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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;
From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,
Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,
Evolving from the worm into the god.

A spark of the eternal Fire, it came
To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.
The inconscient sunless Night received the flame,
In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn

Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape
Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,
Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep
A thinking creature who can hope and love.

Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,
The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 147)

SUPERMIND AND MIND OF LIGHT

THE essential character of Supermind is a Truth-consciousness which knows by its own inherent right of nature, by its own light: it has not to arrive at knowledge but possesses it. It may indeed, especially in its evolutionary action, keep knowledge behind its apparent consciousness and bring it forward as if from behind the veil; but even then this veil is only an appearance and does not really exist: the knowledge was always there, the consciousness its possessor and present revealer. This too is only in the evolutionary play and on the supramental plane itself the consciousness lives always in an immediacy of knowledge and acts by a direct immediacy of knowledge. In Mind as we see it here the action is very different; it starts from an apparent absence of knowledge, a seeming ignorance or nescience, even, in material Nature, from an inconscience in which any kind of knowing does not seem at all to exist. It reaches knowledge or the action of knowledge by steps which are not at all immediate but rather knowledge at first seems utterly impossible and foreign to the very substance of this Matter. Yet, in the blindness of Matter itself there are signs of a concealed consciousness which in its hidden fundamental being sees and has the power to act according to its vision and even by an infallible immediacy which is inherent in its nature. This is the same Truth that is apparent in Supermind but is here involved and seems not to be. The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it, in which the secret of this connection becomes evident and palpable.

The Truth-consciousness is not only a power of knowledge; it is a being of consciousness and knowledge, a luminous many-sided dynamis and play of the omniscient Spirit; in it there can be a spiritual feeling, a spiritual sensation, a spiritual essentiality of substance that knows and reveals, that acts and manifests in an omniscience which is one with omnipotence. In Mind this Truth-consciousness and these workings of the Truth-consciousness can be there and even though it limits itself in Mind and has a subordinate or an indirect working, its action can be essentially the same. There can even be a hidden immediacy which hints at the presence of something absolute and is evidence of the same omnipotence and omniscience. In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover: for this too is a truth-consciousness and a self-power of knowledge. This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate. What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same: there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place. It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge; we have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-conscious into ignorance. The

methods also are those of a self-luminous knowing and seeing and feeling and a self-fulfilling action within its own borders; there is no need to seek for something missing, no fumbling, no hesitation: all is still a gnostic action of a gnostic power and principle. There has been a descent from full Supermind into Mind, but this Mind though a self-limited is not yet an agnostic consciousness unsure of itself or unsure of its workings; there is still a comprehending or an apprehending consciousness which goes straight to its object and does not miss its mark or have to hunt for it in the dark or in insufficient light: it sees, knows, puts its hand immediately on things of self and things of Nature. We have passed into Mind but Mind has still not broken its inherent connection with the supramental principle.

Still there is an increasing self-limitation which begins even with Overmind: Overmind is separated by only a luminous border from the full light and power of the supramental Truth and it still commands direct access to all that Supermind can give it. There is a further limitation or change of characteristic action at each step downwards from Overmind to Intuition, from Intuition to Illumined Mind, from Illumined Mind to what I have called the Higher Mind: the Mind of Light is a transitional passage by which we can pass from supermind and superhumanity to an illumined humanity. For the new humanity will be capable of at least a partly divinised way of seeing and living because it will live in the light and in knowledge and not in the obscuration of the Ignorance.

Still, again there will be a difference between the superhuman and the human, a difference in nature and power but a difference especially in the access and way of admission to the Truth-consciousness and its activities: there may indeed be two orders of its truth, direct and half-direct, immediate and near or even only a reception at a distance. But this we must consider afterwards; at present it is sufficient to mark certain differences in the descending order of gnostic mind which culminates here. We may say that there is a higher hemisphere of our being in which Mind, luminous and aware of its workings, still lives in the Light and can be seen as a subordinate power of the Supermind; it is still an agent of the Truth-consciousness, a gnostic power that has not descended into the mental ignorance; it is capable of a mental gnosis that preserves its connection with the superior light and acts by its power. This is the character of Overmind in its own plane and of all the powers that are dependent on the Overmind: the Supermind works there but at one remove as if in something that it has put forth from itself but which is no longer entirely itself but is still a delegate of the Truth and invested with its authority. We are moving towards a transitional border beyond which lies the possibility of the Ignorance, but the Ignorance is not yet here. In the order of the evolutionary descent we stand in the Mind of Light on that border and a step downward can carry us beyond it into the beginnings of an ignorance which still bears on its face something of the luminosity that it is leaving behind it. On the other hand, in the ascending order of the evolution we reach a transition in which we see the light, are turned towards it, reflect it in our consciousness

and one further step carries us into the domain of the Light. The Truth becomes visible and audible to us and we are in immediate communication with its messages and illuminations and can grow into it and be made one with its substance. Thus there is a succession of ranges of consciousness which we can speak of as Mind but which belongs practically to the higher hemisphere, although in their ontological station they are within the domain of the lower hemisphere. For the whole of being is a connected totality and there is in it no abrupt passage from the principle of Truth and Light into their opposite. The creative truth of things works and can work infallibly even in the Inconscient: the Spirit is there in Matter and it has made a series of steps by which it can travel from it to its own heights in an uninterrupted line of gradations; the depths are linked to the heights and the Law of the one Truth creates and works everywhere.

Even in the material world which seems to us a world of ignorance, a world of the workings of a blind and inconscient Force starting from inconscience and proceeding through ignorance and reaching with difficulty towards an imperfect Light and Knowledge, there is still a secret Truth in things which arranges all, guides towards the Self many contrary powers of being and rises towards its own heights where it can manifest its own highest truth and fulfil the secret purpose of the universe. Even this material world of existence is built upon a pattern of the truth in things which we call Law of Nature, a truth from which we climb to a greater truth until we emerge in the Light of the Supreme. This world is not really created by a blind force of Nature: even in the Inconscient the presence of the supreme Truth is at work; there is a seeing Power behind it which acts infallibly and the steps of the Ignorance itself are guided even when they seem to stumble; for what we call the Ignorance is a cloaked Knowledge, a Knowledge at work in a body not its own but moving towards its own supreme self-discovery. This Knowledge is the covert Supermind which is the support of the creation and is leading all towards itself and guides behind this multitude of minds and creatures and objects which seem each to be following its own law of nature; in this vast and apparently confused mass of existence there is a law, a one truth of being, a guiding and fulfilling purpose of the world-existence. The Supermind is veiled here and does not work according to its characteristic law of being and self-knowledge, but without it nothing could reach its aim. A world governed by an ignorant mind would soon drift into a chaos; it could not in fact come into existence or remain in existence unless supported by the secret Omniscience of which it is the cover; a world governed by a blind inconscient force might repeat constantly the same mechanical workings but it would mean nothing and arrive nowhere. This could not be the cause of an evolution that creates life out of Matter, out of life mind, and a gradation of planes of Matter, Life and Mind culminating in the emergence of Supermind. The secret truth that emerges in Supermind has been there all the time, but now it manifests itself and the truth in things and the meaning of our existence.

It is in this series of the order of existence and as the last word of the lower

hemisphere of being, the first word of the higher hemisphere that we have to look at the Mind of Light and see what is its nature and the powers which characterise it and which it uses for its self-manifestation and workings, its connection with Supermind and its consequences and possibilities for the life of a new humanity.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 588-92)

*A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
 A body instinct with hidden divinity
 Prepared an image of the coming god;
 And when the slow rhyme of the expanding years
 And the rich murmurous swarm-work of the days
 Had honey-packed her sense and filled her limbs,
 Accomplishing the moon-orb of her grace,
 Self-guarded in the silence of her strength
 Her solitary greatness was not less.
 Nearer the godhead to the surface pressed,
 A sun replacing childhood's nebula
 Sovereign in a blue and lonely sky.
 Upward it rose to grasp the human scene:
 The strong Inhabitant turned to watch her field.
 A lovelier light assumed her spirit brow
 And sweet and solemn grew her musing gaze;
 Celestial-human deep warm slumbrous fires
 Woke in the long fringed glory of her eyes
 Like altar-burnings in a mystiered shrine.
 Out of those crystal windows gleamed a will
 That brought a large significance to life.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 357)

‘TO LOOK WITHIN ONESELF...’

January 3, 1914

It is always good to look within oneself from time to time and see that one is nothing and can do nothing, but afterwards one must turn one’s eyes to Thee, knowing that Thou art all and Thou canst do all.

Thou art the life of our life
and the light of our being,
Thou art the master of our destinies.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 45)

A FUTURE ... WHICH HAS BEGUN

(Continued from the issue of November 2006)

64. From the Conversation of 12 March 1958

The difficulty of the problem is that only a mental being could take an interest in this process of transformation and creation, and that the mental consciousness in the animal species was not sufficient for it to take an interest in this process.

Animals had no means of noting what was happening, of taking it into consideration and remembering it. And that is why this part of the earth's history has almost disappeared. A mental capacity like man's must intervene to make it possible to follow the course of this transformation and retain a memory of it.... In fact, more is imagined than remembered. It is quite obvious that the psychic being has gone through all that, but it has not kept a mental memory of it. The memory of the psychic being is a psychic memory which is of an altogether different kind; it is not historical like mental memory which can keep a precise record of what takes place.

But now that we are on the threshold of the new transformation, the new emergence as it is called here, and now that we are going to witness the process of transformation between the human mental being and the supramental being, we shall profit by this historical ability of the mind which will follow what happens and take note of it. So, from that point of view also, the phenomenon which is taking place now is absolutely unique in the history of the earth, and probably—almost certainly—when we have followed the process of this transformation to the very end, we shall have the key to all the former transformations; that is, everything that we are trying to understand at present, we shall know for certain when the process is repeated, this time between the mental and the supramental being.

You are therefore invited to a very special development of the capacity for observation, so that all this may not take place in a half-dream and you awaken to a new life without even knowing how things have happened.

One must be very vigilant, wide awake, and instead of being interested in little inner psychological phenomena which are... quite antiquated—they belong to an entire period of human history which anyway has lost all its novelty—it would be better to be more attentive to things of greater general import, things more subtle, more impersonal which would put you in the midst of new discoveries of a very special interest.

Open the eyes of the subtle intelligence, and without prejudice or preference, without egoism and without attachment, look at what is happening day by day.

(CWM 9: 292-94)

65. From the Conversation of 19 March 1958

One thing seems obvious, humanity has reached a certain state of general tension—tension in effort, in action, even in daily life—with such an excessive hyperactivity, so widespread a trepidation, that mankind as a whole seems to have come to a point where it must either break through the resistance and emerge into a new consciousness or else fall back into an abyss of darkness and inertia.

This tension is so complete and so widespread that something obviously has to break. It cannot go on in this way. We may take it as a sure sign of the infusion into matter of a new principle of force, consciousness, power, which by its very pressure is producing this acute state. Outwardly, we could expect the old methods used by Nature when she wants to bring about an upheaval; but there is a new characteristic, which of course is only visible in an *élite*, but even this *élite* is fairly widespread—it is not localised at one point, at one place in the world; we find traces of it in all countries, all over the world: the will to find a new, higher, progressive solution, an effort to rise towards a vaster, more comprehensive perfection.

Certain ideas of a more general nature, of a wider, perhaps more “collective” kind, are being worked out and are acting in the world. And both things go together: a possibility of a greater and more total destruction, a reckless inventiveness which increases the possibility of catastrophe, a catastrophe which would be on a far greater scale than it has ever been; and, at the same time, the birth or rather the manifestation of much higher and more comprehensive ideas and acts of will which, when they are heard, will bring a wider, vaster, more complete, more perfect remedy than before.

This struggle, this conflict between the constructive forces of the ascending evolution of a more and more perfect and divine realisation, and the more and more destructive, powerfully destructive forces—forces that are mad beyond all control—is more and more obvious, marked, visible, and it is a kind of race or struggle as to which will reach the goal first. It would seem that all the adverse, anti-divine forces, the forces of the vital world, have descended on the earth, are making use of it as their field of action, and that at the same time a new, higher, more powerful spiritual force has also descended on earth to bring it a new life. This makes the struggle more acute, more violent, more visible, but it seems also more definitive, and that is why we can hope to reach an early solution.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the spiritual aspiration of man was turned towards a silent, inactive peace, detached from all worldly things, a flight from life, precisely to avoid battle, to rise above the struggle, escape all effort; it was a spiritual peace in which, along with the cessation of all tension, struggle, effort, there ceased also suffering in all its forms, and this was considered to be the true and only expression of a spiritual and divine life. It was considered to be the divine grace, the divine help, the divine intervention. And even now, in this age of anguish, tension, hypertension, this sovereign peace is the best received aid of all, the most welcome,

the solace people ask and hope for. For many it is still the true sign of a divine intervention, of divine grace.

In fact, no matter what one wants to realise, one must begin by establishing this perfect and immutable peace; it is the basis from which one must work; but unless one is dreaming of an exclusive, personal and egoistic liberation, one cannot stop there. There is another aspect of the divine grace, the aspect of progress which will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect which will propel humanity to a new realisation, which will open the doors of a new world and make it possible not only for a chosen few to benefit by the divine realisation but for their influence, their example, their power to bring to the rest of mankind new and better conditions.

This opens up roads of realisation into the future, possibilities which are already foreseen, when an entire part of humanity, the one which has opened consciously or unconsciously to the new forces, is lifted up, as it were, into a higher, more harmonious, more perfect life.... Even if individual transformation is not always permissible or possible, there will be a kind of general uplifting, a harmonisation of the whole, which will make it possible for a new order, a new harmony to be established and for the anguish of the present disorder and struggle to disappear and be replaced by an order which will allow a harmonious functioning of the whole.

There will be other consequences which will tend to eliminate in an opposite way what the intervention of the mind in life has created, the perversions, the ugliness, the whole mass of distortions which have increased suffering, misery, moral poverty, an entire area of sordid and repulsive misery which makes a whole part of human life into something so frightful. That must disappear. This is what makes humanity in so many ways infinitely worse than animal life in its simplicity and the natural spontaneity and harmony that it has in spite of everything. Suffering in animals is never so miserable and sordid as it is in an entire section of humanity which has been perverted by the use of a mentality exclusively at the service of egoistic needs.

We must rise above, spring up into Light and Harmony or fall back, down into the simplicity of a healthy unperverted animal life.

[When this talk was first published in 1958, Mother added the following note on the “uplifting” of an entire part of humanity by the action of the new forces:]

But those who cannot be lifted up, those who refuse to progress, will automatically lose the use of the mental consciousness and will fall back to a sub-human level.

I shall tell you about an experience I had which will help you to understand better. It was shortly after the supramental experience of the third of February,* and I was still in the state in which things of the physical world seemed so far off, so absurd. A group of visitors had asked permission to come to me and one evening they

* [See *Mother India*, November 2006, pp. 901-03. —Ed.]

came to the Playground. They were rich people, that is, they had more money than they needed to live on. Among them there was a woman in a sari; she was very fat, her sari was arranged so as to hide her body. As she was bending down to receive my blessings, one corner of the sari came open, uncovering a part of her body, a naked belly—an enormous one. I felt a real shock.... There are corpulent people who have nothing repugnant about them, but I suddenly saw the perversion, the rottenness that this belly concealed, it was like a huge abscess, expressing greed, vice, depraved taste, sordid desire, which finds its satisfaction as no animal would, in grossness and especially in perversity. I saw the perversion of a depraved mind at the service of the lowest appetites. Then, all of a sudden, something sprang up from me, a prayer, like a Veda: “O Lord, this is what must disappear!”

One understands very well that physical misery, the unequal distribution of the goods of this world could be changed, one can imagine economic and social solutions which could remedy this, but it is that misery, the mental misery, the vital perversion, it is that which cannot change, doesn't want to change. And those who belong to this type of humanity are condemned in advance to disintegration.

That is the meaning of original sin: the perversion which began with the mind.

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed—it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form; the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt—which must be eliminated—just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world—by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself.

(CWM 9: 296-301)

66. From the Conversation of 16 April 1958

Anyway, we have now reached a certitude since there is already a beginning of realisation. We have the proof that in certain conditions the ordinary state of humanity can be exceeded and a new state of consciousness worked out which enables at least a conscious relation between mental and supramental man.

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of superman who will still have the qualities and in part the nature of man, that is, who will still belong in his most external form to the human being with its animal origin, but will transform his consciousness sufficiently to belong in his realisation and activity to a new race, a race of supermen.

This species may be considered a transitional species, for one can foresee that it will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method, and these beings—who will have a truly spiritual birth—will constitute the elements of the new race, the supramental race.

So we could call supermen those who, in their origin, still belong to the old method of generation but in their achievement are in conscious and active contact with the new world of supramental realisation.

It seems—it is even certain—that the very substance which will constitute this intermediate world that is already being built up, is richer, more powerful, more luminous, more resistant, with certain subtler, more penetrating new qualities, and a kind of innate capacity of universality, as if its degree of subtlety and refinement allowed the perception of vibrations in a much wider, if not altogether total way, and it removes the sensation of division one has with the old substance, the ordinary mental substance. There is a subtlety of vibration which makes global, universal perception a spontaneous and natural thing. The sense of division, of separation, disappears quite naturally and spontaneously with that substance. And that substance is at present almost universally diffused in the earth atmosphere. It is perceptible in the waking state, simply with a little concentration and a kind of absorption of consciousness, if this is retracted, withdrawn from the ordinary externalisation which seems more and more artificial and false. This externalisation, this perception which formerly was natural, now seems false, unreal and completely artificial; it does not at all answer to things as they are, it belongs to a movement which does not correspond to anything really true.

This new perception is asserting itself more and more, becoming more and more natural, and it is even sometimes difficult to recapture the old way of being, as though it were vanishing into a misty past—something which is on the point of ceasing to exist.

One may conclude from this that the moment a body, which was of course formed by the old animal method, is capable of living this consciousness naturally and spontaneously, without effort, without going out of itself, it proves that this is not one

single exceptional case but simply the forerunner of a realisation which, even if it is not altogether general, can at least be shared by a certain number of individuals who, besides, as soon as they share it, will lose the perception of being separate individuals and become a living collectivity.

This new realisation is proceeding with what one might call a lightning speed, for if we consider time in the ordinary way, only two years have passed—a little more than two years—from the time the supramental substance penetrated into the earth atmosphere to the time the change in the quality of the earth atmosphere took place.

If things go on advancing at this speed, it seems more than possible, almost evident, that what Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter is a prophetic announcement: The supramental consciousness will enter a phase of realising power in 1967.

["4-5-67 is the year of complete realisation." *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 35]

(CWM 9: 313-15)

67. From the Conversation of 30 April 1958

As I had foreseen, I have received a shower of questions to oblige me to explain mentally my supramental experience of the third of February.

You want to make me speak and mentalise the experience until a new system is established and you can sit down comfortably in your new mental construction.... I am sorry to have to disappoint you but this is absolutely impossible. And if you want to understand what I have written, well, make an effort to have a supramental consciousness.

That is all I have to say to you.

And beware of the mania of wanting to replace an old dogma by a new one and saying, "Oh! All that was false, but now we are going to work out a fine practical guide to conduct which will be the true one."

Well, a mental construction will never be true, and I refuse to make one. I was obliged to use words which men understand, but I did it in the most incoherent way possible! in order not to be too mental, and I refuse to be coherent in the mental fashion; and that, not only for the questions I have here or those I have received in letters, but for all those that are still to come on the same subject. So it will be useless to ask me any.

I would advise the same thing to everyone: Make an effort, work, open yourself, give yourself up entirely to the new Force, and a day will come when you will have the experience.

With the experience you will understand precisely how useless the questions were.

(CWM 9: 319)

68. From the Conversation of 14 May 1958

As the beginnings of the supramental life, which must be the next realisation in the unfolding of the universe, develop, perhaps not in a very obvious way but very surely, it becomes more and more obvious that the most difficult way to approach this supramental life is intellectual activity.

It could be said that it is much more difficult to pass from the mental to the supramental life than to pass from a certain psychic emotion in life—something that is like a reflection, a luminous emanation of the divine Presence in matter—to the supramental consciousness; it is much easier to pass from that into the supramental consciousness than to pass from the highest intellectual speculation to any supramental vibration. Perhaps it is the word that misleads us! Perhaps it is because we call it “supramental” that we expect to reach it through a higher intellectual mental activity? But the fact is very different. With this very high, very pure, very noble intellectual activity, one seems to move towards a kind of cold, powerless abstraction, a frozen, an icy light which is surely very remote from life and still further away from the experience of the supramental reality.

In this new substance which is spreading and acting in the world, there is a warmth, a power, a joy so intense that all intellectual activity seems cold and dry beside it. And that is why the less one talks about these things the better it is. A single moment, a single impulse of deep and true love, an instant of the understanding which lies in the divine Grace brings you much closer to the goal than all possible explanations.

Even a kind of refined sensation, subtle, clear, luminous, acute, which penetrates deep, opens the door for you more than the subtlest explanations.

And if we carry the experience still further, it seems that when one comes to the work of transformation of the body, when some cells of the body, more ready than others, more refined, more subtle, more plastic, are able to feel concretely the presence of the divine Grace, the divine Will, the divine Power, this Knowledge that is not intellectual but a knowledge by identity, when one feels this in the cells of the body, then the experience is so total, so imperative, so living, concrete, tangible, real that everything else seems a vain dream.

And so we may say that it is truly when the circle is complete and the two extremities touch, when the highest manifests in the most material, that the experience will be truly conclusive.

It seems that one can never truly understand until one understands with one's body.

(CWM 9: 324-26)

69. From the Conversation of 25 June 1958

This seems to be a very exact description of individual development. It is exactly like that. And so you lose patience or lose courage, for you feel that you are not advancing. But when you engage in the development of the body—material, physical development—when you want the physical body to do sadhana, it is exactly like that. You begin by trying out all kinds of things without precision or exactitude, without knowing which end to begin with, and you feel you are groping, searching, going round and round and going nowhere. And then, gradually, one thing comes up and then another, and it is only *very* much later that something like a programme begins to be worked out. And this description Sri Aurobindo gives at the end, when the goal of evolution emerges and becomes perceptible, how much care must be taken for it not to be engulfed once again in the primal Inconscience!

And that is why the work seems... interminable. And yet this is the only way it can be done. The road to be covered between the usual state of the body, the almost total inconscience to which we are accustomed because we are “like that”, and the perfect awakening of consciousness, the response of all the cells, all the organs, all the functionings... between the two there seem to be centuries of labour. However, if one has learnt to open, to aspire, give oneself up, and if one can make use of these same movements in the body, teach the cells to do the same thing, then things go much faster. But much faster does not mean fast; it is still a long and slow work. And each time that an element which has not entered the movement of transformation wakes up to enter it, one feels that everything must be started again—all that one believed had been done must be done once more. But it is not true, it is not the same thing that one does again, it is something similar in a new element which was either forgotten or else left aside because it was not ready, and which, now that it is ready, awakens and wants to take its place. There are many elements like that...

The body seems to you to be something very simple, doesn't it? It is a body, it is “my” body, and after all it has a single form—but it is not like that! There are hundreds of combined entities unaware of each other, all harmonised by something deeper which they do not know, and having a perception of unity only because they are not conscious of the multiplicity of the elements and their divergence.

In fact, this multiplicity and divergence are the cause of most disorders and even illnesses. Something is going well, you have caught the guiding thread, you are following your path, you think you are going to get a result, and then, suddenly, there!—something happens quite unexpectedly, you did not know it was there: it wakes up and insists on joining the march. But it creates a terrible disorder and you must begin everything over again.

The sadhana of all the inner beings, inner domains, has been done by many people, has been explained at length, systematised by some, the stages and paths have been traced out and you go from one stage to another, knowing that it has to be like

that; but as soon as you go down into the body, it is like a virgin forest.... And everything is to be done, everything is to be worked out, everything is to be built up. So you must arm yourself with *great* patience, *great* patience, and not think that you are good for nothing because it takes so much time. You must never be despondent, never tell yourself, "Oh! This is not for me!" Everyone can do it, if he puts into it the time, the courage, the endurance and the perseverance that are demanded. But all this is needed. And above all, above all, never lose heart, be ready to begin the same thing again ten times, twenty times, a hundred times—until it is really done.

And one often feels that unless *everything is* done, unless the work is finished, well, it is as if one had done nothing.

(CWM 9: 348-49)

70. From the Conversation of 8 October 1958

Sweet Mother, will there not be any intermediary states between man and superman?

There will probably be many.

Man and superman? You are not speaking of the new supramental race, are you? Are you really speaking of what *we* call the superman, that is, man born in the human way and trying to transform the physical being he has received by his ordinary human birth? Are there any stages?—There will certainly be countless *partial* realisations. According to each one's capacity, the degree of transformation will differ, and it is certain that there will be a considerable number of attempts, more or less fruitful or unfruitful, before we come to something like the superman, and even those will be more or less successful attempts.

All those who strive to overcome their ordinary nature, all those who try to realise materially the deeper experience which has brought them into contact with the divine Truth, all those who, instead of turning to the Beyond or the Highest, try to realise physically, externally, the change of consciousness they have realised within themselves—all are apprentice-supermen. And there, there are countless differences in the success of their efforts. Each time we try not to be an ordinary man, not to live the ordinary life, to express in our movements, our actions and reactions the divine Truth, when we are governed by that Truth instead of being governed by the general ignorance, we are apprentice-supermen, and according to the success of our efforts, well, we are more or less able apprentices, more or less advanced on the way.

All these are stages, so... In reality, in this race to the Transformation, the question is to know which of the two will arrive first: the one who wants to transform his body in the image of the divine Truth, or the old habit of the body to go on disintegrating

until it is so deformed that it can no longer continue to live in its outer integrality. It is a race between transformation and decay. For there are only two stopping-places, two things which can indicate to what extent one has succeeded: either success, that is to say, becoming a superman—then of course one can say, “Now I have reached the goal” ...or else death. Till then, normally, one is “on the way”.

It is one of these two things—either attaining the goal or a sudden rupture of life—which temporarily puts an end to the advance. And on the road each one has gone more or less far, but until one reaches the end one cannot say what stage one is at. It is the final step that will count. So only the one who comes a few hundred or thousand years later and looks back, will be able to say, “There was this stage and that stage, this realisation and that realisation....” That is history, it will be a historical perception of the event. Till then all of us are in the movement and the work.

How far have we gone and how far shall we go? It is better not to think too much about that, for it cripples you and you can’t run well. It is better to think only about running and nothing else. That is the only way to run well. You look at where you want to go and put all your effort in the movement to go forward. How far you have gone is not your concern. I say, “This is history”, it will come later. The historians of our effort will tell us—because perhaps we shall still be there—will tell us what we did, how we did it. For the moment what is necessary is to do it; this is the only thing that matters.

(CWM 9: 410-11)

(Concluded)

UNFAILING HELP AND PROTECTION

The experience you had of the power of the Name and the protection is that of everyone who has used it with the same faith and reliance. To those who call from the heart for the protection, it cannot fail. Do not allow any outward circumstance to shake the faith in you; for nothing gives greater strength than this faith to go through and arrive at the goal. Knowledge and Tapasya, whatever their force, have a less sustaining power—faith is the strongest staff for the journey.

The protection is there over you and the watchful love of the Mother. Rely upon it and let your being open more and more to it—then it will repel attacks and always uphold you.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Mother, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 347)

SRI AUROBINDO

“I am here, I am here!”

WHEN all over the world there was a growing eagerness to know more and more about Sri Aurobindo and the interest in his work was on the increase, he suddenly disappeared from the earth-scene. Superficially, this is a terrible irony of fate. But a study of his life suggests that more than once the utterly unexpected occurred as if by a choice on his own part. One may say that such an occurrence is almost a regular feature at each decisive turn of the upward spiral of his life. We see the rising curve bending down of a sudden when he threw away the I.C.S. career after a brilliant success and retired into an unpretentious State job in Baroda. There his sun was again in the ascendent, but as soon as he had captured the vision and admiration of the people, he left that peak of eminence. The sun then passed under a cloud; it worked behind the veil till it burst upon the political horizon with a dazzling lustre and when everybody's eyes were filled with wonder and delight, the light hid itself in the shadows of the prison cell where he had one of the sovereign spiritual experiences of his life. When he came out of the prison, his tremendous sacrifice and wise guidance awakened the nation and it waited at his door with the offer of All-India leadership. Again he disappeared one night and passed into oblivion for a large number of years in Pondicherry's unknown retreat. As if this was not enough, he entered into a greater oblivion when in 1926, after having achieved what we may call the first supreme victory in his sadhana, he, instead of hoisting the banner of the glory of the Spirit on the world's summit, withdrew himself for an indefinite period, to the utter surprise and disappointment of his close followers. Now at last has come as a logical conclusion the greatest oblivion in a most staggering manner and the shock had the intensity of a violent explosion. Always he has avoided the limelight and all his great achievements have been prepared in the secret silence of his retirement, and with each emergence he has brought down a greater light, a higher range of illumination and a vaster kingdom of knowledge and power.

But why has he chosen to withdraw through the last painful gate of human existence when, like other Yogis, he could have discarded the mortal sheath by an act of will and for what purpose? For Sri Aurobindo to do anything without a purpose and ultimate advantage is in the last degree inconceivable. If he gave in at times to what he called the Adversary, that was because, to quote his own words, “retreat” (*palāyanam*) suited his purpose. One who had mastered the secrets of Life and the Spirit by his tremendous sadhana, who had been acclaimed as the Yogeshwara by those who had attained to the height of the Spirit, to him death could be neither a terror nor a mystery nor an inevitable necessity. Paying the full price of suffering he would pass through the “exit” of the common man, only if he felt that otherwise his life, his own Yoga would lack completeness and that to bear the human destiny on his

God-like shoulders he must face, in its own den as it were, the dark Power that rules over this destiny and somehow wrest from it all its secrets. He would embrace the dire extremity not unless he found it to be the one way to emerge finally victorious and say, "O human race, from the citadel of the dark King I have issued forth and brought what I promised to you, the golden seed of Immortality."

This supreme sacrifice whose total significance will remain ungrasped by our limited intelligence, he accepted, as the Mother has said in unmistakable terms, for us alone. To enter into its history we have to go back two years in time when the first symptom that completed the sacrifice appeared. It was like a tiny cloud on the horizon; nobody attached any importance to it. But Sri Aurobindo wanted to know what it meant. His disciple, Dr. P. Sanyal, F.R.C.S. (Eng.), an eminent surgeon of Calcutta who was consulted when he came for Darshan, recognised at once that it was a danger-signal and could not be neglected. He told Mother and Sri Aurobindo that it was a case of prostatic enlargement and frequency of micturition was the first symptom. He also explained at length its development and sequelae; he mentioned that as yet there was nothing to worry about, but warned us to watch the development carefully. It was a great advantage to be forearmed with the precise knowledge of things at the very initial stage, as it would facilitate Sri Aurobindo's action on it. For, as he has always maintained, knowledge of things and their processes in detail makes the action of the Yogic Force more effective. The fight would now take place in the open light: there would be no cover of ignorance under which the dark Force could take shelter and advance its attacks. We were never in doubt as to the issue of the fight, though the Mother told us once that they had cured any number of serious maladies in others but as regards their own case, things were very different and very difficult indeed.

As we expected, after a couple of months or so, the symptoms cleared up altogether and when Dr. Sanyal came for the next Darshan, Sri Aurobindo told him emphatically, "It is no more troubling me; I have cured it." Our faith was confirmed.

The work on his epic poem *Savitri* went ahead with vigour and enthusiasm. Book after Book was being revised and released for publication. Some 400 to 500 lines he dictated in succession whose beauty and flow were a delight for their sweep of cosmic vision and their magical language. At this rate, *Savitri*, it seemed, would not take long to finish. On everybody's lips was the eager question, "How far *Savitri*?"

But *Savitri* was not his sole occupation. Side by side went on other multifarious and diverse activities all the facets of which he alone could deal with by his tremendous grasp of intuitive power. The world erroneously believes, or at least used to, that Sri Aurobindo had turned his whole life inwards and that, a recluse from life, he was now engaged in his own salvation and that of his disciples. How such a misunderstanding of a supreme dynamic person like him could have arisen is most surprising. Let us recall what his life had been, the major spiritual realisations he had attained in the course of his arduous political activities; let us recall what his Yoga stands for and the epoch-making books he has written during his Yogic career. Apart from *Savitri* which

is a monument by itself, the daily reading of papers, the perusal of numerous journals, weeklies, fortnightlies, quarterlies edited by people connected with the Ashram and of articles written in four or five languages, poems, essays, letters, the dictating of replies to questions and to crown all, the preparation of his own books and others', the attention to their manuscripts and proofs etc.—all these were his routine work. Add pressing demands from the Press, blessings implored for help and guidance in material distress—and the list should be enough to open a blind man's eyes. All this work had to be despatched within about two hours a day! During the latter part a remarkable faculty developed in him or was noticed for the first time. When I took some article for reading, he used to say "Have you not read it before?" "No." "Are you sure?" "How could I," I replied, "I have received it to-day." "Very strange, I seemed to have heard every word of it." That happened more than once. This labour any mortal sight can attest; but to the vast network of his cosmic activity as a Master Yogi, what vision can have access? One can have a dim penetration into it through the unrolling verse of *Savitri* and through other books or when he chose to let out a little inkling of it. We have played with him like Gopas in Vrindavan, cracked many jokes like comrades, even quarrelled with him, discussed many subjects ranging from Art down to the attractive subject of the palate during the last few years of his companionship. The tender expression that dropped from his lips, the pointed flashes of his quick humour, the silent unassuming distinction of his manner and above all, his vigilant and subtle protection guarding us against all adverse forces—all these had been our heritage, but could we ever reflect in our passing mirror even the slightest shadow of his wide universal action? His detached greatness, disinterested largeness, limitless compassion and sweetness, as if Shiva had come down to earth to deliver the world from its roots of ignorance—where shall we see such a parallel? Even when his disease had advanced, he did not fail to respond to the call of the afflicted. To give an example: as he was engaged in the final drafting of the last two cantos of *Savitri*, there came an urgent call for help from a sadhika living outside. The lady was suffering from a mysterious disease; some doctors said it was coronary thrombosis, some diagnosed cervical rib and some others cancer and they all suggested different remedies. She, on the verge of death, took refuge at the Guru's feet and wired to him that she would rely on his force alone, even were she to die of it. News began to come in daily, by letters or wires. Suddenly no news at all for two or three days! Sri Aurobindo became worried and inquired again and again if any communication had arrived. At last he remarked, rather vexed, "How am I to save her if I don't get any news?" After this rude jerk news began to flow in and we are happy to find her settled in the Ashram in sound health. Those who have received this inner sweetness and solicitude, directly or indirectly, will ever treasure it in their hearts as the very grace of Heaven.

Savitri alone which was the preoccupation nearest to his heart will one day fire the imagination of the world by its sheer bulk and beauty of profound images, vivid words, felicitous and daring expressions, every detail of which he took sculptor-like

pains to develop. The first Book itself went through ten revisions and had he been able to maintain the same god-like labour throughout or had he not been compelled to lean on the support of a weak and at times unwilling assistant required to keep pace with his divine energy, *Savitri* would have seen the light of day before his own life's light had withdrawn. But, alas, that was not to be. About the middle of the last year, the symptoms of the malady came back and along with it we noticed a change in his mood. He was no more expansive, the gems of his speech became fewer and fewer. Days passed at times without any exchange of words except what was needed for the work. However much we tried to draw him out of this shell, it was a "yes", or a "no", or at most a smile that crowned our efforts and ruses. Naturally we began to speculate about the cause of this mysterious silence. Sometimes we thought it must be the grave world-situation that engaged his attention,—for at one time he remarked that the situation was very bad indeed,—sometimes other possibilities crossed our fertile brain. Or could it be the reappearance of the disease? That was another query. But all our efforts were baffled, we could not penetrate that armour of remoteness. He was so near, yet had gone far away!

That did not, however, affect his daily work. *Savitri* had slowed down its pace. We were engaged in the revision of the two big cantos; already 200 to 300 new lines had been added. What a revision! Every word must be the *mot juste*, every line perfect, even every sign of punctuation flawless. One preposition was changed five times; to change a punctuation-sign one had sometimes to read a whole section. All these opened a new sight in me, but for his scribe to carry that burden of perfection on poor mortal shoulders was a task too enormous to cope with in an entirely satisfactory manner. That is why perhaps the work had fallen at places from its height, missed its peak.

At this time the Press sent up a demand for a new book. *The Future Poetry* was given the preference and a chapter was actually written. But as some books on Modern Poetry needed to be consulted, it was shoved aside. He said, "Let us go back to *Savitri*." Again the same two cantos. The symptoms of the disease had not abated, though fortunately they had neither increased. There were temporary improvements now and then. But the course of the disease did not seem to disturb him at all in his work. His whole attention was now focussed on *Savitri* for which we could but spare about two hours at the most. So, the progress had to be slow especially as he had to dictate and depend on another's sight to be guided in his movement. Now came the call from the *Bulletin* for an article. That over, the correspondence and miscellaneous writings swelled up to such an extent that he was at last obliged to remark, "I am finding no time for my real work." Then the path got fairly clear and I was wondering what would be the next choice when looking away he declared, "Take up *Savitri*. I want to finish it soon." The last phrase was a bombshell on my ear. "Finish it soon? What on earth..." I asked myself. My bewildered glance met an impassive face. So again the labour with these two cantos began. What surprised me still more was that he seemed actually to hurry the pace which was quite against his characteristic nature. Always

habituated to slow and leisurely ways in his moods and dealings as if the whole of eternity were in his hand, he was the very embodiment of the Divine in his unparalleled patience and poise, in his conquests and withdrawals, in his diggings and in his soars. Every word he pronounced had a repose, every simple thing he ate was an offering, every step he took was a gentle touching of the earth with his hallowed feet. When his bureau was ransacked, it was found littered with copies and copies of *Savitri*, no less than 4 or 5 versions of some cantos! Here, there, in notebooks, in loose sheets, in small blocks, lines after lines written, scratched, new lines added in between like packed sardines, the links and connections shooting with arrow-marks up and down the epic battlefield. A genius or a God in labour? Such being the mode of procedure, it could not but come as a surprise to hear from his mouth that he wanted to finish *Savitri* soon. Not only that. There seemed to be no longer that unflagging will for perfection, not that élan. On the contrary, close repetitions of ideas and words sounded like obvious flaws in the compact intensity of this massive structure. Those who have carefully gone through these two cantos did not fail to notice this defect. "What has happened? What has gone wrong? Why has he lost his patience? Illness? Why is he also so grave?" were my brooding questions. At last after many detours and ups and downs in the far-flung journey, the goal was in sight. What a veritable rock of resistance these two cantos proved to be! One who had poured strains upon strains packed with grandeur and beauty, emotion and fervour, thought and vision in the dictated cantos on such subjects as Nirvana, as if the very goddess Saraswati had settled in his throat, was halted even by the pebbles of punctuation! As, at last the cantos were wound up and the last full stop had been recorded, a smile of satisfaction burst upon his lips and he said, "Ah, it is finished?" How well I remember that smile, as if after a long strenuous journey in failing strength one had finally reached one's station! And yet it was not the station, there were still many milestones to cover! "What is left now?" was his second question. "'The Book of Death' and the 'Epilogue'." "Ah, that? We shall see about that later on," he answered, in a calm and contented tone. But I was not contented at all, for the many repetitions at the end which he seemed to have hurriedly added jarred on my ear. But I decided that it was wiser to reserve judgement and wait for the revision to take place. Surely these flaws would not escape his eagle-vision. It was much later during the agonising moments of night-enveloped consciousness that what struck me as flaws and repetitions came forcefully with a new significance:

*A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers.*

*

*In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can help.*

*She only can save herself and save the world.*¹

Are these not his last message, his last injunction to us?... The emptiness slowly melted away and in its place shone his Right Hand, the dauntless boon-giver the Mother.

The expected revision never took place; for, along with the close of these two cantos, came winter and there was a sudden increase in the symptoms; urination became more frequent; with it, discomfort. These symptoms had appeared from time to time, to be cleared up and he had never for an instant stopped his work in spite of all inconveniences. Many times I anticipated, almost hoped, that there would be a respite owing to such relapses, but physical trouble would not hinder him. Even if there was half an hour's time, he would utilise it. On many occasions when I told him, "There is not much time today" and almost expected a postponement of the work, he would come out, to my surprise, with "We will work a little". That passionate devotion to work had brought its final reward: *Savitri* was his last testament. As the disease progressed, we began to feel concerned, though we knew perfectly well that we were nothing more than mere spectators and whatever had to be done, he must be doing it. "How is it then the disease is progressing?" was my occasional self-questioning. We were dealing with a human body but not with a human patient; our means and standards of action did not apply any more than the laws of our earth to the being of other planets. We could only lay before his gaze the silent surreptitious approach of various under-currents that tried to assail and break down the physical substratum, and depend upon his own Yogic Power to repulse the attacks.

There were about ten days or so for the Darshan. A surgeon-friend Satyavrata Sen F.R.C.S. (Eng.) had arrived for the Darshan. He was consulted; he corroborated the diagnosis given at the outset by Dr. Sanyal. Sen said that the gland had enlarged. Sri Aurobindo also remarked he had also been feeling it for some time, though once it had completely disappeared. "What is the remedy?" he asked. There was only one radical cure, but Dr. Sen knew that it would gain neither Mother's nor Sri Aurobindo's approval. For Sri Aurobindo could not be subjected to the cruel and not always effective slashes with the knife. The mere use of a catheter was not favoured. Nor was it urgent at this stage. If any intervention were necessary, it could be done after the Darshan. So once more we followed the curve of the disease in a silent watchful attitude, ready to help, but never flagging in our faith that the curve would be checked. One night the urine suddenly stopped. I ran down to call Dr. Sen. In the meantime the urine started flowing. When he learned that I had gone to fetch the doctor, he remarked, "Why? Has he lost his head?" When we returned and heard his remark, I do not know what gave me the thrill, my madness or the removal of the obstruction! He said, "Why have you unnecessarily troubled this poor fellow?" Then in an affectionate tone he continued, "You see, I had a dream; it seemed I was freely passing water and when I woke up I

1. *Savitri*.

found this obstruction. Nothing more. Do you understand?" He added, smiling, "No cause to be nervous." Next day, when the Mother heard the story, she also made a similar remark. She said, "After having passed so many years with Sri Aurobindo, you still get frightened?"—"What to do, Mother?" I replied apologetically, "we are dealing with no other person than Sri Aurobindo."—"That is exactly why you should never get afraid. Do you not know that his mighty force is always with you and helping you? No, fear has no place at all, especially among you who are serving him." I felt ashamed but uplifted too.

Darshan was now at our door. On the eve, a letter had arrived from an astrologer to the effect that Sri Aurobindo would be subject to a grave malady which may even threaten his life. We simply laughed out the idea, but he said, "Will you enquire what exactly he has written? I feel that he has caught some truth." "What nonsense!" was my immediate reaction. Sri Aurobindo had studied the subject of astrology and held that astrology could very well disclose correctly the past of a person, but he said that its readings of the future would not be inevitable, especially in case of Yogis who can change their own and others' destiny. He narrated the story of Narayan Jyotishi, a famous astrologer of Calcutta, whose predictions about Sri Aurobindo had all come true except on one fact, that Sri Aurobindo would be seriously ill at the age of 63 but he had also mentioned that by his yogic action, Sri Aurobindo could overcome that danger and then he would live up to a ripe old age. "So, you see, I am still alive", he said smiling. He accepted nothing as predetermined and fixed in this world-field. Everything, in his view, is a play of possibilities and a Yogi can change these possibilities, even the destiny of others as well as his own. It being so, for astrology to determine Sri Aurobindo's life and action was, we thought, sheer folly. But his enquiry puzzled us. It was found, however, that the astrologer had only hinted at some trivial malady. We enjoyed the fun, as on a similar occasion mentioned by K. D. Sethna in his article *The Passing of Sri Aurobindo*. The Darshan was now on. A vast crowd streamed forth with their offerings. At one time the question was mooted if the Darshan should not be postponed, but considering the anxiety and disappointment it would cause in the hearts of the devotees, the call was responded to at the cost of discomfort and perhaps undue exertion. Everything went on well—the silence, the calm reigned in the atmosphere pervaded by the beatific Presence of the Mother and the Master. After about two hours, an uneasy stir seized the throng and the rumour ran that Sri Aurobindo was not well; people in rapid succession took their blessings and beyond the horizon of their outward sight saw the Master beside the Mother in an everlasting communion and kinship within. The restless thought was no more voiced forth. But soon after the Darshan, the symptoms broke down another barrier, as it were, and visibly marked a broad thrust in the advancement of the disease. The question of passing the catheter could no more be left aside. It was agreed; a wire was sent to Dr. Sanyal to come down at once. He had previously been warned to be ready to start, in case there was an urgent necessity.

The instrument immediately relieved the obstruction and we began to feel light-hearted. But our joy was short-lived. For in the wake of the intruding instrument came its long shadow, fever due to infection. A not uncommon feature, yet it gave us an unpleasant shiver. Dr. Sanyal's arrival at this juncture was like warm sunshine and he dissipated all our anxieties by his calm confidence. We apprised him of the whole clinical development since he had last seen Sri Aurobindo. He wondered how that small insignificant speck of cloud he had noticed in the early stage could, from the perimeter of his consciousness, slowly, almost craftily, enlarge, envelope and take possession of the whole physical being. He asked himself, "How could this Adversary gain such an unbelievable dominance against the puissant action of Sri Aurobindo's force? He had cured himself once, what happened afterwards? Did he not take any step at all to prevent the course of the disease? Otherwise I do not see why it should develop to such an extent." To these questions no satisfactory answer could be given. What I observed was that while our main concern had been the patient development of the future glory of the human race in the language of the gods and in their symbols, the disease simultaneously advanced at a slow pace; Sri Aurobindo did not pay any particular heed to it, either because he had not sufficient time or because he did not care; but it had been a mystery all through. One would say that he had allowed it to advance, for reasons unknown to us, slowly and gradually till the completion of *Savitri*, after which he stopped all his work and withdrew the control on the disease. That is the only explanation reason could supply to the rapid worsening of the condition after this stage. Whatever it was, Dr. Sanyal was yet optimistic and so were we of the final result. Our vigil went on, but Sri Aurobindo seemed now to withdraw himself from his surroundings and the release from the obstruction helped him towards that end. Evidently, he found the deep plunge more useful for whatever purpose he had in view than caring about the afflictions of the body. He appeared to have allowed the body to have its own actions and reactions while he was engaged in a more inscrutable work of world-significance. The body he had assumed had served him well, and, as the Mother has said, it had suffered, endured, worked and achieved all for us. Now, if it served as an impediment to the god-like sweep of his movements, why should he not change it? As he did not allow the physical handicap to trouble him in his work and maintained throughout the same fire and passion, so, after the accomplishment of the work, he did not allow the body's distress to swerve him from his occult sublime purpose. Even of this dire disablement he took the amplest advantage. His was not a nature to be cowed by circumstances, however adverse they might be. If he had to give in on one front, he must gain the full compensation on another. Even if he knew beforehand that defeat and failure would be the result, that would not stop his working and fighting up to the end. "Even if I knew that my mission would fail, I would go on working till the last moment" were his words in a letter. *Nishkama* (disinterested) Karma of the Gita was his motto. An interesting example of which can be cited with regard to the Cripps Mission, now a matter of history. When the Mission arrived in

India, everybody knows how Sri Aurobindo went out of his way and entreated all the big leaders to accept it and even approved of a disciple going to Delhi as his envoy. But after his departure, Sri Aurobindo told us frankly that nothing would come out of it. The Mission would fail. "Then" we said, "why have you taken all this trouble?" He answered, smiling, "I have done a bit of *nishkama karma*." That was his life, both occult and overt. That is why the Adversary was always surprised by his unexpected moves. Divine Diplomat that he was, we have yet to see what was the supreme object of this highest strategy. He could not have been blind to the approach of the dark-cowled Figure. He envisaged a fight, a grim struggle and that is why he followed the same method he had always practised in his life—to be prepared in advance for any eventuality. As he had always marched ahead of time, so he marked every step he took with a solid foreknowledge and divine strength which passed our immediate understanding. Now we realise the meaning of his cryptic phrases and casual remarks. Many people asked us if he had left any message, any advice as regards the work, sadhana etc., before he passed away. The answer is 'yes' and 'no'. 'No'! because, after he had withdrawn completely inwards, he had done no work, he had uttered no word except in relation to the disease. 'Yes', because before he had passed into that stage, *Savitri*, as I have mentioned, was his last work, and the last seal and signature on its golden leaf were those lines which seemed to us repetitions. Repetitions they were, but now they come as the blazoning revelation of the whole secret of his Yoga: Surrender to the Mother. Let us read those prophetic lines and the sense will stand crystal clear:

*A day may come when She must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human-hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.*

*

*In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate*

*

Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.

*

*Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
She only can save herself and save the world.¹*

1. *Savitri*.

He was not in a hurry to finish "The Book of Death". His principal task had been completed and hence his calm and contented smile when he reached the end of it. What was of supreme importance he had been able to communicate and about what was not, he said in a leisurely fashion, "We shall see about it afterwards", knowing very well indeed, what he meant. Now, that momentous message imparted, slowly his consciousness slipped inwards and he became more and more absorbed within. Medical experts will say, "It was a simple uraemic coma." Well, I shall quote Dr. Sanyal's own words: "A patient who comes out of that coma every one or two hours, asks for a drink, enquires about time, his must be a very strange type of coma. At least I have never come across such a type throughout my medical experience."

Whatever might have been the type, our problem became more difficult. We had solely relied on his Force, but the result had not uplifted our hopes. We could go ahead with our costly tablets and precious injections, but without the support of his spiritual Force, what effect would they produce? Human as we are we can but think of our own resources: good or bad we fall back on them in our need. But how to administer such strong and powerful drugs to one who had been unaccustomed to any medicine for more than half a century, was another question that vexed us. Any one who had seen Sri Aurobindo at close quarters could never forget this Divine Child with a body as supple, radiant and pure. His bare body, when he used to sit before the table for writing, his shapely hands, his long delicate fingers, had nothing of the crude mortal flesh in them; they were suffused, as it were, with a white transparent light, "*une blancheur éclatante*", that could like the X-ray make one see through and through. How often have I not seen this radiance, when he used to sit before the table for writing or for rest, or when he was lying on the bed as if on the lap of the Divine Mother, with a half-bare body, the hands held together behind the head, the lips smiling in a wakeful dream! Every part of the body presented the picture of a god in human guise that could not be tampered with in the ordinary human way. Tampering would be nothing but a sacrilege. But, alas, human necessity knows no law, respects no person. And we subjected him to all our instruments of torture with the previous sanction obtained as a gracious gesture to satisfy our mortal ignorance. He knew that the catheter would be of no avail and he emphatically ruled it out, but as we had not the insight nor the proper appraisal of the value of words when they are clothed in the common language we are habituated to use, we insisted on the dangerous remedies in which we had faith and confidence. As the disease was taking a bad turn we repeatedly asked him to use his spiritual Force to cure it, as we had been taught and made to experience that behind every malady, as behind everything else, there are forces that help and hinder. It is the proper adjustment of these forces that brings in success. Those who can consciously or unconsciously manipulate these forces achieve success in their career. We knew that without the effective help of his Force all our remedial measures would be palliatives of the surface manifestation of the deep-rooted trouble. But each time we questioned him, we met with an enigmatic silence. All the

same, we had no positive reason to believe that he was indifferent to the course of the malady or that he was engaged in a far more serious struggle whose issue would have greater significance at that stage for the human race than his own cure. So, as the disease was following in its downward gravitation the typical picture, our duty pointed to us our own responsibility. The advent of every dark sign and symptom was a pressing finger on our perplexed mood. As a result, we adopted all the means of saving that were available to us. But the Decree was otherwise!

At last arrived the School Anniversary on the 1st and 2nd December, with its programme of athletics and dramatics. The whole Ashram, busy and bustling, had its attention diverted there and nobody ever suspected that another drama—a lofty tragedy—was being enacted in those hours of Fate in the closed chambers of Sri Aurobindo. His ailment had been veiled from the gaze of the disciples and the disease also was of such a nature as to admit of being kept a guarded secret. But now the veil was rent, for with the successful ending of the function, the symptoms took a very grave turn, as if the violent tide deliberately checked until this day was now allowed to break through. I say “as if”, but there was no doubt that it was so, for when he was informed on the 2nd night that the function had terminated successfully, he remarked with a broad smile, “Ah, it is finished?” Then only he allowed the Adversary who had been held at bay to leap with fury and Sri Aurobindo plunged deeper within, snapping as it were, the last link of his physical being with the need of earth-matter.

It was the memorable 4th December, the date written for ever in letters of gold. Sri Aurobindo had totally emerged from the depth and expressed a desire to sit up. In spite of our objections, he insisted. We noticed after a while that all the distressing symptoms had magically vanished and he was once more a normal healthy person. Then he sat in the chair. The change was so sudden and unexpected that we looked at each other, in sheer joy and amazement. “At last, our prayer has been heard!” This was the sentiment welling up in the silent heart of our devotion. It could not be believed! Now we ventured to repeat our question: “Are you not using your Force to get rid of the disease?” “No!” came the shocking reply. We could not believe our ears and to get a confirmation of our disbelief we asked again. Now no ground was left to harbour the illusion. What we heard was as plain and sharp as a sabre-edge. Then we put forth the bold query: “Why not? If you don’t use the force, how is the disease going to be cured?” To this he simply gave the cryptic reply: “Can’t explain; you won’t understand.”

Here at last was the key to the mystery! That is why the disease had progressed step by step, marked by three clear stages in its downward path: the completion of *Savitri*, Darshan and the School Anniversary, each stage followed by a deeper and deeper in-drawn condition. It was at one of the final stages that the Mother remarked, “Whenever I was there, I used to see him pulling down the Supramental Light.” It was clear from this statement what Sri Aurobindo was busy with. He had shifted his gaze and concentration to something else which, to his view, must have been much more important than minding the afflictions of the body. But we had not the vision nor the

comprehension; so we thought that the descent of the Light would fulfil our heart's desire. Though on the one hand his curt reply had taken the last plank away, this sudden transition instilled faith and hope—"the gleaming shoulder of some god-like hope"¹ that had upbuoyed us all through. It was much later when the sun had crossed beyond our horizon that these extraordinary incidents showed their true significance.

After an hour he came back to his bed and along with his coming returned all the signs and symptoms with a vengeance. The short respite seemed to have given him time for a further grapple with the advancing Shadow that was trying to draw a premature veil upon his work. Half an hour before the fatal moment, he drank some water and bestowed on all a last glance of compassion and recognition for the services rendered and took the plunge ultimate. Even then we had not the slightest suspicion that

*This was the day when Satyavan must die.*²

The news spread around in the early hours of the morning. The reaction of the disciples can be better imagined than described. Through the hush of night one by one they came and mounted up the stairs of Heaven to see what nobody had seen before. It was not death they saw, not a resurrection, nor a withdrawal into Nirvana but a grand repose, a death that was pulsating with power, light and beauty in every limb as if death had become immortal in the body of the King of kings. A vivid rendering of the Truth into a touchstone of Matter, it was no longer the body, but the golden lid which half-covered, half-revealed that Truth. Those who had the inner sight had realised the Truth and those who had the inner ear had heard in the still cave of their heart the piercing cry, "I am here, I am here!"

In that awakened consciousness we are marching forward towards the Goal the Master had set before us, for which he had worked to the last breath and has promised to do so till the Goal is attained. The Mother, supreme creatrix and realiser of that Goal, is our Guide and Goddess. Enriched with all his inexhaustible achievements, occult and spiritual, and with the supramental Light that had automatically passed on to her she is shaping us to the mould and figure he had visioned as the future type of humanity. Any one who has visited the Ashram after the great Event could not but have been impressed by the will to victory that his sacrifice has engendered in every breast. Out of his Samadhi a thousand flames seem to be mounting up and, lodged in our soul, burning in an ever rejuvenating fire, while His Presence enveloping and merging with and radiating from the Mother's being and body is pervading the whole atmosphere. One can see His Presence, hear his footfalls, his rhythmic voice, ever vigilant, devoid of the encumbrance of the physical body. One day the sacrifice will bear fruit; what he had depicted in *Savitri*, will come true. For, what is, after all,

1. *Savitri*.

2. *Ibid*.

Savitri if not the inner life episodes of the Mother and the Master? What he had pictured in the great epic has been faithfully enacted on the world-stage. The veil has fallen on the first part of that wonderful Drama and the sequel is being played behind the screen. The Fight with the last supreme Adversary has not ceased; if it has ended on the earth's battlefield in an apparent failure, it is raging as fiercely in the occult planes. When at the close of the Duel, the curtain will be lifted, we shall hear the sonorous recital of "The Book of Death", we shall see materialised the "Epilogue" on the earth-stage, and throughout the world will echo and re-echo the embodied passionate cry of Victory:

"I am here, I am here!"

NIRODBARAN

(First published in May 1951)

There are two paths set for the feet of the Yogin, withdrawal from the universe and perfection in the Universe; the first comes by asceticism, the second is effected by tapasya; the first receives us when we lose God in Existence, the second is attained when we fulfil existence in God. Let ours be the path of perfection, not of abandonment; let our aim be victory in the battle, not the escape from all conflict.

Buddha and Shankara supposed the world to be radically false and miserable; therefore escape from the world was to them the only wisdom. But this world is Brahman, the world is God, the world is Satyam, the world is Ananda; it is our misreading of the world through mental egoism that is a falsehood and our wrong relation with God in the world that is a misery. There is no other falsity and no other cause of sorrow.

God created the world in Himself through Maya; but the Vedic meaning of Maya is not illusion, it is wisdom, knowledge, capacity, wide extension in consciousness. Prajna prasrita purani. Omnipotent Wisdom created the world, it is not the organised blunder of some Infinite Dreamer; omniscient Power manifests or conceals it in Itself or Its own delight, it is not a bondage imposed by His own ignorance on the free and absolute Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 96)

‘SOMETHING UNIQUE AND INCOMPARABLE’

—*The Mother speaks of Sri Aurobindo*—

HE walked in the darkness of inconscience, even in the neighbourhood of death, endured the suffering of perdition, and emerged from the mud, the world-misery, to breathe the sovereign plenitude and enter the supreme Ananda. He crossed all these realms, went through the consequences, suffered and endured physically what one cannot imagine. Nobody till today has suffered like him. He accepted suffering to transform suffering into joy of union with the Supreme. It is something unique and incomparable in the history of the world. It is something that has never happened before, he is the first to have traced the path in the Unknown, so that we may be able to walk with certitude towards the Supermind.

(A passage taken from a conversation of the Mother on *Savitri* as recorded from memory by Mona Sarkar in *Sweet Mother, Harmonies of Light*, p. 28)

“THIS ERRANT LIFE” CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

[From his early boyhood Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) has had a passion for poetry. Soon after his arrival in the Ashram Amal began sending Sri Aurobindo his poems for critical appraisal. As he once put it: “...I...kept showing him my own little efforts at expressing the few strange glimmers of beauty and truth that at times my discipleship under so gracious a spiritual and literary guru brought me.” Sri Aurobindo would not just comment on his disciple’s poems but answer the various questions raised during the course of the disciple’s striving for perfection.]

[In 1931 Amal sent the typescript of “This Errant Life” to Sri Aurobindo.]

This errant life is dear although it dies;
And human lips are sweet though they but sing
Of stars estranged from us; and youth’s emprise
Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Cloud-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds grow less
Beyond the waving verdure of our sighs. [1]
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow!
For ’tis with mouth of clay I supplicate;
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
And all Thy formless glory turn to love
And mould Thy love into a human face!

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

[1] This line is terribly fanciful in expression. Green sighs? Sighs with branches?

But for this one unfortunate line a beautiful poem, one of the very best you have written. The last six lines, one may say even the last eight, are absolutely perfect. If you could always write like that, you would take your place among English poets and no low place either.

*

Sri Aurobindo,

Arjava as well as Dilip wants to see the whole of the poem to the concluding eight lines of which you have given such generous praise in your letter to Dilip. At present only two changes occur to me. I should like to write “Sky-lucent Bliss”[1] instead of “Cloud-lucent Bliss”—the “formless glory” of the penultimate line agrees more with the former. Then the line just preceding the last eight lines I want to cut out,[2] as I have been able to find nothing to replace it. Two new lines came to me, but they introduce a new idea which is not necessary to the poem and might even bring in a note of disharmony by being not wholly assimilable by the personal tone of the poem. So the second part of the poem will now read:

“Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds grow less...
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow, etc.”

If you have made any corrections or comments on the typed copy which is with you, I would feel happy to have them—provided, of course, you have no objection to returning me the sheet separately. For I wonder how the poem as a whole strikes you.

Sri Aurobindo’s reply:

[1] Yes; I wondered at the time why you had written “Cloud-lucent”.

[2] Yes, that is the best solution. It is a superfluous line.

I send you back the sheet. The comment was written long ago and was couched deliberately in a suppressed key. From what I have written about it to Dilip, you will gather that I consider they can rank—those eight lines—with the very best in English poetry.

23 July 1931

*

[From Sri Aurobindo’s letter addressed to Dilip Kumar Roy]

Amal’s lines are not easily translatable, least of all, I imagine, into Bengali. There is in them a union or rather fusion of high severity of speech with exaltation and both with a pervading intense sweetness which it is almost impossible to transfer bodily without loss into another language. There is no word in excess, none that could have been added or changed without spoiling the expression, every word just the right revelatory one—no colour, no ornamentation, but a sort of suppressed burning glow; no similes, but images which have been fused inseparably into the substance of the thought and feeling—the thought itself perfectly developed, not idea added to

idea at the will of the fancy, but perfectly interrelated and linked together like the limbs of an organic body. It is high poetic style in its full perfection and nothing of all that is transferable. You have taken his last line and put in a lotus face and made divine love bloom in it,—a pretty image, but how far from the glowing impassioned severity of phrase, “And mould Thy love into a human face”!

11 July 1931

*

[Part of a letter addressed to Amal by Sri Aurobindo]

The quotations [AE] makes [from your poems]—

The song-impetuous mind...¹

The Eternal Beauty is a wanderer
Hungry for lips of clay²—

certainly deserve the praise he gives them and they are moreover of the kind AE and Yeats also, I think, would naturally like. But the poem [“This Errant Life”] I selected for special praise had no striking expressions like these standing out from the rest, just as in a Greek statue there would be no single feature standing out in a special beauty (eyes, lips, head or hands), but the whole has a harmoniously modelled grace of equal perfection everywhere as, let us say, in the perfect charm of a statue by Praxiteles. This apart from the idea and feeling, which goes psychically and emotionally much deeper than the ideas in the lines quoted by AE, which are poetically striking but have not the same subtle spiritual appeal; they touch the mind and vital strongly, but the other goes home into the soul.

*

Sri Aurobindo,

Please excuse my troubling you with a letter before you have replied, but I have sent “This errant life...” to the *Orient* and it has struck me that in the lines:

“Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds grow less.
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings...”

1. “Ne Plus Ultra”

2. “Sages”

the word “grow” is repeated twice. Is it an inelegance? I can’t find a good substitute in the second line. If you think one is necessary and suggest it, I shall send the altered line to the *Orient*.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

It might be considered a fault, but I don’t see how to alter it without spoiling the beauty of the expression. (At a pinch you could write “be” instead of “grow”, but it is not so good as “grow”).

16 October 1931

*

Sri Aurobindo,

You must remember that there was a difficulty in getting rid of the word “grow” in the lines (occurring in my “This Errant Life”)—

“Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds grow less”

which were followed by

“If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow”.

I perceive a further blemish in the too close position of “lest” and “less”—a blemish accentuated if instead of “grow” is substituted a colourless “be”. So I suggest a re-modelling of the couplet thus:

“Eternal, earth-untouched, sky-lucent Peace!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.”

Do you think this would be an unalloyed improvement? If a word other than “eternal”, introducing a variety in the sound-effect, can be found, perhaps it would be better still.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

The second line (“decrease” instead of “grow less”) will do very well, but the new version of the preceding one would destroy its felicity and break up the unity of tone of the poem by bringing in a touch of poetic rhetoric instead of the delicacy of phrase and sincerity of feeling quiet but fervent which is the whole beauty of these lines. I don’t see the necessity of that alteration; “ness” can rhyme with “decrease” very well.

25 August 1932

*

THIS ERRANT LIFE

This errant life is dear although it dies;
And human lips are sweet though they but sing
Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate;
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
And all Thy formless glory turn to love
And mould Thy love into a human face.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

ADDENDUM

Many years later, during one of his informal “open house”-talks delivered at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Amal recited “This Errant Life” and shared his memories and thoughts with the students:

It is a poem written in a mood of half-dejection half-wistfulness. One morning the poet felt very much the pull of human things in the midst of his spiritual aspirations. All that attracts the heart of a mere man came up before his vision and he expressed the deep draw of it in spite of the transiency with which it is associated. But his spiritual yearning too remained. So he declared that the human cannot become the divine unless and until the divine becomes the human and answers as the Avatar the heavenward longing of earth.

The poem is simple enough not to call for much explanation. And your looks tell me that you already are familiar with it somehow. Oh you have been made to study it in the past by two professors? I did not know it had become as famous as all that. But Sri Aurobindo has given it rather high praise and it has been translated into both Bengali and Gujarati. It has, I suppose, what one may

term a poignantly profound sweetness. But by an irony of fate the way it was printed opposite its Gujarati translation knocked some of its high seriousness out by a printer's slip. I hope this mistake does not accidentally happen to be a shrewd comment on the poet's character: in the phrase,

If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings...

the printed version misread "mortal" as "moral"!

*

The *Orient* mentioned in Amal's letter to Sri Aurobindo dated 16 October 1931 refers to a cultural monthly of Bombay edited by his younger brother, Homi D. Sethna.

The poet least of all artists needs to create with his eye fixed anxiously on the technique of his art. He has to possess it, no doubt; but in the heat of creation the intellectual sense of it becomes a subordinate action or even a mere undertone in his mind, and in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous form of his soul: that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving the mechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature. It is this highest speech which is the supreme poetic utterance, the immortal element in his poetry, and a little of it is enough to save the rest of his work from oblivion. Svalpam apyasya dharmasya!

This power makes the rhythmic word of the poet the highest form of speech available to man for the expression whether of his self-vision or of his world-vision. It is noticeable that even the deepest experience, the pure spiritual which enters into things that can never be wholly expressed, still, when it does try to express them and not merely to explain them intellectually, tends instinctively to use, often the rhythmic forms, almost always the manner of speech characteristic of poetry.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Future Poetry, CWSA, Vol. 26, pp. 13-14)

NIROD-DA

(A talk delivered on 18th February, 2003)

At the outset, I would like to inform you all who have gathered here that my presence on the rostrum is purely fortuitous! The speaker who was appointed to address this august gathering was none other than our illustrious Manoj Das. The irony of it all is that of all dates it is on 18th February that he has been requested to attend and deliver a key-note address in an important meeting of the Sahitya Academy at Delhi. He came rushing to me and cajoled me to substitute for him. However I would have much preferred to remain “*gupta*” (hidden) behind Manoj Das—but that was not to be. I had therefore willy-nilly to step into his shoes. I am afraid that these shoes are a size too large for me and my awkward gait may evoke some embarrassment.

Sri Aurobindo has remarked “A God who cannot smile could not have created this humorous universe.” We all know how Sri Aurobindo liked to cut jokes with Nirod-da. I suspect that my lot in speaking on Nirod-da today is one of his jokes. Unfortunately this time the joke is at my cost—I can only look askance at him and submit.

My reservations to speak in a seminar such as this one stem from two apprehensions. Firstly, I am totally incompetent to speak anything worthwhile on Nirod-da; secondly I feel strongly that to eulogise someone in public in his very presence is not salutary either for the speaker or for the listener for obvious reasons. Such public adulation may inflate the ego of the person thus eulogised. Moreover, the audience, in most cases, is likely to suspect the sincerity of the speaker and conclude that the speaker is seeking some favour in return. However in the present context the above points are not valid—Nirod-da by his long years of sadhana has attained a state of *samata* where praise or blame leave him untouched. As for me, I have no favours to seek from him, for the simple reason that I have already received from him more than I could have asked for, namely, his unstinted love and affection right from my childhood for the past half a century.

When we look back and contemplate we find that the year 1903 has been a very special year. This was the year when three stalwarts among the disciples of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Champaklal-ji, Dyuman-bhai and Nirod-da were born. The previous year saw the passing of Swami Vivekananda, the great Vibhuti and disciple of the Avatar, Sri Ramakrishna. Recall the wonderful words of Sri Aurobindo:

What was Ramakrishna? God manifest in a human being; but behind there is God in His infinite impersonality and His universal Personality. And what was Vivekananda? A radiant glance from the eye of Shiva; but behind him is the divine gaze from which he came and Shiva himself and Brahma and Vishnu and OM all-exceeding.

We all know how Sri Ramakrishna took the heavens by storm and his life epitomised the quintessence of all religions. The Avatar Sri Ramakrishna thus prepared the field for the Avatar Sri Aurobindo to usher in a new Spiritual Age, marking the end of Religion and to establish the life divine upon earth.

Please note that I am not trying to draw any parallel or remotely suggesting that the three disciples mentioned before, were Vibhutis like Swami Vivekananda. To a remark of Nirod-da: "What disciples we are of what a Master! I wish you had chosen or called better stuff..." Sri Aurobindo answered, "As to the disciples I agree! Yes, but would the better stuff, supposing it to exist, be typical of humanity? To deal with a few exceptional types would hardly solve the problem." That is the crux of the whole problem. Sri Aurobindo expresses it so beautifully in his poem *A God's Labour*. Here are a few stanzas from the poem:

He who would bring the heavens here
 Must descend himself into clay
 And the burden of earthly nature bear
 And tread the dolorous way.

.....

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
 To bring the fire to man;
 But the hate of hell and human spite
 Are my meed since the world began.

.....

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
 And the Titan kings assail,
 But I cannot rest till my task is done
 And wrought the eternal will.

The poem ends with the grand assurance:

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
 For in a raiment of gold and blue
 There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
 The living truth of you.

The "you" here is our Divine Mother.

The Mother in her characteristic way once said: "Each one of you represent an impossibility." Later she modified it and replaced the 'impossibility' by 'difficulty'. Mother: "Each case is an impossibility to be solved... but now I am more gentle. I take away 'impossibility' and put 'difficulty'. Perhaps they are no longer impossibilities..." (*Questions and Answers*, 1955)

We may wonder what difficulty Nirod-da represented (I am consciously using

here the past tense). Though it is highly presumptuous on my part I shall be audacious enough to venture an answer (forgive my impertinence). On going through his *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* we find that there are two traits of his that Sri Aurobindo had to grapple with—one, his stubborn illogical physical mind, and two, his proneness to succumb to fits of depression. I shall cull at random from the *Correspondence* to illustrate my point.

Sri Aurobindo in his characteristic way while dealing with Nirod-da admonishes him thus:

You are a most irrational creature. I have been trying to logicise and intellectualise you, but it seems in vain... If you do not become perfectly and luminously logical and rational, how can you hope to become a candidate for the next higher stage even? Be a little practical and sensible.

September 18, 1935

Then again we have:

Sri Aurobindo: My dear Sir, be less narrowly logical (with a very deficient logic even as logic)—take a wider sweep; swim out of your bathing pool into the open sea and waltz round the horizons! For anything that happens there are a hundred factors at work and not only the one just under your nose; but to perceive that you have to become cosmic and intuitive or overmental and what not. So, alas!

September 10, 1935

When Nirod-da pressed him saying—

Nirod-da: I would like to know something about my ‘bad logic’ before I write anything further to you.

Sri Aurobindo: Helps to finding out your bad logic. I give instances expressed or implied in your reasonings.

Bad logic No 1. Because things have not been, therefore they can never be.

” ” ” 2. Because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, his sadhana can have no meaning for humanity.

” ” ” 3. What happens in Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana cannot happen in anybody else’s sadhana (i.e. neither descent, nor realisation, nor transformation, nor intuitions, nor budding of new powers or faculties)—because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar and the sadhaks are not.

” ” ” 4. A street beggar cannot have any spirituality or at least not so much as, let us say, a University graduate—because, well, one doesn’t know why the hell not.

” ” ” 5. (and last because of want of space) Because I am a doctor, I can’t see a joke when it is there.

February 11, 1935

As a last example, I would like to quote the following:

Sri Aurobindo: Because I allowed him to talk, and objected to his making an ostentatious ascetic ass of himself, does it follow that the talk and tea were given as part of his Yoga? If the Mother allowed butter or eggs to Y for his physical growth, does it follow that butter and eggs are the bases of the Brahman? If somebody has a stomach ache and I send him to the dispensary, does it follow that a stomach ache, the dispensary, Nirod and allopathic drugs are the perfect way to spiritualisation? Don't be an a___, I mean a Gandhilike logician!

March 18, 1937

From the above let us not jump to the conclusion that Nirod-da was some sort of a moron. When Nirod-da wrote to Sri Aurobindo, "...He (J) says my mind is not clear but it has strength and my emotional being very good!..." Sri Aurobindo replied, "I should say on the contrary that your mind is very clear (in spite of bad logic); it has strength but a slow deliberate strength. The third statement is correct."

March 31, 1935

This should suffice for the present about Nirod-da's bad logic. Let us now come to the Man of Sorrows.

When Nirod-da wrote, "I am thrown out of joint at two miracles, Sir: (1) R's treatment or yours; (2) NK's English poetry, though Madam Doubt still peeps from behind. Anyhow, no chance for me! कपाल,¹ Sir! What to do?" —Sri Aurobindo answered:

Why out of joint? It ought to strengthen your joints for the journey of Yoga.

Not at all कपाल, sir. Mind, sir, mind, Madam Doubt, sir, Madam Doubt! Miss Material Intellectualism, sir! Aunt Despondency, sir! Uncle Self-distrust, sir! Cousin Self-depreciation, sir! The whole confounded family, sir!

December 23, 1935

R, by the way, was a crazy but very successful homeopath. Nirod-da, as we know, was a young allopath with a foreign degree to boot. He would assail Sri Aurobindo with tirades against homeopathy. This royal battle between the two 'paths' —homeopath and allopath—was reminiscent of the famous battle of Panipath. But Sri Aurobindo would always manage to pour 'pani', I mean cold water on Nirod-da's head and disarm him. One is amazed to find in his humorous rebuttals the profound knowledge of medicine Sri Aurobindo possessed!

In another context Sri Aurobindo wrote: "But why hug despair without a cause —Dilipian or other? Come to your senses and develop a Nirodian jollity instead (not

1. *Kapāl*: Fate

necessarily Mark Tapleayan, though that is better than none). Laugh and be fat—then dance to keep the fat down—that is a sounder programme.”

Now we know the secret of Nirod-da’s slim figure!

But I cannot resist continuing further with this correspondence for its sheer delectability.

Nirod-da: The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur takes my breath away, making my heart palpitate!

Sri Aurobindo: O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing that I never was! I groan in unAurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least commonsense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation—not imagining wild imaginations—or for that matter despairing “I know not why” despairs.

February 23, 1935

When Nirod-da retorted:

Your grandeur and austerity imposed themselves not on this commonsense-lacking poor man alone, but on others too. I will say then that common sense is highly uncommon like yogic faculties...

Sri Aurobindo wrote back:

Common sense is exceedingly uncommon in this Asram. Sometimes I think the Mother and myself alone have our stock left unexhausted and all the rest have sent theirs flying sky high. However!

February 25, 1935

While Nirod-da groaned:

I realise at every moment that I am neither made for the path of the Spirit, nor for any big endeavour in life. I know I shall be unhappy, but are all men born to be happy?

Sri Aurobindo’s curt reply was:

Man of sorrows! man of sorrows!! Knock him off, man, knock him off!

January 19, 1936

And knocked him off he has indeed with the Guru’s help—today a few minutes spent in silence in his benign presence sees all sorrow melt away into thin air!

The above examples give us a glimpse of the sweet relation that was established between Nirod-da and Sri Aurobindo—a relation that can be described only as मधुरम्! मधुरम्!

Let me give three more examples:

Nirod-da: I send you a photograph of mine along with the note-book. What do you think of the snap—a Mussolini gone morbid? Anyhow, it looks as if you have at last succeeded in putting some intellect in this brain-box of mine!

Sri Aurobindo: Good heavens, what a gigantic forehead they have given you! The Himalaya and the Atlantic in one mighty brow! also, with the weird supramental light upon it! Well, well, you ought to be able to cross the Ass's Bridge with that. Or do you think the bridge will break down under its weight?

September 19, 1935

Nirod-da: Another point: Have you written anywhere what would be the nature of the physical transformation?

Sri Aurobindo: I have not, I carefully avoided that ticklish subject.

Nirod-da: What would it be like? Change of pigment? Mongolian features into Aryo-Greco? Bald head into luxuriant growth? Old men into gods of eternal youth?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head—everybody different colours, blue, magenta, indigo, green, scarlet, etc.; hair luxuriant but vermilion and flying erect skywards; other details to match? Amen.

Now you can't say surely that all your points have not been cleared?

September 15, 1935

Nirod-da: They are saying that a "sweet relation" has been established between you and me. I only hope and pray that it will be sweeter and sweetest.

Sri Aurobindo: The sweet relation is all right, but let it be nameless.

I have brought down a verse from heaven on the correspondence like Bahauallah—which proves that if I am not an Avatar, at least I am a prophet. It is I fear full of *chhandapatan*, and *bhashapatan*, but it expresses my feelings.

সাধকগণের হৃদিতলে correspondence করব বলে
যদি জাগত না পিপাসা
থাকতাম আমি হাসিমুখে মগ্ন supramental সুখে
হায়রে হায় কোথায় সে আশা?

But for heaven's sake, don't show this undivine outbreak to anybody! They will think I am trying to rival Dara in his lighter poetic moods.

February 5, 1935

(Translation: If the sadhaks had not in their hearts a craving for correspondence, I would live with a smiling face, merged in supramental bliss. Alas, alas, where is such a hope?)

An example of Dara's poetical genius may not be out of place here—once, when he wanted some more tea from the Mother, he wrote the following immortal couplet:

O Mother All-Mighty
I have finished all my tea!

This sweet relation of Nirod-da with Sri Aurobindo brings to my mind another sweet relation in the bygone ages, that of Arjuna with Sri Krishna, that of सखा and the सारथी and in the recent past that of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna. One may wonder as to why Sri Krishna chose Arjuna of all people as the right receptacle (पात्र) for receiving his Supreme Knowledge, when there was a bhakta like Uddhava, a follower and companion like Satyaki or a righteous king like Yudhishtira. We find an answer in the Gita itself. In the fourth chapter Sri Krishna says:

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम्॥ ३॥

This same ancient and original yoga has been today declared to thee by Me, for thou art my devotee and my friend, this is the highest secret.

Again, in the eighteenth chapter:

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम्॥६४॥

Further hear the most secret, the supreme word that I shall speak to thee; beloved art thou intimately of Me, therefore will I speak for thy good.

We may recall the famous lines of Kathopanishad:

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैव आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वाम्॥

The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but only he whom this Being chooses can win Him; for to him this self bares His body.

And that wonderful line in the *Synthesis of Yoga* (Mother's favourite): "He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite."

The secret is, both Arjuna of yore and Nirod-da of the present age are bhaktas all

right, but above all they have established a special bond of friendship, of camaraderie with the Lord—they fear not to argue, even to quarrel with Him, sometimes verging on irreverence.

सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं
हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति।
अजानता महिमानं तवेदं
मया प्रमादात्प्रणयेन वापि॥

For whatever I have spoken to Thee in rash vehemence, thinking of Thee only as my human friend and companion, O Krishna, O Yadava, O Comrade, not knowing this Thy greatness, in negligent error or in love...

The Lord equally reciprocates sportingly, sometimes with a touch of mockery even.

When Arjuna, overcome by grief with the tragic realisation of having to fight and kill his own kith and kin, refuses to fight (न योत्स्ये), Sri Krishna, smiling as it were (प्रहसन्निव) answers:

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे।

Thou grievest for those that should not be grieved for, yet speakest words of wisdom.

Then he goes on to remove the veil of Ignorance from Arjuna's mind. Why? Because Arjuna has totally surrendered to Him seeking refuge.

शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम्।

I take refuge as a disciple with Thee; enlighten me.

When Nirod-da cries out:

Friends have I none, Guru; to none can I open myself except to you. Don't forsake me, please.

The Guru reassuringly answers:

Certainly not.

Or again:

Nirod-da: You can cut me, Sir, or beat me, but don't forsake me.

Sri Aurobindo's compassionate reply: Never! But beat—a lot.

Thanks to the beating, we have today instead of the crude ore, shining gold.
When I read *Correspondence* in solitude, like Sanjay of the Gita, I am moved to utter:

राजन् संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम्।
केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः॥

(O King, remembering, remembering this wonderful and sacred discourse of Keshava and Arjuna [of Sri Aurobindo and Nirodbaran], I rejoice again and again.)

Talking of relationship with the Divine, as sadhaks of the Integral Yoga let us recall the beautiful aphorism of Sri Aurobindo:

Discipleship to God the Teacher, sonship to God the Father, tenderness of God the Mother, clasp of the hand of the divine Friend, laughter and sport with our Comrade and Boy-Playfellow, blissful servitude to God the Master, rapturous love of our divine Paramour, these are the seven beatitudes of life in the human body. Canst thou unite all these in a single supreme and rainbow-hued relation? Then hast thou no need of any heaven and thou exceedest the emancipation of the Adwaitin.

Here are some comments of the Mother about the book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*. She wrote: “Grâce à Nirod nous avons la révélation de tout un côté inconnu de ce qu’était Sri Aurobindo.” (Thanks to Nirod, we have a revelation of an altogether unknown side of what Sri Aurobindo was.)

About *Correspondence* the Mother once asked a disciple (the conversation was in French): “Have you read the whole *Correspondence* with Nirod?... there are—extraordinary things in there. He seems to be joking all the time but... it is extraordinary.”

She once told Nirod-da: “...Sri Aurobindo has answered all the problems in your letters. C’est merveilleux.”

In his Bengali story *Swapna* (A Dream), Sri Aurobindo in his inimitable style depicts a poor man lamenting over his miserable condition and the injustice of God, saying to himself, “If only once I could catch hold of this clever Shyamsundar I would teach him a good lesson.” At that instant the poor man’s hut was suddenly flooded with waves of light and he saw in front of him a dark boy with a lamp in his hand, smiling sweetly. The embarrassed poor man blurted out:

“ওরে কেপ্তা, তুই এলি কেন?” বালক হাসিয়া বলিল, “কেন, তুমি আমাকে ডাকিলে না? এইমাত্র আমাকে চাবুক মারিবার প্রবল বাসনা তোমার মনে ছিল। তা, ধরা দিলাম, উঠিয়া চাবকাও না।” ...বালক আবার বলিল, “দেখ, হরিমোহন, যাহারা আমাকে ভয় না করিয়া সখার মত দেখে, স্নেহভাবে গাল দেয়, আমার সঙ্গে খেলা করিতে চায়,

তাহারা আমার বড় প্রিয়। আমি খেলার জন্যই জগৎ সৃষ্টি করিয়াছি, সর্বদা খেলার উপযুক্ত সঙ্গী খুঁজিতেছি। কিন্তু, ভাই, পাইতেছি না। সকলে আমার উপর ক্রোধ করে, দাবী করে, দান চায়, মান চায়, মুক্তি চায়, ভক্তি চায়, কই আমাকে ত কেহ চায় না।”

(“Hey, Keshta, why have you come?” “Why, didn’t you call me?” said the boy, smiling, “Just now you had such a strong desire to whip me well, I’ve given myself up. Why don’t you get up and lash me?”... “Look, Harimohan,” the boy spoke again, “those who are not afraid of me, regard me as their friend, even call me names but out of affection and wish to play with me, are very dear to me. I have created this world for the sake of play and have been always looking for play-mates, but don’t find any. Everyone becomes cross with me, makes demands on me, asks me for gifts, positions, liberation, devotion, but alas! nobody want me for my sake.”)

In *Thoughts and Glimpses* Sri Aurobindo says: “What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.”

We have also these beautiful lines in the Mother’s prayer of 17th May, 1914:

Ô Toi, Être Universel, Suprême Unité en forme perceptible, par une irrésistible aspiration je me suis blottie dans Ton cœur, puis je fus Ton cœur lui-même, et je sus alors que Ton cœur n’est autre que l’Enfant qui joue et qui crée les mondes... Et sur la terre maintenant je suis l’enfant joyeux qui joue.

(O Thou, Universal Being, Supreme Unity in perceptible form, by an irresistible aspiration I nestled in Thy heart, then I was Thy heart itself, and I know that Thy heart is no other than the Child that plays and creates the worlds... And on the earth now I am the joyful child at play.)

It is interesting to note that the Mother one day while entering Sri Aurobindo’s room saw a vision that Sri Aurobindo and Nirod-da were playing with each other like two babies on the bed.

We are fortunate to have among us Nirod-da, the human baby, and if we approach him in the right spirit, we may be fortunate enough to get a glimpse of the other child, the eternal child, Sri Aurobindo—and that would be the utter fulfilment of our life, and then along with the Rishis of yore we too would sing:

रसो वै सः॥

MANOJ DAS GUPTA

(Reprinted from *Nirodbaran: Divinity’s Comrade*, the volume published on the occasion of Nirod-da’s centenary.)

AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

[We reprint here an article that first appeared in 1960, Volume 12, Number 6, of the journal *United Asia*, an International Magazine of Afro-Asian Affairs, published from Bombay. Many of our readers may not have seen it. We were unable to trace the present office of the journal. Our thanks to *United Asia*.]

*It was the hour before the Gods awake.**

So begins *Savitri* setting the mood of legend, symbolism, and impending cosmic action; the great “Book of Beginnings” stirs under the miraculous gesture of genius. It is not yet dawn, but already there is “the prescience of a marvellous birth to come”.

Taking the ancient legend of “Savitri and Satyavan” from the famous *Mahabharata*, the poet has been within his rights as a creative artist; and has recast, amplified, interpreted and expanded this mystic scripture into an epic poem of heroic dimensions. For those critics who believe that we have grown too wise to be taken in by symbolism and legend, and that we no longer have artists of sufficient calibre to work in this long and difficult form, this work of Aurobindo’s comes as a complete refutation of all such puerile criticisms.

The earlier legend tells of the noble and virtuous King Aswapathy who has been without child or heir. During his sacrifices, the Goddess Savitri appears to him and promises him a spiritual daughter to spring from her own being. She is born, grows up into a “Goddess of Beauty” and divine character. When she matures, her heart seeks out Satyavan, a prince living in a forest hermitage. Though he is destined to die within a year, nevertheless she gives herself to him.

Yama, the God of Death, then comes to get the young prince. But, with the petitions and pleadings of Savitri, Yama returns the soul of Satyavan to his body. Their marriage becomes the symbol of the raising of man to God, and the bringing of God to earth to transform the earth into an abode of divine delight.

This most brief survey of the fundamental story must suffice to only introduce us to the cosmic sweep of his grandiose scheme and architectural design.

The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are earlier epics of inspired intelligence and poetic vision of the great cultures of the past. But *Savitri* is not only a rendering of a world and a culture that is past. It is far more than that, for it enunciates a new law, a new world, a vision of a new consciousness that is slowly transcending and transforming the world about us. It is not only the evolution worked out by man up until now, it delineates the inspiration and vision which shall make the vision become

* The quotations are all from *Savitri*, 1st Edition, published by Sri Aurobindo International University Centre, Pondicherry, India, 1954.

a part of man's concrete experience. The earlier epics hint at, and somewhat anticipate the possibility of the supra-rational or Divine becoming a part of man's unfolding consciousness. But, in this twentieth century masterpiece, the seer becomes the cartographer pointing out the unexplored areas in the new fields of the mind and the struggle for release from the bonds of Ignorance and Inconscience. Here, evolution, and the natural processes of life, reach a higher rung than has ever been so clearly projected before. The problems of good and evil, of imperfection, are dealt with directly and man's eventual emancipation from them foreseen as he helps to establish the divine kingdom here and now upon this earth.

The national traditions of Indian culture, philosophy and religion underlie the earlier epics, with one story strung upon another, and a vast national temple erected. Through them there subsumes the interplay of other worlds, of mystic forces. But in *Savitri*, these worlds upon [worlds are] filled with other conscious beings and invisible powers, become an integral part of man's widening spirit in the entire spiritual adventure of humanity unfolding.

"The confused refrain of human hopes," and "The inarticulate murmur of our lives" become a part of "The deep spiritual cry in all that is." "These changing names, these numberless lives, these new oblivious personalities," are all fused to "vindicate our right to be and love"—"Where Space is a vast experiment of the soul." Book Two is "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds". Immediately there is revealed "the world-stair", that leads to "A self-creation without end or pause", which indicates the entire expansion of mankind's evolution from the unfathomable, dark night of Ignorance.

Every great work of art is an integrated and complete fusion of both intelligence and feeling. They become practically inseparable. In *Savitri*, the powerful rhythms, words, word-colours, spirit and form are indivisible. "The great hammer-beats of a pent-up world-heart", (Book I, Canto 5) become the universal rhythms of the world as it evolves from Matter into Life, and from Life into Mind.

This stupendous epic is unlike anything else in literature. To say that its eight hundred and fourteen pages, with their thousands of lines, makes it so overwhelming, is to give a superficial and false notion of its splendour and immensity.

To anyone who is at all familiar with Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*,—considered by many to be his *magnum opus*, the poem, *Savitri* is a little less formidable. Shall we say—it is not quite so overwhelming. But, as a *tour de force*, as a manifestation of what the philosopher called the supramental, or, the Overmind, the universal man speaking, the poem is a sovereign expression. In this work, poetry again enlarges a part of the spiritual empire of mankind. The World and Time may be slow to give this epic its durable place, but the future will give its final verdict as to the spiritual meaning, power and beauty of this monumental poem.

This final and magistral work from the great Indian teacher is a summation of all his philosophy, of all his teachings in all his multiform writings.

*His soul lived as eternity's delegate,
His mind was like a fire assailing heaven,
His will a hunter in the trails of light.*

...

*The little plot of our mortality
Touched by this tenant from the heights became
A playground of the living Infinite.* (p. 27)

What Aurobindo had long been teaching—the divinisation of life on earth—here reached the celestial powers through his consciousness and its manifestation.

All those who would like to enjoy *Savitri* can hardly be expected to bring to its appreciation the common kind of thinking and experience at the level of most people. For the poet, it was a form of seeing and hearing, of feeling, and a level of mystic experience that only a few mortal minds enjoy in their own right. But that is part of the joy and inspiration of great poetry. As we enter into its expression we raise the level of our own awareness, find new techniques of expression and expand the range of our own experience and consciousness. This is an inspired, concentrated, intuitive utterance, carrying its own light within itself. As we enter into that light, that utterance, that vast, spiritual atmosphere becomes a part of our own being, a fragment of our own creative vision. Its words, thoughts, images, become a reverberation in the well of our own living.

We follow King Aswapathy's journey into the realm of the spirit's Infinity—which as yet has not been attained or realised by man. Rising out of the Inconscience into Matter, and from there evolving into Life and Mind, we also see how Nature climbs into Deity and man becomes divine.

In all the elements of earth there is an inherent imperfection. All our attempts to create perfection out of imperfectoin result only in frustration and disillusionment. In the vast scheme of evolution as perceived by the Master, Aurobindo leads into a kingdom of subtle matter where man joins "a line of the Transcendent" and man becomes exalted in embodying the divine perfection from the Infinite.

The hero perceives all the intermediate planes of life and consciousness, where everything is surrendered to the rule of the mind. From these planes come our creative sciences, the knowledge with which to conquer space and the elements of nature. The interchange between the various planes of life and mind forms much of the background in all of Aurobindo's perception.

Some might wish to argue as to whether life "falls" into matter, or, whether life is already potential in all matter, and thus life ascends from matter. There is a divine Presence or energy behind the working of all the lower, vital force. This it is that drives the course of evolution onwards. But we must also recognise that it is through the conception of the "fall" that the poet had that it was possible to rear this great epic poem. Out of the vast ocean of electric wave-particles a material cosmos appears,

there is a manifestation of life-force, an unfolding of animal consciousness, and from the animal into the first levels of human consciousness. The human being slowly becomes aware of his spiritual possibilities. This is the motif running through Book Two: the reconciliation of human contraries, the ever-circling wheel of action, until Aswapathy came

Out of the timeless depths where he had sunk

and

He heard once more the slow tread of the hours.

Here, the poet expresses a knowledge that is beyond thought, sees a vision that lies beyond the reach of Time

On peaks where Silence listens with still heart

To the rhythmic meters of the rolling worlds.

Here lies the realm of the infinite kingdom of the spirit. The entire work is burnished with so much cosmic fire and light, that it is easy for weary mortal eyes to turn away from these movements of the gods into the lesser planes of everyday living.

The visions described from time to time seem filled with the same Consciousness of Immensity that we experience in the *Revelation of St. John*, in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

He scanned the secrets of the Overmind,

He bore the rapture of the Oversoul.

In “The Book of the Divine Mother” the poet reaches new levels of the aspiring soul as it directs its search for the divine Power realised here on earth. King Aswapathy continues to seek the path by which he can transcend the human formula and participate in the higher reaches of being—where all dualities are dissolved in perfect harmony. By Self-identification, he becomes One with the unborn, immortal Self that never dies.

Back and forth, between the mortal and the immortal, between ignorance and intelligence, the reader is carried along on this torrent of darkness and light, of perfection and imperfection. The lines have the sweep of a mighty Ganges finding its way to the sea. Here are “the architects of immortality,” struggling with the destruction everywhere on earth. Out of the tumult comes a torrent of splendid music that subsides as the King turns towards his labours for the spiritual destiny and perfection of mankind:

Establishing the empire of the soul

On Matter and its bounded universe

As on a solid rock of infinite seas.

In the general format of the epic, there are actually two volumes, with the first part of the second volume consisting of Book IV to Book VIII, and the second continues from Book IX through Book XII. “The Book of Yoga”, Book VII, is the longest [in the second volume].

The thread of the story about Savitri is resumed from where it was left in the first Book. It begins with “The Birth and Childhood of the Flame”, her growth, and her search for eternal love. This carries us through Book V, where she has met Satyavan and begins to become aware of the transforming power of love. Slowly she meets the hard inscrutability of Fate, and faces the cosmic plan and the divine purpose in her life. It is a gradual process as “These spirits met upon the roads of Time”, and the word of Fate permeates their mortal plane. “The Book of Death”, Book VIII, closes with the pre-destined death of Satyavan in the forest. Book IX describes the heartbreaking journey of Savitri, with her dead lover, Satyavan, and Yama, the God of Death as they struggle through the black void and eternal night of the unconscious, while Savitri demands that Death return her lover to her in life again. A double twilight dream broods over Book X, and in XI they have entered Everlasting Day, and Death has been conquered and left behind. In Book XII they return to earth to fulfil their joint mission. The love music that caresses the “Epilogue” brings the same “great light of the discovered soul”, that we can experience in passages from the Wagnerian opera, “Tristan and Isolde”, or in “The Song of Solomon”, that helps us

*To draw the chequered scheme of mortal life
 Into some semblance of the Immortal's plan,
 To shape it closer to an image of God,
 A little nearer to the Idea divine.*

WESLEY LA VIOLETTE

[Wesley La Violette, (4 January 1894–29 July 1978) was a distinguished American educator, musician, composer, author and poet. He is especially known for his version of *The Bhagavad Gita*, and for his opera, *The Enlightened One*, on the life of Lord Buddha.]

GLORIOUS GOLDEN DAYS

THE tale is not of recent times. It starts a long way back, in 1936, when I visited the Ashram for the first time as a child of 6. I came with my elder brother, my sister-in-law, my sister Sumitra and some others whose names I cannot now recollect.

We were overwhelmed with joy at the prospect of having the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Father, my brothers and sisters had already come here previously so we knew about Them, had seen Their photos. I was by nature a shy child and did not freely approach elders—father, uncles or others. Whenever we had to dress up and put on ornaments on special occasions and functions I felt like weeping. For the Darshan we were dressed in georgette saris—blue for Sumitra and red for me. But that day I did not feel like weeping, on the contrary, I felt only a happiness and an eagerness. We were instructed what we should do. We climbed the stairs leading up from the Meditation Hall; we turned right and immediately tried to peep from the left or the right of the persons ahead of us in the queue in order to have a glimpse of Mother and Sri Aurobindo sitting at the far end. Of course, at that time the queue was not long and everything used to take place in silence. On entering the small Darshan room and coming in front of Sri Aurobindo I placed my head at His feet and He blessed me with His soft compassionate hands. After that I made my pranams at the feet of the Mother and Mother also bent down to bless me. Then I placed my head between Them on the sofa and both of Them blessed me at the same time. I was a child and did not understand anything, I only had a feeling of quiet happiness, and measureless joy.

On the day following the Darshan, the Mother used to sit on a sofa upstairs in the room which is in front of the Darshan room, and distribute flowers and garlands. I still get the fragrance of ‘Surrender’, ‘New Birth’ and other flowers. Before leaving for Calcutta we always had the good fortune to have Mother’s Darshan either in the upstairs Meditation Hall or in the Darshan room and would receive chocolates and biscuits as prasad.

From then on Sumitra and I with some others used to come every year for the August Darshan. In 1938 the November Darshan did not take place because of an unfortunate accident: Sri Aurobindo’s thighbone got fractured early that morning. The next Darshan too, in February, did not take place. That was when the April Darshans started. During the next Darshan, in August, we saw that people were no longer allowed to enter the small Darshan room. A box was kept across the door and we were instructed to place our flower offering on the right side of the box and *pranami* on the left, and then leave the room after doing pranam only with folded hands. In spite of these instructions, and going separately for the Darshan, Sumitra and I both knelt and bowed before Them as a gesture of pranam. Of course we were not reprimanded for that act of ours, no displeasure was shown to us, rather the Mother was amused by our action and later mentioned this to our father.

Father knew of Sri Aurobindo quite a long way back. While on a pilgrimage to South India in 1933, he had come to Pondicherry and had the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and surrendered himself at Their feet. At that time we were living at Shantiniketan and father maintained a regular correspondence with some sadhakas. They would send him new writings of Sri Aurobindo and he would type these out, making copies which were sent back to Pondicherry. Father and my elder sister Sujata settled permanently in Pondicherry in 1938. In 1939 our 3rd brother Noren Singh and in 1940 my 5th brother Abhay Singh settled here permanently.

In 1941 our 4th brother Nirmal Nahar and my elder sister-in-law (Rajsen) visited Pondicherry for the February Darshan. My brother returned but the Mother did not allow Rajsen to go back, for the Mother foresaw some serious, even fatal accidents to her. Therefore she had to stay in Pondicherry under the direct protection of the Mother. Here too she met with some accidents but these were not very grave. Once she fell down from a ladder while plucking flowers and fractured her collarbone. On another occasion there were inflammatory eruptions on her face which looked terribly distorted. The Mother asked her not to look in the mirror and every day the Mother would caress her face till Rajsen recovered fully.

We used to come every year for the August Darshan but in 1941 Sumitra did not come. I, along with our eldest brother (Dhir Singh), Shobha Mitra's mother and elder brother came to Pondy well before the Darshan day and therefore had the opportunity to be here for my birthday. Mounting the stairs (beside Nirod-da's room; earlier, it was Chandulal's) I reached the passage on the first floor. Soon the Mother came out after Her bath and came towards us—I had gone there with Kiran Kumari. I offered to Her the gifts I had brought. With what grace She accepted them! She asked me if I liked mangoes and I promptly said, "Yes." She went back to fetch for me an alphonso mango from the fridge near the bathroom. What an unforgettable experience!

Kiran Kumari with her infant son Sumantra, our uncle Uday Singh, his family and my elder sister Sujata came in 1935 for Darshan after which they went back. Kiran Kumari came back soon after and settled down in the Ashram permanently. As for me, from the very beginning, I wanted to stay here. I used to write in bold letters to the Mother praying for permission to stay and Mother would convey orally, "Not now, later, when you grow up." Meanwhile my sister-in-law, staying in Pondicherry away from her children felt sad and lonely. As she could not leave Pondicherry because of the Mother's instructions, the Mother permitted the five of us to settle here. So in October 1941 my 2nd brother Bir Singh brought the five of us: Sumitra, Suprabha, Pratip, Prabir and Lucy to Pondicherry in the midst of heavy cyclonic rains. Hiring rickshaws at the railway station, we went to Michel House allotted to us for our stay. The Mother had seen to it that we were provided with a servant who would clean the rooms, bring drinking water etc.

Later my 2nd brother Bir Singh joined R.A.F. as a pilot. During the war when any plane flew over the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo would say "Perhaps it is Bir Singh". During

training he met with an accident and as a result he received a head injury. After recovery he too settled here. Our 4th brother Nirmal Nahar came to Pondicherry in 1942 and was given the responsibility to develop and look after the Cazanove garden. Our eldest brother Dhir Singh did not settle here permanently as he had to look after our landed property but would come every year and stay for five to six months. Those were the happy days of joy and oneness, all living as members of one family. Nolini-da, Amrita-da, Pavitra-da, Bula-da, Dilip-da, Sahana-di, Champaklal-ji, Kamala-di and her father, Albert-da's parents, Sisir-da and many others lived as one unit. They all loved us youngsters and children as their own. Our brothers lived at Santal House. Although our family was known to poet Nishikanto at Shantiniketan, living at Pondicherry in the same house we grew more intimate.

As five of us children were to arrive and stay at the Ashram, the Mother told Baudi (Rajsen) to make cooking arrangements at the house. In those days the disciples (sadhakas and sadhikas) used to have their meals thrice a day in the Dining Room but many of them used to take tea and toast once a day in their rooms. Almost all had their stoves for the purpose. Vegetables, cooking oil, rice, groundnuts, oranges etc. were supplied for us every day.

I was especially overjoyed to be here as there was no school. But soon the Mother arranged for our study; Sisir Mitra, Master mashai (Prabhakar-da) used to come to our house to teach us various subjects. Pratip, Prabir and others studied English with Rani Maitra and Doraiswamy and Bengali with Sukumar-da. I do not recollect exactly who taught mathematics. However when Sunil-da came, he started teaching mathematics in a room in the Ashram building where Pavitra-da used to teach mathematics earlier to a group comprising two of my elder brothers, sister, Vasudhaben, Mangatrai, and some others. Later, with the opening of the School Sunil-da taught some more subjects. Pavitra-da taught us mathematics, physics and chemistry. With the beginning of World War II more children started pouring in. Till the School started many of them used to study along with us. On our terrace we played games; in Jiji's house we played indoor games such as Carrom, Monopoly, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders etc. Later, in Sisir-da's room we studied English, while at Ila-di's we studied Bengali and her brother Dr. Nripendra taught us hygiene.

In those days along with our studies we also worked in different Ashram departments. Sujata worked upstairs with Kiran Kumari and also did other work under Pavitra-da's guidance. At first Sumitra and I worked with Jiji and Sujata in their house. We used to repair stoves and polish them, repair fountain pens, wash old postage stamps, make chit pads etc. Early morning, we would go to pluck, pick and collect flowers before going to the Dining Room where we had hot milk, sweet bread and banana. After breakfast I used to help Benoy-da, an old sadhaka, to pump water manually. He used to look after the supply of drinking water for those eating in the Dining Room. From an underground tank water used to be pumped to the filter. We also cleaned the filter tanks of the Ashram and the Cycle House.

After dinner which used to be over early, quite a few of us would accompany the elders for a stroll on the beach road. During this time Rishabhchand-da would ask Sumitra, Amita and me to narrate stories or anecdotes in English so that we could learn to speak in that language.

We were always on the lookout for a glimpse of the Mother. Wherever and whenever She could be seen, we would be there to fill our eyes and hearts. Our days started with the Balcony Darshan of the Mother early in the morning. During those morning Darshans there reigned a complete hush with eager expectancy for the appearance of the Mother at the Balcony. After the Darshan was over and the Mother withdrew, every one dispersed, mostly to go to the Dining Room for breakfast and then each one to his place of work.

Later in the morning the Mother would take a stroll on the terrace. But before going to the terrace She would open a window of the room through which She passed and to have a glimpse of Her we waited below. Choosing an umbrella, kept near the window, matching the colour of Her dress, She would go to the terrace over Dyumanbhai's room. While going to the terrace, She would open another window and take a biscuit kept beside it. A crow, called 'Blackie' (he was black all over) would come on the parapet, take the biscuit from the Mother's hand and fly away. Then the Mother would go to the terrace and we children gathered below would move from place to place in the courtyard in order to be able to see Her for the maximum length of time. When the elders gathered to have 'window Darshan', they would greet each other with: "Victoire à la Douce Mère" and the response was: "Au Divin Victoire."

Didi gave me lessons in French from the book *French without Tears* but not much progress was made due to our greater interest in games etc. However I was encouraged by Chandulal, brother of Vasudha, so I with some others went to him to learn French. We were keen to learn this language as we wanted to talk to Mother in French and also be able to read her writings in the original. Chandulal would send some of our notebooks to the Mother who graciously corrected them. Even before the School started the Mother saw Sumitra and me upstairs in Pavitra-da's office. She would give us dictation in French, show us how to draw. Two of our elder brothers and Sujata would also go to the Mother upstairs separately. They worked with Pavitra-da—Noren Singh helped in the stamp collection work. Rajabhai (Abhay Singh) worked in the laboratory and Atelier; Sujata in the lab and also with Kiran Kumari in the Mother's green room. Many things were prepared with Pavitra-da's formula in the lab.

The Ashram School started in 1943. The Mother decided who would attend school and who would continue to work in the departments. I was asked to join. In the meantime more children joined the School, it began to grow, arrangements for regular sports and games were made. The Mother's observant eyes were on every little detail. The year when the girl students participated in the 13th July March Past (eve of Bastille Day), the Mother Herself personally scrutinised all the details of our ceremonial

uniform: whether the dress was properly and smartly worn, if every one had a handkerchief with her and so on.

Darshan continued in its own regular way, i.e. four times a year. The group members had the opportunity of two Darshans in April—one in their group uniform and again with the general queue. The group was led by Pranab-da followed by Abhay Singh carrying the Ashram flag. Behind him went Light with the 'E' group flag followed by its members. Then the other groups one after the other. This continued till 1950.

In November that year Sri Aurobindo was not keeping well, still He gave Darshan and we hurriedly passed by. Then occurred the most unexpected event, Sri Aurobindo withdrew from His physical body in the early hours of December 5, 1950. This unbelievable event left our world mute and stunned. On 9th December the body of our Lord was laid to rest in the Samadhi under the directions of the Mother. It was as if time stood still. From 12th December onward life in the Ashram limped back to a semblance of normalcy.

I do not quite recollect when this began, but after Balcony Darshan, I, along with my brothers and sisters had the Mother's Darshan in the lab through which She passed to go to and return from the Balcony. Beside the room where Nirod-da lived, is a door which leads to a staircase used by the Mother to come down or go up. Sri Aurobindo's body was brought down from these stairs. When one climbs these steps one enters a long corridor. On the right hand side is a small room, the laboratory, through which the Mother used to go to give Balcony Darshan after crossing Pavitra-da's bedroom. The other door to the Balcony is from Pavitra-da's office. From this door if you cross the office, (southward) you come to his dining room, then the passage etc. This leads to another door which opens onto the terrace. Sometimes the Mother stood near one of the windows of the corridor and looked unobserved at the Samadhi and the people. After the three windows there is a door which leads to a small terrace with a view of the Samadhi and the courtyard. As stated, we used to wait for the Mother in the lab, Pavitra-da and Mrityunjoy-da in the former's bedroom, Kalyan-da and Amita in the corridor in front of the lab. On Her return Pavitra-da and Mrityunjoy-da would do their pranam and converse a little. When She came to the lab, we made our pranams one by one. The Mother would discuss many things; She would listen attentively to Rajabhai about his work in the workshop (Atelier) and the various programmes of the day. Once he and two others had to go out to fetch a car for the Mother. From then on Sumantra who had completed his education and had joined Atelier, started coming with us in order to keep the Mother informed, mainly about transport. Mounnou also started coming there.

During one Balcony Darshan Nolini-da fainted and nearly fell down. After that incident Nolini-da and Amrita-da started coming upstairs, to Pavitra-da's room. At that time we enjoyed the Mother's nearness for quite some time. We spoke to Her about many things and She would answer our queries; and also, on Her own, She

would speak to us on several subjects, including our performance during the competition the previous day, our faults and weaknesses and also our good points; and naturally on other topics too.

When the Ashram Press was started, the Mother asked some of us to work there. That work and the School work continued at the same time. Except for her work with the Mother, Kiran Kumari's main work shifted to Harpagon. Work at the lab continued but I had to give it up due to lack of time. Gauri-di assisted Sujata for some time and when Bibha (Samsukha) came she would also help. At the beginning in the Press some of us—Sujata, Priti (Das Gupta), her sister Tapati, Chitra (Sen) and myself — worked in the hand-composing section. Later the manuscripts were typed on the monotype machine which we learnt to use. We devoted some time to the binding section too. I used to help my 2nd brother Bir Singh who was in charge of the accounts office of the Press. When he asked Mother for a typist, the Mother said that Suprabha could do that work. With no delay Amrita-da sent his typewriter to the Press. Thus began my early lessons in typing. However I used to make some fingering mistakes as the typewriter had a French keyboard whereas the monotype had an English one! For some time I was given the responsibility of the Store.

When Medhananda-da translated Sri Aurobindo's poems into German and these were to be published as a book, we typed them on the monotype machine. The Mother suggested that a working knowledge of German would make the work easier. No sooner said than done. The four of us—Priti, Tapati, Chitra and I—began learning German from Medhananda-da.

Having completed the 'classe de seconde' and midway through 'première' I stopped my studies, only continuing for some years with French. Later, for some time, I joined Satprem-da's class and studied for a fairly long time with Bharati-di. After finishing the study of school level French, I had asked the Mother "Who would teach?" She said, "I will teach." That was when the Mother started taking classes in the Playground. These classes began as 'Questions & Answers'. After some time they changed into 'Translation Classes'. The Mother would read from Sri Aurobindo's books *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* etc. in the original English and simultaneously translate the passages into French. When necessary, Pavitra-da would consult a dictionary and provide the proper word. Later Satprem-da joined him. They used to sit near the Mother's feet and help in the work.

My regular studies came to an end when I completed 19 years of age. From that time the Mother asked me to take classes in the School and teach French and mathematics. Though I was not very interested in teaching, the Mother always encouraged me in that. She used to say that to teach others one learnt ten times more than while just studying. She told us about Her stay in Japan during which She used to take classes. These were so interesting that students of other classes would flock into Her class!

All these activities, such as work in the Press, sports, games etc. were closely

twined. My initial learning of table tennis was at the hand of the Mother. A table was kept in our house, Michel House. The Mother inaugurated it by playing with all the inmates of the house and also with some others present there that day.

After teaching for ten years, I came back to the lab to help Didi. Many things were prepared for the Mother and 'Prosperity' according to Pavitra-da's formula. Some things were made for particular persons. My forenoons were divided into three equal segments. Two days working with Didi, two days with Noren Singh and the Mother's stamp collection, and two days with Bharati-di to learn French. In the afternoons I continued in the Press from 1.30 p.m. to 4 p.m. While working upstairs, in the lab or with the stamps, I had the privilege of seeing the Mother whenever She passed by, especially when She had some work with Pavitra-da. On Her way or in his office I could see Her. She would sometimes ask what we were doing. After the French classes with Bharati-di stopped, I devoted more time to the stamp collection.

One day, I do not recollect when, the Mother said that my father required a helper in the Publication Department and asked if I would leave the Press and help my father. I worked there till 1975 when Noren Singh was involved in a car accident in France. Since then I devoted my full time to the stamp department—by that time there was a separate office—and worked in the lab when necessary. Sudha Rai helped me for some time with the lab work. Later that work also I discontinued, but before that I trained Aruna of Prosperity to prepare some of the items for distribution to the sadhakas and also helped her initially.

The Mother took a keen interest in sports and games and used to visit the different grounds where the physical education activities were held. She herself played tennis with some; prior to that She played table tennis. She would decide who would play at which table and against whom. During competition She would watch the sports and in races She would even hold the tape at the finishing line. In this way She encouraged us in all that we did.

The Mother graced the programme of 2nd December by Her presence in the Sports Ground and that of 1st December earlier at the Playground and later at the Theatre. Once She wrote a play along with a few eminent members of the Ashram. She even directed and guided the actors. Final rehearsals used to take place in the Ashram Meditation Hall under Her eyes. Once I played the part of Athene in a scene from Sri Aurobindo's *Perseus the Deliverer*. The Mother watched the three of us, Amita, Arati and myself in Pavitra-da's office. I did my best to deliver the dialogue in a sweet voice but the Mother said that that was not the correct way. She then demonstrated how to speak the dialogue. She said that the voice must come from the depth, from near the stomach and not from the throat alone. After a few days' practice I delivered my dialogue and She read the part of Andromeda. This time She was satisfied.

Under the guidance of the Mother the Ashram expanded manifold. She kept an eye on all things, big or small, important or seemingly insignificant. Nothing was left out of Her view. She taught Huta drawing and painting. The latter became so proficient

that her paintings were published in book-form under the title of *Meditations on Savitri* with a foreword by the Mother!

In this way the Mother moulded us. Under Her care and protection, through unlimited freedom and opportunities given by Her, we Her children, grew. But in our ignorance we missed and lost many things. Yet our Divine and gracious Mother tirelessly and endlessly poured into us the ambrosia of Her Love.

While remembering these glorious golden moments, so many sweet experiences come to mind. Of course, there are also many incidents which are lost in the depths of oblivion. In the early days, perhaps till the end of World War II, we used to collect some flowers with special significance like ‘Service’, ‘Transformation’, ‘Aspiration’ and so on. We counted them, arranged them and offered them to the Mother. Counting the flowers was very significant. While collecting the flowers from the gardens, one thing was kept in mind—that we did not spoil other plants or trample them.

Sometimes when because of physical indisposition the Mother did not give Darshan, even then She never forgot her children. As She recovered, She would see us on special days. Her contact continued with those with whom She had work. Even on first January 1973 She gave Darshan to some sadhakas and sadhikas. Till April that year She saw some people every day and then that too stopped. Every one was apprehensive whether there would be the Darshan in August. But it did take place. It was raining heavily during Darshan time but the sea of humanity was waiting to have a glimpse of Her, to receive a drop of Love and Grace from the Divine.

Then, like December 5, 1950, came November 17, 1973, the day of the unexpected withdrawal. When Sri Aurobindo passed away the Mother was there physically to take us up in Her arms, to give us the needed guidance, to soothe us though we hardly understood what She was passing through. But after November 1973 we were all rudderless in the vast, immeasurable ocean of life. But slowly, life seemed to limp back to normal and each one in his own way tried to follow the teaching of ‘the incarnate dual Power’. Outwardly the Ashram activities continued in their old pattern but slowly many things changed and are even now changing. However those who offer their prayers with single-mindedness, faith, sincerity and surrender receive the guidance. Limitless is Their Grace, Their Love, Their Compassion. When the Mother was present physically in our midst, She was the focal point of the Ashram and in the background, the all-pervading presence of Sri Aurobindo was always felt. We have to continue Their sadhana, abide by Their teaching, feel Their presence everywhere and at all times. At every step, Their protection is there with us and we have to be consciously grateful to Them at each moment.

SUPRABHA NAHAR

(Translated from the original Bengali by Ashoke Ganguli)

ONLY RECALL

My garden of Eden and early morning;
Azurine sky over leaves hangs an awning.
Fingers of light comb through green's fine interstices
Dissolving the last of night's fear precipices

The moon's but a ghost in the blue grey sky.
The star's but a memory you steered last night by
Yet the soul lies still and adreaming
Reluctant from night's slumber to accept new day's weaning.

Towards this new day stretch your tendrils my Heart.
What if some petals seem to get pulled apart?
There are marvels beyond the range of sight
To melt the corrosion of caution's blight
That says it's best not to open the eyes
Lest darkness descend once again from the skies.

Day too has a polestar to see you through,
A brightness each instant born anew.
Its light rushes headlong from on high
To transform every tear and sigh
Into a peerless pearl of grace:
Only recall Her gaze, Her face.

MAGGI

PAINTING AS SADHANA

Krishnalal Bhatt (1905-1990)

(Continued from the issue of November 2006)

14

[Krishnalal's correspondence with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo]

28. Aug. '36: Mother,

Jayantilal writes to me and wants to know whether the fixing of the pictures in the Town-Hall is to begin recently or it will take time.

If Mother knows anything She will kindly let me know so that I can inform him. Sri Aurobindo: There seems to be no present prospect of it, as we have heard nothing from David.

K: I want to practise on my Israj with Madangopal and Vishnu. They have no objection. Can I do it with them?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

9-Sept-'36: Mother,

Herewith I send a line drawing of Sri Aurobindo which I have done after tracing from a photograph.

I had the invitation to do it. I send the letter asking me to do it.

If Mother finds it satisfactory for sending it for publication I may send it.

Sri Aurobindo: I am afraid it cannot be sent or published.

30-Sept.'36: Mother,

We have done some decorations in Purani's room, on door, boxes etc.

I would like to show them to Mother. May I suggest to Mother to see them tomorrow after distributing the pay if possible?

Sri Aurobindo: Mother will decide when she is downstairs.

4. Oct.'36: Mother,

Since two days I remain disturbed in the nerves. I don't get sound sleep during night or day. A little headache is there.

I can't keep myself steady so much as to bring quiet or peace.

Sri Aurobindo: Is there any specific cause of the disturbance?

[37-year-old Dahilakshmi, Tulsibhai's wife, had died two days earlier, on the 2nd. See Notes below.]

5. Oct.'36: Mother,

I think that there were two reasons for my disturbance.

I went to burning place (in case of Dahilaxmi) and so I was tired and so there was nervousness.

The main thing might be that I was disturbed during night by the cries of P [*who had become insane*]. I woke up and could not sleep for 2 hours when I had the ideas of madness pressing on my nerves.

Both these incidents took place during the interval of some hours and so that had the effect on my nerves. This is what I think.

Last night I had good sleep and I feel better.

Sri Aurobindo: That is good. It was evidently the strain on the nerves all worked up by the vibrations in the atmosphere. It should not be difficult to throw it off. [*See Notes below.*]

21.10.'36: Mother,

Since two days I remain quiet and very light internally.

To-day at noon I was sleeping when I had some dream. It stopped & I felt that I should be completely passive. I became passive and in that condition I felt something like light descending from above the head. But when it came down it was a mixture, —confusing—and disturbed and blocked the nerves in the head. Then I woke up and found that a little headache had begun.

Sri Aurobindo: It is the resistance of the nature, especially the outer or physical nature, which creates that difficulty. For its inferior consciousness mixes with the light and stops or obstructs its action and blocks its passage through the physical brain, nerves and cells. If the psychic being is brought forward and its action has cleared the mind, vital and physical sufficiently, this resistance is diminished and practically disappears, for the psychic influence refines the stuff of consciousness everywhere and makes it plastic and pure.

30.10.'36: Mother,

To-day during meditation gradually I became quiet more and more, and at the end I nearly entered into the condition of passivity. This condition is attained sometimes while meditating. To-day also I felt in the condition that some descending movement or connection with something above the head was going to take place. But there was something in me which felt itself unable to bear that result (or the fear or hesitation?) and so I could not leave myself completely in that passivity.

What can be this which was not ready to allow the connection with higher thing?

In this way if I get the passivity should I allow it to continue and have the result it brings or what should be the proper attitude?

Sri Aurobindo: It is probably the physical mind that is afraid of entering into so unusual a state for it. You must get rid of the fear—throw it away when it comes, and

then let the meditation proceed.

2-Novembre-'36: *Mère,*

J'apprends français. Je vous prie pour une copie du "Prières et Méditations" en français.

Mother [re-writing]: *Mère,*

J'apprends le français. Je vous prie de me donner un exemplaire des "Prières et Méditations" en français.

Mother: *Je vous enverrai le livre demain.*

K: *J'ai préparé quelques études des plantes et quelques copies des peintures d'Ajanta. J'aime à vous les montrer si vous me donnerez un entretien à votre convenance.*

Mother [re-writing]: *J'aimerai vous les montrer si vous me donnez un entretien quand cela vous sera possible.*

Mother: *Je pense pouvoir vous voir Mercredi prochain le 4—vers 1hr1/2.*

30-11-'36: Mother,

I want to copy two paintings from Ajanta books. I think of doing them in tempera style on wood. For that I asked Chandulal if there might be old pieces of teak wood of 4' × 2' size. But that he has none. So I asked him whether I could see for the teak wood pieces of some suitable size in the timber godown. To which he flatly refused.

May I pray to Mother to arrange for me two pieces of wood (size I may select from the stock)? If they are old—from rejected doors etc—so much the better.

Mother: I have asked Chandulal if he has an old door that he could give.

5/12/36: Mother,

As the planks of the required size are not there I think of doing tempera-copies on the everite of which I require 2 pieces (1 × 1/2 metre each).

Sri Aurobindo: You can ask Chandulal for the everite pieces.

[*Pencilled on top right* "(2 volumes of Ajanta paintings)"]

14-12-'36: Mother,

May I know something for my portrait-painting?

I am trying out at present the techniques of putting the colours, the boldness of using the colours etc. I don't get the real personality of the model in portrait. Is it due to the above reason—about technique? Or is it that I have no insight for that?

How should I be doing the portrait? Or if there is anything objectionable in my portrait-painting.

Mother will kindly let me know.

Sri Aurobindo: The failure to bring out the personality is not at all due to any defect in the technique. With any technique the personality can be brought out. But to get it one must come out from one's own personality, one's ego with its characteristic and

limited look on things, and identify oneself with the person of the sitter—that is how one seizes it and can naturally bring it out in the painting.

22-12-'36: Mother,

Herewith I send a still-life study which I did recently, and also two cards which Madame Colin gave me as present.

Madame Colin saw some of our pictures and was pleased. It seemed she was interested in art. She talked about the artists and modern art in France etc.

There is one snow-picture of Romen which is framed with glass and dealwood on its back. We found insects behind the glass which spoil the picture. Insects may be there due to the dealwood.

Mother: It is better to remove the plank and the glass and to fly-tox the picture.

24.12.'36: Mother,

There seems some resistance in some part in me. I do not know where or how. I pray Mother to help to get it cleared.

Sri Aurobindo: It is by aspiration and will that you can get the resistance cleared. The Mother's help and her force will be there with you.

*

NOTES apropos death in the Ashram: from Nirodbaran's and Tulsibhai's correspondence with Sri Aurobindo:

Nirod (on 25 March 1935): I firmly believed that death was impossible here. Since it has been possible, it means that hostile forces have become victorious.

Sri Aurobindo: There have been three deaths since the Asram began—one, of a child in a house that was not then part of the Asram and the other of a visitor. This is the first death of an Asramite in the Asram itself.

N: You said, I hear, that you have conquered Death, not only personally, but for others as well.

Sri Aurobindo: I am unaware of having made any such statement. To whom did I make it? I have not said even that personally I have conquered it. All these are the usual Asram legends.

The conquest of Death would mean the conquest of illness and of the psychological and functional necessity of death of the body—that is one of the ideals of the Yoga, but it can be accomplished only if and when the supramental has driven its roots into Matter. All that has been acting here up to now is an Overmind force which is getting gradually supramentalised in parts—the utmost that it can do in this respect is to keep death at a distance and that is what has been done. The absence of death in the Asram for so many years has been due to that. But it is not impossible—especially

when death is accepted. In S's case there was a 5 percent chance of his survival on certain conditions, but he himself knew the difficulty in his case and had prepared himself for his departure from the body.

*

Tulsi (on 5 October 1936): ...Where is she now and in what plane?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not yet time for these things to be spoken about, for if that is done, then it will not be safe for Dahilakshmi's soul in its passage. That was why Mother was not calling you.... If you wish to come for a meditation only, she will call you. But these questions cannot be answered now, so they should not be put.

Sri Aurobindo (on 20th): It is true that you could do nothing there [*in the traditional funeral ceremonies to be held in Gujarat*]. Adverse circumstances are very general now; it is a part of the storm that is blowing over the earth and making life [*insecure?*] and difficult.

*

Nirod (on 9 October 1936): ...In the letter to me [*of 25 March 1935*], there was a very high optimistic, almost a certain tone about the conquest of death. Now it appears that you no longer hold that view, and say that death is possible because of the lack of solid mass of faith. It has to be conquered by Sadhana!

Sri Aurobindo: In what does this change of views consist? Did I say that nobody could die in the Asram? If so, I must have been intoxicated or passing through a temporary aberration.

As for the conquest of death, it is only one of the sequelae of supramentalisation—and I am not aware that I have forsworn my views about the supramental descent. But I never said or thought that the supramental descent would automatically make everybody immortal. The supramental descent can only make best conditions for anybody who can open to it then or thereafter attaining to the supramental consciousness and its consequences. But it would not dispense with the necessity of sadhana. If it did, the logical consequence would be that the whole earth, men, dogs, and worms, would suddenly wake up to find themselves supramental. There would be no need of an Asram or of Yoga....

N: By that letter you have struck terror into many hearts, I am afraid, and henceforth we shall look upon death as quite a possibility, though not as common as it is outside.

Sri Aurobindo: The terror was there before. It came with the death of D. L. and the madness of P [*Krishnalal's neighbour*] and not as the result of my letter. It was rushing at the Mother from most of the sadhaks at Pranam every day.

N: If increase of numbers stands in the way, if doctors and medicines shake the faith, well, it is very easy to solve the problem, isn't it?

Sri Aurobindo: Increase of numbers brought in all sorts of influences that were not

there in the smaller circle before. Doctors did not matter so long as faith was the main thing and a little treatment the help—But when faith went, illness increased and the doctor became not merely useful but indispensable. There was also the third cause, the descent of the sadhana into the physical consciousness with all its doubt, obscurity and resistance. To eliminate all that is no longer possible.

(To be continued)

S. V. BHATT

BOUNDLESS LOVE

O Beauty, O Boundless Love
 Ever seated in the heart of all
 Ever hidden from mortal eyes—
 Who seeks You, is surely wise.

Compassionate and limitless
 Embracing all beings
 Making life all-happiness
 Showering the Bliss Divine.

Gratitude rises from the Earth
 Experiencing this Heavenly Mirth.
 May all live in You and for You,
 The wide world be an altar to You.

PUSHPA PRAVA DASH

MOMENTS, ETERNAL

(Continued from the issue of November 2006)

Vande Mataram

THE Muraripukur band of boys had arrived and India began to grow conscious. Like the sannyasi-children of *Anandamath*, these fearless boys went up on the gallows smiling, with *Vande Mataram* on their lips, and sacrificed their lives for the liberation of their Motherland from the chains of servitude:

Who, on the gallows, sang life's victory-song.

Naturally in this context, Khudiram, the fire-child, comes to mind. The British ruler had tied the hangman's noose around his neck. On this tender young boy's lips that day had echoed his favourite song:

Come, ye who would be lulled by Death, O come.

This youthful boy went laughing to his death, a living embodiment of the determination contained in the *matri-mantra Vande Mataram*. The cry of *Vande Mataram* was on his lips.

The Mother told Mona many things about the revolutionaries of Muraripukur. She held them in very high esteem. Mona showed the Mother every Muraripukur boy's photo and she looked at them with great interest. About Khudiram, the Mother remarked:

Look at his eyes intently—they tell you everything. He looks so innocent and at the same time very happy to sacrifice his life for the country. The fire of patriotism burns in his eyes.

After Khudiram was hanged, Kanailal Dutt and Satyendranath Bose also sacrificed their lives on the gallows. They too went out with the *matri-mantra Vande Mataram* on their lips. On seeing Kanailal Dutt's photograph, the Mother asked Mona: "Was he with Sri Aurobindo?"

Hardly had Mona said 'yes' that the Mother added:

It is clearly written on his face that he was with Sri Aurobindo—it is like an aura. His psychic being is burning intensely; it is quite an individualised psychic being.

It is said that after Kanailal had been sentenced to death, he started putting on weight. And when the sentries came to fetch him on the last day they found him sound asleep. They had to wake him up. And smiling he went on the gallows. He had overcome the fear of death long back. *Vande Mataram!*

Satyendranath Bose's face too lit up with a smile as he went up on the gallows. So many of them sacrificed their lives in order to break the chains of servitude of their Motherland! And *Vande Mataram* was on each one's lips.

The Mother said:

The aura of Sri Aurobindo is around them all, it is very clear, and their psychic being expresses it... See this one. Oh, his psychic is very much to the front. He surely belonged to Sri Aurobindo's group... It is not sacrifice which is written on their face, it is joyful offering to the Motherland—to Mother India. And they have proved something, they have proved that adoration of the Motherland is dearer than life itself. They faced all dangers and fought bravely, whatever the cost. Their psychic beings are all individualised. It is an extraordinary group. All these photos I have seen just now have the markings of a hero. Tejen's father (Jatindranath Mukherjee) has the markings, and others too. Some of them are endowed with almost divine qualities, rarely to be found among men.

Let me tell you now about how two young boys heroically bore the torture inflicted on them by the Police. They went on repeating *Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram*.

Our Biren Sen (in the Ashram) like Sudhir-da was also sent to the Andamans and mercilessly tortured. His brother, Sushil Sen, joined the Swadeshi group as a young boy. Once, an English police officer banned a meeting which a popular Swadeshi leader was to address. So Sushil just walked up to this officer and hit him hard on the head with a stick. The poor boy was immediately caught and ordered to be given a punishment of fifteen lashes. A policeman who wielded a heavy whip started lashing the boy, but he refused to be cowed down. With each whiplash he cried out loud *Vande Mataram* and the whole crowd joined in with him (the slogan had been banned then).

Such is the power of the *matri-mantra*.

Now let me tell you about Chittaranjan, the son of Monoranjan Guhothakurta.

Sri Aurobindo, Bipin Pal, along with several other regional leaders turned up in Barisal for a meeting of a regional conference of Bengal. The gathering kept shouting *Vande Mataram* as they waited for the visiting leaders. When the leaders arrived, the Police made a lathi-charge. However, the young boy, Chittaranjan, continued shouting *Vande Mataram*. The police pounced on him, beating him ruthlessly as he slumped to the ground, bleeding. But he did not cease even once his cry of *Vande Mataram*. After he had recovered, Chittaranjan proudly told his father: "I cried out *Vande Mataram* as

many times as the police hit me with their sticks. They could not silence me.”

Just imagine how powerful this *matri-mantra* is!

This cry of *Vande Mataram* bound all hearts together, from Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra and from every province of India. *Vande Mataram* became a cry of bonding, of mutual love, goodwill and greeting. The educated classes of Punjab greeted one another with the cry of *Vande Mataram*.

Vande Mataram is indeed a tremendously victorious and powerful mantra of awakening.

I am naturally reminded here of Bagha Jatin and his heroism. In the battle for independence Jatindranath Mukhopadhyaya was the hero of heroes. A follower of Sri Aurobindo, Bagha Jatin showed such prowess in battle against the British on the banks of Budibalam in Baleshwar that even some British officers could not but praise him.

The deputy inspector of police, General Riland, once asked Upendranath Ghosh, the lawyer of this revolutionary group:

“Have you read the three articles in this envelope? What an extraordinary man, this Jatin Mukherji! What a mastermind! Had he been alive today the whole world would have looked upon him as a leader.”

There were three English articles in the envelope. Justice McPherson remarked about the article titled “The Children of Mother India—The Voice of a Devotee”:

“This political article is ablaze with fire!”

When a wounded Bagha Jatin was being taken to hospital he told magistrate Kilby:

“These boys with me are innocent. I am solely responsible for everything that has happened. Please see that injustice is not done to them.”

Even while breathing his last he made the same appeal to Kilby again.

On 10th September 1915, Charles Tegart came to see Jatindranath. He was accompanied by some highly placed British officers. Jatindranath reiterated his appeal to Charles Tegart.

“I am glad to have met you. It is time for me to leave but those who remain are innocent. It was at my urging that they chose this path. Kindly see that they are not unjustly persecuted.”

What a vast, generous nature! Even in the final moments of his life he was concerned about Niren, Monoranjan, Jyotish and the others.

Then a paroxysm of cough shook Bagha Jatin and he threw up blood once more. His humour did not leave him:

“Amazing that this body should still contain so much blood! What reassures me is that I could offer it at the altar of the Mother. This blood shall never go waste.”

And with these words this hero of heroes was no more. After Jatindranath’s passing, Charles Tegart told Barrister J. N. Roy:

“You know, Mr. Roy, we had to do our duty, but our admiration and respect for

Jatindranath is immense. He was truly an invaluable son of India.”

Our Prithwin (Bagha Jatin’s grandson) has written a book on his grandfather. Here are some incidents I have picked out from it to give you a feel of this great personality.

Now this is what Sri Aurobindo has said about his beloved disciple:

He was one of my trusted lieutenants, a wonderful man who could belong to the front rank of humanity, such beauty and strength combined in one I have not seen. His stature was like that of a warrior.

The ideal that Bagha Jatin established by offering his blood at the altar of the Mother is what he left behind to his comrades and associates.

22nd November 1915. It was the day Niren and Monoranjan were to be hanged. Both of them went laughing up on the gallows, such joy they felt on that day! Who would reach the noose first: this was the competition between them! Repeating the cry of *Vande Mataram* they had conquered the fear of death. And as they were being hanged, hundreds of prisoners’ voices rang out with the same cry: *Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!*

Another group of young boys appears before my eyes and I remember their fearless faces and feats of bravery. They were born much after the Muraripukur boys. But these boys too were fired by that intrepid self-confidence that was lit by the *matri-mantra Vande Mataram* and they had set out to liberate their Motherland from the chains of slavery.

We are all familiar with the courage and heroism of boys like Benoy, Badal and Dinesh. One day at noon in front of the ‘Writers Building’ a group of these revolutionary soldiers got off their vehicle. They went up to the first floor, determination writ large on their faces. Three pistols were aimed at Colonel Simpson and shots rang out. The ‘Writers Building’ was in tumult. People started running helter-skelter, terrified.

In Lalbazar, Charles Tegart heard a voice crying out carried by the wind, ‘Help! Help!’ He rushed out to try and finish off Benoy, Badal and Dinesh in a man-to-man combat. But he had to concede defeat. Despite so many soldiers around he could not handle three young Bengalis. The famous Gurkha regiment was called to confront this fearless trio. Where on earth did these three boys get such tremendous force to take on the formidable British Army and inflict a shattering defeat on them in battle prowess? The smoke of exploding bullets and the smell of gunpowder! A black darkness descended and through it Benoy, Badal and Dinesh would be heard roaring from time to time *Vande Mataram!* When their guns had run out of ammunition one after another they rushed into a room. They were now face to face with death. Benoy gave the order, cry out *Vande Mataram* one last time before dying. The three of them roared as one, *Vande Mataram!* Look at the sheer power of this *maha-mantra!*

Dinesh was hanged on 7th July 1931. With firm, quiet steps he climbed up on the

gallows and said simply: “I am ready”, and then like a clap of thunder, he cried out *Vande Mataram!* And within seconds hundreds of prisoners from the entire jail echoed *Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!*

Let me now tell you something about the young Pradyut Bhattacharya.

This happened on 11th January in 1933. Nobody had slept that night at the political prisoners’ jail. They were all thinking about Pradyut. Suddenly Pradyut’s voice wafted in with the breeze. He was sweetly singing:

O Death! Thou art dear to me as Shyam.

Unimaginable that such a young boy should sing this before dying!
Khudiram too had burst into song before being hanged:

Come, ye who would be lulled by Death, O come.

Where did they find this power of self-sacrifice? Its source was the *maha-mantra Vande Mataram*. Every revolutionary embraced Death with a laugh with *Vande Mataram* on his lips!

And so on the morning of 11th January 1933, Pradyut got ready. He washed himself, finished his puja and waited. The sentries were amazed. Then he climbed up the steps on to the gallows all by himself. A large smile lit up his face. Like Kanailal, he too had put on weight.

“Are you ready, Pradyut?” questioned the Jail Superintendent, Mr. Burge.

“Absolutely!” he replied with a laugh. “I am ready. Now do what you have to do.”

His being cried out *Vande Mataram* one final time. Within a flash hundreds of political prisoners roared *Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!* shaking heaven and earth.

Pradyut was just 17 and on the power of the *maha-mantra Vande Mataram* he had laid his life at the feet of the Motherland in order to liberate her from servitude. Just two words: *Vande Mataram*—but the power within them is incalculable. And the life and character of every revolutionary merely exemplifies this. The revolutionaries were able to bear all that pain, persecution and torture because they kept repeating the *maha-mantra Vande Mataram*.

Now let me return to the Playground where we heard for the first time the cry of *Vande Mataram*. As soon as Pranab had uttered *Vande Mataram* we too, unknowingly carried by the tremendous force of that *maha-mantra*, echoed it again and again, *Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!*

Four heroic sons of the past were present in our midst in the Adult-Group. I turned to look at them. Nolini Kanta Gupta, Sudhir Sarkar, Nolini Sarkar, Narendranath Dasgupta stood quietly on their spots as if absorbed in meditation. Had the repetition of this mantra stirred something in them? After all this *bija-mantra* had been their constant companion.

I was myself transported to the story of their lives in the distant past.

Nolini-da (Nolini Kanta Gupta) had taken his vow in a secret ceremony at the altar of Kali at midnight with blood drawn from his own chest: "I shall one-pointedly serve my Motherland with body and soul." That same Nolini Kanta Gupta is standing now so quiet and poised, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's beloved child.

Sudhir-da, who had to undergo terrible suffering and torture for a long time in the Andamans, was there too, his eyes aglow with light. Whenever I met him he would tell me: "You know Priti, mati is actually Ma-ti." (The land is the Mother.) The way he uttered Ma-ti opened the gates of such tremendous love and respect for the Motherland! He told Mona one day: "We did not completely accept Sri Aurobindo's Mother India as a living Entity, a living God, so in order to establish the truth, He has brought down now the living Mother, the Divine Mother."

When Mona recounted this to the Mother, She just laughed.

Sri Aurobindo had remarked about Mona's father: "That fearless Sudhir."

The Mother told Mona:

Your father is among the 'gifted' ones who have an individualised psychic being.

Mona took his father to the Mother on his eightieth birthday. After seeing Sudhir, the Mother told Mona:

Tell him to remain quiet. Explain to him lovingly that the Mother has taken charge of India. I know how difficult it is for him, but let him not worry.

Nolini-da (Nolini Sarkar) was not associated with the Muraripukur boys but he never hesitated in giving his total help and support to the revolutionaries in silence from behind. He had the deepest reverence and love for Sri Aurobindo.

After these people, there were many more heroic sons who dedicated their lives one-pointedly in the service of the Motherland under the direct guidance of Bagha Jatin. Narendra Dasgupta or our Naren-da was one of them. Narendra Dasgupta stands out among the youthful revolutionaries who on Bagha Jatin's instructions had committed a successful robbery. This money was brought in bags and was to be used for the Motherland's work. He hid the money under his mattress and quietly slipped into the adjoining room. The Police entered this room and searched everywhere in vain and finally left. It was in the course of a conversation that Sri Aurobindo had made that famous remark: "Oh! that Naren!"

After Naren Dasgupta passed away the Mother observed:

...a man who lived his whole life with the idea of serving Sri Aurobindo, he died clasping my photo to his breast. This was a consecrated man, very conscious, with an unflinching dedication, and all the parts of his being well organised around the psychic.

They are indeed worthy of our reverence. Blessed are they! Among the worthy sons of Sri Aurobindo they had the privilege and honour of hailing *Vande Mataram* in front of the Mother. Earlier they had vowed to work for the liberation of their Motherland from her chains, and now as they uttered *Vande Mataram* they were bound by oath to advance on the path of Integral Yoga.

“ ‘Jeevananda, come at once, the one who reaches the summit first will win. Say *Vande Mataram!*’

The Vaishnava army cried out loud:
 Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
 Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
 Thou the love divine, the awe
 In our hearts that conquers death.”

Here, the summit we must climb is that of ‘Truth’ and so for us it is an ‘Ascent to the Truth’.

Like the children of *Anandamath* we are the children of the Mother and on the strength of the mantra *Vande Mataram*, we are committed to scaling the summit of Truth. And so with the cry of *Vande Mataram*, a wave of fire swept over the whole Playground and a new life began. An immense change overtook the life in the Ashram. In 1905 the cry of *Vande Mataram* had released a tremendous force that awakened the Indian people and now that same *maha-mantra*, *Vande Mataram*, was awakening the whole world. A time shall come when every human being on the earth will cry out *Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!*

(To be continued)

PRITI DAS GUPTA

(Translated by Maurice Shukla from the original Bengali *Abismaraniya Muhurta*)

WHITEHEAD

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD (1861–1947) was an English mathematician, logician, philosopher of science and metaphysician.

Whitehead was in Trinity College, Cambridge, as a student and in 1885 he became a Fellow of the College. During his teachership there, Bertrand Russell entered as a student. Soon Russell became a colleague and a friend. Through the years 1903 – 1913 the three volumes of *Principia Mathematica* came out under their collaboration. This was a pioneering work in Symbolic Logic, or Mathematical Logic as it is also termed.

In what is referred to as the second phase of his career (1914 – 1924), Whitehead was associated with the University of London and was involved in educational matters, especially issues affecting the character of education for the working class. His book, *The Aims of Education* (1928) is a collection of essays growing out of reflections on the experience of these years. But Whitehead was moving on to issues in the philosophy of science. In the span of four years (1919 – 1922) he published *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*, *The Concept of Nature* and *The Principle of Relativity*—the third was instrumental in his subsequent election as a Fellow of the British Academy in 1931.

The year 1924 may be regarded as the beginning of the third and last phase of Whitehead's career. This would culminate in his complete engrossment in the problems of metaphysics. Whitehead never formally studied philosophy in his life, but he agreed in 1924 to become professor of philosophy at Harvard University in U.S.A. In 1929 Whitehead published his great work, *Process and Reality* with the subtitle, *An Essay in Cosmology*. This ushered in a philosophical idea that is now called "Process Philosophy". Whitehead himself, however, used the term "Philosophy of Organism" to describe his thought.

Process and Reality begins with the sentence, "These lectures are based upon a recurrence to that phase of philosophic thought which began with Descartes and ended with Hume." Descartes assumed that there are two distinct, utterly different kinds of substances, mind and matter, each requiring nothing else than itself, to exist. But then, the point to ponder becomes: if knowing begins with the experiencing of a mind capable of existing by itself and cut off from everything external to it, then the question is how to justify the claim to establish contact with a reality external to it. Whitehead's orientation of thought will become clear if we now note the closing phrase of the opening sentence referred to above, namely, "and ended with Hume". Whitehead maintained that Hume (and more elegantly, he notes, Santayana) showed that Descartes' metaphysical assumptions can lead only to skepticism, since it must entail an end of epistemology, and thereby bring about an end to philosophy. In fact, many contemporary philosophers have talked about the end of philosophy. Whitehead observed that this eventuality can occur only from too narrow a view of the nature of

philosophy. Whitehead soon came to the conclusion that mind and matter, the two ultimates of Descartes' philosophy, are actually both abstractions of one concrete reality. Whitehead's thought soon gave rise to his notion of actual occasion, also called actual event or actual entity, and it came to be recognised as Whitehead's fundamental metaphysical category.

Whitehead's actual event is not a substantial unit; it is a process of growing ('concrecence' as Whitehead calls it). It is thus a process of becoming. Whitehead describes it as a weaving together of 'prehensions' (a primitive term coined by Whitehead to mean apprehensions or appropriations or 'taking into account of' or more definitely 'taking into account of the immediate past'). But Whitehead states that 'the taking into account of' or feeling is without conscious awareness. This reminds us of Bergson's 'élan vital', the driving force behind 'creative evolution', but itself without consciousness. Parallels may be drawn also with Prakriti or Pradhana of Kapila's Sankhya school of philosophy.

We think a better synthesis is obtained if we are prepared to look at mind and matter as, on the one hand, two entirely distinct and utterly different kinds of abstractions, but on the other hand, inseparably connected with each other in any instance of existence of one or the other.

Whitehead made Descartes his starting point. However, on matters of ontology, not Cartesian dualism of matter and mind, with God above, but an intimate kind of dialectical monism over mind and matter where we will equally keep God above, seems to be a more consummate viewpoint. But God, or the creator of the world is not only supreme mind but also, supreme matter, in the sense that it has in its stuff that primordial matter or that non-consciousness part, through the medium of which God, following the dictates of its own mind creates the world. It may be said that this non-conscious part was more force-like than matter-like, as it appears to some modern relativistic scientists, including Einstein himself. In chapter ten of *The Life Divine*, "Conscious Force", Sri Aurobindo says, "...even in the view of the world as essentially an act of consciousness, an act is implied and in the act movement of Force, play of Energy." (*SABCL*, Vol. 18, p. 82)¹

Philosophers often compare Whiteheadian actual event with Leibnizian monad, though they say that while a monad is windowless, an actual event is "all windows". By this is meant that while two monads never interact, two actual events may quite interact with each other. Here we feel like making an observation.

We know that one of the four famous proofs of God given by Leibniz goes by the name of "The Argument from Pre-established Harmony or from Design".

The argument is as follows: If we look at different clocks we shall see they are marking the same time, though they are not causally connected to each other. But actually there exists a single outside cause that regulates them all. (The clock-analogy

1. See author's essay on Descartes in *Mother India*, December 1977, p. 984.

was first supplied by Gieulinx, a pupil of Descartes, like Malbranche, who said that mind and body are only providentially parallel. The clock-paradigm caught the imagination of Leibniz.) The same may be said with regard to the universe as a whole. The single outside cause is God. Philosophers who do not otherwise deny the merit of the argument raise the question as to how Leibniz's windowless monad can receive directions from God to act in a certain definite manner. Perhaps, Leibniz himself would have retorted that his monads are windowless, but not without ventilators, and it is through the ventilators that they receive directions from God above.² It may be stated that if a monad is also assumed to have a sort of opening, then a monad of Leibniz and an actual event of Whitehead indeed come quite close, despite the fact that while a monad is a substantial unit, an actual event is a relational or phenomenal unit.

We shall now pay attention to some distinct aspects of Whitehead's thoughts.

Whitehead has spoken of the nature and function of philosophy. In the first chapter of his *Process and Reality*, introduced before, and also in a chapter of his *Adventures of Ideas*, he has dealt with the subject.

Philosophy, according to Whitehead, is the endeavour to frame a logical system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. A fact is interpreted, according to Whitehead, when it is understood as an instance of a general idea.

Whitehead takes the ordinary method of scientific generalisation to be the method of philosophy. Of course, one requires insight, he says, and that cannot be provided by any method. But what we can achieve by our insight should admit of rational presentation and application.

According to Whitehead, it is an error to regard the five senses as the only channels through which knowledge of the external world is obtained. Through the five senses, Whitehead says, we get the knowledge of the contemporary world, but nothing of the past, and totally miss the important fact that the present is derived from the past. Whitehead stands for treating the whole body as the organ of knowledge. The environment is pressing itself, he says, upon the whole body and through indistinct bodily feelings we become aware that the present is causally derived from the past. He makes himself vivid by stating that through the senses we know the world in 'presentational immediacy' and through the bodily feeling, we know it in 'causal efficacy'. It is only through this latter mode that we know the world in fullness, as a causal process. There cannot be any doubt that to know the world as a causal process is of top importance. But instead of falling back upon indistinct bodily feelings, Whitehead could have immediately talked of mind and regard it as the sixth sense, which is an internal sense. Indian systems of philosophy speak of six senses—*ṣaḍa indriya*—of which five are the usual five external senses—*bāhya indriya*—and the

2. See author's essay on Leibniz in *Mother India*, May 1977, p. 373.

sixth is the mind, regarded as an internal sense—*antara indriya*.

In *Religion in the Making* (1926) and in all his works after *Process and Reality* (1929) Whitehead avoided technicalities in exploring imaginatively the significance of his metaphysical ideas. *Religion in the Making* is richly suggestive of the nature of religion. *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), already introduced, presents his conception of experience in luminous prose. *Modes of Thought* (1938) is intended as a free examination of some ultimate notions, as they occur in daily life.

In *Science and the Modern World* (1925), his first metaphysical work, Whitehead rejected the idea of ‘simple location’ presupposed by scientific Materialism. Every object, he says, from a human body to an electron, is composed of events or processes, also called actual entities. An actual entity is a unifying of its relations to the other actual entities of the world it appropriates. God plays a central role in this appropriating process.

Whitehead was not religious in any narrow doctrinal sense. But God was always with him when he was at his sublime heights, a stance that prompts us to quote the opening words of Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine*:

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts ... is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality.

Whitehead is aware that there is a difference between appearance through our perception and reality. When there will be a perfect adjustment between the body and the world, the appearances, so dreams Whitehead, will be at one with reality, and thus will be true, in the truest sense. Our bodies have not reached that ideal stage. But Whitehead believes in the teleology of the universe, and thinks that such a perfect adjustment is part of the aim of terrestrial evolution. This dream is fully consonant with Sri Aurobindo’s envisioning of spiritual transformation which will ultimately reach to the very depths of each and every cell. Only, Sri Aurobindo says, for this a conscious human effort is necessary, when, he says, God’s grace will come down. Then there will be a true supramentalisation of man’s earthly existence. The human effort, or human aspiration, often spoken of by Sri Aurobindo is part and parcel of his prescribed programme of Integral Yoga.

ASHOK KUMAR RAY

NATURE'S BOUNTY

In the weariness bloomed the oleander,
Its hues of rare crimson, or pink or yellow,
Swayed in strangeness of delight.
Nature rushed out from suppressed beauty
To tread on the gleaming breath,
To catch a glimpse of the world.
In soft petals of the oleander
Surrendered heart, whispered:
Silence is everything.
The concealed sweetness
Unfolded its wings;
A vision grew within,
A presence was born.
All that seemed lost or forgotten
Recovered—awakened, as though
From ponderous sleep,
A rare strength sprang up.
It bridged the possible and the impossible,
The promise that lay within
Revealed itself an island
In oceanic bounty,
Revealed the secret
Of the blooming oleander.

N. SHAKUNTALA MANAY

NARAD REMEMBERS

(Continued from the issue of November 2006)

THÉMIS—THE POET

Tehmi: [again on her own poetry] The poetry came so naturally to me and then I stopped it, which was a stupidity.

On Shakespeare:

No poet comes close to Shakespeare. [We quote lines together from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.]

On *Henry V*: I don't care for it. Too rhetorical and pompous.

...

On *King Lear*: *Lear* is unsurpassable. *Lear* must be very carefully played for all its beauty to be brought out.

...

On *Othello*: Somehow I can't stand *Othello*. Iago is a devil, no, worse than a devil.

...

The Comedies are of a different type. *Twelfth Night* is most enjoyable if well played. This is one of his great comedies.

...

Narad: *Hamlet*?

Tehmi: Oh yes. [Quotes the last lines beginning with "Good night, sweet prince".]

The touch we have in Shakespeare we don't get anywhere else.

Lear, I think, is the best of Shakespeare. I don't like *Othello*.

Hamlet doesn't have a very good form. It is a little sprawling. *Macbeth* is short but it has a perfect form. If the three witches are dressed in weird black garments and are hobbling around, immediately the whole atmosphere of the tragedy will come.

Just a few words and you see the genius and the whole atmosphere is created.

Double, double, toil and trouble

Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

There must be vigorous action [in the plays]. They are meant to be acted.

Shakespeare's women are more interesting than his men.

N: What about Chaucer?

Tehmi: Chaucer's language is a little different. It is Middle English. Chaucer is understandable. It is still flavoured with Old English but sufficiently modern to be understandable. Old English is not understandable.

N: Did you read *Beowulf*?

Tehmi: I read *Beowulf* for my M.A. studies. Pure Old English, not understandable to modern people at all. Like a totally different language. It is very powerful poetry. I learned it almost like another language. How much the language changes, huh!

For my studies to learn it was almost like translating from another language. So much transformation a language undergoes.

N: I read chapters of *The Future Poetry* again and again, it is so beautiful.

Tehmi: The later chapters of *The Future Poetry* are difficult. The earlier chapters are easy, but easy [only] for those who know poetic criticism. That is really the future poetry [the later chapters], on truth, beauty, perfection and good—I think so.

...

Nishikanto is a very fine poet. In Bengali he is considered even better than Tagore. [After listening to Satadal's translation of Nishikanto's poem on 25 years of Mother.]

...

I have a different idea about reading English poetry. I don't like any external emphasis or any of one's personal feeling added. I like a very plain reading as if we were reading off the book.

...

Nirod told me that Sri Aurobindo did not. [add personal feeling and emphasis] He used to read very plainly. Nirod said, 'Like you.'

...

The undertones—automatically they should come out if you read the lines as they should be read, because the poet has already done that.

N: And yet I have heard readers who are so boring with an endless monotone.

Tehmi: One has to discriminate between this and that. It depends on how much the reader himself hears of the inner music of the thing he is reading.

When one says: [Tehmi recites the entire passage from memory.]

My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
 Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart.
 Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
 Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;
 Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
 Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
 Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
 To its omnipotence leave they work's result.
 All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour.

You see, it has its own rhythm and music—you don't want to add anything to it. One has to have a feeling for the language—really—and the meaning. The meaning adds to the rhythm.

N: Yesterday you said you would look at some of the poems I have written. I hesitate to say 'I'. Perhaps it would be better to say 'Poems that have come to me'.

Tehmi: I will be happy to look at them.

N: There are just some poems that have been written since I have come this time.

Tehmi: That is the way they must come, just like that.

N: Yes, I understand, but the level of the inspiration must also be high enough or the poetry would not be worth keeping.

Tehmi: A friend of mine, Kishor Gandhi, sent my poems to Sri Aurobindo Through Nirod. I had just come, I was quite new to the place and I didn't know Nirod at all. We used to have classes with Mother in the 'Prayer Room'. When we were coming down out of class I remember Nirod shouting that Sri Aurobindo liked the poetry. What a grace, eh? Sri Aurobindo read fifty poems of mine and commented.

...

My friend in Bombay must have spoken to Kishor Gandhi about me and we became very friendly, a very nice person. He was always a little sickly, weak in his body. I think because he had a very unfortunate childhood. But very intellectual, a very sharp mind!

(To be continued)

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

True repose comes from the widening, the universalisation of the consciousness. Become as vast as the world and you will always be at rest. In the thick of action, in the very midst of the battle, the effort, you will know the repose of infinity and eternity.

The Mother

(Questions and Answers 1957-1958, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 66)

DEVOTIONAL POETRY IN TAMIL

(Continued from the issue of November 2006)

10. The Master and the Disciple

THE *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* which contains the very springs of the Bhakti Movement brings to us the hymns of the Alwars that offer ecstatic worship to Vishnu. And yet, a devotee who did not sing of God also finds a place there. Madhurakavi Alwar did not praise the Lord but spent his lifetime serving his guru Nammalwar. Yet, his decad in the anthology is very important for it upholds the supremacy of the guru in Indian culture. For Madhurakavi, his master Nammalwar was his director, his god, his refuge. Their coming together is one of those brilliant legends that has percolated into the very veins of the devout and Madhurakavi's decad 'Kannin chiruththambu' on Nammalwar is recited as the gateway to a life of devotion.

The 8th century saw an elderly brahmin from Tirukkoilur on the banks of Tambraparni river set out on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas in search of enlightenment. Madhurakavi was the son of Vishnusena, a pious scholar of the village who had unswerving devotion for the presiding deity, Vaithamaanidhi. When he was engaged in tapasya, aspiring for a spiritual preceptor, a rare brilliance appeared before him. Curious, he proceeded towards it but it kept retreating even as the tapasvin moved forward. To his immense surprise the brilliance thus led him through the length of India to an area close to his ancestral village!

This happened to be Alwar Tirunagari, then known as Kurukur. The brilliance led him on into the temple of Adinatha and disappeared into a tamarind tree. Beneath the tree was seated a very young man, his face glowing with knowledge. The elder tried to engage the young man in talk, but there was no reply from the silent, seated figure. On an impulse he asked: "Should the small one be born in the body of death, what would it eat and where would it rest?" Pat came the answer from the young man: "It would eat *that* and rest *there*." Madhurakavi's intuition realised that 'that' meant the Divine and 'there' meant the mortal body. It was thus that the young man, Satakopa, began to speak and compose hymns which carried out a spiritual revolution in India. As literally the progenitor of the Bhakti Movement, he is fondly called Nammalwar (our Alwar), and *prapanna jana kūtastha* (first among the race of aspirants).

Nammalwar was born in Kurukur on the banks of the Tambraparni river in Tirunelveli District. From the moment of his birth his absorption in the Divine was so intense that his limbs would not move, nor did he take any nourishment. His parents were tantalised by this effulgent and silent being, and left him under the tamarind tree in the local temple. He was still in his teens when Madhurakavi Alwar met him. He is said to have lived in Kurukur all his life and cast off his earthly bonds at the age of thirty-five.

Fortunately for the future of Indian culture and spirituality, Nammalwar's greatness was instantly recognised by his contemporaries. All the verses of Madhurakavi included in the *Divya Prabandham* are in praise of Nammalwar and the latter's services for the cause of Vaishnavism.

He indited poetry to please
The devotees of the Lord.
In good Tamil he retold
The secret of the Vedas
In thousand verses sweet.
The finest thing on this earth
Is to receive his grace.

Better than learned Brahmins
He garnered the meaning
Of Scriptures; in a poetic form
He fixed Truth in my heart.
Is there any wonder
That I am a consecrated slave
Of Satakopa the great?¹

It thus becomes clear that there was this widespread understanding that Nammalwar conveyed Vedic truths to the common man through the instrument of a simple, poetic Tamil language that he understood. He was not a translator but obviously the mysticism of the Vedas percolated into Nammalwar's poetry in full. It is in the background of this approach that the student of Nammalwar tends to identify each of his four works with a particular Veda. Nammalwar's *Tiruviruttam* is associated with Rig Veda; *Tiruvasiriyam* with Yajur Veda; *Peria Tiruvantadi* with Atharva Veda and *Tiruvaimoli* with Sama Veda.

Lest the mystic waves associated with the Vedic vision overwhelm the aspirant, Nammalwar perhaps tied his spiritual revelation firmly to the theory of incarnation. The common man was thus enabled to move from the known to the unknown, from the colourful legends to the white radiance of self-knowledge. When all this matter was brought out in terms of mellifluous Tamil poesy, the result has been a life-sustaining belief in the Divine. All these centuries after, Nammalwar's verses continue to be considered as the Tamil Veda for millions of adherents of the creed, cutting down class-and-caste-based divisions. Annual festivals known as 'Araiya Sevai' are held in the temples of Ramanuja Sampradaya when the verses are recited with dramatic gestures by hereditary singers known as Araiya. This tradition of using the Tamil language to propitiate the deities of the Vedic stream has endured till now:

In Srirangam, as the camphor is lit in the “hall of a Thousand Pillars” and the flame lights up the visible form of Vishnu, the Brahmin cantors at the other end of the hall begin the recitation of the poem known as *Tiruvaimoli*, or “Sacred Utterance”. Through light and sound, vision and recited words, with eyes and ears, the congregation is put in touch with the heavenly realm, which they believe descends to earth for those ten days it takes to recite the poem. For the duration of ten days, when the poem is recited and acted, the “gates of heaven”, large doors at the northern side of this temple, are flung open, and the pilgrims (over 40,000 in 1989-90) stream through them to see the divine form of the deity and to hear the recitation of the holy words of the *Tiruvaimoli*.²

A major reason for this popularity has been the spate of commentaries beginning with the *Araayirappadi* of Tirukurukai Piran Pillan (a disciple of Ramanuja) that have related the hymns with thoughts found in the Vedas and the Upanishads. Quite naturally the commentators use a plethora of Sanskrit terms and quotes in their commentaries which are in effect known as written in the Manipravala language, a linguistic mix of Sanskrit and Tamil. These writers find the Vedas to be upholding Vishnu as the Supreme and there is the importance given to Lakshmi in Sri Sukta and other Devi Suktas like the hymns to Bhu and Nila. All this is found in Nammalwar too. If there is a difference between the Vedas and Nammalwar’s works (indeed, the works of all Alvars), it is one of language, and the difference acts in favour of the aspirant today:

Despite the perceived similarities in structure and content between the Sanskrit and the Tamil Vedas, there were also important distinctions that the community recognised. The most important difference concerns the notion of accessibility; whereas the Sanskrit Vedas were only open to study by Brahmin men, the Veda in Tamil could be heard and recited by almost everyone, which meant, in south Indian society, people of all castes and both sexes. Further, unlike the Sanskrit Vedas, the words of the *Tiruvaimoli* would have been easily understood by people hearing them, and even now, after several centuries, the words are not very difficult to comprehend for those who know Tamil.³

For the student of devotional poetry in Tamil, such comparison is, perhaps, not quite relevant. What concerns the devotee is the manner in which Nammalwar is able to get his ideas and emotions across. To have used a language as it is spoken and yet never fallen from the heights is no easy achievement. Nammalwar repeatedly achieves the impossible.

Tiruviruttam is so called because it reflects shades of a mystic’s autobiography. The ‘vruṭṭana’ or happening that is described here is the mystic vision of the Divine vouchsafed to Nammalwar. The opening verse underlines the all-pervading nature of the Divine, the Lord who manifests as everything on this earth. It is to this Lord who

has ‘suffered’ as one of us that we have to pray to redeem us from ‘false knowledge, wrong conduct, body of dirt’. However, our prayers must be as the flame of aspiration symbolised by the heroine of the poem. She is the jivatman, our Soul, struggling to reach the Divine and goes through the different mystical states such as aspiration, the dark night of the soul, yearning, prostration and the Vision. The inner drama of the Divine is brought to us in terms of bridal mysticism. The different psychic moods are projected with the help of nature imagery. The blandishments of earthly life that places hurdles on the jivatman’s path are symbolised by the many-pronged attack of Nature on the girl in love:

Though I have watched many nights in the past,
Such pitch darkness I’ve not heard of nor seen.
When will He come to save me on this earth,
The dark Lord who devoured and spewed it out!⁴

But the tryst with the Divine is kept by the Lord for certain. It is for us to recognise how the Lord chooses to come to us. We are made to recognise the universal presence of the Supreme by removing the veil of divisive forms:

You’ve created many ways of worship,
As many religions, and more godheads;
Thus have you spread your glory. There is none
Your equal: I’ll greaten my devotion.⁵

Tiruvasiriyam has a tremendous invocation of the Supreme in terms of Nature’s power and glory:

Wearing the yellow garment
Bejewelled from the crown downwards
Flame-lipped and red-eyed,
Your green glorious body
Reclines on a snake
That’s poisonous and fierce.
You then appear to me
As the emerald mountain grand
That’s adorned with red clouds,
The russet sun and the pleasant moon
Lying on the sea-king’s palm.
’Mid the clamorous waves
You sleep in yogic silence.
There Siva, Rudra and other gods

Make obeisance to you.
 O King with the lotus navel!
 O Lord whose feet measured
 The three worlds!⁶

It is Nammalwar's regret that though man can strive for and attain this glorious vision, he yet prefers to be lost in the mire of worldly living. The Vedic question, *kasmāi devāya haviṣā vidhema* (to which god shall be place our offerings?) gets an answer in the course of the poem:

Brahma; the moon-bedecked Siva;
 Indra the king of gods;
 The universe and its beings;
 Earth, water, fire, air, ether;
 The sun, moon and the rays;
 Aye, everything with no exception
 He pervades, and that wondrous Lord
 Chooses to recline on a banyan leaf,
 To which God should we do obeisance
 But this supreme being?⁷

Krishna the Anandamaya Purusha holds Nammalwar in thrall throughout his writings. His *Peria Tiruvantadi* shows how the mind can be trained to become an instrument to help us comprehend the Divine. Our mind is capable of recognising the attributes of the Divine, meditating upon Him, and envisioning the figure that showers grace upon us. Mind which is associated with the cold intellect now becomes a stepping stone to reach God if this thinking is continuously directed towards the Divine:

My mind thrills to think of you,
 When through contemplation
 I envision thee
 My sinful past is destroyed.
 That's the way to follow you
 In whichever world you be!
 O Lord who measured the universe
 Give me your firm assurance.⁸

In his poem "Thought the Paraclete", Sri Aurobindo likewise describes Thought as rising beyond life and going past mental, intuitive and above-mental levels of consciousness and becoming one with the Self:

As some bright archangel in vision flies
 Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities,
 Past the long green crests of the seas of life,
 Past the orange skies of the mystic mind
 Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God...
 Hungering, large-souled to surprise the unconned
 Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,
 Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
 Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,
 Thought the great-winged wanderer Paraclete
 Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.
 Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

Nammalwar's *Tiruvaimoli* through its hundred decades of crystalline verses, helps us in such contemplation by setting out in detail the divine attributes of God, either as Vishnu the Supreme Lord of the Cosmos, or in his various colourful incarnations. The work is equated with Sama Veda as it is the most musical of Nammalwar's compositions and is used for congregational singing at home and in temples. The opening decad describes the rise of godward emotions in one attuned to meditation:

He has none of the mind-thought emotions
 That rise upwards from a cleansed mind;
 Nor sense-feelings. An image He is
 Of Knowledge and Delight, none to equal
 Or exceed Him in the past, present and the future.⁹

Though the verse describes the Lord, because of the construction of the phrases, we find here the definition of an ardent devotee. This is important information for the aspirant who has gained the intelligence to seek the Divine.

Through yoga the devotee cleanses himself of the many evils of Ignorance like lust, hate and pride. These evils touch the mind when it gets attracted to outside influences. If by yogic self-discipline the devotee withdraws the mind from outside influences, the evils fall away of their own accord as they have no breeding ground. One is reminded of Keshidhwaja's advice to Khandikya in *Sri Vishnu Purana*:

One who follows that yoga and reaches the Brahman never returns. If the mind holds on to the senses, it will lead to Ignorance. If the mind keeps apart, Release is certain. The mind should be withdrawn from the senses and made to concentrate upon Brahman. The Brahman itself will then transform the *jīvātmā* into a yogi as a magnet transforms the iron; yoga is the act of connecting the mind to the Brahman by conscious effort like self-control.

As the cleansed mind blossoms and rises as if it were ascending steps (*malar misai ezhu tharum*), it will reach the Shubhasraya. Indeed the mind does have many planes and when an aspirant comes to this Path, he begins to go upwards from the plane in which he has been residing till now which happens to be material life. Life—Mind—the planes of illumination and intuition... a progression without an end except at the Shubhasraya of the Lord. Such is the manner in which the godward emotions go up that thought gets left behind at some stage and the progression becomes automatic, as if a magnet from above us is lifting us upwards. This is like the experience of *malar misai ezhu tharum* that has been recorded by Sri Aurobindo in his poem, “Thought the Paraclete”.

The one thousand and more verses of Nammalwar in *Tiruvaimoli* come thus as a steady succession of waves helping our ascension. Each verse begins with the last word of the previous one, symbolising the need to promote uninterrupted love (*avichinnanuraga*) for the Divine. Each verse has a twin vision. There is usually a particular icon in a familiar setting, surrounded by beautiful nature and worshipping humanity. At the same time we envision the Lord who is vaster than all this, who is the Supreme Brahman. Here is Nammalwar on the Lord at Katkarai (in Kerala):

I know Him not; the entire universe
Resides in Him; He resides
In all the contents of the universe.
And yet as a Little One
He became the life of my life.
He is the Lord of south Katkarai
With intoxicatingly scented gardens.¹⁰

Nammalwar’s verses cover the gamut of all moods and emotions to prepare us for the final ecstatic vision:

Surrounding, expanding, driving into depths,
Rising upwards endless in the sky;
Beyond all these and the ether,
Thou, O blossoming flame!
Glowing over and above all,
Like a fire of knowledge-delight!
Encompassing this all,
Yet coming to quench my thirst!
O cosmic Lord!¹¹

Nammalwar is able to gain this vision because he has been meditating upon the Lord in all possible ways: as a devotee, an aspirant, a mother, a bride. Sri Aurobindo

seems to have been particularly struck by the bridal mysticism of Nammalwar and has translated an entire decad written in this style:

Seated, she caresses Earth and cries, “This Earth is Vishnu’s”;
 Salutes the sky and bids us “behold the Heaven He ruleth”;
 Or standing with tear-filled eyes cries aloud, “O sea-hued Lord!”
 All helpless am I, my friends, my child He has rendered mad.¹²

Sri Aurobindo was also drawn to the renunciate in Nammalwar as stated in the decad on the subject:

Leave all—
 So leaving
 Render your life
 Unto the Master of Liberty.¹³

Sri Aurobindo’s choice of the decad on the Greater dawn when the population of devotees will literally become vast armies exploding in Ananda Consciousness is also significant. Nammalwar the seer looks into the future and finds the Bhakti Movement enveloping all humanity, the repetitive phrases marking a dance of Ananda:

’Tis glory, glory, glory! For Life’s hard curse has expired; swept out are Pain and Hell, and Death has nought to do here. Mark ye, the Iron Age shall end. For we have seen the hosts of Vishnu; richly do they enter in and chant His praise and dance and thrive.

We have seen, we have seen, we have seen—seen things full sweet for our eyes. Come, all ye lovers of God, let us shout and dance for joy with oft-made surrenderings. Wide do they roam on earth singing songs and dancing, the hosts of Krishna who wears the cool and beautiful Tulsi, the desire of the Bees.¹⁴

I have often wondered whether this passage ignited in Sri Aurobindo’s creative forge the immortal vision of the future:

I saw the Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
 Forerunners of a divine multitude,
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came
 Into the little room of mortal life.
 I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
 The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,...¹⁵

It is not surprising that Madhurakavi was overwhelmed by the multitudes that the poems of Nammalwar contained. Here was our entire Vedic past, the very best of Sanatana Dharma. No criticism of other religions but an all-enveloping consciousness of divine understanding. The very first verse of *Tiruvaimoli* had projected the Cosmic Lord not as Vishnu or Rama or Narasimha to assure us of the ultimate truth of One:

He has such high qualities
That none higher exist;
He granted us mental poise
That is not easily swayed;
He is the Lord of the Gods
Who knows no tiredness.
My heart! Do obeisance
To His sorrow-dispelling feet.¹⁶

It was not a mere concept but a felt experience for Nammalwar. He experienced the all-pervading One but he could also allow himself to be tossed around by the emotions inspired by the incarnations:

The way you were born,
And the manner you grew up,
Managed the Bharat war
And showed the Five your powers,
Ah! All these unbelievable actions!
O brilliance of the Beyond!
As I contemplate, you enter
My very being! When will I join you?¹⁷

And all about the One and the Many conveyed through musical phrases, spreading honeyed sweetness! No wonder Madhurakavi the disciple remained meditating upon Nammalwar the Master all the time:

I received Ananda by singing his verses.
I have drawn close to his golden feet.
This is but the truth: I know no God
Except Satakopa of Kurukur.
I will go round singing
The sweet music of his poems.¹⁸

(To be continued)

Notes and References

1. *Kanninun Chiruthambu*, verses 8-9. All translations from the Alwars are by Prema Nandakumar unless otherwise stated.
2. Vasudha Narayanan, *The Vernacular Veda* (1994), p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
4. Verse 49.
5. Verse 96.
6. Verse 1.
7. Verse 7.
8. Verse 76.
9. 1-1-2.
10. 9-6-4.
11. 10-10-10.
12. 4-4-1, CWSA, Vol. 5, p. 589.
13. 1-2-1.
14. 5-2-1,2, CWSA, Vol. 5, p. 587.
15. *Savitri*, Book III, canto iv, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 343.
16. 1-1-1.
17. 5-10-1.
18. *Kanninun Chiruthambu*, verse 2.

When the Light enters into the Inconscience which hedges in all our being and prevents or limits the manifestation of the true consciousness in us, when it inhibits the habits and recurrences and constant repetition of the same stimuli which besiege us and rise from the subconscious, then only can the Nature be wholly free and respond to the Truth from above.

Sri Aurobindo

(A birthday message to a sadhak)

THE GNOSTIC QUEST

In the depths of the darkest abyss,
Held captive by its contended existence,
Lies the well-spring of an immense Light.

Like the tree, unborn within the seed
Lying in the fallow earth, seeking to be,
What urge impels it to seek its source?

No mere yearning will fuel the climb;
A greater force shall break the sleep
Of contentment, that chains it to its destiny!

Neither muck nor slime can stain the flame
Obscured perchance from frightened eyes
That seeing a sordid reality, turn away.

All touch, all taste, all sound denied
They seek escape through the mind's eye
Into the wonder of the formless void.

But we who worship at another altar,
Must all forms of the All-form embrace,
And cleanse with its light all obscurity.

No shrinking recoil, nor yearning fancy, we seek
The Truth alone. That which courses through me
Though hidden yet, is also the substance of Thee!

We march steadfast. Neither gain nor solitary victory
We seek but to press down and cleave the dam
That limits us to our human mortality.

AMIT GUJRAL

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Movements with the Cosmic Dancer—On Pilgrimage to Kailash Manasarovar, by Lakshmi Bandlamudi. Published by New Age Books, New Delhi. Pp. 219. Price: Rs. 295.

THE Himalayas, a king among mountains, have always fascinated the human mind and the adventurer soul. Describing the majesty of the Himalayas, Sri Aurobindo in his translation of Kalidasa's great epic writes:

A God mid hills northern Himaloy rears
His snow-piled summits' dizzy majesties,
And in the eastern and the western seas
He bathes his giant sides; lain down appears
Measures the dreaming earth in an enormous ease.

Myths and legends abound about these mountains regarded as the abode of the gods, especially the great god Shiva who dwells upon the bare and snowy summits of Kailash at whose base, as if in an adoration and an offering to the Lord of Tapasya there has come about the highest fresh water lake in the world, Manasarovar. *Movements with the Cosmic Dancer* is a book about a journey to this pilgrim spot regarded as sacred in many traditions including the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh faiths. Though the book is about the pilgrimage to Manasarovar, it is a book with a palpable difference. On the surface it is about the author's pilgrimage to the breathtaking landscape of Kailash Manasarovar. But inwardly the story runs on two parallel lines. At a more personal level the story is about the search of a daughter for her father whom she lost to an untimely death. Carrying her loss as a silent grief in her bosom she undertakes this assiduous journey as if yet prompted by him whom she seeks to rediscover through the pilgrimage. And of course she does indeed rediscover him even as she rediscovers how life and death are simply a trick of our senses, and that the dead continue to live and whisper to our souls if we care to listen. That those whom we love are never really lost except to appearances. It is in her own way a struggle of love with death, of faith in the future with the finality of a fatal fate. But also and simultaneously the story of her journey takes on a more cosmic dimension as the author begins to see in this high and difficult path a symbol of the soul's journey to the abode of the Supreme Soul or the father of the universes whom the author personally recognises in the being of the great and mighty figure of lord Shiva. The outer journey therefore becomes an occasion for an inner quest and the inner quest itself becomes as if a symbol of man's perennial quest for his long lost home that he ever seeks but seldom and only with difficulty finds. The three narratives that seem to run parallel at first begin to meet as the travelogue progresses till they fuse and become one.

Obviously the author is a being with rare sensitivities. She is not only moved by the outward sight of the mountain majesty but is equally stirred to her depths by that sight. She is at once a journalist with a keen observation, a philosopher whose philosophy is born out of the pain and beauty of life, a striving soul that knows the ascending and descending paths of our spiritual progress and chooses the latter for herself. Or shall we say she is a woman of substance who truly lives the essence of womanhood in some true and deep sense. The calm and still waters of Manasarovar reflect her own being and the reflection is indeed beautiful for she has seen the placid waters not only with the physical eyes that conceal more than they reveal, but also with the eye of beauty and with yet subtler sight that communes with the unseen gods and beings of another world. If for nothing else then for this alone the book would be a prized possession for anyone interested in a deeper look at life through the eyes of a pilgrim soul.

The book abounds in description of the landscape done with deserving beauty of thought and substance. The prose at times seems to turn into poetry and comes at times to an abrupt halt as if passing into the silence of the mountains. The writer carries us with her from description to a mystic reverie bringing the soul moment alive to us through a simple and direct entry into the truth that she sees within herself:

What I saw before my eyes was the physical manifestation of that Column of Light and I spent hours late into the magical night transfixed to this wondrous mountain, quite unmindful of Kinna's instructions to have a good night sleep in preparation for the eventful day ahead. At that hour I could not imagine anything more resplendent and ornate than what I was witnessing. It was impossible to shut my eyes and each time I tried to force some sleep I failed. My eyes wanted to see more. To heighten this effect, almost as a playful reward for staying up late, the beautiful crescent moon perched itself on the left side of the mountain revealing Shiva as *Chandrasekhar*, the Lord adorned with the crescent moon.

(p. 155)

There are of course the well researched historical and other informative details which any keen traveller would find fascinating. These include the various beliefs about Manasarovar, its interesting geography and its legendary origin which is not less interesting. Rather it makes the description itself richer and more complete since it includes not only the physical but also the psychological and the spiritual Manasarovar. Here is one example:

Kailash is the embodiment of that mythical mountain Sumeru. When the first sons of Brahma who were learned sages came to the Kailash region for meditation and worship, they needed sanctified water to bathe and conduct other rituals. They appealed to their father, and Brahma created Manasarovar from the will

power of his mind. Born out of Brahma's mind, this lake is an emblem of beauty, intellect, purity and enlightened knowledge. Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar complement each other in every aspect—the height to its depth, the spirit to its matter, the erotic to the sublime and the immutable to the mutable. If Kailash is the Absolute Centre of Divinity, a much-adored shrine, Manasarovar is the fluid form that delivers one to the realm of the Absolute....

(pp. 185-86)

Like the clear waters of Manasarovar capable of reflecting the Centre of Divinity, the mind must also be clear and become a symbol of fecundity.

Geographically, the significance of Manasarovar cannot be understated. At an altitude of 15,000 feet it is the highest fresh water lake in the world. More importantly, this lake is the mother of four majestic rivers—Indus, Brahmaputra, Sutlej and Karnali that flow in four different directions. Tibetans call this *Tso Mapham* 'The Undefeated Lake' or *Tso Rinpoche* 'The Precious Lake'. The rivers that flow out of this lake are long and they make vast regions of the Indian sub-continent fertile. Manasarovar's significance goes beyond the physical aspects of the lake. It is a profound symbol of everything that humanity must aspire for. It is the mind's lake symbolising creative energy that human beings must engage in to make the mind more fertile. Taking a dip in that lake is to absorb the creative powers of Brahma.

The Sanskrit word '*Manas*' is derived from '*Man*' meaning "intellect, intelligence, understanding, perception, sense, conscience, will" (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit Dictionary*, p. 783), and it refers to all mental powers having strong emotional connotations. The round shaped Manasarovar resembling the sun signifies solar energy capable of expelling darkness due to ignorance. A dip in the lake is said to cleanse the mind of impure and inert ideas and generate sublime and lofty patterns of thought that are creative and useful in the spiritual ascent.

(pp. 186-87)

And of course myths and legends abound and give an added charm to the interested reader who often finds himself quite transported to the land of the pauranic gods and their symbolic tales:

Thus, born out of Shiva's tears, these beads spill grace. It is said in *Shiva Purana* that one of the directives of Lord Yama (god of death) to his attendants is that anybody with *Rudraksha* is to be given its due honour and sent directly to heaven. In one of their conversations Lord Shiva himself declared to his consort Parvati, "the Rudraksha as well as the person who wears it is my favourite" (*Shiva Purana*, Vidyeeswara Samhita, Chapter 25). As for me these beads signifying Shiva's tears

were meant to wipe out my tears and indeed I rejoiced in wearing them.

(pp. 75-76)

The psychological side of the book is no less remarkable than the journalistic, the philosophical and spiritual side. Here is something she writes about rediscovering her father in a way that can find few parallels in a travelogue:

Today my life revolves around libraries, concert halls and theatres and I understand the worth of these places. My father never preached about the wonder of music or the power of great books; his passionate engagement with them simply revealed their grandeur. In every activity that I engage in I feel my father's presence, hear his words, and am watchful to the ethical compass held by him. More years have been spent in his absence than in his presence, and yet as time passes by I feel a lot closer to him and have more lively discussions with him. The resident of this mountain alone knows the pain that my father's demise has caused me. Yet, strangely enough, as I behold the Mirror of the King of Death on this high cremation ground, I see life affirming images before me. As I struggle to breathe while passing through the gates of death, I realise how *ALIVE* my father is. He must be in this region, having joined the celestial choir, enjoying every moment to the fullest. In the Land of Death, if I can experience forces of Life, there must be a subtle message—some spirits do not just vanish, they simply take on a different form. My realisation of this truth is a daughter's tribute to her father—for this legacy my eternal gratitude to my father/Father.

(pp. 166-67)

The book, even as the journey, does not end without giving us the share of wisdom that the author brings back from her experience of the majestic, the mighty and the sublime. She has traversed a difficult path, endured through obstacles from within and without, kept her vigil over a slippery and unsparing terrain, fared through rough and smooth weathers alike, bathed in the glory of the peaks and felt the rapture of a sublime vision. All this naturally moves her to her depths, not only the physical eye that sees and the mind that ecstatically beholds that vision but also the heart that feels the pang and the new birth, and the soul that discovers its pure reflection when nature stands still in mute adoration transfixed by the wonderful and the marvellous. The author manages to bring something of this experience, something of the wisdom that she has drunk from the soothing waters of Manasarovar. And what is beautiful is that she brings both sides of this wisdom,—the metaphysical and philosophical as well as the pragmatic:

The path of spiritual realisation can be classified broadly into two philosophical systems—one the path of distinction and discrimination and the other the path

of union and integration. The former is the *Viveka Marga*—the intellectual path that requires the mind to be released from the trappings of limited body and matter. The spiritual path is a linear trajectory and consciousness ascends and eventually transcends. The school of Vedanta belongs in this category and in particular the works of *Adi Sankaracharya* epitomises this philosophy. In his classic works like *Atma Bodha*—‘Self Knowledge’ and *Viveka Chudamani*—‘Crest Jewel of Discrimination’, Sankaracharya asserts that the only way to liberate ourselves is to rise from the illusory world. Thus, in this formula *Samsara*—the phenomenal world—is false and illusory while Brahman, the Cosmic Self is the Truth. The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali also fall into this category, as Yoga to him is an intense state of abstract meditation called *Samadhi*. According to this school of thought spiritual realisation is a linear irreversible path.

The other approach to spiritual realisation is the *Yogaja Marga*—the path of union and integration. The ideal here is not the rejection of the world as illusory, but its assimilation into its Supra Cosmic source, after delineating the distinctions between the concrete and abstract, individual self and Cosmic Self. Therefore the movement in this path is curvilinear in which the ascent must be followed by a ‘redescent’ to complete spiritual journey. Each half of the journey has its unique characteristics and unique challenges, and neither one is superior to the other. The school of Kashmir Saivism and Abhinavagupta’s exposition of Tantric philosophy and the Integral Yoga proposed by Sri Aurobindo belong to this category. This school does not negate the principles of ascent and abstraction, but adds the necessary principles of descent to the concrete matter, making it holistic.

...The practice of Integral Yoga is bi-directional—the first one is the ascent of human consciousness to the higher plane and this is followed by the descent of divine power to earth consciousness. It is the descent that can eliminate darkness and ignorance and transform the world. Sri Aurobindo recognising this fact, asserts that Brahman resides both in the human world and in the Supra Cosmic world. To recognise it in the prosaic world of daily life is a greater challenge. To absorb divine light and power one must constantly widen the consciousness. Failure to do so prevents us from recognising godliness in the earthly life.

Sri Aurobindo points out the descent of divine light into lower being, into daily life and the body is an absolute necessity for the transformation of individual consciousness. If higher consciousness remains at the heights and the lower remains at the lower realms the heightened consciousness remains detached and becomes useless. Therefore the individual consciousness must actively toss the lid and allow the influx of Spirit to percolate through the cellular level and allow metamorphosis. Only then the luminosity of higher truth and wisdom is capable of dispelling darkness and a fundamental change in the Being, and in the world

is possible. Sri Aurobindo clearly cautions that there are greater difficulties in the descent. In the process of ascent one readily sheds old habits in search of something superior, but during the descent the individual shows resistance and closes all loopholes for the Power to sink in. To bring profoundness into the vagaries of life is confusing, unsettling and laborious and herein lies the challenge of descent.

(pp. 175-78)

And here is the pragmatic side though not without its touch of reflecting the troubled times that we live in. Yet she sees hope somewhere and does not let cynicism prevail over faith. She holds on to the bedrock of faith that the mountain symbolises, the faith that even though oblivious to our ephemeral sight there is beauty somewhere and that we can find it if we care to discover and take the trouble to undertake the journey. That this Beauty can even transform our life or at least definitely rejuvenate it with the fresh springs that flow perennially from the Manasarovar of our being. And in times such as these we need to hold on to this vision not easily accessible to our everyday seeing, the vision of the grand and the sublimely beautiful, the vision of Peace and Strength and Joy that exists at some summit of our being, the vision that is at once like a hope and a certitude that can help us go through everything with courage and hope. It is this that makes the book an exceptional one since it marries the physical to the spiritual, the mundane to the sublime:

The rise of religious fundamentalism in many parts of the world is as disturbing as the cold rigidity in another part of the world where religious freedom is restricted and that brings me back full circle to the site of my pilgrimage. The control over Tibet by China is absolute: their religious freedom is restricted, their spiritual practice mocked, their cultural heritage berated, their environment polluted, their writers persecuted and their monks continue to be tortured. I recently travelled to many parts of China as a Fulbright Scholar and I am convinced more than ever that Tibet is in a no-win situation while China is in a win-win situation. I found it shocking that Tibet was not even an issue, even among the intellectuals; they think feeble noises are made elsewhere in the world that can be conveniently ignored. In general, the Chinese themselves do not enjoy free press or academic liberty. It was once clamped in the name of Communism and now in the interest of Capitalism. But the greater danger lies in the fact that the world that once was critical, today defers to the Chinese commerce. This is the power of capitalist dictatorship.

But, there is no power on earth that can rob the individuals of their deep feeling for faith—an actual living engagement with their sense of the Divine. Blind belief systems may not stand the test of time or they may become rigid. Religious leaders may fall short or mislead their followers. Religion may be

thoroughly misused in the political arena or religious practices may be restricted. But faith that grows and develops with life cannot diminish. It makes no sense to have had the privilege to go to Kailash and see absolute Beauty, hear intense Silence, feel vibrations of a higher Power, taste the Elixir of Life in the waters of the heavenly Lake and hear the mystical Sounds amplified by the winds and return to the world to slip into cynicism. Kailash is a magical place, but I do not want to locate it in the 'dream space' in my consciousness. Each day as I contemplate about my pilgrimage amidst all the chaos in the world, I realise that I need Kailash not because I want to escape from a troubled world, but because I need to actively live in a troubled world.

(pp. 210-11)

Laced with beautiful photographs and a touching foreword by H.H. Dalai Lama, the book makes for uplifting reading. It is reasonably priced and packaged in a simple cover and easy to handle size. Like the rare treasures hid in the heart of the Himalayas, this book too is a treasure among books.

ALOK PANDEY

The movement of love is not limited to human beings and it is perhaps less distorted in other worlds than in the human. Look at the flowers and trees. When the sun sets and all becomes silent, sit down for a moment and put yourself into communion with Nature: you will feel rising from the earth, from below the roots of the trees and mounting upward and coursing through their fibres up to the highest outstretching branches, the aspiration of an intense love and longing,—a longing for something that brings light and gives happiness, for the light that is gone and they wish to have back again. There is a yearning so pure and intense that if you can feel the movement in the trees, your own being too will go up in an ardent prayer for the peace and light and love that are unmanifested here. Once you have come in contact with this large, pure and true Divine love, if you have felt it even for a short time and in its smallest form, you will realise what an object thing human desire has made of it.

The Mother

(*Questions and Answers 1929-1931*, CWM, Vol. 3, p. 72)

Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it.

25 April 1954

The Mother

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 123)