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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

- ‘THE KNOT THAT TIES TOGETHER THE STARS’ (Poem) ... 813
THE MOTHER AND THE NATION ... 818

The Mother

- ‘O THOU, SOLE REALITY . . .’ ... 820
UNITY AND HOMOGENEITY OF THE BEING ... 821

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

- TWO NEWSPAPER COLUMNS FROM 1951 ... 824

P. B. Saint Hilaire (Pavitra)

- ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY
CHAPTER FIVE: LAMA IN INNER MONGOLIA ... 830

Pavitra and Mrityunjay

- GLIMPSES OF PAVITRA ... 838

André Monestier

- ON PAVITRA ... 847

Debashish Banerji

- AN INTRODUCTION TO SRI AUROBINDO’S *RECORD OF YOGA* ... 848

Anurag Banerjee

- NIRODBARAN: THE SURREALIST’S JOURNEY ... 856

M. S. Valiathan

- AN AYURVEDIC VIEW OF LIFE ... 870

M. S. Srinivasan

- ‘THE NEW PARADIGM IN BUSINESS’ ... 883

Felicity

- THE RED RIBBON ... 887

Prema Nandakumar

- WANDERING IN THE ARCHIVES OF MEMORY
12. THE LOTUS POND ... 890

‘THE KNOT THAT TIES TOGETHER THE STARS’

. . . Thus have they made their play with us for roles:
Author and actor with himself as scene,
He moves there as the Soul, as Nature she.
Here on the earth where we must fill our parts,
We know not how shall run the drama’s course;
Our uttered sentences veil in their thought.
Her mighty plan she holds back from our sight:
She has concealed her glory and her bliss
And disguised the Love and Wisdom in her heart;
Of all the marvel and beauty that are hers,
Only a darkened little we can feel.
He too wears a diminished godhead here;
He has forsaken his omnipotence,
His calm he has foregone and infinity.
He knows her only, he has forgotten himself;
To her he abandons all to make her great.
He hopes in her to find himself anew,
Incarnate, wedding his infinity’s peace
To her creative passion’s ecstasy.
Although possessor of the earth and heavens,
He leaves to her the cosmic management
And watches all, the Witness of her scene.
A supernumerary on her stage,
He speaks no words or hides behind the wings.
He takes birth in her world, waits on her will,
Divines her enigmatic gesture’s sense,
The fluctuating chance turns of her mood,
Works out her meanings she seems not to know
And serves her secret purpose in long Time.
As one too great for him he worships her;
He adores her as his regent of desire,
He yields to her as the mover of his will,
He burns the incense of his nights and days
Offering his life, a splendour of sacrifice.
A rapt solicitor for her love and grace,
His bliss in her to him is his whole world:
He grows through her in all his being’s powers;

He reads by her God's hidden aim in things.
 Or, a courtier in her countless retinue,
 Content to be with her and feel her near
 He makes the most of the little that she gives
 And all she does drapes with his own delight.
 A glance can make his whole day wonderful,
 A word from her lips with happiness wings the hours.
 He leans on her for all he does and is:
 He builds on her largesses his proud fortunate days
 And trails his peacock-plumaged joy of life
 And suns in the glory of her passing smile.
 In a thousand ways he serves her royal needs;
 He makes the hours pivot around her will,
 Makes all reflect her whims; all is their play:
 This whole wide world is only he and she.

This is the knot that ties together the stars:
 The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
 The Two who are one are the might and right in things.
 His soul, silent, supports the world and her,
 His acts are her commandment's registers.
 Happy, inert, he lies beneath her feet:
 His breast he offers for her cosmic dance
 Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,
 And none could bear but for his strength within,
 Yet none would leave because of his delight.
 His works, his thoughts have been devised by her,
 His being is a mirror vast of hers:
 Active, inspired by her he speaks and moves;
 His deeds obey her heart's unspoken demands:
 Passive, he bears the impacts of the world
 As if her touches shaping his soul and life:
 His journey through the days is her sun-march;
 He runs upon her roads; hers is his course.
 A witness and student of her joy and dole,
 A partner in her evil and her good,
 He has consented to her passionate ways,
 He is driven by her sweet and dreadful force.
 His sanctioning name initials all her works;
 His silence is his signature to her deeds;
 In the execution of her drama's scheme,

In her fancies of the moment and its mood,
In the march of this obvious ordinary world
Where all is deep and strange to the eyes that see
And Nature's common forms are marvel-wefts,
She through his witness sight and motion of might
Unrolls the material of her cosmic Act,
Her happenings that exalt and smite the soul,
Her force that moves, her powers that save and slay,
Her Word that in the silence speaks to our hearts,
Her silence that transcends the summit Word,
Her heights and depths to which our spirit moves,
Her events that weave the texture of our lives
And all by which we find or lose ourselves,
Things sweet and bitter, magnificent and mean,
Things terrible and beautiful and divine.
Her empire in the cosmos she has built,
He is governed by her subtle and mighty laws.
His consciousness is a babe upon her knees,
His being a field of her vast experiment,
Her endless space is the playground of his thoughts;
She binds to knowledge of the shapes of Time
And the creative error of limiting mind
And chance that wears the rigid face of fate
And her sport of death and pain and Nescience,
His changed and struggling immortality.
His soul is a subtle atom in a mass,
His substance a material for her works.
His spirit survives amid the death of things,
He climbs to eternity through being's gaps,
He is carried by her from Night to deathless Light.
This grand surrender is his free-will's gift,
His pure transcendent force submits to hers.
In the mystery of her cosmic ignorance,
In the insoluble riddle of her play,
A creature made of perishable stuff,
In the pattern she has set for him he moves,
He thinks with her thoughts, with her trouble his bosom heaves;
He seems the thing that she would have him seem,
He is whatever her artist will can make.
Although she drives him on her fancy's roads,
At play with him as with her child or slave,

To freedom and the Eternal's mastery
 And immortality's stand above the world,
 She moves her seeming puppet of an hour.
 Even in his mortal session in body's house,
 An aimless traveller between birth and death,
 Ephemeral dreaming of immortality,
 To reign she spurs him. He takes up her powers;
 He has harnessed her to the yoke of her own law.
 His face of human thought puts on a crown.
 Held in her leash, bound to her veiled caprice,
 He studies her ways if so he may prevail
 Even for an hour and she work out his will;
 He makes of her his moment passion's serf:
 To obey she feigns, she follows her creature's lead:
 For him she was made, lives only for his use.
 But conquering her, then is he most her slave;
 He is her dependent, all his means are hers;
 Nothing without her he can, she rules him still.
 At last he wakes to a memory of Self:
 He sees within the face of deity,
 The Godhead breaks out through the human mould:
 Her highest heights she unmask and is his mate.
 Till then he is a plaything in her game;
 Her seeming regent, yet her fancy's toy,
 A living robot moved by her energy's springs,
 He acts as in the movements of a dream,
 An automaton stepping in the grooves of Fate,
 He stumbles on driven by her whip of Force:
 His thought labours, a bullock in Time's fields;
 His will he thinks his own, is shaped in her forge.
 Obedient to World-Nature's dumb control,
 Driven by his own formidable Power,
 His chosen partner in a titan game,
 Her will he has made the master of his fate,
 Her whim the dispenser of his pleasure and pain;
 He has sold himself into her regal power
 For any blow or boon that she may choose:
 Even in what is suffering to our sense,
 He feels the sweetness of her mastering touch,
 In all experience meets her blissful hands;
 On his heart he bears the happiness of her tread

And the surprise of her arrival's joy
 In each event and every moment's chance.
 All she can do is marvellous in his sight:
 He revels in her, a swimmer in her sea,
 A tireless amateur of her world-delight,
 He rejoices in her every thought and act
 And gives consent to all that she can wish;
 Whatever she desires he wills to be:
 The Spirit, the innumerable One,
 He has left behind his lone eternity,
 He is an endless birth in endless Time,
 Her finite's multitude in an infinite Space.

The master of existence lurks in us
 And plays at hide-and-seek with his own Force;
 In Nature's instrument loiters secret God.
 The Immanent lives in man as in his house;
 He has made the universe his pastime's field,
 A vast gymnasium of his works of might.
 All-knowing he accepts our darkened state,
 Divine, wears shapes of animal or man;
 Eternal, he assents to Fate and Time,
 Immortal, dallies with mortality.
 The All-Conscious ventured into Ignorance,
 The All-Blissful bore to be insensible.
 Incarnate in a world of strife and pain,
 He puts on joy and sorrow like a robe
 And drinks experience like a strengthening wine.
 He whose transcendence rules the pregnant Vasts,
 Prescient now dwells in our subliminal depths,
 A luminous individual Power, alone.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, pp. 61-67)

THE MOTHER AND THE NATION

WE have lost the faculty of religious fervour in Bengal and are trying now to recover it through the passion for the country by self-sacrifice, by labour for our fellow-countrymen, by absorption in the idea of the country. When a nation is on the verge of losing the source of its vitality, it tries to recover it by the first means which the environment offers, whether it be favourable to it or not. Bengal has always lived by its emotions; the brain of India, as it has been called, is also the heart of India. The loss of emotional power, of belief, of expansiveness of feeling would dry up the sources from which she derives her strength. The country of Nyaya is also the country of Chaitanya, who himself was born in the height of the intellectual development of Bengal as its fine flower and most perfect expression.

The land of Chaitanya is also the chosen home of the Mother and in Bengal she has set her everlasting seat. Immeasurable ages will pass, revolutions shake the land, religions come and go, but so long as the Ganges flows through the plains of the delta, so long shall the Mother sit enthroned in Bengal as sovereign and saviour. New forms she will take, new aspects of power or beauty, but the soul of her Motherhood will live unchanged and call to her sons to adore her. In the new age she has taken to herself a new form, she has come to us with a fresh face of beauty the full sweetness of which we have not yet grasped. When Bankim discovered the *mantra* *Bande Mataram* and the song wrote itself out through his pen, he felt that he had been divinely inspired, but the people heard his song and felt nothing. "Wait" said the prophet, "wait for thirty years and all India will know the value of the song I have written." The thirty years have passed and Bengal has heard; her ears have suddenly been opened to a voice to which she had been deaf and her heart filled with a light to which she had been blind. The Mother of the hymn is no new goddess, but the same whom we have always worshipped; only she has put off the world-form in which she was familiar to us, she has assumed a human shape of less terrible aspect, less fierce and devastating power to attract her children back to her bosom.

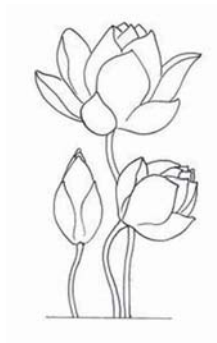
What is a nation? We have studied in the schools of the West and learned to ape the thoughts and language of the West forgetting our own deeper ideas and truer speech, and to the West the nation is the country, so much land containing so many millions of men who speak one speech and live one political life owing allegiance to a single governing power of its own choosing. When the European wishes to feel a living emotion for his country, he personifies the land he lives in, tries to feel that a heart beats in the brute earth and worships a vague abstraction of his own intellect. The Indian idea of nationality ought to be truer and deeper. The philosophy of our forefathers looked through the gross body of things and discovered a subtle body within, looked through that and found yet another more deeply hidden,

and within the third body discovered the Source of life and form, seated for ever, unchanging and imperishable. What is true of the individual object, is true also of the general and universal. What is true of the man, is true also of the nation. The country, the land is only the outward body of the nation, its *annamaya kosha*, or gross physical body; the mass of people, the life of millions who occupy and vivify the body of the nation with their presence, is the *pranamaya kosha*, the life-body of the nation. These two are the gross body, the physical manifestation of the Mother. Within the gross body is a subtler body, the thoughts, the literature, the philosophy, the mental and emotional activities, the sum of hopes, pleasures, aspirations, fulfilments, the civilisation and culture, which make up the *sukshma sharir* of the nation. This is as much a part of the Mother's life as the outward existence which is visible to the physical eyes. This subtle life of the nation again springs from a deeper existence in the causal body of the nation, the peculiar temperament which it has developed out of its ages of experience and which makes it distinct from others. These three are the bodies of the Mother, but within them all is the Source of her life, immortal and unchanging, of which every nation is merely one manifestation, the universal Narayan, One in the Many of whom we are all the children.

When, therefore, we speak of a nation, we mean the separate life of the millions who people the country, but we mean also a separate culture and civilisation, a peculiar national temperament which has become too deeply rooted to be altered and in all these we discover a manifestation of God in national life which is living, sacred and adorable. It is this which we speak of as the Mother. The millions are born and die; we who are here today, will not be here tomorrow, but the Mother has been living for thousands of years and will live for yet more thousands when we have passed away.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram*, CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 1114–16)



‘O THOU, SOLE REALITY . . . ’

February 15, 1914

O THOU, sole Reality, Light of our light and Life of our life, Love supreme, Saviour of the world, grant that more and more I may be perfectly awakened into the awareness of Thy constant presence. Let all my acts conform to Thy law; let there be no difference between my will and Thine. Extricate me from the illusory consciousness of my mind, from its world of fantasies; let me identify my consciousness with the Absolute Consciousness, for that art Thou.

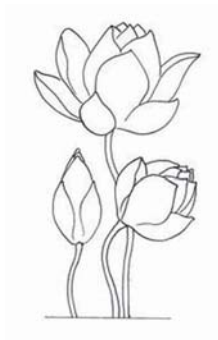
Give me constancy in the will to attain the end, give me firmness and energy and the courage which shakes off all torpor and lassitude.

Give me the peace of perfect disinterestedness, the peace that makes Thy presence felt and Thy intervention effective, the peace that is ever victorious over all bad will and every obscurity.

Grant, I implore Thee, that all in my being may be identified with Thee. May I be nothing else anymore than a flame of love utterly awakened to a supreme realisation of Thee.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 75)



‘UNITY AND HOMOGENEITY IN THE BEING’

What is the way to establish unity and homogeneity in our being?

KEEP the will firm. Treat the recalcitrant parts as disobedient children. Act upon them constantly and patiently. Convince them of their error.

In the depths of your consciousness is the psychic being, the temple of the Divine within you. This is the centre round which should come about the unification of all these divergent parts, all these contradictory movements of your being. Once you have got the consciousness of the psychic being and its aspiration, these doubts and difficulties can be destroyed. It takes more or less time, but you will surely succeed in the end. Once you have turned to the Divine, saying, “I want to be yours”, and the Divine has said, “Yes”, the whole world cannot keep you from it. When the central being has made its surrender, the chief difficulty has disappeared. The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, “I am here and I am yours”, then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one.

Ambition has been the undoing of many Yogis. That canker can hide long. Many people start on the Path without any sense of it. But when they get powers, their ambition rises up, all the more violently because it had not been thrown out in the beginning.

A story is told of a Yogi who had attained wonderful powers. He was invited by his disciples to a great dinner. It was served on a big low table. The disciples asked their Master to show his power in some way. He knew he should not, but the seed of ambition was there in him and he thought, “After all, it is a very innocent thing and it may prove to them that such things are possible and teach them the greatness of God.” So he said, “Take away the table, but only the table, let the tablecloth remain as it is with all the dishes upon it.” The disciples cried out, “Oh, that cannot be done, everything will fall down.” But he insisted and they removed the table from under the cloth. Lo, the miracle! The cloth and all that was upon it remained there just as though the table was underneath. The disciples wondered. But all on a sudden the Master jumped up and rushed out screaming and crying, “Nevermore shall I have a disciple, nevermore! Woe is me! I have betrayed my God.” His heart was on fire; he had used the divine powers for selfish ends.

It is always wrong to display powers. This does not mean that there is no use for them. But they have to be used in the same way as they came. They come by union with the Divine. They must be used by the will of the Divine and not for

display. If you come across someone who is blind and you have the power to make him see — if it is the Divine Will that the man shall see, you have only to say, “Let him see” and he will see. But if you wish to make him see simply because you want to cure him, then you use the power to satisfy your personal ambition. Most often, in such cases, you not only lose your power but you create a great disturbance in the man. Yet in appearance the two ways are the same; but in one case you act because of the Divine Will and in the other for some personal motive.

How are we to know, you will ask, when it is the Divine Will that makes us act? The Divine Will is not difficult to recognise. It is unmistakable. You can know it without being very far on the path. Only you must listen to its voice, the small voice that is here in the heart. Once you are accustomed to listen, if you do anything that is contrary to the Divine Will, you feel an uneasiness. If you persist on the wrong track, you get very much disturbed. If, however, you give some material excuse as the cause of your uneasiness and proceed on your way, you gradually lose the faculty of perception and finally you may go on doing all kinds of wrong and feel no uneasiness. But if, when once you feel the least disturbance, you stop and ask of your inner self, “What is the cause of this?” then you do get the real answer and the whole thing becomes quite clear. Do not try to give a material excuse when you feel a little depression or a slight uneasiness. When you stop and look about for the reason, be absolutely straight and sincere. At first your mind will construct a very plausible and beautiful explanation. Do not accept it, but look beyond and ask, “What is it that is behind this movement? Why am I doing this?” Finally you will discover, hidden in a corner, the little ripple — a slight wrong turn or twist in your attitude that is causing the trouble or disturbance.

One of the commonest forms of ambition is the idea of service to humanity. All attachment to such service or work is a sign of personal ambition. The Guru who believes that he has a great truth to teach to humanity and who wants many disciples and who feels uncomfortable when the disciples go away or who seizes on anybody that comes and tries to make him a disciple, is evidently following nothing but his ambition. You must be able, if you are ready to follow the divine order, to take up whatever work you are given, even a stupendous work, and leave it the next day with the same quietness with which you took it up and not feel that the responsibility is yours. There should be no attachment — to any object or any mode of life. You must be absolutely free. If you want to have the true yogic attitude, you must be able to accept everything that comes from the Divine and let it go easily and without regret. The attitude of the ascetic who says, “I want nothing” and the attitude of the man of the world who says, “I want this thing” are the same. The one may be as much attached to his renunciation as the other to his possession.

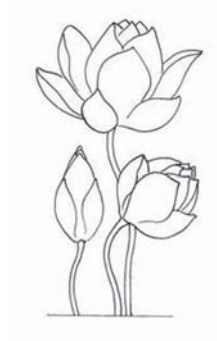
You must accept all things — and only those things — that come from the Divine. Because things can come from concealed desires. The desires work in the subconscious and bring things to you which, although you may not recognise them

as such, nevertheless do not come from the Divine but from disguised desires.

You can easily know when a thing comes from the Divine. You feel free, you are at ease, you are in peace. But when something presents itself to you and you jump at it and cry out, “Oh, at last I have it”, then you can know for certain that it does not come from the Divine. Equanimity is the essential condition of union and communion with the Divine.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM Vol. 3, 2nd Ed., pp. 7-10)



TWO NEWSPAPER COLUMNS FROM 1951

1. BEHOLD THE REAL MOTHER INDIA . . .

It was a fine instinct that made our Prime Minister declare the other day, at Patna: “Slogans like ‘*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*’ or ‘*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*’ are all right, but I don’t like slogans which cry ‘ZINDABAD’ to Government.”

His declaration opens up several important tracks of thought — but how many who can follow these tracks will pause a little to reflect upon the meaning of the slogan: “*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*”? This slogan gives voice to the patriotism and nationalism without which no Indian can truly be Indian, and most of us have uttered it at one time or another with a glow in our mind and heart. But what exactly have we meant by it? What particular emotion has it given us?

More Than Mere Geographical Unit

The questions are of profound moment, for if we are to have a Government creative of a great future for the country or if we are to be citizens helping the country to fulfil itself in world-history we must give the correct answers. Unless we know what *Bharat Mata* or Mother India really is, we cannot properly and fully contribute to her *Jai*, her Victory.

Many of us think of India first in geographical terms. We keep in mind an area of land with mountains, rivers, forests, plains bounded by natural factors to form a unit that has in general preserved its wholeness down the ages. And most certainly India is such a geographical unit. But is that all we feel to be our country? No. We feel it also to be a huge mass of living beings. India is a vast variety of peoples with a many-coloured yet one common cultural atmosphere persisting through the centuries.

With this conception the majority of modern-minded men stop. But it is not with a conception limited to the land and its inhabitants that the nationalist movement which freed us from the British took its start and sustained itself over decades of heroic struggle. The central inspiration of that movement was the cry: “*Vande Mataram!*” The country was a mighty being at whose feet the patriots bowed in their heart and mind. A living figure, a super-personal entity, a glorious Goddess was to them the true India, the presiding Spirit whose physical body as it were, was the geographical unit known to history and whose life-manifestation was the diversified unity of the human inhabitants.

The subtle Soul of the land, the one secret Self of the myriad creatures dreaming

and acting there — such essentially to the makers of our nationalism was *Bharat Mata*.

And such too for all of us in our moments of patriotic exaltation is India. In our ordinary armchair hours we may doubt if the name “Mother” which we give to our country is not a mere metaphor. But when the liberty and security of the land are in danger and we leap to the call for defence the vision haunting and stimulating us is not only of a geographical area or of a multitude of men and women. The vision is of a Being in whom we live and whom we serve. We may not specifically formulate it thus to ourselves but on our mind of enthusiasm is the light from a Face that looks through a million faces and in our heart is the beauty of a Presence whose children are these human creatures living and dying for their ideals.

Invocation Of Divine Spirit

To keep alive the sense of India the great Mother is a necessity for our national evolution. For, it is the first step towards rendering politically active the instinct of the Superhuman and the Divine that has been most typically India’s since the dawn of history. And in the complete conception of Bankim’s famous song, “*Vande Mataram*”, not only the Superhuman but also the Divine is invoked. There is behind it the intuition that the presiding genius, the National Soul of a country like India which has stood out for its endless testimony of spiritual experience cannot but be something more than a National Soul: it must be a projection, so to speak, of the Supreme who has been the search and the realisation of the greatest Indians from the Vedic Rishis down to Sri Aurobindo.

Yes, if the central motive-force of Indian civilisation is to work in our day and carry the nation to the only lasting greatness possible to it — the greatness attuned to its inmost nature — then the nationalist and the patriot in us should ever be quick with a spiritual feeling.

Genuine Spiritual Feeling

Let us not, however, imagine that this means a revival of narrow religiosity. Religiosity is as much an enemy of the spiritual as is scepticism. The genuine spiritual feeling is wide and liberal, aware of the World-Spirit’s diversity no less than of its oneness. This feeling rises above sects and creeds, though valuing the inner content of each. By its catholicity it takes up all that is of authentic worth in the secular concept of national life. But it does what neither religiosity nor secularism can do namely, to put, directly or indirectly, the human into contact with a Wisdom, a Goodness, a creative Power that alone can deliver what man’s whole evolution is in

travail of and that alone can raise indestructible India to the height of her destiny as light and leader of a world in which all current “isms” have shown their deplorable deficiency.

2. FIVE STEPS THAT LEAD TO INDIA’S GREATNESS

A foreign journalist has made a five-word diagnosis of India’s ills: land, water, babies, cows and capital. Some of our Ministers have hailed it as if it were a sentence out of Solomon — a pronouncement of penetrating wisdom. But perhaps Solomon himself would have said that the chief ill of India is Ministers of this mind.

No doubt, there is an amount of truth in the diagnosis: our land is not sufficiently cultivated; our water resources are poor and precarious; our babies are too many as well as too feeble; our cows are often a clutter of old age and uselessness; our capital is meagre or mishandled. A nation not attentive to all these defects will lack in life, prosperity, power.

But if it looks no deeper it will have a life that is only a rich encumbrance of the earth, a prosperity that is just an abundance of glittering fetters, a power that is mere sound and fury signifying nothing. And if India is that nation, then more than any other it will betray its own self. For, more than any other, she has the historical mission of being the self of insight no less than the self of outlook.

What is wrong with India is precisely that she is becoming superficial in thought. She is inclined to lay stress on the outer and either forget the inner or else think that the “without” will take care of the “within”. But man is mind no less than body and even the mind has a surface utilitarian effectivity and a profound recess of ideals, aspirations, visions. In the heart of this recess is something that can only be called a spark of divinity — something that holds the promise of the frail, fumbling, factious man growing more than man and his world turning into a splendid harmony.

Land Is The Soul Of The Nation

India’s ills are to be first sought in the contemporary Indian consciousness. Perhaps a suggestive indication of them can be made under the very heads enumerated by the foreign journalist. Take land. What is our attitude to this vast land we live in? Last week it was pointed out in these columns that the land we call *Bharat Mata* or Mother India is not only a geographical area, not only a collection of human beings, as many of us believe, but a super-personal Soul of the Nation, symbolised by the territorial mass and multifariously represented by the men and women whose hidden ground of unity is that Soul.

It was further explained that the National Soul of a country like India that is

distinguished centrally by its agelong spiritual quest and experience can only be a face and front of the World-Spirit, the Universal Mother worshipped in a thousand temples all over the land. Nationalism, therefore, can be perfect and authentic in India only if it is, as in Bankim's famous anthem "*Vande Mataram*", a religious feeling, a spiritual fervour. A mystical sense of the term "land" is the primary cure for India's incapacity and unhappiness.

Water Is A Living Force — Material And Spiritual

Then consider water. Originally it is a condensation of elements of the atmosphere — a visitor from the sky which is an emblem of the Infinite. Afterwards it takes the form of seas — a vastness and a depth upon earth, mirroring the sky. And it rises back to its home and comes down as fertilising and nourishing rain — a gleaming grace out of heaven — and from earth's heights flows through the plains into the deeps.

Here, clearly suggested, is a reception of a living force from the overbrooding Spirit, the World-Mother, an opening of the recesses of our being to hold that force and wake in the earth's mind an image of the unascended reaches of Superconsciousness, a lifting-up towards those reaches and then returning with their rhythms of rapture and their fluencies of force and freedom to make terrestrial life more abundant, more concordant, both inwardly and outwardly.

Here we have the call to a process of existence charged with the consciousness the ancient Rishis who created our civilisation sought to put into the consciousness that has given us the greatest moments of our history whether in art, literature, philosophy, statecraft, soldiership or society-building.

Child: Embodiment Of Infinity

Now take the babies. What brings them into the world is a creative act of love and what is thus created is meant to continue or perpetuate in some way our own being and it is an embodiment of happy innocence. The urge towards self-continuation and self-perpetuation is at bottom the natural affluence of the true immortal soul in us: the deathless soul's presence deep within becomes in the mechanics of the outer groping life the impulse towards an indirect or vicarious immortality through one's offspring.

And this inmost soul is a happy innocence because it partakes of something of the divine essence and is a spark of God — a child-form, as it were, of the Supreme Bliss and Beauty, the growing God in man responding to the World-Mother. And it is by an act of inward creation inspired by love of the ideal that the truth of us,

behind the appearance of mind and life-energy and body, is brought forth. The birth of the soul's "sweetness and light" into the outer nature is our great need.

The Cow And All It Connates

Next we come to cows. In India the cow has been a sacred animal. Have we ever stopped to ask why? Is it only because the cow gives milk which was the main support of a primitive pastoral society or because it was a beast of burden and a means of movement from place to place? Has its quality of meekness impressed us so much that we are disposed to worship it? Whatever its usefulness or amiableness, the aura of sanctity it has acquired cannot be explained by a merely outward look. The cow, as originally mentioned in the Vedic hymns, figures in an occult and mystical context where the sun is a symbol of the divine Truth-Consciousness and fire is an emblem of the heavenward will, the Godward desire, the purifying and enlightening upsurge of the soul to its supreme Origin.

In the Sanskrit hymns the word "go" does not mean only "cow": it means also "ray". The cow represents in esoteric literature a shooting forth of spiritual illumination, a beaming of the Light of lights, taking form by it in our animal nature. A traditional persistence, a vague racial memory of this meaning has rendered the cow sacred. And what we as a nation should do is to see that "the herds of the Sun of Truth", as the Rishis put it, gather in our groping minds which are usually at the mercy of an unregenerate animality.

True Significance Of Capital

Finally, there is capital: In the ordinary connotation, it is accumulated wealth employed in projects to produce goods for society and more wealth for the investor. There is a suggestion of life-enrichment, material fruitfulness, both individual and social. The power of all this is gold, again a figure of the luminous, an image often used for the Highest Knowledge. But money is the most physical form of goldenness and one turned to the outward details of life.

So the word "capital" can yield to the eye of insight the utilisation and organisation of the truths of the Spirit for the material structure or framework of co-operative effort which a new cultural renaissance of India's spiritual wisdom must establish in the interests of a secure and widespread outflowering of itself. The moulding of all enterprise and industry of the external being in the light of our depths and our heights — this also is what is absent in India, an ill requiring to be remedied.

The foreign journalist's diagnosis proves thus an extremely helpful one when interpreted symbolically. For it gives us five connected steps to a genuinely Indian

greatness: 1) the sense of the Supreme World-Mother in our national aspirations; 2) the idea of the process of spiritual world-evolution; 3) the evocation of the true psyche that is the heart of this process; 4) the reception, by the psyche's help, of the Spirit's truth-splendour into our mentalised animal vitality; and 5) the just exploitation of this truth-splendour in a harmonious activity of material production.

K. D. SETHNA
(AMAL KIRAN)

(Published in *The Atom*, Bombay: INSIGHT AND OUTLOOK ... *Sermonettes for the Times*, a weekly column by K. D. Sethna, on 27 June and 4 July 1951.)

When the psychic puts its influence on the vital, the first thing you must be careful to avoid is any least mixture of a wrong vital movement with the psychic movement. Lust is the perversion or degradation which prevents love from establishing its reign; so when there is the movement of psychic love in the heart, lust or vital desire is the one thing that must not be allowed to come in — just as when strength comes down from above, personal ambition and pride have to be kept far away from it; for any mixture of the perversion will corrupt the psychic or spiritual action and prevent a true fulfilment.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1524)

ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

Pavitra's Correspondence with His Father

(Continued from the issue of September 2009)

Chapter V

Lama in Inner Mongolia

One letter, unfortunately, is missing in Paul's Dossier of Correspondence. It was written by Philippe on his arrival at Peking after his departure from Japan. It must have explained how he had freed himself from the influence of Zina Lubienska and why he had taken the decision to leave Japan. Contrary to what the letters of the previous chapter might have suggested, he did not decide either to go to India or to return to Europe or even to get married. In a Buddhist Seminar he had met a Mongolian lama who had asked him to accompany him to Inner Mongolia and stay in their lamasery. Philippe had accepted this proposal. Could it be that he had expected to come into contact with a cult that held for him a double interest: the antiquity of its tradition and an authenticity protected by the isolated and inhospitable character of its sanctuary? According to his father he had hoped to find there "some traces be it of a revelation, an intervention of superior and divine beings, or at the least, some occult knowledge unknown to our western world . . ."

In this desolated place close to the Gobi Desert, with no communication with the monks since he did not speak Mongolian, in a great intellectual solitude, Philippe had ample time for reading and writing; the correspondence with his parents became more profuse. The relation with his father had improved since he had shown his independence by leaving Tokyo: "Now you are free . . . Therefore, my dear child, I embrace you tenderly and with much joy to have somewhat found you again." The dialogue between them took on a more dialectic tone, in which metaphysics became the main subject. For want of company there, of a spiritual guide or of a guru who spoke his language, Philippe must have felt the need for the sceptical or critical reactions of Paul who would compel him to look for more clarity in the intuitive but sometimes obscure or paradoxical aspects of his approach.

The debate, for example, concerned ethics: was it legitimate to teach convictions which were only intuitive but which could not be reasoned out?

Philippe often chose to bring in, without explicitly mentioning it, references from Plato as expressed by Plotinus and his school, regarding, for instance, the concentration of the spirit or to past recollections, as well as the precepts of

Pythagorus and the intuitive thoughts of Bergson. Of course, these ideas coincided with his own, but unlike certain theosophical concepts, they had the advantage of being part a tradition which was common to him and his father and thus facilitated their exchange of views.

During this period of seclusion, he specified his leanings vis-à-vis the three paths which he could follow: scientific reflection, occultism or spirituality. He found the domain of pure science very narrow. The path of occultism, wasn't it arduous and painful? Did it not demand qualities of which he possessed only the rudiments as well as the help of a guide or the control of a Master whom he had not yet met? His resolve to pursue the path of mysticism — a striving towards truth, beauty, harmony, self-mastery, freedom and tolerance — was therefore confirmed.

*To help him financially, his father suggested that he write an account of his journey in China for the journal *Le Temps*.¹ Probably after it was rejected by this journal, Paul suggested that the first article² be sent to a weekly review.³ The management of the review offered a very small remuneration and demanded, for making enlargements, negatives of photographs that were lost in the post. . . . Finally Paul abandoned these attempts and got the manuscripts back. He did not look for another publisher, even after receiving a second article from his son.*

* * *

Jehol,⁴ August 16, 1924

My dearest Parents,

I am sending you this hurried note from Jehol, a town some 200 to 250 km from Peking, where we have arrived after a long journey by carriage. The roads were completely destroyed in last month's heavy rains and most of the time are non-existent. We mostly followed the water courses and even the river beds. The carriages are a kind of two-wheeled cart without suspension and the jerks that they give you are incredibly powerful, so I have made most of the journey on foot. We were stopped on several occasions by torrential rains which made any travel impossible during that period.

In spite of that, the journey was not without its interest because I was able to study the people and the country from close quarters. I was well received by the

1. *Le Temps* was a journal which *Le Monde* took over in 1944, the printing press along with the entire layout and production.

2. As the article did not have a title, I have named it 'From Peking to the Gobi Desert'.

3. *Sciences et voyages, an educational review, illustrated and easy to understand*, of which the notepaper was decorated with photographic medallions of Louis Pasteur and of Sir Ernest Shackleton.

4. Or Jo-Ho.

governor of Jehol, a Chinese of the old school, and we hope to leave for the monastery as soon as possible. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find carriages in this season and the cost is quite high.

In this letter I am sending you a few small stickers which you have only to stick on the envelope of the letters that you will send me. Simply write beside the sticker: China, Province of Jehol. In this way I hope to receive news of you, which is so rare. I shall write you a longer letter once we arrive and settle down.

How are you and what are you doing? How is La Minelle getting on? I think you must be there at present and my thoughts often go there to find you.

Au revoir, I embrace you very tenderly.

Signed: Philippe

P.S. I have sent you by registered post a long letter from Peking.⁵

* * *

Draft of Paul's letter to Philippe

August 27, 1924

My dear Philippe,

I have just received the long and nice letter you sent me from Peking. Since your departure this is the first letter that has brought me a little joy, not that I approve of the ideas which have led you to a Mongolian or Tibetan monastery. Of that we shall shortly speak again, but it has unburdened me of the idea that obsessed me from the time of your departure. I had seen you then submissive to the will of the Lubienskis and the abdication of your will was for me the most sad and painful thing. Your letters, your projects, your conduct during the last three years showed the hold that these people had over you. By God's grace now you are free from it, for me, that's a great relief!

As for your ideas, they seem hardly to have changed; you still appear to be dominated by theosophical doctrine. I find in your letters the ideas and even the style, this kind of jargon particular to the books on Theosophy. You talk about wanting to teach people. First of all, it is pretentious. But what will you teach them other than what you have learnt in your theosophical studies, and are you sure enough to vouch for them? No doubt, today, as you say, you would like a certitude, a proof, and this is what you hope to find in the Mongolian monasteries. You hope to find there traces,

5. It is this letter which is missing from Paul's Dossier of Correspondence.

either of a revelation, an intervention of superior and divine beings, or at least of some occult knowledge unknown to our western world. But, don't you see, ten thousand years ago men were the same as they are today. They obeyed the same necessities and you will find there man's fine effort, in the beautiful expression of Jaurès, "to lull human suffering to sleep", but you will not find anything else there. Well, they are your ideas and I don't agree with them; but at least they are your own ideas and you are living according to your ideas, and that is a condition for happiness.

However, that is mainly your affair. And what you have undertaken is not without courage, nor without beauty and your endeavour does not pain me. I think that with your wonderful qualities of energy, of work, of abnegation, your marvellous aptitude to learn, you could have made yourself more useful to your fellowmen, because that is the goal which you are pursuing. For, looking more closely at what you have done during these three years, and because you speak of teaching others, it would be good to teach oneself. Now, what is the outcome of these three years that you have spent? Where are the beautiful schemes that led to your departure? And the prophecies of Madame Lubienska and of Madame Potel? You have won friends, I don't doubt that and that is very natural, but on the whole I see only one tangible result, it is that you have pulled the miserable Lubienski household out of misery. That is very noble, but for that you have abandoned your parents, your country, and you have worked like a galley-slave during three of the most beautiful years of your life. Well, let me tell you that it was dupery, and that with the noblest sentiments, if these are not controlled by reason, one merely adds another chapter to the story of Don Quixote. Well, that is now a thing of the past. Perhaps in time you will arrive at this conclusion by yourself. That will be infinitely better because it is thus that experience comes.

In any case, in what you have undertaken now, I follow you keenly; and then, after all, it is better than going to play bridge;⁶ it is not for me to judge you!

Your photograph has given us much pleasure; we have found you again as we loved you, and then you have almost announced your returning to us.

So, my dear child, I embrace you with all my affection and with much joy at getting you back a little.

Your father

Signed: Paul⁷

6. Paul loved to play bridge.

7. Paul had recopied his letter after crossing out the following paragraph: "... and you live according to your ideas and that is one of the conditions of happiness.

"After all, a man must have a hobby horse in his life, and one is not worse than another. That a man pursues fortune, glory, love — it is the quest for the goal to be attained which is the condition, the very reason of life, and if, by chance one attains one's goal, one is stupefied to find that it is really not much, and how great is the deception. You, you are seeking life eternal: evidently the risk of being deceived is less because it is difficult to attain this goal in one's lifetime.

"However, that is your affair. . ."

Draft of a letter from Paul to Philippe

September 17, 1924

My dear Philippe,

I often think of you and your new adventure which, moreover, I consider as a logical action consequent to your state of mind. You wish to go to the very source and there you hope to find a confirmation of what you have been told, you are looking for that which will enlighten your religion; what you will find there, that is something else. Indeed one must not yield to the mirage of the past centuries, and the manuscripts — however ancient and respectable they may be — are but the products of the human brain. But considered differently, as documents, as historical teachings, they are of great interest. The other day I was talking to a sub-editor of the journal *Le Temps*, who sometimes comes for lunch at the club, and I asked him whether his paper would be interested in your travels. He has spoken to the editorial staff and he told me that *Le Temps* would be willing to publish your letters provided that they are informative for the readers and above all, that they are not written from a theosophical point of view. In that case they will pay you 500 F per column or a column and a half. Therefore, if you find in your studies, your travels, your monastery, things of interest to the lay public, write about them in your letters and send them to me, I shall send you the money I get for them.

I want to discuss a subject with you which bothers me at times and even disturbs me. In your letters and particularly the last one, you talk of teaching people. What do you mean by that? If it relates to guiding people towards a moral, political or social goal, I understand perfectly; it is even a duty, and I deeply admire a man like Mahatma Gandhi. But by teaching, you do not intend to affirm something **that cannot be proved**. You do not mean to tell people: look this is what happens in the beyond, or I read in your past lives, or some other gratuitous and unverifiable affirmations. Because in that case, one is either a visionary or a charlatan. Being a visionary is a state for which one is not responsible, but the thing must be kept to oneself and not to be taken as a pretext for authority. To give oneself, as I see many a writer of the Theosophical Society doing, to some unverifiable affirmations, to convince people of one's particular gifts and powers, — now, that I consider as lacking in integrity, as something odious and dishonourable. And in that there is no invoking of some good intention because no human reasoning can prevail against truth, it is a crime against humanity, the consequences of which are always harmful. Even to relieve the human condition, one has no right to tell lies. Who can draw up a balance sheet of religions? I often I think of it, it is for me a cause of concern and I ask you to tell me your point of view and to reassure me on this point.

* * *

Ling-Shi-Shien, September 22, 1924

My dear Parents,

It is now almost three weeks since I have arrived at the monastery where my destiny has now brought me. The journey was quite long and tiring, as I indicated in my letter from Jehol, due to the terrible condition of the roads. Meanwhile I have profited much from my travels by looking and observing. I shall not tell you all the little incidents of the journey; they would be incomprehensible unless a whole volume were written. The Chinese authorities have shown themselves to be very obliging, too much in fact, because from Jehol they provided me with an escort which grew bigger bit by bit and on my arrival here numbered two officers and six men. As I had to feed and lodge the men and horses, I was in a hurry to arrive.

From Jehol, China has much similarity with the Haute-Saône with a little mixture of the Champagne and, often, the climate itself gave me the feeling of travelling through the Bourbonne region or towards Saint-Loup. Of course, there are numerous differences, yet to some extent, we can compare the Chinese from the North with our peasants; there are certain common traits, while the Japanese is fundamentally different. I must say that I prefer Japan to China in every respect. However the one which has affected me the most during my travels is physical cleanliness. The Chinese is dirtier than our peasant while the ordinary Japanese can give a few pointers to our high society. In Japan I have never had the least physical aversion nor dreaded any bodily contact; here it is not the same.

The Mongol is again very different from the Chinese. It is a fine race, solid and energetic, struggling painfully in a difficult country under Chinese domination. We in Europe (at least most people) do not have any idea of the differences between these races, which are more pronounced, much more, than between a German and a Frenchman. All have their dominant note and it is extremely interesting to see how all these peoples mix together and react with one another.

Now I well understand very well why Japan is way ahead of the other Asiatic nations: I do not think that China may be in a position to follow her example before many generations and I am sure of the greatest future for Japan to which I am very attached. The country where I am is quite wild. Lofty hills resembling those that dominate La Minelle, right on top, with short and sparse grass, and the sandy valleys forming the pasture land. In the distance vast sand dunes which formed the shore of the Sea of Gobi thousands of years ago when her borders were the cradle of our Aryan race.⁸ A few inhabitants, some tents and mud houses of the nomads, big scattered flocks of sheep, and above, a marvellous sky, very pure and very beautiful.

8. A theory which is now disputed.

The air is bracing and already cold; in the morning the temperature is 2 to 5 degrees above zero. In the winter it is very cold. The east wind comes directly from the plains of Siberia and Inner Mongolia is particularly icy. Only fur clothes can give protection. I am amply provided with woollen clothes and other necessities.

The lamasery is big; there are between 800 and 900 monks and another monastery of equal importance is 3 kilometres away; it is an important centre of Lamaism.

I cannot yet give you my impressions of the lamas themselves because at present many have gone home for the harvesting which requires all available hands in this country where the population is very spread out. Mongolia is ten times bigger than France and has only 2.6 million inhabitants, that is to say that it is a hundred times less populated than France. My monastery is somewhere near 118° 40' East longitude and 43° 30' North latitude, at an altitude of 500 to 600 metres.

Considering the customs of the country, I am settled comfortably enough and must not complain. What is really missing is a bath, but war has accustomed me to some of these privations. My lama is very good to me and does his best to make my stay pleasant; he worries much about me, even to a fault, for I am not that difficult.

I am, naturally, perfectly at peace, and when the curiosity aroused by my arrival will have died down, I shall be absolutely tranquil. My occupations are studies and meditation and I do not have the time to get bored. I have started speaking a little Mongolian, which is absolutely indispensable, but the progress is made difficult due to the absence of European books on the subject and of dictionaries.

I have talked enough of myself. I cannot tell you how long I am going to stay because I know absolutely nothing about it. Have you received my long registered letter from Peking, the note from Jehol and the photos that must have been sent to you from Tokyo? Among them some are for Albert because I preferred to send them all together, the risk of their getting damaged would be less. You will see me in multiple transformations of physiognomy. Personally, I prefer the beard, but here it would be impossible and there is a wise rule laid down by the Rosicrucian brothers and which I try to apply: it is that a Rosicrucian must adopt the habits and customs of the country where he finds himself. Besides, we, the French, adapt ourselves well enough.

I have naturally no news of you since my departure because the letters, if there are any, must follow me. The postal communications are not easy and I can send or receive letters once a month on an average. As you would think, I myself have often thought lovingly of you, also not without a certain sadness; you understand me, it is not necessary that I insist. I know, myself, and I feel, although far from you, the suffering that I have indirectly caused you; it has left traces on father's photograph. May it not have been in vain!

I dare not ask what you are doing, for fear of bothering you. Also having

spoken too much about myself, I end by embracing you with all my heart, as a loving son.

Signed: Philippe

P.S. Address: Ph. Barbier Saint Hilaire
Tung-Ta-Miao
Ling-Shi-Shien China
Put a sticker on the envelope.

By the way, if you want to send me a gift for Christmas, I accept it. There must be new interesting books (occult or theosophical). Send them by post along with a few photographs of you and the family! I should also like to receive *Les Atomes* by Perrin (Librairie Flammarion) and *Le Radium* by F. Soddy.

(To be continued)

PHILIPPE BARBIER SAINT HILAIRE

(Translated by Aniruddha Sircar from the original French *Itinéraire d'un enfant du siècle* by Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire, published by Buchet/Chastel, Paris, 2001. Our thanks for their kind permission.)

The method of gathering of the mind is not an easy one. It is better to watch and separate oneself from the thoughts till one becomes aware of a quiet space within into which they come from outside.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 733)

GLIMPSES OF PAVITRA

From the Reminiscences of Pavitra and Mrityunjoy

[We reproduce below the first half of an eight-part series published in Mother India in 1988-89.

Although a number of our readers will be familiar with it, we feel that more recent readers will find in it something to better appreciate the Itinerary of a Child of the Century currently featured in the journal.]

Introduction

“PAVITRA” is the Sanskrit name given by Sri Aurobindo to his French disciple Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire. At the age of twenty-six, Pavitra left France for the Far East — a young man in search of a spiritual teaching and master. He lived three years in Japan and then a year in China and Mongolia before coming to India in 1925 to meet Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He remained at their Ashram in Pondicherry for the next forty-four years, until his passing in May 1969 at the age of seventy-five.

One of those who worked closely with Pavitra during his years at the Ashram was a Bengali sadhak named Mrityunjoy. After Pavitra’s death, Mrityunjoy wrote down what his friend had told him about his early life. The narrative is sketchy, for as Mrityunjoy noted: “A detailed account of Pavitra’s early life is not possible, as he never gave much importance to it. But at times he let out small bits about himself.” Yet even these “small bits” are instructive. Mrityunjoy also began an account of Pavitra’s years in the Ashram, but broke it off with the early 1930s. Although incomplete, it provides an interesting perspective of the beginning of the Ashram and Pavitra’s role in it.

In this compilation, Mrityunjoy’s recollections have been interwoven with portions from an autobiographical talk given by Pavitra in 1964 to the students of the Ashram school. The two accounts complement each other and provide a completer picture of Pavitra’s life. Mrityunjoy’s reminiscences were written in English; Pavitra’s talk was in French and appears here in translation.

Part 1
Boyhood and Youth — France: 1894-1914

Mrityunjoy's reminiscences begin with anecdotes from Pavitra's childhood and student life.

Not much is known about Pavitra's early life. While he lived in the Ashram he attached little importance to it and only mentioned small details or incidents for the sake of illustration. The picture that emerges from these anecdotes is incomplete, but nevertheless revealing.

Pavitra was born in Paris on the 16th of January, 1894. His father, Paul Barbier Saint-Hilaire, an advocate, was a typical Frenchman: active, cultured, intelligent, well-bred in thought and bearing. His mother was an affectionate woman, but also a disciplinarian. They had two sons, Albert and Philippe (Pavitra), and were eager to help their children. They believed in giving them freedom and full scope for learning, but at the same time did not wish them to exceed the limits set by their age.

When Pavitra was ten or eleven years old, his father bought him a bicycle for his birthday. He had already learned to cycle and now started roaming far and wide. One day, the housemaid — who had brought him up from childhood and was almost like a mother to him — had a celebration at her house. The place was quite a few miles outside Paris, but Pavitra took it into his head to go there, and cycled all the way without telling his parents! The maid and her husband were overjoyed to see him, but surprised that he had dared to make the long ride alone. They were in a festive mood and served their young guest with lots of food and drink, filling him with meat and cake and other delicacies, topped off with wine. Wine was something new to Pavitra, and he took far more of it than his hosts would have liked. Soon he felt drowsy and fell asleep. Meanwhile his parents grew worried: they didn't know where he was — perhaps he had been involved in an accident! Nobody could tell them anything. In the end Pavitra's father lodged a report with the police, and they issued an alert. The people of the suburb in which the maid lived discovered Pavitra sleeping but safe. The maid's husband, a washerman, put the boy and his cycle on a mule-cart and took him home to Paris. Pavitra was still fast asleep! His parents were naturally relieved, but his father was also upset — the child had gone beyond his limits and needed to be taught a lesson. He did not beat or scold the boy, but rather shaved his head and painted it red. Pavitra discovered this only when he woke up the next morning. He felt sorry and ashamed, but was also a bit angry at what he thought to be unreasonable on the part of his father. After all, what had happened? He had merely come back home a little late. His father, still upset, ordered him to be given only bread and water for the day. Pavitra did not go to school for several days, which was painful to him; but he learned his lesson.

On another occasion, probably not much later, he began to tinker with his

bicycle, opening its nuts and bolts. He had been given a wrench along with the cycle. Soon the whole cycle was dismantled. His father discovered the child's unwise move, but did not reprove him; he only said: "Now put it back together again." And as a help he bought his son a booklet on cycle repairs and a few more tools. Pavitra found the job so difficult that he asked his father to let him take the bicycle to a mechanic, offering to pay the charges from his pocket money. But his father refused permission and quietly insisted that since he had dismantled it he would have to assemble it again. So the youngster went on labouring day after day, opening and refitting the different parts. It took twenty-one days, but at last he succeeded in putting the cycle back on its wheels! Much relieved, he also felt happy and proud. And his father praised him for his perseverance. Is it to be wondered at that in later years this boy became an expert in all kinds of machine work?

On another birthday, Pavitra's father bought him a small electric motor with a set of metal-polishing components. Happy to have it, he used to busy himself opening the brushes, cleaning and refitting them. And of course he studied the electric motor, but this time he did not completely dismantle it. His experience with the cycle had made him wiser. He also helped his mother by polishing her small metal objects.

Another incident took place when Pavitra was studying in the upper classes of the school. Fond of Chemistry, he was trying an experiment with combustible materials in his mother's kitchen at home. There was some mistake, the experiment failed and the flasks broke. Flames burst out, clouds of smoke arose and black ashes settled on the food his mother had prepared. She was naturally displeased. Pavitra's father also rushed in to survey the situation. He did not get angry but gently told his son that he would get two unused rooms in the garden white-washed, so that Pavitra could set up a laboratory there. Once again his father's wise encouragement helped the child in his hobby; and we know that in later life laboratories and chemical experiments formed a part of Pavitra's activities. When he was in Japan, his lab was for some time his means of earning a living; and here in the Ashram, the 'Laboratoire' he set up is an important aspect of the Centre of Education.

During the long school vacations children often conduct themselves lazily, but Pavitra and his brother Albert were different. They spent their holidays methodically pursuing their hobbies. Pavitra's hobby was to collect insects. He would go to the nearby woods, bring new specimens home, study them with the help of books such as the Encyclopaedia, note down interesting details, and preserve the insects that could be saved. Later he would compare his collections with those of other students. His brother Albert was interested in telecommunications, telephones and wireless telegraphy. He used to collect electrical components and build receiving and transmitting sets; when the sets were ready, he would invite his parents and friends to try them out. Later in life Albert became a telecommunications engineer in Indochina. Pavitra spent a month with him there on his way from Japan to India.

Stamp-collecting was another hobby Pavitra developed in his childhood.

Many children in Europe — and quite a few in India also — used to cultivate this hobby; stamp collections were even passed on from generation to generation, like money or other property. Pavitra's father had a good stamp collection, and later Pavitra inherited a large portion of it. He offered this collection to the Mother, who asked him to continue it for Her. Philately is a skilled work, and one needs to undergo a long patient study to be really good at it. But Pavitra was. In his early years in Pondicherry, some local young men used to come to learn the technique from him.

Pavitra was not very good at games and sports however, nor did he have much inclination for them. He was far too interested in his studies. Students who stay in hostels usually go home during the vacations, but with Pavitra it was the reverse; he preferred to stay in his hostel. The reason, he explained, was that at home people were always coming and going — one could not concentrate on one's studies there!

Pavitra had a girl friend who used to visit him; but if she showed up late, he would not wait for her! And if he had started doing math problems, he would not see her that day! He mentioned this once, not as a joke but in all seriousness, when some teachers here were discussing how the children were wasting their time in gossip and neglecting studies.

Pavitra passed the Baccalauréat (corresponding to the Secondary School Exam, giving University Entrance qualification), and then did one year of *Mathématique Spéciale*. These courses do not have an exact equivalent in India, nor perhaps in England. He then went on to the *École Polytechnique*, to study Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, and finally to specialise in his chosen field, Engineering. The *École Polytechnique*, it may be pointed out, is very different from the institutions in India which are called Polytechnics. The *École* was established by Napoleon, and it is still the best technical institute in France. At that time each student was guaranteed a government job after graduation, and admissions were strictly restricted. Pavitra had a high rank in the list of entrants to the School.

Students of the Polytechnique were generally serious about their studies, but they also had their share of fun. On one occasion they figured out a way to lift a heavy cannon from the ground floor up to a terrace on the fifth floor. The feat created a sensation, even inspiring awe and admiration. But some people outside the *École* were critical of the school authorities; they spread a rumour that the government had placed the gun up there in order to shoot at the civilians below! A youthful prank almost turned into a national problem. Military training was compulsory for all Polytechnique students, which made it easy for them to get commissioned as officers if they were called for military service. Pavitra too had to undergo a year's military training during his Polytechnique days. When war was declared in August 1914, he was called up and assigned to an artillery regiment for further training. He was then twenty years of age.

Part 2 The War — France: 1914-1918

Pavitra's talk begins with an account of his wartime years and his opening to spiritual life.

During the First World War, most of the four years that it lasted were taken up with trench-warfare, meaning that the two armies were entrenched opposite each other. They had dug trenches, shelters, and lived, day after day, night after night, in conditions that were often difficult and sometimes, but not always, dangerous; their enemies were: cold, rain, disease, boredom, and sometimes of course, enemy shells and bullets. Well, at that time I was a junior officer. I was just twenty in 1914. I had studied Science. I had been at the École Polytechnique for a year and, like all the students, I had undergone some military training before entering the School. And in 1914, just at the time the war broke out, in August, I was scheduled to go and spend some time as a private in an artillery regiment — after one year of college during which we had studied mainly Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.

War was declared just the day before I was supposed to join my regiment. So I joined it, but the conditions were different, and we were immediately put 'under pressure', which meant riding four or five hours a day. In those days that was supposed to be the best preparation for warfare. Then there was theory. . . . Anyway, it was quite intensive, and after a few months, on the strength of this military training we had undergone, they appointed us sub-lieutenants of artillery. And in October, the end of October, four months after the beginning of the war, we left for the Front.

I was in a battery, as a junior officer, in a battery of 105's: what the English call a four-inch gun. It was a new piece of rapid-firing equipment, which France was very proud of — interesting.

At that point, I was a young man who had all the ordinary interests of any ordinary young man at that age. I was just like all my fellows. I had the same ideas, the same interests as the young men around me. I enjoyed my studies — in general I liked what I was doing, because I preferred liking it to not liking it. It makes life easier! But when I look back on my past, I cannot say that I had any spiritual aspirations. I was brought up in the Catholic religion, but it didn't especially interest me. Actually I hadn't really thought much about it.

Well, during the war, we sometimes had 'hard pushes' — difficult periods — but also at times we had a lot of free time on our hands. I don't know how — it was probably the hand of fate — I began to read a few books about so-called 'psychic phenomena' — things that the science of the day did not study at all, things that it rejected, considered outside its province, non-scientific.

There were all kinds of things: telepathy, clairvoyance, mediums, all those things; even pendulums and divining — everything that is rather on the borders of

science. I went into it in a scientific spirit, simply to find out about it, thinking, “How strange! Here is a whole domain that Science does not deal with. Why? No one knows.”

I never practised these things, I never took any interest in practical experiments with mediums, predictions and all that. That was not what interested me. It was the possibility that these things existed. “Do they exist? Are they true? Are they false? Why doesn’t Science examine them? It was not that I wanted to gain these powers or to know the future or things about myself — no! Then gradually, from one book to another, I began to read about what in Europe is called occultism. I won’t mention any authors, but I read whatever there was to be read on that subject, so-called ‘magic’ — not black magic, that didn’t interest me, but ‘magic’: the possibility of controlling certain forces, of proving their existence. And then I went back to the Middle Ages — because when you study occultism, you are naturally obliged to turn to the period when occultism was flourishing: the Kabbala, the secret initiatory societies, the Hebrew tradition, then alchemy (in the spiritual sense, the transformation of nature); and then the modern occultists — and the door to India.

I have to say that it was Theosophy which opened the door to India for me, and for this I am extremely grateful. And in Europe, especially at that time, there was not much else. It was the Theosophists who translated many of the Indian sacred texts and made them available, almost fashionable, who made the ideas of reincarnation, karma, perfection on earth, the ideal of the *jivanmukta*, available to the Western mind; these ideas are there in Theosophy.

So, for my part, as far as I can remember, when I came across these ideas of reincarnation and karma, they seemed perfectly natural to me. Self-evident. From the moment I saw these ideas of reincarnation and karma, I never doubted them for a second — I adopted them as a part of myself. It all seemed obvious to me. I knew, of course, that they could not be proved, so there was no use discussing them: either you accept them or you don’t.

So with these ideas from India, I entered a new phase — a new phase of . . . of aspiration for spiritual perfection. You see, there are two ways of studying Indian religions. One is from outside (as Westerners, Frenchmen, usually do), without participating in them, without living them. In that case you study India just as you would study a colony of bees or ants: you report what they think and what they do. But the other way, and the only one that interested me, was, well, to live it — first to understand, and then to live it. It was the ideal of a perfection that could be realised by men in the course of time, in the course of many lives, that really appealed to me — it seemed both correct and worth living for.

But the war was still going on. For two years, I was at the Front, going from one position to another, still with the artillery, the 105’s. And then, for another two years or so, I was at an army headquarters as an artillery reconnaissance officer, where I had a job that was almost a desk-job, but which was very interesting because

it meant collecting all the available information and passing it on to the artillery of an army. (An army would include a variable number of corps; each corps was made up of two or three divisions; the divisions had two brigades; a brigade was made up of a certain number of regiments — that is, several thousand men; so a corps represented one or two hundred thousand men at the Front, with a considerable amount of artillery and twelve or fifteen air-squadrons.) So it was a matter of research — collecting, scrutinising, sifting through every kind of information that could be gathered. And at the same time I had another task, a work of personal contact with the units, the units at the Front — with visitors, with foreigners, because, after a certain time, there were lots of Americans. There were Englishmen too.

But all the free time I had — there wasn't much, we were very busy — I devoted to reading, often far into the night. And these ideas took possession of me more and more; I surrendered to them, consecrated myself to them. And in a few years — from 1917 onwards, that makes two years — my outlook had changed completely. I had been, I can't even say "a materialist", because I didn't have any opinion on the matter. I was, as I told you, a young man who had received a scientific, logical, rigorous training, but I had never thought about these matters. But once they entered my thoughts, my feelings, I gave myself to them completely.

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Mrityunjoy adds a number of details about Pavitra's war years and his interest in occultism.

A job in the Artillery was one of the toughest assignments in the Army, and generally the most able men were selected. For the first two years of the war, Pavitra was in the front line. When he was promoted to the rank of captain and became a reconnaissance officer, he had more office work than active duty; but, as he soon realised, it was an even more serious and delicate task than manipulating guns, for it involved risks not only to himself but to his whole division. Pavitra had to collect information, classify it, and pass it on to his superiors. He also had to go on reconnaissance flights to risky positions behind enemy lines. He told us that on one occasion the report he brought back did not quite support the situation his commanding officer believed to exist, and to act upon the information would have meant a change in the line of action. The officer therefore asked Pavitra to check his data again, warning him of his responsibility, and even suggesting that he repeat the mission if it were feasible. Ultimately all went well and Pavitra's report was accepted.

During this period in the Intelligence Branch, one of his important assignments was to meet people. He often had to take visitors to the Front, mostly American and English, who were war correspondents. He would show them the troops, introduce them to the field officers, give them a picture of the fighting and explain

the possible gains and losses. To do that well, he had to have a thorough knowledge of what was happening. It was not an easy job.

Pavitra often told us that unless one has served in wartime, one cannot fully know the meaning of duty, obedience, alertness and acceptance of difficult conditions — qualities, in a word, that are necessary to any spiritual discipline. Also hard labour. Trench warfare was common in those days. The soldiers had to dig long deep trenches, piling up sand and mud in front of them, then fight from inside them, standing or kneeling according to the depth of the trench. Sometimes they would have to dig the trenches, wait inside them for days and nights on end, often in freezing cold, and then, after a week's vigilance, suddenly be ordered to abandon them and draw back. When it rained, the soldiers had to stand in water. Many would fall sick. Sometimes the soldiers had to march for days with very little food or water; on reaching their destination, they would simply collapse and fall asleep. Pavitra gave this as an example of the body's power of endurance until it reaches its goal. He was speaking from his personal experience.

But during the war there were also periods of leisure. Pavitra spent such time reading serious books. He was not interested in novels, dramas and detective stories — he was a student of science. Sometime in 1917, guided by a hidden hand as it were, he began reading books outside the domain of science proper — books on what the scientists would call psychic phenomena. In his study of modern occultism he read the works of the Theosophists Madame Blavatsky and Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant. Theosophy, he said, opened the door to India for him. He read with deep interest the books on Tantra by Sir John Woodroffe, especially his *Shakti and Shakta*. Some of these books were in his room for many years, and later were sent to the Ashram Library.

Along with his studies of occultism, Tantra and Indian scriptures, Pavitra started placing restrictions on his food, like orthodox Indians. He gave up meat and fish and wine, but at this time he was still at the Front! Vegetarianism there was highly inconvenient and seemed almost fanatical. His fellow-officers felt sorry for him and hoped that good sense would prevail. Wine was part of a Frenchman's diet; to give it up could only be a narrow moralist's virtue! But Pavitra was ready to undergo such misunderstandings, and his new attitude to food remained the same to the end of his life. Yet it was hard on his system to remain a vegetarian, particularly under war conditions and in cold weather. Naturally, in the exigencies of war, food could not always be served at regular times. Pavitra suffered many intestinal disturbances at that time and the trouble persisted throughout his life.

The war also affected his sleeping habits. There were periods when the troops could sleep reasonably well but others when there was little regular sleep; they would have to sleep out in the open on straw, in the midst of the thunderous sound of exploding shells. Pavitra's nerves were affected, and later in life the slightest noise would wake him from sleep: he would appear a bit shocked and upset, like a child.

A Polytechnique friend of Pavitra, junior to him by one year, was stationed with him at the Front in Champagne, and held the same rank — that of captain. Their friendship grew closer through their common attraction towards the extraordinary. Whenever they could meet during their spare time at the Front, they would discuss religion, occultism and such subjects. This friend, André Monestier, had been brought up in a rigorous Catholic environment, while Pavitra's surroundings had been free from any such orthodoxy. Thus Monestier, due to his upbringing, was rigid in his belief in Catholicism, whereas Pavitra was inclined towards the Theosophists and tried to influence his friend by sharing his thoughts with him.

After the war Pavitra completed his engineering studies and was assigned a responsible high post in Paris, but he left it soon and went to Japan in search of his Guru. Monestier became an industrial engineer in the same line as Albert, Pavitra's brother, and plunged himself more and more into worldly activities. He did not keep in touch with Pavitra, but he remembered their old friendship. As the years passed Monestier understood more clearly why the Christian faith in which he had been brought up failed to satisfy the scientific curiosity of his friend Pavitra. Even though he did not keep in direct contact with Pavitra, Monestier was always keen to know about him through his brother Albert. Albert regularly informed him of Pavitra's life in the Ashram, and quite naturally about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Thus it is not surprising that one day this friend should come to see Pavitra in the Ashram.

Monestier has written about his association with Pavitra in his book, *En Inde sur les sentiers de l'œcuménisme*, which was published in France in 1966, shortly after his return to Europe from Pondicherry.

* * *

(To be continued)

PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY
(Compiled from their writings)

(Reprinted with some editorial changes from the May and June 1988 issues of *Mother India*.)

ON PAVITRA

André Monestier dedicates his book to Pavitra with these words: “To my friend Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire to whom I owe some of the richest hours of my life.”

He also evokes his friendship with Pavitra in the Introduction:

A FRIENDSHIP founded on spiritual affinities is a precious gift of Providence.

Unlike superficial friendships which are so easily destroyed by time or the events of life, a deeper friendship endures always and becomes a source of increasing richness.

During the First World War I found myself in an artillery regiment on the front at Champagne with one of my fellow students of the École Polytechnique, like me, a young officer — Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire.

Brought up in a not too devout family, he had suddenly felt a need for spirituality and devoted all the time his military duties permitted to the study of Theosophy. We had frequent discussions about the comparative merits of Catholicism (with a slight Jansenist slant) in which I had been brought up and the attractive concepts of Annie Besant to which my friend tried to convert me.

This dialogue led first to a solid mutual friendship, but also, deeper in us, the feeling that perhaps Truth was not to be found exactly in the positions that each of us defended.

Then, the tribulations of war separated us . . . and each followed divergent paths — without however cutting off contact altogether.

Barbier Saint-Hilaire, after coming out of the Xth regiment at the end of the War, gave up a brilliant career as Civil Engineer which was open to him, to go to Japan to settle there. He hoped to find in the East a form of religion or a way of spiritual life which would satisfy his aspirations.

After spending three years in Tokyo, he started off — as a Buddhist monk, with shaven head and dressed in an ochre robe — for a monastery of lamas in the depths of Mongolia.

Disappointed with his sojourn there, a year later he started a reverse journey on foot and horseback, giving up the ochre robe, and from Tokyo set off for India, with the intention of finding there a sage about whom he had come to know.

So it was that on a certain December day in 1925, my friend came and knocked on the door of the Ashram established a few years earlier by Sri Aurobindo . . .

ANDRÉ MONESTIER

(Translated from the French *En Inde sur les sentiers de l'œcuménisme* by André Monestier, published by G. de Bussac, Clermont-Ferrand, France, 1966)

AN INTRODUCTION TO SRI AUROBINDO'S *RECORD OF YOGA*

(Based on a Talk Delivered at the Cultural Integration Fellowship,
San Francisco, 2008)

I

Dear friends,

I would like to talk today about the recently published diaries of Sri Aurobindo that go by the name of *The Record of Yoga*. 'The Record of Yoga' was a name used by Sri Aurobindo himself, as a title in one of his diaries, and the name of the published volumes is derived from this. These diary entries have been published in two volumes — the bulk of it was written from 1912 to 1920; during this period the entries were regular. You may have heard of some controversies about the published volumes, some people believe that they should never have been published, some believe these shouldn't be talked about and some believe that they misrepresent Sri Aurobindo's yoga or his teaching. In terms of Sri Aurobindo's own yoga and his formulation of it, certain things changed after the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry in 1920. So there is an opinion that Sri Aurobindo's practice and teaching changed after 1920. I believe there is some merit to this view, but it is overstated. At the least, one could make a very strong case for people to read this work because it represents something historical, something very important from the viewpoint of understanding Sri Aurobindo as a yogi and a person. They are his autobiographical notes, and make much more concrete what it means to practise the Integral Yoga, because these are the steps he took and the results of his efforts.

Regarding whether or how his yoga and/or its formulation changed after 1920, we need to remember that in *The Record of Yoga*, he is writing not for the general public but for himself, what he experienced. So it relates to his personal sadhana, his own yoga. While conversing with his disciples Sri Aurobindo once remarked that a Yogi experiences far more than he ever expresses to the general public. But how does the *Record* relate to us as fledgling sadhaks, people who are scratching the surface of the vast and complex reality of the Integral Yoga?

The Sapta Chatusthaya: Bijas of the Integral Yoga

To approach this question without preconception, we need to give careful and sustained attention to this text. Towards this attempt, we find that Sri Aurobindo

gives us his own synoptic guide to his diary notes. Without this, it would have been next to impossible to make sense of the notes, because it is written in a language which is his own — his own creation. It is mostly a cryptic style of English telegraphese, very extensively peppered with Sanskrit; plus the meanings of the Sanskrit terms are not what you might commonly expect if you looked for them in a Sanskrit lexicon. Of course, now there exists a Glossary for the *Record of Yoga*, on the internet, which is very helpful to those who wish to study these notes in detail. But even with the glossary we would be in a clueless forest of obscurity had there not been Sri Aurobindo's own schematic introduction, which he wrote in 1912 or 1913 and called the "Sapta Chatusthaya".

The first volume of the *Record of Yoga* begins with this "Sapta Chatusthaya" in two versions with some incomplete notes written by Sri Aurobindo. The *Sapta Chatusthaya* itself is a consolidated chart, classifying the lines of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana and the *siddhis* or results, which he wanted to achieve, and was tracking in his diary notes. *Sapta* means seven and *Chatusthaya* has been loosely translated as tetrad or I would say, quartet — sets of four, seven quartets comprise this *Sapta Chatusthaya*. Those who just read these first pages of the *Record*, and contemplate on what Sri Aurobindo says in and about the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, will find that this is already a tremendous help in the Integral Yoga. This is because these condensed statements and terms are like *bijas*. In Tantra, we find the notion of *bijas* — *bijas* are seeds, the Tantrics speak of *bija mantras* which are syllables to repeat, the supposition being that they are connected vibrationally to something elemental, which will open up an entire world of experience at a certain level of consciousness. So the *Sapta Chatusthaya* can be taken as a set of *bijas* of the Integral Yoga.

Through the main period of these diary notes, Sri Aurobindo was also writing the *Arya*, so there is an overlap of the *Record* in terms of contemporaneity, with parts of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, for example. Later Sri Aurobindo revised parts of the *Synthesis* and *The Life Divine* and wrote other works, such as *The Mother* and *The Supramental Manifestation on Earth*, where there are new terms and emphases but the *bijas* of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* can be seen to be present in all these works. I would say it is best to come to the *Record* after reading all the rest of Sri Aurobindo's written works. The ideal situation, I feel, would be to read *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Life Divine*, *Savitri*, *The Mother*, *The Supramental Manifestation on Earth* and then to read the one page summary of *Sapta Chatusthaya* at the start of the *Record of Yoga*. Suddenly everything comes together in a little gestalt, a microcosmic integral unit. But what I propose to do today is the reverse of this, in the sense that I will talk about the *Sapta Chatusthaya* first and then try to relate it to the wider corpus of his works. There is also an opinion that only a little part of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* actually makes its way into the larger corpus of Sri Aurobindo's works. But my belief is that most, if not all of it, makes its way into his complete oeuvre, in some form or the other, and all of it continued to be the basic selective scheme through

which he viewed and organised his own experience, albeit with some modifications.

The Yoga of Self-Perfection

So the first text in *The Record of Yoga* is ‘The Sapta Chatusthaya’. We find the *Record* beginning with Sri Aurobindo’s elaboration of the first three quartets followed by summary descriptions of the next four; then a schematic outline of the seven *Chatusthayas* with a notation in parenthesis saying “revised order”. This is then followed by a few pages of incomplete notes on the first few quartets. Here we see there has been a revision, which means there was a prior order which he has presented differently here. It would be interesting to look at the original order and see how he has revised it. The revised order begins with *Siddhi Chatusthaya*. *Siddhi Chatusthaya* refers to the quartet of *Siddhis*. *Siddhi* is a Sanskrit term which is not so easy to translate. Some people think of it as “occult powers”, some think of it more generally as “fulfilment” or “perfection”. Sri Aurobindo uses the term “self-perfection” in *The Synthesis of Yoga* — the fourth section of the *Synthesis* is called ‘The Yoga of Self-Perfection’. So this is what he means by *Siddhi*. The quartet or four limbs of this perfection, the *siddhis* of *Siddhi* or the perfections of Perfection if we want to call it that — elsewhere he also calls it *Yoga Chatusthaya*, so we may also think of it as the general perfections of Yoga — are *Shuddhi*, *Mukti*, *Bhukti* and *Siddhi*.

In Part IV (‘The Yoga of Self-Perfection’) of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, where he elaborates on this, we find his translations for these terms. In Chapter Four — ‘The Perfection of the Mental Being’ — he lays out the psychology of the mental being, partly as it comes to us from an older Indian psychology and partly as he has developed it. Following this, in Chapter Five, ‘The Instruments of the Spirit’, he continues with the psychology of mind and relates it to the chapter title by showing that mind is not the knower in man but an instrument of Knowledge. It is meant to be used by the true knower, which is the Spiritual Being. The mind is the inner instrument, *antahkarana*, and its constituents are the instruments of the Spirit. Following this, he launches into two Chapters — ‘Purification, the Lower Mentality’ and ‘Purification, Intelligence and Will’. Here he establishes two broad divisions for the mind — the lower mentality on the one hand and intelligence and will on the other. And it is the purification of these that he refers to as *Shuddhi*, purification, the first of the *siddhis* of the *Siddhi Chatusthaya* and the foundation for all the rest.

The second *siddhi* in the quartet is *Mukti* which means liberation. We find that two Chapters following the ones on purification deal with this, chapters titled ‘The Liberation of the Spirit’ and ‘The Liberation of the Nature’. It is a twofold liberation — I’ll touch on this in a moment, as to why this is so central and so important to Sri Aurobindo’s whole schema. The third *siddhi* here is *Bhukti*. *Bhukti* is translatable as ‘enjoyment’. Here we find a gap in the ‘Yoga of Self-Perfection’, since there is no independent chapter on enjoyment. The next *siddhi* is given as *Siddhi* itself. This

seems like a recursive description, the *Siddhi Chatusthaya* sets out to describe the perfection of Perfection and attempts to do so by saying that the most perfect thing about the perfection of Perfection is Perfection. This is the esoteric style in which he presents his own notes to himself! The second Chapter in the 'Yoga of Self-Perfection' is titled 'The Integral Perfection' and following the two Chapters on Liberation, we find Chapter Ten titled 'The Elements of Perfection'. In these two Chapters, he elaborates on *Siddhi*. In the last paragraph of Chapter Ten, he also breezes through the *siddhis* of *Bhukti*, or Enjoyment.

'The Yoga of Self-Perfection' then moves into what the revised order of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* places as its 4th quartet — the *Shanti Chatusthaya*. This, in fact is the first quartet in the original order, and there designated as *Samata Chatusthaya* or the quartet of Equality. In the 'Yoga of Self-Perfection', this quartet is covered in three chapters from Chapter Eleven to Chapter Thirteen. Sri Aurobindo often portrays *Samata*, equality or *Shanti*, peace as the firm foundation of the Integral Yoga and hence, it is not surprising that this quartet becomes the first of the *adhara siddhis* in his scheme. The 'Yoga of Self-Perfection' follows with chapters on the *Shakti Chatusthaya* and the *Vijnana Chatusthaya*; and that's where the 'Yoga of Self-Perfection' ends.

In the revised order of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* we were considering, the second *Chatusthaya*, the one following *Siddhi*, is the *Brahma Chatusthaya*, the quartet relating to Brahman. Brahman is translated by Sri Aurobindo as Reality or Being. In a rough translation it may be referred to as the One Being there is. This is followed by the third quartet, *Karma Chatusthaya* which you could say is the quartet of work, action. The fourth one is *Shanti Chatusthaya* or the quartet of peace. The next one is *Shakti Chatusthaya* or the quartet of power. The next one is *Vijnana Chatusthaya* or the Quartet of Knowledge. And the final one is the quartet of the body, *Sharira Chatusthaya*.

Integrality of the Sapta Chatusthaya

If we take stock of this scheme, we see that Sri Aurobindo has divided the lines of his Integral Yoga into seven different approaches. In considering the *siddhis*, each of these seems very attractive, each one of these calls out as a goal to pursue. I'd like to have power, I'd like to have knowledge, I'd like to have delight, I'd like to have perfection of the body, would like to have perfection of action and all these are different kinds of very desirable goals. The reason why we immediately resonate with these is that they are seeded very deep within us as human aspirations. And Sri Aurobindo has put them all in this form and the beauty of it is that anybody who has studied *The Synthesis of Yoga* knows that each one of them is the entire Yoga.

Here is where we intuit the integrality. The idea of integrality in the term Integral Yoga can be summarised by saying that every part contains the whole. There is

nothing but the whole and all parts make up the whole and each part is the whole. This brings us to the sense of the sevenfold approach of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*. What Sri Aurobindo is presenting here is a totality with all its parts, where each part is the whole and each part is also separate and moving towards the harmony of the whole. So the following of the seven quartets is a simultaneous seven-pronged effort towards integrality — the integrality of each and the integrality of the whole. And Sri Aurobindo was practising all of them integrally, all at once, while also maintaining a view on the progress of each towards the perfection of integrality, what he also called the perfection of Perfection.

An index of that integral way in which he followed this sevenfold path is that he lays out the scheme we just considered, but in his diary notes, there are only a few places where he actually refers to these specific *Chatusthayas*. There are a few places where he writes the day's record in terms of these. For example, he lays out a heading like "Shanti" and then he writes what happened regarding progress in this area or he writes "Shakti" followed by what happened in that area, etc. But mostly, the entries refer to the Sanskrit terms that constitute the *siddhis* or sub-*siddhis* in each of these *Chatusthayas* and often, he refers not even to these terms, but to synonyms. We may speculate on the reason for this; and here I'd say this kind of self-expression arises because he is following a progress of his yoga in two dimensions. The seven *Chatusthayas* may be thought of as one of these dimensions, but there is another dimension which cuts across the seven; and the terms that he uses in describing the *siddhis* of these seven *Chatusthayas* also constellate around certain key practices, binding them across borders towards integrality. For example, there is a concern for Peace. How to arrive at peace? Of course, there is a quartet of Peace or Equality, but there is also some practice related to peace, in the quartets of Being, of Knowledge, perhaps in all of the quartets or in some of them. Similarly there is a concern with the Will. How to arrive at the Perfection of the Will in action? There are elements that run through all the quartets which relate to Will. Similarly, Enjoyment — this is a very important aspect, one of the principal goals of the yoga.

Shuddha Bhoga

One may think that this yoga is above all a practice of austere disciplines. Of course, there is an austere side to the yoga. Sri Aurobindo teaches that a "clear austerity" is to be kept at all times as a firm foundation of the yoga. But this is not incompatible with a pure or divine enjoyment. Sri Aurobindo uses the term "*shuddha bhoga*" for this. When we read the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, we find that the central goal of the yoga, and the crux of its development is the growth of the power of pure enjoyment. The Integral Yoga is undertaken for the realisation of a perfect and integral Bliss, for Ananda. And thus, this becomes another of the goals which cuts across the *Chatusthayas*. Indeed, we may say that the detail and variety of Ananda in this

document is not paralleled in any mystic literature. Among Sri Aurobindo's own writings, nowhere else has he referred to such a variety of forms of Ananda that are possible to the human being and aspects of his divine realisation.

There is also surrender. Often we hear a reductionist view that Sri Aurobindo did not know about the psychic being prior to the Mother's coming. These views are over-simplifications which stray far afield in realms of ungrounded speculation. When we read *The Record of Yoga*, we find that one of the key threads which cuts across and ties the seven *Chatusthayas* is the core power of the psychic being, Surrender. And again, the close relationship between "surrender" and "delight" is also not to be lost sight of. It is surrender that brings happiness and delight into all our practices, however hard, arduous or austere. So Peace, Power, Delight, Knowledge, Surrender, you could say these are the five main strings that tie together the seven *Chatusthayas*.

Further, Sri Aurobindo also divides the seven *Chatusthayas* into two groups in terms of the nature of perfections or *siddhis* — he calls these the general *siddhis* and the *siddhis* more specific to the human being and instrumentality, the *adhara siddhis*. The *Samata*, *Shakti*, *Vijnana* and *Sharira Chatusthayas* are classed by him as the *adhara siddhis*, while the *Brahma*, *Karma* and *Siddhi Chatusthayas* are the general *siddhis*. This is what accounts for the difference between Sri Aurobindo's two formulations of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, the original order and the revised order. The original order started with the *Samata Chatusthaya*. The second one was *Shakti Chatusthaya*, the perfection of power, the third one was *Vijnana Chatusthaya*, perfection of knowledge and the fourth one *Sharira Chatusthaya*, the perfection of the body; and then he went on to the *Karma*, *Brahma* and *Siddhi Chatusthayas*. In other words, this ordering positioned the *adhara siddhis* before the general *siddhis*. In the revised order, he reversed the two sets — i.e. he places the general *siddhis* first and then the *adhara siddhis*.

If we compare this with *The Synthesis of Yoga* we see that the first two general *siddhis*, *Brahma* and *Karma Chatusthayas* are related to two of the three traditional yogas, the Yoga of Knowledge and the Yoga of Works. Indeed, the first two parts of the *Synthesis* deal with these two yogas. The third part, 'The Yoga of Divine Love', deals with the practices and concerns of devotion, surrender, faith and delight. As we saw earlier, these are also the disciplines that cut across all the specific practices or concerns of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*. Then, as we have already considered, the fourth part of the *Synthesis*, 'The Yoga of Self-Perfection' starts with the last of the general *siddhis*, the *yoga* or *Siddhi Chatusthaya*; and then follows this up with the first three of the *adhara siddhis*, the quartets of *Samata* or Equality, of *Shakti* or Power and of *Vijnana* or Knowledge.

The Quartet of Knowledge

So, in 'The Yoga of Self-Perfection', Sri Aurobindo covers the *Samata Chatusthaya* from Chapter Eleven to Chapter Thirteen — 'The Perfection of Equality', 'The Way of Equality' and 'The Action of Equality'. The next *Chatusthaya* is called *Shakti Chatusthaya*, the quartet of Power, and he covers this in five Chapters following the ones on *Samata* — 'The Power of the Instruments', 'Soul Force and the Fourfold Personality' — a very beautiful and important Chapter which Sri Aurobindo develops to its fullest expansion in the little book called *The Mother* — then there is 'The Divine Shakti', 'The Action of the Divine Shakti', 'Faith and Shakti' — all these Chapters have to do with the *Shakti Chatusthaya* which he elaborates further in the book *The Mother*. The remaining Chapters from the *Synthesis* then take up the *Vijnana Chatusthaya* — 'The Nature of the Supermind', 'The Intuitive Mind', 'The Gradations of the Supermind', 'The Supramental Thought and Knowledge', 'The Supramental Instruments', 'The Supramental Sense', and 'Towards the Supramental Time Vision'.

These are very important Chapters relating to the transition from rational knowledge, a form of *Avidya* or Ignorance to infallible knowledge, also known as *Vidya* or Knowledge, a transition facilitated by the development of the intermediate knowledge-mode of Intuition. The first *siddhi* of the *Vijnana Chatusthaya* is *Jnana* or Knowledge and the development of the intuitive faculties of truth-seeing, truth-hearing and intuition are what this *siddhi* is all about. The second of the *siddhis* of *Vijnana* is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Triple Time Vision or *Trikaladrishti*. This concerns the infallible knowledge of past, present and future; and the *Record* contains many very interesting entries of his experiments at developing the faculties leading to this. All these Chapters in *The Synthesis of Yoga* deal with the first two *siddhis* of the *Vijnana Chatusthaya*. But the third *siddhi* of this quartet, which he terms *Ashtasiddhi*, is not covered in this section.

The name *Ashtasiddhi* is quite popular in yoga literature due to its use by Patanjali. Sri Aurobindo's use of *Ashtasiddhi* or "the eight siddhis" bears a close resemblance with Patanjali's terminology, but is not exactly the same. *Ashtasiddhi* has to do with what are called paranormal faculties. Paranormal faculties and their development play an important role in *The Record of Yoga*. In his notes on the *Vijnana Chatusthaya* in the *Sapta Chatusthaya* section of the *Record*, Sri Aurobindo begins with an interesting essay on paranormal powers, where he points out that these powers are part of the natural functioning of a transformed humanity and need to be taken in stride in the progress of yoga, but not sought after for themselves or used for personal advantage. In his diary entries, we find that he devotes a good deal of attention to the development and progress of such powers in his own yoga.

The *Vijnana Chatusthaya* also includes as its last *siddhi*, *Samadhi* or Absorption. Though 'The Yoga of Self-Perfection' does not deal with this aspect either, we find

a chapter on *Samadhi* in 'The Yoga of Integral Knowledge' section of the *Synthesis*, which is clearly an elaboration of this aspect of the *Vijnana Chatusthaya*. As with many of the other terms, *Samadhi* for Sri Aurobindo does not mean a trance of world-excluding transcendence but rather an identification with a poise of Brahman or cosmic Purusha in each of its states or *avasthas* of waking world, *jagrat*, the inner or subliminal world, *swapna*, the supramental world, *susupti* and the infinite Unmanifest, *turiya*. Each of these identifications gives access to a world of knowledge and the aim of Sri Aurobindo is to keep the connection between these worlds in each of these forms of trance, so that it is possible to transmit knowledge of these deeper states to the waking world.

In terms of *Vijnana*, there is another difficulty that we also have to confront. This is the question of what exactly he meant by the term *Vijnana*; since this term is equated by him with 'Supermind', but there is some doubt regarding when he arrived at his final conception of supermind. There is some reason to believe that Sri Aurobindo refined his understanding regarding what he calls the "overhead planes" of universal Mind and may have equated Supermind with Overmind or even with the entire gamut of the overhead planes at the time when he was writing the bulk of the *Record* and the *Synthesis* (1914-1920). Be that as it may, certainly the philosophical qualitative distinction between Mind and Supermind was well in place by this time and the *Vijnana Chatusthaya* remains a guide to this higher Knowledge.

So the general *Siddhi Chatusthaya* and the first three *adhara siddhis* — *Samata*, *Shakti* and *Vijnana* — but without the *ashtasiddhis* — are what Sri Aurobindo elaborates in 'The Yoga of Self-Perfection'. The general opinion is that he left the rest without further description. But we find that he does touch on these other *Chatusthayas* in a variety of writings. The remaining *adhara siddhi*, the *Sharira Chatusthaya* makes an appearance in his last writings, *The Supramental Manifestation on Earth*, where he talks about the Divine Body and the powers and properties associated with it. And, as we have seen, he touches on the *Brahma Chatusthaya* in some chapters of 'The Yoga of Integral Knowledge' section of *The Synthesis of Yoga*; and certain chapters in 'The Yoga of Divine Works' section of the *Synthesis* relate to the *Karma Chatusthaya*.

(To be concluded)

DEBASHISH BANERJI

NIRODBARAN: THE SURREALIST'S JOURNEY

I am no more a vassal of the flesh,
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.

(*SABCL*, Vol. 5, p. 161)

THE lines mentioned above, written by Sri Aurobindo in his poem, 'Transformation', were perhaps uttered by Nirodbaran in the evening of 17th July 2006 after his immortal soul left his mortal body. The journey of his life which started 102 years ago ended on that day after completing its mission. And what a journey it was! His entire life was an example since he himself was an ideal Integral Yogi. But how can one understand or realise his greatness? What does one do, while he is in a hilly area, to have a distinct view of the scenic beauty around and beneath him? He ascends to the top-most peak of a hill and thus, gets to see everything. Nirodbaran was this peak and the world around him was the Aurobindonian world, where one could find oceans of spiritual experiences, cascades of eternal wisdom and paths leading to everlasting Light. He was our guide in the field of Integral Yoga. He himself had told a seeker when he was asked how can one reach Sri Aurobindo, "Only through the Mother." Similarly, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo both could be reached through Nirodbaran; as he was one of the few enlightened ones who lit our roads with the light of Guidance. This is my impression of him.

We are grateful to the land of Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) which gave birth to this great spiritual luminary. A son was born to Rajkumar Talukdar (who was a zamindar and businessman) and Chitrarekha on the 17th of November 1903 and the child was named Nirodbaran. Seventy years later, in 1973, on that very day, the Mother left her mortal body, so Nirodbaran used to celebrate his birthday in the Ashram on the 18th of November. It is said that at the time of his birth, Chitrarekha saw a "resplendent yogi" in her vision. It was only when she met Sri Aurobindo several years later that she recognised him as the same yogi who had appeared in her vision. To become a yogi was Nirodbaran's destiny, so the Lord himself came to choose him. It reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's famous words — "He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite." But the young boy's path in early life was not covered with flowers. Rajkumar Talukdar died prematurely when Nirodbaran was only five years of age. It is said that once when Nirodbaran fell quite ill, his father had prayed that father and son should die at the same time, for otherwise there would be none to look after the child. Eventually Nirodbaran recovered but his father passed away. (Does it not remind us of the story of Babur and Humayun, when the former willingly sacrificed his own life in order to save the latter since he

was told to sacrifice something that was dearest to him to facilitate his son's recovery?)

At the age of 11 or 12, Nirodbaran was admitted to Chittagong Town School and in 1920, he passed the Matriculation examination with flying colours. After that he was enrolled in Chittagong College but later, he migrated to Calcutta and joined Vidyasagar College. At that time, the entire country was aflame with the fire of the Non-Cooperation Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi. In the very first month of the movement, around ninety thousand students left their schools and colleges and in Calcutta, the students started a province-wide strike to compel the management of the educational institutions to disaffiliate themselves from the Government. Like other students, Nirodbaran too joined the movement. However, he was arrested along with other supporters and participants of the movement and was sentenced to seven months imprisonment but later, this was reduced to two months. After his release, he joined City College in order to study Intermediate Arts. But a year later, without completing the course he returned to Chittagong from where he passed Intermediate Arts in the 1st Division.

From his early days, Nirodbaran wanted to go abroad and study law and become a barrister. But he lacked the means. So he wrote to his cousin at Rangoon and expressed his desire. Pat came the reply from his cousin who wrote that Nirodbaran would have to accompany his daughter Jyotirmoyee who had just passed B.A. to go abroad and he would have to study medicine instead of law. Nirodbaran agreed. In 1924, Nirodbaran and Jyotirmoyee left for London. He studied medicine and after five years, he obtained the M.B.Ch. B.B. degree from Edinburgh in 1929. Meanwhile Jyotirmoyee, who had returned to India, had become a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and was residing at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Both Nirodbaran and Jyotirmoyee had learnt about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from Dilip Kumar Roy whom they had met in Paris in 1927. In the first week of January 1930, Nirodbaran started for India and reached Colombo from where he went to Pondicherry following the request of Jyotirmoyee. He met Dilip Kumar Roy (who had also become an Ashramite in 1928); it was he who arranged Nirodbaran's meeting with the Mother on the following day. He met the Mother and obtained her blessings. His very first meeting with the Mother was to cast a deep impression on his mind. He saw her as:

. . . the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
 The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
 A power of silence in the depths of God;
 She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
 The magnet of our difficult ascent,
 The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
 The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
 The joy that beckons from the impossible . . .

(*Savitri*, p. 314)

Though he left Pondicherry, yet he returned the next month for the February Darshan and stayed for a month. On the 21st of February, he had the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A few of the Ashramites advised him to become a disciple of Sri Aurobindo but he had other plans. He wrote to Sri Aurobindo and informed him about the plans for his future life and also wrote that he wanted to do Karma Yoga and was not prepared for sadhana. He got a long reply from Sri Aurobindo who told him that his decision was correct — Karma Yoga can easily be done outside and that would help the spiritual life in future.

Nirodbaran's life can be divided into several phases, the first of which started in 1930. In this phase, we observe how he tasted the nectar of success and eventually the poison of despair. When he returned to Chittagong after the February Darshan, he received a telegram from one of his relatives saying that there was a position vacant in Rangoon and he could get it if he applied for it. He applied accordingly and left for Rangoon but did not get the job. However he found another job at Rangoon Medical College and was happy with the secure pay and practice. Everything went well but gradually the holy touches of the Ashram began to fade away from his heart and he forgot his own wish for Karma Yoga. During that period, he received a book from the Ashram, *Conversations with the Mother*. Then one day, his house was raided all of a sudden and in that raid, Sri Aurobindo's letter to him was confiscated. The Burmese Government sent a notice to him that his job would be terminated within the next six months, though the contract was for three years. He was compelled to return to Calcutta and from there, he went to Chittagong. After looking for a job, he eventually landed one but lost it after six months when the police raided his house. It is not known why the raids were conducted — probably it was because of his involvement in the Non-Cooperation Movement or due to his links with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, for Sri Aurobindo was still a source of terror for the British Government even twenty years after his retirement from politics. The actual answer is not known. One day, Nirodbaran received a letter from Jyotirmoyee in which she wrote that he was wasting his valuable time and how long would the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have to wait for him. It was then that a strange but profound detachment entered his heart and he left for Pondicherry in February 1933. He wrote to Sri Aurobindo about his desire to stay in the Ashram permanently but was advised to wait till August. It should be noted that he was a materialist and he himself had confessed:

. . . I cared very little for God and had no faith. . . . I started the sadhana without having any idea about it, as Stendhal's Fabrice joined the army in utter ignorance of what war was like.

(*Sri Aurobindo for all Ages*, pp. 206-07)

But he was accepted as a disciple and was initiated into Integral Yoga in which

Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga merge. Gradually, his materialistic consciousness began to change and thus started the second phase of his life.

At first, Nirodbaran was given the charge of keeping the accounts of the Building Department. Later, he was transferred to the House Painting Department with the same job and again he was shifted to the Godown where his job was to send reports to the Mother about how much wood was used for which work and also the length and breadth of the logs and also supervise the labourers. It was only when the doctor of the Ashram fell ill that his name was suggested, and so he was transferred to the Dispensary. Many might ponder why a sadhak was given such responsibilities. Well, in Integral Yoga no work is considered to be trivial or insignificant if it is wholeheartedly dedicated to the Divine. Not only is work looked upon as worship but it is actually a means to reach the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has himself written:

The whole principle of this Yoga is to give oneself entirely to the Divine alone and to nobody and nothing else, and to bring down into ourselves by union with the Divine Mother-Power all the transcendent light, force, wideness, peace, purity, truth-consciousness and Ananda of the supramental Divine.

(*SABCL*, Vol. 24, p. 1507)

The period 1933-38 has rightly been called the “Golden Age of Yogic Correspondence”. Writing letters to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was also a part of the sadhana. Why? Sri Aurobindo has explained:

It is an undoubted fact proved by hundreds of instances that for many the exact statement of their difficulties to us is the best and often, though not always, an immediate, even an instantaneous means of release. This has often been seen by sadhaks not only here, but far away, and not only for inner difficulties, but for illness and outer pressure of unfavourable circumstances.

(*SABCL*, Vol. 24, p. 1723)

And Sri Aurobindo has also written about the significance of the yogic correspondence:

If I have given importance to the correspondence, it is because it was an effective instrument towards my central purpose — there are a large number of Sadhaks whom it has helped to awaken from lethargy and begin to tread the way of spiritual experience, others whom it has carried from a small round of experience to a flood of realisations, some who have been absolutely hopeless for years who have undergone a conversion and entered from darkness into an opening of light.

(*SABCL*, Vol. 26, p. 180)

Even trivial letters could play a role in sadhana as “all depends on the force behind these things and the purpose in their action.” Almost every sadhak used to write to Sri Aurobindo, and Nirodbaran was no exception. He used to send three notebooks to Sri Aurobindo — one contained questions relating to sadhana, another was for medical reports and the third one carried his literary queries. Not only Nirodbaran but many others too benefited from the voluminous correspondence between him and his Guru. Sri Aurobindo’s letters threw light on the theory and practice of Integral Yoga; it also reflected the attempts to bring down the Supramental Consciousness on earth and amidst mankind. The letters contained answers which are relevant even today. The letters were a guide to his sadhana and yoga and reflected the struggles (inner and outer) that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had to face in the spiritual planes. The replies came from a different world altogether whose only residents were the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and the letters brought an aura of the Everlasting Light. Whatever Sri Aurobindo wrote, was written from the spiritual experiences and the “deep source of knowledge” that he had gathered over the years. It was possible only for him as none had gone to the depths of the Ultimate Truth like him. A detailed and meticulous study of the correspondence will show how gradually the consciousness of the sadhaks was being transformed due to the constant efforts of Sri Aurobindo and the Grace of the Mother. As K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly remarked:

Human bricks became marbles, raw adolescents became seasoned sadhaks . . . and the atmosphere of the Ashram quickened the flowering of the consciousness of most of the inmates.

It can be said that the letters acted as an effective force through which human consciousness was being moulded by the Divine Consciousness. The letters from the Gurus offered relief as well to the intrigued and impatient disciples who had attacks of depression and frustration due to the failure to arrive at the expected results promptly. Sri Aurobindo showered on his disciples unending love, compassion and affection; he was patient with all of them and such Divine Patience could only be expected from him. Disciples like Dilip Kumar Roy whom Sri Aurobindo had cherished as “a friend and a son” and on whom he had poured his force to develop his powers “to make an equal development in the Yoga” and Nirodbaran would go on arguing with him tirelessly on various subjects ranging from scepticism, politics, literature to Supermind and Supramental Manifestation. And since the Guru allowed his disciples such liberties, they “could go on treating [Sri Aurobindo] almost as our equal in stature” as claimed by Dilip Kumar Roy who also said, “Nirod often ran full tilt into him whenever his daemon impelled him to.” However, it would be wrong to assume that only serious topics were discussed with the Guru. Sri Aurobindo’s letters also reflected his magnificent sense of humour, which will

be found abundantly in Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* — Volumes 1 and 2 but later, Nirodbaran included the humorous letters in a separate book titled *Sri Aurobindo's Humour*. It is interesting to note that in the initial stages, the correspondence between him and Sri Aurobindo was quite formal in nature. But one day, Nirodbaran's notebook returned from Sri Aurobindo and he saw, the Guru had written, "Well, sir, do you understand now?" He was quite astonished but from that day onwards, the very character of the correspondence changed. Even Dilip Kumar Roy had to admit that Sri Aurobindo had revealed himself in a totally new manner in Nirodbaran's correspondence. But it should also be noted that the Guru had to try quite hard in order to transform Nirodbaran's consciousness for good. Nirodbaran's pessimistic attitude made the Guru call him the "man of sorrows" and in *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, one comes across lines such as, "Kindly reflect a little and don't talk facile nonsense" or "You are a most irrational creature. I have been trying to logicise and intellectualise you, but it seems in vain." But even then, it goes without saying that there existed a unique relationship between the Guru and his disciple and instances of such close relationships are indeed rare in the history of spirituality.

It was during this period that Nirodbaran began to compose poetry. It was indeed strange for someone who had never dabbled in verse composition before joining the Ashram. But perhaps a psychic opening caused this occurrence! It seemed as if a rock had been kept on a spring, and the moment the rock was removed, the water sprang up. His other gurubhais Dilip Kumar Roy, A. Chadwick, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Nishikanto Roy Chowdhury and K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran) excelled in writing poems. But it should be mentioned that like Nirodbaran, Chadwick too never wrote a line of poetry before joining the Ashram; Dilip Kumar Roy was never happy with the quality of poetry he produced but after joining the Ashram, he blossomed into a poet. K. D. Sethna, Nishikanto and Harindranath wrote good poems in their pre-Ashram lives, but it was only after they started practising the yoga that they began to produce remarkable pieces of poetry. But how did it happen? What caused the miracle? The following letter of Sri Aurobindo might explain the reason:

. . . poetry and music come from the inner being and to write or to compose true and great things one has to have the passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being.

(SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 482)

And it was Sri Aurobindo who cleared the passage for his disciples, and thus, transformed them into distinguished poets. He himself took all the pains to read and correct the poems of his disciples. He also taught them how to develop a style and express their ideas in a more precise language. He also taught them rhythm and thus guided them at every step; so he can rightly be called a "Poet-Maker". Since all the

literary guidance received by the sadhaks were through letters from the Guru, it will not be wrong if one says that the sadhaks blossomed into distinguished poets through a correspondence course conducted by the Guru.

Nirodbaran wrote from the inspiration he obtained but often he failed to understand the meaning of the poems he wrote and Sri Aurobindo had to explain the meaning. And quite often, his poems earned Sri Aurobindo's praise. His poems were mystic in nature, so, to many sadhaks, his poetry appeared to be very obscure. Once, when a disciple wrote to Sri Aurobindo commenting on his poetry that "obscurity and unintelligibility seem to be its very essence", the Seer-Poet replied:

Nirod's poetry (what he writes now) is from the dream-consciousness, no doubt about that Dream-poetry is usually full of images, visions, symbols that seek to strike at things too deep for the ordinary means of expression. Nirod does not deliberately make his poems obscure; he writes what comes through from the source he has tapped and does not interfere with its flow by his own mental volition I interpret his poems because he wants me to do it, but I have always told him that an intellectual rendering narrows the meaning — it has to be seen and felt, not thought out. Thinking it out may give a satisfaction and an appearance of mental logicity, but the deeper sense and sequence can only be apprehended by an inner sense. I myself do not try to find out the meaning of his poems, I try to feel what they mean in vision and experience and then render into mental terms. This is a special kind of poetry and has to be dealt with according to its kind and nature.

(A letter of 12.2.1937, *SABCL*, Vol. 9, p. 446-47)

One would simply marvel if one reads the poems of Nirodbaran with an open heart. His poems, which were termed "surrealistic", appeal not only to spiritually inclined persons but also to lovers of poetry as well. His poems were like his life — an offering at the Feet of the Divine. So, in poetic language, he had prayed:

Let every moment of my life
Be crowned with diamond thoughts of Thee;
Chisel from the hard granite rocks
A statue of divinity.

. . .

In the infinite silence let me merge
Untraversed by the faintest sound,
No wrinkle of rough time disfigure
The Eternal's timeless calm around.

(*Sun-Blossoms*, p. 26)

The transformation of Nirodbaran's consciousness due to the practice of Integral Yoga made him realise:

My body is now a flame
Of the Spirit-fire;
Towards Thy crystal Name
Its hues aspire.

...

Slowly I have become
A mirrored dawn
Of earth's lone martyrdom
To thy heaven withdrawn.

(Sun-Blossoms, p. 48)

And

My life is filled with Thy immortal wine;
Its little movements flow towards Thy Light,
A rhythm of endless beauty made divine
And drunk with the vision of the Infinite.

(Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran, p. 109)

Due to which

My heart is now a canticle of prayer:
It dwells like a pure breath of crystal air
Upon a bare peak of tranquillity
Around the foam of a mysterious sea.

(Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran, p. 101)

And therefore he had realised

The breath of life is a flame-mystery,
That circles towards a hidden altitude,
A spark, a movement of eternity
And its occult seed a veiled God-hood.
Creation is a child of God-delight;
Born from illimitable seas of sound
It turns to its tranquil source in the Infinite
Escaping from the monotone of Time's round.

(Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran, p. 88)

And so

We lose, yet gain our spirit's hidden gold
 By cruel sacrifice of earthly ties;
 Even if life bleeds, it shall receive the mould
 Of the Supreme's fire-touch and heavenward rise.

(*Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran*, p. 21)

The voluminous correspondence between Sri Aurobindo and Nirodbaran continued till November 1938. But after Sri Aurobindo's accident, Nirodbaran was selected as Sri Aurobindo's personal attendant — a rare Grace that few received. Thus started another phase in his life and for the next twelve years till Sri Aurobindo's physical withdrawal on the 5th of December 1950, he served his Guru along with attendants like Champaklal, Purani and others. From 1938, he was in direct contact with his Guru and it was the greatest boon he could ever aspire for. "Service was our life" — said Nirodbaran in the later half of his life and the Master had himself said, "Nirod is no doctor to me, he has come to serve me." After Sri Aurobindo's recovery, some of his attendants used to gather around him and engage in conversations. This used to happen in the evenings and the talking "rolled on under the dim light". The talks have been reproduced by Nirodbaran in his book *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* in four volumes and A. B. Purani in his book *Evening Talks*. Posterity will remain ever grateful to them for preserving those talks as they reveal the unknown facets of the Master's radiant personality. Though the correspondence between the Guru and his disciples was discontinued (excepting Amal Kiran and Dilip Kumar Roy), yet, a new form of a more intimate (although limited) contact began with him. Varied topics and subjects were discussed in the talks the attendants had with Sri Aurobindo and most of the conversations were concerned with the happenings in the contemporary world. Nirodbaran later wrote:

There was not a subject that was not touched, not a mystery he did not illumine, not a phenomenon that passed unnoticed, humorous or serious, superficial or profound, mundane or mystic. Reminiscences, stories, talks on art and culture, on world-problems poured down in abundant streams from an otherwise silent and reticent vastitude of knowledge and love and bliss. It was an unforgettable reward he accorded to us for our humble service.

Just as the precious words of Sri Ramakrishna were recorded in memory by M (Mahendranath Gupta) and later reproduced on paper, similarly, A. B. Purani and Nirodbaran meticulously preserved the golden words uttered by the Master and later published them.

Later, Nirodbaran wrote in detail about the period 1938-50 in his memorable

book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*. In a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, Sri Aurobindo had written — “. . . neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see.” But Nirodbaran magnificently portrayed the outer (and veiled) life of his Guru. In that book he wrote at length about Sri Aurobindo's daily routine and other details that everyone aspired to know. If the book had not been written, then we would not have been fortunate enough to know Sri Aurobindo fully (in the ordinary sense, of course). The book also described how his epic *Savitri* gained its final form in stages. *Savitri*, which can actually be termed as the Mother's spiritual biography and in which Sri Aurobindo “has crammed the whole universe” was, in fact, regarded “as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative.” Nirodbaran was chosen as scribe when Sri Aurobindo started revising and enlarging the earlier drafts of *Savitri* as his eyesight had grown very weak. Nirodbaran wrote down the lines dictated by his Guru. And how did the process of writing *Savitri* proceed? Nirodbaran had explained that initially, “the dictation was very slow and at times halted, waiting for inspiration, I suppose,” but then “the tempo of the work was subsequently speeded up and it proceeded smoothly without break till the seal of incomplete completion was put almost two weeks before the November Darshan of 1950.”

The epic *Mahabharata* would not have been written if Lord Ganesha had not agreed to become Vyasa's scribe. Similarly, no one can ignore Nirodbaran's role in the writing of *Savitri*, which is the epic of the 20th century. With the “incomplete completion” of *Savitri* and Sri Aurobindo's voluntary descent into the realm of death, a phase ended in Nirodbaran's life and a new one commenced which continued till the very end of his life.

On the 5th of December 1950, Sri Aurobindo left his physical frame in order to carry out his works from a subtler plane and after his departure, the Mind of Light got realised in the body of the Mother. The Master left his mortal body but reminded us of the prophecy he had made in *Savitri*:

A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world. . . .
 The superman shall reign as king of life,
 Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,
 And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
 And lift towards godhead his mortality. . . .
 The supermind shall claim the world for Light
 And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
 And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
 And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.

(*Savitri*, pp. 706-07)

Now it was the Mother's task to fulfil the yoga of the supramental descent and transformation which she did and eventually on the 29th of February 1956, the much awaited manifestation of the Supramental occurred followed by the realisation of Overman that was accomplished in 1958 and on the 1st of January 1969, she brought down the Overman Consciousness. The task she had accepted was fulfilled; it reminded us of her prayer (29.2.1956):

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

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 95)

And on the 24th of April 1956, the Mother declared:

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 96)

But what happened to Nirodbaran? Five days after the passing of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother assured him that nothing had changed and he would get everything from Sri Aurobindo, and later she informed him, "I see Sri Aurobindo all the time busy with you." In the meantime, many sadhaks and followers of the Aurobindonian faith and philosophy were desirous to know about the last days of their beloved Guru. For their information, Nirodbaran penned a booklet titled *I am here, I am here!* K. D. Sethna also wrote a booklet titled *The Passing of Sri Aurobindo* in which he explained why Sri Aurobindo had decided to leave his body. Both were appreciated by the Mother.

When the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education was started, Nirodbaran began to teach English, French and Bengali to the students of the higher classes. The Mother also gave him the charge of the work at the Samadhi and also allowed him to sleep in Sri Aurobindo's room, on the floor beside Sri Aurobindo's bed just as he used to do when the Master was alive; and he continued to sleep in his Guru's room till his 100th year; it was discontinued when his health started failing and he found it difficult to climb the stairs.

So what was the phase that started in the life of Nirodbaran following the passing of his Guru? He became a spiritual counsellor to many of the devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He wrote numerous books and essays on them and

also wrote about his gurubhais. It was he who wrote about Mrinalini Devi, Sri Aurobindo's wife, about whom our knowledge was extremely limited. He had simplified the theory of Integral Yoga and had made it understandable to all aspirants. He taught us that the yoga of Sri Aurobindo consisted of three steps. In his own words,

. . . individual realisation of the self is the indispensable first step . . . The second step is the realisation of the universal or cosmic Self which is one in all and the perception of the One and Divine infinitely everywhere, 'sarvam khalvidam brahma', verily, all this that is is the Brahman. And still there is a third and final step: to rise beyond the individual and the universal to the Transcendent through the Supramental consciousness and to bring down the powers of the Supramental into mind, life and body for a total and perfect transformation.

(Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, p. 197)

Nirodbaran was a pillar of the Ashram. He was like a bridge that connected an aspirant with his goal. We could reach Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through him and his books. Every seeker who sought instruction, illumination or solace never went back empty-handed and each of them must have made considerable progress in the field of Integral Yoga. He taught us the simple chant to reach Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the *mantra* was LOVE. We have not seen Sri Aurobindo or the Mother but we have seen them through the eyes of our soul and it was Nirodbaran who enabled us to see them. His books brought them near to us. His was the spiritual touch that ignited the minds of the aspirants with the fire of love and enlightened them. He was our guide on the path of spirituality. We were indeed lucky enough to have him amidst us for such a long time.

One more thing — a particular trait of Nirodbaran's personality that had dazzled me for several years was his youthfulness. When I had met him, he was already a nonagenarian, yet, there was hardly any trace of old age in him. I often wondered what could have been his secret? Only yoga or benefits of regular exercises and participation in sports? Recently I got my answer when I read the Mother's views on "Youth".

Youth does not depend on the small number of years one has lived, but on the capacity to grow and progress.

(*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 257)

And on the 21st of February 1968, she said:

It is not the number of years you have lived that makes you grow old. You become old when you stop progressing . . . when you feel that what you have done is just the starting-point of what remains to be done, when you see the future like an attractive sun shining with the innumerable possibilities yet to be achieved, then you are young, however many are the years you have passed upon earth, young and rich with all the realisations of tomorrow.

(*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 123)

In the year 2003, Nirodbaran's 100th birth anniversary was celebrated. It was indeed a special occasion for all of his admirers. But after the celebrations, his health began to fail gradually. At that time, he said to one of his dear ones that he was no longer interested in talking. In fact, after that he gradually stopped talking and spoke only occasionally and even then, only a few necessary words were uttered. One who met him after his 101st birthday told me that he had become extremely solemn and meeting people did not interest him anymore. He was gradually withdrawing himself into a world of silence. But why? The ordinary brain would not be able to think of a suitable answer. Perhaps he had realised that all the work he was supposed to do in this life was done, and now his presence was required in a different world — the world where his Gurus reside along with his other gurubhais.

In March 2006, Nirodbaran fell ill and was admitted to the Ashram Nursing Home from where he did not return. Though he kept his eyes closed all the time and did not talk to people, yet he was fully conscious within. On the 29th of March, he sat up, opened his eyes and had a look around for sometime "with interest" and then he lay down tired, yet relaxed. 29th March is an important day in the Ashram as on that day in 1914, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had met for the first time on the physical plane. On the 17th of July, in the evening, Nirodbaran opened his eyes and looked at the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and after taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes forever. He consciously descended into the world of death, just like his Gurus.

Nirodbaran lived amongst us for 102 years and has gone to the subtle world where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were waiting for him. Many years ago, Esha, the "Extraordinary Girl" had a vision in which she saw Sri Aurobindo riding a horse-carriage with Nolini Kanta Gupta, Dilip Kumar Roy and Champaklal. Now, Nirodbaran has probably joined them. We must not mourn Nirodbaran's physical departure though the void created by his demise is hard to fill up. But had he not himself written in one of his poems:

Betwixt the shadow and reflected light
Trampling, my journey ends in the Infinite.

(*Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran*, p. 27)

And his last words uttered silently were probably the lines he had composed sixty-nine years ago:

Thou hast come, Beloved and Friend,
 To lift me to thy Sun
 Leading through timeless deeps
 To intimate union.
 Now the thick veil is rent
 And we for ever meet:
 My life a passion-flower
 Laid at thy luminous feet!

(*Sun-Blossoms*, p. 35)

ANURAG BANERJEE

(From the booklet of the same name published by S.A. Publishers, Kolkata, 2006.)

The very object of yoga is a change of consciousness — it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and Bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that Ananda and Bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of Ananda and Bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of Bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and Tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspersed, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior yoga-capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the Divine Influence.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 785)

AN AYURVEDIC VIEW OF LIFE

(Based on the Dr L. M. Singhvi Memorial Lecture delivered in Delhi under the auspices of the Thrombosis Research Institute of Bangalore, on 24 January 2009.)

[Ayurveda, according to Caraka, is knowledge which seeks to weigh life in the scales of wholesomeness and happiness against their opposites. Its main themes of health and disease, and recovery of health from disease take the stage against an inspiring background of intuitive philosophy, lofty idealism, and vivid compassion, which are the hallmark of India's cultural inheritance. After centuries of neglect and stagnation, Ayurveda has witnessed an unprecedented resurgence from the twentieth century in India and abroad. Ayurveda viewed health as a state of many-sided equilibrium, and disease as its reversal. Ayurvedic practice of medicine aimed at the restoration of equilibrium and, in that process, represented more than the sum of dietary regimen, procedures and medications.]

From Thrombosis to Ayurveda

It is an eloquent commentary of our times that this lecture is sponsored by the Thrombosis Research Institute, which does advanced research on thrombotic disorders in its centres at London and Bangalore. Thrombosis is a reversal of the natural state of the blood which remains liquid in the heart and blood vessels thanks to a state of equilibrium between blood and its conduits — what is technically called 'vascular homeostasis'. It occurs when the equilibrium breaks down and blood solidifies in blood vessels during life to the detriment of organs or life itself. Triggered by many causes, thrombosis progresses through a biochemical cascade of great complexity. This intricate event evolved over millions of years when organisms with a closed vascular system had to seal any breaches in the vascular compartment to prevent exsanguination by forming a plug or coagulum without causing generalised thrombosis. When the vascular system was open in primitive organisms earlier (e.g. Crustacea), coagulation provided a defence against invading microbes. In recent years, studies on the molecular evolution of coagulation factors and complement system have shown that both processes arose from a single ancestral mechanism which provided defence against microorganisms and against the loss of body fluids. Determination of the coding sequence of coagulation proteins from many species has even allowed an estimation of the order of appearance of coagulation proteins in the evolution of species. The ongoing work to prevent deep vein thrombosis and

thrombo-embolic complications of prosthetic heart valves is beneficial and life-saving, but it can have few claims to impinge on the biology of coagulation which will possibly continue to evolve as man finds new habitats with vastly different living conditions. Above all, the breakdown of equilibrium as the trigger for thrombosis has a strong resonance in Ayurveda which postulated a different kind of equilibrium — *sāmya* — as the basis of health and its disturbance as the equivalent of disease.

Ayurveda — Early History

Caraka said that the science of life always existed, and a beginning can be said to have occurred only with reference to the first attempt to put down concepts and practice in writing. The earliest record of the roots of Ayurveda is found in the *Atharvaveda* (circa 1500 BC), which has numerous hymns relating to health, diseases, fertility, herbal drugs and anatomy. No wonder Caraka insisted that students of Ayurveda should be loyal to the *Atharvaveda*, which regarded diseases as the punishment of gods for human transgressions. The Atharvan practice of medicine was driven by faith — *daivavyapāsraya*. The Buddhist phase which followed marked a sharp decline in the use of hymns, but Ayurvedic concepts and practice flourished as shown by numerous textual references in the Buddhist period, such as *Milindapanho*, *Dīkhanikāya* of Suttapitaka, *Mahāvagga* of Vinayapitaka and *Visuddhimagga*. The universities of Taksasila and Nalanda became famous for medical studies and attracted students from many other countries in Asia. The practice of medicine was driven by empiricism, not faith, in Buddhist India. The next phase was heralded by Caraka's redaction of *Agnivesa Tantra* (1st century) when intellectual life in India was in ferment. The six systems of Indian philosophy were differentiating at this time from pre-existing but undifferentiated strands of the *Upanisads*, and they were often in conflict with Buddhist doctrines. The vigorous intellectual climate influenced Caraka, whose *Samhita* stood out for its philosophical bias. It became the foundational text of Ayurveda, used even today by the students and practitioners of Ayurveda, and marked a shift of Ayurveda from faith-based to reason-based (*yuktivyapāsraya*) practice. The redaction of *Susruta Samhita*, which was done by Nagarjuna a few centuries after Caraka, became another classical text widely admired for its surgical orientation and descriptions of operations and instruments. The last of the 'Great Three' of Ayurveda was Vāgbhata, who probably lived in the 6th century and composed *Ashtangasamgraha* and *Ashtangahrdaya*. The *Samhita* phase of the 'Great Three' was the golden age of Ayurveda, which was systematised and taught and practised all over India. As the *Samhitas* were translated into Arabic and Tibetan, and texts such as the *Bower Manuscript* were discovered in Central Asia, it is clear that the reach of Ayurveda extended far beyond the Indian subcontinent.

Stagnation and resurgence of Ayurveda

The golden age of Ayurveda was over after Vāgbhata. The period of stagnation which followed lasted a thousand years when advances became a trickle, such as the advent of counting pulse, use of mercury and opium in treatment and the description of syphilis. But there were no more Carakas or Susrutas and no more Taksasilas or Nalandas. The surgical procedures of Susruta disappeared from the mainstream of Ayurveda and survived precariously among the 'lower castes' here and there. Surgical operations such as the plastic repair of the nose, couching for cataract, complicated deliveries, setting of fractures and many other procedures were not done by traditional Vaidyas, but by illiterate practitioners who passed on their manual skill from one generation to the next. According to P. C. Ray, India's soil at this time was made 'morally unfit for the birth of a Boyle, Descartes, or a Newton, and her very name was all but expunged from the scientific world for a time'. India's East-West encounter in the 19th century spurred the growth of modern science and medicine and brought about a revolution in India's cultural history. Unfortunately the encounter spared Ayurveda, which suffered from neglect if not denigration. Ramnath Chopra's brilliant contributions on the pharmacology of natural products of Ayurvedic origin, commercial production of Ayurvedic drugs by P. S. Varrier at Kottakkal, Gananatha Sen's work in Calcutta and Lakshmi pathy's in Madras were a few lamps which shone in a sea of darkness. A dramatic resurgence came after Independence and Ayurveda has never had it so good as in the 21st century. In the growth of patient care, education, research, commercial production of drugs, and patronage by the Government, the position enjoyed by Ayurveda is enviable today.

The Ayurvedic Canvas

Ayurveda, in the literal sense, is the knowledge of life. P. C. Ray characterised the long phase of India's cultural history from 600 BC to AD 800 as the 'Ayurvedic period' because he credited Ayurveda with the origins of not only medical sciences but also chemistry and, if one may add, plant and animal sciences. The philosophical climate in the *Samhita* phase was so vibrant that Ayurveda, especially Caraka, was influenced by, and contributed to, the ongoing philosophical currents in India. An Ayurvedic view of life must therefore consider the rich background against which medical themes appeared to complete the big picture. In a great painting, an artist achieves harmony by composing different parts into a unified whole by design. In the 'Last Supper', Leonardo achieved this harmony by emphasising the figure of Christ, who was silhouetted against a window behind him. All the lines in the background which receded into the distance seemed to converge on him. One could

hardly imagine the Last Supper if the scene were shifted to a shallow room with different background! Divested of its background, Ayurveda would be reduced to no more than a system for medical practice. It is therefore appropriate to outline the background which enlivens the Ayurvedic canvas.

Man and the Cosmos: Common Constituents (pancabhutas)

The constituent elements of the universe and those of the smaller universe within the human body are identical and their response to varied stimuli is also identical. The universe as macrocosm and the human body as microcosm was always a dominant theme in Ayurveda, which regarded man as a part of all that exists and the human body as a cosmic resonator. The universe is known to us through our five senses which have specific objects of perception, such as what the eye sees, ear hears, tongue tastes and so on. The elements perceived by the five senses and their derivatives (*pancabhutas*) constitute the universe for Ayurveda, which has little to say on a suprasensory universe. The tissues of the body, no less than food and medications, are composed of the five elements and their derivatives. It is this identity of composition which underlies the central principle of Ayurvedic therapeutics that mandates the choice of food and drugs from without for producing effects within the body. It was believed that this principle could hardly operate in the absence of identity between the substances in the external world and the smaller world within.

Evolution of the Universe (parināma)

How did the universe with its immense diversity begin? How did it evolve? These questions belonged to a field which had been ploughed earlier by Sankhya philosophers, and which was of great interest to Caraka, whose medicine was deeply rooted in the philosophical soil. According to him, all that exists evolved from *avyakta* — an unmanifest, undifferentiated, incoherent and primordial state of existence. A perturbation in *Avyakta* led to a cascade represented by *Mahat (buddhi/consciousness)* —> *Ahankara* (individuation) —> *Tanmatras* (subtle forerunners of five elements) —> *Indriyas* (five sense organs and five motor organs) —> *Mānas* (mind) —> five *Indriyārthas* (objects accessible to the five senses), which totalled 24 categories.^{1,2}

Evolution of the universe began when a perturbation occurred in *avyakta* by the interaction of the forces of rajas and tamas, which were latent in it. This event belonged to the realm of chance, a random occurrence which could neither be predicted nor controlled. But once the perturbation occurred, the subsequent course of evolution through a cascade which ended in sense objects and the universe was preset, progressive and unalterable. To borrow Monod's phrase from a different context, the initial perturbation in *avyakta* was a chance event, but subsequent steps represented unalterable necessity. However, unlike Darwinian evolution which is

irreversible and open-ended, the process of *parināma* in Ayurveda consists of endless alternating phases of differentiation and expansion followed by another when the stupendous variety dissolves into the original, undifferentiated *avyakta*. This process had no external control and was blind to the sufferings of man. Caraka's view of evolution was 'harsh' and admitted no role for God in the process. According to him, the universe in some undifferentiated or differentiated form was always there and would always be there.

Equilibrium (sāmya)

Ayurveda regarded equilibrium as the essential condition of good health and well-being. But equilibrium was a collective term which included several individual components that were not interchangeable. The seven tissues (*dhātus*) of the body (muscle, fat, bone, blood, etc.) had to maintain *dhātusāmya*; the fires (*agni*) which constantly burn in the tissues and make things happen had to preserve *agnisāmya*; and *dosas*, the all-important products of digestion, without whose perturbation no disease could occur, had to keep *dosasāmya*. *Sāmya* involved the interaction between the body and the environment as the six seasons ranged from the very hot to the very cold (*rtusāmya*). This called for adjustments on the part of the body, some of which occurred naturally such as sweating during summer and shivering in winter. But Ayurveda prescribed food, drinks, physical activity, medical procedures and general conduct to supplement natural adaptation and maintain equilibrium through the change of seasons.³

Sāmya also included *hetu* (cause), which gives an insight into the role of causes in the genesis of disease as understood in far-off days. Causes were countless and were classified under four large groups (due to the perturbed *dosas*, to external events such as floods; to the wrath of the gods; to imprudent conduct). They exist all the time, everywhere and can never be eliminated. Nevertheless, people generally remain healthy, suggesting that something more than a cause is necessary to produce disease. Ayurveda held that a breakdown in the equilibrium between the body and the co-existing cause (*hetusāmya*) was the principal factor in the genesis of disease, cause playing a supportive role. Instead of taking arms against innumerable causes in a fruitless and unending chase, Ayurveda argued, it would be wiser to restore *hetusāmya* by appropriate measures, when causes would take care of themselves.

A Full Life

Ayurveda offered a model for living, which stands in sharp contrast to the traditional view that Indians prized asceticism and renunciation, and disparaged affluence and a life of comfort. Caraka stated explicitly:⁴

A person with a normal share of strength and combativeness, who is of sound mind and concern for things here and hereafter, is moved by three desires. These are the desire for life, for wealth and for life hereafter. The desire for life comes first, because the loss of life amounts to the loss of everything. To ensure good life and health, the observance of a code of conduct is necessary, just as careful attention needs to be paid for the proper care of illness. The pursuit of wealth comes next, because wealth takes second place only to life. There is scarcely anything more miserable than a long life without the means to live. One should therefore work hard to make a living by engaging in farming, animal care, trade, service and similar occupations. The third desire concerns life in another world after death, which does indeed raise many doubts.

The desire for long life in good health found expression in the prescribed code for living, which is a far cry from asceticism.⁵ The code laid great stress on personal hygiene; guidelines on nutrition and tasty food, appropriate clothes and jewellery, sexual intercourse, social relations and enjoyments, which are the elements of a full life. While virtues such as truthfulness, rectitude, fearlessness, modesty, courage, forgiveness and kinship to all forms of life were extolled, there was no bar on the celebration of life and the use of *rasāyanas* to enable one to live for a hundred years. A whole section in *Caraka Samhita* was, in fact, devoted to rejuvenant therapy,⁶ which was claimed “to ensure prolonged lifespan, youthfulness, good health, fine voice and complexion, suppleness, intellect, power of retention and strength”. Caraka devoted another section to *vajīkarana*, which consisted of numerous formulations to enhance sexual vigour to the level of a horse’s.⁷

The elaborate description of various items of food and drinks, the protocol for dining, the enjoyment of many types of wines and a wine party, which are elaborately described in Ayurvedic texts should leave one in no doubt that, barring a minority who were ascetically inclined, the vast majority of people sought to live a full and enjoyable life.

Training of a Physician

Side by side with the ancient Gurukulas, universities such as Takasila imparted medical training as recorded in Buddhist literature. The pupils were chosen with great care and were required to possess a liberal education which included sacred and secular literature, grammar, logic, philosophy, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, botany and mechanical arts. The selection was made on the basis of physical, mental, intellectual and moral attributes, besides the aptitude for arduous training for several years.⁸ Initiation was done during a sacred ritual, which involved the pupil taking an elaborate oath on the conduct of a physician in training.⁹ The academic training consisted of learning by rote and more importantly, by discussions. *Caraka*

Samhita is indeed based on such discussions which were vigorous, free and highly educative. Practical training was given at the bedside, during domiciliary visits, and by participation in the identification of herbs during field trips, preparation of drugs and performance of medical and surgical procedures. At the conclusion of training, which was determined by the preceptor, the student had to obtain royal permission to start practice. The *Arthasāstra* of Kautilya had laid down severe punishment for those doing medical procedures without royal permission.

Extraordinary importance was attached to training in debates, and Caraka went to great lengths to discuss hostile and friendly debates, definition of many logical terms, techniques to worst the opponents and so on.¹⁰ This was important for a physician who wished to challenge an opponent for a debate on his doctrine or method and defeat him to win fame and adherents. This tradition of disputation was not confined to Ayurveda. Strict guidelines applied to the debators such as “not a word should be spoken which is not well thought out or which is out of place or which is confused or lacking in scriptural authority”. Triumph in a major debate or disputation strengthened one’s claim to become a royal physician.

Destiny (daiva)

The human condition is smitten by suffering which is the constant companion of a physician’s vocation. Traditional systems of Indian philosophy regarded false knowledge as the ultimate cause of human bondage and suffering and sought, in different ways, the liberation from bondage by ridding oneself of false knowledge. Caraka held, on the other hand, that suffering resulted, in the final analysis, from errors of judgement and imprudent conduct (*prajñā-parādha*). Unlike false knowledge which is a metaphysical concept, erroneous judgement is mundane and offered better possibilities for mankind for avoidance or correction. But how free is man to avoid flawed judgements and imprudent conduct? This question brought Caraka into an illuminating discussion on human destiny, which had been debated in India for centuries. One view held that fate was supreme, and no human effort could make the slightest difference to its inexorable operation; another view known as *pauruseya* and championed by *Yogavāsistha*, claimed that the heroic endeavour of man could indeed alter the course of destiny. If predestination is carried to its logical conclusion, Caraka pointed out, much of human effort, including the practice of medicine would become futile. Granted that no human effort could ward off the consequences of evil acts of great sinfulness, he noted that the bulk of what one does in a workaday world lacked a moral content in so far as it related to the business of daily living. Caraka argued that if a person chose to remain well by paying attention to hygiene, nutrition and proper conduct, one could not claim that his consequent well-being had been preordained. While the effect of Karma was unalterable for crimes and sins of great magnitude, errors which were the lot of the

human condition could be prevented or corrected by adherence to proper conduct. This essentially involved the avoidance of the overuse, underuse and misuse of the senses and the mind. Caraka did not advise the renunciation of desire or non-attachment, but commended a full and righteous life which could be enjoyed in harmony with one's environment. A healthy life, according to Caraka, had to be a righteous life.

Habitat

Ayurveda inherited the Atharvan adoration of nature, which was amply reflected in the background of the discussions held in Atreya's hermitage, and in the surroundings of a house for healing described by Caraka. It recognised, however, that beneficent nature and the habitat for living beings were ever susceptible to devastation by epidemics and other calamities, which was termed *jana-padodhvamsana*. Polluted air, water, land and disorderly seasons had the power to wipe out populations and destroy the habitat.¹¹ Ayurveda took the view that the root cause for calamities which devastated human habitat was unrighteous and sinful living. Rulers lacking in probity would treat officers, traders and people so unjustly that righteousness would disappear altogether and even "gods would take leave of the country". Unrighteousness would also invite ruin by war and violence, which were triggered by greed, anger and conceit. Epidemics and devastation were a warning to statesmen of the perilous state of governance. The surest remedy and best prophylaxis for this catastrophe was wise living, ethical conduct and harmony between man and his surroundings.¹²

Medicine in Ayurveda

Approach to the practice of medicine

While keeping out of trouble by observing a code of conduct (*svasthavrtta*) occupied centre stage, Ayurveda recognised man's vulnerability to disease and attached the highest importance to the practice of medicine to get one out of trouble (*āturavrtta*). The role of medicine was akin to giving a helping hand to men who had fallen in a pit they had dug themselves and from which they might escape on their own only with difficulty.¹³ Medical practice demanded a quartet — physician, medications, helper and the patient — each possessed of special qualities.¹⁴ Among the quartet, the physician was the most important because of his knowledge and his role as a leader and coordinator. When the quartet was complete and each member had the prescribed qualities, treatment would succeed and restore the equilibrium of tissues and *dosas* and make the patient well. However, it was incumbent on a good physician to recognise before treatment whether the disease was curable, palliable or

incurable.¹⁵ His guiding principles were friendship and compassion towards the ill, joy in treating those amenable to therapy, and masterly inactivity towards patients with incurable diseases.¹⁶ When a major or risky treatment was contemplated for a grave or incurable illness, the physician was obliged to share the information with the family of the patient. The three great texts (*brhatrayī*) made no reference to yogasanas or meditation as ancillaries to the practice of medicine. The use of mantras was infrequent, and astrology played a minimal, if not nil, role. Though compassion was recognised as the motive power of medicine, physicians were not forbidden from accepting a fee for service, except from sages, teachers and so on. The texts suggested a line of treatment slanted in favour of the affluent, but Caraka was sensitive to the problems of the poor and prescribed treatment 'without frills' for them.¹⁷

Diseases

The *Samhitas* are encyclopædic in the coverage of diseases, which were always seen and managed through a framework of perturbed *dosas*. As a bird in flight does not go beyond its shadow, diseases, according to Vāgbhata, do not transcend perturbed *dosas*.¹⁸ Every disease would have distinctive clinical features and would require a different treatment depending on whether it was precipitated by perturbed *vāta*, *pitta* or *kapha*, or their combination. As *dosas* involve the whole body, every disease was systemic in Ayurveda which did however recognise, for practical purposes, regional and specialised disorders. Examples are diseases of the head and neck, eye diseases, poisoning, and disorders in children. Surgical conditions were dealt with by specialists who had received training in the discipline (*salya*) as taught by Susruta.

On the basis of counting the number of references to diseases in the *Caraka Samhita* (using a digitized text made by Yamashita of Kyoto University), a probable picture of the prevalence of diseases in Caraka's time (1st century AD) could be constructed. This analysis showed that the references to infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy and cholera were twice that of non-infectious diseases, including heart disease, anaemia, diabetes, epilepsy, etc. in Caraka's India. This finding from archeo-epidemiology would sit well with the disease pattern in the 'pre-transition' stage of an ancient society, as postulated by modern epidemiology.¹⁹

The natural history of diseases and their prognosis were always discussed at length in Ayurveda. The elaborate signs of approaching death (*rista*) were required to be learnt by physicians, and they were put together from medical experience and colourful popular beliefs. The exhaustive discussion on the signs of death would suggest that a class of specialists probably existed, who were experts in the care of the dying.

Treatment of diseases

Diagnosis was given great importance. It was based on interrogation, inspection, palpation and listening to bowel sounds, etc. In fact all senses, excluding taste, were employed in the diagnostic process. Counting of pulse entered Ayurveda long after Vāgbhata. Keen observation was supplemented by astute inference and the teachings of great predecessors. According to Caraka, physicians who are unable to explore the “dark interior of the body with a lamp of knowledge and discrimination” could never treat patients with success. An ancient text (*Mādhavanidāna*) was, in fact, exclusively devoted to the diagnosis of diseases.

Once the diagnosis was made in terms of the perturbation of *dosas*, therapeutic measures were put in place promptly, as delay was condemned. For mild perturbation, simple measures (*samana*) such as fasting, rest, etc. were sufficient; but copious perturbation which manifested in serious diseases would call for the elimination of accumulated and vitiated *dosas* (*sodhana*) and the restoration of *dosasamyā*. This involved rest, dietary regimen, evacuative measures (*pancakarma*) and the administration of various drugs of plant, animal or mineral origin. Lifestyle, dietary regimen, cheerful atmosphere and faith in the physician and his method were as important as herbal drugs and procedures for successful treatment. The drugs and procedures were always chosen on the basis of their properties being opposed to those of the perturbed *dosas*. If the perturbed *dosas* were acidic, for example, the medicinal formulation would be alkaline. If the patient’s condition was surgical or became surgical, he was referred to the surgeon. Many of the procedures adopted for treatment were based on a ‘mechanism of action’ as conceptualised by ancient physicians. *Pancakarma* is a good example of their talent to see images of events in the mind’s eye when they were absent before the senses, and move them about inside one’s head to work out new arrangements for a possible mechanism. This was not done by deduction, but by a blend of speculation and insight, which would qualify as induction. In the treatment of patients, yoga, meditation and astrology played a minor role in the *Brhatrayī*. Auspicious configuration of stars was chosen, not always, for conducting major elective procedures, and chanting of hymns reserved for special occasions only.

When evacuative therapy or other major procedures were prescribed, the patient was admitted to a ‘house for treatment’.²⁰ Caraka gave detailed guidelines on its ideal location; building plan with rooms for the patient, attendants, physician, cook, kitchen, store for medicines and equipment, bath, etc. The house had to have in attendance musicians, singers of ballads and associates who could relate to the patient easily. Its locale had to be home for birds, animals like hare and antelope, and gifted with plenty of greenery and supply of pellucid water. Caraka even gave directions on the furniture, upholstery, and vases for flowers in the patient’s room!

Obviously the house for treatment was designed to heal the mind as well as the body.

Surgical procedures

Ayurveda excelled in surgery, which was synonymous with the Dhanvantari School of Susruta in Varanasi. He probably lived before Panini, who made three references to him in the *Astadhyāyi*. *Susruta Samhita* dealt with cadaveric dissection to learn anatomy; use of fruits, leather bags, and various other models to practise basic surgical techniques such as incision, excision, extraction, suturing and tapping; pre- and post-operative care; a large number of procedures such as the setting of fractures, couching for cataract, removal of bladder stone, plastic repair of the nose, drainage of abscesses, and surgical methods including *ksāra sūtra* for treating anal fistula. Among the many surgical procedures Susruta described, trephining of the skull was not mentioned. It was performed by Jivaka — Buddha's physician — a few centuries later. Susruta described 20 sharp and 100 blunt instruments, and gave directions on their proper use.

In Susruta's period, surgeons were respected as Ācāryas, but the position had already begun to change by the 5th-6th century, when surgeons and all others who used their hands to make a living — masons, carpenters, weavers, farmers, blacksmiths — found themselves downgraded by a travesty of social engineering. This was the beginning of a long phase of intellectual stagnation and decline, when the brain was disengaged from the hand and the springs of originality ran dry in India.

Epilogue

Echoing the *Mahābhārata*, *Caraka Samhita* proclaimed "Whatever is found here, may be found elsewhere; whatever is not found here, will be found nowhere." The vast stage and the immense range of things and events which characterise the phenomenon of Ayurveda would undoubtedly bear out the claim of Caraka. Ayurveda recognised the identity of man and the cosmos as a central reality and upheld the dynamic equilibrium among the constituents of the universe — living and nonliving — as the necessary condition of existence. The equilibrium was credited with inbuilt mechanisms to withstand shocks and restore itself, which could be glimpsed in the spontaneous recovery of function from dysfunction in many a diseased state (*svabhāvoparama*). The role of Ayurveda was no more than to assist the process of recovery and maintain good health by safeguarding the state of equilibrium.

While Ayurveda had ample tools and remedies in its vast storehouse, it enjoined virtuous conduct as the sovereign prophylactic against maladies and the unfailing guarantor of well-being. This was brought out in full measure by Vāgbhata through numerous verses in the *Ashtangahrdaya*.

Consider the following:

“All creatures seek happiness in whatever they do: but happiness cannot be had without righteous conduct. Therefore righteous conduct is obligatory for all.”²²

On the attitude to fellow-beings:

“One should always regard even mites and ants as no different from oneself.”²³

Towards a foe:

“One should be of service to him who may be intent on doing harm.”²⁴

In adopting the middle path:²⁵

“Neither torment nor pamper sense organs.”²⁶

In the quest for knowledge:

“The whole world is a teacher for the wise in all he does; therefore, a man of action in the world’s theatre should emulate its example.”²⁷

On virtuous conduct in general:

“Compassion for living creatures; charity; tamed body, speech and mind; regarding others as one’s own.”²⁸

“Nights and days roll on; one who ever reflects, ‘How have I spent my nights and days’ would never grieve.”²⁹

“Giving up imprudent conduct; restraining the activities of senses; remembering one’s role in his noble calling; and cherishing the knowledge of habitat, time and soul, a physician should follow the path trodden by men of virtue.”³⁰

“One who enjoys wholesome food and activity everyday; who introspects on his actions; who is unattached; who is generous; who looks on all with an equal eye; who is truthful and forgiving; who delights in the service of virtuous men; he remains free from illness.”³¹

How to live a virtuous life was a golden thread which ran through, and bound together, the varied themes of Ayurveda.

Ayurveda prized knowledge and skill highly, but rated compassion and virtuous conduct even higher in a physician’s scale of priorities. Therein lies the key to its unbroken practice for 25 centuries and its resurgence in our times.

M. S. VALIATHAN

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‘THE NEW PARADIGM IN BUSINESS’

WINDS of change are blowing in Business and a higher aspiration is emerging in Management. A new paradigm founded on higher-than-bottomline values is taking shape in this human field, which is considered ‘materialistic’ in popular conception. This article examines this new paradigm in Business, and its future possibilities, in the light of an integral spiritual vision of human development.

The Higher Values in Business

One of the most important developments in the philosophy of modern Business is the realisation of the simple and obvious fact that Business is a human enterprise, a living human organism, not merely an economic engine. An engine or a machine is a material organism, which can be ‘managed’ with mechanical techniques. A human being, on the other hand, is a living organism, which has to be nurtured with great care and attention so that it blossoms freely towards its highest creative potential. While maximising productivity and efficiency may be the object of a machine, the aim of an enterprise involving people has to be the fulfilment of human needs and aspirations and in the process create ‘value’ for the society in harmony with the laws of Nature. The nature of this value or social contribution may vary for different types of human enterprises. It may be wealth for business, social justice for politics, and knowledge for educational institutions. This is, more or less, the drift of the new and emerging business philosophy. This new thought is at present confined to a few perceptive and progressive business thinkers. But emerging trends indicate that it is likely to be the Business paradigm of the future.

Let us have a brief look at the views of some of the representatives of this new paradigm in Business. James Burke, former CEO of the well-known multinational company Johnson & Johnson says, “I try to talk philosophically of business, since young people have a tendency to think of it in a narrow sense rather than as a dynamic organism which satisfies human needs and to create wealth in the process.”¹ Rolf V. Ostenberg, former CEO of a group of paper factories writes, “The *raison d’être* for a company is to supply an environment within which personal development of the people involved in the company can take place.”² Stephen Covey in his best-seller, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, says, “The aim of any human resource development program ought to be to release the tremendous creative power and potential of people by involving them in a meaningful change and development process” and adds, “Principle-centered leadership suggests that the highest level of human motivation is a sense of personal contribution. It views people as the most valuable organisational assets — as stewards of certain resources — and stewardship

as the key to discovering, developing and managing all other assets. Each person is recognised as a free agent, capable of immense achievement, not a victim or pawn limited by conditions or conditioning.”³ And this well-known American leadership guru suggests a shift from the present mechanical model of organisation to an agricultural model. “Organisations are not mechanical, they are organic. To see organisations through the agricultural paradigm is to see them as living and growing things made up of living, growing people. Living things are not immediately ‘fixed’ by replacing non-working parts; they are nurtured overtime to produce desired results.”⁴ But the most positive feature of the new paradigm is that some companies, big and small, from all over the world are making the attempt to ‘Walk the Talk’ with handsome results in the bottomline. Here are two companies which exemplify the new paradigm values.

The Exemplars

In Brazil, Ricardo Semler runs Semco, an equipment manufacturing company. Virtually everyone in the company sets his or her own hours. Some employees with particularly valuable skills make higher salaries than their bosses without being in the management track. There is no hierarchy to speak of, except titles like, counsellors or associates. Employees make most of the important corporate decisions. When supervisory people are hired they are interviewed and evaluated by their future subordinates. There is a complete openness of information. The financial data of the company is shared with the workers. The company provides classes to workers on financial analysis so they may understand the financial condition of the company. Semco’s combination of democracy, profit-sharing and open information has created one of Brazil’s fastest growing companies. It was voted the best company in which to work and has a profit margin of 10 percent.⁵

Here is an example of corporate democracy from Semco. Workers of the company, not real estate agents, found three prospective sites, for a division of Semco. Then everyone from the division got into buses to visit the sites. The employees voted for one building that management didn’t really want because it was across the street from a plant with one of the worst labour records in Brazil. But after the plant was purchased, the workers’ productivity flourished as they had designed the factory for flexible manufacturing. Within four years after moving into the new site, workers’ productivity per employee jumped from \$14,200 to \$37,500.⁶

Anita Roddick, the founder of Body Shop bases her international company on business ethics, environmental awareness, responsibility for the community and respect for the employee and the customer. Each Body Shop store has a community project that employees do on company time. The company has a third-world trade department that, as Anita puts it, “goes into areas of the Third World, creating trade

in an ethical way paying First World prices, making sure that the environment and the social fabric of the environment is protected.” When they had to open a shop or production plant they put it in Glasgow “the worst housing area in the whole of Europe”. In addition to cutting the unemployment rate dramatically, the company gave 25 percent of the profit of that plant back to the Glasgow community. The other unique value of Body Shop is the feminine touch and feminine values like caring. As Anita explains, “We have so many women in our organisation that care becomes a very natural part of our vocabulary.” These values of Body Shop have led to all the traditional signs of growth in sales. The success of Body Shop is so phenomenal that *Inc.* magazine ran a cover story on Anita Roddick with the headline, “This Woman is Changing Business Forever.”⁷

The Next Step Forward

So corporate democracy, empowerment, social and environmental responsibility, creativity, quality, customer service, innovation — these are the mantras of the new paradigm. But is this all or is there a beyond? Is a benign humanism, environmentalism and social conscience the last word in human evolution and development? Is this the highest possibility in Man? If not, what’s next? Is there a further step beyond these? These are the questions we have to ask now in order to prepare ourselves for the future.

This new paradigm in Business is a very welcome development because it paves the way for a decisive step forward in evolution from an authoritarian, mechanistic, Taylorian era to a freer, more humane and democratic ethos in business. But even as these New Paradigm values are spreading fast and getting established in business, we have to think ahead and visualise the next stage in the evolution of Business.

But how is one to do this crystal gazing into the future? If our view of man and his evolution is confined to the present condition and potentials of the human being, then looking into the future is a futile exercise. Faith in evolution, progress and the future implies the assumption that Man and his evolution is at present an unfinished and incomplete project. If we accept this assumption, the next question is what are the criteria for determining the right direction towards the future? First, it should be a movement towards unravelling new potentials and sources of well-being and fulfilment hitherto not manifest in the human being. Second, it should be in harmony with emerging evolutionary trends and ultimate human destiny. Viewed in this perspective, modern futurology like that of Alvin Toffler is of limited help. They have tried to plot trends in the external environment but have nothing much to say on the future growth of human potential or human destiny. Even in the area of external change, modern futurism seems not to have much insight into the essential drift of the change.

This is where the importance of spiritual intuitions of seers — ancient or modern — comes in. Spiritual traditions all over the world have persistently held that the highest potential, well-being and fulfilment of man lies in the spiritual, sacred and divine dimensions beyond the secular and the rational. And the intuitions of modern seers like Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin indicate that the next step in human evolution is unravelling this divine dimension in man. This future spiritual awakening will not be confined, as in the past, to a few sages, saints or seekers or to the activities of the higher mind of man like religion, philosophy, literature or art. It will diffuse itself into the entire human mass and into every activity of human life. As Sri Aurobindo points out, “. . . in the next stage of human progress it is not a material but a spiritual, moral and psychical progress that has to be made”,⁸ which will culminate in a new world in which,

“Even the multitude shall hear the Voice
And turn to commune with the Spirit within”⁹

and

“. . . common natures feel the wide uplift.”¹⁰

This is the new or future evolution. And Sri Aurobindo says significantly, “. . . Whatever race, whatever country seizes on the lines of that new evolution and fulfils it, will be the leader of humanity.”¹¹ In other words whichever group makes this new evolution the central thrust of its development strategy will be the leaders of the future. Why shouldn't Business take the lead?

M. S. SRINIVASAN

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THE RED RIBBON

I HAD been asked to write my story. But I realise that I have no story: it is perhaps part of the story of all of us.

Each one of us does an infinitesimal part of the whole that has to be done and all is interwoven. So much so that it sounds strange to separate one's experience from that of others as it would sound strange to isolate the score of a single musical instrument that was meant to be part of a symphony.

So, now and then, I am telling you in one way or another about some episodes I remember, in the way I remember them.

I have told you how I returned to the Mother, about my beginnings in the Ashram and reading sessions with the Prince, about the Diamond Warrior and the Golden Lion. This is the story of the Red Ribbon.

Well, I "crossed the border" as is said, into the world of Sun.

Coming back, I dived into the matter this body is made of although I did not really know at the time what was happening.

I also lived the astonishment of this kind of new body that my inner consciousness was aware of with all the new characteristics and potentialities:

the feeling of an energy gliding through and holding the body instead of bones and blood;

the feeling of a much wider and more powerful breath, a respiration of this energy flowing through this different body;

the vision of things with eyes that see otherwise; not the eyes that see through or beyond into the subtler worlds: the eyes that see the material world as it really is — an absolutely different way of being —

the smiling feeling of strength, serenity, quiet but active joy flowing through one to another.

At a certain point I was aware of orange coloured hair that then turned gold. Is that energy too? It was beautiful hair floating in that different substance that can be lived in.

With this, for me a new consciousness, I watched things that were new to me. There was for example what I called a "red ribbon". It was long, infinitely long, and had hundreds of little lines irregularly placed.

I knew that I had to explore it. It was a memory to explore.

I asked Satprem what this "red ribbon" was but of course, as I called it the red

ribbon, he could not say.

So I wrote to the Mother explaining and asking what it was. Here is the answer She dictated to Pournaprema. It is in Pournaprema's writing.

I translate it: "She is in contact with the influence of the supramental world. The best thing she can do is to remain tranquil, always very tranquil, and to observe and to open herself so that her consciousness may gradually develop with that influence."

I do not think I really managed to do as much as the Mother meant.

I am passing Her advice on to you knowing that many have already been able to follow it but one always needs to hear about tranquillity in the way the Mother means it!

When Pournaprema came with Mother's answer, Edoardo was there. The scene was too funny: he listened to what Pournaprema read out aloud, looked rather aghast and falling back into his armchair he exclaimed, "Why on earth should that happen to me?!" So that's how he saw it. I felt like a strange object as they looked at me: an amusing situation.

Later Edoardo started studying the scientific point of view of my little drawings and compared them to what he found in a book by the physicist Francis Crick who had discovered the structure of DNA with James Watson (1953) cracking the DNA code. It was about the cells and their memory and it was interesting. I sometimes told him what I saw and he gave me the scientific explanation.

I do not really know if it was a yoga the Mother was doing in me or if perhaps I was in contact with what was happening in the Mother's body or what was happening everywhere. I did not talk much about it and probably it was happening to others who also did not talk much about it!

My body had been through a great crisis. It was not well at all. In fact, years later Wilfy, Udar's brother, told me they thought they would "lose" me.

But I was living a wonder, a world of light, a movement of powerful harmony that had a feeling of the deepest love.

The Mother sent me a white rose every day. The effort to go and fetch it kept me here, receiving it with what She put in it kept me here. Now I know that the times when I was so weak that Edoardo would go to fetch it for me were a mistake. But he was so happy to do so of course!

We had put a little vase covered with shells on a cupboard at the bottom of the staircase leading down from Mother's rooms. Nata would put the rose there coming down from the Mother. I imagine that it was that great heart of Nata who reminded Her.

One day Kalyan-da told me that if I was a good yogini I could concentrate and get better at once. So I concentrated and had a look at what was going on in the flesh. What a mess! So I started to put things together again. Doing so, I saw that it would all go back to the old state and so stopped and wondered what to do. I wrote to the Mother asking Her if what was happening “was a grace or a disgrace”. That made Her laugh (I liked to make Her laugh!). She answered: “In her case it is a grace.”

That is, a work was being done taking advantage of the physical crisis, but that certainly does not mean that one should look for that sort of crisis.

So I observed. I learned many things. How for example there is a similitude in what happens in the physical body with all we have learned from ancient yoga: did the Vedic rishis know this? Yes, with different eyes.

Then one day this new consciousness, watching through the lines of the code of the red ribbon, placed between two of them a new sun, a seed of golden light that could change perhaps in the future the message, perhaps gradually spread harmoniously through the lines eliminating them, eliminating the old code. It was like a game.

We are all trying to do this in one way or another following the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s path towards a new world, a new life.

Here is a passage on tranquillity — or quietude — from the Mother’s *Entretiens* translated into English in *Questions and Answers* of October 17th, 1956.

Quietude is a very positive state; there is a positive peace which is not opposite of conflict — an active peace contagious, powerful, which puts everything in order, organises. It is of this I am speaking; when I tell someone “Be calm”, I don’t mean to say “Go and sleep, be inert and passive, and don’t do anything”, far from it! . . . True quietude is a very great force, a very great strength. . .

FELICITY

WANDERING IN THE ARCHIVES OF MEMORY

(Continued from the issue of September 2009)

12. The Lotus Pond

EVER since I was persuaded to jot down my random memories, I have been in a sort of haze because curtains after curtains have been whirling around me. Sometimes they allow me a clear view into a scenario but more often they seem bent on shutting me away from the past. What a tease, this memory! Almost like the Brahman!

Near, it retreated; far, it called him still.
Nothing could satisfy but its delight:
Its absence left the greatest actions dull,
Its presence made the smallest seem divine.¹

Can I touch upon my earliest memory, a scene in which I can see myself interacting with another? Amazingly I can and hence my lifelong love for the lotus. And a lifelong reverence for the flower. Is it not the name of our Master, Sri Aurobindo? — one whom I came to adore ever since my mother made me stand in front of his portrait, put my palms together and offer ‘namaste’; one who was described as a Rishi by my mother, and he looked one, with the flowing beard and pearly locks, looking at me with gentle eyes. He is looking at Me, I used to tell myself, I should be a good girl.

My earliest memory regarding the lotus is walking near the *Tamarai Kulam* (the lotus pond) in our village, Kodakanallur. It was on the backyard of the Nangayaramman temple, the Mother-guardian of the village.

Amma’s voice: “Repeat, *Tamarai-kulam*.”

Me: “*Thamadai kodam*.”

Amma: “No. It is *Tamarai*, not *Thamadai*, it is *kulam*, not *kodam*.”

Me: “*Thamadai kodam*.”

Amma: “Oh: *Kodam* is a pot, *kulam* is a pond. Look at this pond, it is *kulam*, not *kodam*.”

Me (trying with wet eyes): “Mmmm, *Thamadai kodam*.”

Amma must have been very patient with me in teaching me to pronounce words correctly. Whenever I go on stage to deliver a speech, I remember that loving voice which was patience incarnate and the huge pink lotuses on the water. Did she

1. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 305.

think I would become a Professor, a public speaker at that time? I can't say. But certainly those first lessons in correct pronunciation have stood me well. How auspicious that a lotus pond was an instrument in making this change!

Though I began this series hesitantly because of my relatively placid life (not unlike the lotus pond in the village), now I marvel at the many unseen forces and visible material objects that have been part of my life. Flowers, of course, have been my dearest friends from early days. Some have been very, very close to me and the Mother's meaningful names have made this closeness exceptionally fruitful. The tall *Akasamalli* (Sky-jasmine!) trees in my childhood that rained blossoms, making the entire garden ever so sweet-scented! I have loved the flowers of this Indian cork tree because though they usually wilt quickly, if we put them in water they remain fresh for three days or more. One can weave a garland out of them without the help of thread or plantain bark, thanks to their long stems. This year, the flower which has been given the name 'Transformation' has been very much in my consciousness as I started the year on the first of January with the Mother's inspiring message:

Let this year be a year of progress and transformation — one more step on the way leading to the Divine Realisation.²

Each year, I paste the New Year's message from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on the first page of my diary. For 365 days (some years it is 366) the nectarean message smiles at me as I record the day's happenings. There is nothing really profound in these daily jottings. People whom I have met, books read or reviewed, an article planned, the search for a lost pen. Some flower or other manages to catch my attention when I move around opening a book or dusting a shelf but a flower like *Akasamalli* makes me stop in my tracks and gaze into the past. As when my brother and I watched the falling of a huge, Indian cork tree in a storm that raged over the Bay of Bengal. It was a dance of destruction in the vast Siripuram garden in Waltair where we lived sixty-five years ago. About twenty feet of a single tree fallen across the road and I was crying: "I won't be able to gather those flowers any more!" My brother kept saying, "Stupid! Don't cry! We can always plant another!"

Ambi was a protective brother though he was less than three years older. The reason the champak is also dear to me is because he brought a sapling from Simhachalam Hills and planted it in our garden so that I could wear the flowers on my two plaits. It gave a profusion of golden flowers and when we learnt the name given by Mother, 'Supramentalised Psychological Perfection' we were delighted as it was another aspect of '*Annai Kodukkum Poo*' (champa). *Gul Mohar* has always been with me and even in this house its huge shade in the front of the house guards us during summer while showering brilliant red flowers. The name given by the

2. *Words of the Mother – III*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 199.

Mother, 'Realisation' made me use it as an image for my novel *Atom and the Serpent*.

It is so easy for me to be wandering in space and time when it comes to flowers. They are part of one's self for a Tamilian, particularly if belonging to the Vaishnavite tradition. Can my consciousness be ever separated from the garland of wild flowers that Krishna wears, the *Vaijayanti*? And his lotus-like feet, lotus-like eyes, lotus-like palms? The tears that streamed down the Vaishnava teacher Ramanujacharya's eyes when his preceptor mistranslated the word *pundarika* (lotus) as a monkey's behind? The entire ancient Tamil literature is a flood of varied blossoms. The *Kurinjipattu* (written about two thousand years ago) has a passage which lists one hundred flowers gathered by girls at play!

The large-petalled bright red November-flower,
Ambal and *anicha*, and red lily cool from the pond,
Kurinchi and *vetchi* and the rose-red hedgerow flower,
 Sweet mango, *sem-mani* and the bunched blooms,
 With a smell of their own, of the big bamboo cane,
 The *bel* flower and the flame-like *eruzha*,
 Milk-weed and *kaviram*, *vata-vanam* and *vahai* . . . ³

To this land comes the Mother, draws further inspirations from Japan and now the Aurobindonians live always amidst flowers. If we cannot get fresh ones, there are always excellent photographs to gaze at in meditative silence. And the lotus is always there, buoying up our hearts amidst the encircling gloom. The Avatar will come!

I cannot imagine the religious-spiritual world of India without the lotus. Like *Sat*, Existence, it is always there! The twin feet of Lord Buddha on a lotus seat (*pāda padma pīthika*) has been the cause of innumerable bhakti-laden poems in Buddhism. This seat has great significance in the early Tamil epic, *Manimekalai* which has a Buddhist theme.

Here was a brilliant, shining Seat
 Rising from the ground by four feet and half,
 Spreading thirteen feet and half on its sides,
 Properly sculpted in marble in circle shape
 With a lotus square placed on its summit.
 Trees would shower nought else but scented blooms on it.
 For it was the Seat of the Righteous One,
 Birds would not fly with outspread wings near,
 This was the jewelled Seat placed by Indra,
 Buddha's chair that illumines our past births.⁴

3. Translated by N. Raghunathan.

4. Translated by Prema Nandakumar.

This image has been brought to us in contemporary times by yet another great poet, Sarojini Naidu:

Lord Buddha, on thy lotus-throne,
 With praying eyes and hands elate,
 What mystic rapture dost thou own,
 Immutable and ultimate?
 What peace, unravished of our ken,
 Annihilate from the world of men?⁵

In any case, the lotus is ubiquitous in our thought-processes though it is not a familiar flower nor can it be grown easily in the backyard. Indian spirituality has always placed great store by the lotus. It is said that when Vardhamana Mahavira walked, at each step there bloomed a lotus. The Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar speaks of this in the very first verse of his classic text, *Tirukkural*. In fact, for those brought up to love Tamil literature, the entire first decad of the work is sacred:

Of what use all knowledge, unless one seeks
 The source, the Lord's lotus feet?

Prosper those at the hallowed feet that rest
 On flowers of devotion.⁶

The Vedic religion placed Goddess Lakshmi herself on the lotus seat, made visually popular by the portrait of Raja Ravi Varma. However, the Vedas do not seem to have anything to say about flowers, including the lotus. There are, of course, references to the Soma plant but flowers themselves do not have a part in the rituals. Worshipping the Divine with flowers is obviously an integral component of Indian culture. Later on, it is flowers, flowers all the way, all over India, and the lotus reigns supreme.

Long before I learnt of all the many myths and legends about the lotus, the flower and its leaf had become dear companions in my childhood. Even as I type these words the curtains seem to part and I look on with wonderment into the past. I see four of us sitting in a semicircle with my grandmother in the front. It is dusk and the huge brass lamp in the central hall is giving light and throwing shadows. *Patti* has a big stone vessel which is full of curd-rice. A small tin vessel is close by. Each of us has a lotus leaf in front of us. The fight for the largest leaf is just over. I

5. 'To a Buddha seated on a lotus' by Sarojini Naidu.

6. Verses 2 and 3. Translated by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.

am the winner because I am the only girl and the youngest as well. Grandmother decides in my favour: “She is a little one, poor thing, don’t fight. And when the huge stone door of the cave opened . . .”

Patti has begun the story for the evening. It is a continuation from the previous evening. A prince charming had dared to knock at the door of the cave in which lived a fierce lion. My two cousins, my brother and myself have forgotten the leaf-fight. Automatically we receive the balls of rice placed by her in our outstretched right palms to which she adds a spoonful of *sambhar*. Five hands in continuous motion while the story moves through the goodness and bravery of the prince and the strength and generosity of the lion. Are there no villains in the stories churned out by *Patti* for the little ones? No. Everyone seems to be good, after all. Just when the lion is leading the prince to the treasure-trove beneath the valley, the stoneware becomes empty and all of us rush to wash our hands.

Eating off leaf-plates was our way of life in the village. Usually it was either plantain leaves or those of *poovarasu* (*thespesia populnea*) strung together or simply the near-circular lotus leaf. The lotus was the children’s favourite. Till *Patti* got the food ready for the children, we would sit and play with drops of water that re-enacted a tennis game on the leaf moving around so quickly! In those days of childish joy I never knew that this game held a great truth about existence.

*Brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karotiḥya:
lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatramivāmbhasā.*⁷

How to surrender thus is our recurring question and great teachers from Krishna onwards have sought to help us understand this phenomenon. There is this golden passage in Sri Aurobindo’s *The Mother*, the “great little book”. There are many copies of the book in our house but one remains most precious for it had been signed and given to my mother whose name was also linked to the lotus, Padmasani, (‘she who is seated on the lotus’):

To Padmasani with blessings Sri Aurobindo

All in the Avatar’s own handwriting and it appears as fresh today as it was when it was written probably in 1942. Did the Avatar exert a power over the ink?

Usually I do not handle this book for reading or taking down quotations. But today I have a feeling of being surrounded physically by all these people in my life, so many sparks of the Divine and the Avatar too, that I shall open the page and use the quote before restoring it to its sacred niche:

7. “He who surrenders all his actions to the Lord giving up attachment even when he is doing them, is free from sin just as the lotus leaf is free from the water drop getting stuck to it.” *The Gita*, V.10.

There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power; there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature.⁸

Sri Aurobindo — the lotus — the Avatar — surrender. Mantric terms in our lives. I have often fondly imagined that Sri Aurobindo was drawn to translate the Tamil hymnologist Kulashekara Alwar because of the latter's use of the lotus as a simile for perfect surrender:

Let Fire himself assail with its heat the lotus-flower, it will blossom to none but the Sun. Even if thou shouldst refrain from healing its pain, my heart can be melted by nothing else as by thy unlimited beauty.⁹

Modern technology has been very invasive when it comes to Mother Prakriti and I do not know whether it has learnt to replicate the sun's rays to make lotuses open. I hope it has not. This image of Kulashekara about surrender that is imbedded in the heart of every devout Vaishnavite would then lose its contextual reference. The lotus must open only to the Sun; our hearts will open only to the Avatar.

I am back in the Time-machine again and Sastrikal is teaching us Sanskrit in the Ramaseshler High School, Pattamadai. When was this? 1948 or was it 1949? Certainly before 1950. A portly person in traditional gear, his forehead gleaming with the Holy Ash and lips always smiling, he is telling a story. Wonderful actor! For our ten-year-old eyes, he suddenly performs a vanishing trick. Now we are looking at a full-blown lotus gently waving on the waters and a brilliantly dark bee is buzzing around it. Aha, how it flies circling the petals. There! It has settled near the pericarp. It is sipping fresh nectar. Yes, we can see the fully drunk bee, its tiny head swaying a bit, totally-self lost and still sipping the droplets. All the time one by one the petals are closing so gently as if they are all closing simultaneously. The blossomed lotus is gone and we see a huge bud once again waving in the breeze. From somewhere Sastrikal's voice describes the state of the imprisoned bee and how it dreams throughout the night of the coming dawn. With sunrise the petals will open and it will fly away to drink nectar from other flowers!

Suddenly there is a thud. It is our Sastrikal who has leapt from the platform to the floor. "When the idiot bee was dreaming like this, there came this huge elephant, plucked the lotus and threw it away on the bank!" We are shocked back to reality by this tragic announcement. Before we can lament for the bee now facing certain

8. *The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 2.

9. *Perumal Tirumozhi*, V, vi. Sri Aurobindo's translation in *Translations*, CWSA, Vol. 5, p. 594.

death, comes the peppery laughter of Sastrikal: “You set of asses put together! Don’t you sleep and dream on your benches like that stupid bee!” He recites the verse and begins to teach it word by word:

*rātrirgamiṣyati bhaviṣyati suprabhātam
bhāsvānudeṣyati haṣiṣyati pañkajaśrīḥ
ittham vicintyati koṣagate dvirephe
nā hanta hanta nalinīm gaja ujjahāra¹⁰*

I think his name was Sivaramakrishna Sastrikal. It is ‘*apachara*’ to say ‘I think’. How could I have forgotten the full name of this guru who taught us with so much verve, gusto and dramatic inspiration! Salutations to you, sir, and all my teachers who have led me firmly on the pathways of Mahasaraswati Yoga.

Wherever I turn, the lotus is ubiquitous. It is white with Saraswati and pink with Lakshmi in the traditional portraits of the goddesses given to me by my parents on the day of my marriage. It has been a sweet pastime to try to understand the Mother’s calling the pink lotus as Avatar (the Supreme manifested on earth in a body) and the white lotus as Aditi (the Divine Consciousness). I must have read the phrases lotus-born (Brahma) and lotus-seated (Lakshmi) thousands of times. Several years ago I learnt that the thread drawn from lotus stalks and dried should be used as wicks for oil lamps to get the grace of Mahalakshmi. And that the Buddhists consider the robe made of lotus fibres as the most holy to be worn by a monk. With more mundane interests attacking me, I go back to my childhood and remember the joy we had when we could get good pericarps from the *nirmalya*¹¹ flowers in the village temple and pluck out the fresh seeds. They tasted heavenly. More recently I found that like woodrose, the dried pericarp is used in dried-flower arrangements.

The lotus is our national flower. But then nothing in India remains unstained by politics ever since we won ‘freedom’ in 1947 and decided to have universal adult franchise and its attendant tears and laughter. A quarter century ago, my father was being interviewed for the television and the officials had requested for some of his publications to be shown on the screen now and then. Two books which were recent publications then, his translation of *Tirukkural* and his edition of *The Synthesis of Yoga* were politely declined which surprised us. Since he was being interviewed in Chennai showing *Tirukkural* on the screen was considered appropriate and of course Sri Aurobindo. When asked for the reason, the rather taciturn assistant pointed out to the symbol of Birla Foundation (the Publisher) which was a golden lotus. It dawned upon Father then that it was politically incorrect to show the lotus on the

10. “The night will pass and the sun will rise above the Chakravala Hills.” So the bee that was drinking honey at the pericarp of the lotus thought when the petals closed and it was imprisoned. Alas, an elephant came, uprooted the lotus and took it away!

11. Flowers used to decorate the deity and now discarded.

screen since elections had been announced and the Bharatiya Janata Party (whose election symbol was the lotus) was a contestant!

Fortunately, this business of politics and election signs is of recent origin. I am told that the lotus is a very ancient flower and was cultivated more than three thousand years ago in China. In India we have been reciting the Vedic Sri Sukta for several millennia with the repetition of the flower's name occurring like the pealing of temple bells: *padme sthitām padmavarṇām. . . padmanemīm. . . padmamālinīm. . . padmapriye padmahaste padmālaye. . . padmadalāya tākṣi. . .* So many names for lotus: *Kamala, Pankaja, Saroruha, Jalaja, Neeraja, Ambuja, Sarasija, Mrinalini, Pundarika. . .* The ancient Buddhist tract, *Saddharma Pundarika*, familiarly known as *The Lotus Sutra*. The bodhisattva Padmapani who is recognised by the lotus in his hand. I have always loved the legend that a Tamil Brahmin prince from Kanchipuram went to China, became Bodhidharma, taught Zen Buddhism of transmitting knowledge through meditating upon a lotus flower (taking us back to Buddha's Flower Sermon) and initiated the Shaolin martial art.

The lotus has a firm place in my memory because of an unforgettable incident. One day when I was working for my doctoral research, my mother came to remind me that it was time for my music practice. I was upset that I was 'disturbed' in my work (at the age of twenty-one, our pride has truly Himalayan proportions!), and so said curtly: "Yes, I am the famous M.S. doing a kutcheri and one thousand people are going to listen to me. You are jobless!" But the quiet voice simply said: "Yes, Subbulakshmi is a lotus heard by thousands. But because the lotus blooms, does the *thumba*¹² refuse to flower? Don't give up your practice. It will be a change for you and I will be the listener." I never forgot the lotus-*thumba* comparison (so apt!) and never dared to refuse mother's request for the rest of my life.

Indeed looking back in memory's fields, I find that it has been flowers, flowers all the way in one sense. To aspire for progression on the sunlit path with a garland of *parijātha* in hand, to be assured of the answering grace of the Avatar when gazing at the lotus at the centre of Sri Aurobindo's symbol: I think this is the Life Divine. For our heart is the lotus, we have been told. They never say rose-heart or the champa-heart, do they? It is always the lotus-heart, *hridaya-kamal*. Fill this lotus with love says Rishi Narad, and the Avatar will be with us. You may call me a typical Indian lost in ritualistic imagery who dare not face intellectual questionings of research-obsessed scholars. Does it matter? What has the intellect done for us? But the lotus of the heart has made itself the throne of Krishna, the All-Beautiful. And given us Ananda. I believe, therefore I am. I love, therefore I am. Let us nurture the Rishi's message all our life:

12. Tiny white flowers that grow on small shrubs that rise just six inches in height.

He sang to them of the lotus-heart of love
 With all its thousand luminous buds of truth,
 Which quivering sleeps veiled by apparent things.
 It trembles at each touch, it strives to wake
 And one day it shall hear a blissful voice
 And in the garden of the Spouse shall bloom
 When she is seized by her discovered lord.
 A mighty shuddering coil of ecstasy
 Crept through the deep heart of the universe,
 Out of her Matter's stupor, her mind's dreams,
 She woke, she looked upon God's unveiled face.¹³

(Concluded)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

(A year's meditation upon some of the flowers has shaped my thought-processes. It has been an amazing discovery that these flowers which I had taken for granted in my journey through life have been living companions that have moulded my view of life. I laugh gaily to myself trying to count the millions of *parijatha* flowers that I must have threaded or baskets of jasmines that I have woven as garlands. Each time I touch a flower I touch the hem of the Divine.

Sharing memories can be soothing and does help face all our tomorrows. May all be full of Mother's Grace, as always!

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

13. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, pp. 417-18.

There is a love in which the emotion is turned towards the Divine in an increasing receptivity and growing union. What it receives from the Divine it pours out on others, but freely without demanding a return — if you are capable of that, then that is the highest and most satisfying way to love.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 815)