWO, SAVITRI
—“THE WORLD OF FALSEHOOD, THE MOTHER OF EVIL
AND THE SONS OF DARKNESS”

BY HUTA

It was January 1964. The Mother and I were deeply absorbed in doing *Savitri*-painting. When we came upon *Canto Eight of Book Two*, the Mother disclosed to me:

“But I have already fought with the Mother of Evil, and now I do not wish at all to give forms to the Falsehood in painting and put the pictures in front of humanity, so that they can easily get into the false consciousness. No, I am not going to give them forms. Drop *Canto Eight* altogether.”

We skipped it. Nevertheless, I read it word by word intellectually with Amal (K. D. Sethna). I was so horrified that I could not sleep for a few nights. The atmosphere was harrowing. Poisonous, living vibrations of that terrifying world made me extremely sick. At that time I wondered whether this world of Falsehood had any general effect, any special influence on human beings.

As years passed I gradually became aware of its function through some human beings whose consciousness became perverted and possessed by the Sons of Darkness who made them their instruments.

In the book *Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri"—An Approach* by A. B. Purani, I came across the statement:

When Ashwapathy saw the heart of the Night he found that there was a spiritless blank eternity where the eternal truth was denied and it was hoped to continue the anarchy of darkness. There was only a brute principle of life without the revealing presence of divine Light. Evil and pain acting in this brute life gave rise to demonic powers which were:

World-egos racked with lust and thought and will,
Vast minds and lives without a spirit within.

There were in fact embodiments of dark ideas which were responsible for the creation of man's hell. This hell was:

... the gate of a false Infinite,
An eternity of disastrous absolutes.

It denied all true things because it was the power of the Inconscience.
Thought became an instrument of perversity and even Good,

... A faithless gardener of God,
Watered with virtue the world's upas-tree...

*

My memory flies back to 20th January 1964. After the *Savitri*-work, the Mother revealed to me—as she had never done before—what truth, lie and falsehood are:

“Child, there is a vast difference between Falsehood and lie. When people tell a lie, it is words that come from their mouths and they are contrary to the actual fact or deny it. For instance, if you have gone somewhere and deny to have gone or if you have done something and refuse to admit the fact—it is a lie. But lies have no strength. Lies are always the sign of a great weakness and, if they are habitual, of a great crookedness.

Falsehood is something very serious. The world, as it is, is in a state of Falsehood—it denies the Eternal Truth. There are three chief categories of Falsehood

(1) People who aspire for the Truth but are not sincere enough in their aspiration to discriminate between the Truth and the Falsehood. They fall always into trouble and misery and get out from the path leading to the Truth.

(2) The second category is dangerous. People who can very well discriminate between the Truth and the Falsehood, who know that the Truth is better but have no strength to resist the temptation and fall constantly into Falsehood.

(3) The last one is the most dangerous of all. People who are aware of the Truth but refuse to recognise the Truth and choose deliberately the Falsehood. They have a kind of hate for the Truth and reject it violently. On the list of the Eternal, these can be marked: ‘missing souls’—as it is written in *Savitri*, Book Two, p. 210:

So might one fall on the Eternal's road
Forfeiting the spirit's lonely chance in Time
And no news of him reach the waiting gods,
Marked 'missing' in the register of souls. .

Happily there are very few like that—who deny the Truth and choose the Falsehood.

There are, of course, a number of people who have goodwill, good purpose, good aspiration and the rest; but, in spite of all that, they still live in Falsehood because they have no strength to fight for the Truth. And if they let themselves go without reacting with a constant vigilance they are bound to live in Falsehood because this world is a world of Falsehood.

When souls come upon earth by accepting the sorrows, miseries and troubles of the world—it is because they want to conquer Falsehood and help in the Victory of the Truth. I call them heroic souls.

For those who leave aside their mental, vital and physical and live only in the Bliss, there is no struggle and pain because their beings are untouched, undisturbed and they remain as they are. But the souls, who come upon earth to fight face to face with Falsehood, are truly heroic souls, and the Supreme Lord is there with them. They set a concrete example for the world.

Another important thing to be remembered is that one must have an unshaken faith in the Lord. The Flame of Faith must be kept burning and it must grow and spread its light widely to replace the Falsehood, because it is the Light of the Truth.

Child, why should you get disturbed? You must leave everything to the Lord. It is He who knows—not only knows but sees and looks after everything, arranges everything. It is His responsibility for human beings. The more they get disturbed and upset by Falsehood, the more will It come under various forms and take a quick chance to enter their consciousness, hearts and brains and make them miserable. Here the body and the true consciousness are not separated, so naturally the body too suffers from the Falsehood. Child, I tell you, you must try constantly to ignore the Falsehood by remembering only the Lord's Love. Whatever may happen to you, do not get upset—just pray to the Lord."

In answer to my letter dated 26-11-72 the Mother wrote:

"Before dying falsehood rises in full swing.

Still people understand only the lesson of catastrophe. Will it have to come before they open their eyes to the truth?

I ask an effort from all so that it has not to be.

It is only the Truth that can save us; truth in words, truth in action, truth in will, truth in feelings.

It is a choice between serving the Truth or being destroyed."

Here are Sri Aurobindo's encouraging words:

"It is quite true that falsehood reigns in this world, that is the reason why

these difficulties manifest. But you have not to allow yourself to be shaken. You must remain calm and strong and go straight, using the power of Truth and the Divine Force supporting you to overcome difficulties and set straight what has been made crooked by the falsehood.”

The Falsehood has numerous various aspects. They assume masks of Truth. They are like a chameleon—changing colours to suit and serve their own purpose. The hostile forces, in order to fulfil their blatant mission in the world, make some human beings their instruments and work through them or they work by themselves. These instruments, in fact, are responding to these lower forces, they are influenced and readily obey their commands.

These people are as the Mother explained to me in her talk:

“... The last one is the most dangerous of all. People who are aware of the Truth but refuse to recognise the Truth and choose deliberately the Falsehood. They have a kind of hate for the Truth and reject it violently.”

These very people use their tyranny, money-power, mischief, pride, dominating influence and try desperately to prevent the true aspirants from reaching their Supreme Goal: the Divine. They are great schemers. These nasty forces want to destroy the true being physically, mentally, psychologically, morally and spiritually, even financially. They take perverted joy in harassing, torturing and brainwashing and ruining the true people.

These hostile instruments cannot possibly tolerate anybody’s happiness, peace and progress.

Nonetheless, the Divine too has His own instruments who are helpful and full of goodwill.

Sri Aurobindo has written in Vol. 24, p. 1731 about the nature of hostile Forces:

“It is a fact always known to all yogis and occultists since the beginning of time, in Europe and Africa as in India, that wherever yoga or Yajna is done, there the hostile Forces gather together to stop it by any means. It is known that there is a lower nature and a higher spiritual nature—it is known that they pull different ways and the lower is strongest at first and the higher afterwards. It is known that the hostile Forces take advantage of the movements of the lower nature and try to spoil through them, smash or retard the siddhi....”

The following explanation by the Mother is appropriate:

“Those who want to follow the true path will naturally be exposed to the

attacks of all the forces of ill-will which not only do not understand, but generally hate that which they do not understand.”

These are the verses from *Savitri*, which describe the mischief of the lower elements:

“Beings were there who wore a human form;
 Absorbed they lived in the passion of the scene,
 But knew not who they were or why they lived....
 Ardent from the sack of happy peaceful homes
 And gorged with slaughter, plunder, rape and fire,
 They made of human selves their helpless prey,
 A drove of captives led to lifelong woe....”

*

It was Monday, 27th July 1964. As always after the *Savitri*-work the Mother revealed to me one thing or another.

After our work she went into a deep trance. When she awoke she said solemnly:

“Child, Durga always chases the devils who are in thousands. She does not kill them because they cannot be killed.

When Durga fights them they run here and there to find a hiding place. Whenever human beings keep the doors of their consciousness open, the devils without losing a moment enter and start their mischief. I tell you: Never keep the door open because it is dangerous to welcome these nasty forces.

You must remember that human beings and the world are *One*. The whole *One* cannot be transformed—it takes time. Nevertheless, the individual can progress and can be freed if you do not listen and let the adverse forces into your consciousness.

If you shut the door of your being to the Falsehood and cling only to the Truth, you are free and happy.

Remember, the Lord is stronger than these forces.”

There is no end to her teaching. I have experienced that whenever she said something, she at the same time gave her Force to realise her truthful, brilliant teaching.

The Mother sent me a card illustrating Durga. Her hopeful words on the card were:

“*Durga*—She will fight until there are no more anti-divine forces upon earth.”

As Sri Aurobindo has stated aptly in *Savitri*, Book One, Canto Two:

“A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God:
Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
Guard the Wheel’s circling immobility,
A bond is put on the high climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;...”

The characteristic of the Devil is that he takes enormous pleasure in destroying beautiful things, new creations, new perceptions and visions. He never allows the Divine Truth, Beauty and Love to manifest easily upon earth. He is the creator of catastrophes. He even quotes scripture to deceive us. The Mother told me

“Child, we have to outwit the Devil.”

She wrote to me in 1961:

“Alas! my poor little child, this kind of Devil is *immortal* and will disappear from the earth atmosphere only with the disappearance of *falsehood*.”

She also wrote:

“Do not give up to the enemy (the adverse forces)—resist—I am with you for the fight and *we must conquer*.”

Many a time I faced the Falsehood. Its undercurrent hostility and ill-will had disastrous vibrations. It was not at all an open, ordinary fight from the human point of view, but extremely subtle and invisible.

Under this effect I suffered both mentally and physically. I felt as if my whole being were strangled and suffocated. The situation recalled what Sri Aurobindo has expressed in his poem: *In the Battle*:

“All around me now the titan forces press:
This world is theirs, they hold its days in fee;

I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
Is it not yet thy hour of Victory?"

On 6th November 1963 I saw the Mother in her room for our *Savitri*-work. After the work, I requested her to make me understand the following Message given by her:

"This world is full of pitiable miseries. But of all beings those are the most to be pitied who are so small and so weak that they cannot avoid being nasty."

Her explanation was:

"Child, when I was one with the Supreme—the Pity came to me because there are innumerable beings upon earth, who do not understand anything; they even know nothing about the Divine. They are full of ignorance and mischief—they are very small and cannot resist being nasty. They do not know what they are doing and why they are doing it. They are what they are.

"But I want these small beings to be transformed completely in order to become divine beings. I want perfection for everyone.

"This experience I summed up in my Message. First I wrote in French—just after the experience, on 17th September 1963. Then the next day I wrote the Message in English."

*

When the anti-divine forces attacked me indiscriminately, I totally forgot to pray to the Lord—I even lost faith in Him. I wondered whether the Divine existed—whether there is justice in His Kingdom. I was really annoyed with Him because He created such a wretched world.

Then suddenly one day I read in the *Bulletin* these cheering words from the Mother.

All things considered, looking at the world as it is and as it seems it must be irremediably, the human intellect decreed that this world must have been a mistake on the part of God and the manifestation or creation can be only the result of desire, desire for self-knowledge, desire for self-manifestation, desire for self-enjoyment and the only thing to be done is to put an end to this mistake as soon as possible by refusing consent to desire and its evil consequences.

But the supreme Lord answers that the comedy has not yet been wholly

played out, and He adds, "Wait for the last act, maybe you will change your opinion."

The Mother sent me a card dated 30-12-55. It depicted a peacock coming out of a leaping fire. Her words on the card were:

"This is the picture of the soul coming out victoriously from all the ordeals. I want this realisation for you."

I am grateful to the Mother for making me conscious of the World of Falsehood and its calamitous actions in concrete reality. Her Grace gave me tremendous endurance, patience, poise and peace and saw me through the most dangerous, severe and critical phases in my life. The Mother remarked about all the *Savitri*-paintings:

"They are living beings—full of light, vividness and vibrations."

It was really good that the Mother and I did not do the painting of *Canto Eight* of *Book Two*.

If Sri Aurobindo's Compassion, Strength, Help and Presence had not been with me constantly, I would have been smashed into pieces.

Here are some luminous verses from *Savitri*:

"Only were safe who kept God in their hearts:
 Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,
 The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,
 Casting a javelin regard in front,
 Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light."

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THE SAMADHI—ADORING ASSUMPTIONS

WHEN we think of the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and if we are sincere in our thoughts, we are brought face to face with Sri Aurobindo's Love; Love proven and demonstrated in His Supreme sacrifice for all beings, all life and all creation. This sincere thought also brings us face to face with the central theme—the new race that is to commence on earth and the special opportunity we have been given to participate in its commencement.

The Samadhi, which is the living loving union of 'Sri Aurobindo's Supreme Purusha consciousness as matter' and 'the Mother's Supreme Prakriti life as matter', is also our indispensable reference point for the Divine Life. This reference point is an outcome of the union depicted in the Samadhi by the great events of 1950 and 1973.

When we need spiritual strength to carry on our Sadhana firmly and consistently we may remember the Samadhi. The response will be positive and immediate and effective because it is of love for us. The joint Samadhi is the assuring proof of the continuity of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's indefinable love for each other. This love, alive and vibrant, radiates from the Samadhi. This love can constantly renew our faith in them. This love can constantly recreate us in the Divine Nature because we are the product of this love.

*

On December 5th, 1950, Sri Aurobindo's material envelope achieved the highest status of ultimate Supremacy. While He essenced all that He is into His body, He put in the front only His aspect of supramental light.

He achieved all this out of His love for the Supreme Mother. He did this by His total and complete surrender to the Mother—the Mother as material life. He did this for all creation—creation that is life and life that is the Mother. He did this to start new spiritual trends in the history of creation.

When He implanted His body into earth through the Samadhi, He actually transplanted all that He had essenced in His body. By this implant He incorporated the potentiality of all the worlds that exist in endless space—the worlds that are but the different aspects of His Truth. His implant was the result of the greatest sacrifice made by the Supreme Sovereignty that is Sri Aurobindo. He gifted Himself to all the worlds through the earth because the earth is the epitome of all that exists in endless space. When He so gave His gift He actually gifted Himself to the Mother because nothing exists apart from the Mother who is life and life-play.

Time was never so great as it became when Sri Aurobindo's body was put into earth because this sovereign sacrifice of the Supreme was an event that was unique: it had never occurred in time and will never occur again in time. It was a landmark that gave a spiritual curve to creation. All creations became spiritually

oriented in essence.

Earth is now a concentrated essence of Sri Aurobindo's infinite truths. This concentrated essence kept latent in earth will cause newer and newer fountains of His marvels.

The great event of 1973 summed up in the Samadhi will cause waterfalls of Supreme consciousness, Grace-filled, rising out from the Samadhi, Himalaya-high, and pouring all over, flooding the earth. The Mother put Her material envelope in the earth and blended it with Sri Aurobindo's. The 'consciousness-concentrates' of Sri Aurobindo housed in earth will enable the Mother to draw one fragrance after another from the infinite varieties lying latent. She will blend these essences one by one in Her status as Supreme Life. Such blendings will cause progressively marvellous manifestations which will be the result of Sri Aurobindo's *Lila* merging with the Mother's *Mahamaya*.

The Samadhi is the living symbol of the supreme fusion achieved in earth by the events of 1950 and 1973. The Samadhi embodies the eternal indivisibility of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In fact, the whole earth is their living Samadhi. Its centre is the total concentration of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's love for each other. The core of the earth is now surrendered to this love which fills it. This love holds the earth in itself. The earth is now immortal because of this love. The earth will never disintegrate.

Sri Aurobindo's light is spirally cyclic. This cycle is composed of light-ingredients derived from the truth of His love for the Mother. The continuous, inextinguishable cyclic restructure of 'this love becoming visible as light' in ever-increasing intensity is expanding and enlarging more and more in space. This light is causing to spread further and further the united embodied presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in boundless space saturating the space coverage with constant grace of this embodied aspect. It is like a supreme Sun whose light-speed will one day overcome the endlessness of space in infinite time to come.

This Supreme revolution, going unnoticed, is centred in and emanating from the Samadhi. It needs spiritual sight to visualise it. However, the certainty of this is present in our faith. If we keep our faith firm and aspire for visualisation, maybe we shall develop this spiritual sight.

*

The Samadhi is a great challenge confronting and questioning our faith. In spite of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother leaving their bodies, are we ready to accept that nothing has changed, that everything is progressing towards the goal of the Supramental Race, that nothing has altered? Are we accepting this or is our faith shaky?

*

When Sri Aurobindo left his body it was the first enactment of the hour of

the unexpected. When the Mother left, it was the second. The Samadhi now mysteriously conceals more aspects of “the hour of the unexpected”. Many of us have written of their return. Some say, “We were not ready so they left. How are we ready now that they should return?” Some say, “Their work is complete, so they left ” Some say, “They never believed in performing miracles. After all direct materialisation would be a miracle and they would not do it.” In fact we were not ready even when they were born as Avatars. Their return is therefore independent of our readiness. Their work is not complete because they are to be the first specimens of the Supramental Race. “Miracle” is a relative word. Because direct materialisation has not taken place before, it may appear as miraculous but they would be actually paving the way for the developed souls to return on earth by avoiding the usual way of taking birth. Those who firmly believe that they will not return are in for a pleasant surprise because for them their return will be “the hour of the unexpected”.

The Samadhi secretly conveys to us that there is no difference between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They are closely part of each other, too close to be separated. They are constant complementaries to each other. The only difference is the face and form. It would not be therefore surprising if a sadhak concentrating or meditating on the Samadhi might see Sri Aurobindo in the Mother’s form or the Mother in His form. The Samadhi is the Divine Sun where one cannot say which is the front and which is the back. It is both all over on all sides. The Samadhi is the representation of their eternal oneness.

*

In altogether different aspects, the Samadhi’s walls extend into a different dimension where their work in matter is going on. The Samadhi in this context has steps going into the huge wells of subconscious and inconscient darknesses which are being more and more illumined, making our Divine Parents’ way clear in the denseness of the darkness. Purification of the subconscious and illumination of the inconscient are an important process that is being channelised by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through the Samadhi.

POSTSCRIPT

Perhaps one of the effective ways of meditating while facing the Samadhi is to close the eyes and put the image of the Samadhi into our hearts. Having done so, we imagine that the same Samadhi which we are physically facing is also present in our hearts emanating Light, Love and Grace. This would link the Samadhi with our psychic being and with our body. The psychic being then would receive grace in the same way as when the Mother used to give it to us through Her eyes. Physically we would open up to Her transforming action.

JAGAT KAPADIA

ESCAPISM

THE words 'escape' and 'escapism' have acquired a derogatory meaning and association for the intellectuals and the media men. They imply running away from a problem or responsibility of life by taking to other ways where one has not to face such problems. In normal usage, they may mean an ostrich-like attitude, but we must look into their reason deeply. It must have some psychological necessity and justification in life and its wider parameters. In life and the social field, not to face a demanding situation and look for an excuse or an escape route may be a defeatist attitude, but in an overall picture of life it is better to examine what escapism amounts to.

Man in his physical life and preoccupation with material existence and physical consciousness, beyond a point, faces a condition of deadening inertia from which he must perforce find a way out. If there is nothing else to pull him out of the boredom, it will lead him to sleep and greater inertia—a kind of temporary death or unsubstantial oblivion. This is precisely because man, even when he is not psychologically very developed, must rise above physical inertia into a subtler world of his—a world of desire, a world of imagination, a world of fear and foreboding apprehensions, or some subtle other world which is also his abode apart from his gross physical existence. He cannot live without rising into it from time to time by whatever means are available to him. A labourer, after a day's hard work, may need the help of some intoxicant to force him to rise into this subtle world. If he is temperamentally of a passive type, he may lose himself in sleep, but this is not possible for a more active nature. He may go to see a drama, a film, an exciting match, where he can forget his fatigue and enter a freer inner world or take to drinks which pull him away from his ordinary milieu by compulsion. A modern educated man of some mental development often takes to reading novels or romantic literature or an adventure story, or anything that can lift him out of his boredom into his mental world.

Man lives simultaneously on many planes even when as an embodied person he occupies a physical frame. He lives and remains largely preoccupied with it in a mental world which very often is a world of desire, romance, amorous imagination, day-dreams or any other sphere of his vital or mental being, a freer world. It may be a world of driving ambition, planned ways and means of his activities, or it may be a religious or archetypal world of higher beings. It may even be literary or scientific imagination in a creative field. We must know for certain that man cannot do without this escape or elevation into his subtler being. It is not always that he achieves the ascension by self-effort. Often he may be carried away by waves of the vital, mental or religious energies circulating in the atmosphere or coming like waves from elsewhere. If he cannot do it by himself, he has to be lifted up by whatever means are active around him. From times immemorial man has freely taken to intoxicating and psychedelic drugs

and brews to enter into superior worlds.

One has to realise that this is a necessity of our fuller life and growth as it is constituted and must be accepted as a part of the game (like 'Snakes and Ladders'), in which we rise and fall in a certain rhythm or out of rhythm, moved by universal forces or desire-forces and uplifting aspirations. Religion in its true sense is not a form of *escapism*. It is a genuine movement of the human spirit in search of its origin.

Like quiet, sound sleep of the body, this rising movement is a form of rejuvenation of life and its energies and of achieving the poise of an elevated developed being. Intoxicating drinks may help, as they do help in quite a few cases. It is only when they become a habit that they not only lose half of their value, but produce negative results of a new kind of inertia. Habitual reading of novels and romantic stories also induces an inertia of a kind which does not easily permit coming down to the physical plane when required. This tendency may be called *escapism*, which cannot be supported or justified.

It may be remembered that the help of intoxicating drinks or other means will take one to a higher or lower world depending on one's inner condition and demand. The rise to the higher world must be voluntary, brought about by meditation, an inward movement of thought, reading of inspiring literature, listening to music or a dive into religious thought and experience or a natural movement of aspiration which the inner being experiences.

If we once realise this necessity of raising the consciousness, our attitude to many problems of life will become broad and clear, and include all forms and activities which lift up the being and fill it with light and joy, thus rejuvenating the being and bringing down a greater consciousness in our daily life. Art, music, literature, creative work or even social and humanitarian activity born of a large sympathy often lead us to higher states. There is a whole range of these higher states and how high we rise will depend on many factors. But to rise out of the mechanical movements of physical inertia is a necessity and its full value should be appreciated in any view of life.

Any upward movement leads us into universal dimensions and therefore a freer world-existence.

The physical world is the field of our play. Not to be able to meet the demanding situations of this physical field and face human problems is certainly a limitation that cannot be allowed to endure, but not to be able to dwell in or rise to higher and subtler planes of our existence is a forbidding error which life will not tolerate for long or the spirit permit without crippling atrophy.

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

AN APPRECIATION

If you love stories, no matter what your age, and if you have children at home who you want should grow up with happy and healthy attitudes, then go ahead and write to SABDA to send you a set of Daulat Panday's *The Tales of India*—in three parts costing a mere sixty-five rupees. You get a total of 350 pages of delightful reading material, 87 stories in all.

After reading the three books in three days, (for I could not stop reading them, so engrossing and interesting are they) I wished Daulat had written many more stories. For she has a natural flair for not only telling stories but weaving them out of the simplest little happenings in our day-to-day life.

In "A Visit by Meghraj" Daulat tells us of the coming of rain in a village as seen by a little girl through her window and all that the rain arouses in the child's heart and mind. If you have a special love for flowers, plants and animals you will find a plentiful fare. "My Lady Magnolia" is the story of how the marriage of the Sun and the Earth came about. Writes the author: 'And as Magnolia had brought about this union, the sun made her a present of a beautiful rainbow scarf.' Magnolia scattered the colours among all the creatures of the world making the earth 'one vast palette of a divine artist, and our dear mother earth was so happy, that she gave a gentle kiss of thanks to Magnolia, which became the perfume in her heart, and remained with her for ever.'

Story after story unfolds the sensitive, delicate and widely imaginative mind of Daulat, a lovely Parsi lady, to whom Sri Aurobindo had aptly given the name Lalita.

The last story in Part 2, "The End of the Journey" is perhaps autobiographical where Lalita tells us of her coming to Sri Aurobindo, the Lord and Master of her life.

"Man does not Live by Bread Alone", a slightly longer story than the others, is one about Oomrav the God-lover and his suspicious wife Aruna, who eventually realises the value of her husband. In the author's words: 'She ate the berries leisurely and commenced to feel a bit drowsy, for she had not slept well last night. But she could not afford to fall asleep now. She could see the fields and meadows on the other side of the river, where clusters of flowers, mauve and amber, nodded in the breeze. How beautiful was this place! And so quiet too. Not a sound could be heard on the earth, or in the sky, and as she gazed in the silent vacancy, all anger fell away from her, like a soiled cloak.'

All the stories have a subtle message, something to learn from and plenty of food for thought.

"The Four Princesses" is no story about princes and princesses meeting and marrying. They are the beautiful personifications of Quiet, Calm, Peace and Silence who have come in sequence to cure a sick little boy, Kabir. After reading this story one wonders about the cause and remedy of disorders in the body.

For dog-lovers is the moving yet happy tale of 'Dotty' the dog who goes to Poona. Here you almost see the world through the eyes of this little pup lost on a railway station of Bombay.

A wise little advice to teachers may be found hidden in the story "Heart-to-Heart". "Ranjit's Christmas Present" is about a child who had polio and lost the use of his legs and how Santa Claus brings him a wonderful joy. Not that the conclusions in Daulat's stories are inevitable. There lingers here and there a pleasant element of surprise. But more than anything it is the way she narrates, the details she gives, that create a living atmosphere and build the story.

All this is done through simple and perfect English. "She is very poetic." I said to Amal Kiran. "That is why she was so close to me," was his immediate reply. By the way, Lalita was Amal Kiran's wife, with whom he first came to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the year 1927. "She was a great story-teller," he added. That she indeed is. Or else how could she spin a most interesting story on the talk between the different saris in the wardrobe of a lady? And there too there is something to learn from the mouth of the walking-stick!

Music-lovers will love "Sonali and her Flute". Writes Daulat:

'Dawn was gliding in softly amid the dreaming wood. Sonali placed her flute to her lips and slowly imitated the Linnet's notes that she well remembered. She found that all other noises died away, as if the whole woodland had been alerted, and was listening intently.

'She went on playing softly and watching all around her. What a beautiful setting this was for her music practice!

'Ferns, much higher than herself, surrounded the place, and enormous trees where the breezes rustled and spread the redolent smell of wild flowers everywhere.

'On and on Sonali played her flute, like one inspired, and after a few minutes she saw that a couple of Blue Jays flew down from somewhere and perched on the lower limb of a nearby tree, chattering in answer to her music. They looked a bit puzzled at the sound of the flute which was giving out bird-like notes, yet they could see no birds nearby. They cocked their heads this way and that, but could not understand it. Sonali and her nursemaid could not help smiling at their excited antics.

'Then, in another tree, a big brown bird started chirping along with her music and the Jays.' She heard a rustle a few feet away, and wondered if it was a snake. For the latter was said to love the music of the flute. But to the girl's surprise, the beautiful head of a startled fawn appeared with its large eyes looking fearlessly at them, and listening as if hypnotised. The nursemaid had also seen the fawn, but they both sat perfectly still, and the beautiful creature stayed to enjoy the music.

'Now, quite close to her on the ground, Sonali found that a small squirrel ran out, sat up, and watched with approval as she played.

'By this time, the surrounding trees had many magic singers on their boughs, joining the concert and singing for all they were worth

'Sonali and her nursemaid were enjoying this amazing experience, and when she stopped eventually, as she had to do, she heard the birds chirping plaintively a few times, as if in complaint because she had ceased to play '

Here are interesting stories to read in one's leisurely hours to oneself or to the young members of one's family.

ADITI

NOTES OF ECSTASY

O IMMACULATE Ecstasy!
 Your fine notes have not receded
 In spite of my deafness and indolence.
 My fate, fashioned by your graceful hands,
 Is flexible, I could still new-shape it
 Inspired by your fresh music
 In my careless moments
 Behind the march of events,
 The dust of ignorance
 May screen my playful eyes,
 But never can they turn me blind,
 For always your sweetness and light
 Overlooking from the windows of eternity
 Present to me an inner sight
 To trace the architecture
 Of your fault-free creation,
 The sublime network of bliss.
 Are my steps really in tune
 With that soft blissful melody,
 Heaven-born and earth-sown?

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 1995)

SRI AUROBINDO's words are that "At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other mental activity."¹ There he had a first development of absolute surrender to the Divine and a complete identification which was very compulsive.

"Sri Aurobindo was in a state of total surrender to the Mother. When he was staying at Chandernagore, on being asked by Motilal Roy, he explained and even demonstrated to him what his surrender meant. This surrender led to an identification with the Mother, which is evidenced by his letters to Motilal Roy from Pondicherry as Kali. It was, in fact, a development of the Krishna-Kali experience he had in Alipore jail."²

Sri Aurobindo remarked later: "I could not question it. It was Sri Krishna's *Adesh*. I had to obey. Later I found it was for the Ashram, for the Yogic work."³

After receiving the *Adesh* Sri Aurobindo asked Motilal to make arrangements for his departure to Pondicherry. It was decided that he had to be accompanied by Bijoy Nag. Motilal wrote a letter to Sukumar Mitra (Krishna Kumar Mitra's son and Sri Aurobindo's cousin) to make necessary arrangements privately so as to keep his departure secret. Motilal wrote another to Amar Chatterjee of Uttarpara in which he informed him of Sri Aurobindo's intended departure from Chandernagore in the steamer *Dupleix* on the night of 31st March 1910. Everything done had to be top secret as there was an oppressive air of suspicion everywhere and police spies were posted at every corner of the city. Sukumar Mitra therefore decided to work through safe intermediaries.

In his reminiscences, Sukumar Mitra writes: 'It was 1910, around the end of March. Unexpectedly I received a letter from Sri Motilal Roy of Chandernagore. He informed me of Auro-da's desire to leave Chandernagore and go to Pondicherry. All the arrangements for his departure were to be made by me. And I had to be most careful in keeping all this a secret.... I resolved to work with the utmost care and circumspection at every step and in every detail. At that time half a dozen plain-clothes detectives used to sit near the tank in front of our house and keep watch. They shadowed me as soon as I came out of the house.... Since the police openly picked me up and followed me from the moment I left the house, I felt it better not to be directly involved in making the arrangements but instead to get the work done by giving instructions to two men I trusted. Even so what I told one I did not pass on to the other, and I did not allow the two to meet. . . I decided to send Aurobindo to Pondicherry by a French ship rather than by train, for to go by rail was, I decided, too dangerous. If he took the train he might be recognised during the long journey, for there were police spies on the alert at the stations. At that time a French shipping company called

Messageries Maritimes operated from Calcutta. Ships of other companies also sailed from Calcutta to Colombo but they did not halt at Pondicherry. There was another advantage in travelling by a French ship, a political one. As soon as the ship went beyond the British Indian coast, the passengers would come under French jurisdiction. The security Aurobindo sought by going to Pondicherry would be his once he had travelled eighty miles south of Calcutta.'

The two persons chosen by Sukumar to assist him in carrying out the plan were Nagendrakumar Guharay and Surendrakumar Chakravarty, both trustworthy Swadeshi workers from Noakhali.

In later years Nagendrakumar Guharay wrote about these events and to his reminiscences he gave the title *Farewell to the God*. He writes:

'One day in the last week of March, Sukumar-da showed me two steel trunks in a room of his house (the *Sanjvani* office) and said that I should take them away and keep them at my mess. I lifted the trunks a little and realised that they were full. Jokingly I enquired whether they contained bombs and pistols. Sukumar-da smiled and said that whatever the contents, the trunks must be kept with me. So I took them to my mess at 44/1 College Street. He asked me to meet him again the following day.

'The next day when I met Sukumar-da at the appointed time, he wrote down the names and addresses of two men and, giving me the necessary money, asked me to buy two second class tickets on the Colombo steamer. I cannot remember exactly whether I bought the tickets for Pondicherry or Colombo. Sukumar-da recalls that the tickets were for Colombo. He says that he did this to divert the police for, in the event of an enquiry later, their attention would first be directed towards Colombo instead of Pondicherry. I cannot recall the name of the steamer company but Sukumar-da still remembers it. It was Messageries Maritimes. But I certainly haven't forgotten the name of the ship on which we would bid farewell to the god. A picture of that ship, the *Duplex*, docked at Chandpal Ghat near the Eden Gardens of Calcutta still floats before my eyes. Sukumar-da had asked me to reserve a single cabin for two persons and I made the bookings accordingly. I then returned to the *Sanjvani* office and gave him the two tickets which he checked carefully. Handing them back to me he said, "Keep them with you for the time being—I will take them later."'

Under Sukumar's instructions Nagendrakumar had booked the passages in the names of Jatindra Nath Mitter of Uluberia (a town not far from Calcutta), and Bankim Chandra Bhowmik of Nilphamari, in Rangpur district, names to be assumed by Sri Aurobindo and Bijoy for the journey. Actually, they were not fictitious names and addresses but were taken by Sukumar from the subscribers' list of *Sanjvani*, his father's nationalist journal. This was done to mislead the police in case of any later investigations.

These arrangements took care of Sri Aurobindo's proposed journey from Calcutta to Pondicherry. The S. S. *Duplex* was due to sail in the early hours of

April 1, from Chandpal Ghat, Calcutta.

Sukumar now gave his attention to the problem of bringing Sri Aurobindo across from Chandernagore to Calcutta without arousing the suspicions of the police. He was determined to take the utmost precautions and decided that Sri Aurobindo should not be brought direct from Chandernagore to Calcutta so that the boatmen would be in the dark about his destination. So Sukumar planned the journey in several stages. Here let me explain that Chandernagore is situated on the western bank of the Ganges, whereas Calcutta is on the eastern side, about 35 km downstream from Chandernagore. Sukumar decided that the first stage of Sri Aurobindo's journey should be from Chandernagore to Agarpara, on the western side of the river, about halfway between Chandernagore and Calcutta. Whilst Sri Aurobindo made his journey, Amar Chatterjee would hire a boat at Uttarpara, situated on the western bank, cross the river and pick up Sri Aurobindo from Agarpara. However, they would still not proceed direct from Agarpara to Calcutta. Instead, Amar and Sri Aurobindo would again cross the river and take up position at another ghat on the western side of the river, a few miles from Uttarpara. In the meantime Nagen and Suren, accompanied by Bijoy Nag, would hire a boat at Calcutta and proceed upstream to the appointed ghat on the opposite side of the river below Uttarpara. It was further decided that in event of any delay, Amar's boat would not be moored at the ghat, to avoid attention being drawn to it, but move towards the mid-river. Each boat would fly a banner of the same kind which would be their flag of identification. Once the two boats had established contact, Sri Aurobindo would be transferred to Nagen's boat which would bring the party direct to the *Duplex* at Chandpal Ghat. Sri Aurobindo and Bijoy would then board the ship from the river by a rope-ladder, instead of using the gangplank. The captain's permission to do so would be taken in advance and at that time the passengers' baggages would be deposited in a cabin reserved for them.

It was certainly an elaborate plan, perhaps over-elaborate, but Sukumar considered that a zig-zag route and various diversionary tactics were necessary so as to hoodwink the police. Also, it seemed a good idea for Sri Aurobindo to board the ship straight from the river, as the police usually kept a sharp look-out from the adjoining road when passengers entered the ship from the jetty.

On the morning of March 31, the day prior to the *Duplex's* date of sailing, Motilal Roy saw Sri Aurobindo off from the Boraichanditola Ghat at Chandernagore. Motilal himself did not accompany Sri Aurobindo but deputed two of his trusted followers to be with him. In accordance with the plan, the boat moved downstream and crossed the river to reach Agarpara on the eastern bank.

In the meantime, Amar Chatterjee had hired a boat at Uttarpara and, along with his right-hand man Manmatha Biswas, set off for Agarpara. This journey also was uneventful and they had no trouble in making contact with Sri Aurobindo at Agarpara.

Now let us turn to the other participants in these exciting events and see what they were doing. On the same morning of March 31, Sukumar sent word to Nagen, to come and see him. To quote from Sukumar's memories: 'I called Nagendra and asked him to put Aurobindo's two steel trunks in the reserved cabin on the *Dupleix*, show the two tickets to the captain and lock up the cabin. Nagendra loaded the trunks on to the ship and returned to inform me. I then called Surendranath Chakravarty and told him that before noon he would have to hire a boat to go northward up the Ganges. I gave him a banner I had ready and asked him to fix it high on the boat. I told him that a similar banner would be flying on a boat which he would come across near a ghat on the opposite side of Agarpara. He should meet this boat, transfer the passengers to his own boat and carry them to the *Dupleix* which would be moored at Chandpal Ghat. Surendrakumar did not ask any questions nor did he show any undue curiosity. He left to do his work as instructed.'

When Nagen came back after having deposited the two trunks in the ship's cabin, Sukumar instructed him also regarding the boat journey that he would have to make with Suren to pick up two persons from another boat and take them to the Colombo-bound ship. Recalling the events Nagen writes: I enquired of Sukumar-da, "How am I going to recognise the men of the boat?" He replied, "I have explained everything to Suren." As Sukumar-da was saying this, all at once something flashed across my mind. I suddenly asked: "It isn't your Auro-da who is going, is it?" A little surprised he answered with a laugh, "Well, you have become very clever, haven't you? How did you know?" "It just occurred to me," I answered. "You guessed right," he said. "But be very careful that no one else finds out."

Around midday Nagen and Suren set off in a boat which went up the river with the object of meeting the other boat that carried Sri Aurobindo, Amar and Manmatha. All had worked out well so far. But now fate, or an unseen Hand, intervened. The two boats failed to establish contact either at the appointed ghat or in mid-river. There had probably been some delay in Nagen and Suren starting from Calcutta or the two boats might have passed each other without recognising the banner of identification which they were flying; whatever the reason, a very grave situation now developed.

Remember that Amar was neither aware of the arrangements which had been made for boarding the *Dupleix* nor did he have the tickets. Detailed instructions as well as the tickets were being carried by Nagen and now the two parties had missed each other. The whole sequence of carefully prepared arrangements had gone awry.

Amar was now getting increasingly worried. He decided that he could wait no longer for Nagen to turn up and instructed the boatman to proceed towards Calcutta. He rightly concluded that he must meet Sukumar to find out what had gone wrong.

Meanwhile Nagen and Suren, equally perturbed at having searched for and failed to find Sri Aurobindo, also decided that they must return to Calcutta and report to Sukumar. Nagen writes in his reminiscences: We went straight to Sukumar-da's house and told him what had happened. He asked me to go at once to Chandpal Ghat and take the two trunks out of the ship's cabin. It was then about six in the evening. I again rushed to Chandpal Ghat. There was no end to my scurryings that day.... On the ship I learned that the ship's doctor had finished the examination of the passengers and gone home. My heart sank when I heard this. I thought, 'All this labour and now our efforts are all wasted.'

However, Nagen was resourceful enough to meet the captain, obtain the doctor's address (he was a European) and get the captain to agree that if the passengers could board the ship by 10 or 11 p.m. with the required medical certificates, they would be accepted. Then there was a stroke of good fortune. Nagen goes on to write: The coolie who took the two trunks down from the ship's cabin and put them on the hired horse-carriage told me that he knew the doctor-sahib's house and was acquainted with the sahib's servant. He could arrange everything. In the same breath he also made it clear that I would have to give him and the servant a fat tip to keep them happy. The coolie was a Bengali, a Calcutta man and very clever. From his behaviour and words I could see that he could get the job done. But the cloud of anxiety did not dissolve completely, because we did not know yet when and where this unforeseen game of hide-and-seek with the two passengers would end.

To return now to Amar, Manmatha and the precious human cargo they were carrying. Alighting at a ghat near Chandpal Ghat where the *Dupleix* was berthed, they hired a carriage, put Sri Aurobindo inside and rushed towards Sukumar's house in the College Square area. Amar stopped the carriage some distance away from the house and sent Manmatha to enquire at Sukumar's place.

The situation was now full of danger. This was an area where plain-clothes policemen and informers were always on the look-out. Sri Aurobindo's face was well-known. If by chance he were recognised and the police tipped off, the authorities would take swift action. To make matters worse, Manmatha came back and reported that Sukumar was not in the house—he had apparently gone out in search of the missing party! There was nothing to be done except to wait. Amar recalling the events writes: My mind was restless as I sat with Aurobindo in the carriage worrying about where the others were. But he whose safety was causing me so much restlessness and agitation was himself untroubled, unshaken, motionless like a statue he sat there like a lifeless stone image.

After some time Manmatha tried again and on this occasion he succeeded in meeting Sukumar. The latter was aghast to hear that Sri Aurobindo was in that dangerous locality and asked that they immediately go back to the vicinity of Chandpal Ghat and wait there—he would arrange to send Nagen with the tickets etc to them. Subsequent events have been vividly described by Nagen in his

memoirs: 'By the time I arrived back at the mess with the two trunks, evening had advanced. I had asked the coolie to wait at the Ghat. Once again I rushed towards Sukumar-da's house. He was waiting for me in the outer room. I told him that I had removed the luggage from the ship's cabin. But before I could give him any other news he ordered me to take the two trunks and the tickets back to the pier immediately. He said that Amar-babu had taken Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag there by carriage and they were waiting for me. I told him about the arrangements I had made for the medical examination and getting the health certificate. When I asked him for the necessary money he went in at once, got the money and gave it to me

Once again I took the two trunks from the mess and loaded them on a horse-carriage; taking the tickets along with me I rushed back to Chandpal Ghat. There I saw Aurobindo's carriage waiting by the roadside. Our coolie was sitting nearby. When he saw me he at once ran up and said, "Your babus have come. I've already told them of our arrangement. It's late. If you waste any more time, the doctor sahib won't carry out the examination—he will have gone to sleep."

I sent my carriage away. The coolie put the two trunks on the roof of Aurobindo's carriage with some other things... I climbed in and sat beside Amar-da. Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag were sitting behind us. The coolie got up and sat next to the coachman. I don't remember the name of the street on which the doctor's house was situated but I recollect that it was in the European quarter on the other side of Chowringhee.

When we reached the doctor's residence, all four of us waited on the verandah. The coolie called the servant and came to terms with him. Before the doctor called in Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag, I gave them their tickets and told them the names and addresses under which they had been purchased. I recall that I gave the money for the doctor's fees to Aurobindo but do not remember the exact amount—perhaps thirty-two rupees.

We had to stand and wait on the verandah for almost half-an-hour before the doctor called Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag inside. During this period the coolie did something amusing that we all enjoyed a great deal. He came and whispered in my ear, "That Babu of yours—is he frightened? I guess he has never been near an Englishman before. Tell him the doctor sahib is a good man, he doesn't have to be afraid." The coolie had noticed the three of us chatting off and on but, noticing that Aurobindo remained completely silent and absorbed, he had reached his own conclusions. And, in a wink, he was before Aurobindo whispering to him softly: "Babu, why are you afraid? The sahib is a very good man, you don't have to be afraid." And as he spoke, he took hold of Aurobindo's arms and shook them as if to make him alert. The three of us silently enjoyed the whole episode, exchanging amused glances and laughing to ourselves. Aurobindo too smiled gently. The scene comes alive in my mind like a film even today

Hardly a moment later, the servant came and told us, "*Sahib Salam diya*" (the master bids you enter). Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag were led into the doctor's room by the servant. They came out ten or fifteen minutes later with certificates. I heard from Bijoy Nag that after a moment or two of conversation the sahib had realised that Aurobindo had been educated in England. When the doctor asked about this, Aurobindo merely said, "Yes".

'We climbed back into the carriage greatly relieved. I again sped towards Chandpal Ghat. We could not see the slightest trace of anxiety on Aurobindo's face. Later, we were to talk about this among ourselves and Amar-da rightly said: "The one for whom we are anxious was altogether calm like someone absorbed in the trance of samadhi." That Aurobindo was a man beyond anxiety or fear, that he was *abhu* (fearless) I had heard, but before this meeting I had not the good fortune of seeing it for myself.

It was almost eleven at night when the carriage reached Chandpal Ghat. After putting the luggage on the coolie's head the four of us boarded the *Dupleix* and entered the reserved cabin. The coolie arranged the luggage and then left. Bijoy Nag made Aurobindo's bed. Amar-da and I stood facing Aurobindo near the door. Amar-da took some currency notes from his shirt-pocket and gave them to Aurobindo saying that they were from Michhribabu (Zamindar of Uttarpara). He accepted the notes without a word. Then Amar-da lowered his head, and touching his forehead with folded hands made *namaskar* to Aurobindo. I laid my forehead on Aurobindo's feet as an expression of my reverence, and in the touch of that divine body I felt fulfilled.'

Early next morning, April 1, the *Dupleix* steamed out of Calcutta carrying Sri Aurobindo into the safety of the open seas and, four days later, on April 4, 1910, he reached Pondicherry where he was beyond the writ of British authority. His departure also marked the end of his physical association with his native province, for he left the shores of Bengal never to return.

How mysteriously does the Divine move in protecting those who surrender themselves to Him! Late in the afternoon of March 31, Sri Aurobindo's safety seemed to be in great jeopardy, for the carefully prepared plans for his getaway seemed to be wrecked. And yet, as we look back and reconstruct those distant events, it becomes clear that the delay in the two passengers boarding the ship actually proved a blessing in disguise. Had Sri Aurobindo reached the ship in time to be examined by the doctor, he would have faced much greater danger. It seems that those who made the plans so carefully had overlooked the fact that a Calcutta policeman was detailed, as a matter of routine, to be present at medical examinations. Sri Aurobindo could then have been easily recognised—with disastrous consequences. The records show that the police report for that evening merely stated that two ticket-holders with Bengali names did not turn up at the ship for the medical examination. It was not until April 4 that the police made further enquiries and learnt that two passengers had in fact embarked at

the last moment and sailed away the next day. And because of the late hour at which Sri Aurobindo boarded the ship (it was about 11.00 p.m.) the police pickets had left so that there was no one to watch his arrival. In fact at every stage of the events which culminated in his final departure to Pondicherry one feels the presence of Sri Aurobindo's all-seeing Friend and Master controlling the events. And Sri Aurobindo's own comments on the *adesh* which he received are wonderfully revealing: 'As for Adesh, people speak of Adesh without making the necessary distinctions, but those distinctions have to be made. The Divine speaks to us in many ways and it is not always the imperative Adesh that comes. When it does it is clear and irresistible, the mind has to obey and there is no question possible, even if what comes is contrary to the preconceived ideas of the mental intelligence. It was such an Adesh that I had when I came away to Pondicherry.'

Even in this age of skepticism and materialism can one really deny that God exists, is near us, with us and leads us if only we are ready to surrender ourselves?

After Sri Aurobindo's departure to Pondicherry he ceased all public connection with politics for reasons I shall presently explain. Here I would like to pause briefly and sum up what Sri Aurobindo did for the nation during the four brief but tumultuous years (of which one was spent in jail). His first achievement was to awaken the nation from its torpor and slavish mentality under the British rule. His magnetic personality and his inspired writings in the *Bande Mataram* exercised a profound influence and I have already stressed that it was he who first demanded, in clear and explicit terms, that India must have complete political freedom. Next, he spiritualised politics, placing God at the head of the National movement as its leader, inspirer, force and strength. He saw the country, not as a political or geographical entity, but as the very body of the Divine Mother—this was the key to the inspiration he provided. Lastly, Sri Aurobindo developed the theory and practice of Passive Resistance as a means of giving a direction to the political struggle with the aim of achieving freedom. These ideas and programmes were imperfectly understood at that time but they influenced (sometimes unconsciously) subsequent political developments, such as the non-cooperation movement, with far-reaching results and eventual success.

Sri Aurobindo's sudden departure for Pondicherry and thereafter his complete severance with politics left a vacuum which was all the greater because of the powerful impact he had made earlier. The British did not believe that he had in fact withdrawn from politics but suspected that he was preparing for revolutionary action in secret. On the other hand those concerned with day-to-day politics deplored his retirement and thought that he was lost to India and the world, being interested only in his own spiritual salvation. So he was called a truant or an escapist. Even now there is insufficient understanding of what led to

his decision. Yet Sri Aurobindo's own words in this connection leave little room for any misunderstanding. This is what he wrote in a letter to a disciple: 'I may also say that I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my yoga and because I got a very distinct *adesh*. I have cut connections entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward on lines I had foreseen by others and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence. There was not the least motive of despair or sense of futility behind my withdrawal.'

There is another important consideration we should not overlook. "Sri Aurobindo has stated that the very principle of his Yoga is 'not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning'. To say therefore that he had shunned the world is to misunderstand the nature and purpose of his Yoga. The vast range and significance of his spiritual force and action which he was now to radiate from Pondicherry—his 'Cave of Tapasya'—will unfold themselves more and more to us as we proceed further"⁴

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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MUSINGS ON PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of November 1995)

The Secret

THERE are many mysteries of life which cannot be solved without some magic word or mantra or incantation. Lives pass in futile attempts to force open those doors leading to the splendours of the Beyond. To enter the chamber of the Lord we need to discover the secret passage or rather the secret way of being which will gain us an entry into these inner regions of Peace, Purity and Perfection.

We try morality and religion and stoicism, we read the scriptures and chant mantras, we worship great Gods or small gods, we follow a particular messiah and enthusiastically plunder, butcher and rapé in the name of our ideal, also we hate our fellow-beings for belonging to another faith—all these crimes or deviations take place due to our misguided efforts to follow and realise the ideal, most often we do all these things in the name of God.

Why do we go off the track so horribly? The answer is: because we do not have the secret key that will open the doors to Divinity. There is a golden path which can lead us straight into oneness with the Lord and what is this path or this key? In her *prayer* of May 11, 1913 the Mother has given it to us,

... It is by becoming conscious of Thy Will and identifying ours with Thine that there is found the secret of true liberty and all-puissance, the secret of the regeneration of forces and the transfiguration of the being.

It is a very simple formula. We are not asked to perform harsh austerities, we are not asked to renounce the world and live in caves and deserts or on mountain-snows but only to take a certain stand or an attitude, it is to ask ourselves before speaking or acting the simple question, “What is the will of the Lord in this particular matter or situation?”—It may be a simple question; whether to take a second spoon of sugar, eat another slice, play cards or not, or an important one—whether to marry or not and if yes, then whom to marry? To kill or not to kill—as in Vietnam. The situation may be as simple as eating another slice or as complex as the one which faced Arjuna at the beginning of the Kurukshetra War.

First we have to take a conscious decision that we will do only what the Lord wants us to do and then by a constant life-long search to know the Divine Will and its implementation we would indeed enter into Oneness with the Divine. We would have to renounce our desires, preferences, premises and moral qualms. For the Divine Will may turn out, in some cases at least, contrary to what we consider proper or good, as it turned out to be in the case of Arjuna.

If we sincerely take this decision and stick to it then even if we sometimes misunderstand the Lord's intention he will lead us to himself and then we would become perfect instruments, we would become all puissant like the Divine. Of that state the Mother writes,

To be constantly and integrally at one with Thee is to have the assurance that we shall overcome every obstacle and triumph over all difficulties, both within and without.

O Lord, Lord, a boundless joy fills my heart, songs of gladness surge through my head in marvellous waves, and in the full confidence of Thy certain triumph I find a sovereign Peace and an invincible Power. Thou fillest my being, Thou animatest it, Thou settest in motion its hidden springs, Thou illumineest its understanding, Thou intensifiest its life, Thou increasest tenfold its love; and I no longer know whether the universe is I or I the universe, whether Thou art in me or I in Thee; Thou alone art and all is Thou; and the streams of Thy infinite grace fill and overflow the world.

Sing O lands, sing O peoples, sing O men,
The Divine Harmony is there.

This will be the sublime and beatific result of achieving Oneness with the Divine. The Mother gives us the *sutra*, the solution to all the ills of life and creation, the key to immortality, the formula to achieve omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. This is the thing which she emphasised throughout her life and even spoke of it in one of her very last talks on education on February 8, 1973.

... The Divine is in you but you are not fully conscious of it... it acts now as an influence rather than as a Presence. It should be a conscious Presence, you should be able at each moment to ask yourself what is... how... how the Divine sees. It is like that: first how the Divine sees, and then how the Divine wills and then how the Divine acts. And it is not to go away into inaccessible regions, it is right here. Only, for the moment, all the old habits and general unconsciousness put a kind of covering which prevents us from seeing and feeling. You must... you must lift, you must lift that up.

In fact you must become conscious instruments... conscious... conscious of the Divine.

Usually this takes a whole lifetime, or sometimes, for some people it is several lifetimes. Here, in the present conditions, you can do it in a few months. For those... who have an ardent aspiration, in a few *months* they can do it.

(*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol 12, p. 430.)

This is the promised Epiphany. The Lord himself has been awaiting us long. The time has come, if we try sincerely it can be now. In the beginning of this *prayer* the Mother tells us how to set about it,

As soon as I have no longer any material responsibilities, all thoughts about these things flee far away from me, and I am solely and entirely occupied with Thee and Thy service. Then in that perfect peace and serenity, I unite my will to Thine, and in that integral silence I listen to Thy truth and hear its expression

The secret is to occupy oneself *solely* and *entirely* with the Lord and his service, to forget this insect self, this egocentric life which goes round and round in the same grooves and leads to *nothing* while the Divine Life waits for us in vain.

*

Adventure of Physical Transformation

During Time's long drawn-out journey, which began from Inconscient Matter, this partially conscious humanity has slowly evolved. Though among the earthly creatures human beings are undoubtedly the most evolved, yet they are still very imperfect. They have achieved some spurious mental light, but of this light one can never be sure because it is an admixture of truth and falsehood and it partly illumines and partly obscures. Humanity has traversed only half the path and has arrived only at an incomplete victory. It is a dupe of Falsehood, the greatest of whose manifestations are disease and death.

As the Divine is a Totality and a Perfection, It cannot and will not accept, as the culmination of the evolutionary process, anything less than the total and perfect. Ultimately, in the Creation of the Lord *nothing* will be left undone or half-done, especially not here, on this earth, where things went off-course and where, instead of the Gods, the Asuras have held sway for a very long time and most tragically still do. How have they been able to defeat the Gods?

The Asuras have an advantage over the Gods. The bedrock of this Creation is inconscient Matter and the Asuras dominate through the inertia of Matter and its downward gravitational pull.

But what is Matter? Is it not a concretising of the Divine Consciousness? Has not the Divine Consciousness hidden herself in it? What holds the suns on their courses and what holds the atoms together? It is the Ananda set secret in things by the Lord or rather the Lord himself lying secret in Matter as Ananda—for he is Sachchidananda.

The time and necessity for thus *hiding* in Matter is over. The age of revelations is with us. The Divine has decided to stand uncovered and revealed.

Soon Godheads, palpable to the eye, will walk on our earth and She, Aditi, who has created these countless suns, will wrest back her own kingdom from the Asuras who have usurped her throne.

This victory over the Anti-divine Forces, over the Faces of Evil, will not be possible until Matter can be made divine, until in each grain of Matter blooms the *lotus of consciousness*. This lifeless Matter is in reality a limitless ocean of light. In this kingdom of Matter have now arisen two Super-Lotuses representing Avatar and Aditi.

Divinization of matter was the goal for which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the twin Avatars of Supermind, came down on the earth by the dark way of human birth and it is the mission for which both the Avatars of the golden Supermind were working independently, even before their meeting on the physical plane.

From the very beginning the Mother was absolutely clear about this Aim, this Ideal. The days of the denial of Life, of the abnegation of Physical Consciousness were over. The great Negation which abjured the Manifestation was to be tolerated no more. On June 15, 1913, the Mother declared in her *Prayers and Meditations*,

Even he who might have attained a perfect contemplation in silence and solitude would have arrived at it only by withdrawing from his body, by disregarding it; and so the substance of which the body is constituted would remain as impure, as imperfect as before, since he would have left it to itself; and by a misguided mysticism, through the lure of supraphysical splendours, the egoistic desire to unite with Thee for his own personal satisfaction, he would have turned his back upon the very reason of earthly existence, he would have refused like a coward to accomplish his mission—the redemption and purification of Matter. To know that a part of our being is perfectly pure, to commune with this purity, to be identified with it, can be useful only if this knowledge is later used to hasten the transfiguration of the earth, to accomplish Thy sublime work.

In these lines the Mother clearly declares the futility of a realisation which excluded the body—the divine agent in the material world. The yogis of the past, who advocated a retreat from life and called life *māyā* or illusion, were not of much use in the Divine's scheme of things and could not bring about any decisive change in the world because of this denial of the reality of Matter.

For this great Change, this revolutionary Step, this tremendous Transformation to take place is needed One Thing—the infusion of consciousness into the body. Tragically till now all our Godward endeavours have been an effort in a wrong direction, in effect all yoga has been a denial of the Divine Intention and Purpose in Creation. The great of the world have run away from or have

abandoned the arena of life for their own *conceived* good, call it Salvation or Nirvana or Moksha. They never paused to ask themselves what the purpose of Creation was, why this stupendous and splendid universe was created, why the stars were hung in the sky and why the million-faceted glories of life were made. They were bent only on withdrawing from it to plunge into some supraphysical splendour, so that a few yogis might participate in and enjoy the other-worldly enchantments. Because of this lure for the supraphysical realities, the chosen of the Lord became cowards and turned away from Earth and Life—thus leaving unfulfilled the Divine Will and Purpose in manifestation.

In this *prayer* we discover the reason for physical culture taking such a great place in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo; why with infinite patience, inch by inch, the Mother created this magnificent edifice of Physical Education in the Ashram, why she gave herself wholly to the Playground activities, why she played tennis up to the age of 80, and why her instrument Pranab had such an important place in her scheme of things and why she wrote to him on 18.10.57—

To my beloved child and faithful companion in the building up of the New World.

With my love, my trust and my blessings for ever.

Never before has the lofty ideal of otherworldly yoga been so mercilessly exposed, never before has it been termed a *misguided mysticism, the lure of supraphysical splendours, the egoistic desire to unite with Thee for his own personal satisfaction*. But, short of glamour and high-sounding adjectives, this is what the great yogis are in their reality, what they have as their motive.

The Mother's decree has gone forth and suddenly the elite of the world have begun to give top-priority to physical culture. The development of mind at the cost of body is becoming a thing of the past.

Thus is being fulfilled the purpose of the Mahashakti in things.

*

Unparalleled Courage

On June 17, 1913 the Mother wrote a small *prayer* in her *Prayers and Meditations*, which is an epitome of noble selflessness, an acme of courage. After reading it one realises why the world has not withered with the pain of existence. There is *Someone* who remains hidden yet sustains the excruciating labour of Life. How is it that life's constant meanness, its million and one crushing blows, its lacerating injustices and the crooked and loaded throws of Destiny do not kill the will for living and do not sap the strength for standing? Why don't humans give up?

Unseen by the outer eye, there is a Face of Compassion that looks with dreamy eyes filled with a mystic Love and a divine Ananda, which upholds us in adversity, supports us on the uneven path of our living and gives us fortitude to bear the mostly unbearable decrees of Destiny and cruel Death.

It is Divine Love which upholds the travails of the stars and keeps the suns on their courses. It arms with resignation the rebellious, with fortitude the weak, with wisdom the foolish. A soft Hand supports us on the sheer cliff-faces of impossibility. But for this Compassion, the sorrow and burden of living might have overwhelmed us and life would have sunk in the Nihil, the Inconscient.

On that day of June what the Mother prayed for is an act of immense courage and magnificent Divine Love. She wrote,

Grant, O Lord, that I may be like a fire that illumines and gives warmth, like a spring of water that quenches thirst, like a tree that shelters and protects.... Men are so unhappy and ignorant and have so great a need of help.

My trust in Thee, the certitude within me grow deeper day by day; and day by day too I feel Thy love more ardent within my heart, Thy light more brilliant and yet also more sweet; and more and more am I unable to distinguish Thy Work from my life and my individual being from the entire earth

O Lord, Lord, Thy Splendour is infinite, marvellous is Thy Truth; and Thy all-powerful Love shall save the world.

Most of the time we humans pray for the amelioration of our personal pains and for self-aggrandisement. We would have the Lord bestow on us the riches of the three worlds and perhaps even that would not be sufficient for our inflated ego. We may ask for the crown of Godhead or even the kingdom of Heaven. All our applications are for our own selves. There are rare saint-souls who pray for others and support those around them or far from them.

Only the Divine Avatar, the Divine Mother, *Aditi*, could have asked to bear the sorrows of the whole of humanity. I remember meeting a brave American lady who is trying to help innocent women battered by their inhuman husbands, left unsupported to face the world, with beauty and youth gone and no skill to fall back upon. Her sensitive heart was so overwhelmed and shattered by the excruciating agony of a hapless victim that she had to leave this line of work. Yet the Mother aspired for and undertook the mission of supporting the *whole of humanity* and she made this high sacrifice gladly. She bore all the sorrows of earthly beings. Once she revealed that she had suffered the pain of each of the concentration camp victims of Hitler.

We in the Ashram along with her children all over the world, had the experience of the warmth and support of her love. She listened to our imaginary

or real woes without impatience. The way her love inundated all those who entered her ambience was a marvel of Grace. Only the Divine can successfully suffer all the earth's ills. The Mother totally identified herself with Earth and all the earth's creatures. Countless were her wounds and if one day we see and participate in a Divine Life on earth, it will be due to her sublime self-sacrifice.

The day of the reward, the culmination, the Transformation draws near and one day each leaf and each flower will surely reflect her Face. She will smile at us from everywhere in a million ways and forms

*

That We Seek

How ardently we human beings desire happiness and how intense and all-absorbing is this quest for happiness. Our whole life is passed in seeking ease and joy and delight. As a child aspires for a new toy or a sweet, we adults too seek *toys and sweets* though of different types and varieties. It may be a particular person on whom we pin our hopes of a happy future, it may be a job or a possession or possessions. But a child soon tires of a toy and clamours for something more, in the same way we grown-ups never remain satisfied with what we have. And even the rare souls who are satisfied with what they have are cheated out of it—of youth and beauty by age and disease, and of possessions by Death. Therefore the quest for happiness has always remained elusive.

Then, is there no way to achieve fulfilment? Do we have always to chase mirages? Will happiness always run out through the holes of age, disease, treachery, evil and harsh *fate*? Will it remain ever out of our reach?

In truth *fate* is neither contrary nor capricious. It is we humans who are off the track. We have wrong premises and confused notions. We are headed in the wrong direction altogether. We have never recognised the true character or content of happiness and have mistaken sensual agitations and the satisfaction of arbitrary desires for happiness.

When everything fails, the bewildered seeker asks, "What then is true happiness?" On June 18, 1913 the Mother wrote,

To turn toward Thee, unite with Thee, live in Thee and for Thee, is supreme happiness, unmixed joy, immutable peace; it is to breathe infinity, to soar in eternity, no longer feel one's limits, escape from time and space.

This is in brief the formula for *happiness* but this is the one thing which human beings never connect with happiness. The Divine for them is something for whom uncouth, bearded ascetics live in burning deserts or harsh mountain caves, or those ready to lie down on a bed of nails and to fast and torture their bodies in diverse ways.

This harsh ascetic background, the Cross and the Stigmata, the ochre robe and the begging bowl are not the only things that frighten faint-hearted common humanity.

There is a paradox that bedevils mankind. In truth humans are afraid of happiness. They would rather enjoy the drama of partings and meetings, of ephemeral joys intertwined with long periods of pain. This is what is called the drama of life. Though human beings cry out loudly against cruel fate, they tremble at the very thought of being marginalised from the stage of life, of not acting any more. The Mother wondered,

Why do men flee from these boons as though they feared them? What a strange thing is ignorance, that source of all suffering! How miserable that obscurity which keeps men away from the very thing which would bring them happiness and subjects them to this painful school of ordinary existence fashioned entirely from struggle and suffering!

This then is the real question. Ordinary life, ordinary ways and means, a time-bound life—how can these guarantee happiness? Happiness cannot be won by chattels of death. Time the inexorable executioner will cut with one stroke the creeper of our worldly desires. How can anybody be truly happy with the sword of mortality hanging over one's head? We may beguile ourselves for a while with whatever joys are thrown to us by the cruel empress of Death, who intends to sever our thread of Life?

As the Mother emphasises, the ordinary existence consists of struggle and suffering. Then why not let go? Why not give the responsibility of one's life to the Divine and then as a result achieve true happiness?

Satisfaction of desires never sates.

(To be continued)

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CULTURE AS THE SOURCE OF DEVELOPMENT

In the last article we have said that our approach to the subject of culture is not that of a pure philosopher or that of a sociologist but that of a “developmentalist” seeking in it the source of inspiration and creative force for building the society. We have also indicated how culture can be a source of development. This article explores that idea in greater detail.

The Nation and its Culture

First of all we have to be clear about the meaning of the word “Culture”. Let us begin with the dictionary meaning and proceed to the deeper Indian vision. Webster’s Dictionary offers several interesting definitions. One of them which corresponds to the orthodox view is “the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties by education” and the second one which reflects the modern anthropologist’s view is “the total pattern of human behaviour embodied in thought, speech, action, artifacts and dependent upon man’s capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge”. As used in modern social sciences, especially in the field of anthropology, culture is defined as “man’s entire social heritage; all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills he has acquired as a member of the society;” it is the “distinctive way of life of a group of people, their complete design for living.”¹

But the Indian view of culture proceeds from a deeper spiritual vision of a nation. In this perception, a nation is not a unit occupying just a piece of earth but a living organic being. Just like the individual, a nation also has a Soul, Mind, Life-force or Vital Energy and a Body. Let us imagine the Nation as a great Goddess. Culture with its religion, philosophy, science, art and literature forms her mind, the economic, social and political activity is the energy of life-force animating her being; its ecology and geography, that is, its rivers, mountains, natural environment and material resources and her people form her body. Behind all this is the soul of the nation which is an aspect of the divine Power of the universal Spirit and Self, embodying the deepest spiritual self of the nation and expressive of its unique genius and its mission, purpose and destiny in the evolution of humanity. Culture is the first and the most direct expression of the mind and soul of the nation—the soul expressing itself through mind—in its outer life. It is the expression of the inner being of the nation whereas its economy, society and polity which are the expressions of its vital energy and its geography and ecology which form her body constitute the external being of the nation. This Indian concept of a nation can no longer be dismissed as “mystical”. Modern scientific thought is moving closer to it. Some of the latest developments in system sciences admit the possibility of a collective or group-mind which in turn is embedded in the cosmic Mind. As Fritjof Capra writes in his famous

book, *The Turning Point*:

“In the system concept of mind, mentation is characteristic not only of individual organisms but also of social and ecological systems. As Bateson has emphasised, mind is immanent not only in the body but also in the pathways and messages outside the body. There are larger manifestations of mind of which our individual minds are only subsystems . In the stratified order of nature, individual human minds are embedded in the larger minds of social and ecological systems, and these are integrated into the planetary mental system—the mind of Gaia—which in turn must participate in some kind of universal or cosmic mind.”²

“Because the systems view of mind is not limited to individual organisms but can be extended to social and ecological systems, we may say that groups of people, societies, and cultures have a collective mind, and therefore also possess a collective consciousness. We may also follow Jung in the assumption that the collective mind or a collective psyche also includes a collective unconscious. As individuals we participate in these collective mental patterns, are influenced by them and shape them in turn In addition the concepts of a planetary mind and a cosmic mind may be associated with planetary and cosmic levels of consciousness.”³

The Essence of Culture

Thus in our Indian view culture is not only the “social heritage” but primarily the mental, moral and spiritual heritage of a community. The culture of a community expresses its highest ideals and aspirations, its governing values, its unique aesthetic, moral and psychological temperament, and its distinctive and special genius; it is the expression of the mental, moral and spiritual energy of the community. The unique and essential features of a nation’s culture can be discerned in the vision, values and ideals revealed in its Religion, Philosophy, Art, Literature and the values of its social organisation. There is an external dimension of culture made up of its customs, habits, norms, rituals etc., but this is only the outer form and not the inner core of culture. We may include society and politics also as parts of culture, but they belong to the vital dimension of a collectivity and the practical outward frame through which the cultural ideals of a society are worked-out in the external life. Sri Aurobindo describing the Indian vision of culture says:

“The culture of a people may be roughly described as the expression of a consciousness of life which formulates itself in three aspects. There is a side of thought, of ideal, of upward will and the soul’s aspiration; there is a side of creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis, intelligence and imagination; and there is a side of practical and outward formulation. A people’s philosophy and higher thinking give us its mind’s purest, largest and most general formula-

tion of its consciousness of life and its dynamic view of existence. Its religion formulates the most intense form of its upward will and the soul's aspirations towards the fulfilment of its highest ideal and impulse. Its art, poetry, literature provide for us the creative expression and impression of its intuition, imagination, vital turn and creative intelligence. Its society and politics provide in their forms an outward frame in which the more external life works out what it can of its inspiring ideal and of its special character and nature under the difficulties of the environment. .. Together they make up its soul, mind and body.”⁴

A major difference between the modern anthropological and the Indian approach to the study of culture is that in the former the predominant stress is on the social and external aspects of culture like behaviour, customs, habits, rituals, skills and the outer way of life while in our Indian view the primary emphasis is on the psychological and subjective dimensions of culture, like its insights, ideals, values, temperament and genius.

Utility of Culture

We have discussed the meaning of Culture. What is the pragmatic utility of Culture for development?

Lasting success in any collective human endeavour depends on four factors: right discipline, right motivation, right aim and unity of purpose. For all this, culture holds the key. Let us look at the first factor, discipline. Nothing can be achieved without discipline, individual and collective. But if the discipline is to be effective, it must be natural and spontaneous, to be spontaneous it must be in harmony with the natural temperament of our being. It is culture which reveals the natural temperament of a group of people. So in any organised human endeavour, a collective discipline which is in harmony with the cultural temperament, genius and values of the group has the greatest chance of success in achieving its aims. The second factor is motivation. The culture of a nation is the expression of the inner being of the nation whereas economics, society and politics form the more external part of a nation. The cultural values, because of their deeper origin, have a greater power of motivation than the economic, social and political motives and values. They can touch the deeper self in man and evoke a deeper, nobler and more spontaneous response from human beings; they can invoke the moral imperative in man and inspire him towards self-sacrificing action; they can release the dormant moral and spiritual force in human beings and release a tremendous amount of creative energy of a higher kind into a group or a nation. Sri Aurobindo's role in the freedom movement is a typical example to prove this point. The Indian freedom movement picked up momentum and gathered a cohesive strength only after Sri Aurobindo gave a spiritual turn to the movement by bringing into it the Indian spiritual and cultural values. He gave an inspiring ideal to the movement based on the unique spiritual

ethos of our nation. His idea of the nation as an aspect of the divine Mother and his conception of nationalism as the sacrifice and service to Mother India and his far-seeing vision of the future of India as the spiritual guru of the world and the inheritor of the Asiatic destiny turned a slumbering nation into a volcano of nationalistic fervour. The eminent historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar writes in his well-known book on the Indian freedom movement

“While Tilak popularised politics and gave it a force and vitality it had hitherto lacked, Aurobindo spiritualised it and became the high-priest of Nationalism as a religious creed.... The freedom movement was specially or more directly inspired by the teachings of Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda, and Aurobindo who placed the country on the altar of God and asked for suffering and self-immolation as the best offering for His worship”⁵

The third factor is the right aim. In our Indian view each nation-soul has a mission and purpose to fulfil in the evolution of humanity and is endowed with a special capacity or genius to fulfil this mission. To discover and develop this unique genius and fulfil this mission is the aim of all national development. Here again it is culture which reveals the national genius and indicates the destiny of the nation.

The fourth factor is the unity of purpose. Here again it is cultural unity which can create a lasting and stable unity among a group of people. For culture binds the heart and mind of a people through an inner unity of consciousness based on a common conception of life and shared values whereas economic, social and political unity can create only an uncertain external unity forced by outer circumstances. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“After all, the spiritual and cultural is the only enduring unity and it is by a persistent mind and spirit much more than by an enduring physical body and outward organisation that the soul of a people survives.”⁶

Towards a Culture-specific Development Strategy

So the thesis we put forward here in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s vision is that a human collectivity or group can achieve the greatest heights of creative excellence, wholesome well-being and progress when its development strategies are in consonance with the unique cultural temperament and genius of its people. So the best path to the “sustainable development” of a nation or a community is to evolve its own culture-specific development strategies and selectively absorb and assimilate the external influences from other cultures in the light of the vision and values of its own cultural ethos.

The most recent example of successful implementation of a culture-specific development strategy is the case of modern Japan. Postwar Japan, like independent India, opted for western technology and production technique and the basic principles of the management theory developed in the West but with a

crucial difference. She has selectively absorbed and assimilated them into the unique values of her cultural ethos. For example, in the field of management Japan took over all the productivity techniques of the West but rejected the values of the organisational culture of the West like individualism, competition, toleration of conflict and its motivation system which encourages personal self-esteem, achievement and ambition of the individual ego. The Japanese have evolved an organisational culture which is in harmony with their unique collectivistic cultural values like group-harmony, subordination of the individual to the group, co-operation, loyalty, service to the nation, gratitude, humility, respect for elders, etc. Japanese companies have rejected the rigid, cold, formal businesslike and impersonal organisational climate of the West and have evolved a warm, filial and flexible organisational environment based on brotherly relations between superior and subordinates, job security, life-long employment, loyalty to the company or the "Organisational family", national service, etc.—all these features reflecting the unique cultural values of Japan. Now it is recognised by most of the modern development-sensitive experts that the main factors behind the Japanese success are culture-development strategies, innovative assimilation of western techniques with her own unique cultural ethos and hyper-nationalism. Inadequacy in these three areas is probably the cause of the relatively poor performance of modern India especially on the socio-economic front. The factors behind the Japanese success also indicate the new direction which India has to take to regain her lost pre-eminence in the comity of nations.

The lesson we have to learn from modern Japan is that while the "hardware" of development for maximising the productivity and efficiency of the outer socio-economic machinery can be imported from other cultures, the "software" of development for motivating, inspiring and developing people or the "human resources" has to be drawn from the roots of our own culture.

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THE PRAYERS TO SŪRYA AND AGNI IN THE ĪŚĀVĀSYA UPANIṢAD

(Continued from the issue of October 1995)

6. Explanation of the Text

WE notice four distinct ideas in verse 15: (i) the Truth covered by a golden lid; (ii) the lifting of the cover; (iii) the action of the Truth; and (iv) the vision of the Truth

(i) From the point of view of man's consciousness, his truth of existence is in the true knowledge, *satyam*. But the knowledge he now possesses is only about the truth of form "composed of the concepts and percepts of the mind". The truth of existence is beyond his reach, for it is covered by "this brilliant formation" of the mind, *hiranmayena pātrena*. (ii) As he is accustomed to the concepts and percepts, the rays rather than the light of the Truth, he finds it difficult to overcome his habit and remove the cover by his unaided effort. Hence his prayer for help, *tat tvam pūsannapāvrru*. (iii) For him to succeed in his effort the grace of the Lord must take hold of him and operate from within his mental being. This is the law and action of the Truth, *satyadharmā*. (iv) When the mental being in us is recast according to the law and action of the Truth, the brilliant formation is replaced by the truth of existence

In the next verse, verse 16, the prayer to Surya is concluded. Here it begins (i) with the epithets of Surya, then comes to (ii) the process of arriving at the self-vision of Surya and closes (iii) with the emergence of the all-vision of Surya culminating in the cry, "He am I."

(i) There are four epithets and each of them brings out an important aspect of Surya. He is *pūṣan*, because he increases "the seed of the Truth" in our conscious being. He is *ekarṣi*, because he "enables us to arrive finally at oneness". He is *yama*, because he is "the ordainer of the right law of action in us, the law of the Truth". He is *prājāpatya*, because "all becoming is born in his Being who himself exceeds all becomings and is their Lord".

(ii) In the process of arriving at the self-vision of Surya there are "two successive actions": one, an arrangement of "separate intuitions of the image and the essence of the image" behind our percepts and concepts in their true relations to each other, *vyūha raśmīn*; two, the emergence of the truth of unity when "totalities of intuitive knowledge" are formed, *samūha tejah*. As the mental being has to move from truth of form to truth of existence, it passes through *vyūha* and *samūha* as if the truth of form precedes the truth of existence. Once it reaches the truth of existence it reverses its characteristic action and learns "to proceed from the whole to the contents" As a result, the mortal sight is transformed into an immortal vision. Now no longer exists the golden lid, and

the godliest form of the Truth, *rūpaṁ kalyāṇatamam*, stands fully revealed.

(iii) The vision of Surya's godliest form leads to the perfect perception, the perception of the universal Puruṣa who inhabits all, *idam sarvam*. The vision then culminates in the realisation of Puruṣa as the true self of the individual, *so'ham*

7. Prayer to Agni

Now the prayer to Surya, having accomplished its goal by getting the vision of the Truth, gives rise to another prayer, the prayer to Agni. Man is both a mental being and a living being, for he progresses not only by knowing but also by becoming in life what he has gained from the process of that knowing. It is therefore natural that after opening the mental being the living being also must be opened—the vision of Surya must awaken now the will of Agni in us.

The prayer to Agni (verses 17 and 18) develops through three steps—first of all, its focus is on the Life-principle; secondly, it sees the Will as the chief element of the Life-principle; and thirdly, it concludes with a prayer for a straight passage to the immortal felicity.

(i) In us Vāyu, elsewhere called Mātariśvan, is distinct from the body, though it appears to be indistinct from it and to disappear along with its disappearance. In actual fact it is the body, not Vāyu, that is destroyed, *śarīram bhasmāntarāṁ*. For Vāyu is an immortal Life-principle, *anilam amṛtam*. It is called immortal because it is superior to the body and not affected by the body's birth or death. It is the connecting thread, *sūtrātmā*, of the whole series of bodily lives. It helps the mental being in its forward movement by carrying it from body to body and preserving all that needs to be preserved for the benefit of its growth and development. It is in this Life-principle that the will of Agni is to be awakened.

(ii) The awakening of the Life-principle depends upon the awakening of the Will in us, *kratuḥ*. It is the Will that guides, controls and expresses the Life-principle in our actions. However, the Will operates within limitations, limitations imposed by the very actions of which it is the source and cause. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "We live in what we are doing, we do not control what has been done, but are rather controlled by our past works which we have forgotten." The only way to free the Will from its limitations is to transform it into the divine Will, Agni, which is fully conscious and therefore lord of all actions done now or in the past. Behind the individual will is the divine Will seated in the Life-principle. The process of transformation begins when the individual will remembers and becomes conscious of all that has been done, *kr̥tam smara*. When the whole series of past actions is thus remembered and mastered, the individual completes the process of transformation and becomes indistinguishable from the divine Will. The will of Agni is thus fully awakened in the Life-

principle. By the combined action of Surya and Agni man attains a perfect divine birth and lives here as a son of Immortality, *amṛtasya putra*.

(iii) The process of transforming the human into the divine Will is not effected by the unaided individual effort. To remember the whole series of past actions and gain a conscious control over all that acts from the darkest parts of our being is a much too difficult task. For we have to deal with the forces of sin which make our fulfilment a crooked process. Hence the invocation of Agni's help with an attitude of complete submission, *bhūyīṣṭhām te nama uktim*.

Agni "knows all manifestations, all things that take birth in the worlds. It is Jatavedas, that which has right knowledge of all births. It knows them in the law of their being, in their relations to other births, in their aim and method, in their process and goal, in their unity with all and their difference from all". With this knowledge It protects Its devotees from crookedness and leads them by the good path towards "a felicity full of the spiritual riches, *rāye*".

8. Relation of the Text to Other Verses

Having explained the sense of the last four verses in the light of the valuable clues provided by the figures Surya and Agni, Sri Aurobindo proceeds to show that in them the thoughts of the preceding verses find their natural culmination, their logical development. We shall note, however briefly, the three important movements of thought that Sri Aurobindo has found in the foregoing verses, verses 1 to 14, so as to relate them to the final movement. In doing so we shall be guided by the clues Sri Aurobindo himself has given. In this respect the following passage deserves special attention:

Thus the fourth movement indicates psychologically the double process of that attainment of Immortality which is the subject of the third movement, the state of bliss and truth within and the worlds of Light after death culminating in the identity of the self-luminous One. At the same time it particularises under the cover of Vedic symbols the process of that self-knowledge and identification with the Self and all its becomings which is the subject of the second movement and of that liberated action in the assertion of which the first culminates. It is thus a fitting close and consummation to the Upanishad.*

If we carefully read the above passage, we find that Sri Aurobindo invites our attention to four ideas common to the two major parts of the Upaniṣad, part one comprising the first fourteen verses and part two the last four verses.

(i) the double process of that attainment of Immortality which is the subject of the third movement (verses 8 to 14).

(ii) the state of bliss and truth within and the words of Light after death culminating in the identity of the self-luminous One (verses 8 to 14).

(iii) the process of that self-knowledge and identification with the Self and all its becomings which is the subject of the second movement (verses 4 to 7).

(iv) the process of that liberated action in the assertion of which the first culminates (verses 1 to 3).

Of these four, we shall focus on (i), (iii) and (iv) and leave aside (ii) for the moment, for this will have to be discussed separately under another heading.

(i) The third movement begins with verse 8 and closes with verse 14. Particularly in verses 11 and 14 two aspects of immortality are set forth—enjoyment of immortality through the Self, *vidyayā amrtam aśnute*, and enjoyment of immortality through the Birth, *sambhūtyā amrtam aśnute*. One becomes eligible for these enjoyments only when one crosses beyond death i.e. when one is “liberated from all limitation in the dualities”.⁹ To enjoy immortality through the Self cannot be the object of manifestation in the world, “for that the Self always possessed”. The object of manifestation is fulfilled only when immortality is enjoyed through both the Self and the Birth, *vidyā* and *sambhūti*. We understand the first because the Self is “beyond birth and death, beyond the chain of cause and effect, beyond all bondage and limitation”.¹⁰ But we do not understand the second because the Birth is “caught in the wheel of Nature’s delusions” and therefore an obstruction to the enjoyment of immortality. For the same reason it cannot be combined with the Self in the matter of enjoyment of immortality. Birth is a bondage as long as the Self is not attained by the individual; once this is attained the liberated individual accepts it as a process of becoming “subject to the soul and not binding upon it and by this free and divine becoming enjoys immortality”.¹¹ This is the double process of attainment of immortality mentioned in verses 11 and 14. Sri Aurobindo points out that in the last four verses (15 to 18) the Upanisad goes back to the two processes and describes them in psychological terms—in terms of the vision of the universal Puruṣa who is the true self of the individual (*so’ham asmi*) and also in terms of surrendering the human will and realising the divine Will in the Life-principle, Vāyu

(iii) Each existence in the world has two aspects—essence and form. In essence it is the Self and in form it is the active formation of that Self. Thus all existences are one in the Self and united together through the becomings of the Self. Self-knowledge arises when one sees the Self in all and all as becomings in the Self. The vision of the Self is only “the beginning of wisdom”, for “one must become what inwardly one sees”. When the inner life is changed according to

what one sees, the individual reproduces in his Self “the divine act of consciousness by which the one Being, eternally self-existent, manifests in itself the multiplicity of the world”,¹² *sarvāni bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt*. The vision and the realisation of the Oneness, *ekatvam*, are the teachings of verses 6 and 7. Śrī Aurobindo explains that these two processes, the vision accompanied by the realisation, are taken up and worked out through the symbol of Surya in verses 15 and 16. In verse 15 the vision as well as the action of the Truth is prayed for, *satyadharmāya drstaye*. In the next verse (verse 16) the prayer is granted: the vision of the divine Purusa in all opens up; then the action of the Truth in the conscious being leads to the realisation “He am I”, *so’ham*.

(iv) In the first movement verse 1 teaches that one should renounce all desires of the heart and enjoy the world. To enjoy thus without desires is to enjoy the world as the habitation of the Lord, to live and work for Him in the world, *tena tyaktena bhujīthāh*. In order to bring out the intended significance of renunciation the second verse calls attention to two things: (1) as the renunciation is psychological, neither physical life nor works should be given up; (2) when man lives and works with an attitude of renunciation, he escapes bondage, *na karma lipyate nare*. For it is the desires that bind, not the embodiment or the works. Man’s aim is therefore fulfilment of the Lord’s will, not his own personal will. According to Śrī Aurobindo, verses 17 and 18 develop this idea of surrendering the personal in favour of the divine Will through the Vedic symbol Agni. Agni is the symbol of divine Will and submission to Agni symbolises submission of the individual to the divine Will, *bhūyisthām te nama uktum*. When the divine Will is fully awakened in the Life-principle, all movements of life express immortality instead of death, *rāye*.

Thus what we witness in the last four verses of the Upanisad is not only a psychological process of attaining an integral union with the Lord but a grand unification of all the main threads of the preceding verses under the figures of Surya and Agni.

(To be continued)

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CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

(Continued from the issue of November 1995)

Meeting at the Court

HE kept his promise some days later, to make up for the shortness of his previous visit, as he had put it. But the wealth of his teaching was immeasurable in terms of time and impatience never troubled my heart.

“Today, I shall take you to another plane,” he said when he came. “I want you to observe the workings of those who are there, who also assist the Re-creating Will.”

Full of anticipation, I offered him my hand to guide me. In no time we travelled, moving past splendidly flowered gardens and groves, stretching as far as the eye could see. Statues and fountains graced the scene everywhere. Fascinated, I tugged at his hand.

“Could we go a little slower, Christalis? I would so much love to observe these wonderful statues and...” There was no reply. He led me on taking little notice of my desire to halt before each one of them. Having learnt to obey his guidance I kept quiet.

Presently, we arrived at what appeared to be our destination. Forgetting the statues, I stared ahead of me in disbelief. There, in front of us stood a silver palace in all its shining glory. Shafts of alternating coloured lights moved round it in perpetual motion. Circulating coloured nebulae.

We walked up to the gate of the palace and Christalis knocked upon it three times. He held up a silver rod which had a golden globe on it rotating in the same direction as the nebulae around the palace. How it came to be in his hand at this moment, I had little time to ponder, for the gate was parting to let us in.

No one was there to receive us. Having entered, we proceeded through gem-inlaid halls. But Christalis allowed me no time to gaze upon them leisurely. In inner speech he told me to be concentrated, as we were to enter an Assembly of the Ruler of this place. Holding my hand still, he stopped and pressed my forehead firmly—then led me to seats that flashed our names in small lights above them. This touch enabled me to understand what happened in this immense Hall and to be in tune with the place and the event.

This was a day of importance. An all-encompassing meeting was to be held at King Peace’s court of Higher Mind. Invitations were sent out earlier by special couriers to monarchs of other kingdoms and their high-positioned eminences

to accompany them. All were invited to assemble here at the given time. In other words, the heads of State from many a realm were to attend what promised to be an important meeting.

Unusual in its way, because this time rulers of the Lesser Kingdoms were also invited to attend in full office. Those who had sworn allegiance after the Great Victory, declaring their desire to serve the Higher Light henceforth. They were powerful, important kings of their regions, who had supported the Hostile Lords before in their own resourceful capacities. Their alliance was essential to the new order of things, as they were not only powerful but knowledgeable in the numerous arts of ruling and held sway over vast numbers of subjects and territories.

They came, gloriously attired in bright-coloured regalias. They wore splendid crowns and costly ornaments, carrying the emblems of their empires on golden sceptres entwined with platinum. Emblems of serpents, dragons and bats, ferocious-looking wolves, bears and many quite unbeautiful-looking specimens. They had brought rich offerings from their vast treasures as tokens of their allegiance and laid them before the throne of the King.

They were given seats in front, opposite the notables of this land, where King Peace-in-the-Mind ruled and where sat the leaders of the neighbouring states in unison with him. The meeting was duly opened with a brief address by the King.

“You will all know that my reign is founded on the strong pillars of Rightful Love, on Truthfulness and Bliss. I and my Queen constitute jointly the first supporting pillar of Peace, Right Planning, and Reconstructing Force—all combined in one.

“I call before us now the three Lords of the Sash; the upholders of my magistracy to present us with the reports on the findings of the mission on which they were sent. The Lord of Rightful Love who wears the rosy Sash, the Lord of Truthfulness of the pure white one, and the Lord of Bliss of the golden Sash.”

The three rose from their seats. They came before the King and the Queen and offered their salutations. They were tall, majestic in figure and countenance, nobility sat upon their brows—humility the mark of their disposition. Not a murmur was heard in the great Hall when they appeared—those best among the best—the Lord Defender Truthfulness, Rightful Love, and the shining Lord of Bliss.

No ordinary ones were these, for much depended upon their vigilance and sleepless observation of any hint of wrong at any place in the Kingdom. Wherever some such activity was found, they sent out members of their ranks forthwith to set it right. The result of their labours and their influence upon the lands were beyond reproach in every field of existence. Everyone therefore was anxious to hear what they had come to say.

One by one they related the most important findings of their mission of

search, reporting the impressive signs of progress they observed on earth. They spoke of the numerous points of contacts they had found in some of the people. Those who were open in their beings to receive the visits from the higher realms who came to them in response to their inner calls.

Some, they said, had received only flashes of visions, or fragments of messages given them; brief but true revelation in their sleep, which they remembered on waking. These were important signals of awakening, sufficient to rouse their spirits when their minds were still. They were contemplative of higher realities and brooded in silence longingly to go toward it. Would they be able to elevate themselves to those yet unknown but already desired heights? The seed of light was germinating inside the sombre soil of sleeping ignorance.

Then there were others, they continued, who were able to receive more of the higher consciousness coming to them. Able to receive also the teachers from those regions. These were assisted to planes of existence past their bodies and minds and were recipients of teaching given them at those levels. Their earnest prayers for help were credentials of their sincerity and faith, which brought down to them the helpers.

The arms of heaven opened wide to receive those homecoming souls. Many august beings were pressed into service on the graded planes of consciousness, to impart their own knowledge in the field of sciences and skills. Nothing was left out of learning. Even navigation, agriculture, town-planning, economy and budgeting, to name but a few fields, were covered. Others were to teach the higher Wisdom, Truth and the Arts.

But more by far were the beings attending, who were selected in accordance with their inclinations; souls in preparation for their future descent.

Those who were at the Court listened intently to these sublime reports and held visions of a glorious age to come to earth.

As if all they had heard until now was not wondrous enough, more was to come. These reports were a saga told not of yesterday, but of the future.

There stood the three before the throne and one after another continued to report the findings of their missions...

They came to tell that the all-enduring Earth Mother had joined in to meet the Will of the Supreme Lord, and that of the large heart of Heaven, the Mother Divine's. Her rousing force reverberated through all recesses of her kingdom with a great awakening call. She thrilled with delight, understanding that the dark aeons had ended, the burden which she alone had borne for so long. The liberation of her kingdom beckoned, the Light of Heaven was coming nearer to her. Accordingly she set her own forces in motion—spreading her benevolent healing rays in all directions to work their ways into every clod of earth. She sent forth her best servers—and in fact all workers at hand, all those who were ready to offer their labours to clean the body of her domain. Indeed, the very soil was continuously calling to her, asking to be unburdened of all the dross and harmful

substances that had penetrated it.

Soon the fields would be heavy with grain again and new blooms would sway in the winds: thus predicted the three.

The same was said of the rivers, the lakes and the great oceans, whose prayers for purification could be heard without a pause. The murmurs of their dwellers sent pleading melodies with each lapping wave that kissed their shores.

Those three, on their mission, sought audiences from the Monarchs and Queens of the watery realms of the oceans, and were received everywhere with due ceremony. The message of the High had already reached them before and their hearts were gladdened.

“Has then the time of the New World come?” they asked.

“Not yet,” replied the three, “but preparations for its descent have begun. It is for this reason that we have come before your throne. How will you serve the Great Aim?”

The responses of these greats were in keeping with their august stations. Accustomed as they were to rule unopposed till now, even so they promptly showed due humility and declared their desire to serve the Supreme Will alone, paramount above all other interests they may have had before.

Vast were their stores of treasures, safely kept in secret caves deep below the waves. They wished to offer them to the Divine, as contribution for the re-creation of the World.

“All through the centuries gone past”—the Kings of the oceans related—“these treasures were collected, from countless seafaring vessels that sank in battles, or in violent storms,—and the great store of pearls from our harvests, such as none has seen on earth, are here. Let it be known,” they declared, “that all these are for the asking; an offering to the Most High, when in accordance with His wishes the new World will be built. Carry with you this knowledge and our obeisance. We await His calling and the time.”

“Great Kings of the oceans, we salute you and your Queens,” replied the Three. “Your offers are tokens of the splendour and justice of your reign. As for now, we shall take inventories of your offered wealth, with your signature and own seal, and place them before our King, who is himself but a server of the Supreme. All of these are for Him alone. Meanwhile who but yourselves should be the custodians of what you have guarded for so long? And now farewell until we meet again, whenever we are sent. Accept our salutations and live in the Light.”

The three went on, mindful to seek out the hidden whereabouts of the great temples and palaces of old, where once the gods themselves dwelt on earth, the demi-gods and the great rulers of their time

They sought through places of splendour that had long sunk below the rivers and lakes, or now lay buried deep below layers of earth formed in the cycles which men call history. Others lay covered by sterile, unyielding sands of vast

deserts, once fertile lands feeding and sustaining proud nations that had lived upon them, but dwelt there no more.

Not one of those ancient places was found without a guard, and they greeted them with due respect for they understood the meaning of their visit. All down the centuries they had waited for the messengers of the Light to signal to them the end of their vigil and they knew that they had come. Eagerly they offered them kingly ornaments and crowns, but they accepted none.

“Not for us these objects of worship which once glittered on august brows to bedazzle men. The Sash is our crown and our adornment. Show to us instead all your treasures, it is these we came to observe.” Well did they know what wealth they held, amassed by rulers or deities at the zenith of their reigns. Immense chambers sprang open before them, revealing great works of art and artisanship lost to later generations. River boats were kept there complete with gold-inlaid oars, chariots of splendour with silken baldachins and vast armouries of past ages lay now unused, assuring no ruler of his might.

Huge jars of precious gems, others heavy with golden coins, bearing the countenance of the rulers of the time. Objects collected in ransom or plunderings from the conquered—or taxes levied on rich and poor alike.

Small whispers could be heard within these walls, sighs and groans of the wounded and the slain. Wailing of women and cries of children echoed here. The Lords of Light gave their redeeming signs to free them from their sorrows and told them of the coming of God’s Love.

“Be joyful,” they told them. “We herald to you the coming of the Great Age.

“The august places will be revealed again to light, and their contents of wealth put to higher use. You and the guards will be freed and rewarded as is fitting, you will help us in the new order. Await the rule of the Light that is to come! We shall return.”

Their labours were tedious, painstaking, and at times when they were in need of rest, they would choose a secluded mountain cave and call to the Light to replenish their waning energies.

At last they sought out the hidden caves of the snow-clad mountains, where precious scrolls of learning were held, well-guarded from untimely discovery. Here had lived some of the ancient Guardians of the world, whose age and whereabouts only heaven’s records held. Their bodies were of the fresh beauty of youth, graceful and full of radiance. No need of food had these Greats, the air and their spirits sustained them.

They readily received the visit of the Lord’s Messengers, those of the coloured Sash, and bestowed their blessings upon them.

No need of words was here, for they knew the coming and passing of the great cycles on God’s earthly stage, where men and nations were actors in His play, and they knew the Gods who directed them. They knew also how it was,

when the Supreme's Light was eclipsed and the earth was covered with darkness, and they also knew that the time was near for its imminent rise again

These, whose bodies were filled with light, made ceremony in their honour, and lit the sacred fire with fragrant sandalwood, throwing handfuls of grains collected from the harvest of the slopes. They poured into the flames clarified butter made from the milk of their own mountain-cows that fed on the herbs and flowers which grew on a hidden, wind-protected clearance nearby.

All seated there worshipped in the silences of their hearts and further pledged their services to the Most High. When they rose, the Lords of the Sash bade those Greats farewell at last and those sublime Guardians sent to the King Peace-in-the-Mind three gifts with them to take. A vessel of pure water of the mountains that no man had visited, another one of honey brought to them by the bees that knew them, and some rare herbs which cure all ills.

Replenished from this exalting meeting, they turned toward the East to return to their own realm, where Higher Mind was King, who spread his influence over spheres that covered the earth.

There they stood now, those Lords of the Sash before the throne. Having concluded their reports, they placed before the King and the Queen the three jars sent by the enlightened ones, the Guardians of Earth.

Next they laid out the many maps and inventories they had collected and dutifully presented them. Instantly the King called his treasurer and the guards, and ordered these precious, uniquely important objects to be locked away in the place appointed for their storing. Only then did he rise to embrace his best-trusted eminences and thanked them for their services.

Those seated at the Assembly-centre of the Court listened with awe to all that was related before them. They understood that the horizon was very bright and prayed in their hearts that they too might be found as worthy as these, when they themselves would be called upon.

None would stir from their seats, lest they miss one word of these incomparable findings—for nothing of what they heard today had ever been heard in the past.

The King, before closing the session, called upon all the invited personages to pledge once more their unflinching support to the aims of the Great Re-creating Will, and reminded them that none should ever rise against that Light again.

"The wheels of Heaven's time-marking force moves with God-generating rapidity, as you will know," he said. "Be ready therefore! Let the Light Supreme lead all your actions, lead all of us; happy servers of the reawakened New World."

He raised his hands over the Assembly. "The Light be yours," he called out, and those there with one voice replied:

"The Light be for All."

(To be continued)

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

73. A MANTRA TO CURE SNAKEBITE

HAVING gained the appellation 'Thirunavukkarasar' from Lord Siva Himself and converted a Jain king to a Saivite, he started on a pilgrimage to various shrines in the Chozha kingdom. He composed a number of hymns during this period. These impassioned songs embody his deep and mystical concepts of the Absolute.

During this pilgrimage Thirunavukkarasar entered a temple city called Thingalur (Thanjavur District). There he stayed at "Thirunavukkarasar Choultry", got free food from "Thirunavukkarasar Feeding Centre" and drank water at "Thirunavukkarasar Watershed".

"Who is this Thirunavukkarasar, after whom many of these places are named?" he asked.

"What an ignoramus you are!" heckled the choultry-keeper. "He is a great Saivite saint and all the seven worlds know about him. Your dress and the stripes of holy ash on your brow and body proclaim that you are a Saivite. Never again ask such a question and betray your ignorance."

"Oh, I see! I never knew that his name had spread far and wide... By the way have you ever seen Thirunavukkarasar?"

"Who? Me?... No! Not even Appoothi Adigal, who runs all these hospitable centres... I am sure one day Thirunavukkarasar will grace our city and bless it."

"Who is Appoothi Adigal?"

"Oh! I can't expect you to know of him, when your knowledge of Thirunavukkarasar himself is next to nothing... Appoothi Adigal is a devotee of Lord Siva, and an ardent admirer of Thirunavukkarasar and his..."

"I would like to meet him," interrupted Thirunavukkarasar. "Please guide me to his home."

The choultry-keeper said, "Why me?... Any child in the street will be glad to take you to Appoothi Adigal's home."

Appoothi Adigal beamed at the sight of the ochre-garbed ascetic, welcomed him and took him inside his home. He then introduced his two sons by saying, "This is my first son. He is Thirunavukkarasu I. Here is my second son, Thirunavukkarasu II."

Taken aback, Thirunavukkarasar asked, "Can't you find any other name for your second son? Did you run short of names?"

"It's out of sheer love for that noble soul, who has suffered so much for Saivism. I revere him... By the way, have you ever seen that great saint in your life?"

Thirunavukkarasar smiled and said, "Yes! Yes! I see him whenever I drink

water from ponds.”

Appoothi Adigal was not slow in reading between the lines. Unable to contain himself, he fell at the feet of the saint. Tears of joy glistened in his eyes.

Meanwhile Appoothi Adigal's wife had prepared a sumptuous dinner. She had sent her eldest son to fetch plantain leaves from the garden.

Thirunavukkarasu I entered the garden with a knife. He searched for big and broad plantain leaves, cut a few. On his way back home a cobra sank its fangs into his leg and slithered away into the garbage heap.

He was sure of his death. He wanted the leaves to reach home. He rushed, gave the leaves to his mother and fell down with a thud.

His parents examined him. Blood was oozing from the snake-inflicted wound. His body turned blackish-blue with venom. His heart had stopped its work.

The parents kept the body of their son hidden in a corner. Without showing the least sign of sorrow, they invited the saint to dine with them.

The plantain leaves were washed clean. On these plates food was served.

Appoothi Adigal's entire family sat with Thirunavukkarasar, to satisfy the latter's wish.

“One is missing... Where is he? Call him,” said the saint.

Appoothi Adigal didn't want to tell a lie. Tears trickled out of his eyes. His wife sobbed. She gave out what had happened.

“Huh!... Bring his body here... immediately,” commanded Thirunavukkarasar.

As soon as the body was placed before him, Thirunavukkarasar burst into melodious prayers to Lord Siva in ten successive verses, the first praising the one element of His limbs and ornaments, the second two, the third three, the fourth four and so on, until the tenth describing the ten elements.

To the joy and amazement of Appoothi Adigal and his family, the corpse showed signs of life. Seconds later the boy opened his eyes. He was quite alive.

The mystical interpretation given to the ten successive verses sung by Thirunavukkarasar to revive Appoothi Adigal's dead son is that the venom gets into the head of the victim through ten stages. The venom can be removed from the system only gradually by degrees. A quatrain was sung for every stage and the peculiar kind of chanting added a fantastic occult force with the result that the venom lost its power and the boy got back his life. These ten quatrains titled “*Vidam Theertha Thirupathigam*” are still considered a powerful mantra for curing snakebite.

(More legends on the way)

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-ninth Seminar

23 April 1995

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SRI AUROBINDO'S AND THE MOTHER'S TEACHING

PROSPECTS OF WORLD-UNION

Speech by Arvind Akki

THE urge towards human unity is the pressing need not only of the present generation, for the vision of the need is as old as civilization itself. From times immemorial all over the world numerous prophets, sages, poets and thinkers have envisaged an order of world unity. In the Vedic period the great Rishis affirmed the world as a family: *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. The Bible stresses the same importance of unity. It says, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Also it has conceived of the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth. There is too a revealing line in the Mahabharata, "The whole world of mortals is but a single body." Our ancient Rishis have affirmed that the One has become the Many. If we look deep into the origin of things we find that behind their apparent diversity there is an essential unity. This is what Nature is endeavouring to realise. But it is left to man to see how far he can collaborate in achieving this great ideal of human unity.

World-unity is one of the five cherished dreams of Sri Aurobindo which he has mentioned in his birthday message of August 15, 1947. He states, "The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind..."¹ Although Sri Aurobindo calls it a dream, it should not be understood in the ordinary sense of the word. Such dreams are realities in other planes of existence. As Sri Aurobindo himself points out, "Ideals are truths that have not yet effected themselves for men, the realities of a higher plane of existence which have yet to fulfil themselves in the lower plane of life and matter, our present field of operation"² To cite a concrete example: The Mother had seen in 1920 that India was already free in the higher plane and yet it took fully twenty-seven years to materialise in the physical plane. So we can be sure that one day Sri Aurobindo's dream of world-unity will be realised, for it is the will of the Lord. There is absolutely nothing to doubt, for Sri Aurobindo has put

his divine seal and sanction on it. He says, "I have never had a strong and persistent will for anything to happen in the world—I am not speaking of personal things—which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster."³

Any great idea if it has to be materialised takes a very long period. It may seem to be an impractical thing to an average man but Sri Aurobindo, pointing out the shortsightedness of such skeptical notions, says, "What the practical man of today denies as absurd and impracticable is often enough precisely the thing that the future generations set about realising and eventually in some form or other succeed in bringing into effective existence."⁴ And we do not realise that the common facts of today were once the impossible dreams of yesterday!

We may ask ourselves: Why should we seek after human unity? Is it only to prevent future world-wars? Is it only to establish peace in the world? Or should we strive to accomplish human unity just because it is a great ideal? But we know that man is essentially selfish, so how can we ever think of realising human unity? We have seen that throughout human history men have waged wars: there have been religious, economic, racial and regional conflicts and exploitations all over the world. In recent times the enormity of destruction and bitter experiences of the two World Wars and other crises have threatened the existence of mankind. For there are already nuclear weapons which can wipe out the very existence of man on earth

In spite of all these happenings the group life of man is now not the same as it was in his earlier stages. He has gradually widened his love of his family, his clan, his village, his city-state and his nation. But he has yet to embrace the whole of humanity as his own group. Man is now becoming more rational a being than before, which enables him to see the world in a global way. The development of science and technology, wireless communications and so many other sophisticated instruments have brought men closer to one another. If we at all have to solve international problems, it has to be done by the voluntary participation of all nations, with goodwill, love, sacrifice for the common good and mutual help and understanding.

Empires both ancient and modern could never endure for a long time because theirs was merely an outer political unity imposed by force, whereas the nations have endured because they possess the real inner unity. As Sri Aurobindo says, "At the present stage of human progress the nation is the living collective unit of humanity."⁵ So it is futile to expect a lasting world-union to be formed only by an administrative, a military, a political, a social or a communistic unification, for it will never be a durable unity. It tends to be mechanical and artificial and would lose the cohesive force of life. The individual will be deprived of his freedom to develop his individual capacities. But it is through the free individuals that all human progress has been achieved. The State cannot be the best means of human progress. As Sri Aurobindo says, "... the State is not an

organism; it is a machinery, and it works like a machine, without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create.”⁶

Nature never tends to follow a rigid method of development. It always seeks for new methods and a rich variety. Sri Aurobindo has emphasised this truth a great deal: unity in diversity or diversity in oneness. Uniformity is a great obstruction in Nature’s way of working even though it may temporarily bring a strict organisation and order for the efficiency of the state. Sri Aurobindo says, “The State tends always to uniformity, because uniformity is easy to it and natural variation is impossible to its essentially mechanical nature; but uniformity is death, not life.”⁷ If we always impose uniformity upon ourselves, then “we crush Nature’s initiative and habit of intuitive self-adaptation.”⁸ Therefore Sri Aurobindo has no hesitation in saying, “Better anarchy than the long continuance of a law which is not our own or which our real nature cannot assimilate.”⁹

A lasting world-union would need an outer form of unification cemented by an inner psychological feeling of unity. Out of the several forms of external unification, Sri Aurobindo strongly favours the federal systems in the present world conditions. To put it in his own words, “A confederacy would give the greatest freedom to the nations constituting the World-State, but this might give too much room for fissiparous or centrifugal tendencies to operate; a federal order would then be the most desirable. All else would be determined by the course of events and by general agreement or the shape given by the ideas and necessities that may grow up in the future. A world-union of this kind would have the greatest chances of long survival or permanent existence.”¹⁰

But the inner psychological feeling of oneness is the more important factor in arriving at world unity. As Sri Aurobindo says, “A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future.”¹¹ We have to arrive at the “mutual recognition of human brotherhood, a living sense of human oneness in thought, feeling and life.” If we arrive at this, then “the one necessary psychological change will have been effected without which no formal and mechanical, no political and administrative unity can be real and secure. If it is done, the outward unification may not even be indispensable or, if indispensable, it will come about naturally, not as now it seems likely to be, by catastrophic means, but by the demand of the human mind, and will be held secure by an essential need of our perfected and developed human nature.”

This “religion of humanity” should not be understood in the ordinary intellectual sense. It is not “a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite.”¹² It has a wider and deeper spiritual sense. Sri Aurobindo says, “A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being

are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here.”¹³

A deep psychological transformation is the *sine qua non* of human unity. And in realising this great ideal India will have a major role to play. Sri Aurobindo has proclaimed: India alone can lead the world to peace and a New World order. The Mother too has repeatedly stressed India’s luminous future. She says, “The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is the living soul. India is incarnating the spiritual knowledge in the world. The Government of India ought to recognise the significance of India in this sphere and plan their action accordingly.”¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo is the modern prophet of human unity. In his book, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, the Master has thoroughly dealt with all the problems that obstruct the realisation of world-union. Today, the world has only to turn to him in order to receive his divine guidance and inspiration to fulfil humanity’s age-old ideal of world-union.

Friends, I conclude my speech with these illumining words of the Mother, “By following the Divine Will India shall shine at the top of the spiritual mountain and show the way of Truth and organise world unity.”¹⁵

References

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