

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXIII

No. 4

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

---

### CONTENTS

*Sri Aurobindo*

THE RISHI (Poem)	...	297
THE KARMAYOGIN	...	313

*The Mother*

‘IT IS IN THEE THAT WE LIVE . . .’	...	320
‘THE ONLY REMEDY’	...	321

*Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)*

SRI AUROBINDO AND HUMAN EVOLUTION	...	324
-----------------------------------	-----	-----

*P. B. Saint Hilaire (Pavitra)*

ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY		
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE IMPOSSIBLE RETURN!	...	331
ANNEXURE B	...	337

*Maggi*

A VISIT TO THE MOTHER’S ROOM	...	341
------------------------------	-----	-----

*Gautam Malakar*

DETERMINATION AND WILL: DOUGLAS BADER, CHURCHILL AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN	...	345
---	-----	-----

*Prema Nandakumar*

LIVING WITH <i>THE LIFE DIVINE</i>		
3. THE DANCE OF SHIVA	...	355

*Nilima Das*

JUGAL-DA — A TRIBUTE	...	363
----------------------	-----	-----

*Alok Pandey*

A SALUTATION AND A PLEDGE	...	369
---------------------------	-----	-----

## THE RISHI

*King Manu in the former ages of the world, when the Arctic continent still subsisted, seeks knowledge from the Rishi of the Pole, who after long baffling him with conflicting side-lights of the knowledge, reveals to him what it chiefly concerns man to know.*

### MANU

Rishi who trance-held on the mountains old  
Art slumbering, void  
Of sense or motion, for in the spirit's hold  
Of unalloyed  
Immortal bliss thou dreamst protected! Deep  
Let my voice glide  
Into thy dumb retreat and break thy sleep  
Abysmal. Hear!  
The frozen snows that heap thy giant bed  
Ice-cold and clear,  
The chill and desert heavens above thee spread  
Vast, austere,  
Are not so sharp but that thy warm limbs brook  
Their bitter breath,  
Are not so wide as thy immense outlook  
On life and death:  
Their vacancy thy silent mind and bright  
Outmeasureth.  
But ours are blindly active and thy light  
We have forgone.

### RISHI

Who art thou, warrior armèd gloriously  
Like the sun?  
Thy gait is as an empire and thine eye  
Dominion.

## MANU

King Manu, of the Aryan peoples lord,  
Greets thee, Sage.

## RISHI

I know thee, King, earth to whose sleepless sword  
Was heritage.  
The high Sun's distant glories gave thee forth  
On being's edge:  
Where the slow skies of the auroral North  
Lead in the morn  
And flaming dawns for ever on heaven's verge  
Wheel and turn,  
Thundering remote the clamorous Arctic surge  
Saw thee born.  
There 'twas thy lot these later Fates to build,  
This race of man  
New-fashion. O watcher with the mountains wild,  
The icy plain,  
Thee I too, asleep, have watched, both when the Pole  
Was brightening wan  
And when like a wild beast the darkness stole  
Prowling and slow  
Alarming with its silent march the soul.  
O King, I know  
Thy purpose; for the vacant ages roll  
Since man below  
Conversed with God in friendship. Thou, reborn  
For men perplexed,  
Seekest in this dim aeon and forlorn  
With evils vexed  
The vanished light. For like this Arctic land  
Death has annexed  
To sleep, our being's summits cold and grand  
Where God abides,  
Repel the tread of thought. I too, O King,  
In winds and tides  
Have sought Him, and in armies thundering,  
And where Death strides

Over whole nations. Action, thought and peace  
     Were questioned, sleep,  
 And waking, but I had no joy of these,  
     Nor ponderings deep,  
 And pity was not sweet enough, nor good  
     My will could keep.  
 Often I found Him for a moment, stood  
     Astonished, then  
 It fell from me. I could not hold the bliss,  
     The force for men,  
 My brothers. Beauty ceased my heart to please,  
     Brightness in vain  
 Recalled the vision of the light that glows  
     Suns behind:  
 I hated the rich fragrance of the rose;  
     Weary and blind,  
 I tired of the suns and stars; then came  
     With broken mind  
 To heal me of the rash devouring flame,  
     The dull disease,  
 And sojourned with this mountain's summits bleak,  
     These frozen seas.  
 King, the blind dazzling snows have made me meek,  
     Cooled my unease.  
 Pride could not follow, nor the restless will  
     Come and go;  
 My mind within grew holy, calm and still  
     Like the snow.

### MANU

O thou who wast with chariots formidable  
     And with the bow!  
 Voiceless and white the cold unchanging hill,  
     Has it then  
 A mightier presence, deeper mysteries  
     Than human men?  
 The warm low hum of crowds, towns, villages,  
     The sun and rain,  
 The village maidens to the water bound,  
     The happy herds,

The fluting of the shepherd lads, the sound  
 Myriad of birds,  
 Speak these not clearer to the heart, convey  
 More subtle words?  
 Here is but great dumb night, an awful day  
 Inert and dead.

RISHI

The many's voices fill the listening ear,  
 Distract the head:  
 The One is silence; on the snows we hear  
 Silence tread.

MANU

What hast thou garnered from the crags that lour,  
 The icy field?

RISHI

O King, I spurned this body's death; a Power  
 There was, concealed,  
 That raised me. Rescued from the pleasant bars  
 Our longings build,  
 My wingèd soul went up above the stars  
 Questing for God.

MANU

Oh, didst thou meet Him then? in what bright field  
 Upon thy road?

RISHI

I asked the heavenly wanderers as they wheeled  
 For His abode.

MANU

Could glorious Saturn and his rings of hue  
 Direct thy flight?

## RISHI

Sun could not tell, nor any planet knew  
 Its source of light,  
 Nor could I glean that knowledge though I paced  
 The world's beyond  
 And into outer nothingness have gazed.  
 Time's narrow sound  
 I crossed, the termless flood where on the Snake  
 One slumbers throned,  
 Attempted. But the ages from Him break  
 Blindly and Space  
 Forgets its origin. Then I returned  
 Where luminous blaze  
 Deathless and ageless in their ease unearned  
 The ethereal race.

## MANU

Did the gods tell thee? Has Varuna seen  
 The high God's face?

## RISHI

How shall they tell of Him who marvel at sin  
 And smile at grief?

## MANU

Did He not send His blissful Angels down  
 For thy relief?

## RISHI

The Angels know Him not, who fear His frown,  
 Have fixed belief.

## MANU

Is there no heaven of eternal light  
 Where He is found?

## RISHI

The heavens of the Three have beings bright  
Their portals round,  
And I have journeyed to those regions blest,  
Those hills renowned.  
In Vishnu's house where wide Love builds his nest,  
My feet have stood.

## MANU

Is he not That, the blue-winged Dove of peace,  
Father of Good?

## RISHI

Nor Brahma, though the suns and hills and seas  
Are called his brood.

## MANU

Is God a dream then? are the heavenly coasts  
Visions vain?

## RISHI

I came to Shiva's roof; the flitting ghosts  
Compelled me in.

## MANU

Is He then God whom the forsaken seek,  
Things of sin?

## RISHI

He sat on being's summit grand, a peak  
Immense of fire.

MANU

Knows He the secret of release from tears  
And from desire?

RISHI

His voice is the last murmur silence hears,  
Tranquil and dire.

MANU

The silence calls us then and shall enclose?

RISHI

Our true abode  
Is here and in the pleasant house He chose  
To harbour God.

MANU

In vain thou hast travelled the unwonted stars  
And the void hast trod!

RISHI

King, not in vain. I knew the tedious bars  
That I had fled,  
To be His arms whom I have sought; I saw  
How earth was made  
Out of His being; I perceived the Law,  
The Truth, the Vast,  
From which we came and which we are; I heard  
The ages past  
Whisper their history, and I knew the Word  
That forth was cast  
Into the unformed potency of things  
To build the suns.  
Through endless Space and on Time's iron wings  
A rhythm runs



Our lives pursue, and till the strain's complete  
That now so moans  
And falters, we upon this greenness meet,  
That measure tread.

MANU

Is earth His seat? this body His poor hold  
Infirmly made?

RISHI

I flung off matter like a robe grown old;  
Matter was dead.

MANU

Sages have told of vital force behind:  
It is God then?

RISHI

The vital spirits move but as a wind  
Within men.

MANU

Mind then is lord that like a sovereign sways  
Delight and pain?

RISHI

Mind is His wax to write and, written, rase  
Form and name.

MANU

Is Thought not He who has immortal eyes  
Time cannot dim?

## RISHI

Higher, O King, the still voice bade me rise  
 Than thought's clear dream.  
 Deep in the luminous secrecy, the mute  
 Profound of things,  
 Where murmurs never sound of harp or lute  
 And no voice sings,  
 Light is not, nor our darkness, nor these bright  
 Thunderings,  
 In the deep steady voiceless core of white  
 And burning bliss,  
 The sweet vast centre and the cave divine  
 Called Paradise,  
 He dwells within us all who dwells not in  
 Aught that is.

## MANU

Rishi, thy thoughts are like the blazing sun  
 Eye cannot face.  
 How shall our souls on that bright awful One  
 Hope even to gaze  
 Who lights the world from His eternity  
 With a few rays?

## RISHI

Dare on thyself to look, thyself art He,  
 O Aryan, then.  
 There is no thou nor I, beasts of the field,  
 Nor birds, nor men,  
 But flickerings on a many-sided shield  
 Pass, or remain,  
 And this is winged and that with poisonous tongue  
 Hissing coils.  
 We love ourselves and hate ourselves, are wrung  
 With woes and toils  
 To slay ourselves or from ourselves to win  
 Shadowy spoils.  
 And through it all, the rumour and the din,

Voices roam,  
 Voices of harps, voices of rolling seas,  
     That rarely come  
 And to our inborn old affinities  
     Call us home.  
 Shadows upon the many-sided Mind  
     Arrive and go,  
 Shadows that shadows see; the vain pomps wind  
     Above, below,  
 While in their hearts the single mighty God  
     Whom none can know,  
 Guiding the mimic squadrons with His nod  
     Watches it all —  
 Like transient shapes that sweep with half-guessed truth  
     A luminous wall.

#### MANU

Alas! is life then vain? Our gorgeous youth  
     Lithe and tall,  
 Our sweet fair women with their tender eyes  
     Outshining stars,  
 The mighty meditations of the wise,  
     The grandiose wars,  
 The blood, the fiery strife, the clenched dead hands,  
     The circle sparse,  
 The various labour in a hundred lands,  
     Are all these shows  
 To please some audience cold? as in a vase  
     Lily and rose,  
 Mixed snow and crimson, for a moment blaze  
     Till someone throws  
 The withered petals in some outer dust,  
     Heeding not, —  
 The virtuous man made one with the unjust,  
     Is this our lot?

#### RISHI

O King, sight is not vain, nor any sound.  
     Weeds that float

Upon a puddle and the majestic round  
     Of the suns  
 Are thoughts eternal, — what man loves to laud  
     And what he shuns;  
 Through glorious things and base the wheel of God  
     For ever runs.  
 O King, no thought is vain; our very dreams  
     Substantial are;  
 The light we see in fancy, yonder gleams  
     In the star.

### MANU

Rishi, are we both dreams and real? the near  
     Even as the far?

### RISHI

Dreams are we not, O King, but see dreams, fear  
     Therefore and strive.  
 Like poets in a wondrous world of thought  
     Always we live,  
 Whose shapes from out ourselves to being brought  
     Abide and thrive.  
 The poet from his vast and labouring mind  
     Brings brilliant out  
 A living world; forth into space they wind,  
     The shining rout,  
 And hate and love, and laugh and weep, enjoy,  
     Fight and shout,  
 King, lord and beggar, tender girl and boy,  
     Foemen, friends;  
 So to His creatures God's poetic mind  
     A substance lends.  
 The Poet with dazzling inspiration blind,  
     Until it ends,  
 Forgets Himself and lives in what He forms;  
     For ever His soul  
 Through chaos like a wind creating storms,  
     Till the stars roll  
 Through ordered space and the green lands arise,

The snowy Pole,  
 Ocean and this great heaven full of eyes,  
 And sweet sounds heard,  
 Man with his wondrous soul of hate and love,  
 And beast and bird, —  
 Yes, He creates the worlds and heaven above  
 With a single word;  
 And these things being Himself are real, yet  
 Are they like dreams,  
 For He awakes to self He could forget  
 In what He seems.  
 Yet, King, deem nothing vain: through many veils  
 This Spirit gleams.  
 The dreams of God are truths and He prevails.  
 Then all His time  
 Cherish thyself, O King, and cherish men,  
 Anchored in Him.

#### MANU

Upon the silence of the sapphire main  
 Waves that sublime  
 Rise at His word and when that fiat's stilled  
 Are hushed again,  
 So is it, Rishi, with the Spirit concealed,  
 Things and men?

#### RISHI

Hear then the truth. Behind this visible world  
 The eyes see plain,  
 Another stands, and in its folds are curled  
 Our waking dreams.  
 Dream is more real, which, while here we wake,  
 Unreal seems.  
 From that our mortal life and thoughts we take.  
 Its fugitive gleams  
 Are here made firm and solid; there they float  
 In a magic haze,  
 Melody swelling note on absolute note,  
 A lyric maze,

Beauty on beauty heaped pell-mell to chain  
The enchanted gaze,  
Thought upon mighty thought with grandiose strain  
Weaving the stars.  
This is that world of dream from which our race  
Came; by these bars  
Of body now enchained, with laggard pace,  
Borne down with cares,  
A little of that rapture to express  
We labour hard,  
A little of that beauty, music, thought  
With toil prepared;  
And if a single strain is clearly caught,  
Then our reward  
Is great on earth, and in the world that floats  
Lingering awhile  
We hear the fullness and the jarring notes  
Reconcile, —  
Then travel forwards. So we slowly rise,  
And every mile  
Of our long journey mark with eager eyes;  
So we progress  
With gurge of revolution and recoil,  
Slaughter and stress  
Of anguish because without fruit we toil,  
Without success;  
Even as a ship upon the stormy flood  
With fluttering sails  
Labours towards the shore; the angry mood  
Of Ocean swells,  
Calms come and favouring winds, but yet afar  
The harbour pales  
In evening mists and Ocean threatens war:  
Such is our life.  
Of this be sure, the mighty game goes on,  
The glorious strife,  
Until the goal predestined has been won.  
Not on the cliff  
To be shattered has our ship set forth of old,  
Nor in the surge  
To founder. Therefore, King, be royal, bold,

And through the urge  
 Of winds, the reboant thunders and the close  
     Tempestuous gurge  
 Press on for ever laughing at the blows  
     Of wind and wave.  
 The haven must be reached; we rise from pyre,  
     We rise from grave,  
 We mould our future by our past desire,  
     We break, we save,  
 We find the music that we could not find,  
     The thought think out  
 We could not then perfect, and from the mind  
     That brilliant rout  
 Of wonders marshal into living forms.  
     End then thy doubt;  
 Grieve not for wounds, nor fear the violent storms,  
     For grief and pain  
 Are errors of the clouded soul; behind  
     They do not stain  
 The living spirit who to these is blind.  
     Torture, disdain,  
 Defeat and sorrow give him strength and joy:  
     'Twas for delight  
 He sought existence, and if pains alloy,  
     'Tis here in night  
 Which we call day. The Yogin knows, O King,  
     Who in his might  
 Travels beyond the mind's imagining,  
     The worlds of dream.  
 For even they are shadows, even they  
     Are not, — they seem.  
 Behind them is a mighty blissful day  
     From which they stream.  
 The heavens of a million creeds are these:  
     Peopled they teem  
 By creatures full of joy and radiant ease.  
     There is the mint  
 From which we are the final issue, types  
     Which here we print  
 In dual letters. There no torture grips,  
     Joy cannot stint

Her streams, — beneath a more than mortal sun  
Through golden air  
The spirits of the deathless regions run.  
But we must dare  
To still the mind into a perfect sleep  
And leave this lair  
Of gross material flesh which we would keep  
Always, before  
The guardians of felicity will ope  
The golden door.  
That is our home and that the secret hope  
Our hearts explore.  
To bring those heavens down upon the earth  
We all descend,  
And fragments of it in the human birth  
We can command.  
Perfect millenniums are sometimes, until  
In the sweet end  
All secret heaven upon earth we spill,  
Then rise above  
Taking mankind with us to the abode  
Of rapturous Love,  
The bright epiphany whom we name God,  
Towards whom we drove  
In spite of weakness, evil, grief and pain.  
He stands behind  
The worlds of Sleep; He is and shall remain  
When they grow blind  
To individual joys; for even these  
Are shadows, King,  
And gloriously into that lustre cease  
From which they spring.  
We are but sparks of that most perfect fire,  
Waves of that sea:  
From Him we come, to Him we go, desire  
Eternally,  
And so long as He wills, our separate birth  
Is and shall be.  
Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth  
And joy receive  
His good and evil, sin and virtue, till



He bids thee leave.  
 But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil  
     Thy part, conceive  
 Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,  
     The drama His.  
 Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,  
     Who only is.  
 Work, love and know, — so shall thy spirit win  
     Immortal bliss.  
 Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O King,  
     Fear not to enjoy;  
 For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing  
     Fools to annoy.  
 From self escape and find in love alone  
     A higher joy.

#### MANU

O Rishi, I have wide dominion,  
     The earth obeys  
 And heaven opens far beyond the sun  
     Her golden gaze.  
 But Him I seek, the still and perfect One, —  
     The Sun, not rays.

#### RISHI

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set  
     In the huge press  
 Of many worlds to build a mighty state  
     For man's success,  
 Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,  
     Perfect the race.  
 For thou art He, O King. Only the night  
     Is on thy soul  
 By thy own will. Remove it and recover  
     The serene whole  
 Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover  
     To God the goal.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 220-37)

# THE KARMAYOGIN

## A Commentary on the Isha Upanishad

Sri Aurobindo modified the structure of *The Karmayogin: A Commentary on the Isha Upanishad* while he was working on it. He began with a two-tier division: “Chapters” and sections. Later he introduced a superior division, the “Part”, and began calling the lowest-level divisions “Chapters”. The intermediate divisions, earlier called “Chapters”, became known as “Books”. The numbering of these divisions is neither consistent nor complete. The table on the opposite page shows the structure as marked by Sri Aurobindo in the manuscript and printed in the text and, italicised and within square brackets, how it would be if the final three-tier division were applied consistently throughout.

In the right margin are indicated the places where the discussions of the first six verses begin. The other twelve verses were not discussed.

— Editorial note in CWSA

### [Part I] [No title]

#### [Book I] Chapter I. The Law of Renunciation.

[Chapter] I.	God All and God Everywhere	[Start verse 1]
[Chapter] II.	Isha, the Lord.	
[Chapter] III.	Isha and His Universe.	
[Chapter] IV.	God in Man and in all Creatures	
[Chapter] V.	Selflessness, the Basic Rule of Karma-Yoga	
[Chapter] VI.	The Philosophical Justification of Altruism	
[Chapter] VII.	The Meaning of Renunciation	

#### [Book II] Chapter II. Salvation through Works

[Chapter] I	[No title]	[Start verse 2]
[Chapter] II.	Vairagya.	
[Chapter] III.	One Road and not Three.	
[Chapter] IV.	The denial of salvation by works	
[Chapter] V.	Mukti and the Jivanmukta.	
[Chapter] VI.	Suicide and the other World.	[Start verse 3]
[Chapter] VII.	Retrospect	

### Part II Karmayoga; the Ideal

#### [Book III] Chapter IV. The Eternal in His Universe

##### I. Eternal Truth the Basis of Ethics / I / The Root of Ethical Ideals

Chapter I.	Brahman.	[Start verse 4]
Chapter II.	Spiritual Evolution in Brahman	
Chapter III.	Psychical evolution — downward to matter	
Chapter IV.	Psychical Evolution — Upward to Self.	
[No Chapters V or VI]		
[Chapter] VII.	Elemental Evolution.	
[Chapter] VIII.	Matariswan and the Waters.	
[Chapter] IX.	Spirit and Matter	
[Chapter] X.	[No title]	
[Chapter] XI.	[No title]	
[Chapter] XII.	[No title]	[Start verse 5]
Book [IV] III.	[No title]	
Chapter I.	[No title]	[Start verse 6]
[Chapter] II.	Ethics in primitive society.	
Chapter III.	Social Evolution.	
Chapter IV.	The place of Religion in ethics.	

## Chapter I.

# The Law of Renunciation.

## I. God All and God Everywhere

### GURU

Salutation to the Eternal who is without place, time, cause or limit. Salutation to Him who rules the Universe, the Lord of the Illusion, the Master of manifold life. Salutation to the Self in me, who is the Self in all creatures. Brahman, Isha, Atman, under whatever aspect He manifests Himself or manifests not, to Him the One and Only Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, salutation.

The Upanishad begins; —

“With the Lord all this must be clothed (as with a garment), even all that is world in this moving universe; abandon the world that thou mayest enjoy it, neither covet any man’s possessions.”

The Upanishad first sets forth the universality of the Supreme Being; whatever we see, hear or are in any way sensible of, we must feel the presence of the Lord surrounding it. This tree that I am sitting under, I must not consider as only so many leaves, bark, pith, sap and roots encased in earth and air; I must realise that it is a manifestation in the Supreme who is the only reality. This voice that I am uttering, vibrates in the atmosphere of the Divine Reality; only because it vibrates there, is it capable of sound, articulation and meaning. No action I do or watch others do, but

the Lord is there surrounding and upholding it; otherwise it could not be done. Whatever I see, I am seeing God; whatever I hear, I am hearing God; whatever I do, it is the Energy of God which is governing my actions. This is the first thing the Karmayogin has to realise and until he has set his mind on the realisation, Karmayoga is impossible. The Lord is everywhere; the Lord surrounds everything with His presence; the Lord is all. वासुदेवः सर्वमिति। This Karma that I do, I do it in the Lord; this subjective I who act, exist only in the Lord; this objective he, she, it to whom the action is done, exists only in the Lord. It is the omnipresent universality of the Supreme, that has first to be realized. When the Yogin has had spiritual experience of this universality, then only is he fit for Karmayoga; for not till then can he sink the constant feeling of I and thou and he in a single higher and wider Existence; not till then can he escape from apparent self to true Self, and without such escape Karmayoga cannot really begin. To clothe all things with the Supreme, to be conscious of Him in all you say, do, think, feel or are sensible of, — this experience is the beginning of Karmayoga. The transformation of this experience into the habitual condition of the soul, is the consummation of Karmayoga; for it leads straight to the knowledge of Brahman and the ecstasy of union with Him, Karma melting into and becoming one with Jnana and Bhakti. Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, — Action, Love, Knowledge, are the three paths which lead out of phenomenal existence to the eternal reality, and where the three meet & become one, is the end of the great journey, that highest home of Vishnu towards which it is the one object of the Upanishad to turn and guide us. The Isha Upanishad is the Scripture of the Karmayogin; of the three paths it teaches the way of Action, and therefore begins with this first indispensable condition of all Godward action, to see all things, creatures, causes, effects, changes & evolutions as so many transitory phenomena enveloped with the presence of the Supreme Being and existing in Him and by Him only. Not I but He, for He is my real self and what I call I is only so much covering and semblance, — this is Vedanta; the first feeling of this truth is the beginning of Jnana, the beginning of Bhakti, the beginning of Karma. सोऽहं. He is the true & only I.

## II. Isha, the Lord.

Let us now look closely into the language of the Scripture, for in the Upanishad every word is of infinite importance and is chosen in preference to others for some profound and significant reason. *Ishâ* is the first word of the Upanishad; it is with the Lord that we must clothe all things in this Universe, it is the Lord whose presence, will, energy we must realize in whatever we see, feel, do or think. It is in other words the Supreme Being not in His aspect as the actionless, unknowable Para-brahman, transcendental and beyond realization by senses, mind or speech; it is not even Sacchidananda, that absolute self-centred Existence, Consciousness, Bliss with

whom the Jnanayogin seeks to unite himself in Samadhi; it is the Eternal in His aspect as Ruler of the Universe, He who keeps the wheel of phenomena turning and guides its motions as the mechanic controls his machine. The Karmamargin aims at living disillusionized, but yet using the illusions of Maya as the materials of his Yoga; he seeks to free himself from phenomena while yet living among phenomena; it is therefore Isha, Maheshwara, the Lord of the Illusion, the Master of multiple phenomenal life whom he must seek and in whom he must lose his lower self. Since he works through actions, it is the Master of actions whom he must worship with the flowers and incense of a selfless life.

Is there then a difference between Parabrahman and Isha? Are there two Supreme Beings and not one? No difference, really; the distinction is one of appearance, of semblance. Parabrahman, the absolute, transcendental, eternal reality is unknowable to human reason; That which is above reason in man can reach Parabrahman and experience Parabrahman, because It is Parabrahman, but this is in the state of Samadhi and from the state of Samadhi the human understanding can bring back no record intelligible to the reason or explicable in terms of speech. Parabrahman in His Essence is therefore realizable but not intelligible; He can be experienced, He cannot be explained or understood. Still Parabrahman presents to the understanding two semblances or aspects by which He can be relatively though not absolutely known. These two aspects correspond to the two powers inherent in Parabrahman as the Knower of Himself, the powers of Vidya and Avidya, the power to know and the power not to know, the faculty of Knowledge and the faculty of Illusion. Parabrahman can know Himself as He really is; this is Vidya. He can also imagine Himself as He is not; this is Avidya. In the first aspect He is Sacchidananda, absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss; He exists to Himself alone, because there *is* no other existence but Himself; He is conscious of His own existence only, because there *is* no other existence to be conscious of; He is the bliss of His own self-conscious existence, because there is nothing outside or other than Him to give Him external bliss. That is the eternal reality, that is His aspect to Vidya or true Knowledge. But there is also the eternal unreality, His aspect to Avidya or False Knowledge. Then He is a great Will, Shakti or Force pouring itself out in a million forms and names and keeping for ever in motion the eternal wheel of phenomenal Evolution, which He guides and governs. He is then Isha, the Lord or Ruler. To use a human parallel, Shakespeare pouring himself out in a hundred names and forms, Desdemona, Othello, Iago, Viola, Rosalind, Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, Cymbeline is using his power of Avidya to become the lord and ruler of a wonderful imaginary world. Shakespeare putting aside his works and returning to his own single & sufficient existence is using his power of Vidya to recover his own constant single reality. But there is one Shakespeare and not two. Now the Karmamargin has to deal with this great multifold phenomenal universe and when he seeks to feel the presence of the Eternal round every single thing it contains, it must necessarily be not in His unconditioned, unphe-

nominal aspect of Sacchidananda but in His conditioned, phenomenal aspect as Isha, Lord of the Universe. As Isha the Karmayogin may worship Him in various sub-aspects. Isha is a double being as Purusha-Prakriti; Purusha, the great male ocean of spiritual force which sets Prakriti to produce and watches her workings, and Prakriti, the mighty female energy which produces and works unweariedly for the pleasure of Purusha. He is the triple Being, Prajna, Hiranyagarbha, Virat; Prajna, Lord of Sleep-Life, the intelligent force which lives and wakes in what would otherwise seem inert and inanimate existence or the mere blind play of mechanical forces; Hiranyagarbha, the Lord of Dream-Life who takes from this ocean of subconsciously intelligent spiritual being those conscious psychic forces which He materializes or encases in various forms of gross living matter; and Virat, Lord of Waking-Life, who governs, preserves and maintains the sensible creation which Hiranyagarbha has shaped. He is triple again as Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu; Shiva, the destroyer, the Yogin, the Lord of brute or inert life; the Master of Samadhi, the Refuge of the outcast & of those who have no refuge; Brahma, the Creator, who puts forth life and stays not his hand for a moment; Vishnu, the Preserver & Saviour, the Master of Power & Love and Life and Light and Sweetness. With all these aspects of Isha, the Lord, Hindu worship has associated names & forms and in these names and forms He shows Himself to His worshippers. The Jnanayogin loves to worship Him as Shiva, the Master of utter Samadhi; to the Bhakta He appears in whatever form appeals most to the spiritual emotions of His devotee. But the Karmayogin should devote himself to those forms of the Supreme Lord in which His mighty Shakti, His Will to live and create has expressed itself in its highest, purest and most inspiring and energetic virility; for Karma is merely Shakti in motion and the Karmayogin must be a pure conductor of divine energy, a selfless hero and creator in the world. Isha Himself in His Avatars, Buddha, Rama, Srikrishna, has given us the highest types of this selfless divine energy and it is therefore to these mighty spirits, God-in-man, that the Karmayogin may well direct his worship. Or he may worship Isha in His Shakti, in the form of Durga-Kali, the most powerful realisation of His cosmic energy which the human mind has yet envisaged. If he is able to dispense with forms, he may worship the idea of Isha Himself, the Almighty Lord, whom the Hindu adores as Hari, the Christian as God, the Mahomedan as Allah. Even the atheist, if he recognizes a mighty Power at work in all life and existence and yields up his self and actions to the will and ends of that Power, or if he recognizes in men the godhead he refuses to recognize in the Universe and devotes himself to the selfless service of his kind, has set his foot on the path of Karmayoga and cannot fail to reach the Lord whom he denies. It is of no importance that the Karmayogin should recognize a particular name or form as the greater Self to win whom he must lose his smaller self; but it is of importance & essential that he should recognize the existence of a Power inside and outside himself to the law of whose Will and Workings he can sacrifice the self-will and self-worship of the

natural man. Whatever name he gives to this Power or whether he gives it a name or not, it is Isha, the Lord, whose presence he must feel around every object and movement in the Universe.

### III. Isha and His Universe.

Next let us take note of the word वास्यं. All this Universe must be clothed with Isha; we must draw the feeling of His presence round every object in the Universe and envelop it with Isha, as a robe is drawn round and envelops the wearer. For the Lord is greater than His universe. This tree is not the Lord, it is in the Lord. We must avoid the materialistic Pantheism which identifies the visible Universe with the Supreme Being. It is true that He is both the final and material Cause of the universe, and in one sense He is His Universe and His Universe is He, just as Shakespeare's creations are really Shakespeare himself, woven by him out of his own store of psychic material; and yet it would be obviously a mistake to identify, say, Iago with Shakespeare. This tree is evolved out of original ether, ether pervades it and surrounds it, but the tree cannot be described as ether, nor ether as the tree; so, going deeper down, we find it is evolved out of the existence of the Lord who pervades it and surrounds it with His presence; but the tree is not the Lord, nor the Lord the tree. The Hindu is no idolater; he does not worship stocks or stones, the tree as tree or the stone as stone or the idol as a material thing, but he worships the presence of the Lord which fills & surrounds the tree, stone or idol, and of which the tree, stone or idol is merely a manifestation or seeming receptacle. We say for the convenience of language and mental realization that God is in His creature, but really it is the creature who is in God, न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि. "I am not in them, they are in Me."

We find European scholars when they are confronted with the metaphors of the Sruti, always stumbling into a blunder which we must carefully avoid if we wish to understand our Scriptures. Their reason, hard, logical and inflexible, insists on fixing the metaphor to its literal sense and having thus done violence to the spirit of the Upanishad, they triumphantly point to the resultant incoherence and inconsistency of our revealed writings and cry out, "These are the guesses, sometimes sublime, generally infantile, of humanity in its childhood." But the metaphors of the Sruti are merely helps to a clearer understanding; you are intended to take their spirit and not insist on the letter. They are conveniences for the hand in climbing, not supports on which you are to hang your whole weight. Here is a metaphor वास्यं, clothe, as with a garment. But the garment is different from the wearer, & limited in the space it occupies: is the Lord then different from His creation and limited in His being? That would be the letter; the spirit is different. The presence of the Lord who is infinite, must be thought of as surrounding each object and not confined to the limits of the object, — this and no more is the force of वास्यं. When we see the tree, we do not say,



“This is the Lord”, but we say “Here is the Lord”. The tree exists only in Him & by Him; He is in it and around it, even as the ether is.

*All this*, says the Sruti, is to be thought of as surrounded by the presence of the Lord, सर्वमिदं, all this that is present to our senses, all in fact that we call the Universe. But to avoid misunderstanding the Upanishad goes on to point out that it is not only the Universe as a whole, but each thing that is in the Universe which we must feel to be encompassed with the divine Presence यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत्। everything and anything that is moving thing in Her who moves. *Jagati*, she that moves, in the ancient Sanscrit, was a word applied to the whole Universe; afterwards it meant rather this moving earth,<sup>1</sup> that part of the cosmos with which we human beings are mainly concerned and the neuter *jagat*, that which moves, came to be the ordinary expression for world or universe. But why is the universe called “she that moves”? Because it is the result of the working of Prakriti, the visible form of Prakriti, the great female material energy of the Lord, and the essence of Prakriti is motion; for by motion she creates this material world. Indeed all object matter is only a form, that is to say a visible, audible or in some way sensible result of motion. Every material object is what it is here called, *jagat*, a world of infinite motion; even the stone, even the clod. Our senses tell us that the material world is the only reality, the only steadfast thing of whose rule and order we can be sure and by which we can abide; but our senses are in error and the Upanishad warns us against their false evidence. The material world is a transitory and changing whirl of motion on the surface of Brahman, the great ocean of spiritual existence, who alone is, in His depths, eternal, real and steadfast. It is He who as the Lord gives order, rule and abidingness to the infinite motion we call the Universe; and if we wish to be in touch with reality, we must train our souls to become aware of His presence sustaining, pervading and surrounding this moving Prakriti and every objective form to which her varying rates of vibration have given rise. Thus placed in constant touch with reality, the Karmayogin will escape from the false shows and illusions of Prakriti; Karma or action which also is merely her motion, energy at work, will not master him and drive him as a storm drives a ship, but he will rather be the master of action, both his own and that of others. For it is only by understanding practically the reality of a thing and its law of working that one can become its master and make use of it for his own purposes.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pp. 169-80)

1. The ancient Rishis knew that the earth moves, चला पृथ्वी स्थिरा भाति, “The earth moves, but seems to be still”.



## ‘IT IS IN THEE THAT WE LIVE . . .’

**February 21, 1914**

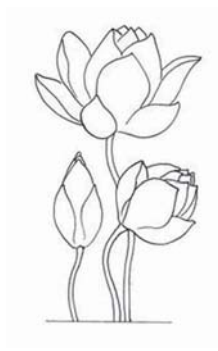
EVERY day, every moment should be an occasion for a new and completer consecration, and not one of those enthusiastic and flurried consecrations, over-active, full of illusions about the work, but a deep and silent consecration which is not necessarily visible but penetrates and transfigures all action. Our mind, solitary and peaceful, should always repose in Thee and from that pure summit have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality behind all unstable and fleeting appearances.

O Lord, my heart is purified of all uneasiness and anguish; it is steady and calm and sees Thee in all things; and whatever our outer actions may be, whatever the circumstances the future has in store for us, I know that Thou alone livest, that Thou alone art real in Thy immutable permanence and it is in Thee that we live. . . .

May there be peace upon all the earth.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 80)*



## ‘THE ONLY REMEDY’

THERE is a rush of adverse forces. A mad rush. But the Response has started coming — it is just a small beginning. In everyone it was as though a hurricane — it has not gone completely. All that was believed to have been conquered and repulsed, rushes back again — in the most unexpected persons — in all forms, but especially in character, oh! . . . doubts and revolts and all that. . . .

(Silence)

A message was asked from me for the whole of India. I have given it. (*Mother hands the text to the disciple.*)

*Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth  
Let us obey Thee alone  
and live according to  
Truth.*

It is a terrible onrush of Falsehood. It was as though the whole world, everyone were lying, even the most unexpected people — everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. And for me it was a living thing (*Mother makes a gesture of seeing*) oh! horrible, you can’t imagine. . . . A little twist to the right, a little twist to the left, a little twist . . . nothing, nothing, nothing is straight. And then the body asked itself, “Where is your falsehood?” It looked at itself. And it saw this old story: “The Lord is to be called only when the matter is important! (*Mother laughs*) You don’t expect to be with Him all the time!” Then it got a good rap! . . . It was not aggressive, it looked something like humility — it got a good slap.

It was a mad fury of disagreeable things — more than disagreeable: truly, truly wicked and bad and destructive. A fury, until it got the understanding. Then this feeling came in the whole body, in all the cells, everywhere, all the while — it reached such a point that I was not able to swallow when I was eating — until everything, everything got the understanding: I exist only through the Divine and I cannot subsist but through the Divine . . . and I cannot be myself but by being the Divine. After that, things were better. Now the body has understood.

(Long silence)

You have nothing to ask? Nothing to say?

*I have the feeling that the destiny is bad.*

No, it is not true. This is part of the Falsehood; it is this Falsehood. There is no bad destiny, it is a lie! It is a real falsehood. . . . It is not true at all, at all, at all.

There, that just gives you an example: it is like that, like that everywhere (*gesture, as though with claws*). As for me, I feel as though I see goblins with hooked hands that try to clutch at everybody. Ah! You should have a look at them and then laugh — stick out your tongue, like a child with no manners.

*(Long silence)*

*In any case, you are attacked on all sides.*

Oh! . . . I tell you it is a massive rush — but it does not matter. . . . One must rise above, and then (*gesture of seeing from above*).

What I have told you is the Truth, it is the *only* remedy:

To exist only for the Divine.

To exist only through the Divine.

To exist only in the service of the Divine.

To exist only . . . by becoming the Divine.

There you are.

There is no “you”, there is no “one must wait”, there is no “it will come in its time”, there is no . . . all these things very reasonable do not exist any more — it is That (*Mother brings down her fist*), like a sword blade. It is That. It is That *in spite of everything*: the Divine, the Divine alone. All this rubbish of bad will and revolt and . . . all that (*Mother lifts a stiff finger*), that must be swept away. And that which says that one shall perish or be destroyed by That, is the ego — it is Sir Ego that tries to be taken as the true being.

But the body has learnt that even without the ego, it is what it is, because it is that by the divine Will, not by the ego — we exist by the divine Will and not by the ego. The ego was a means — a means for many centuries — now it is worth nothing, its time has passed. Now . . . (*Mother brings down her fist*), consciousness, it is the Divine; power, it is the Divine; action, it is the Divine; individuality, it is the Divine.

And the body has understood, felt very well; it has realised, understood that this sense of being a separate individuality is altogether useless, altogether; it is not at all indispensable for its existence, it is wholly useless. It exists through another power and another will which is not personal: it is the divine Will. And it will be what it should be only the day it feels that there is no difference between itself and the Divine. That is all.

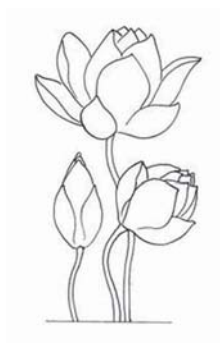
All the rest is falsehood — falsehood, falsehood, and falsehood that must

disappear. There is only *one* reality, there is only *one* life, there is only *one* consciousness (*Mother brings down her fist*): the Divine.

9 June 1971

THE MOTHER

(*Notes on the Way*, CWM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 258-60)



## SRI AUROBINDO AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

“I HAVE no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco.”<sup>1</sup> These ringing challenging words come from the greatest spiritual figure of modern India: Sri Aurobindo. They were meant to refuse acceptance of what he called “a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature.”<sup>2</sup> Although originally applied to a particular crisis in a disciple’s career, the surmounting of the habitual outer personality with its petty and egoistic ways of thought, feeling, character and action, they can be taken in general to suggest Sri Aurobindo’s keen sense of the need for a new principle and power of spiritual life to solve the many-sided problem of man’s imperfect nature.

To grasp what Sri Aurobindo stands for, we must first seize the significance of the phrase “spiritual life”. Historical India has had no uncertainty about it. “Spiritual” does not mean merely “cultural” or, as is mostly the case today, merely “moral”. Of course, spirituality has in its essence a supreme refinement and liberality as also an extreme honesty, purity, unselfishness and benevolence. Yet its essence goes beyond the values of the intellectual, the aesthetic and the ethical being. Even religious values — concerned primarily as they are with a set of dogmas, pietistic practices, modes of external worship to support and satisfy one’s faith in and fervour for the supernatural — cannot be quite equated with it. It does not deny all these values, but it goes to the concrete experience of a more-than-human Reality hidden from us, a Reality eternal and infinite whose partial and divided reflections are caught in all that we ordinarily consider the highest humanity. Spirituality is oneness with or at least effective participation in that secret existence: it is for evolutionary man the act or state of what India has called Yoga. The word “Yoga” has the same root as the English “yoke” — it connotes the being yoked or joined or united with the more-than-human, the divine, the perfect, through a disciplined process of inner development.

This process is sometimes preluded by the practice of certain extraordinary physical postures and breathing exercises. But they have never been considered necessary to the central object of Yoga. The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo starts straight with the consciousness and puts a double aim before it: transcendence and transformation. That double aim is in general all Yoga’s, but much depends on the precise content read in it. In the past, the whole meaning of transcendence lay in getting beyond the ordinary human self into some aloof Absolute or some Cosmic Consciousness or some Oversoul that is this self’s Lord and Lover. Transformation

1. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1306.

2. *Ibid.*

meant sagehood and saintliness, a calmly compassionate, wisely energetic and helpful living from within outwards, which brings others not only happiness but also a touch of the transcendence achieved by the sage and the saint. The philosophy behind this spirituality has been either that the world is a huge illusion from which its victims have to be drawn away into an illimitable peace, or that here is a mysterious play of God with the soul around a theme of love's hide and seek, or else that a creative divine Force is sweeping the soul upwards through various phases of effective self-expression to an ultimate identity with the Supreme Spirit above Nature. Ascetic quietism, ecstatic devotionism, enlightened dynamism have been the three main strands of the Indian spiritual life. But the first has acquired prominence because of a tremendous trenchancy in it, its impatience with any kind of "make-do" with a world which, whatever the transformative influence brought to it, seems compounded of some stuff of radical and irremediable imperfection. After all, even the other ways of spirituality end up with a passing out of the world-scene, an attainment of a Beyond where alone is fulfilment found. A clean cut, therefore, between matter and Spirit has often struck the baffled aspiring mind of man as the most satisfying solution.

Sri Aurobindo holds that by such a clean cut nothing is really solved: the problem is shirked and shelved and, though the Nirvana of Buddha and the Absolute Brahman of Shankara are grand experiences that no aspirant to all-round spirituality can afford to ignore or miss the original Indian drive towards a many-sided harmony, towards an accord of the Here and the Beyond, is left uncompleted. At the same time he recognises that the means adopted so far for changing the earth from a *mêlée* of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, beauty and ugliness, strength and weakness, into a mould for the Divine's manifestation have been inadequate. The Yoga of God's enrapturing love and the Yoga of God's uplifting power have indeed a splendour which cannot be depreciated, they have unsealed great springs of idea and action; and yet they have failed to break the ultimate rock, so to speak, from which the full fountain of the Life Divine may leap. Philosophically, though they did not deny like the Illusionists the world's value, they overlooked three basic points.

First, the world is a field of evolution in which through a succession of births the growing inmost soul in us prepares three instruments — the physical, the vital, the mental — and unless these instruments find a perfection of their own, there can be no fulfilment of the evolutionary scheme. Merely for a sojourning soul to develop itself and utilise them exaltedly for a while and then, discarding them as incapable of entire divinisation, pass on beyond is surely to bypass the purpose of evolution. Together with the inmost being's growth into the Divine we must have the instrumental nature's completion if we are to appease the urge that has always found voice in human history — the mind's search for flawless knowledge of the world's dynamics, the life-force's cry for happiness and co-operative abundance and triumphant activity, the body's passion for health, stability, continuance. Transformation must signify

the perfecting of our nature-parts to the full, a total conquest of the difficulties with which evolution is beset, the establishment of a divinised mind, a divinised life-force, a divinised body — a spiritual victory in the very field that is the concern of science. The Yogi must prove to be the super-scientist. Then alone can spirituality have integral and utterly incontrovertible justification for earth-beings. That is the first point to be emphasised.

The second point is the rationale of the spirituality which is super-science. Is the required divinisation possible by the way things are constituted? “Yes,” answers Sri Aurobindo. Evolution starts with a seeming opposite of all that we can imagine of Godhead: a vast welter of blind brute energy — insensitive, unconscious, amoral matter. Out of this arises the *élan* of life and out of life arises the activity of mind. Sri Aurobindo says that evolution occurs because the emergent powers are already in a state of involution within the physical cosmos. And the involution is the last stage in a series of grades downward — a devolution — from the supreme Spirit, a series in which planes of mind and life occultly exist between Spirit and matter. Forces of these planes press upon matter and enter into it to assist the push within it to evolve life and mind in material terms. The supreme Spirit also has an involved figure of itself in matter and that is why there can be no ultimate satisfaction in earth-existence without a straining towards the spiritual. Once the mental level has emerged, the inmost soul is able to function with some of its light in the forefront and, through the pursuit of ideals and values, through the ache for the infinite, the eternal, the deific, it helps its instruments, our nature-parts, in that onward and upward straining. But since the Spirit is not only beyond but even here — and here not only as a Cosmic Consciousness containing and enveloping all but also as an entity hidden in the very atoms of the physical universe and progressively active in the stuff of life and mind — its outflowing in our nature-parts must be possible and the liberating touch and penetration from the Spirit’s uninvolved status above can be no alien intrusion but God’s coming into His own through an evolutionary process. Divinisation of mind and life and body can be accomplished only if there is a fundamental identity of substance between the higher and the lower: that is, if the lower is a particular phenomenal organisation put forth for working out some potentiality of the masterful infinite that is the higher.

Having seen what the spiritual goal of the evolutionary process is and how its attainment is grounded in the nature of things, we must get into conceptual focus the exact principle and power of the Spirit which provides the ground and goal. In Sri Aurobindo’s view, the Spirit is the Truth of existence not in the sense of the Real as opposed to the unreal that is the universe of mind and life and matter, or in the sense of the Perfect that can never be found in the world’s formations. Sri Aurobindo avers that if all things have come from the Spirit, there must be in the Spirit a supporting original of them. No doubt, the Spirit is an ineffable freedom from all

that is here, it is not limited by anything, it exceeds all that we can conceive; but, while exceeding all, it does not negate all: of its reality they are phases and in it must be the archetypes, the perfect patterns, of which all the formations of the world are evolving terms. Divine counterparts of mind and life and matter must reside in it, fully manifested in flawless harmony in the Beyond and concealed in their fullness within the laboriously evolving terms here, the twofold presence of them constituting by descent and ascent a manifestation upon earth. Such presence alone, with its descending and ascending movement, can provide the exact goal and ground of evolutionary fulfilment, it alone can be the genuine significant Truth of the cosmos and of the individual centres through which the involved cosmic possibilities blossom forth. Sri Aurobindo calls it Supermind, Gnosis, Creative Truth-Consciousness.

The Aurobindonian Supermind is not an entirely new discovery. As early as the Vedas, there was the vision of it as *Satyam Ritam Brihat* — the True, the Right, the Vast — and it was symbolised as the Sun of Knowledge in the highest heaven. But either it was experienced in deep trance from which its whole import could not be transmitted or what was seized was its reflection in the several grades between it and the mental level — grades distinguished by Sri Aurobindo from that level upwards as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. On each of these levels the Spirit has an organised existence in which it is self-revealed, each carries something of which our universe seems a half-lit image-echo; but the Spirit's self-revelation differs in intensity from grade to grade. In the Overmind it is so intense that most yogis and mystics have hardly looked further, they have believed the ultimate omniscience and omnipotence to be here, and yet this greatness has not the secret of the total transformation. No more than grand hints and glimmerings of the Supermind have been caught up to now. If there had been a clear and concrete seizure of it, its precise potentialities in reference to the evolutionary process would have been gauged. The realisation of the Supermind's significance and intention, by a wide-awake union with its Truth-Consciousness, is Sri Aurobindo's contribution to spiritual experience. The systematic detailed exposition of them is his contribution to philosophy. And the direct application of them to the problems of individual and collective living in his Ashram at Pondicherry is his contribution to practical world-work.

These three contributions render Sri Aurobindo the most important influence for humanity's future, the spiritual India of history reaching its climax and giving modern times a stimulus of the profoundest creativity. Behind the stimulus was a versatile personality who could claim to be representative of both East and West and who seemed to hold in himself, like a greater Leonardo da Vinci, the seeds of a new age.

...



The Ashram today is an organisation in which hundreds of souls — men, women and children from several countries — are being shaped to be the nucleus of the new humanity. It is a scene of varied enterprise, with engineers, doctors, craftsmen, physical culturists, sportsmen and manual workers no less than artists, poets, musicians and thinkers, trying to be the instruments of a novel inspiration. Sri Aurobindo's call is not to the wilderness: modern times in all their subtlety and complexity are accepted by him, for the spiritual life can be most fruitful only when it is organic to the age, takes stock of whatever is current, keeps in touch with contemporary problems and needs. Typical of the modernity of the Aurobindonian Yoga is the insistence that the production of a few extraordinary individuals is not the object. A collective, a social transformation is wanted. And that is why the spiritual work, though unimplicated in politics, is never indifferent to the crises brought about in any part of the world by tyrannies that seek to arrest into a single-typed thought-fettered uniformity the many-sided evolutionary nature of man which can be fulfilled only by a diversity in unity, a freedom within co-operation. But Sri Aurobindo has always reminded the world that its dreams of liberty and democracy and international harmony cannot really come true unless there is a progressive inward dedication to the service of the divine Supermind which is the whole sense of his Yoga.

Here a few words would be in place about Sri Aurobindo's attitude to the scientific temper of modern times. We have already said that the Aurobindonian Yoga does not dissociate itself from the current and the contemporary. This should imply that there is nothing obscurantist about it. In fact it welcomes many of the mental qualities science has helped to cultivate. Sri Aurobindo's stay in England coincided with the heyday of scientific materialism. And, though he prophesied quite early that its negation of the extra-sensory and the supra-physical would break down by the very force of its own narrowness, he always appreciated the austere discipline, fostered by science, of emotion-free intellect which insists on putting everything to rigorous test, and he set an immense value on science's demand for tangible results of all endeavour and for building by evolution upon *terra firma* whatever heaven the idealist visions among the clouds. By what he criticised and what he approved he went to the core of the scientific adventure, cleansing it of all adventitious dogmatism and making its essential integrity and clarity and progressive this-worldliness one with his insatiable hunger for not only the surfaces but also the depths of Reality. It is this rare union of the scientific and the spiritual, each intensifying and completing the other, that finds expression in a letter he wrote apropos of an inveterately sceptical intellectuality like Bertrand Russell's as contrasted with the temperament which easily and eagerly believes or rests happy with lofty speculations. The letter begins:

I must remind you that I have been an intellectual myself and no stranger to doubts, — both the Mother and myself have had one side of the mind as positive and as insistent on practical results and more so than any Russell can be. We could never have been contented with the shining ideas and phrases which a Rolland or another takes for gold coin of Truth. We know well what is the difference between a subjective experience and a dynamic outward-going and realising Force. So although we have faith, (and who ever did anything great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him?) we do not found ourselves on faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane. That is why I am not alarmed by the aspect of the world around me or disconcerted by the often successful fury of the adverse Forces who increase in their rage as the Light comes nearer and nearer to the field of earth and Matter.<sup>3</sup>

“The field of earth and Matter” — that is the final objective of the scientist of the Spirit that is Sri Aurobindo. And to prepare in this field the requisite inner receptivity to the Supermind’s Light in a comprehensively cultured and efficient consciousness, he had conceived an International Centre of Education in Pondicherry, with residential quarters for students and teachers from all over the globe. After his passing, the Mother started to materialise the gigantic scheme. It was her aim to offer free studies in every accepted branch of learning. . . . But this Centre would not be just one more educational institution added to the hundreds of others in India and elsewhere. It would always have the Aurobindonian world-vision as its background. And this vision would be conveyed not only by study, in the higher classes, of the Master’s own books like *The Life Divine* (the metaphysical structure of that vision), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (the *exposé* of an integral technique of spiritual progression), *The Human Cycle* (studies in the psychology of social development and the search for values), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (an analysis of man’s political aspirations and of present-day social, political and economic history), *The Future Poetry* (essays on poetry in general and English poetry in particular, on the various grades and powers of consciousness finding poetic expression and on a new direction of poetic development under the stress of spiritual experience), *Savitri* (a blank-verse epic of nearly twenty-four thousand lines turning a legend of the past into a symbol of the supramental transformation and variously exemplifying “the future poetry”). Over and above Sri Aurobindo’s books which are part of India’s most living and significant literature, as well as the illuminating publications of the Mother,

3. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 468-69.

what would convey his vision would be the constant presence of its very source — the new spiritual consciousness made dynamic for earth-use by him and the Mother and in process of establishment in their disciples. Thus the Centre of Education in its full development would be at the same time a great meeting-ground of the East and the West and a rich soil for the first shoots of a harmonised world in which the spiritual would not be cut off from the material, the outermost would be illumined with the innermost and there would not be in any form “a new edition of the old fiasco”.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

(*The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, 1992, pp. 1-10; published in *Mother India*, August 1955. Part of this article originally appeared in the Delhi weekly, *Thought*.)

*I have not said that everything is falsehood except the supramental Truth. I said that there was no complete Truth below the supramental. In the overmind the Truth of supermind which is whole and harmonious enters into a separation into parts, many truths fronting each other and moved each to fulfil itself, to make a world of its own or else to prevail or take its share in worlds made of a combination of various separated Truths and Truth-forces. Lower down in the scale, the fragmentation becomes more and more pronounced, so as to admit of positive error, falsehood, ignorance, finally inconscience like that of Matter. This world here has come out of the Inconscience and developed the Mind which is an instrument of Ignorance trying to reach out to the Truth through much limitation, conflict, confusion and error. To get back to overmind, if one can do it completely, which is not easy for physical beings, is to stand on the borders of the supramental Truth with the hope of entry there.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 19-20)

# ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

## Pavitra's Correspondence with His Father

(Continued from the issue of March 2010)

### Chapter Seven The Impossible Return!

*ON the ship that was bringing him back to Japan, Philippe wrote a moving letter to his parents. In it he confirmed his desire of pursuing his spiritual itinerary, to go till the end of this spiritual life which "can neither be written nor described" but which he could at certain moments glimpse with great clarity; his ultimate goal was to realise the divine presence in himself: "To raise himself up above the purely human plane, to that level where the light is never extinguished." The letters had crossed, and Paul rightly thought that the time had come for his son to clear up the misunderstanding between them and remove the ambiguity caused by his old Theosophist friends.*

*The question of money, however, remained a sensitive issue between them. When Philippe received a cheque, he mistook it at first to be the amount from the sale of his article, whereas it was a gesture of generosity from his father. Even when he accepted that his father lent him the money for his return to France thus avoiding the need to wait till he had earned enough, he nonetheless borrowed from his brother Albert the additional sum he would require for his planned detour to India. . .*

*The meeting with his brother in Indochina was the last he had with any of his near relatives.*

*The letter of August 10, 1925 was the first to be type-written; most of the others which he wrote from Pondicherry were also type-written.*

\* \* \*

June 25, 1925

My very dear Papa and Maman,

It is from a ship that I am writing to you; perhaps that will surprise you somewhat after my last letter where I did not at all seem inclined to leave. But everything is simple, logical and clear in my life, if one understands once and for all that I have surrendered the charge of my life to the desire which is in me [for a spiritual life].

He alone guides me — where I will go and when.

Also, after having passed a winter of terrible struggles and great suffering of which I did not tell you and which I can hardly share with you, because the inner trials have no meaning except to those who also follow the same path and would be totally incomprehensible to you, — after, I say, a great battle had been fought and won (no credit to me in that, the spirit alone acts in the heart of the disciple) — the goal for which I had been led to this Mongolian retreat having been attained, I understood that the time to leave had come.

And, as abruptly as I had the premonition, my departure was effected, not without a few incidents as there always are, I think, in travels in China: the rains damaging the rail lines and the roads being cut off, etc. This time I took a shorter route. Travelling directly Eastwards, I reached the railways in Manchuria and passing through Mukden, I arrived at Tien-tsin and Peking where I had to make a short halt for bank matters and for the things left for safe-keeping during my journey last year.

This time I made the journey all alone and, as soon as I arrived in China my knowledge of the Mongolian language was no longer of any help. In other words, I was alone in a country whose language I did not understand. In spite of that I did not have, even for a moment, any feeling of danger and the few small difficulties quickly faded. However I met many Japanese in Manchuria who gave me all the help they could.

A few days before my departure from Ling-Shi-Shien, I received in good time Papa's cheque for 1000F which I encashed in Peking. I am very thankful to him for what he has done for me and the trouble that he has taken to try and sell my article. As for the photographs, I am sending them along with this registered letter to Corrèze (where you would be in Summer).

As for my new photos, I am really annoyed because I fear that the Chinese Postal Service has definitely lost the two dozen photos I have taken at the lamasery and which I think are interesting. I shall write one or two more articles on Japan and send them to you. Naturally, I shall also write for the Japanese magazines, because I need to earn a little money.

But I must tell you about my plans or, at least, that portion of the path which I think I have found before me at present. I am thinking of spending July and August in Japan because coming back by ship at the height of Summer is a little tiring, then leave at the beginning of September to spend a fortnight with Albert, and reach Adyar at the beginning of October. How long shall I stay there? I do not know. I do not wish to arrive there before October because in Summer Adyar is empty and life does not resume there till October. How long I stay there will depend on what I have to do there and not on my pleasure. Then, if such is my path, I shall continue on my way to France. I say: if such is my path, because, wishing to be absolutely frank with you, I shall not hide from you that, even though I see this plan before me

today, I am not in the least sure that it will not undergo any change and that may be what my Master wants me to do. In order to put my thoughts more clearly to you, let us suppose that when I am in Europe, my Master wants that I go to Djibouti, a place I have never heard of. There are two ways of bringing about the desired result. Either to imprint in my waking consciousness the word Djibouti with a strong desire to go there, which will be all the more difficult since I am not psychic. The second method, which will demand less force, would be to give me the desire to leave for India, for example, which I know well, then in the course of the journey, it will be easy to make me change the destination.

Also, I confess frankly to you that it is not I who have taken the decision to return to France. It seems to me that I have something to do in Adyar before returning, but I may as well end up in Canada or Australia. I must write this to you, firstly to avoid a deception towards you in case my return is delayed or postponed and secondly so that you understand well, something that you do not wish to do, that I am but an instrument of the divine force which drives me where it wants. I understand your difficulty to admit this idea, but as I have written to you quite at length in my last letter, without admitting it, you will never be able to understand me. Along with the cheque I have received a letter from Papa which again showed me how necessary it is that I write to you in this manner.

Papa tries to bring everything down to the level of the intellect, but Theosophy, just like mysticism, has nothing intellectual and all that is written in books is neither true occultism nor true Theosophy. Spiritual life can neither be written about nor described; it is apprehended inwardly at certain moments of clarity and we receive then the power to march farther in the period of darkness until there is a new burst of light. To give you an idea of what it is to live spiritually, I shall quote to you a letter from a very dear friend, Madame Raymond. She and her husband, of whom I have spoken to you in my letters, are Americans although she is of French origin and he Czechoslovak. They are élite souls and infinitely close and devoted friends. After ten years of marriage, they at last had a baby but the baby died a month after its birth. Here is what the mother's heart writes:

The little one has been taken away from us and God's deep love has spared us, if not the pain of separation, at least all bitterness, by helping us, as you say it yourself, to raise ourselves above the purely human level, there where the light is never extinguished, on the level where the terms "injustice", "inexplicable", etc., do not exist.

As I held him in my arms, very small, dependent, my son, thus my maternal love was crushed, torn by his loss. As I recognised him as my brother, as the soul to which it was given to me to furnish an incarnation, however brief it may be, I knew the joy of giving, of consciously taking part in the sacrifice.

The burst of light, the force of the emotion of that moment are gone. I

strongly felt God's presence and love and the joy that filled my heart was like madness. This advent and this mysterious departure were like an announcement of a principle of life which lifted me above the clouds. And meanwhile I knew that my son was dead and that my heart was crucified by that.

... We knew that you were with us. It is in this way that friends help one another, and it is not so much their presence near us that, at such moments, is of value to us, as the knowledge of their thoughts, the existence of their soul which lend weight to that part of us which needs support!

In what concerns me, I bow down before the beauty, the purity of this soul. I have cited this only to show that it is about something living and not as Papa says, "of a belief or a dogma that I would have gathered from the books of Sinnet or of HPB". The reality is totally different from what Papa imagines, but I could write pages after pages and not succeed in clarifying this idea to you. I can do nothing about that; that is the nature of these things, a nature which has been recognised as such in all ages: it is to be inexplicable by means of words. But if the soul knows the truth, one word, a single word, becomes then full of deep meaning.

To come back to my present journey. I shall spend the two summer months in Japan, to rest and to write a few articles, unless the Master places some other work in my hand. This will be a relaxation for me and probably an interval between two periods of struggle and work. At present I am in one of those moments of peace and joy which always follow the valiant battle and the surrender to the Supreme. Oh, how simple and clear life is for him who could realise the divine presence in himself! Pure joy penetrates everything and expresses itself everywhere in man, man's work and in the whole nature, but to discover this joy, one must be "like a little child" and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

What nonsense, isn't it! Meanwhile read what I have sent you about the path of the disciple, because I have tried to explain the why of the surrender, as much of it as can be done.

I shall send you this letter as soon as I touch Kobe, via Siberia. If you reply immediately, perhaps there is a chance for me to receive your letter before I leave Japan. Write to me:

c/o M. Lubienski  
Andrew and George Co.  
Chiyoda Building. Kyobashi at Tokyo,

because I do not have a home. You can also send a word for me to Albert, but that will take too long, I think, for me to get it on my way. I shall write to you again in a few days and shall send you articles and photographs.

Think of me with love and joy, but not with that human joy that you may feel



at the thought of my return, because this joy, belonging to the world of change, will sooner or later change into pain. "All is impermanent in the Real", says Buddhist wisdom.

I embrace you with all my heart, and would like to communicate to you a little of the profound peace that I feel.

Your affectionate son,

*Signed:* Ph. B. St Hilaire.

\* \* \*

Tokyo, July 6, 1925

Dear Papa and Maman,

I reached Tokyo four days ago, where I have again met many dear friends.

My programme has not changed, except that I shall attend the Theosophical Convention which will be held at Adyar (in India) in December. Until then I must earn a little money to survive during these few months.

I am sending you seven of the best photos for my first article, and I am preparing another article.

I am well and my journey has done me a world of good physically.

I shall write to you at length in a few days. Embracing you tenderly, your son,

*Signed:* Ph. B. St Hilaire

\* \* \*

*Draft of a letter from Paul to Philippe*

20, Rue Pigalle – IX<sup>e</sup>

July 10, 1925

My dear Philippe,

A few days ago I received your letter of April 23. It has taken more than two months to reach me. It is the one where you complain about the way I judge you and where you undertake to make me retract my opinion. This is the first time that you are concerned about my judgement! What I admire is that you have just discovered it all of a sudden on reading the passages which you have picked up



from one of my previous letters. All the same could it be that you are closed to my thought, being dominated, possessed by your idea? Or could it be that you read my letters so lightly as not to have noticed it since my first registered letter, to Japan, which contained at least fifteen long pages, and to which you have not ever referred except to pick up a sufficiently insignificant detail about the relations between Madame Lubienka and Madame Jacquet? That was the only thing that touched you, but what indignation!

Ah well, my dear Philippe, if I have this opinion of you, and if this opinion is wrong, — something I wish with all my heart, — the fault is entirely yours, because you have never taken the trouble to make me change it. Since you met the Lubienkas, you have hidden yourself from me and you have kept your thoughts a secret (that is what I told you already in that letter) and since, in none of your letters, all of which I have kept, have you taken the trouble to clarify things to me; you have lived in thoughts that are as vague as they are nebulous, in that Theosophical style which suits admirably the mystery and imprecision of ideas, and you have covered everything with the most Platonic declarations of love.

Therefore, if today you are concerned about my judgement, I am very glad of it and I ask for nothing more than to clear up the misunderstanding which exists between us. But for that there must be much sincerity and much clarity — we must speak French.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, I am going to set you an example of it because you must know exactly the depth of my thought, in order to be able to act on it . . .

*(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 permission.)

1. There is a popular French expression, "Ce qui n'est pas clair n'est pas Français" — What is not expressed clearly cannot be French. — Ed. note

# ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

## Annexure B

Draft of an article:  
The New Year Festivities in Mongolia<sup>1</sup>

THIS year, the first day of the Mongolian year falls on January 24 of our calendar. There is always a marked difference between the two systems because it is the lunar calendar that is in use here.

The first days of the year are ones of great festivity and the preparations are made much earlier; the students have a month's vacation for this occasion, and the first six days of the year are public holidays, no business transaction takes place.

Among the Mongolian people, religion is an intimate part of all the activities of life and naturally, these festivities too have this character to a high degree. In each house a little sanctuary containing a small statue or a painted image of a lama saint or a protective guardian spirit is constructed, and votive offerings are prepared and piously placed on this altar. These are primarily produce of the land: water, grains, butter, etc., cakes, some of which have fixed ingredients and shapes, and incense of various forms. There are also some objects of rituals: small lamps that are kept burning continually and symbolic vases. They also prepare the necessary dresses and provisions, because there will be much rejoicing and many visitors.

On New Year's Day, at the lama temple, the horns and the trumpets call the whole population. The entire congregation of the monks gathers in a solemn service, but as is the custom here, lay people remain outside and do not participate in any common prayer. Their worship consists in prostrating themselves three times and touching the ground with their foreheads before each of the seven or eight temples of the monastery. Through the open doors of these temples can be seen the ornate golden images of the Grand Lamas, the Buddhas and other numerous divinities of the lamaic pantheon. Before these statues innumerable little lamps are lighted and the incense smoke creates a blue haze. There is among these simple people a perfect faith never assailed by any doubt.

The lamas then go out in procession in a hierarchical order with *houbilgan* and *gelongs* at the head, do the round of the monastery and prostrate themselves before each temple. The crowd follows closely and, when the procession is over, disperses.

Now comes the time for visits. It is customary to pay one's respects to those to whom respect is due, be it by family ties or for some other reason. And on entering a house, the first thing to do is to prostrate oneself three times before the family

1. This document was attached to the letter of February 26, 1925.

altar. Then one bows deeply before everybody; if there are lamas, one prostrates oneself three times before them in the same way, and one exchanges compliments. Then there is some tea and cakes; the men drink a little wine and smoke a long pipe which is passed round from one to another according to the custom.

The next three or four days differ little from the first and are devoted to the same duties. The costumes are very picturesque, there is a great variety of colours: the lamas in all shades from lemon yellow and bright orange to scarlet and purple violet; the women in dresses of embroidered silk — green, blue, red. There is a curious similarity between these ladies' dresses and those of the people of Central Europe, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Poles and Hungarians and even certain dresses of our Romanies [the gypsies of our country] — the Bohemians made famous by Richepin are certainly descended from them. The complexions are very rich, enhanced by the brilliance of the sun which invariably shines in the cloudless sky. However, it is cold and each dress is lined with sheepskin: the thermometer oscillates between minus ten and minus twenty degrees all through January.

The fifteenth day of the first month — the seventh February for us — is particularly auspicious. It is the day of the full moon and it is celebrated in a special way which is worth describing somewhat at length because the chief attraction is a sacred dance performed by the lamas, a dance which takes place only once a year, and consequently is quite rare. This dance (*tcham* in Mongol) is a representation of a Tibetan mystery similar to those which Bacot has recently translated into French. It has, moreover, a deeper significance and shows how one action leads to another, the good and the bad each producing their natural effects: happiness and misfortune.

In front of the temple, in open air, two small tents are pitched, one for the high dignitaries of the monastery, the other meant for the civil functionaries. The crowd forms a circle and is held back, not without difficulty, by the guards armed with batons.

The costumes of the actors are very elaborate, in silk with embroidered motifs, of various colours and chosen with a symbolic purpose. Almost all wear masks; some wear only big, black, flat hats with large brims with a small death's head on top; the actors' features are concealed by black dangling fringes; in a word, the actors are anonymous. The masks are large, made of moulded and painted cardboard. Among them a head of a stag with magnificent antlers, an elephant, *rakshasas* (a kind of spirits) with a third eye in the middle of the forehead, a mask representing Yamantaka, the conqueror of death, a protective spirit with frightening features; masks for the children: dogs, black demons etc. All in all, about thirty bit players.

The dance is ritualistic. After the service in the temple, the high lamas come and take their places. Behind the temple stand the standard bearers, dressed in the manner of the ancient Mongol warriors, helmet on head, clad in coat of mail, sword belt, bow and quiver of arrows. The flags, black squares with wide red borders on which images of saints are embroidered, fly in the air. The orchestra is composed of

cymbals, enormous drums which look like big crates, very long trumpets of red copper, three to five metres in length (two men are required to carry one of these) and another wind instrument resembling an oboe with seven stops. The harmony is naturally different from that of our music: it is above all rhythmic and the same phrase is repeated indefinitely. From time to time the dancers are accompanied by songs. They are in Tibetan, the sacred language of the lamas, but the pronunciation is rather distorted.

Among the spectators very few understand the symbolism of the dance, but all are impressed by the display of the religious pomp, by the perfect performance of each role and by the solemn gravity of the gathering.

There are several acts; some scenes are played by only one or two actors, others are group dances. The movements are simple and consist mainly of arm and leg movements, but they are well defined and not left to improvisation or fantasy. There are also real dance sequences where the actors move about in a harmoniously patterned choreography.

The spectacle is certainly not commonplace; the bright, multicoloured costumes of the lamas, the Mongols and the Chinese, some camel drivers perched on their animals to have a better view, women, children, the music and the songs, and in the midst of all this the grimacing masks, animals, gods or demons come and go and whirl. The tireless crowd watches, standing. The actors are tired, nothing surprising in that: among them are those who have not left either the scene or their mask during the three hours that the performance lasts. As soon as it is over, a procession forms and moves towards a pyre made of twigs and dry grass built on the plain a few hundred metres from the monastery. A sheer magical ceremony takes place: some prayers are addressed to a small death's head fixed on a small wooden pyramid; from the ears of the death's head escape two tiny red flames; the whole, — pyramid, flames, the head, — are in wood carefully sculpted and painted. With ritualistic words and gestures the whole set is subsequently thrown into the burning brazier. Quickly everybody turns and moves far away from it, as if harmful influences were escaping from the fire. The procession returns to the temple, then disperses.

In the evening of the same day, another festival is held in the compound of the monastery itself; some draperies are hung on the outer walls of the temples and lighted up by Chinese lanterns for the benefit of the faithful. These tapestries in silk are very valuable indeed; they depict the saints and the divinities, and among others, the twenty-five Bodhisattvas of Sukharati. In addition, some bas-reliefs in coloured plastic material, artistically modelled, represent religious emblems and symbols, fabulous animals and the local spirits of the mountains and the rivers. The people crowd around all these objects; the lamas, without too much ceremony, urge the faithful to keep moving. The latter jostle one another quite a lot though without any acrimony; there is no meanness in their lack of refinement and even a stranger feels perfectly safe provided he conforms to their manners and customs. After some

prayers by the *houbilgan* and the high lamas, the festival comes to an end.

This *houbilgan*, the head of the monastery, is an eight-year-old boy with an open and intelligent countenance. The search for these *houbilgans*, future abbot or *kampo*, is done by divination; some signs that they are the incarnations of superior souls are recognised in them, and consequently they are brought up destined for the job of high clergy. When a *kampo* dies, it is often a *houbilgan*, that is to say one of these children, who succeeds him, but his role hardly consists of anything more than presiding over ceremonies and receiving the homage and the prayers of the faithful.

The following day, the last of the annual festivities, the lamas perform a brief dance, a continuation of the previous evening's ceremony.

For three days, as a purificatory rite, it is customary for the lay people to circumambulate the monastery several times, a distance of about half a kilometre, carrying the *soter*, (sacred books, from the Sanskrit *sutra*), weighing some ten kilograms on their back. Some fifty men and women are thus continually occupied in burning their sins. The direction of the circumambulation is clockwise, the opposite direction is considered to be very harmful.

What is impossible to describe is the simple faith, ardent but without extravagance, which these rustic people have in their religious guides. Life and religion are intimately interlaced; each family supplies its contingent to the monastery and more than half the male population become monks. It is among them that one finds the doctors, who treat and give free medicine. The lama therefore is the wise man, the doctor, the priest all in one, hence his prestige.

One of them told me:

“The year begun by honouring the gods and the saints in an appropriate manner will certainly be a favourable year.”

*Barin (Inner Mongolia), February 10, 1925*

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 permission.)

## A VISIT TO THE MOTHER'S ROOM

I'VE sometimes wondered when seeing Pondicherry school children in uniform quietly walking around the Samadhi shepherded by their vigilant teachers. What's happening? How much are they told about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo? That he was a revolutionary and a Mahayogi . . . that she was . . . well what can you convey about the Mother, that she, that they came to change the world? Those are words but how many feel that psychic tug with which the overflowing grace at the Samadhi touches hearts it is difficult to see. Expressions hardly change. Not so often one thinks, "That one! Perhaps."

Recently something happened which gave me much food for thought: at Darshans I'd noticed that hardly any children go up to Mother's room. But my little Aurovilian granddaughters, seven and eight, recently returned after a three year stay in France, exhibited an interest in Douce Mère. They have a little altar with Sri Aurobindo's photo as a little boy and Mother's self-portrait. They also requested photos of Douce Mère as a little girl with a fringe. They offer flowers. Douce Mère is often in their conversation so we asked them if they would like to see the room of Douce Mère.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November Darshan we packed them and their 13-year-old brother into the car expecting that they might be excited and start playing with handles and fidgeting. But they sat quietly. The two girls sang a little Sanskrit song for us. Then as we neared Pondy I explained that it was the anniversary of Mother's Mahasamadhi, the day she had left her body to go to the other side where she and Sri Aurobindo were still working for the earth, to make it a place without suffering. My grandson asked one or two questions. Then I suggested we be quiet to prepare for the Darshan.

There were fewer people than we thought there would be. We left our car and shoes and the world behind soon to be in the quiet penumbra of the meditation hall and then up the steps past the reminder to Cling to the Truth. The thought occurred that I hadn't told the children to take the card with both hands or the right hand. They were behind me and I left it to Mother. Then I was alone with my own Darshan about which I'll say nothing since this is about the children. All too soon we were out of Mother's room receiving the messages. Since the table was to our left as we passed I noticed the little left hand of Noémi was reaching out to receive her message. All right.

Then we were at the Samadhi where the children knew they could say a prayer if they wanted to. They knelt.

Then shoes, car, and we were heading towards Auroville again. Nobody spoke. No questions, no comments. Soon two little heads were nodding, then rolling. They slept, one against me one against Surakshita. Their brother sat silent. We dropped

them at their home and proceeded to ours. I was with my own thoughts and it had never occurred to me to ask any of the three for their impressions. In fact I gave it no more thought until 3 days later my daughter told me that Noémi's teacher, Kirti had said that there had been a dramatic change in Noémi immediately, the very next day, after she had been in Mother's room, in fact that Kirti had been very impressed by the noticeable difference. It seemed that Noémi had performed all her tasks faultlessly. I was pleased but not over-impressed. Noémi is a charming child so I gave some of the credit as much to a mother's pride as to any descent of Grace. It did not stay with me. It only came back when news came in from Patrizia the teacher of the other little girl. This was really something to sit up about. Ayesha is very different from her sister who is outgoing. She is shy, sometimes to the point of being indrawn, (she wants to be a writer) and it is (or was) sometimes difficult for her to join in, to express herself in ways in which the class is asked to do. But this was before the visit to Mother's room and the Samadhi. There was an immediate volte-face afterwards. She was joining in in everything and enjoying doing so.

"What did you give her?" was Patrizia's question to Ishita (who works in the same school). She knows that we give homeopathic remedies.

"Nothing. She went to Mother's room." At this point I became very interested. It wasn't a mother's exaggeration then. Patrizia was truly impressed. I had occasion to hear it all from her because she is one of the friends who takes homeopathy from us. There had been a transformation in the child, Patrizia said. Even her expression had changed.

At this point I was interested in more detailed information from Kirti. What had actually happened to impress and delight Kirti to such an extent?

This is what Kirti reported. I shall try to be as exact as possible.

Noémi is a delightful little person but easily distracted. She is outgoing and likes to chat with her friends. In fact I had to move her away strategically from a group where there were French speaking children. I often have to tell her to get back to her task. Well on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November it happened to be her day to go through certain exercises that we do. I have a calendar and the child has to say what the date is, what it was yesterday, what it will be tomorrow which is also an exercise in grammar. Then certain dates are circled, an exercise in multiples. There is also a temperature graph that we plot etc., etc. The morning is taken up by 4 or 5 exercises, and this little visitor to Mother's room was entirely centred and concentrated and didn't make a single mistake, not one, and the next day, too.

The mother not only had not been exaggerating. She had been understating. Kirti is the granddaughter of that remarkable Ashramite A. B. Patel and she spent many years at the Ashram in his home. She first saw the Mother at the age of 4, and



she understands about Mother's force and the Grace it bestows. Her voice was very intense as she gave me this account. I'm no stranger to accounts of how Mother's force descends on unsuspecting visitors, old devotees, Ashramites and Aurovilians. Yet I was very touched listening to this. The children in Kirti's class bring flowers everyday. A candle is lit and they do a morning concentration. There are photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to which the children can relate.

And this brings me back to the beginning of this piece of writing. There was really nothing different in the faces or actions of the children right after their plunge into Mother's atmosphere. Quite possibly they didn't know themselves that they had been touched by the force. Perhaps if they had felt something they would have thought it was the lovely flowers.

And so what about all those thousands of children that have filed past the Samadhi in the past? We'll never know how, once they've left the Ashram gate, they are returned to their world to spread a little light and a little order that they've unexpectedly received. So light, like the touch of the monarch's sword on each shoulder before the words are pronounced "Arise, O Knight".

And amongst all the many wonders for me is this: it is so recognisably the Mother's force. It seldom sends the children into trances or mystic conditions. They are returned to do what they are supposed to do but much better, to be more centred, no doubt more in touch with their psychic beings, in fact more useful, co-operative people.

One of Mother's complimentary adjectives was "useful". She wanted people to be useful. And the ideal child was the child who ate when he ate and played when he played and slept when he was supposed to. So simple, almost a Zen injunction. So although Mother's force can give us wondrous experiences, take us into other worlds and do all sorts of things as we can read from those who have been touched, its hallmark is that it also straightens one out. Its transforming power is miraculous but miraculously simple. It puts us in touch with what we are. AND. . .

It's there all the time. We hardly notice it. We don't realise in how many ways we are ceaselessly being changed, in spite of ourselves mostly, (because so often we resist). But perhaps children who are not consciously doing Yoga resist much less and are more easily touched by the transforming wand of Grace.

The very lovely and comforting thought is that we who have access to the words of the Masters, to spaces where they lived and which still vibrate with them are being transformed without our knowing it too.

Oh! What about their 13-year-old brother? Well, he's a teenager who plays it very cool. When I asked him if he was happy about his visit to Mother's room he said, "*Très content. Oui, très content.*" (Very happy. Yes, very happy) with an enthusiasm which he's usually careful not to show.

One more thing. Many times we seem to fall back from even our very important experiences. And I wanted to know if Noémi's condition was holding. Her mother



reported that Kirti had commented not only was it holding it was progressive. "It's like a muscle that has started working," she said, "a change in attitude."

It would seem that such an experience does not easily fade. We are into the fifth month and Kirti writes, "As far as Noémi goes, I would say that she continues to hold the special vibration that she picked up in Mother's room. She seems to radiate a sweetness and sincerity that are charming as well as full of light." Her sister too has lost nothing of what she gained from the visit to Mother's room.

Kirti further writes that after an exhibition of Mother's flowers, while the children were waiting for the photos that each had chosen, she caught sight of Noémi in the lotus position with eyes closed, a smile on her lips, her ears tuned to Sunil's music which was softly playing. "She looked like an angel," writes Kirti. I wish we could end this little story here with Sunil's music playing softly but we know and Kirti knows that children do not spend their lives like little Angel statues. The vital is ready to jump out and laugh and shout and play and take control.

Everybody's life is made up of both sweet and bitter in this chaotic world. And the mind often soon enough overtakes the psychic, and later, in adolescence if not before, the vital fires start raging. But for one in whom that inner being has been touched and kindled there is a refuge and point of reference to which to turn. Those still, magical moments can be returned to, in memory, and activated.

In Auroville and in the Ashram the children are fortunate in having those who can remind them of what it is all about and who can lead them to listen to that still small voice, which, like Sunil's music playing softly in the background, makes peace descend into the heart, so that the next step, whatever it be, need not be feared.

On this our mysterious planet that pirouettes upon itself to wind around the sun, each incarnating soul that hears this silent voice draws us nearer to our wondrous destiny.

MAGGI

*... from the point of view of action, the value of an idea is in proportion to its pragmatic power. It is true that this power varies a great deal according to the individual on whom it acts. An idea that has great impelling force in one individual may have none whatsoever in another. But the power itself is contagious. Certain ideas are capable of transforming the world. They are the ones that ought to be expressed; they are the ruling stars in the firmament of the spirit that will guide the earth towards its supreme realisation.*

*The Mother*

(On Education, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 12, p. 61)

## DETERMINATION AND WILL: DOUGLAS BADER, CHURCHILL AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

*(Continued from the issue of March 2010)*

IN early January 1940, Bader got his chance to fly a Hurricane. It was a single-seater aircraft, ideal for an individualist. Bader was in deep peace now for he had fulfilled his destiny of being a fighter pilot and that too during the War. Within a month, he was commanding a squadron. The wheel had turned full circle since his crippling crash.

At the end of a few months of flying, his report read: "This officer is an exceptionally good pilot . . . he is very keen and should be ideally suited . . . to single-seater fighters."

Another report stated: "I entirely agree with the above remarks. When flying with this officer it is quite impossible to even imagine that he has two artificial legs. He is full of confidence and possesses excellent judgment and air sense. His general flying (including aerobatics) is very smooth and accurate. I have never met a more enthusiastic pilot. He lives for flying."

In his log book under the heading, "Ability as a pilot", was written "Exceptional".

\* \* \*

Even when he took four days' leave to meet his wife, he was restless and impatient to return to his Air Force base. He then got his first chance to fly the Spitfire, the jewel of the RAF. Most days he used to practise how to shoot down the German bombers. He would say, "The chap who'll control the battle will still be the chap who's got the height and sun, same as the last war."

At times he sharpened his skills and tested his nerves with forbidden risky aerobatics. Once a Wing Commander told him, "I *wish* you wouldn't do that. You had such a *terrible* accident last time." During practice Bader had some near-fatal accidents due to some bad leading in the flying formation. He complained to his superior, ". . . bad leading always causes trouble. I've had it twice now in a short time and I'm sick of it. I prefer to be killed in action, not on active service. Isn't it about time. . . ?"

Soon after, he had another accident when his wheels crashed into a stone wall. The plane almost cart-wheeled and then landed on its belly. He emerged out of the cockpit almost unhurt except that his two artificial legs were smashed at the shins. Ironically, he rejoiced at his good fortune of having artificial legs, for had they been

real legs they would have been severely injured. Bader was then promoted to Flight Lieutenant and made flight commander of a squadron.

\* \* \*

Bader's first taste of action was making several patrols to Dunkirk during the evacuation. He then made his first kill, shooting down a German fighter plane, a Messerschmitt, Me 109.

In mid-June 1940, Air Vice Marshal Leigh-Mallory promoted Bader to a Squadron Leader and gave him responsibility of a squadron commander. Bader responded by candidly admitting, "Sir, there's one thing I should tell you . . . I broke a Spitfire last night. Overshot landing."

Leigh-Mallory gently replied, "Well, that happens sometimes, you know."

But Bader continued, "Sir, the point is that last time you promoted me to Flight Commander, I'd also just broken one."

"Don't worry," was the reply.

Bader was given the only Canadian squadron in the RAF who were a tough wild bunch, just returned from a beating in France after a very difficult time where they lost quite a few of their aircraft. They were angry as they were given no support in France and had to fend for themselves. Their morale was low. Leigh-Mallory needed a leader who could be firm and felt Bader was the best man for this unenviable task of disciplining and motivating such a maverick group.

On hearing of his promotion his old Cranwell buddy, Rupert Leigh told him, tongue-in-cheek, "Now you won't have to call me 'sir' any more. Not that you ever *did*, but it'll be a comfort for you to go on being rude with a clear conscience."

On arrival at his new base, Bader went to meet the boys who were relaxing in a hut. When he entered, none stood up and those standing had their hands in their pockets. Their uniforms were crumpled, they wore sweaters instead of shirts and ties and their hair was long and untidy. A Squadron Commander being met in this fashion was disrespectful, to say the least. These were wild Canadians, the most difficult to handle and extremely antagonistic to Commanding Officers. Bader stormed out and heaved himself into a Hurricane. If they believed their new Commanding Officer was weak and crippled, they better think again. He then gave them a dazzling aerobatical display which would have given goose pimples to many a pilot. When he landed his aircraft, all the pilots were standing outside the hut watching in amazement. He clambered out of the plane unaided and did not even give them a glance.

Next morning, he gathered all the pilots and told them that a squadron should always look smart. The dress codes would now be shirts and ties. He was told that they had lost all in France and just had the clothes that they were wearing. They had an extremely rough time in France where they were left with no support whatsoever

and were lucky to return alive. They had about 50 per cent pilot casualties. Bader then apologised for being harsh, and though no money had yet been sanctioned by the authorities, he told them to order whatever they wanted at the tailors. The Canadians opened out to him. They knew that despite his bravado he cared for them.

\* \* \*

A major problem at this air base was that there were no aircraft spares and tools, for these had all been lost in France. A squadron is non-operational without spares. New spares had been requested several times but were yet to be delivered. Bader badgered the high command and the spares did finally arrive. His method was very unconventional and stirred a hornet's nest leading to a summons from the Chief. But he got his way.

With Bader at the helm, the pilots soon thought that they were the best squadron. In war, a squadron is a sensitive unit. Pilots find glory and die young. Never in the history of the RAF, perhaps even in any Air Force in the world had there been a legless pilot in its crew. As one Canadian officer said, "Legs or no legs, I've never seen such a goddam mobile fireball as that guy."

Once, the boys saw him taking his legs off and putting them beside the bed along with shoes, socks and trousers. They watched in a hush, fascinated by it all. Once he took off alone in dangerous cloudy weather to intercept a German aircraft but did not allow any of the other pilots to fly with him as it was too risky. He exuded so much confidence that the others pilots found it infectious.

\* \* \*

On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1940 Bader and his men ran into a large group of around a hundred planes — primarily bombers and a few fighters. They attacked the main swarm from above and the whole formation dispersed almost instantly. They destroyed a dozen German aircraft of which Bader's share was two kills. The fact that they were outnumbered eight-fold did not unnerve them and Bader's role as the flight commander in instilling courage was crucial.

In one fortnight in September 1940, 231 pilots were killed or seriously wounded and 495 Hurricanes and Spitfires were destroyed or badly damaged. This was the most anxious period during the Battle of Britain for a German invasion appeared imminent. On 15<sup>th</sup> September the RAF reportedly shot down 185 German aircraft. The factories churned out a hundred planes a week and new pilots were fewer than the lost ones and of them, too many were too inexperienced for battle.

Pilots were always on tenterhooks as they were aware that the next day could be their last. Bader, however was an exception. He was always gunning for a dogfight

and his enthusiasm and indifference to danger was infectious. He loved talking about the War and continually talked and thought of tactics and was dying to down those planes marked with swastikas. He was universally recognised by his colleagues to be fearless. The high morale of the pilots was due to him, as they looked on him as a superman and would follow him anywhere in the skies. He knew his achievements in the air were higher than anybody else's and there was a certain fire within him which, coupled with his iron will was a lethal combination. Many of Bader's pilots received a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), awarded for an act of valour, courage, or devotion to duty performed while flying in active operations against the enemy.

By the beginning of October, the daily swarm of German planes waned. It was evident the Battle of Britain was almost over and Churchill could heave a sigh of relief. Hitler and the Luftwaffe were thwarted and the invasion of Britain was foiled. On 12 October, Hitler postponed his invasion of Britain till the following Spring. Bader felt sorry that the fighting in the skies was over. However, Hitler was not finished yet and he continued to send his planes to bomb London and other cities in an attempt to pulverise them.

Bader was called in as a special invitee for a high-level meeting in the Air Ministry where the lowest-ranked officer was an Air Vice-Marshal. Not only was he valued for his skill and courage but also for his tactical acumen. During the meeting, he was asked for his views and he responded: "Firstly, that the chap who's got the height controls the battle, especially if he comes out of the sun; secondly, that the chap who fires very close is the chap who knocks them down; thirdly, and most important, it is much more economical to put up a hundred aircraft against a hundred. . . . I know we cannot always put equal numbers against the Germans because their Air Force is bigger than ours . . . but surely we can manage to put 60 aircraft against a couple of hundred instead of only one squadron of twelve." Bader was taken seriously by these elite officers of the RAF and several of his suggestions were implemented. Bader's was a concrete tactical contribution to Britain's war effort.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1941, his squadron destroyed 67 German planes whilst they lost only six pilots. By the beginning of 1941 England had decided to send their bombers to bomb ammunition dumps in France — it was a new offensive, taking the fight to the enemy instead of waiting for him to come back. It was a dangerous mission and he lost seven of his closest pilots in a matter of weeks. In March 1941, he was promoted to Wing Commander — that made a total of three promotions in a year! Simultaneously, to the disappointment of his boys, he was posted out to another assignment. The squadron was crestfallen at his departure and so was he.

\* \* \*

At the new Air Force Station he did not need to earn the respect and confidence of the men. He was a celebrity now. Bader was a wonderful leader and initially the men observed him with great curiosity and then opened out to him when they were sufficiently impressed. Keeping to the dictum that no man is perfect, Bader too had his defects. He was domineering and saw everything in black and white. Though most were devoted to him, a few resented him for his bluntness and toughness. There were no half-measures: people either hero-worshipped him or detested him. Despite his tough exterior, he had a sensitive side to him and wrote letters and inspired a seven-year-old boy who had lost both legs. After the War, Tom Pike, who later rose to be Air Vice Marshal and Assistant Chief of the Air Staff said of Bader, "I think he almost eliminated fear from his pilots. His semi-humorous, blood-thirsty outlook was exactly what is wanted in war and their morale soared. He was a tremendous tonic."

And his colleague, Ken Holden, reflected about him, "I've never known a braver man. He was mad about getting at the Hun and couldn't talk about anything else. He was like a dynamo with terrific morale and a strange power over his men so that they all caught his spirit. After every show he got all the chaps together to yarn about it, though he didn't like people chipping in or putting him in second place. He could be pretty testy with his authority. He always had his own ideas and would take no opposition. It was just as well most of his ideas were sound."

By end July 1941 he had done more forays into France than anyone else. Yet he insisted on leading every raid, pushing himself to the limit and setting a trend for the others. In a week, he completed ten raids, enough to take the stuffing off a fit and strong man. He was the last of the old-timers still operating — the others were either killed or asked to rest. By now, his eyes were dark with fatigue, but he refused all orders to take rest. Finally, he had to accede to strict orders and a holiday was booked for him in Scotland by his superior. He had by now shot down 23 confirmed enemy aircraft though probably the actual number was far greater. This was the fifth highest tally amongst all the RAF pilots.

\* \* \*

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1941, he went yet again on one of his customary sweeps into France. He crashed into the tail of a German aircraft and had to quickly eject. He had great difficulty ejecting as he could only get the top half of his body outside the cockpit for he was unable to spring higher due to his artificial legs. Somehow the wind sucked him out of the aircraft. Alas, the foot of the right artificial leg got stuck in the cockpit. The plane dragged, twisted and turned him in mid-air. It went on and on until fortunately the plane cranked the artificial leg off him. How blessed, he thought, to have artificial legs that could easily detach themselves from the cockpit of a screeching crashing plane. Just as he got out of the jam and was parachuting down,

the worry of landing on one leg loomed up. Whilst parachuting, a screaming Messerschmitt came towards him, but to his relief, the pilot veered off without pressing the trigger. He landed awkwardly and lost consciousness. He was in occupied France. Three German soldiers picked him up and drove him to a hospital. The doctor examining him stared in amazement at the empty trouser leg from where the artificial leg had got detached. When the doctor discovered that Bader had lost the other leg too, he exclaimed, "We have heard about you." His fame had preceded his arrival.

Bader was now a POW (prisoner of war) in France. A few German pilots came to meet him and were spellbound talking to a pilot with no legs. They were curious to find out how it was, flying without any legs. When they saw one of his artificial legs leaning against the wall, they remarked that this would not have been possible in Germany.

A French nurse at the hospital was an admirer of Bader — he was well-known in France and Germany by now. Unable to contain his energies Bader was eager to escape and she was willing to help. A note was passed to him by her. He had to be careful in destroying the note, for if the Germans saw it, the person who had signed it and the French nurse were liable to be put to death.

Such was the aura of Bader that a young German Count, a highly-decorated fighter pilot, came with a friend to share two bottles of champagne with him. It was a sight to behold: a German war hero treating a POW with such awe and respect. They chatted amiably on tactics and aeroplanes and freely exchanged experiences but never asked each other uncomfortable questions. Bader liked them both; they were types after his own heart and he would have liked to have them in his squadron. What a monstrous war this was. The Count informed him that the Luftwaffe had radioed England offering to give a British plane unrestricted passage to fly and parachute Bader's artificial leg. Bader responded by saying, "I bet they drop it with bombs, they don't need any unrestricted passage." This offer made by the Germans was unprecedented and reflects how courage and bravery is admired by all, even if you are in the enemy camp. The Count then told him that the Commanding Officer, Galland, had sent him his compliments and would like to invite him for tea. This was not to extract any information but because they would like to meet someone of his stature. The respect that the Germans showered on Bader was phenomenal. Galland was one of the highest decorated fighter-pilots in the Luftwaffe and Bader too was keen to meet him. Bader was received majestically by Galland and was introduced to a host of others. The hospitality was excellent and he was even allowed to sit in the cockpit of an Me 109. On departure, Galland and his officers clicked their heels and bowed to Bader. Bader quite liked Galland and a sense of nobility linked them.



Bader's eagerness for adventure and daring was insatiable. Though out of active combat, he had been planning his escape for days. For a POW to consider escaping (let alone attempting to escape) from the Nazis would be brave. Certainly, for a man without legs to attempt such a feat would be sheer madness. But not for Bader. He was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the hospital and he knotted the bed sheets to form a rope. In pitch darkness he slid down the building, hoping the knots would hold. He managed to reach the ground and thanked his lucky stars that the knotted sheets reached the ground floor. A Frenchman was waiting for him and they walked through the night with Bader in pain. The last hour or so was sheer agony as the steel leg rubbed the skin of his groin. An old couple was kind and brave enough to hide him in their house from where the French resistance would take him underground.

Next morning when the Germans learnt that Bader had escaped, they combed the area and after a long search found Bader hidden behind baskets and straw. He tried to plead that he had entered the house on his own and the house owners knew nothing about him. He was grateful to the old couple for keeping him and was anxious that no harm befell them. Bader was questioned but he gave no answers. Instead they took his legs away. They then transported him to Germany for safekeeping. The Germans tried to extract information from him but he refused to divulge any details except name, rank and number.

Incredibly, at the new POW camp Bader again started plotting to escape. He made an attempt but was spotted and caught. Once a German officer demanded Bader salute him. Bader refused, stating, tongue-in-cheek, that the Geneva Convention stated that he was only to salute enemy officers of equal or senior rank. He was soon shunted to another POW camp. Bader was the enfant terrible, the rebel who in his attempt to garner his pride did all he could to irritate and annoy the jerries. Out of exasperation he was ultimately sent to Kolditz Castle, the most difficult prison to escape from.

At Kolditz, Bader again planned a strategy to escape but the other POWs dissuaded him from it. Bader's legs were giving serious problems and he was put on the list of POWs to be repatriated back to England along with the sick and the maimed. But he stoically refused the offer as he wanted to stay and rough it out with the other POWs. He got his way. The doctors were befuddled as normally prisoners exaggerate their ills to be repatriated and not the opposite.

On 14<sup>th</sup> April 1945 the Americans had arrived with their tanks. It had been 3 and a half years since Bader was captured and made a POW. The next day the American soldiers broke into Kolditz and freed the prisoners. American journalists started firing questions at Bader and offered him a lift in their jeep. He was a war hero and a celebrity now. He was still bewildered and couldn't believe that he was now a free man. That night he could not sleep. Perhaps the excitement of it was too much.

Bader was flown to Paris and when he spoke to Thelma on the phone she



asked, "When am I going to see you?" "A few days, darling. I'm looking for a Spitfire. I want to have a last fling before it packs up." "Oh, god. Haven't you had enough yet?" moaned Thelma.

Bader now tried to trace the French nurse and the old couple who had helped him escape from the hospital. He was assured everything possible would be done to find them. He felt a deep gratitude towards them and was concerned about them. When they were later traced he flew his Spitfire from England to meet them. It was an unforgettable emotional reunion. Even his initial hatred towards the Huns had waned, for during the course of the War he met some fine and decent German officers. The RAF quickly brought Bader back to England. His fame had made him a legend but it was at a cost as several people intruded into his and Thelma's privacy. He then tried hard to get a posting in the Far East to fight the Japanese but the Air Ministry said he had done quite enough and in any case his doctors said that his stumps would give trouble in the tropics. He was offered to stand as a Member of Parliament at a very safe seat but Bader declined the offer stating that he was not interested in being a politician.

The RAF had designated 15<sup>th</sup> September as Victory day (they had shot down 185 German planes on that day). On 15<sup>th</sup> September 1945 (its fifth anniversary) the RAF celebrated with a victory fly-past. Douglas Bader was asked to organise and lead this fly-past over London, where 300 aircraft took part.

After the War the RAF as a unique gesture wanted him permanently and offered to give him back his seniority that he had lost since his crash until his rejoining. He could keep his full disability pension and in the event that there was another serious crash he would be eligible for another full disability pay. But without the War, the RAF had lost its aura. Bader went back to his old Shell Company. They offered him his own private plane to fly around the world on business. He also started actively helping and interacting with disabled people. His presence and advice was a great motivation and tonic to many a disabled person. He was later knighted for his inspirational guidance to the disabled. It is said he initially refused the knighthood on the premise that his artificial legs would not allow him to follow protocol of kneeling before the Queen whilst receiving the honour. Subsequently, as an unprecedented gesture, he was allowed to receive the honour while standing in front of the Queen.

At the RAF College, Cranwell, they hung an oil painting of Bader. During the War Bader was awarded two Distinguished Service Orders (awarded only for leadership) and two Distinguished Flying Crosses (awarded for bravery). In addition, the French Government awarded him the Légion d'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre. He has been considered the best fighter leader and tactician of World War II and amongst the best pilots.

Sri Aurobindo writes in "The Hour of God":

. . . The will of a single hero can breathe courage into the hearts of a million cowards.

(SABCL, Vol 17, p. 179)

I believe many of the RAF pilots, of whom Bader was one, were open to Sri Aurobindo's force, both during and after the Battle of Britain. Bader had several providential near fatal escapades during this decisive battle, as if to imply that he was a destined man.

There is evidence that Douglas Bader was open to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Force. I quote from Maggi Lidchi-Grassi's book, *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss*, (1994):

... Though Sri Aurobindo himself never spoke of it. The Mother told the author of how Sri Aurobindo used to tell her of the words that he would put into the mouth of Churchill before the famous broadcasts, and certain passages were spoken by Churchill word for word. I have not found any written references to this in the texts written on Sri Aurobindo but his secretary Nirodbaran had heard of this, and Dyuman-bhai, present Managing Trustee of the Ashram, has confirmed it. He told me that certain passages in Churchill's speeches often were repetitions of words already spoken in Pondicherry. Anuben Purani tells me that her father A. B. Purani, one of the few people who saw Sri Aurobindo every day told her the same thing.

When the invasion of the Island seemed inevitable, no one will deny that it was Churchill's speeches that put heart into his nation and kept its spirit high. Relates Group Captain Douglas Bader, who rejoined the RAF in 1939 after losing both his legs in 1931, "We all waited for his voice on the radio. Everybody, in the air as well as on the ground, relied on this one man. . ."

(pp. 77-78)

Bader's story is not only one of determination and will but also of endurance. I quote a small extract by the Mother on endurance:

Let endurance be your watchword: teach the life-force in you — your vital being — not to complain but to put up with all the conditions necessary for great achievement. The body is a very enduring servant, it bears the stress of circumstance tamely like a beast of burden. It is the vital being that is always grumbling and uneasy. The slavery and torture to which it subjects the physical is almost incalculable. How it twists and deforms the body to its own fads and fancies, irrationally demanding that everything should be shaped according to its whimsicality! But the very essence of endurance is that the vital should learn to give up its capricious likes and dislikes and preserve an equanimity in

the midst of the most trying conditions. When you are treated roughly by somebody or you lack something which would relieve your discomfort, you must keep up cheerfully instead of letting yourself be disturbed. Let nothing ruffle you the least bit, and whenever the vital tends to air its petty grievances with pompous exaggeration just stop to consider how very happy you are, compared to so many in this world. Reflect for a moment on what the soldiers who fought in the last war had to go through. If you had to bear such hardships you would realise the utter silliness of your dissatisfactions. And yet I do not wish you to court difficulties — what I want is simply that you should learn to endure the little insignificant troubles of your life.

Nothing great is ever accomplished without endurance. If you study the lives of great men you will see how they set themselves like flint against the weaknesses of the vital.

(CWM, Vol. 3, p. 136)

*(To be continued)*

GAUTAM MALAKAR

#### *Sources*

*Reach for the Sky* by Paul Brickhill, Cassell, London, 2000.

*The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss* by Maggi Lidchi-Grassi,

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1994.

Websites — RAF, BBC, and others.

*There are two possibilities, one of purification by personal effort, which takes a long time, another by a direct intervention of the Divine Grace which is usually rapid in its action. For the latter there must be a complete surrender and self-giving and for that again usually it is necessary to have a mind that can remain quite quiet and allow the Divine Force to act supporting it with its complete adhesion at every step, but otherwise remaining still and quiet. This last condition which resembles the baby-cat attitude spoken of by Ramakrishna, is difficult to have. Those who are accustomed to a very active movement of their thought and will in all they do, find it difficult to still the activity and adopt the quietude of mental self-giving. This does not mean that they cannot do the yoga or cannot arrive at self-giving — only the purification and the self-giving take a long time to accomplish and one must have the patience and steady perseverance and resolution to go through.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 591)*

## LIVING WITH *THE LIFE DIVINE*

(Continued from the issue of March 2010)

### 3. The Dance of Shiva

WHEN I began my doctoral work on *Savitri*, it became clear that I had to study the other writings of Sri Aurobindo, and *The Life Divine* was high on the list. I was familiar with it because of the sumptuous volume which could never escape one's eye on my father's bookshelf. My father simply said: "Make a list of Sri Aurobindo's books and begin reading them one after another, take down notes and get back to me." But once I began reading *The Life Divine* seriously, my enthusiasm floundered. The phrases did fascinate me, and not daring to underline them in a book which was being used by Father, I noted them down in a separate notebook: "satiated but not satisfied", "a complex shock of multitudinous forces", "the inalienable delight of existence". They wound themselves around my psyche as sheer poetry that is to be enjoyed as an audio-visual experience. But the sentences would not allow any easy passage, when I sought to understand them.

Spiritual evolution which manifests the divine in matter could not easily be absorbed by a mind which had till then found the sheer joy of reading Chaucer's poetry, Shakespeare's dramas and the short stories of Conan Doyle. The 'other' life did not go beyond the Ghost in *Hamlet* or the terror of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. What exactly did this sentence in *The Life Divine* mean?

The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god.<sup>1</sup>

Acceptance of statements does not come easy to young people just out of their teens. When I happened to remark the uncertainty in the phrase, "may well be" as not supported by something concrete, my father laughed. "A time will come when you will realise that Sri Aurobindo is a ratiocinative philosopher. He never indulges in woolly imagination. Your mind is not patiently following the lead from the beginning as you get side-tracked by the perfectly formed phrases. Look at the list of great thinkers who have become Aurobindonians by reading this book." It was true. For me it has been as fascinating to read these "critics" as getting immersed in *The Life Divine* itself.

1. *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, p. 6.

For a simple statement on the classic, we must go to Veluri Chandrasekharam's *The Life Divine: A Brief Study* (1964). In less than fifty pages he has helped us experience the ideas imbedded in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. For long I had known about him and when this book came to my hand, I was happy. Another chance to read about the classic! A beautiful quotation appears as the epigraph:

World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing.<sup>2</sup>

This is followed by a beautiful sentence which seems to tell all.

This is the gist of the knowledge enshrined in this great work.<sup>3</sup>

All this made me feel enthusiastic. As simple as that! As a Tamilian who had learnt carnatic music, I have always been conscious of Shiva's Dance thanks to the great *Nandanar Charithram* by Gopalakrishna Bharati. This is the story of the Dalit devotee Nandan whose devotion for Nataraja, the presiding deity of Chidambaram has entered deep into the psyche of the Tamilians. The songs repeatedly refer to the dance of Shiva and are used often for Bharata Natyam performances. The symbol being close to the heart, I thanked V. Chandrasekharam silently before going deeper into the sentence. In a trice I had been told that I am also part of the Divine. I have received this form and so has the rest of the world as a result of divine ecstasy. Still the Ananda Tandava goes on . . . What can make me morose or depressed anymore?

I realised that the passage must have been culled out of *The Life Divine*. But from which chapter? Living with *The Life Divine* on one's shelf can be a constant tease. One may read it many times, chapter by chapter or pages opened at random, but still individual sentences such as these cannot be easily located in the text. At least it has been so for me! I knew it was no use asking Father. "Why don't you search for it? It will make you read the book again," would be his helpful advice. So I began reading from the first sentence again. Well, this is how I have been living the life divine! It is always a pleasure to handle books by or on Sri Aurobindo, but this particular copy is special for me. As I read from the beginning, I pass through the blue or red pencil markings by Father.

There! I get the quote early enough: Book One, chapter IX, titled 'The Pure Existent'. Sri Aurobindo is trying here to make us understand the tremendous world movement that is going on around us all the time. If so, are we an insignificant dot

2. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

3. V. Chandrasekharam, *Sri Aurobindo's The Life Divine: A Brief Study* (1964), p. 3.

in this Force? No, says Sri Aurobindo. We need neither puff ourselves up with pride that the movement has its centre in us; nor need we feel despondent that the movement does not care for us. The constant movement is there. That is all we need to know.

Sri Aurobindo knows that our mind will not rest with this affirmation. With the patience of a school teacher (but then, he *was* a very popular teacher in Baroda!) he proceeds to teach us about this “infinite and omnipotent energy” that is moving all around us. Gently he leads us on to the pure, immutable existence from which this great energy proceeds. This existence which seems stable, *sthānu* is actually a movement. Time, space, infinity: so many concepts come upon us like waves that the mind flounders. Suddenly Sri Aurobindo holds out an image before us: at once all seems to fall in place: It is the Dance of Shiva! We feel the movement but the movement itself appears to be unmoving because of the speed!

Veluri Chandrasekharam assures us that this image is very important to our understanding of high philosophy and cannot be brushed aside as “mystic rapture or high poetic conception.”<sup>4</sup> It only shows that the Indian philosopher does not work in an arid desert of Pure Reason.

Pure Reason can greatly help us in elucidating and organising our experience and in unifying different departments of thought into one coherent whole, but the nature of Reality eludes its grasp. That is why the first direction given in India to the seeker of Reality has been, “Energise your consciousness”. Among modern philosophers of the West, Bergson seems to recognise that the approach to Reality should be made through a certain intensification of consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

But is *The Life Divine* just another text-book of philosophy? No! Actually, for the first time, a master of the English language was using his knowledge of the philosophy of the West (along with its terminology) to restate the experiences and conclusions of the ancient seers of India. Indians themselves suffered from a problem when the twentieth century dawned upon them. English education had distanced them from traditional lore. Unable to comprehend the ritualism of the received tradition or understand the deeper significances of the scriptures of the Vedic stream garnered down the centuries, the educated Indian, mesmerised by Western culture, sought to jettison the findings of the ancients, favouring the intellects from abroad. Before permanent damage had taken place by an education that had proved to be poison “to all true elements of national strength and greatness”,<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda appeared on the scene to give the Upanishadic wake-up call.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Sri Aurobindo, ‘The Bourgeois and the Samurai’, CWSA, Vol. 7, p. 1105.

British rule, Britain's civilizing mission in India has been the record success in history in the hypnosis of a nation. It persuaded us to live in a death of the will and its activities, taking a series of hallucinations for real things and creating in ourselves the condition of morbid weakness the hypnotist desired, until the Master of a mightier hypnosis laid His finger on India's eyes and cried, 'Awake'. Then only the spell was broken, the slumbering mind realised itself and the dead soul lived again.<sup>7</sup>

The English-educated Indian now wished to know about his roots. And who could explain it better than Sri Aurobindo in a language that the reader could understand? Sri Aurobindo had read, in Baroda, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and classical Sanskrit literature. Coming to Pondicherry, he entered the Vedic-Upanishadic world as well. When the *Arya* was launched in 1914, *The Life Divine* started emerging from a Mahayogi's creative forge. But why present a new system? Was it not enough to study the Vedas, the Upanishads and other scriptures again? Hadn't our rishis told us all that we need to know? V. Chandrasekharam gives the reason for the birth of this prose epic:

But the ancient Seers did not work out the full intellectual implications of this position. They did not present to the mind a systematic and rational effort to assimilate our normal experience to this conception of the Reality; only, they threw out intuitive suggestions to impel the seeking mind towards the goal. But intuition is like the fitful flash of lightning, which may help us to reach our destination if we do not stumble and fall in the dark intervals of the journey. Its flashes have to be organised into a steady light which will throw a continuous illumination all along the path. And the pronouncements of the higher consciousness and the perceptions of pure Reason have to be justified to our intellect and ordinary experience. All this has been accomplished in the fullness of time by *The Life Divine*.<sup>8</sup>

V. Chandrasekharam admits that such an organisation had indeed been attempted by our great philosophers in the past but they had got into compartmentalized formulations and had lost the experiential import of the ancient Wisdom. Fortunately for us, "Sri Aurobindo has, through some mystic sympathy of his being, recaptured the thought of the ancient Seers in its purity and integrity."<sup>9</sup> It was his personal experience in the realms of yoga that gave life back to the received philosophical tradition. This is why when we read *The Life Divine* we live with the book and

7. Sri Aurobindo, 'The Bourgeois and the Samurai', CWSA, Vol. 7, p. 1104.

8. V. Chandrasekharam, *Sri Aurobindo's The Life Divine: A Brief Study*, p. 5.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.



through it live the life divine. Here is highly skilled, ratiocinative reasoning, but we are also connected with the living pulse of the intuitive flashes of the ancient seers. One of them is the dance of Shiva.

I belong to a generation which had received an English education but was not prepared to sit with the ancient texts in Sanskrit or one's own mother-tongue. It was not possible either, for where were the teachers or the opportunity to sit at the feet of a traditional scholar? They were becoming increasingly rare. Meanwhile, the discovery of India's priceless treasures by the educated elite during the first half of the century had whetted our appetite. When we went to philosophy, the fat volume of B.A.G. Fuller had to be opened and we trudged through it all, cluttering the mind with stoicism, the problem of evil and the concepts of substance and causation. But it all seemed so dry, so far away though one did feel grand to be speaking of Hegel and Bosanquet and to appear scholarly. But the inner linkage was missing.

The writings of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo were thus a welcome boon. The University departments still fought shy of prescribing texts by these great writers, but no matter. Here was something which helped us 'connect'. Though we had no idea of the traditional Darshanas, names like Adi Shankara, Ramanujacharya, Vallabhacharya and Madhvacharya were familiar thanks to family linkages. So were the key phrases and images used by these neo-Vedantic writers of the twentieth century. Thus Swami Vivekananda:

But no sooner is the essence of Cit realised, than the essence of Ananda is also realised. Because what is Cit is verily the same as Ananda.<sup>10</sup>

Sanskrit expressions, made familiar to the Indian ear in daily discourse, seemed to help us understand the subtle philosophical embroidery of the thinker. Terms like Cit or Ananda were not the same as Consciousness and Bliss. We seemed to imbibe something more from them turning a seemingly arid argument into a seizable idea. Certainly, when an Indian image was projected, the idea leapt to life. Sri Aurobindo uses Indian words sparingly and there lies their power to hold our attention when they do appear. The dance of Shiva is one such image.

When Fritjof Capra published his *The Tao of Physics* in 1975, we were all thrilled. He had used *our* image of the dancing Shiva as the crucial metaphor for explaining what happens in subatomic matter! He goes to the subject straightaway in his preface:

Five years ago, I had a beautiful experience which set me on a road that has led to the writing of this book. I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing,

10. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume V, p. 385.



when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sand, rocks, water, and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms, and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another by creating and destroying other particles. I knew also that the Earth's atmosphere was continually bombarded by showers of 'cosmic rays', particles of high energy undergoing multiple collisions as they penetrated the air. All this was familiar to me from my research in high-energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams and mathematical theories. As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I 'saw' cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.<sup>11</sup>

Not surprisingly the book had become a bestseller and is still much sought after. In the same manner philosophy ceases to be uninspired when we come to it in Sri Aurobindo. Reading him is like reading beautiful poetry! Thus are we constantly drawn to think of the divine and live the life divine by holding in our hands Sri Aurobindo's work. When there is someone like V. Chandrasekharam, it is all joy. In the course of a brief exposition, we get to know how Sri Aurobindo deals with the problem of evil and death, the real significance of the term Maya and how the Supermind concept is already present in the symbols presented by the Vedas and the Upanishads. So it is with the scheme of evolution which is actually "the Vedic doctrine of the world as a progressive self-expression of the One".<sup>12</sup>

According to V. Chandrasekharam, the philosophy of *The Life Divine* pulsates with life because "behind the movement of ideas and arguments of the Master we sense a stream of *seeing* thought flowing into the mind and filling it with a liquid brilliance which can image within it the form and feature of spiritual truth."<sup>13</sup> *The Life Divine* is not the work of an academic scholar. A Rishi is speaking to us using the terms and symbols sanctified by several millennia of usage. He is not repeating what has been said earlier. He is himself the seer, one who through yoga has been reliving the experiences of the sages of the past. Sri Aurobindo has seen the truths realised earlier and has also pierced through the falsities pursued by some great minds and comes to the conclusion that transformation from the human to the divine is possible. The Past and the Present, East and West have all been subsumed in Sri Aurobindo's yoga which makes V. Chandrasekharam affirm happily:

11. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, p. 11.

12. V. Chandrasekharam, *Sri Aurobindo's The Life Divine: A Brief Study*, p. 15.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

This is not a synthesis of the kind we know in Spencer, for instance; this seems to grow out of vision, which is by nature synthetic and total. Resurgent India has in *The Life Divine*, a world-view worthy of its glorious past and formative of a more glorious future.<sup>14</sup>

That is the whole point. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the future. Imprisoned in the modern world of uncertainties, how dare we think of a future? The arsenals of nuclear weaponry (with its perfect acronym MAD — Mutually Assured Destruction), the havoc perpetrated on our environment giving or leaving little or nothing to the future generations, the constant threat of physical death and financial crashes . . . in such a world, does the word ‘hope’ have a significance today? And Sri Aurobindo speaks of all our tomorrows stretching out to centuries or millennia for a transformation to take place!

So, I will not despair. For I have *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo speaks in a language that I understand, though I may trip if I seek to understand his argument step by step, from page one. Let us get back to the dance of Shiva image used by Sri Aurobindo to indicate world-existence which is one of constant movement. How did this non-stop movement originate from what is apparently a stable white radiance of eternity? Sri Aurobindo gently leads us from the known to the unknown. Instead of talking only about Existence and Force, he uses terms which mean something more than what the dictionary has to say about these words.

The answer most approved by the ancient Indian mind was that Force is inherent in Existence. Shiva and Kali, Brahman and Shakti are one and not two who are separable. Force inherent in existence may be at rest or it may be in motion, but when it is at rest, it exists none the less and is not abolished, diminished or in any way essentially altered.<sup>15</sup>

As simple as that! Subramania Bharati has a wonderful poem on Shakti’s dance, “Oozhi-k-koothu” which opens

As the worlds mightily clash  
and crash in resounding thunder,  
as blood-dripping demon-spirits  
sing in glee amid the general ruin,  
to the beat and the tune, O Mother,  
you leap in ecstatic dance!<sup>16</sup>

14. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

15. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, p. 90.

16. Translated by Prema Nandakumar.

We have got so used to the image of the dance of Shiva or Shakti or both that Sri Aurobindo's question pulls us up with a start. Why this dance? Why this movement? Is Existence stable and without movement because it has no consciousness? Is the Movement also an unconscious one? Is it moving automatically to some rhythm? Or does Existence have a consciousness and the Movement impelled by a conscious propulsion?

The answer is given immediately by Sri Aurobindo in a line of reasoning which is persuasive. There is "a supreme hidden intelligence" which pervades Matter, Life, Mind and all the rest too. If it is an "intelligence", why then does it allow for so much wastage of precious material through death, desire and incapacity? But then, as yet, our limited mind cannot understand why it is so. For the present, it is enough to know of this Force as an Ananda Tandava undertaken consciously for the emergence of the New Future.

Meanwhile let us expand our mental horizons!

*(To be continued)*

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

Sweet Mother, is desire contagious?

*Ah, yes, very contagious, my child. It is even much more contagious than illness. If someone next to you has a desire, immediately it enters you; and in fact it is mainly in this way that it is caught. It passes from one to another. . . Terribly contagious, in such a powerful way that one is not even aware that it is a contagion. Suddenly one feels something springing up in oneself; someone has gently put it inside. Of course, one could say, "Why aren't people with desires quarantined?" Then we should have to quarantine everybody. (Mother laughs)*

*The Mother*

*(Questions and Answers 1955, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 7, p. 37)*

## JUGAL-DA — A Tribute —

OUR beloved and respected brother, Jugal-da, passed away on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2009.

Jugal-da (Jugal Kishore Mukherjee) was a senior sadhak who distinguished himself as one of the most dedicated and outstanding students of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's works.

He was born in 1925. Just after completing his post graduate studies in science with a special paper on nuclear physics he joined the Ashram in 1949. From then onwards, he was associated in various capacities with the Ashram school — now known as Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

In December 1967 the Mother gave him the responsibility of implementing the “Free Progress” method at the Higher Course level. These classes were then shifted to a new building that the Mother named “Knowledge”. There he taught all the books of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, drawing upon his wide scholarship and intimate understanding of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's teaching to help students to look at all subjects and topics in the light of Their vision.

As the author of several books and a large number of articles, he brought to his writings and presentation “the luminosity of a spiritual seeker with the deep analytical mind of a scientific researcher”.

My tribute to Jugal-da is a re-reading of some of his books and a sharing with the readers of a few of the passages from them.

\* \* \*

Jugal-da was an educationist. The subject of teaching was as close to him as the subjects he taught. His book, *Principles and Goals of Integral Education* which carries the subtitle “as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the experiment of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry” gathers together several of his articles on Education while also giving a glimpse of the working of the Higher Course which had become for him his field of dedication and work.

Explaining why this book was written, he says,

. . . it is by now well recognised that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were not only Mahayogis, masters of spirituality, they were at the same time great educationists as well. Both of them, in their diverse writings, formulated fundamental principles of education with an altogether new non-conventional

goal in view. The Mother established a school in Pondicherry in 1943 in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to put into practice these principles of education. She gave this school a wider and higher scope with far-reaching consequences for the future of humanity, by progressively transforming it into a University Centre in 1953.<sup>1</sup>

We observe that Jugal-da's scientific mind studied like a scholarly researcher on education the ideas propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He expounded the theory and philosophy of education with a new vision.

To quote from the opening of the first chapter of the book:

The world knows Sri Aurobindo as a Mahayogi, a great philosopher, a renowned poet and an accomplished literary critic. But not many people know that he has been a great educationist as well. Even those who are aware of the fact that Sri Aurobindo was a very successful teacher, — first at the Baroda College, then in the Bengal National College, — have not much cared to study his educational thoughts and insights . . . <sup>2</sup>

Jugal-da writes:

To understand the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in all its bearings, to comprehend the logical justification and inter-relation of all its principles and practices, we must first try to understand the basic vision of Sri Aurobindo as regards man, Nature and the world-process. For, everything, all of Sri Aurobindo's views and formulations, whether literary, philosophical or spiritual, derive organically from his fundamental world-vision.<sup>3</sup>

From Jugal-da's book, we are going to give in brief "a few salient principles that the Master-Yogi has recommended for making education luminous and efficient."<sup>4</sup> He then takes up Sri Aurobindo's "principles of true teaching" explaining and elaborating them to come up with "Sri Aurobindo's Seven Principles of Education". Here they are in a nutshell:

*First Principle:* "all knowledge is within and has to be evoked by education rather than instilled from outside."

*Second Principle:* "every one has his own *svabhava* and *svadharma*, his intrinsic self-nature and the characteristic turn of his being," and the aim of the educationist is "to discover it, develop it and use it".

1. *Principles and Goals of Integral Education* by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2005, p. v.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

*Third Principle:* “to work from the near to the far”.

*Fourth Principle:* “education has to be national but not parochial and sectarian.”

*Fifth Principle:* “to change the focus from ‘furnishing’ of knowledge to building up of the faculties of knowledge”.

*Sixth Principle:* “the ethical-aesthetic nature too has to be developed.”

*Seventh Principle:* “We cannot stop at the borders of ordinary humanity with all its basic insufficiencies and limitations. . . .” but “arm ourselves with an active faith and robust optimism in the divine possibility of man.”<sup>5</sup>

Another book by Jugal-da, *Sri Aurobindo The Smiling Master* takes up an aspect of Sri Aurobindo that not many researchers and writers except Nirodbaran have focused on — Sri Aurobindo’s humour.

Jugal-da has ardently presented a scholarly study. The book is “An analysis and an anthology”. We have found examples galore of the Master’s humour on matters medical, logical, literary, covering the many types of humour we find in Sri Aurobindo’s writings. The book is a treasury of humour. There is so much that I would like to quote pages and pages, but restrain myself, recommending the readers to discover it all for themselves.

When I go through Jugal-da’s book, *The Destiny of the Body* I am overwhelmed by his labour and painstaking investigation on physiological, psychological, philosophical research work in the light of the vision and the realisation in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga. In the Foreword to the book, K. D. Sethna, editor of the journal *Mother India*, writes:

Reading the series of studies contributed by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee I could not help being exhilarated not only by the scholarly thoroughness of its knowledge but also by the wide-ranging vitality of its insight.<sup>6</sup>

K. D. Sethna further states:

Jugal Kishore Mukherjee brings the legitimacy of this utterance home to us by various interesting and illuminating routes. His exposition is a reminder to the champions of the spiritual life that the inner divinity is meant not to tear away from the outer form but to awaken that form to a natural kinship with it. It is also a reminder to the champions of the physical life that the ultimate source of this life’s full flowering lies in that inner divinity and its awakening touch on matter.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-26 (adapted).

6. K. D. Sethna’s Foreword to *The Destiny of the Body* by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 1975, p. ix.

7. *Ibid.*, p. x.

In his Introduction Jugal-da announces the central point of the book with this brief quote from Sri Aurobindo:

It is the object of my Yoga to transform life by bringing down into it the Light, Power and Bliss of the Divine Truth and its dynamic certitudes. This Yoga is not a Yoga of world-shunning asceticism, but of divine life. . . . it aims . . . at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object.<sup>8</sup>

Jugal-da, towards the close of the Introduction, writes:

Sri Aurobindo assures us that there will no doubt remain a material base for the New Body to appear in course of the contemplated supramental transformation, but it will be ‘a new earth with divine structure’, having for its stuff the supramental substance and for its organisation a divine functioning, in which the Earth-Mother will finally reveal her unshrouded supernal splendour. Thus will appear on the terrestrial plane ‘a divinely human body’ about which Sri Aurobindo has prophesied:

Even the body shall remember God,  
Nature shall draw back from mortality  
And Spirit’s fires shall guide the earth’s blind force;

. . .

The Spirit shall look out through Matter’s gaze  
And Matter shall reveal the Spirit’s face.

. . .

These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,  
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy  
And mortal bodies of immortality.

. . .

Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine.<sup>9</sup>

But does this goal of the emergence of a ‘glorious body’, ‘*corps glorieux*’ seem to be too good a prospect to be at all actualised even in some remote future? — far be it . . . to speak of an imminent realisation. But, if this conscious self-evolutionary attempt, on the part of some pioneers, to score a total victory

8. *The Destiny of the Body*, p. xxx, quoting from *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, pp. 99, 109.

9. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 707, 709, 710.

over all the present limitations of man's body and bodily life, looks like an act of folly, we may only quote what the Mother herself has said in another context — that of the physical conquest of death:

That seems a madness. But all new things have appeared as madness until they become realities. The hour is come for this madness to be realised.<sup>10,11</sup>

*The Destiny of the Body* is a detailed exploration of how and by what steps the different parts and functions of our physical being will move towards the final culmination of what assuredly awaits man, the human being of tomorrow as he grows beyond his present humanity.

While we are on the subject of physical transformation, Jugal-da's article "The Mystery of Sri Aurobindo's 'Departure' *vis-à-vis* The Ideal of Physical Transformation" serialised in *Mother India* comes to mind. He quotes the Mother's words:

My body has now, let me repeat, neither the indisputable authority of God nor the imperturbable serenity of the Sage. I have asked it to do in all seriousness the Work of Sri Aurobindo and, at bottom, to do the given Work of Sri Aurobindo is to realise the supramental upon earth. And in that my body is only a simple apprentice which is learning to work. I am only an apprentice, a simple apprentice: I am in the process of learning my job.<sup>12</sup>

Jugal-da also quotes these revealing words of the Mother:

I was born with a body consciously prepared. Sri Aurobindo was conscious of that and he declared it the very first day I met him: "You are born free." Yes, I was absolutely free from the spiritual point of view — without any desire, without any attachment.

And it is a fact that if there is the slightest desire or attachment, it is impossible to attempt the work of transformation.<sup>13</sup>

Jugal-da then ventures to state rather directly:

But a nagging question may be troubling the reader's mind: "What about the year 1973 when the Mother herself left her body plunging all their disciples

10. The Mother, *Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 85.

11. *The Destiny of the Body*, p. xli.

12. Quoted by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee in *Mother India*, December 1999, p. 1159.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 1162.



into a shocked query: Did the work of supramentalisation ultimately fail? Was it at least suspended for the time being?"<sup>14</sup>

And he proceeds to answer the question he has raised in his categorical way:

Our answer is an emphatic "NO". Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Work continued and has been continuing with unabated intensity and effectivity even after the momentous event of 17 November 1973 and this will continue till the definitive Victory is won on the physical plane.<sup>15</sup>

This is Jugal-da, a sadhak of Integral Yoga, a dedicated scholar and above all one for whom every word of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was a truth to be applied in life, one for whom the fulfilment of the work of Transformation was an absolute certainty.

NILIMA DAS

14. *Ibid.*, p. 1163.

15. *Ibid.*

*Each person has his own freedom of choice up to a certain point — unless he makes the full surrender — and as he uses the freedom, has to take the spiritual or other consequences. The help can only be offered, not imposed. Silence, absence of frank confession, means a desire in the vital to go its own way. When there is no longer concealment, when there is the physical self-opening to the Divine, then the Divine can intervene.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 598)*

## A SALUTATION AND A PLEDGE

### I

. . . Fallen is the harp; shattered it lies and mute;  
Is the unseen player dead?  
Because the tree is felled where the bird sang,  
Must the song too hush? . . .

The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;  
An artist Godhead here  
Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,  
Unwilling to cease

Till all is done for which the stars were made,  
Till the heart discovers God  
And soul knows itself. And even then  
There is no end.

Sri Aurobindo  
‘The End?’

YES, Pranab-da or “Dada” as everyone called him was not only a dear elder brother to one and all but also a dedicated and faithful child and instrument of the Mother. His straightforwardness, honesty, truthfulness, sincerity of purpose and fidelity to the goal made him truly exceptional. Full of courage and conviction, fearless to the marrow he was surely one of the finest men among those of the era gone by, the *srestha* of the Gita. Even in his departure his body exuded a glow and everyone around felt the presence of a mighty pillar of strength and power. No wonder, the Divine Mother poured so much love upon him and shaped a beautiful and powerful instrument out of his being.

Having said that, it is true that the Mother’s work will not stop. If anything, it is bound to move forward. These were the first samples of humanity in whose hard rock She planted the seeds of Supramental Light and Love. Her labour and work is seen fructified in the form of these giant oaks. However, before leaving they have ensured that the seed and sapling of the Divine Life is planted firmly in the human soil, it has taken root and earth is beginning to bear its first fruits and flowers in the form of aspiring humanity all over the world. I am sure these seeds will grow further and spread out more and more till the tree covers the whole earth.

These great and luminary ones became what they did by Her Grace and so can

we and others to follow, if we can emulate their example, and who knows, even surpass them — for each generation, now touched by the New Consciousness, must improve upon the earlier.

Of course material nature and the physical are always hard, obstinate in their resistance and impervious to change. It is not going to be easy to find another Pranab for he chose this most difficult part as his field of action and before departing made sure that through this rock-like matter streams of Her Love begin to flow.

But such men never die. They go back to where they come from. But in the process enrich the earth during their sojourn and leave something of the concentrated force they had gathered within them as their gift to all. They leave in the earth atmosphere a quivering touch of their presence that it can never forget. In times to come, this memory and this touch will return again and again to awaken earth-nature to its higher destiny and the great fulfilment foreseen by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

That their work does not go waste and their gift is not thrown away, we must rededicate ourselves with renewed vigour and greater enthusiasm to the Work and march on till we conquer for Them or fall aside and make way for other soldiers of Light and hero-warriors of Truth. For that is what he would like of us and expect of us. And that also will be the best tribute to this glowing son of mother India and the child and comrade of the Divine Mother.

May aspiration awake in us and the flame burn brighter and ever brighter. In this battle of the future, in this war of the ages, on this path at once heroic and delightful, there is no place for sadness, only a greater determination and courage, a deeper and truer resolve, a higher soar, a swifter and completer victory. Thanks to the sacrifice of men like “Dada” and thanks to Her Infinite Grace and Love, it will be possible and will become more and more possible tomorrow and hereafter:

Slowly the light grows greater in the East,  
Slowly the world progresses on God’s road.  
His seal is on my task, it cannot fail . . .

## II

A strong pillar of the Ashram life has fallen — a pillar of strength, a pillar of love, for behind the strong exterior of Dada, there always flowed a soothing river of love even as fresh streams reside within and flow from a majestic mountain’s heart. This was not the usual thing that men call love, not something weak and sentimental that human beings often romanticise. It was a strong and mighty current, much like his being and his persona, that derived its truth and force from his unflinching faithfulness and love for the Mother.

It was, we may say, the Mother's Love, the love She had abundantly poured on him and on all whom She drew close to Herself.

Of course, Dada was a special recipient of that Love and Glory.

And this special Grace, of which he was the recipient and a strong vessel, was not just because of his straightforward nature, his honesty and fidelity to the truth, his courage and fearlessness, not even his love for Her. These are no doubt admirable and rare qualities, indispensable for the Yoga and the Divine Life. They are the solid elements of human nature, the best that the old creation could provide, to be used as scaffolding for the Future Work, the New Creation of tomorrow. Dada had these in abundance, qualities that would mark one as a hero and a leader in any sphere of life, what the Gita calls *Srestha*, the very best among men.

But that was not the only thing. The deeper reason perhaps lay in the fact that Dada took upon himself the most challenging field of work. Not the subtle regions of the mind, not even the flowing domains of the heart, which respond more easily to the divine touch. Instead he chose to work upon the most obstinate, the most stubborn of all elements, the physical body — that hard, rock-like material, impervious to all light, which does not allow any Ray to pass through its thick and obscure substance. As we know, the yogis of the past did not even attempt it; most dread this domain that is the very bastion of resistance. Dada consented to enter this dark and dangerous field, dark to any spiritual light, and by Her Grace, with Her as his divine Teacher, did admirable work that will help the coming generations. He established Her fort in the most difficult terrain, the country of fixed dead matter, as we call it. Yet by the power of Her Love, he managed to bring this dead matter to life and awaken it to Her love and compelled it to aspire for Her Light.

Such men never die! Nor does their work go in vain. They have inspired the hearts and minds of humanity, they have shaped many lives by their subtle influence and neither the inspiration one has derived from them, nor their occult influence cast upon men by their inner beings cease with their passing on to domains beyond the grasp of our material senses.

If anything, freed from the hard grip of the human frame and the limiting cage of embodied nature, they become freer, larger and universal in their action, even as a god bears with his immensity the creation's load. Their force liberated from the narrow circle of the few and the fortunate reaches out to the many, often even unknown to them. Having done their appointed task, they return to the hill tops of silence from where they came.

But what they have gathered within their bodies, they leave behind as a gift to earth. They enrich the earth not only during their life but also through their death.

While it is natural that we feel their loss as if some material aspect of our Divine Mother has left us, yet by this very act of sacrifice, if we may say so, this material power universalises itself and enters into hearts and souls that are ready. It

even diffuses itself into matter, percolating silently layer by layer and from there awakens it to aspire, increasing and releasing Light from within its dark folds much as the Angirasa sages of old released Light from the caves of darkness by the power of the Mantra. This is not just the power of the Mantra releasing Light from the caves of darkness, but rather converting those very caves into homes of Light, to invade the dark bases upon which the foundations of our earthly life seem to stand. They have been instrumental in establishing upon earth the seeds of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo brought down to earth by Their tapasya.

Indeed it is Their labour, Their Glory, Their Grace and Love that we see fructified in these pioneers that have gone before us in this life. But instruments were needed, earth-natures fit and ready or willing to be made ready, surrendering themselves to Her tremendous touch, plastic to Her Force — a Force that few can bear or hold. These pioneers and pillars provided that much needed soil to plant the divine seed upon earth. The seeds did take root and have grown, watered by Her Love and helped by the Sun of Their Grace brooding over our earth. The work done, They withdrew but not before ensuring that the roots are secure. In time to come, many more saplings will emerge out of each of these trees, the seeds of Light will find better and better human vessels, and earth will be made ready by the Supramental Force ploughing our minds and bodies and life since Its descent on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1956 . . .

The light that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have brought down to earth is bound to grow and change everything in due course of time. Only one must know how to hold on and hold out. For in the end one thing is certain: even if all the rest fails or falls, there is no doubt about the Victory of Truth and the triumphal march of the Divine.

ALOK PANDEY

*Self-surrender at first comes through love and bhakti more than through ātmajñāna.  
But it is true that with ātmajñāna the complete surrender becomes more possible.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 598)*