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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE SILVER CALL

There is a godhead of unrealised things
To which Time's splendid gains are hoarded dross;
A cry seems near, a rustle of silver wings
Calling to heavenly joy by earthly loss.

All eye has seen and all ear has heard
Is a pale illusion by some greater voice
And mightier vision; no sweet sound or word,
No passion of hues that make the heart rejoice

Can equal those diviner ecstasies.
A Mind beyond our mind has sole the ken
Of those yet unimagined harmonies,
The fate and privilege of unborn men.

As rain-thrashed mire the marvel of the rose,
Earth waits that distant marvel to disclose.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 157)

THE VEILED PSYCHIC ENTITY

THE true soul secret in us—subliminal, we have said, but the word is misleading, for this presence is not situated below the threshold of waking mind, but rather burns in the temple of the inmost heart behind the thick screen of an ignorant mind, life and body, not subliminal but behind the veil,—this veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us, inextinguishable even by that dense unconsciousness of any spiritual self within which obscures our outward nature. It is a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge. It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth, untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine. Not the unborn Self or Atman, for the Self even in presiding over the existence of the individual is aware always of its universality and transcendence, it is yet its deputy in the forms of Nature, the individual soul, *caitya purusa*, supporting mind, life and body, standing behind the mental, the vital, the subtle-physical being in us and watching and profiting by their development and experience. These other person-powers in man, these beings of his being, are also veiled in their true entity, but they put forward temporary personalities which compose our outer individuality and whose combined superficial action and appearance of status we call ourselves: this inmost entity also, taking form in us as the psychic Person, puts forward a psychic personality which changes, grows, develops from life to life; for this is the traveller between birth and death and between death and birth, our nature parts are only its manifold and changing vesture. The psychic being can at first exercise only a concealed and partial and indirect action through the mind, the life and the body, since it is these parts of Nature that have to be developed as its instruments of self-expression, and it is long confined by their evolution. Missioned to lead man in the Ignorance towards the light of the Divine Consciousness, it takes the essence of all experience in the Ignorance to form a nucleus of soul-growth in the nature; the rest it turns into material for the future growth of the instruments which it has to use until they are ready to be a luminous instrumentation of the Divine. It is this secret psychic entity which is the true original Conscience in us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist, for it is this which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us, and persists till these things become the major need of our nature. It is the psychic personality in us that flowers as the saint, the sage, the seer; when it reaches its full strength, it turns the being towards the Knowledge of Self and the Divine, towards the supreme Truth, the supreme Good, the supreme Beauty, Love and Bliss, the divine heights and largenesses, and opens us to the touch of spiritual sympathy, universality, oneness. On the contrary, where the psychic personality is weak, crude or

ill-developed, the finer parts and movements in us are lacking or poor in character and power, even though the mind may be forceful and brilliant, the heart of vital emotions hard and strong and masterful, the life-force dominant and successful, the bodily existence rich and fortunate and an apparent lord and victor. It is then the outer desire-soul, the pseudo-psychic entity, that reigns and we mistake its misinterpretations of psychic suggestion and aspiration, its ideas and ideals, its desires and yearnings for true soul-stuff and wealth of spiritual experience.¹ If the secret psychic Person can come forward into the front and, replacing the desire-soul, govern overtly and entirely and not only partially and from behind the veil this outer nature of mind, life and body, then these can be cast into soul images of what is true, right and beautiful and in the end the whole nature can be turned towards the real aim of life, the supreme victory, the ascent into spiritual existence.

But it might seem then that by bringing this psychic entity, this true soul in us, into the front and giving it there the lead and rule we shall gain all the fulfilment of our natural being that we can seek for and open also the gates of the kingdom of the Spirit. And it might well be reasoned that there is no need for any intervention of a superior Truth-Consciousness or principle of Supermind to help us to attain to the divine status or the divine perfection. Yet, although the psychic transformation is one necessary condition of the total transformation of our existence, it is not all that is needed for the largest spiritual change. In the first place, since this is the individual soul in Nature, it can open to the hidden diviner ranges of our being and receive and reflect their light and power and experience, but another, a spiritual transformation from above is needed for us to possess our self in its universality and transcendence. By itself the psychic being at a certain stage might be content to create a formation of truth, good and beauty and make that its station; at a farther stage it might become passively subject to the world-self, a mirror of the universal existence, consciousness, power, delight, but not their full participant or possessor. Although more nearly and thrillingly united to the cosmic consciousness in knowledge, emotion and even appreciation through the senses, it might become purely recipient and passive, remote from mastery and action in the world; or, one with the static self behind the cosmos, but separate inwardly from the world-movement, losing its individuality in its Source, it might return to that Source and have neither the will nor the power any further for that which was its ultimate mission here, to lead the nature also towards its divine

1. The word "psychic" in our ordinary parlance is more often used in reference to this desire-soul than to the true psychic. It is used still more loosely of psychological and other phenomena of an abnormal or supernormal character which are really connected with the inner mind, inner vital, subtle physical being subliminal in us and are not at all direct operations of the psyche. Even such phenomena as materialisation and dematerialisation are included, though, if established, they evidently are not soul-action and would not shed any light upon the nature or existence of the psychic entity, but would rather be an abnormal action of an occult subtle physical energy intervening in the ordinary status of the gross body of things, reducing it to its own subtle condition and again reconstituting it in the terms of gross matter.

realisation. For the psychic being came into Nature from the Self, the Divine, and it can turn back from Nature to the silent Divine through the silence of the Self and a supreme spiritual immobility. Again, an eternal portion of the Divine,² this part is by the law of the Infinite inseparable from its Divine Whole, this part is indeed itself that Whole, except in its frontal appearance, its frontal separative self-experience; it may awaken to that reality and plunge into it to the apparent extinction or at least the merging of the individual existence. A small nucleus here in the mass of our ignorant Nature, so that it is described in the Upanishad as no bigger than a man's thumb, it can by the spiritual influx enlarge itself and embrace the whole world with the heart and mind in an intimate communion or oneness. Or it may become aware of its eternal Companion and elect to live for ever in His presence, in an imperishable union and oneness as the eternal lover with the eternal Beloved, which of all spiritual experiences is the most intense in beauty and rapture. All these are great and splendid achievements of our spiritual self-finding, but they are not necessarily the last end and entire consummation; more is possible.

For these are achievements of the spiritual mind in man; they are movements of that mind passing beyond itself, but on its own plane, into the splendours of the Spirit. Mind, even at its highest stages far beyond our present mentality, acts yet in its nature by division; it takes the aspects of the Eternal and treats each aspect as if it were the whole truth of the Eternal Being and can find in each its own perfect fulfilment. Even it erects them into opposites and creates a whole range of these opposites, the Silence of the Divine and the divine Dynamis, the immobile Brahman aloof from existence, without qualities, and the active Brahman with qualities, Lord of existence, Being and Becoming, the Divine Person and an impersonal pure Existence; it can then cut itself away from the one and plunge itself into the other as the sole abiding Truth of existence. It can regard the Person as the sole Reality or the Impersonal as alone true; it can regard the Lover as only a means of expression of eternal Love or love as only the self-expression of the Lover; it can see beings as only personal powers of an impersonal Existence or impersonal existence as only a state of the one Being, the Infinite Person. Its spiritual achievement, its road of passage towards the supreme aim will follow these dividing lines. But beyond this movement of spiritual Mind is the higher experience of the supermind Truth-Consciousness; there these opposites disappear and these partialities are relinquished in the rich totality of a supreme and integral realisation of eternal Being. It is this that is the aim we have conceived, the consummation of our existence here by an ascent to the supramental Truth-Consciousness and its descent into our nature. The psychic transformation after rising into the spiritual change has then to be completed, integralised, exceeded and uplifted by a supramental transformation which lifts it to the summit of the ascending endeavour.

Even as between the other divided and opposed terms of manifested Being, so

2. *Gita*, XV. 7.

also a supramental consciousness-energy could alone establish a perfect harmony between these two terms—apparently opposite only because of the Ignorance—of spirit status and world dynamism in our embodied existence. In the Ignorance Nature centres the order of her psychological movements, not around the secret spiritual self, but around its substitute, the ego-principle: a certain ego-centrism is the basis on which we bind together our experiences and relations in the midst of the complex contacts, contradictions, dualities, incoherences of the world in which we live; this ego-centrism is our rock of safety against the cosmic and the infinite, our defence. But in our spiritual change we have to forego this defence; ego has to vanish, the person finds itself dissolved into a vast impersonality, and in this impersonality there is at first no key to an ordered dynamism of action. A very usual result is that one is divided into two parts of being, the spiritual within, the natural without; in one there is the divine realisation seated in a perfect inner freedom, but the natural part goes on with the old action of Nature, continues by a mechanical movement of past energies her already transmitted impulse. Even, if there is an entire dissolution of the limited person and the old ego-centric order, the outer nature may become the field of an apparent incoherence, although all within is luminous with the Self. Thus we become outwardly inert and inactive, moved by circumstance or forces but not self-mobile,³ even though the consciousness is enlightened within, or as a child though within is a plenary self-knowledge,⁴ or as one inconsequent in thought and impulse though within is an utter calm and serenity,⁵ or as the wild and disordered soul though inwardly there is the purity and poise of the Spirit.⁶ Or if there is an ordered dynamism in the outward nature, it may be a continuation of superficial ego-action witnessed but not accepted by the inner being, or a mental dynamism that cannot be perfectly expressive of the inner spiritual realisation; for there is no equipollence between action of mind and status of spirit. Even at the best where there is an intuitive guidance of Light from within, the nature of its expression in dynamism of action must be marked with the imperfections of mind, life and body, a King with incapable ministers, a Knowledge expressed in the values of the Ignorance. Only the descent of the Supermind with its perfect unity of Truth-Knowledge and Truth-Will can establish in the outer as in the inner existence the harmony of the Spirit; for it alone can turn the values of the Ignorance entirely into the values of the Knowledge.

In the fulfilment of our psychic being as in the consummation of our parts of mind and life, it is the relating of it to its divine source, to its correspondent truth in the Supreme Reality, that is the indispensable movement; and, here too as there, it is by the power of the Supermind that it can be done with an integral completeness, an intimacy that becomes an authentic identity; for it is the Supermind which links the

3. *jaḍavat.*

4. *bālava.*

5. *ummattavat.*

6. *piśācavat.*

higher and the lower hemispheres of the One Existence. In Supermind is the integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the supreme Ananda: the psychic being uplifted by that Light and Force can unite itself with the original Delight of existence from which it came: overcoming the dualities of pain and pleasure, delivering from all fear and shrinking the mind, life and body, it can recast the contacts of existence in the world into terms of the Divine Ananda.

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAITYA PURUSHA

...As for the Purusha it is there on all planes; there is a mental Purusha, *manomaya*, leader of the life and body, as the Upanishad puts it, a vital, a physical Purusha; there is the psychic being or Chaitya Purusha which supports and carries all these as it were. One may say that these are projections of the Jivatman put there to uphold Prakriti on the various levels of the being. The Upanishad speaks also of a supramental and a Bliss Purusha, and if the supramental and the Bliss nature were organised in the evolution on earth we could become aware of them upholding the movements here.

As for the psychic being, it enters into the evolution, enters into the body at birth and goes out of it at death; but the Jivatman, as I know it, is unborn and eternal although upholding the manifested personality from above. The psychic being can be described as the Jivatman entering into birth, if you like, but if the distinction is not made, then the nature of the Atman is blurred and confusion arises. This is a necessary distinction for metaphysical knowledge and for something that is very important in spiritual experience. The word 'Atman' like 'spirit' in English is popularly used in all kinds of senses, but both for spiritual and philosophical knowledge it is necessary to be clear and precise in one's use of terms so as to avoid confusion of thought and vision by confusion in the words we use to express them.

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 276)

*

The Jiva is realised as the individual Self, Atman, the central being above the Nature, calm, untouched by the movements of Nature, but supporting their evolution though not involved in it. Through this realisation silence, freedom, wideness, mastery, purity, a sense of universality in the individual as one centre of this divine universality becomes the normal experience. The psychic is realised as the Purusha behind the heart. It is not universalised like the Jivatman, but it is the individual soul supporting from its place behind the heart-centre the mental, vital, physical, psychic evolution of the being in Nature. Its realisation brings bhakti, self-giving, surrender, turning of all the movements Godwards, discrimination and choice of all that belongs to the Divine Truth, Good, Beauty, rejection of all that is false, evil, ugly, discordant, union through love and sympathy with all existence, openness to the Truth of the Self and the Divine.

(Ibid., p. 277)

*

The true being may be realised in one or both of two aspects—the Self or Atman and the soul or Antaratman, psychic being, Chaitya Purusha. The difference is that one is felt as universal, the other as individual supporting the mind, life and body. When one first realises the Atman one feels it separate from all things, existing in itself and detached, and it is to this realisation that the image of the dry coconut fruit may apply. When one realises the psychic being, it is not like that; for this brings the sense of union with the Divine and dependence upon It and sole consecration to the Divine alone and the power to change the nature and discover the true mental, the true vital, the true physical being in oneself. Both realisations are necessary for this yoga.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 277-78)

*

The psychic is not by definition,¹ that part which is in direct touch with the supramental plane,—although, once the connection with the supramental is made, it gives to it the readiest response. The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine. In its origin it is the nucleus pregnant with divine possibilities that supports the lower triple manifestation of mind, life and body. There is this divine element in all living beings, but it stands hidden behind the ordinary consciousness, is not at first developed and, even when developed, it is not always or often in front; it expresses itself, so far as the imperfection of the instruments allows, by their means and under their limitations. It grows in consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us, and, finally, by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements, there is developed a psychic individuality,—that which we call usually the psychic being. It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it. It is therefore that which we have to bring from behind to the front in the yoga. ...

1. Someone had asked what the psychic being was, whether it could be defined as that part of the being which is always in direct touch with the supramental. I replied that it could not be so defined. For the psychic being in animals or in most human beings is not in direct touch with the supramental—therefore it cannot be so described, by definition.

But once the connection between the supramental and the human consciousness is made, it is the psychic being that gives the readiest response—more ready than the mind, the vital or the physical. It may be added that it is also a purer response; the mind, vital and physical can allow other things to mix with their reception of the supramental influence and spoil its truth. The psychic is pure in its response and allows no such mixture.

The supramental change can take place only if the psychic is awake and is made the chief support of the descending supramental power.

The psychic being may be described in Indian language as the Purusha in the heart or the Chaitya Purusha;² but the inner or secret heart must be understood, *hrdaye guhayam*, not the outer vital-emotional centre. It is the true psychic entity (distinguished from the vital desire-mind)—the psyche—spoken of in the pages of the *Arya* to which you make reference.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 288-89)

*

The soul and the psychic being are practically the same, except that even in things which have not developed a psychic being, there is still a spark of the Divine which can be called the soul. The psychic being is called in Sanskrit the Purusha in the heart or the Chaitya Purusha. (The psychic being is the soul developing in the evolution.)

(*Ibid.*, p. 301)

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The heart is the centre of the being and commands the rest, as the psychic being or *caitya purusha* is there.

(*Ibid.*, p. 375)

2. The Chitta and the psychic part are not in the least the same. Chitta is a term in quite different category in which are co-ordinated and put into their place the main functionings of our external consciousness, and to know it we need not go behind our surface or external nature.

FROM A CONVERSATION OF 28. 1. 1926

Sri Aurobindo: Did you refer to the dictionary to find out whether “Chaitya Purusha” can mean “the Psychic Being”, “the Soul”?

Disciple (1): I did, but the word is not given there in that sense; it only carries the sense of Chaitya of the Buddhas and the Jainas.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another meaning. But what about this one?

Disciple: But you have yourself used it in the *Arya* at two places.

Sri Aurobindo: How is that? Where?

Disciple: In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in the fourth chapter about the “Four Aids” you have mentioned there “Chaitya Guru”, the inner guide.

Disciple (1): In Vaishnavite literature it means the portion—Amsha—of the Divine which guides a man. It is called Chaitya Guru.

Sri Aurobindo: I wanted to know if the word has a fixed connotation. If it has not, then one can use the word “Chaitya Purusha” for the “psychic being”. It has the advantage of carrying both the functions of the psychic being: it is the direct portion of the Divine in the human and it is also the being that is behind the Chitta.

(*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by A. B. Purani, 1982 , pp. 214-5)

‘ IN THY LIGHT WE SHALL SEE...’

January 31, 1914

EVERY morning may our thought rise fervently towards Thee, asking Thee how we can manifest and serve Thee best. At every moment in the manifold choices which we can make and which, despite their apparent insignificance, are always of great importance—since according to our decision we become subject to one category of determinisms or another—at every moment may our attitude be such that Thy divine Will may determine our choice and that thus it may be Thou who directest our entire life. According to the consciousness in which we are when taking a decision, we become subject to the determinism of the order of realities in which we are conscious; whence the consequences, often unforeseen and troublesome, that are contradictory to the general orientation of one’s life and form obstacles which are sometimes terrible to overcome later. Therefore, O Lord, Divine Master of love, we want to be conscious of Thee and Thee alone, be identified with Thy supreme law each time we take a decision, each time we choose, so that it may be Thy Will which moves us, and that our life be thus effectively and integrally consecrated to Thee.

In Thy Light we shall see, in Thy Knowledge we shall know, in Thy Will we shall realise.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed. Vol. 1, p. 62)

AN INTERESTING EXPERIENCE

1 July 1970

I had an experience which was for me interesting, because it was for the first time. It was yesterday or the day before, I do not remember. X was there just in front of me, and I saw her psychic being, dominating over her by so much (*gesture indicating about twenty centimetres*), taller. It was the first time. Her physical being was small and her psychic being was so much bigger. And it was an unsexed being, neither man nor woman. Then I said to myself (possibly it is always so, I do not know, but here I noticed it very clearly), I said to myself, “But it is the psychic being, it is that which will materialise itself and become the supramental being!”

I saw it, it was so. There were particularities, but these were not well-marked, and it was clearly a being that was neither man nor woman, having the combined characteristics of both. And it was bigger than the person and in every way overtopped her by about so much (*gesture surpassing the physical body by about twenty centimetres*); she was there and it was like this (*same gesture*). And it had this colour... this colour... which if it became quite material would be the colour of Auroville.¹ It was fainter, as though behind a veil, it was not absolutely precise, but it was that colour. There was hair on the head, but... it was somewhat different. I shall see better perhaps another time. But it interested me very much, because it was as though that being were telling me, “But you are busy looking to see what kind of being the supramental will be—there it is! There, it is that.” And it was there. It was the psychic being of the person.

So, one understands. One understands: the psychic being materialises itself... and that gives continuity to evolution. This creation gives altogether the feeling that there is nothing arbitrary, there is a kind of divine logic behind and it is not like our human logic, it is very much superior to ours—but there is one, and that was fully satisfied when I saw this.

It is really interesting. I was very interested. It was there, calm and quiet, and it said to me, “You were looking, well, there it is, yes, it is that!”

And then I understood why the mind and the vital were sent out of this body, leaving the psychic being—naturally it was that which had been always governing all the movements, so it was nothing new, but there are no difficulties any more: all the complications that were coming from the vital and the mental, adding their impressions and tendencies, all gone. And I understood: “Ah! It is that, it is this psychic being which has to become the supramental being.”

But I never sought to know what its appearance was like. And when I saw X, I understood. And I see it, I am seeing it still, I have kept the memory. It was as though

1. Orange.

the hair on the head was red (but it was not like that). And its expression! An expression so fine, and sweetly ironical... oh! extraordinary, extraordinary.

And you understand, I had my eyes open, it was almost a material vision.

So one understands. All of a sudden all the questions have vanished, it has become very clear, very simple.

(Silence)

And it is precisely the psychic that survives. So, if it materialises itself, it means the abolition of death. But “abolition” ... nothing is abolished except what is not in accordance with the Truth, which goes away... whatever is not capable of transforming itself in the image of the psychic and becoming an integral part of the psychic.

It is truly interesting.

THE MOTHER

(Notes on the Way, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 238-39)

MATRIMANDIR TALKS

10 January 1970

I have a letter from C...

I am going to see him this afternoon.

I told you that I had seen the central building of Auroville... I have a plan, would you be interested to see it? There are some rolls there.

(Mother unrolls the plan as she explains) There will be twelve facets. And, at an equal distance from the centre, twelve columns. At the centre, on the ground, is my symbol, and at the centre of my symbol there are four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, upright, forming a square, and on the square a translucent globe (we don't know yet in what material). And then, from the top of the roof, when the sun is shining, the sunlight will fall onto it as a ray (nowhere else, only there). When there is no sun, there will be electric spotlights which will send a ray (also a ray, not a diffused light) exactly onto it, onto this globe.

And then, there are no doors, but... going deep down, one comes up again into the temple. One goes under the wall and comes up again inside. Again it is a symbol. Everything is symbolic.

And then there is no furniture, but on the floor, like here, there is first wood, probably, then over the wood a thick "dunlop" and over it a carpet, like here. The colour is yet to be chosen. The whole place will be white. I am not sure if the symbols of Sri Aurobindo will be white... I don't think so. I did not see them white, I saw them in an indefinable colour between gold and orange, a kind of colour like that. They will be upright. They will be carved in stone. And a globe which is not transparent but translucent. And then, right at the bottom (*below the globe*), there will be a light which will be directed upwards, shining diffusely into the globe. And then, from outside, there will be rays of light falling onto the centre. And no other lights, no windows, electric ventilation. And not a single piece of furniture, nothing. A place... for trying to find one's consciousness.

Outside, it will be something like that (*Mother unrolls another plan*). We don't know if the roof will be completely pointed or... very simple, very simple. It will be able to hold about two hundred people.

So, C's letter?

"Very Sweet Mother,

"I saw A on Sunday. He came to my room, we had lunch together. With love, I arranged for You and for A some very beautiful flowers. You were with us. We talked a lot. I felt A as a brother.

"I told him that Auroville cannot start like any other town—city-planning

problems, social, economic problems, all that later. The beginning ought to be 'something else'. That is why we should begin with the Centre. This Centre must be our lever, our fixed point, the thing on which we can support ourselves to try to leap to the other side—because it is only from the other side that we can begin to understand what Auroville ought to be. And this Centre should be the form which manifests in Matter the content which You can transmit to us on all the planes (occult also). As for us, we should be only the open and sincere medium through which you can materialise that.

“And I told him that I have felt the need to approach all that by living the experience within—and all united, people of the East and West, in a wide movement of love. Because that is the only possible concrete for building 'something else'.”

What he says is good.

“And the Centre can give us this love at once because it is love for You! I told him that practically we could begin with a moment of silence, all together, and try to make a total blank, and with everyone’s aspiration bring down the indications for the beginning into that blank. But all united and all together, especially those who are spiritually most advanced (the Indians).

“A agreed perfectly. He said really this should be done.”

(Mother nods approvingly.)

I will see C this afternoon to give him this plan. Because that is what I saw, you know. We will make it in white marble. F has said that he will fetch the marble, he knows the place.

The whole structure in white marble?

Yes, yes.

But C told me something which I feel is quite right. He said: We are going to build this Centre, we are going to put all our heart and aspiration into it, into this Centre...

Yes, yes.

And with the years it will become more and more “charged”....

Yes.

So this Centre must be the real thing. This temple should not be removed to build another, bigger one later.

I said that to reassure the people who think that something huge is needed. I said, "We will begin with this, and then we will see." You understand? I said, "This Centre should be there until the town is completely built, and afterwards we will see." Afterwards no one will want to remove it!

But he says that from the architectural point of view it is quite possible to extend the thing from the outside, without touching what has already been built.

Yes, oh, it is quite possible! You see, A told me, "And then what will we do afterwards?" I said, "Well, we will think about that later!" That's it! They don't know... they don't know that one must *not think!* I didn't think about it at all, at all, at all. One day, I saw it like that, as I see you. And even now, it is so living that I only have to look and I see it. And what I saw was the Centre and the light which falls on it and then, *quite naturally*, while looking at it I noticed, I said, "There, it is like that." But it was not thought, I did not think "twelve columns and then twelve facets and then..."; I did not think all that. I saw.

It is like these symbols of Sri Aurobindo.... When I am speaking of the Centre I still see these four symbols of Sri Aurobindo, which support each other at the corners, like that, and this colour... a strange colour... I don't know where we could find that. It is an orange-gold, very warm. And it is the only colour in the place; all the rest is white, and the translucent globe.

C said that he would go at once to enquire in Italy, at Murano, the place where they make the big crystals, to find out if it is possible to make a globe of thirty centimetres, for example, in crystal.

The exact measurement is on the plan, it must be marked.

There is a big glass-works there.

Oh! They make marvellous things there.... Isn't it marked, the size of the globe?

Seventy centimetres.

It can be hollow. It need not be solid, so that it is not too heavy.

(Silence)

This underground entrance... one will enter a dozen metres or so away from the wall, at the foot of the urn. The urn will mark the descent. I must choose from which side exactly.... And then, it is possible that later the urn, instead of being outside, will be *within* the enclosure. So perhaps we could simply put a great wall all around, and then the gardens. Between the enclosure wall and the building we are going to make now, we could have the gardens and the urn. And that wall will have one entrance... one or several, ordinary doors. People will be able to walk in the garden. And then one should fulfil certain conditions to have the right to go down into the underground passage and come out into the temple.... That must be something like an initiation, not just “like that”, no matter how...

(*Silence*)

I said to A, “We will see in twenty years”—so that calmed him down. But the first idea was to surround it with water, to make an island so that one would have to cross the water to be able to reach the temple. It is quite possible to make an island....

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother – I, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 13, pp. 288-293*)

‘DOING PRANAMS TO SADHAKS AND RECEIVING THEIR BLESSINGS’

A Letter

APROPS of the topic of people doing pranams to sadhaks and receiving their blessings, a number of points have been raised for consideration. The most significant of them is: “A sadhak may not desire pranams, but if somebody on his own wants to do them, the sadhak does not interfere: he allows them. There is no desire or wish involved. Is there anything here to find fault with?”

The situation presented in the question is not quite as simple as it looks. The person who allows pranams on the terms mentioned may be perfectly honest and unassuming and have a genuine consideration for the psychological needs of those who want to do pranams to him. But what may start as a harmless and even benevolent affair may develop certain kinks and complexities. These may not always come to the surface in the consciousness of the sadhak concerned but may gradually go to the making of a particular constant attitude in him which may not be to his own good or other people’s.

First of all, pranams repeated day after day are bound to set up a mechanism of expectation. They become a part of the sadhak’s habitual relationship with others and there lies the danger of a desire or wish germinating. Here is a very natural psychological process. From this desire or wish a slowly and subtly gathering sense is likely to arise of what is due to one. And from that sense the step to a feeling of one’s implicit superiority to others and of a general guruship is easy. The urge of benevolence and helpfulness to people could still be authentically there. But the movement of doing good may not now be from the same level as at the beginning; it may be from a slight self-elevation and this new poise may keep on increasing until one comes to have the established impression of an acknowledged guru’s *gadi* under one.

Secondly, although one does not ask anybody to do pranams, one sets by accepting them an example to those who have not done them yet. These people may be wondering what they should do. They come with admiration and even reverence to whoever has been long in Yoga and is really in a position to give help both by his words and by his presence. They do not know what their approach as seekers should be and what outward relationship they should have with the object of their admiration and reverence. Especially in India, where a variety of approaches and relationships on the outer plane is possible, the question becomes more pointed. The point becomes still more keen when Westerners come here and sincerely want to be Indianised in order to make the spiritual life more concrete and quick-moving. Seeing others easily go down on their knees and marking no reluctance at all in the

one to whom this gesture is made, all these people get encouraged to respond with the same gesture. This effect on them amounts to their being tacitly invited to do pranams.

All the circumstances involved would tend to turn pranam-making into what, if we rightly interpret certain statements of Sri Aurobindo, would be disapproved by him—namely, a kind of cult and a shadow of the Mother's role *vis-à-vis* the sadhaks. Such a result cannot but be a hindrance to the Motherward development in both the sides concerned in this particular spiritual exchange. The receiver of the pranams would interfere in the continuity he has inwardly to maintain of surrender to the Mother and self-effacement before her. He may sincerely try to invoke her presence and offer up to her the gesture addressed to him; but if the latter has become part of a habitual, repeating, cultic process, such an attitude of consciousness is practically impossible and the element of personal self mostly replaces the sense of being a medium. As for the pranam-makers, the frequent recurrence of the gesture is bound to focus the consciousness on the pranam-receiver rather than on the Mother whose disciple they know him to be. As the physical act of going down on their knees concentrates and culminates the movement of devotion, the inner side-tracking and substitution run the risk of being firmly established. Not that they will derive no spiritual benefit from what they do, but they will not, on the whole, put themselves into the full direct contact with that unique creative fountain of the infinite supramental light that is the Mother.

Finally, there are certain dangers or at least challenges for the pranam-receiver, attendant on his getting into a cultic stream. By the momentum of this stream many movements in the beings of the pranam-makers begin naturally to flow out into him. Of course, something of him will flow out into them. This may mean their getting a strong touch of his qualities and his getting a strong touch of their defects. More probably what would happen is that a sort of mixture is created of the two consciousnesses and there will be again and again an activation of this ever-present pull in two directions with a little yet not very significant variation. After a while a stagnancy, merely surface-stirred, of spiritual life comes about—unless the pranam-receiver is able to make a great deal of inner progress by a supernormal self-purification in the intervals between the pranam-periods. Such a refreshing of one's being at the secret sources of light is not very likely because the cultic rhythm usually becomes dominant, and the *mélange* produced by it will not allow an easy break-away towards those deeper springs. In order to remain unaffected by the haunting influence of that rhythm, one has to be very powerfully above the general psychological level of the people one accepts into one's consciousness.

All these, of course, are general observations. There is bound to be exceptional circumstances in certain respects and some modification may have to be made of my

line of thought. But, by and large, the picture presented here is likely to stand and may serve as a broad guide to both the receiver and the maker of pranams.

(1976)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

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THE BEING OF LIGHT ... UNCONDITIONAL INEFFABLE LOVE

I

In the *Mahabharata*, while the Pandavas and Draupadi are in exile, the Lord of Dharma in the guise of a crane asks the Pandavas in a sweet voice, one after the other, to answer his questions before he will allow the parched warriors to drink from his lake. They all disregard him and drink eagerly and one by one are felled to the ground. When Yudhisthira finally arrives on the scene he sees his four brothers lying prone in a sweet sleep which is death.

The crane challenges Yudhisthira to answer the questions his brothers have refused to answer before letting him drink from the lake waters. If Yudhisthira tries to drink before answering, the sun will look down on all five Pandavas in death beside this lake on whose small fishes he lives.

With this the crane changes into a frightful monster and starts shooting questions like arrows at Yudhisthira.

The questions concern ritual and Yudhisthira, being the son of Dharma has no difficulty in raising them to the sphere of the spirit:

Ablution is completely cleansing the mind of impurities. Hypocrisy is the establishment of religious standards instead of Truth. Brahmanhood is determined neither by birth nor learning but by righteous behaviour.

But then comes the \$64,000 question. "What is the most extraordinary thing in the world?"

Yudhisthira is equal to this too and thus is allowed to bring his brothers back and to drink. His answer: though hundreds of thousands of people are snared by Lord Yama's noose each day to leave on the unknown journey, nobody ever really believes that he too must die.

This is still true. And by and large, death is today still regarded as the redoubtable unknown journey about which it is best not to think too much if one wants to get on with one's life in a positive, productive manner. It is regarded as a morbid subject if too much dwelt upon and up to 25 or 30 years ago people resuscitated from clinical death were regarded as delusional and much worse if they brought back stories of what had happened to them while their 'corpses' lay stretched out in death, sometimes in the morgue.

It was the mostly dreaded unknown journey and for the majority it still is.

Ministers of religion would tell and still tell their parishioners who report on extraordinary meetings with a Being of total Love that they have been beguiled by the devil. People who came back saying that they returned with the mission to love everybody would actually find themselves in the psychiatrist's waiting room if not in a lunatic asylum. Families of returnees told them not to speak about their experience.

Usually the returnee himself or herself, after a first enthusiastic attempt with the nurse or doctor, learnt to keep things “under his/her hat”; they were told they had been given strong drugs which produced these hallucinations. They were told to relax, be quiet and forget about these things. In fact, the poor nurses and doctors were generally irritated by the patients wanting “to share” their experiences with them, as people normally are when dragged out of their rational limitations. Nothing in their schools of medicine had prepared them for anything like this.

I myself when very young had what is now called a near death experience and was more discreet than many. I told of my wonderful experience to only two people, really only one, in detail—a spiritual seeker—and she seriously disturbed my mother by telling her I had gone mad and needed therapy. My experience was the most important thing that had ever happened to me. It involved Sri Aurobindo of whom I had not heard at the time. But I shall come to this much later.

After 1975, at first very slowly, and then since the last decade of the 20th century, snowballingly, the attitude to NDE’s —Near-Death Experiences—started changing.

It is generally thought to be due to a book written by Raymond Moody a young American doctor who published a work called *Life After Life* in 1975. It was brought out by a small Southern States Publishing House that thought at best it would sell a few thousand copies. Instead, it sold hundreds of thousands, was picked up by a big publisher and became an international best seller, selling millions of copies.

Oh! So people were interested in death after all? No. They were interested in life. They were at last faced with the possibility, which to many looked like proof, that death did not really exist other than to the body, and that something wonderful awaited one, once one had accomplished one’s life here. In fact the N.D.E. is about life. And the fact that the Heaven which NDEers visit is increasingly opened to the public, as it were, is both a sign and a means of our evolution. With the ever-improving high-tech methods of bringing people back, souls return to their bodies with a sense of a mission that has been imparted to them.

Their lives change. Business tycoons become philanthropists, gangsters become volunteer workers in old age homes, or teachers, mechanics become philosophers. People who have hardly read a book to the end before delve into religion, philosophy, physics, recognising in them often hints of what it is that has happened to them. People who had kept their secret for years began to appear on television, hardly able to restrain their tears when telling of the total unconditional love they have encountered on the other side. For all those who have encountered the Light, entered the Light, the message is the same. The most important thing in the Universe is Love. We must love everything and each other. Love is supreme.

The cat is out of the bag. The experience happens to anybody: tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief. Hosewives and lorry drivers are turned into mystics overnight. My Oxford dictionary gives me for ‘mystic’: “one who has the direct connection of the soul with God; one initiated into mysteries.” For

ever more, the centre of their reality, their truth,—unless it has been suppressed by a psychiatrist or religious guide or society—is the Being of Light.

Not that the medical profession or any other sector is necessarily convinced. One cannot say that NDE is mainstream thinking yet. There are many questions to be asked and it does no good to the cause to be too simplistic but the unknown journey begins to be chartered. Heaven seems to lean down to Earth. NDEers bring back something with them. Often they have extrasensory perceptions, Siddhis have developed, there are changes in their brains and they exhibit features which would seem to belong to a more evolved species.

Before I go any further I would like to quote from the Mother something which for me substantiates the fact that NDE's are part of an evolving consciousness. It is from a conversation of 22 July 1967, several years before the term NDE was coined or somebody would probably have drawn her attention to the increasing number of the phenomenon.

Now it is no longer the case that one has to have a certified clinical death with heart arrest for an experience to be recognised as near death. The literature is full of cases where breathing has stopped, like in swimming accidents or indeed much like the following serious allergic reaction to penicillin. The thing that classes it with other NDE's is that ineffable “something else.”

Here is the person's description:

External awareness had slipped away. I heard, saw nothing. I sagged forward as my wife held my head to keep me from pitching from the chair. To the Doctor I had reached clinical death. But for me there was a surge of inner awareness— magnified, finely focused, brilliant. It is a progressive thing, this death. You feel the toes going first, then the feet, cell by cell, death churning them like waves washing the sands. Now the legs, the cells winking out. Closer now, and the visibility is better. Hands, arms, abdomen and chest, each cell flaring into a supernova, then gone. There is order and system in death, as in all that is life. I must try to control the progression, to save the brain for last so that it may know. Now the neck. The lower jaw. The teeth. How strange to feel one's teeth die, one by one, cell igniting cell, galaxies of cells dying in brilliance. Now, in retrospect, I grope for this other thing. There was something else, something that I felt or experienced or beheld at the very last instant. What was it? I knew it so well when it was there, opening before me, something more beautiful, more gentle, more loving than the mind or imagination of living creature could ever conceive. But it is gone.

David Snell

(Senior Editor, *Life* magazine, in *Life*; May 29, 1967)

The Mother's comment:

In a magazine (I think it's *Life*, an American magazine), they published the story of a man (who is in fact one of the editors or administrators of the magazine) a man who was given an injection of penicillin but was allergic to penicillin. And lo and behold, all his cells begin to dissolve, while he, entirely conscious and as if concentrated in his brain, watches the dissolution. When it reached up to the heart, the doctors declared him dead... the impression it had on him was that the cells had a kind of expanding movement, then burst and dissolved one after another: feet, legs, abdomen, everything. And when it reached the heart, the doctor said, "He's dead." But he had taken refuge in his brain and thought, "I must hold out; if I can hold out here, concentrate and resist here, all will be well." And that's what he did. Then he felt all at once a power, he says, something so luminous, so beautiful, so gentle, so... so much more full of love than anything else in the world, such a marvellous sensation... that he let himself melt into it, and after some time, order returned everywhere and he came back to life! He describes that. He describes it (with sentences: it's in a magazine, so he makes sentences), but his experience is really interesting. You see, because of that will to concentrate in what he conceived to be the essential part of his being, the centre of his life, he suddenly found himself in the presence of that 'power'... He said he tried to recapture it afterwards. But "I forget what it was, I no longer remember, except for that sensation, more marvellous than anything one can conceive.

I found that interesting.

And that brought him back to life.

(silence)

I took it as one of the signs that the Force is really at work. Because I don't think that man had done any yoga, he knew nothing about those things; he is just a gentleman- who's-had-an-injection-of-penicillin which he can't tolerate (those accidents happen often enough), nothing else. There was just this idea that the brain is the conscious part of the being, and if he concentrated there... His idea was, "I want to know what's happening. I want to be conscious of what's happening, I want to see what's happening." So that's what pulled the Force. A simple thing.

It seems to me there is a progress in human consciousness—that's my impression.

An awakening.

What is now presented is a near-death experience which touches Sri Aurobindo very concretely. It is that of John Kelly, a 20-year old American Infantryman in World War II who after almost 2 years of trench warfare, assaults in which he saw his close buddies killed, goes into a deep depression and wills himself to die. He has been guided through the war by Sri Aurobindo whom he has seen in his subtle body (Sri Aurobindo was still on the physical plane). He has experienced his Light, his Majesty, his Power. He has also experienced Mother's love and compassion. And now he wants to go to Her.

The following is an extract of the book I wrote on John's story *Great Sir and the Heavenly Lady*.

For those who have not read any NDE's I point out some of the features of his experience which are to be found in very, very many NDE's: the deep darkness in which there is the tiny light which grows and grows; the shooting of the consciousness through the head and the being whooshed into another dimension or other dimensions; the cathedral; the life review; the being shown future events by the Guide (which in this case is Sri Aurobindo) and the resistance to returning to life, and finally the realisation that there is something that he must do down there, where his body is waiting for him to return. The decision is left to him, as it is in so many recorded experiences.

I wrote John's story in 1968 seven years before *Life After Life* appeared and probably 10 years before I read it. I wanted the book to be readable and believable enough to be published. Scores of NDE books have been published in the 80's, 90's and after, but at the time, my English publisher wrote saying that it couldn't possibly be a true story, that at best it might be a fictionalised version of something I had experienced and for some reason decided to present as a war story. (She was too polite to say that it was a cock and bull story). My American publisher demonstrated no greater belief or interest. (The book was published in 1993. Since then, the Italian as well as the Spanish versions are out and it is now being translated into French).

So it is that many other incredible features of John's experiences were left out of *Great Sir* for one, John's interplanetary travels which so many Near-Death Experiencers report.

Now for John's experience. It is a portion from the book, *Great Sir and the Heavenly Lady*, cited almost in toto.

II

[John is in a deep, deep depression. The violence of the war and his encounter with a Nazi concentration camp which his unit liberated have left him without any will to live. He desires to die and go to the Heavenly Lady of all compassion (The Mother) whom he has seen in vision.]

Death took one step nearer every time he looked. He would be with Her. Once he was with Her he would never return.

Now he must prepare the body. He brushed his teeth. Hot water ran into the great white tub, sending up clouds of steam. He watched himself fading in the mirror and then stepped into his last bath. Carefully he soaped his body, recapturing for a few now ridiculous moments a hint of its immortality.

When he had toweled himself dry he stood for a moment undecided. Striped pyjamas would not be fitting. He wrapped himself in the sheet. He paused before the light switch. Death would come more surely and swiftly in the dark.

He lay down on the bed. "Hail Mary, full of grace ..." No. Words kept it away. Death came in silence. It waited, kept at bay by prayers. Death was emptiness.

He crossed his hands upon his breast. He had not trimmed his nails. 'It doesn't matter,' he told his mind now rife with trivialities. He had brushed his hair. Get on with it. Silence. Suddenly the house erupted. Jazz! The door flung open and three girls bent over his bed. He prayed with violent desperation. No, no, no! Begone! They were gone. Silence again. He let himself be pulled into its depths until in utter blackness he found a thread of light which spun itself into a tiny diamond. He fixed his being on it; it grew in brightness, spawning light, cascading light. Within it grew a Presence. It was He, his Lord, his Saviour and Protector.

'Great Sir!'

Energies hummed and throbbed and moved towards his heart, a great engine turning over. Gaining strength, the energies gathered, began to rise and shot him through his head.

Waiting for him, with diamond blue arms outstretched, was Great Sir. John gazed. Love blazed between them.

Come with me, said Great Sir, but do not look left or right and do not look down.

John seized the ankles and felt himself swung up. They gathered speed. Like a great double bird they clove through worlds of stifling gloom in which, but for his hold on Great Sir, he would have suffocated. They turned and twisted through the murk, through the terror which gave way before them. Phantoms fled like night visions at cockcrow. He pressed his cheek against the heels of Him who had always, always and in all lives been his Beloved Friend.

There was now less resistance and something subtly new which his eyes opened on, less opaque, thinning with gaps and swirls as in a mist, and with a last corkscrew twist they broke into a clearer sweeter world of infinite shores and sparkling silver seas.

He looked down in wonder on an eternal still summer of innocence and ease where peace fell like a dew. Throbbing with bliss, radiant god-forms flowed. It was a timeless valley of delight.

We have to go beyond.

Without warning, without transition they were flying out into the night, terrestrial night, flying over Italy. Together they looked down on the bridges of Florence spanning the Arno with quiet arching rhapsody, this city of accomplishment, a phrase in their eternal dialogue, in their silent exchange. The gardens and palazzi nodded in affirmation of their passing and then, with a memory that burst like a Tuscan grape in the press, he remembered that they had lived here once. His laughter spilled over the hills of Assisi, the red earth of Siena; before the last ripples were behind them dawn turned the world to pink and orange over the sands of Egypt.

Questions dissolved when he saw his own heart's home. The heart-shaped country Ma Kelly had spoken of. It was his Master's home. They moved over its eastern side and came down over a cluster of dove grey houses, cool in the brightening dawn. A terraced roof was brilliant with magenta bougainvillea. Between the houses and the darker grey of the streets, white-clad figures moved.

Now do you remember?

'I know. I know what we have always been. You are the Beloved Friend.' They looked a look that went from life to life. A voice spoke in his heart,

You see, our love is beyond loss, beyond disturbance. Our love continues inviolate.

His heart, suffused with peace and bathed in grace, laid itself at his Master's feet. Unable to bear more, he closed his eyes. His soul was wrapped in flame, he was consumed and born once more.

Fine filaments of sun passing through his brain illumined the points of his life and of his Master's life to which he chose to turn. Each concept on which he had been reared had taken him away from his own being and the knowledge of his freedom.

He let a beam pass through the moment of his birth and play his whole life, showed his Master that he had been born in a centre of barbaric ignorance and superstition, how never in his whole life had anyone explained to him that he had lived before; nobody knew. The ray itself was coming from his Master. Now the Master's life unfolded, simple, human. Consciousness in its enormous love taking on the pain of human birth and life.

He had come to don earth's resistant matter and to kindle its dormant soul. And what was wanted of John Kelly's soul was that he help Great Sir and the Lady. His life was full of its own sense. The Lady and Great Sir, then, were somewhere on earth.

I will show you something.

Upon another terrace beside him was Great Sir with silky white hair flowing, one golden arm and shoulder bare, the other draped in soft white cloth.

Look.

John peered over the edge at a familiar scene: smoke, tanks, eruptions, more smoke, men marching in formation. He knew that they were looking not into the horror of the past, but at the future, at what was still to be. He turned in protest, but something stopped him. But if he were being asked to go through it again he simply could not. He knew that. He had gone through all that, had left his body and would not return to it again. He would never let go of his Lord's ankles. He felt resistance taken from him, he must be quiet to understand.

Do you know what we are doing here?

Once again they looked down at the grey and white houses within which jeweled points of energy began to bud. He knew that men and women were offering their lives to the Force that sought to penetrate the earth. The world's sleep kept the light at bay. Forces of darkness held the ridge. His place was down here with these advance guards of the spirit. His body lay wrapped in its shroud down there and waiting, but he must find the Lady.

His desire bore him to a translucent cathedral made of angels and half-hidden gods whose faces were the breathing architecture. At the summit of a transparent stairway lay his freedom: he must not linger or forget his purpose. In a sea-green robe, half hidden in the mists, stood his Heaven Lady, her face concealed by the veil that impedes our knowing.

He was nearing the top when from behind the veil She spoke:

*Because the human instrument has failed
The Godhead frustrate sleeps within its seed.*

What lay behind the veil, so diaphanous, yet not revealing? He tried in vain to penetrate it. And then, when he had lost all hope, a white arm rose. The veil was gone. He read the secret of Her eyes. It ran into his blood and turned it into honey, into liquid gold, into wine and fire. His being melted, grew boundless, dissolved. All the discord of the world poured into harmony. He was the One Existence that rules the seas of Time. He was the Smile. He was the One.

He was tumbling joyously, without direction, without fear or care, in a perfectly controlled descent into a bank of pink and orange clouds on which sat ... Great Sir.

There came a grey memory of something heavy and dull and ignorant lying on a mattress down below. Something that crawled with wormlike progress and did not know the world of joy and light. There was nothing in the universe which could *make* him go back to ignorance. He was free to stay. He waited, suspended in longing. The option was being offered him in love. He turned his head, met Great Sir's gaze. Once again the flame of love swept over him. All he wanted was to serve his Lord.

With a mute cry of love and farewell and a prayer that he be allowed to remember what he had learned, he hurtled down, down, down, forgetting as he fell.

*

Bless 'em all, bless 'em all
 The long and the short and the tall.
 You'll get no promotion this side of the ocean,
 So cheer up, my lads...

He had not died! He had had a healing dream, had awoken to a pure and immaculate universe. He strained to recapture where he had been, remembered only that the Lord had come for him, that he had been with his Lady and that he yearned to be with Her again, but that there was something to be done for Them down here. He was alive and well.

He unwrapped himself. Naked he went to the window. A figure emerged from the dark trees singing and walked unsteadily towards the pavement below. What a thing of beauty was the human figure, brimming with grace. Every careless swing of the arm, the most drunken placing of foot, was informed with Godhead and trailed divinity. Owens didn't know. "Bless 'em all." The Polish Colonel. There were so many things to do now, quietly, calmly. He would find the Colonel, tell him what had happened, of how right he had been. He would write to Kathy.

And he would go home. Home. The thought took him by surprise: everywhere was home.

The trees rose around the gleaming silver of the fountain. The sky was full of stars. He had never seen them so rife with ordered life. He saw his own hand on the window sill, white against the black wrought-iron window guard. Everything was perfect, the soft radiance, the dark outlines of the trees, the gleam of the pond between them, the mystery of the man-made statue, a reflection of the Godhead. The soldier and his voice receded up the road, sowing blessings. John joined his hands in prayer but had nothing to say, nothing to ask of Great Sir.

*

As the coffee bubbled in the percolator Great Sir came through the wall, sitting in a big green arm-chair. John gazed while his right hand went to the switch. He found himself upon his knees, tears raining down his cheeks, his heart swelling with gratitude. It sent out silent words. 'My Great Sir, my Master, I don't begin to understand Your power or Your love nor how they work, but whatever Your work is, whatever You may want, I dedicate my life to it. I dedicate my life to You. I am Yours for as long as I may live and afterwards. I don't know what the world is that You come from, nor even what Your name is. I am Your servitor.'

Great Sir's eyes fixed on John's. Something was moving in John's breast. The strongest, gentlest hand had reached into his heart, caressed it.

Oro ... Great Sir's lips had shaped a word. John leaned forward.

Oro ... The lips moved silently.

'*Oro ...?*' asked John? Great Sir smiled and nodded. Was it a sacred word? An open sesame?

The lips pressed on each other to shape another word.

'Bend?' asked John and bent forward further. 'Like this?' he bowed.

Great Sir smiled.

Waves of force emanating from Great Sir's green chair were striking him in little bursts. They made him shake and tremble. His teeth were chattering. He was not strong enough. The inner tremor had taken hold of all his limbs. The beautiful grave face remained serene. 'Great Sir, last night You showed me what I had to do, but I can't remember.' The words were blurted out because the trembling had become so violent that it ground his very thoughts against each other. He would have to leave the room. Yet he could not just run out, even if the force shook him apart.

You're a soldier, said Great Sir. *Just stand at attention for a moment.*

John struggled to his feet and straightened, gazing at the cherished visage with its frame of moonlit hair and flowing beard. His knees quaking, teeth chattering, he looked at the eyes brooding on eternity, at the resplendent body, stored it in his memory and tottered out.

In the corridor his knees still trembled violently. Tears of love coursed down his cheeks as he grasped the banister. Downstairs he opened the door, realised he was still in his dressing gown and closed it again. He stared up the stairs. His knees turned rubbery once more.

He hung his gown on the clotheshorse, took his cigarettes, matches and handkerchief from the pockets, wiped his face and peered into the street. A young Captain was coming from the left, a mother wheeling a baby carriage was coming from the right, an old black Peugeot turning around the park. Clouds in a blue sky scudding on gusts of wind. The wind sought him out under his light shirt and he shuddered.

He put one foot down from the pavement onto the street to cross toward the park and noticed that it wore a furry brown slipper. The other, which came after it, wore a

polished shoe. He hesitated. No, he would go and sit in the park. He could limp and pretend he had an injured foot. It didn't matter. None of these things mattered. Where must he go to get the answers to his question, find an explanation for it all? He knew by the time he reached that lamppost he would have his answer.

India.

The answer came through clearly in Great Sir's unmistakable accents. He had been willing to die, had taken the Doctor's advice. He had offered his life to Great Sir and the Lady.

"India?" The last time he had read a paper they'd been having famines and riots. There'd been a photo of piles of corpses waiting to be burned, rows and rows of dark shrivelled bodies with arms and legs like sticks and open sores black with flies ... Another concentration camp. No. He couldn't. He could not stand more suffering, simply could not. Who could give him the answers in India.

He had forgotten to drag his slippers foot. He began to limp, his mind wandered through the pestilential corpse-strewn streets of India, trying to find the answers. In a Himalayan cave. He had heard of life-long seekers after Truth. He wasn't made for that. Better not to know.

His heart still ached with sweet devotion for the Lady and Great Sir. It was sore and heavy-laden that he could not volunteer for India.

'Forgive me, Lord.' He stopped and picked a leaf and walked some more. 'Since You let me choose ... I really can't. I am really sorry.'

He leaned against a tree. 'Apart from that, I can't take violence any more.'

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III

The interesting part of this story for me was that while I have read a good number of books on NDE's with hundreds of individual cases, THE ONLY ONE in which the Heavenly Guide, the Being of Light who orchestrates the Life review is still on the physical plane is John's. His experience took place just after the war in 1946. He was still in Germany with the American army of occupation waiting to be demobilised. This makes sense to us for we know Sri Aurobindo was working on more than one plane, as was the Mother. And of course, at this time Sri Aurobindo was still in his body sitting in his green armchair in his room on the first floor of the Ashram!

In all the other cases I have read, the Experiencer identifies the Being of Light who receives or guides him/her as someone who has left the physical plane, often Christ in Western Countries, Lord Yama, Krishna or an angel. Sometimes the NDEer

is met by a deceased relative but as often as not it is simply a Being of Light of total, unconditional Love, a love which the returnee can never adequately express in words for such love does not exist on our material plane. The books very often have “Light” in the title. *Saved by the Light, Embraced by the Light, Into the Light, Lessons from the Light, Nearer to the Light, Return from the Light*. And as Raymond Moody says with a certain degree of wonderment, all the Returnees who have seen the light and been in the light testify that the light is a Being, not a person like you or me, but definitely a Being and not just a wonderful impersonal light. Sri Aurobindo was in fact perceived as a Being of Diamond Blue Light, spawning, cascading Light.

At the Hour of Death, a book by Osis and Haraldson (1977), documents 1,708 cases of deathbed visions in India and the U.S. In no case was the relative or religious figure who came to take the patient to the afterlife an apparition of a living figure. The same holds true for the NDE itself.

John forgot about most of what seemed to him a healing dream which had pulled him out of his depression.

He was not to learn of Sri Aurobindo’s identity until some time later when he saw in a magazine a photograph of the Mother as he had seen her on the battlefield—at which time the experience came crashing back into his memory.

MAGGI

(To be continued)

UDAR, ONE OF MOTHER'S CHILDREN

(Continued from the issue of June 2008)

Dowsing

THE practice of dowsing is a very ancient one. In England this used to be done with a hazel twig in the form of a Y. This twig had a natural springiness. One holds the Y facing outwards, level with the ground. The method was used largely for finding sources of water. The dowser walked slowly over the ground being investigated and if and when he came over a source of water the twig would move suddenly and forcefully, either up or down.

Sometime during the last war we had the visit of an officer of the British Royal Air Force. He had come to see us to ask questions with regard to dowsing. Instead of a hazel twig he used a V made by sticking the tips of two steel cored knitting needles into a piece of rubber. But he mostly used a pendulum. He explained that this was also an old tradition for prospecting for precious metals and stones. The pendulums had a small chamber and screwed-on tip. A small piece of the metal or precious stone sought for was put into the pendulum bob that was hung by a silk string. Prospecting was done at the place itself or even over a map at a place far removed from the actual site. The pendulum would show its reaction by circular movement either clockwise or anti. He himself used mostly the pendulum.

Now, he explained, the Royal Air Force had taken him up seriously and they employed him to trace missing airmen who had been shot down and forced to bail out over enemy-occupied territory. The R.A.F. would send him a piece of clothing of the airman he had to locate and would indicate the area to be investigated. He had large-scale maps of all the areas. He said that he was able to locate quite a number of men, and rescue parties would be sent out to bring them back.

Now the officer had two questions for which he wanted answers. First, he wanted to know what was the force that acted in such matters and from where it came. Next, he asked why the results were not always true. Purani was with us at the time and neither he nor any of us felt we could answer these questions. So Purani took the V and the pendulum to Sri Aurobindo and showed the things to Him and asked Him the questions.

This is the answer given by Sri Aurobindo. He said that such knowledge as is revealed to those who seek for it through these and other means exists in a certain plane of consciousness and persons can open to this plane. When one gets reactions through the instruments such as those taken to Him it shows that one is open to this plane. But because the knowledge is transmitted through physical material instruments which are themselves not conscious, error can often come in and often certain mischievous forces purposely give false information just for the fun of it, and because

they can use the material instruments. So the best thing to do, said Sri Aurobindo, was to try and open more towards that plane of knowledge for a direct revelation and not through an instrument. Then each revelation would be always true.

Udar

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Interest in Aviation

Udar had qualified as an aeronautical engineer from the UK in the early thirties. However there was little aviation in India at that time and hence no scope for utilisation of his education and skills. I first met Udar in the summer of 1959. I was then serving as a fighter pilot on active duty in the Indian Air Force. I was flying French Ouragon (called Toofani in India) aircraft and as a hobby I used to do gliding (sail-plane flying) on weekends. We just clicked from the very beginning. His interest in aviation was rekindled through our association and for me he always remained a father-figure.

During my visit to Pondicherry in the summer of 1966 Udar expressed a wish to fly in a small plane over Pondicherry and the Ashram. So we went to Meenambakam Airport in Madras and the Chief Flying Instructor of the Madras Flying Club very kindly arranged two separate Pushpak aircraft for us to fly over Pondicherry and back. The two yellow Pushpak aircraft appeared over Pondicherry and Udar was indeed very thrilled to wave to the people in the Ashram below. After that whenever we were together in Delhi he always prompted me to fly him. It was for me a great privilege to take him up in the air, seated beside me, and to feel the enthusiasm that he radiated.

D.P. Soni

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Solar Energy

Mother told me that the days of fossil fuel are over. The very word fossil fuel itself indicates the dead past, so we are living on the dead past. We must look toward the future and the present and not live in the dead past.

Udar

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The 12th World Energy Congress ended at Delhi on 23rd September 1983 with the participation of 62 nations in the deliberations on the important question of energy.

What interested me most is that this is part of the Mother's vision. Mother had told me very forcefully that the days of the fossil fuels were over and it had to be so. We were living on our past, our dead past as the word fossil itself indicates. We should now move to our future, our glorious future, to an energy from the sun, the physical symbol of the Supramental. Mother had had a vision in which She saw a very large area covered with some kind of flat panels and from this there was a constant supply of electric power coming.

Udar

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I must mention the very important and dedicated work in solar energy that is being done here by Dr. Chamanlal Gupta, one of the members of the Ashram, under the aegis of the Tata Energy Research Institute, and his fine collaborator, his wife Shipra. Presently they are setting up in several places installation of solar water heating systems and they are manufacturing very efficient solar cookers. They had also set up a solar pond in one of our estates but it was a small pond for experiment and they were able to collect valuable data. Now for the big pond that we propose to make in Pondicherry it is they who will help prepare the scheme.

Here are some general facts about solar ponds' electric generation: 1 sq. metre will generally produce 3 to 4 watt-hours. The solar pond keeps its heat even during the night, so the power generation is for 24 hours.

Udar

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I gave Mother the whole explanation about photovoltaics, and She said, "Do whatever you can to push research in that line, this is the way of the future for the world. Because the Sun is the sign of the supramental and the supramental is pouring power on earth, a tiny fraction of it is enough, and this is the way we can have it."

She said that Nuclear power is the power of the Asura, the titan. It comes out of destruction and out of destruction you get power. So the whole character is destructive and even for peaceful purposes it will give no end of troubles.

And she said India should be the one country not to take to nuclear power, but we are using it as much as possible.

Udar

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... The more important thing to state is something which physical science will not accept and that is that energy has characteristics. They maintain that energy is neu-

tral and can be well used or ill used but the Mother has said very strongly that nuclear energy is evil in its very base. It comes from the destruction of the basis of matter, the nucleus of the atom and so its very characteristic is destructive. Even the so-called peaceful purpose is a blind. It can never be peaceful and, somehow or the other, will cause great damage. On the other hand The Mother has shown that the true spiritual energy in the physical comes from the sun. It is the physical symbol of the Supramental and it pours down on us enormous quantities of wonderful energy of which we now use only a very, very small fraction. So our whole attention must be concentrated on using solar energy, in all its forms.

Udar

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“I am an engineer,” he used to say, but one could see that he had the attitude of a true scientist. For example, once Mother told him that Nuclear fission is not the way of the future for energy because it has an occult flaw as it profits from division; there might be a good future for Nuclear fusion because it is the opposite. So Udar went and searched and showed the Mother all other possibilities like biomass, hydroelectric etc. including a picture of solar panels for solar electricity. Mother, he claimed, had a vision of large installations of such a kind in desert lands, She said, “Yes, this is the way.”

Olivier P.

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Hydroponics

In the 1950's Udar also experimented with Hydroponics, soil-less culture. Though agriculture was not his field, after reading about ‘the miracle of making the desert bloom’ in the book by J. Sholto Douglas, he took copious notes and for the first time in Pondicherry, grew plants in sand and gravel with chemicals as nourishment. He won the horticultural prize that year in the Pondicherry Flower Show for his hydroponics cultivation of tomatoes and roses.

The book that inspired him was “Hydroponics, the Bengal System – with notes on other methods of Soilless Cultivation” by J. Sholto Douglas (1951) where the author shows how even with poor soil and very limited income one could grow enough food.

(To be continued)

P. AND G.

THE SUPRAMENTAL BEING, A MATERIALISATION OF THE PSYCHIC BEING

How will the next species, the supramental body, be created? Is it a transformation of a human body? No, the present physical body created by the process of procreation may become a superman (a “surhomme”) but not a supramental man. The supramental body will be a materialisation of the psychic being, coming into existence without the mechanical process of procreation. But how can it happen?

This issue is still not very known, although the relevant information has been published in *Notes on the Way*, a compilation of extracts from the Mother’s conversation with Satprem. These were first published in the Ashram *Bulletin*. Other references may be found in the Mother’s *Questions and Answers*, and other volumes of the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM) and *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* (SABCL).

I

**According to the Mother, the psychic being is going to
“materialise itself and become the supramental being”.**

On 1 July 1970, while “seeing with open eyes” a disciple’s psychic being, the Mother had an experience:

I said to myself: “But it is the psychic being, it is that which will materialise itself and become the supramental being ... So, one understands: the psychic being materialises itself... and that gives continuity to evolution.”

(*Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol. 11, p. 238)

What then is the process by which the psychic being be materialised? For many years, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been exploring how the new race, the supramental race would appear on earth, how the first supramental being would appear. The process of animal procreation which entails physical heredity and karma did not seem a proper process.

In *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* (CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 548-49), Sri Aurobindo writes:

The necessity of a physical procreation could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available... If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility... A soul wishing to... form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be

assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functioning of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge.

This necessity of finding a process to produce new beings is also mentioned by the Mother on 16 April 1958 (*Questions and Answers 1957-1958*, CWM, Vol. 9, pp.313-14). She relies on the superman, an intermediary being between man and the supramental being:

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of superman...

This specie ...will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method ...

Previously, on 25 September 1957, (*Questions and Answers 1957-1958*, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 191-92) the Mother spoke of Sri Aurobindo's conception of creation of the new being:

The supramental being as he conceived of it, is not formed in the ordinary animal way *at all* but directly, through a process that for the moment still seems occult to us, but is a direct handling of forces and substance in such a way that the body can be a "materialisation" and not a formation according to the ordinary animal principle.

In the same vein, the Mother said on 30 September 1966 while discussing with Satprem the manifestation of the supramental being:

... this would be a transformation infinitely greater than that from the animal to man; this would be a passage from man to a being who would not be built in the same manner, who would no longer function in the same manner, who would be like the condensation and concretisation of "something"

(*Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol. 11, p. 46)

What is that "something"? The answer may be found in the talk of 1 July 1970 quoted in the beginning of this article. It may be the condensation or concretisation of the psychic being.

The next thing is to consider how this precursor of the supramental being is growing, is developing, from its birth up to its present state in this 20th century.

2

Out of the Supreme, a divine spark will come out and will crystallise to become the psychic being, through our life experiences.

As the Mother said on 5 August 1953 (*Questions and Answers 1953*, CWM, Vol. 5, p. 203):

... the psychic starts by being only a kind of a tiny divine spark within the being and out of this spark will emerge progressively an independent conscious being having its own action and will... For a long time, in most human beings the psychic is **a being in the making** . [*emphasis added*]

Even earlier, in 1931, the Mother had written:

... it is the psychic presence which little by little becomes the psychic being.
(*Questions and Answers 1929-1931*, CWM, Vol. 3, p. 150)

On 16 July 1960, she wrote:

... the soul is the divine spark ... in man.

The psychic being is formed progressively around this divine centre, in the course of its innumerable lives in the terrestrial evolution, until the time comes when the psychic being, fully formed and wholly awakened, becomes the conscious sheath of the soul around which it is formed.

(*Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 247)

We may wonder why, in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, the soul, that divine spark in man, is called "psychic being" and not, for instance, "oversoul" or "super soul", once it has developed into a concrete form and shape? In fact the emergence of this *independent conscious being* is first perceived as a separate entity within our human frame usually through an unexpected and sudden experience, when the psychic being "burst out of its shell". We become aware of an entity which has always existed and we did not know it, which will always exist beyond the death of the physical body. We become aware that this entity is in fact the real Peter or Paul, more real, more physical than the physical body which is then felt as transient. It is therefore a living "being" and it is a being which has emanated from that soul called "psyché" in Greek. That is why the wording "psychic being" is quite evocative. This individual entity is in fact the being of our psyché, our psychic being.

On 25 July 1962, the Mother describes to Satprem, in a very living manner, the process of growth of the psychic being:

... this divine flame exists inside each human being, and little by little, through all the incarnations ... **a being takes shape around it.** ... And when the psychic being reaches its full development, it becomes a kind of bodily or at any rate **individual raiment** (*revêtement corporel*) of the soul... through all the incarnations, whatever has received and responded to the divine influence progressively **crystallises** around ... This is what we call the “psychic being”. [*emphasis added*]

At this juncture, it is interesting to know how to consciously activate the growth of the psychic being, which actions or attitudes or behaviour develop the psychic individuality? According to Sri Aurobindo, in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy:

... the psychic being grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us and, finally by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements, there is developed a psychic individuality which we call usually the psychic being

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 288-289)

It looks as if an analogy could be drawn with a muscle which grows with practice: the psychic being grows whenever its envelope follows a higher psychic movement.

In a similar manner, the Mother writes in 1967 about the development of the psychic personality:

In order to strengthen the contact and, if possible, the development of the conscious psychic personality, one should, while concentrating...take great care, each time one receives an indication from it, to follow it very scrupulously and sincerely

(*Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 358)

How to identify indications received from the psychic being? In the Mother's words:

Communications from the psychic do not come in a mental form. They are not ideas or reasoning. They have their own character quite distinct from the mind, something like a feeling that comprehends itself and acts

(*Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 426)

This distinction is very important.

...the psychic has the true knowledge, an intuitive instinctive knowledge. It says: “I know; I cannot give reasons, but I know.”

(*Questions and Answers 1929-1931*, CWM, Vol. 3, p. 152)

It is a sort of inner certitude which makes you do the right thing at the right moment and in the right way, without necessarily passing through the reason or mental formation.

(Questions and Answers 1953, CWM, Vol. 5, p. 397)

It also discourages you with this

... kind of capacity for foresight, but not in the form of ideas: rather in the form of feelings... For instance, when one is going to decide to do something, there is sometimes a kind of uneasiness or inner refusal...

(Questions and Answers 1957-1958, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 357)

And its way of expressing itself is quite subtle:

... the tiny, very quiet indication of the soul which says "Don't do it."

(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM, Vol. 10, p. 25)

The growth and development of the psychic being is a concept which has been identified and described by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Among those who have spoken about sensations and feelings coming from the psychic, many have noticed a growing presence and influence within themselves but a growing perception cannot be a proof that the psychic being grows and is evolutionary. It is not known if it is the perception which is developing or if it is the psychic being which is growing and developing itself, which entails a more living perception.

3

The psychic being is developing an individual "body" within our human frame.

The Mother tells us that the psychic being is evolutionary and many features of an evolved psychic being can be individualised.

1. It is a being!

During the 1 July 1970 conversation, the Mother described a sadhak's psychic being, seen with open eyes:

... it was clearly a being which was neither man nor woman, having the combined characteristics of both.

(Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol. 11, p. 238)

Yes, a being, which is defined by the Mother as:

... an organised entity, fully conscious of itself, independent, and having the power of asserting itself and ruling the rest of the nature...

(*Questions and Answers 1957-1958*, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 339)

A visitor to the Ashram said, when he became aware of his psychic being, that he discovered that this being was in fact himself, his real "I". He started to talk with the third person, using 'he' instead of using the 'I', since the one who was talking was the envelope of what he had identified as himself, the newly discovered being

It is interesting to note how Sri Aurobindo describes the moment when Savitri discovers her soul, (*Savitri*, p. 526), in the Canto called 'The finding of the soul'. The first Section finishes with the line:

There suddenly she met her secret soul.

The poem stops with one blank line and resumes with solemnity in the next line:

A being stood immortal in transience.

2. This being has a form

That visitor said that this being had the shape and dimension of a duck's egg. It was more real, more physical than the flesh of his body. That is why he could describe the shape in a concrete manner.

Some similar shape is described in the *Katha Upanishad* in which we can read about the soul, that Sri Aurobindo identifies with the psychic being (Chaitya Purusha):

The Purusha, the inner Self, no larger than the size of a man's thumb

Sri Aurobindo himself had mentioned that dimension when he writes about Savitri discovering her secret soul:

A being no bigger than the thumb of a man

But later he would write to a disciple that it is an image,

... that of course is a symbolic image. For usually, when one sees anybody's psychic being in a form, it is bigger than that

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 306)

An ashramite rightly commented that “the problem of size is that the psychic being is in a different sense of space. So it may seem small or large depending on the experience, the state of the person and the extent of the psychic awakening and taking charge of the outer personality”.

The Mother did say that:

... the psychic being is an entity which has a form... and having a form it has a dimension, but a dimension of another kind than the third dimension of the outer consciousness.

Another day, on 24 February 1951, she said:

... when it is fully formed, the psychic being has a distinct form which corresponds to our physical form.

(Questions and Answers 1950-1951, CWM, Vol. 4, p. 141)

It looks as if the psychic being grows and becomes quite bigger than the thumb of a man. Indeed, on that day, 1 July 1970, when the Mother saw the disciple's psychic being she told Satprem:

I saw her psychic being, dominating over her by so much (*gesture indicating about 20 centimetres*) taller... It was an unsexed being, neither man nor woman... There was hair on the head... I had my eyes open.

(Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol. 11, p. 238-39)

3. This being has a substance of its own

The visitor said that the substance of this being is more real, more material, more physical and denser than the matter which composes his physical body, which is confirmed by the Mother:

... this is an absolutely tangible experience, something more concrete than the most concrete object, more concrete than a blow on your head, something more real than anything whatever.

(Questions and Answers 1955, CWM, Vol. 7, p. 194)

But how is this substance being formed? The answer may be found in what the Mother wrote to Shyamsundar on 1st February 1967:

... the soul is in fact like a divine spark which puts on many states of being of increasing density, down to the most material;... These states of being take form and develop, progress, become individualised... and form the psychic being.

(*Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 358)

Sri Aurobindo also uses the word “substance” when he describes what happened to Aswapathy when his soul is released, which we understand being the moment Aswapathy discovered his psychic being:

In the transient symbol of humanity draped
He feels his substance of undying self

(*Savitri*, ‘The Yoga of the Soul’s Release’, p. 23)

4. This being has a colour:

The Mother described on 1 July 1970 how she saw the disciple’s psychic being:

I saw her psychic being... It had this colour... which if it became quite material would be the colour of Auroville [*orange + red*]... I had my eyes open...

(*Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol. 11, pp. 238-39)

5. This being has a location within the body:

Sri Aurobindo wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy:

Its central place is ... behind the heart, rather than in the heart

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 289)

and to another disciple:

I never heard of two lotuses in the heart centre; but it is the seat of two powers, in front the higher vital or emotional being, behind and concealed the soul or psychic being.

(*Ibid.*, p. 365)

In *Savitri*, again in Book Seven, Canto Five, on page 526, describing the discovering of Savitri’s secret soul, we read:

A being no bigger than the thumb of a man
Into a hidden region of the heart

Again in Book One, in the description of ‘The Yoga of the Soul’s release’, on page 23:

A beam of the Eternal smites his heart

But we are puzzled when the Mother locates it in the solar plexus:

It is inside the body, within the solar plexus, so to say...

she wrote to Shyamsundar on 1 February 1967 (*On the Way*, p.....).

Two years later, she wrote to another sadhak:

generally it is in the heart, behind the solar plexus, that one finds this luminous presence.

(*Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 410)

And to the following question: “Is the psychic being in the heart?” she replies:

... not in the physical heart, not in the organ. It is in a fourth dimension, an inner dimension. But it is in that region, the region somewhat behind the solar plexus, it is there that one finds it most easily.

(*Questions and Answers 1954*, CWM, No 6, p. 392)

A medical book will tell us that the solar plexus is located behind the stomach and ‘innerves’ the viscera of the abdomen. Could it be that the Mother would locate the solar plexus in the region of the physical heart, which is higher than its physiological location? Anyway, whatever the conclusion, the Mother mentions also clearly that it is in the region of the heart that one finds it most easily.

Now a question for which we have not yet an answer: In which other traditions can we find mention of this specific “being”?

How is it that no mention of this “body” has yet been found in some other tradition or religion (except the lonely “thumb” of the *Katha Upanishad*)? In the Christian tradition, the soul looks more a theological description; it is more a matter of faith than an individual concrete experience. Buddhism states that the soul does not exist, that there is nothing permanent in man; the concept of earthly evolution is foreign to it while emphasis is put on escape. The soul is recognised by many esoteric schools as a static phenomenon. Apart from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, only Steiner is reported to mention its evolutionary character but no references could be traced yet.

Has the physical perception of the psychic being taken place only in the 20th

century because it is only now that it has attained to some maturity? Moreover, are there only the members of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's vast 'family' who are able to identify it when it "bursts out of its veil"? We surmise that other persons have surely experienced the bursting out of their soul and have had a full or partial contact with their psychic being, but since it was not described in their spiritual map, they could not identify it in a proper manner with all its features.

Unless the person has the psychic experience and knows the characteristics of the psychic being and can grasp them during the period of identification, there is a great chance that later he will forget many of its features except the sudden untriggered great joy, the special vibration and warmth at the heart level. He will remember that something very important has manifested itself in the region of the heart, but the "being" as an individual entity aspect may be forgotten, the "shape" also unless it has been recorded during the moment when the experience was living, the "substance" may remain a vague memory since it has no point of recognition with known substance; the "colour" may be taken for a light as it is sometimes seen during some spiritual experiences. This may explain why the psychic emergence is an experience which is not yet on the geographical map of spiritual seekers belonging to some other traditions.

ALAIN G.

ATELIER

Pavitra-da's workshop in the Ashram

THERE is a big wooden door below the balcony, on the northern side of the Ashram building. It opens into a garage where the Mother's car is kept. In front of it there is an open space covered by a roof. The Samadhi is visible from here. To the right is a long room which is now the office for foreign correspondence. Previously, this room was Pavitra-da's *Atelier* or workshop, which was made into an office for him. Later, this office was used by Monsieur André Morisset whenever he was here, since 1975.

All the repair and maintenance of metal wares required by Ashram departments or inmates was done in this workshop. Even such a trivial requirement as preparing a new metal lid for an empty butter tin or cutting damaged glass tumblers or bottles—as requested by inmates—to a smaller size to be used as flower vases, was taken up here. At that time very few people had flower vases in their rooms. This workshop also provided help in the construction of Golconde.

Dyuman says :

Years ago Pondicherry had only three cars: one belonged to the Govenner, one to the Ashram and one to a Mudaliar of the town. The first car belonging to the Ashram, a yellow one, was donated to the Mother in 1927 by Madame Potel who lived in the house opposite the Ashram Main Building. That house is now the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Madame Potel had two cars, the second one was a beautiful Lorraine, which the Mother later bought from her, but for her own reasons never used.

Later, Duraiswamy ordered a small Renault from France for his own use but instead of using it, he offered it to the Mother. Then the Mother started using this car for her drives. Sometimes in another car she would take people ... Nolini, Amrita, Duraiswamy and occasionally myself to accompany her on these drives.

(‘Dyuman the Luminious One’ in *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* by Shyamkumari, pp. 20-21)

We quote a few lines from the Mother's letter to her son dated 23 August 1930:

... We have now ... five cars, twelve bicycles, four sewing machines, a dozen type writers, many garages, an automobile repair workshop, an electrical service, a building service ...

(*Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 5)

Mrityunjoy came to the Ashram in 1929. He used to help Pavitra-da in many things. When the *Atelier* was started, he used to work also there. We give here portions from Mrityunjoy's reminiscences, where we find some interesting information regarding the genesis of Pavitra-da's Workshop.

As the cars were running regularly, their repair and maintenance became essential. There was hardly any competent car-mechanic in Pondicherry at that time. Pavitra-da himself would do all that was necessary. He did this job with the few tools at his disposal. At that time he decided to put up an *Atelier*—a workshop—for repairing the Mother's cars. But, this took some years to materialise, since at first there was no place to build it.

When the land between the Library House and the Meditation House was bought by the Mother, the atelier was constructed below Pavitra's new room in the Ashram. Till then, Pavitra stored all the tools he needed for running the Mother's car in his big almirah.

Pavitra himself organised the interior of the proposed workshop, which took a number of years to fit out fully. The planning was a remarkable thing: months ahead, even before the masonry work began, the planning of every detail had been minutely worked out. At each step Pavitra asked the Mother and did as she said. On Her way out for a drive and again when coming back, she would peep inside the new workshop. Little by little, with whatever money the Mother could spare, new machines, big and small were bought and installed. The Mother seems to have a special regard for the workshop and its workmen; she knew all the local men by name. ...

The main purpose of the workshop initially was to repair the Mother's cars. Those old cars often required parts to be changed or made. But Pondicherry had no reliable car-repair garage. Pavitra could never get the repairs done properly. That is why he decided to build a workshop. He was literally alone for the job. ... So Pavitra was all alone and he had to develop a workshop from scratch.... The right equipment did not come at once. Pavitra had to wait years in some cases before an important machine arrived. In those days all the equipments had to be imported from France. (*How They Came to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo*, p. 32)

In those days the departments of services were few. One of them was Pavitra's Atelier (workshop) for mechanical and technical activities. Every detail of all the services was presented to the Mother for Her scrutiny and approval, specially Pavitra's department. In Pavitra's case it was the Mother who was the one and the all. She conducted everything, Pavitra only carried out her orders. At the same time all technical details or engineering matters were worked out by him, but even for the most insignificant item it was she who would say 'yes' or 'no' and only then that the work was carried out.

In the workshop, repairs to the Mother's car and its maintenance were the main job; but along with that all other electrical works, including house installation and repair jobs, water works, in the form of water canalisations from the municipal supplies and repairs of taps etc. on the one side, and all the domestic service requirements like repairs of metal pots and tinning of cooking vessels as well as smithy jobs etc. were all being done.

In each of these, Pavitra, engineer of the Ecole Polytechnique, gave a helping hand, and all the details were presented to the Mother. It was She who decided what to do and in which order. The relation between the paid workmen and the one sadhak worker, who was also Pavitra's assistant, was very sweet and friendly due to Pavitra's being the intermediary between them. (*Breath of Grace*, p. 73)

Bala, a young Tamil boy had grown up in the Ashram. In 1932, after he had passed out of school, the Mother asked Pavitra to take charge of his education and also give him work at the Atelier. Thus Bala was taught some mathematics and mechanics. In the workshop he learnt to operate lathe machines, he also learnt drilling and shaping of metals and tinkering.

It so happened that Doraiswami had imported a Renault car which he presented to the Mother. The car came after Bala joined work in 1932. In those days vehicle registration and driving test used to be at Travaux Publiques (PWD). The registration number of the Renault was 'P 186'. This car was extensively used by the Mother. She used to go out twice a week. Pavitra used to drive it himself. Later, on Mother's suggestion, Pavitra taught Bala driving in this car. But Bala was allowed to drive only far out of town. So mostly he would sit beside Pavitra in the front seat. Mother would sit alone in the back. Sometimes she would be accompanied by Chinmayi who would sit at her feet. Bala says, "No one was given the privilege of sitting with her on the back seat." Pavitra was a very careful driver and very regular, so Bala never got to drive the Mother. She used to like very much the grey colour on her cars and therefore most of the cars would be painted grey. The paint was especially imported from France. The most common places Mother used to visit were the Lake area, Cuddalore beach, Jipmer area and a little beyond Jipmer on the right. (*How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, Vol. 4, pp. 86-87)

Abhay Singh Nahar, son of Prithwi Singh Nahar, joined the Ashram in 1940. He was then 16 years old. Abhay Singh remembers regarding his work in Atelier.

Mother told me to work in the workshop where lathe work was being done. At that time there was a very old lathe; nowadays those machines are obsolete.... So I was working, cleaning old cars—there was arrangement for washing them, a pipe was kept there. And I was also making shutters and other things for Golconde; I was helping as a *payya* (a boy) would. We had a very good team.

There were three or four Almirahs in which Pavitra used to keep his things. The same things were arranged in the long store upstairs in the workshop. They were well organised so that you could get immediately whatever you wanted. In spite of all the activities in that hall everything was kept neat and clean.

At that time, in Pondicherry, there was no other workshop. So we had to get things from outside. Whenever there was an exhibition, I used to go and see it and then ask the Mother, “Can we buy these instruments? We don’t get them here”.

(*Abhay Singh Nahar*, edited by Samir Kanta Gupta, p. 72)

Abhay Singh was given full charge of the workshop by the Mother when Pavitra became the Director of the Centre of Education.

After a few years, Abhay Singh shifted his office to the present Atelier premises and the workshop in the main Ashram compound was turned into Pavitra’s office.

Arun Ganguli was appointed as the manager of “Le Faucher” Garden by the Mother in the year 1972. His journey as a sadhak began way back in the year 1942. In 1944 when the Ashram School had just started, there was a meeting of all the students with Pavitra-da telling the Mother that everyone was not working well enough. Arun Ganguli and Bikash Mukherjee told her that they were not interested in studies. The Mother asked them to work in the Atelier, saying studying was not the only way of learning. Arun Ganguly fondly remembers :

My father, Monoranjan Ganguli and mother, Jyotsana Ganguli brought our family to Sri Aurobindo Ashram to receive the Mother’s blessings. Once here, the Mother requested my father not to go back and we settled down in the Ashram. I was 12 years old then and the eldest among the six siblings in my family.

The Mother assigned me to work at the Atelier under the supervision of Pavitra-da. There I met Abhay Singh. He was a few years older to me and was managing the machinery section. I was immediately impressed by his managerial skills and his organisation of the tools and machinery section. I was joined by another lad, a little younger to me, Bikash Mukherjee in a year’s time.

The three of us grew up together. Pavitra-da instructed us to observe the work around the workshop and then give a report on it. We would carefully observe all the tools which were being used and learn their various uses. Being told to jot down in French all that we were learning and doing made us conversant with the language very soon.

Subsequently, Pavitra-da started giving us simple assignments and once our performance was found to be satisfactory he would put us onto a tougher job.

One of the first formal assignments given to us as youngsters was the maintenance of the big cooking pots of the Dining Room Kitchen on a regular

basis. We had to scrape and clean the vessels thoroughly before it was given for tinning. We were thrilled!

Soon we got onto regular small jobs at the Atelier. I remember sharpening used shaving blades and razor knives received by the Prosperity Department. In those days each sadhaks was given only two shaving blades per month. They would return them when the blades became blunt and we were supposed to sharpen them by applying a coat of Vaseline and then wrap it back in its original cover by keeping wastage to a minimum. The joy you received in doing all small odd jobs was immense. The will to learn and do our best kept us going.

As the years passed by I graduated to more specialised work at the Atelier.

The Centre of Education started in 1943, as a small school with a few students. Pavitra-da taught Science and Mathematics to the elder students, 11-15 year olds along with some of his special class held in the Ashram earlier. Before the present laboratory was started in 1956, the first batch of students used to go to a small building, "Little House" which was situated at the corner of Manakula Vinayagar Street and Rue St. Gilles. It is the same building where linen for Golconde was being prepared. Here Pavitra-da conducted some experiments in Chemistry and Physics for his class.

The genesis of a Lab for students can be traced to Pavitra-da. Trained as an engineer at the reputed Ecole Polytechnique, he had joined the Ashram in 1925 and was the director of our Centre of Education.

In those days the Mother encouraged making all our equipment ourselves and the apparatus that Pavitra-da was able to make at the Ashram workshop before 1950 was quite extraordinary. There was a Barlo's Wheel which demonstrated the principles of an electric motor. An electric current passed through the hub of the wheel to a mercury contact on the rim; this was contained in a small trough through which the rim passed. The interaction of the current with the magnetic field of a U-magnet caused the wheel to rotate. There was an Optical Bench, with accessories, used to determine the optical properties of lenses and mirrors. He also constructed a Wheatstone Bridge used to measure an unknown electrical resistance by balancing two 'legs' of a bridge circuit.

(The Golden Chain, August 2006, p. 13)

To continue what Arun Ganguli has said :

Pavitra-da was quite a genius at inventing machinery for specialised usage. Physics Laboratory equipments for the Centre of Education were prepared at the Atelier under his guidance. He designed a stone-polishing machine for Harpagon. It was designed to polish the stone slabs used for the construction of

Golconde. Under the guidance and keen supervision of Pavitra-da we had all learnt a lot.

Apart from working together at the Atelier, Abhay, Bikash and I also had the privilege of cleaning and maintaining the Mother's cars. We would look forward to those three days in a week when we would go over to wash, clean and polish her cars—Renault, Ford, Plymouth, Bentley and Humber! It was part of our job to take the cars out on a test drive to ensure its smooth running. We used to have a great times driving around in the Mother's car. Our short trips to Cazanove are memorable. Driving into the garden in Mother's car would earn us some special treatment. We could eat and pick up any number of guavas and cucumber!

Towards the end of 1946 there was an urgent requirement of work force in the Ashram Press. Bikash and I volunteered while Abhay Singh stayed back at the Atelier. With the Mother's approval we joined the Press.

Sumantra, now looking after the 'Udyog Service Station' writes:

Before I came to the Ashram in 1944 the Mother had fixed my work in the Atelier under Pavitra-da who was in-charge. Within a month of my arrival I began to work there.

Abhay-da, Arun-da, Bikash were already working there. There were only six-seven local paid staff. The usual working hours were 7.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Pavitra-da was a great disciplinarian. He used to come at 7.25 a.m. sharp. when the first bell rang. We were supposed to be in Atelier before his arrival. The work started immediately after the second bell which was at 7.30 a.m. We learnt, a variety work under his guidance, such as machining, the work of a tin-smith, and the work of a car mechanic to maintain the cars, etc.

The most interesting part of the work which we enjoyed was that the Mother would enter the working place and watch us in action. Sometimes She would observe us working through the window of the first floor corridor of the main building. We were fortunate to work in this Atelier because the Mother took keen interest in its functioning.

It will not be very much out of place to mention other persons who, though not in the Atelier, looked after some repair and maintenance work in the Ashram.

Uday Singh Nahar, in the early 1930's used to maintain and repair clocks etc. used by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the first floor of the Meditation House. He also repaired clocks, typewriters etc. used by Ashram inmates.

Bansidhar, who came in 1927, learnt repairing of clocks and watches and helped the few inmates who were there at that time. Later on, another sadhak took up this work.

Kiran Kumari joined the Ashram in 1930's. Soon she started to do some maintenance and repair works for the Ashramites. At that time many inmates used Primus stoves. In her small one-room work area, she would periodically clean and repair these stoves. Each inmate had the sanction of getting only one stove-pin each month. These were issued by her. She also cleaned, maintained and repaired all the type-writers that were used in the Ashram. Fountain pens used by the inmates would also be repaired by her. She went round in the Ashram building and Dining Room to clean and service the drinking-water filters installed there. Every evening she used to send the report of her day's work to the Mother.

Once the Harpagon Workshop started functioning by the mid-1950's all the service, repair and maintenance work for the Ashram inmates and services were gradually taken up by it. The Atelier was consigned to maintenance and repair of cars till it was shifted to its present location on the western side of the Ashram building. As already mentioned, this previous area was changed into an office and the only work done in this place then, was the cleaning of the Mother's cars and the Garage where this car was kept.

CHITRA SEN

PUJALAL-JI

(Continued from the issue of June 2008)

4

AFTER the 24th of November, 1926, Pujalal-ji remained in Pondicherry for good. The river had finally found the ocean. He surrendered himself at the Feet of the Mother.

Following the descent of Krishna's consciousness, Sri Aurobindo withdrew into seclusion. From then, the Mother would sit daily for meditation with everyone at night, instead of in the evening. Very often she would go into a trance. At times she would remain in trance for two to three hours! What could the sadhaks do in such a situation? How long could they go on meditating? Many would fall asleep! And you could hear their loud snoring!

Upstairs, Sri Aurobindo used to pace up and down like a lion. During the meditation downstairs one could hear those solemn footfalls in the thick of night. Nothing escaped Sri Aurobindo's consciousness. When he heard this snoring during the meditation almost every night, he asked the Mother to discontinue it. It was difficult for many to maintain a meditative consciousness at night. They quickly fell into the snoring consciousness!

Pujalal-ji told me that the Mother herself used to distribute soup to everyone in the room where the Reception room stands today, and while distributing soup she would sometimes go into a trance.

Sarala-di was a worthy daughter and caretaker of Pujalal-ji. She served him with great dedication and he showered a lot of affection on her. Everyone in the Ashram calls her Sarala-ben. She told me quite a few things about Puja-ji and I will tell them to you as we go along.

There's a beautiful, blue statue of Krishna in Pujalal-ji's room, a standing, smiling Sri Krishna with his flute. Beside him stands his beloved cow; even she is gazing lovingly at Sri Krishna. Sarala-di told me that it was Mrityunjoy's mother who gave this statue to Pujalal-ji. It was white in the beginning. Brinda's mother, Kalin-di, coloured it blue. Whenever this statue of Krishna faded, some artist or the other from the Ashram would repaint it.

An Ashram artist named Sarala Rastogi once took Krishna's statue to her house because it needed repainting. But she took quite some time to do it. After a few days Puja-ji called Tara and told her, "Go and get Krishna back." When Tara returned with Krishna, Puja-ji said, "This Sri Krishna is no ordinary statue made of clay. The Lord himself has infused life into it and dwells within."

Puja-ji continued, "I have loved Lord Sri Krishna from my very childhood. I would keep repeating *Om namo bhagvate Sri Vasudevaya namah* almost always, especially when I was out on a journey. This is a mahamantra. The Mother's mantra

for us is *Om namo bhagvate*. She has left a blank in place of *Sri Vasudevaya namah*. That blank can be filled with *Sri Aravindaya namah* and so you have *Om namo bhagvate Sri Aravindaya namah*.

In his childhood Pujalal-ji once experienced the presence of Balkrishna, who was seated above his head. From there he began progressively descending into his throat, chest and abdomen. Wherever he descended, there followed a stream of ananda.

Another time Purani-ji's wife, Lilavati-ben, cooked something for Sri Aurobindo and sent it to him with Pujalal-ji. In those days the Dining Room used to be situated where the present Fruit Room is. Puja-ji handed the cooked dish to Amrita-da or somebody else and then went and stood near the Reception Room. Suddenly he saw Sri Aurobindo coming down the staircase. Sri Aurobindo looked at Puja. "Ah, what a look that was !" exclaimed Puja-ji. "If there was God on earth, it was him." Saraladi, who told me the story, added, "That day Puja-ji had the darshan of the Supreme Absolute. It is impossible to describe that extraordinary form in words."

When Puja-ji first came to the Ashram, Saraladi observed, he had splendid long hair and his face was covered with an impressive beard. The Mother used to admire his hair, saying, "Such long hair !" or "Such curly hair!"

And thus many years passed and the young boy became a middle-aged man. His beard and hair started turning grey !

The first Group for physical activity started in the Ashram in 1945 on Dada's (Pranab-da's) initiative. Before the advent of these sporting activities in the Ashram, most sadhaks sported long hair and luxurious beards. As soon as sporting activities began, many of them chopped off their long hair and beard on the Mother's advice. But Puja-ji did not give his up. There probably was some talk among the sadhaks about this. So Puja-ji told the Mother, "It is because you like my hair that I haven't touched it." The Mother answered, "You were young then. Now you have grown up. Grey hair and a grey beard don't look good on you now."

Puja-ji went that very day to get his hair and beard cut. When the hairless, beardless Pujalal went to work upstairs, nobody recognised him! It was only Mother who recognised him, seeing his eyes. She took him by the hand and led him to Sri Aurobindo, "Look ! Here is your new Puja !" Puja-ji bowed to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Aurobindo blessed him by placing both his hands on Puja-ji's head.

"By cutting off my hair and beard," Puja-ji confessed, "I gained immensely. I received my Guru's blessings ! In those days nobody was allowed to go and see him. By cutting off my beard and hair, I had his darshan, his touch *and* his blessings !"

The Mother told Dada that two photographs of Puja-ji were sent to her, one in which he had a beard and long hair and the other in which he was without them. The Mother laughed a lot seeing the two pictures. "Ancient yogi" she said on seeing the first photograph. The second one for her was "Modern yogi".

Dada mentioned two other incidents from Pujalal-ji's life. One day Pujalal-ji was giving a demonstration of *lakdi patta* (movements with a wooden stick and shield)

at the Playground before the Mother. He had a wooden stick in one hand and a shield in the other and simulated sword-play. This was a very popular form of sport in Gujarat. Pujalal-ji most probably gave this demonstration with Vishnu-bhai. When the demonstration was over, the Mother turned to Dada and said, "Did you notice the fire in Puja's eyes?"

On another occasion Pujalal-ji organised a Garba dance programme. All the children, especially the Gujarati ones, from the various groups took part in it. The Mother was present for this programme too.

After settling down in the Ashram for good, Pujalal-ji began working upstairs in the Mother's room, cleaning the carpet, painting the rooms and furniture, etc. After some time he felt that he was not fit for Sri Aurobindo's yoga. So one day, while working upstairs, he told the Mother, "Mother, I am not fit for yoga and sadhana. I have too many shortcomings. I am far too weak. That's why I don't wish to remain here."

The Mother replied, "The Divine does not descend all the time. It happens very rarely, after a long, long time. It is not right, therefore, to leave Him and go away. You just go on doing your work."

Puja-ji felt that the Mother was telling him to simply go on serving. This service itself was his yoga and his sadhana.

Everyday Puja-ji would begin his work in the Mother's room before daybreak. The Mother would herself open the door. At that auspicious moment, before the arrival of the goddess of dawn, he would have the vision of the Mother of the universe !

Once Puja-ji went to work upstairs as usual at that auspicious time. The Mother opened the door and said, "There is a bird sitting at the door. Sri Aurobindo has asked that the bird should not be disturbed." Sri Aurobindo had told this to the Mother even before Puja arrived!

He began working very silently so that the bird was not disturbed in any way. Then at daybreak the bird flew away. "Just see, how much love and compassion there was in Sri Aurobindo's heart for all life," Pujalal-ji remarked.

Some time after this, Puja-ji had jaundice, but he did not know it. It was the Mother who saw his yellowish eyes and sent him to the doctor. After this, she reduced his work by half. Lalu-bhai came in, in order to relieve Puja-ji.

When Puja was staying at Kushindra, Lalu was only four or five. When Lalu came to Pondicherry he spoke only a smattering of English. But after coming here, he learned both English and French. He was able to read Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's works in the original. He would sometimes even catch misprints or overlooked errors in their books. He also learnt to speak Bengali, Oriya and Tamil. Puja-ji told me, "When Lalu used to stand before Sri Aurobindo, his palms were always joined in salutation."

A pigeon used to come and perch atop one of Sri Aurobindo's cupboards. Naturally it would foul the cupboard with its droppings, but Sri Aurobindo never

shooed it away. Such was his love and gentleness toward living creatures.

One day an owl flew into Puja-ji's room. Seeing Puja-ji, it suddenly dropped dead! But Puja-ji knew that owls often faked death. After coming back from his bath, he noted that the owl was sitting merrily on its perch once again. The owl's ability to act amused him immensely. Later he went to the Mother and told her about it. The Mother said, "It might be sick. Take him very gently and leave him in the garden." So he put him gently on a tree in the garden.

After the descent of Krishna's consciousness in 1926, Sri Aurobindo went into seclusion. At that time, nobody except the Mother could see him. This seclusion continued until the accident in 1938. But in the early 1930's, everyone began writing to him. He would answer their letters day after day, often late into the night. In those days there were many women in the Ashram who had not had much education. Many of them did not speak English, so they would write to Sri Aurobindo in their mother-tongue. The Gujarati women wrote to him in Gujarati. Sri Aurobindo knew some Gujarati. And he kept a Gujarati-English dictionary, which he would consult whenever the need arose.

Once someone offered two coconuts to the Mother. These nuts had begun to germinate. The Mother asked Puja to plant them in the soil and let them grow. First Puja planted the coconuts in a tub filled with earth which he kept on the terrace where Navajata's room stands today. When the trees started growing, they were transplanted into the ground, one inside the Ashram and the other in Golconde. The tree in the Ashram never grew very high. A Service-tree was planted near it, so the coconut tree could not grow very tall, though it had been planted earlier. Once during a storm, the Service tree got almost uprooted. Puja-ji and some others tied some ropes in order to prop it up. But today the roots of this tree have spread all around and some have even reached the surrounding streets outside. At several places, under the pressure of these roots, the cemented floor has been effected.

Pujalal-ji used to live at the Guest House in the beginning. He would work at the Ashram from four in the morning until eleven at night. He had his meals in Dyumanbhai's room and would also rest there. Later, the Mother wanted him to move to the Ashram main-building and showed him two places there: the Fruit-room area and the room on the southern side of the Samadhi which was then made of mud (from there butter-distribution would take place), and asked him to choose where he wanted to shift. Pujalal-ji selected the mud-house. The Mother got the mud-house pulled down and had the present room constructed. When it was ready Pujalal-ji was asked to shift. He requested the Mother to grace the space by walking into the room before him. "A palace!" the Mother exclaimed as she entered the room.

When Pujalal-ji moved from the Guest House to the Ashram, he brought with him a Champa tree (*Psychological perfection*) and transplanted it in front of the Fruit-room window on the north. It still stands there today, laden with flowers spreading its fragrance all year long.

Asked by Sarala-di about Sri Aurobindo's shifting from his room above the Reception to his final residence above the Meditation Hall, Pujalal recalled : "Sri Aurobindo was living in seclusion after the descent of the Overmind, so when the time came for him to move to his new residence, a passage was especially prepared for this occasion. Saris were hung on either side of this passage right from the room above the Reception up to the new residence. Then Sri Aurobindo walked through this passage leading to his room, without being seen by anybody."

Sri Aurobindo lived in a room above the present Reception and Reading rooms until 1926. Meanwhile the Mother had bought the house where Sri Aurobindo's room is at present. In those days there was just a mud-house there with a big mango-tree in front. After this house was bought, a cat came and took refuge with the Mother. This cat was named Bushy. Bushy offered herself at the Feet of the Mother. Bushy was provided with fish every day. Once when she was served an unusually big fish, she gripped it between her teeth, climbed all the way upstairs and showed it to the Mother. On another occasion she saw a mouse and started playing hide-and-seek with it. The poor mouse died of fright! Instead of gobbling it up, Bushy brought the mouse to show to the Mother. Placing the dead mouse in front of the Mother, she began playing with it, showing off all sorts of acrobatic tricks, as if she were performing some very heroic acts. Often Bushy would follow the Mother up to Sri Aurobindo's door. She wanted to see Sri Aurobindo very much but at that time no one was allowed to enter his room. Often she would jump up and try to enter his room, but she never succeeded. Later Bushy gave birth to two kittens. One was named Castor; I don't remember the second kitten's name. One of the kittens got his neck caught in an iron hook once, and nobody could manage to get him off the hook. Finally Puja-ji held the kitten by the neck and managed to free it from the hook.

The Mother had another favourite cat. Puja-ji did not remember its name. It would sleep in the Mother's bed.

Sri Aurobindo had a large he-cat named Big Boy. Big Boy had a little brother named Kiki. Kiki was a very quiet cat and used to be scared of Big Boy. Sri Aurobindo would feed Big Boy with his hand. If Sri Aurobindo showed any affection to another cat such as Kiki, Big Boy would get upset and angry.

Often, one cat or another would comfortably settle down in Sri Aurobindo's chair. Sri Aurobindo would never drive them away. He would just make a little space for himself in such a way that the cat was not disturbed. That is the kind of love he harboured for all beings.

Pujalal-ji was a poet-devotee. He has written many poems and invocations in Sanskrit, English and Gujarati to the Mother, to Sri Aurobindo and to Sri Krishna. No other sadhak in the Ashram has written as much on the Mother. That's why she aptly nicknamed him "My Poet".

Pujalal-ji used to sit daily for meditation in his room facing the Samadhi. One day while he was sitting in this way, he received a 'command' from Sri Aurobindo

that *Savitri* needed to be translated into Gujarati. Puja-ji wrote to the Mother about this. The Mother read his letter and blessed him to start the work. Only after getting the Mother's blessing did Puja-ji undertake the Gujarati translation of this great epic by the Master.

Sarala-di mentioned in one of our conversations that Pujalal-ji was one of Mahasaraswati's sons and so was blessed by her. She constantly showered Her Grace and Compassion on him. While translating *Savitri* he did not need to think at all; the Gujarati translation came down to him canto after canto all in one block, carrying with it the right words and the right meaning, couched in flawless beauty.

Pujalal-ji also translated the totality of the poems written by Sri Aurobindo except for *Ilion* and *Songs to Myrtilla*, as well as *The Supreme Discovery* and numerous other writings of the Mother. Pujalal-ji wrote a book on the different forms of poetry entitled *Chchandapravesh*.

Pujalal-ji studied only till the 12th class but some of his writings are now prescribed texts in the schools, colleges and universities of Gujarat. A number of doctoral theses have also been written on his writings.

Puja-ji was much loved by the children of the Ashram and you could see children crowding around him in his room. He would teach them Sanskrit shlokas or verses. In the beginning this happened near the staircase leading up to Kamala-ben's room and the Ashram would then be filled with the sweet voices of children reciting Sanskrit verses.

A boy called Partho came to the Ashram when he was two. He met Pujalal-ji and became friends with him. If anyone talked about him, Pujalal-ji would always say, "my Partho". From time to time he would recite to Partho in Bengali Tagore's poem, '*Puraton Bhrityo*'.

As a little boy, Partho used to enjoy listening to stories. He knew the stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata by heart. He especially loved hearing tales of devotion and heroism. He had a special affection for the life of Maharana Pratap. He would run around the house wielding a stick and shield and shouting some strange things. Partho's mother told Pujalal-ji about this. After listening to her, he observed, "There's obviously some connection with a past life." Pujalal-ji had a profound respect and admiration for the Maharana of Mewar. "*Rana Pratap ka nam leney sey mera khoon ubalata hai.*" (My blood rages at the mere name of Rana Pratap !)

Puja-ji once told me that in one of his previous lives he had been a friend and court-poet of Prithviraj Chauhan, the king of Delhi and Ajmerpujalal-ji. His name was Chandrabardai and he was known as Chand-kavi. One day Puja-ji told me about Prithviraj's heroism and he extolled his warrior qualities, his skill at wielding different weapons and his expertise in archery. Prithviraj could shoot an arrow on target just by listening to the sound. His greatness and generosity are unrivalled. "During the reign of Prithviraj, Mohammad Ghori attacked his kingdom. After a fierce battle Prithviraj defeated him. But just see his greatness and generosity. He did not harm

the vanquished enemy but forgave him and sent him back to his kingdom. But then Mohammad Ghori returned to attack Prithviraj with more troops. A tremendous battle ensued. Through crookedness, force and craft he managed to defeat Prithviraj. He blinded him after the battle. In Chandrabardai's account, the blind Prithviraj is said to have killed Mohammad Ghori with an arrow, although historically it is believed that Mohammad Ghori defeated and killed Prithviraj in the second big battle. Prithviraj was too good a human being. Though he was peerless in bravery he was unfamiliar with deceit and duplicity. He could never imagine that someone he had forgiven after defeating him in battle could return to destroy him.

Once little Partho went with his parents for a holiday to Delhi, Hardwar etc. Puja-ji told him before leaving, "Write to me from there." Partho wrote to him when he reached Delhi and in reply Puja-ji sent him a beautiful one-page letter. In that letter he wrote a shloka from the Gita Mahatmyam:

*Sarvopanishado gavo dogdha gopalnandanah
Partho vatsah sudhirbhokta dugdham gitamritam mahat.*

Maurice, a former student of our Ashram school, fondly remembers : "As a little boy, I used to go to Pujalal-ji every morning around 6 to learn Sanskrit shlokas from him. Pujalal-ji would write each shloka in his extraordinarily neat hand in the notebook and then ask me to recopy it. This may have helped in memorising the shloka. I was always amazed at how quickly I would be able to commit the shloka to memory. It obviously had to do with the climate of gentle heart-warming love and affection that Pujalal-ji created between the teacher and the student. I cannot forget that atmosphere in the room with Pujalal-ji sitting serene, and relaxed (as if time didn't exist!), totally composed, with this soft, gentle affection streaming all around him, as he repeated a shloka: it was like a Vedic ashram, with children sitting around a rishi and breathing in purity and warmth and knowledge all at the same time from the environing air itself ! That formidable mix of the morning breeze, the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother inside the Ashram, the fragrance of the flowers and incense from the Samadhi a few metres away, the sound of those pristine Sanskrit syllables uttered in an unhurried steady voice by this unbelievably gentle loving teacher blending with the sweet birdsong and squirrel-chirping from the Service tree—it was all quite overwhelming, really, even for a child like me !"

There is another incident that Maurice recounted which merits retelling: "Once I was with Pujalal-ji in his room. We had finished our shloka-session. He affectionately put a toffee into my hand, I remember, which I unwrapped and popped into my mouth. To us children, getting a toffee in those days was a source of tremendous joy. Mother used to give us toffees, Dada used to give us toffees, our captains used to give us toffees. In that joy of getting a toffee, I carelessly forgot about the wrapper and left it on the floor. As I got up to go, I looked up at Pujalal-ji to take my leave and then

froze. His calm, collected look had such an intensity that I knew something was not quite right. He was angry, but in an incredibly controlled way. It felt as if a mountain were piercing my soul with its lofty impassivity, sending out a flame of fire to purge the air of some wrong movement of consciousness. It was the toffee wrapper! Quickly I bent down, picked it up and dropped it in the bin in a corner of the room. One more lesson had been learnt by default : the slightest negligence of any sort was the reflection of a shabby consciousness that was not worthy of the Mother's children. This vigilance in regard to neatness and beauty was a part of Pujalal-ji."

Partho once went to see Puja-ji with his mother after quite a long time. Sarala-di said, "What happened? Why haven't you come for all these days?" Partho's mother answered, "So many people have come from far away and they have all come here to meet you. That's why we didn't disturb you." Puja-ji gently smiled and remarked, "So what if many people have come? You should still come and meet me." Such was his love and affection for one and all.

And then the 27th of December 1985 arrived. It was the birthday of Sri Adinath Chakravarty, a disciple of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We went with him to meet Puja-ji a little before half past seven in the evening. He was lying in bed as for quite some time he had been ailing. All the physical suffering and pain he bore with an ever-present smile. He looked at us tenderly and offered us toffees as usual. To Adinath Chakravarty he gave a beautiful handkerchief. He also gave him some sweets and held his hand for a long time. Then he looked at me with a gaze brimming with tenderness. I felt at that moment that he would not remain long on this earth. But who could have foreseen that only a little while later he would return to the Mother's arms.

Dr Dilip Datta came at eight. He examined him and said, "You are all right, now." Puja-ji replied that he was feeling fine. After the doctor left, two boys who were in Pondicherry for a youth camp told Puja-ji, "Since you are fine, can we have dinner at the Dining Room and come back?" "I am very well," Puja-ji replied, "I have laid myself at the Feet of the Mother, so have nothing to worry about. It is all in Her hands now. I am free. You, too, offer yourselves at the Feet of the Mother and live in ananda." These were his last words.

After this Lalu-bhai arrived. Sarala-di said, "You've come early today." Lalu-bhai gave Puja-ji his medicine, but as he was pouring water into Puja-ji's mouth, the water trickled out. Sarala-di asked him to sit up and take the medicine. But by then Puja-ji had already gone.

It was Uttarayan, the full moon of the month of *Maghi*. He had chosen this auspicious day himself to return to the Mother. The *jivatman* merged with the *Paramatman*.

Puja-ji used to say, "Pray to the Mother that She hold you by both your arms and never leave you." He would also say, "I feel that service to the Divine is everything. I have never done any yoga. I don't even know what yoga is. You can get everything

through service. Always, in every activity, we must remember Him. Being human we tend to forget Him and get engrossed in something else. It is the Divine who does the sadhana for us. What can we do so that He does the yoga and sadhana for us? Look at his Grace and compassion : if we take one small step towards Him, He moves ten strides forward to embrace us.”

(Concluded)

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTY

(Translated by Maurice Shukla from the original Bengali article)

THE GRADES OF HUMAN CONDUCT

I am charged by God to do his mighty work,
Uncaring I serve his Will who sent me forth,
Reckless of peril and earthly consequence.,
I reason not of virtue and of sin
But do the deed he has put into my heart.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 509)

THESE lines are pregnant with the power and spirit of self-realisation and identity with God. The identification with God is the aim, ideal and aspiration of a true seeker of the Divine, not simply of an individual but also of the race and humanity at large. Humanity, during its long history, consciously or unconsciously, has borne within itself, a seeking for something high and lofty, an absolute beauty, good and perfection. But a balanced and healthy social order with an inner growth and rhythmic vibration for the All-beloved still appears to be a distant dream.

But is it actually so? Will it be wrong to hope that humanity is now on the verge of a new orientation which, when it culminates, will bring about an ideal social order? To have a clearer idea, let us try to follow Sri Aurobindo's view on the subject. To live a normal life, man has need of a society for his growth and development. His progress is conditioned by the growth and development of the society he lives in. Similarly, the improvement of a society is dependent on the progress of the individuals constituting it, because all existence proceeds by an interaction between the whole and the parts, the collectivity and the individuals. Usually, the individual conforms to the standards of conduct laid down by the society. But the difficulty crops up when the individual finds the social laws to be a compulsion and an obstruction to his own law of nature. In such a case, if he breaks the social law for his self-fulfilment, on what basis will he find his justification? We can get the proper light on this point from the following words of Sri Aurobindo:

The Divine Will acts through the eons to reveal progressively not only in the unity of the cosmos, not only in the collectivity of living and thinking creatures, but in the soul of each individual something of the divine Mystery and the hidden truth of the Infinite.

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 190)

If that is so, the conduct which expresses the Divine Will in an individual must be pursued even if it does not agree with the social laws and rules. But the question is—how to recognise the Divine Will in oneself? Individuals are very often prone to disregard social rules and laws for the satisfaction of their crude vital needs and

desires. Therefore social codes, laws and restrictions are of immense value so far as they restrain such motives.

In fact, creation advances through various steps and stages and as such there cannot be any fixed social rule for all and at all times. So, in order to ascertain the human conduct of living according to the Divine Will and Spirit, let us try to follow the standards of conduct which developed during the course of evolution.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of four such standards of conduct during the history of the human race. The first is the standard of personal need, preference and desire; the second is the collective good and well-being; the third is an ideal ethic; the fourth is the divine law of nature.

The first is the crude physical stage when man knows his material and vital needs and desires and their dictates as the only guide to show him the purpose of his life. But the first law of desires is counteracted upon by the same demands from the family, tribe or community of which he is a member. Thus the second grade of his standard of conduct, i.e. the law of good and well-being of the collectivity evolves. Perhaps man found that his needs and desires could be better satisfied by the formation of groups. Thus a collective whole grew in the mass consciousness.

The two main impulses of man, one personal and the other collective, always go together. But at times, the possibility of their opposition also comes about. The attempt to reconcile these two propensities is said to be the basis of our civilisation. As has been stated before, the external social law is both an advantage and a disadvantage to the integral development of man in society. When it goes to suppress and immobilise the individual self-development, his nature reacts, the manifestation of which may occur in various forms. Mainly, it may be the violent revolt of the criminal or the complete renunciation of the ascetic. It may also introduce a new social idea that could act as a compromise between the social and the individual demands. But a compromise cannot be the solution of a problem.

At this stage, a new principle may also be called in, one that is higher than the two conflicting ones. That is the moral law which seeks to establish an ideal order. Thus a door is opened to man to move from the vital and material to the mental life. But this is not the product of the mass-mind. It is a standard developed in the nature of the individual by the mental and moral qualities like justice, love, right reason, right power, truth, beauty etc.

This culture of man is the beginning of the individual or rational age in society. The law of this new age contributed to social progress in various ways. We can see its results in every walk of life, namely science, technology, art, culture etc. But it has its drawbacks too. It tends to become rigidly binding, becoming a constraint on the spontaneous life-principle. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is more intent upon status and self-preservation than on growth and self-perfection. That is why humanity moves in a roundabout way and fails to follow that which the highest spirit demands of it.

Exceeding the mental being in us, there is a greater being which is spiritual and

divine. And in that divine vastness one can find the harmony among the different powers and qualities and find there the reconciliation of the conflicting mental moods and motives. Beyond the external social law, there is a divine law secret in the heart of each human being, the truth of his own essential nature, which is the guiding light of each one in his individual life and also of the society to which he belongs, leading to a spiritual collectivity. The individual personal experience is the only way to find this.

On the other hand, there is an imperative law, an absolute freedom, because it is the Dharma of our inner self and also of the plastic nature to be discovered by the spirit. Its difference from the mental and ethical law is this that it cannot be extended to others by mental ideas or theories. It is only through a spiritual influence that its effects on others can be brought about.

To sum up, the Divine Will is secretly leading man throughout his long and arduous career. First it expresses itself in the law of needs and desires, and then in mental and moral rules of the idealist. Now it is preparing man to exceed both these formulae to attain a divine and spiritual law of nature. In this new state of his conduct, the essential needs and demands of the previous ones will not be rejected or suppressed. On the contrary, rising above them, it will bring about a synthesis of all that is divinely true in their spirit and purpose. May be, the principle of needs and desires will be transformed into Divine Will and Ananda and moral aspiration into the powers of the Divine Truth, Beauty and Perfection.

Moreover, there is the infinite possibility of the descent into earth-nature of other powers of the Supreme, the splendour of which has not perhaps even been dreamt of by humanity at large.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

PROF. NADKARNI, WE DO HEAR YOU

How to record my impressions about Prof. Nadkarni's talks and their impact on me? Words seem to distort the true feelings. I see Nirodbaran's gentle smile. He has accurately formulated what I feel but cannot express:

As much as the talks it was the atmosphere created by them that was the magnet. I felt a Presence pervading the room. The reason that struck me for it, if any reason can be given for an occult phenomenon, is that, by the lecturer's own admission, *Savitri* was a madness and a passion with him. If that was so, the Aurobindonian "God-touch" was bound to be there. And the passion was felt in every word, each expression of his, either in interpretation or in elucidation or in reading of relevant passages. This made everything living. His fluent, spontaneous delivery with a masterly command over the language combined with his easy and simple manner accounted further for the Presence, and the great success resulting from it came extra graceful because of his handsome appearance.

Nirodbaran made the above observations on Dr. Nadkarni's talks on *Savitri* in his valedictory speech at the Society Beach Office.¹ In a simple compact passage, Nirod-da has described the quintessential features of Nadkarni-ji's sessions on *Savitri*. It explains the vibrant and sublime delight that we used to feel during his talks. As Nirod-da remarks in the concluding part of his speech:

He [Dr. Nadkarni] has made us enter into the divine beauty of *Savitri*.

Nirod-da says that it is not that Prof. Nadkarni opened any magic casement on *Savitri*; he spoke of the usual themes: the Divine's Love for humanity, of the Truth, Beauty and Felicity at the core of the universe, the great promise held forth by the Poet about the human race while notable thinkers were beset with gloom and saw nothing but absolute failure for it. But what made his talks special was the unfailing energy and conviction with which such familiar themes were brought home to us in the audience. Nirod-da also emphasises the importance of *Savitri* recitation:

One thing especially I learnt from his talk: that to enjoy poetry, one must read it aloud. Particularly great spiritual poetry like *Savitri*, full of mantric vibrations, cannot be appreciated by a mute reading. Sri Aurobindo, I am told, read aloud not only to the Mother but also to himself what he had written. Dr. Nadkarni brought a fine ringing voice to his recitation.

1. The entire speech is reproduced in the August 1990 issue of Mother India.

In his inimitable style, Nirod-da then gives an occult allegory involving the author of *Savitri*, its scribe and its messenger. Seeing that the world is in a big mess, Lord Vishnu called for Narada in Heaven and announced his plan to take birth as a poet and compose an unprecedented epic whose mantric utterance will bring about a great change in the consciousness of the world and give it hope and courage. Narada was to accompany the Lord as a scribe. Lord Vishnu also told him that

... one day you will meet a remarkable person who, steeped in the lore of *Savitri*, will be spreading its message in the dark corners of the globe. He will seek you out and you will recognise each other as kindred souls.

I would now like to share my thoughts on the role of the messenger. Mangesh Nadkarni was a sadhak but he deliberately confined his study camps and lectures to an apparently intellectual approach to the study of Sri Aurobindo using primarily the language and idiom prevalent in the contemporary academic and cultural world. Dr. Nadkarni's task was focussed: to spread something of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness to "dark corners" of a certain type: the shallow confused minds in contemporary intellectual circuits, the modern versions of the Philistine so vividly described by Sri Aurobindo in *The Human Cycle* ². He had a rich sense of humour and irony which he used judiciously to make sure that the audience do not lose their concentration. There was a cultured aggression in his approach. Did not Sri Aurobindo say in a certain context:

Knowledge must be aggressive, if it wishes to survive and perpetuate itself ...

Dr. Nadkarni was to rescue and restore some receptive minds before they get putrefied by the asuras in the mental world. For this mission, Prof. Nadkarni's academic achievements, professional stature, sharp intellect, vast scholarship and impressive personality made him a powerful warrior in the services of the Mother.

To those of us who are raw aspirants and students of Sri Aurobindo, staying geographically away from Pondicherry in an ambience that is mentally active but spiritually underdeveloped, Nadkarni's lectures have imparted a clarity of thought and strength of intellect and made it possible that we hold more of Sri Aurobindo at least by way of intellectual illumination. This holds not only for his camps on *Savitri* and *Gita* but also on his thought-provoking talks and writings on miscellaneous themes like the Indian intelligentsia, the ideal of the Rishi and the ideal of the monk, India's Destiny and so on.

To illustrate the role played by Prof. Nadkarni, I mention a few of my own experiences. During the early 1990s, I was doing my PhD in mathematics at TIFR

2. *SABCL*, 15: pp. 79-83; esp. 81.

(Mumbai). Somehow I happened to visit the Churchgate centre in Mumbai, a quiet centre for meditation and silent study without much of outward activity. I got drawn to the centre and began visiting it as and when I could. I used to read at random the Ashram and Society journals and booklets. It was at this juncture that Prof. Nadkarni delivered a series of lectures on Savitri at Mumbai in September 1993. That was the first time I heard anyone speak on Sri Aurobindo's work for a considerable length. Prof. Nadkarni's sessions provided a quick coherent overview of the epic and Sri Aurobindo's work about which I was having only some diffused ideas through occasional and haphazard studies. It was as if someone knocking at the periphery was brought close to the centre-stage.

And further he became largely influential in infusing a bit of Sriarobindonian dynamism in my intellectual personality. Initially the two aspects of my life were sort-of partitioned: there was the Churchgate-centred life which gave a sense of quiet inner joy; but there was the professional world of science where spirituality was a taboo and one had to, as it were, hide such leanings to avoid ridicule. But then gradually the shyness and timidity gave way to a bold intellectual robustness. The compartmentalisation disappeared. And no longer did the achievers in science and academics have any stifling effect on me by their attitude to spheres outside their provinces of expertise. As I look back upon the human influences which made the change possible, Nadkarni's visit to Mumbai was a definite turning point. It got further consolidated by my subsequent visit to Pondicherry and meetings with sadhaks like Nirod-da and Arindam-da.

Those of us in the outside world, who have got identified as devotees of Sri Aurobindo in our respective social and professional world, have a responsibility to represent the ideals and works of Sri Aurobindo as faithfully as possible. We have to do it in two ways: whenever the occasion arises in our academic and social interactions, we have to accurately represent Sri Aurobindo's perspectives before people unfamiliar with His vision; and, more importantly, we have to become worthy examples of His influence. And, in this regard, Prof. Nadkarni has been an example before us — at least for those of us in the “highly qualified” academic circles.

The name “Nadkarni” stirs up not only the image of a gifted orator, a grand scholar and a bold and forthright commentator, but also the image of a kind human being who had been exceptionally considerate to all his acquaintances irrespective of their stature. It is a joy to recall little incidents of interactions; I mention one.

I used to attend his *Savitri* camps in Mumbai in September 1993 and May 1994 — but at that time I did not have any interaction with him. In May 1995, I was on a short visit to IISc Bangalore. One morning, I visited Sri Aurobindo Bhavan at Bangalore and was pleasantly surprised to discover that there would be a talk by Nadkarni in the evening. I went for the lecture well before time. People at the Bhavan knew each other; however I did not know anyone there. Nadkarni-ji noticed me in the Bhavan complex, recognised me (not as an acquaintance but as a member of his

Mumbai audience) and struck a conversation with me. He talked as if with someone long acquainted with him; he also enquired about my professional work. The programme began at the scheduled time. And Nadkarni began his lecture by telling the audience that they might not be aware that they have amidst them a young ... and introduced me in glowing terms. In one stroke a non-entity—who was a complete outsider in the Bhavan complex, almost a trespasser — became an honoured Guest! That is Mangesh Nadkarni.

Nadkarni was not only a great speaker, he was also a keen listener. During my visits to Pondicherry, I had opportunities of brief meetings with him. We had various discussions especially on issues about which he was quite concerned. He used to listen with all seriousness whatever an immature youngster had to say.

We are now reconciled to putting the prefix “Late” before his name, but it is difficult to believe that Mangesh Nadkarni is no more with us. But then is it really true for us, the students of Sri Aurobindo who have been fortunate to hear him? In the context of the Mother’s statements on the Supramental Manifestation, do we not hear his anguish: why do we act as if She has not made the statements? Do we not hear his “ringing voice” repeatedly remind us that our consciousness gets purified in the atmosphere of *Savitri*, that every word of Savitri has a vibration of optimism, joy and love, that behind the words there is a Force to realise the words, to make them come true, that Savitri is the key to feel the Presence of Sri Aurobindo, that the text vibrates with Sri Aurobindo’s consciousness!

There is a saying that the *Bhagavat* begins where the *Gita* ends. In one of his talks, Dr. Nadkarni once referred to the two aspects of the legacy of Sri Krishna: (1) the author of *Gita* and (2) the Flute-Player. And he drew an analogy: while the *Life Divine* and other major works (of the *Arya*-phase) give the gospel of Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* is the playing of His Flute. To those of us who have participated in his camps, Dr. Nadkarni ceaselessly beckons to us to wake up from our slumber and listen to the Flute.

AMARTYA KUMAR DUTTA

AN UNFORGETTABLE PERSONALITY

WE often fail to recognise the true worth of a person as long as the individual is present among us. We come to realise it only when we miss his adorable presence (*sat sang*) among us.

Mr. Mangesh V. Nadkarni was a rare and versatile personality, and many would be proud of having his worthy presence among them. A person fully involved in society, living with family, friends, and admirers and at the same time perusing his vocation and discharging his responsibilities, sharing with all what the magnanimous grace of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had enabled him to perceive—the solution to the many problems, whether physical, institutional, social, religious, psychological, evolutionary or spiritual that beset us today.

Before I met him in person I was already his fan: I would listen to the audio recordings of ‘Introduction to Savitri’. I well remember his unique voice giving a call to go beyond the present. His talks brought to me an exhilarating enthusiasm to go deeper into *Savitri* and seek there one’s object in life. That was indeed a breakthrough for me in my teens. Through the talks I came to know what Sri Aurobindo has left for us—such an ocean of knowledge, the knowledge of the unknown which is the basic thirst of every conscious soul on earth.

Savitri is such an epic. Nadkarni-ji had dared to prove that the verse of *Savitri* is accessible to those who, irrespective of their inadequate mastery over the language, have turned their consciousness in love towards the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

All his retired life he sought to awaken men to find the mystery of the Divine’s personality on earth. His endeavour was to find out what he could of the mystery of the avatarhood of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. If I remember correctly, some of the very interesting queries which he used raise to discuss during his discourse were:

- (i) How could Sri Aurobindo confine himself in his room for such a long period and still act so dynamically on the world ?
- (ii) A person who took only six years (1914 to 1920) to write nearly the entire volume of his work, took fifty years(1901 to 1950) to finish *Savitri*. What could be the mystery?

There are many other subjects which can be followed in his recorded talks. It is very interesting to know that he has tried to give answers to all these significant queries in an appealing manner.

He was a lover of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He had an equal admiration for Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Society and the Mother’s dream of Auroville, and the many branches and centres developed by the followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He considered them all as created by the Divine Mother with equal responsibilities to fulfill the Supreme’s dream on earth. He had always

spoken from a platform which was above confusions and invoked harmonious words to bring all together under the guidance of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. He was always keen to discuss the positive aspect of all happenings on individual or institutional level. That is why he was admired by all the children of the Mother from the different parts of the world.

He had a god-gifted enchanting voice to draw the conscious mass to respond to a higher call.

So many have heard him and been touched somewhere in their being.

His voice still echoes within us and creates many warriors who will pursue their battle for a new dawn on earth.

KRISHNENDU

LEAFING THROUGH ...

Review of **A Journey on the Sunlit Path**, edited by R. Ranganath, Published by Mirravision Trust, Puducherry, 2008, pp.192, price Rs.200.

HE TOUCHED LIVES

THE book is a compilation of over fifty tributes (by friends, family members, students, colleagues and seekers) to Dr. M. V. Nadkarni who passed away in Pondicherry on 23 December 2007.

“The individuals who have written these contributions speak for hundreds more, whose reverence and appreciation has been expressed only in personal letters, or spoken in a few heartfelt words, or held unuttered deep within,” writes Shradhdhavan in the Foreword.

One section of the book very aptly presents a few pages from Dr. Nadkarni’s talks on *Savitri*, for it was the sharing of that epic poem’s revelation of truth and beauty and the promise of the Future that he made his life’s mission. As Ananda Reddy puts it, “His intense desire was to make Sri Aurobindo a contemporary person, that is, relevant to present burning issues, especially in India. He loved the poetic vision of *Savitri* but he was at the same time a grassroots pragmatist who would ask people close to him to do research on the application of Sri Aurobindo’s vision that is sketched out in *Savitri* and *The Life Divine*.”

It was a task that Dr. Nadkarni undertook with all humility and faith. This is how he expressed it: “I’m a total upstart in this business—I’ve no Ashram background I’m no yogi and I have no literary training. I just enjoy reading the poetry and sharing what I find with others. For me, it’s a celebration: I’m like a town crier who goes round the world saying, ‘Here’s a wonderful thing. Read it.’” And he said, “When God gives you work, he also gives the capacities and the power needed to do that work.”

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla writes: “He took upon himself (as his Karma) the work of spreading the understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s works. The practical examples he gave were of great importance. He not only explained them intellectually and brought mental clarity but what attracted a lot of people to his talks was the outpouring of his bhakti towards the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. His karma merged with Jnana and Bhakti to uplift us through his talks.”

In the tribute ‘Mangesh V Nadkarni that became a *Savitri* legend for us’, R Y Deshpande observes: “...one thing that impressed everyone was the rich and vibrant and powerful voice of the speaker, resonant and far-ringing, carrying in it a spell, a kind of authority that gripped more the heart of the listener than his mind. His articulation was superb, with an English spoken in an accentuated English way.”

Although he spoke on many other topics, *Savitri* was closest to Dr. Nadkarni’s

heart. In his words, "...one of the great things that *Savitri* does is, it keeps beaming as it were, radiating as it were, waves of hope, waves of optimism, waves of courage, waves of love." And, "While *Savitri* touches on the world of human affairs, it does something which no other epic has even attempted on such a grand scale—the revelation of ranges of consciousness. What baffles many a modern reader is the way Sri Aurobindo has forced English into a language capable of expressing the experience of the overmental ranges of consciousness. Outside of vedic Sanskrit there never has been spiritual poetry on such a massive scale; its mantric cadence and power are something new, and therefore it is no wonder that *Savitri* baffles the academic critic no end. In English at least, *Savitri* marks a new kind of poetry, what Sri Aurobindo has called 'future poetry', and we need a new science of aesthetics to come to terms with it."

Shraddhavan recounts: "He told us: 'I like to talk about *Savitri* because I love to be in the atmosphere of this wonderful poem, and these lectures give me the chance to share that experience with other enthusiasts.' "

Carel writes: "In his lectures he often light-heartedly referred to himself as a 'Town Crier for *Savitri*'. But there was more than mere explanation of the meaning of *Savitri*. '*Savitri* is a force, a unifying force,' he said when he addressed his mixed audience consisting of Ashramites, members of the Sri Aurobindo Society and Aurovilians. 'No matter where you come from, no matter how you begin, if you are an aspirant to the New World, if you want to join this pilgrimage to the new consciousness, *Savitri* has been given to all as a guide and a golden bridge.' "

Alan to whom he spoke, reports his words in *Auroville Today*: "*Savitri* appeals on so many levels. For some, it is the magic of the poetry, for others, the dramatic intensity, for others it is the mantric quality, and, of course, Mother has said that *Savitri* is the complete handbook of the yoga. I also believe that Sri Aurobindo, through the writing of this poem, was impregnating the occult level with vibrations of love, hope and joy at a time when Europe, in particular, was experiencing great pessimism and darkness, and that these vibrations can be experienced even if one doesn't understand the words."

"I myself have not grasped all the dimensions of the poem. I tell my audience I am not in any way an authorised interpreter of the text. The most I can do is be a doorway: the reader himself must discover the innermost essence, the sanctum sanctorum.

He was aware that in the academic and other circles, much misunderstanding persisted. "*Savitri* is not without its detractors. These include those Indian literary scholars who find in it nothing but echoes of Tennyson and the Romantic poets, and those who believe that Indians shouldn't write in English but only in their own language. Then there are those—a sizable portion of the Indian intelligentsia—whose response to Sri Aurobindo's work is conditioned by a belief that he abandoned political action to immerse himself in some kind of Nirvana..."

Carel writes that “he broached the topic of why the Indian intelligensia of the last half a century had problems with Sri Aurobindo. ‘Sri Aurobindo...was in his view a and his vision so radical and so much ahead of of his times, that he effectively alienated four of the strongest intellectual establishments in the country: the traditional Hindu religious establishment, the Gandhian establishment, the politically non-committed but Eurocentric university intellectuals...and also the leftist, communist/socialist establishment.’”

There are many pieces in the book that speak of the man that was Dr. Nadkarni. Yet, as Alok Pandey rightly points out: “... what do we know of someone except a few scattered strands and threads of the surface life. What we see of a man derives its value from what he is within and that we seldom see.” Those who came in closer contact with him had glimpses of his deeper personality. For instance, when his daughter told him that her faith was not as strong as she would have liked it to be, he replied: “A strong and persistent mental faith is good to have and you already have that. Your faith should have a profounder base: it should implant itself on all parts of one’s being, on the very physical cells of one’s body. Such a faith is not easy. To be able to have such a profound and unshakable faith is in itself a great spiritual achievement. One gradually grows into this faith: our natural tendency is to trust the Divine through the ego, and the trust of the ego can never be anything more than the bargain of a bania.”

One of the contributors expresses a wish: “It is to be hoped that his recorded lectures will at some time become available in book form.” Although that would surely be helpful to many, we also need to take note of the point made in the editor’s introduction: “An intellectual appreciation and exposition of Sri Aurobindo’s works certainly has a value, specially for those newly attracted to the Master and the Mother, but it cannot really replace the understanding that comes from living the reality of his teachings.”

The book will revive fond and happy memories in those who knew Dr. Nadkarni; to those who have only heard of him, it could be an introduction to what he was; and to all readers it is an invitation to approach the works of the Master with love and veneration.

‘An Old-Fashioned Browser’