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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

“TO FIND HIGHEST BEAUTY IS TO FIND GOD.”

BEAUTY — AN EXPRESSION OF THE DIVINE

BEAUTY — AN EXPRESSION OF THE DIVINE	...	93
THE SENSE OF BEAUTY	...	93
THE YOGIN’S AIM	...	94
EXPRESSING THE ONE DIVINE	...	95
HOLDING THE MIRROR UP TO NATURE	...	95
ALL ART IS INTERPRETATION	...	96
TRUE BEAUTY IS BEYOND FORMS	...	97
BEAUTY AND DELIGHT — SOUL AND ORIGIN OF ART	...	99
GREAT ART SEEKS FOR DEEPER TRUTH	...	99
CULT OF THE SPIRITUAL AND CULT OF THE BEAUTIFUL	...	100

APPRENTICESHIP

CREATING HAPPY FORMATIONS	...	101
EFFORT AND WILL	...	101
BECOMING THE THING ONE WANTS TO EXPRESS	...	102
TRAINING OF THE INSTRUMENTS	...	103
THE WORLD CAN BECOME THE SUPREME BEAUTY	...	105

BEAUTY IN THE PHYSICAL AND OTHER PLANES

EXPRESSING PHYSICAL BEAUTY IS A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM	...	106
THE BEAUTY OF A CROW’S WINGS	...	106
FLOWERS AND BEAUTY	...	106
A TREE GROWING	...	107
LOOK AT THE STARS	...	108

A SUPREME BEAUTY ACTING ON THE CELLS OF THE BODY	...	109
BEAUTY OUTSIDE THE PHYSICAL FORM	...	109
BEAUTY OF ACTION	...	110
UNSELFISH MOVEMENT — A BEAUTIFUL FORM OF THE PSYCHIC CONSCIOUSNESS	...	110
THE PSYCHIC ELEMENT IN MAN	...	111
BEAUTY AND THE PSYCHIC	...	111
THE PSYCHIC — A CENTRE OF LIGHT AND TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE		
	AND BEAUTY AND HARMONY ...	111
A TRUE AND BEAUTIFUL THING — PURE LOVE	...	112

FROM THE MOTHER'S PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS	...	115
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NOTES ON SOME PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS BY THE MOTHER	...	123
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A Correction

We regret the error in the first quote on page 64 of the January issue of the journal. The passage should read:

But the point here is that the modern mind has exiled from its practical motive-power the two essential things, God or the Eternal and spirituality or the God-state, which are the master conceptions of the Gita. It lives in humanity only, and the Gita would have us live in God, though for the world in God; in its life, heart and intellect only, and the Gita would have us live in the spirit; in the mutable Being who is “all creatures”, and the Gita would have us live also in the Immutable and the Supreme; in the changing march of Time, and the Gita would have us live in the Eternal. Or if these higher things are now beginning to be vaguely envisaged, it is only to make them subservient to man and society; but God and spirituality exist in their own right and not as adjuncts. And in practice the lower in us must learn to exist for the higher, in order that the higher also may in us consciously exist for the lower, to draw it nearer to its own altitudes.

Sri Aurobindo

(CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 32)

“To find highest beauty is to find God.”

Sri Aurobindo

(C25: 145)

When Sri Aurobindo was asked: “Why does the Mother put on rich and beautiful dresses?” he replied:

Beauty is as much an expression of the Divine as Knowledge, Power or Ananda. Does anyone ask why does the Mother want to manifest the divine consciousness by knowledge or by power and not by ignorance and weakness? It would not be a more absurd or meaningless question than the one put by the vital against her wearing artistic and beautiful dress. (S25: 361-62)

In another letter he explained:

Outer things are the expression of something in the inner reality. A fine sari or a palace are expressions of the principle of beauty in things and that is their main value. The Divine Consciousness is not bound by these things and has no attachment, but it is also not bound to abstain from them if beauty in things is part of its intended action. The Mother, when the Ashram was still unformed, was wearing patched cotton saris; when she took up the work, it was necessary to change her habits, so she did so. (S25: 362)

These two passages reveal how integrally Beauty is part of the Mother’s Work.

The theme of the February issue of *Mother India* is ‘Art and Beauty’ — two words that are closely associated in our minds with the Mother.

We first touch on some general aspects of Beauty, then move on to the apprenticeship, the training to receive and express Beauty which leads to the experience of Beauty in the different planes. The last section is a selection from the Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations*. About the *Prayers*, Sri Aurobindo has said:

The Prayers are mostly written in an identification with the earth-consciousness. It is the Mother in the lower nature addressing the Mother in the higher nature, the Mother herself carrying on the Sadhana of the earth-consciousness for the transformation praying to herself above from whom the forces of transformation come. This continues till the identification of the earth-consciousness and the higher consciousness is effected. (S25: 383)

We have included in this issue some of the Mother's paintings and drawings with brief notes on some of them.

More passages on the theme of Art will appear in the next months.

The sources of the quotations are indicated thus:

Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL) — S

Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA) — C

Collected Works of the Mother 2nd Edition (CWM 2nd ed.) — M

For example: (M: 17) stands for *Collected Works of the Mother* 2nd Edition, Volume 1, page 17.

TO FIND HIGHEST BEAUTY IS TO FIND GOD

BLANK p. 90

Harmony and beauty of the mind and soul, harmony and beauty of the thoughts and feelings, harmony and beauty in every outward act and movement, harmony and beauty of the life and surroundings, this is the demand of Mahalakshmi. Where there is affinity to the rhythms of the secret world-bliss and response to the call of the All-Beautiful and concord and unity and the glad flow of many lives turned towards the Divine, in that atmosphere she consents to abide. But all that is ugly and mean and base, all that is poor and sordid and squalid, all that is brutal and coarse repels her advent. Where love and beauty are not or are reluctant to be born, she does not come; where they are mixed and disfigured with baser things, she turns soon to depart or cares little to pour her riches. If she finds herself in men's hearts surrounded with selfishness and hatred and jealousy and malignance and envy and strife, if treachery and greed and ingratitude are mixed in the sacred chalice, if grossness of passion and unrefined desire degrade devotion, in such hearts the gracious and beautiful Goddess will not linger. . . .

. . . For it is through love and beauty that she lays on men the yoke of the Divine. Life is turned in her supreme creations into a rich work of celestial art and all existence into a poem of sacred delight; the world's riches are brought together and concerted for a supreme order and even the simplest and commonest things are made wonderful by her intuition of unity and the breath of her spirit. Admitted to the heart she lifts wisdom to pinnacles of wonder and reveals to it the mystic secrets of the ecstasy that surpasses all knowledge, meets devotion with the passionate attraction of the Divine, teaches to strength and force the rhythm that keeps the might of their acts harmonious and in measure and casts on perfection the charm that makes it endure for ever. (S25: 31-33)

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BEAUTY — AN EXPRESSION OF THE DIVINE

Beauty — An Expression of the Divine

On the physical plane it is in beauty that the Divine expresses Himself.

*

In the physical world, of all things it is beauty that expresses best the Divine. The physical world is the world of form and the perfection of form is beauty. Beauty interprets, expresses, manifests the Eternal. Its role is to put all manifested nature in contact with the Eternal through the perfection of form, through harmony and a sense of the ideal which uplifts and leads towards something higher.

*

Let beauty be your constant ideal.

The beauty of the soul

The beauty of sentiments

The beauty of thoughts

The beauty of the action

The beauty in the work

so that nothing comes out of your hands which is not an expression of pure and harmonious beauty.

And the Divine Help shall always be with you. (M12: 232)

The Sense of Beauty

To do this yoga, one must have, at least a little, the sense of beauty. If one does not, one misses one of the most important aspects of the physical world.

There is this beauty, this dignity of soul — a thing about which I am very sensitive. It is a thing that moves me and evokes in me a great respect always.

Yes, this beauty of soul that is visible in the face, this kind of dignity, this harmony of integral realisation. When the soul becomes visible in the physical, it gives this dignity, this beauty, this majesty, the majesty that comes from one's being the Tabernacle. Then, even things that have no particular beauty put on a sense of eternal beauty, of *the* eternal beauty.

I have seen in this way faces that pass from one extreme to the other in a flash.

Someone has this kind of beauty and harmony, this sense of divine dignity in the body; then suddenly there comes the perception of an obstacle, a difficulty, and the sense of fault, of indignity — and then, a sudden deformation in the appearance, a kind of decomposition of the features! And yet it is the same face. It was like a flash of lightning, and it was frightful. That kind of hideousness of torment and degradation — what has been translated in religions as “the torment of sin” — that gives you a face indeed! Even features that are beautiful in themselves become horrible. And it was the same features, the same person.

Then I saw how horrible the sense of sin is, how much it belongs to the world of falsehood. (M15: 353)

It is one of the greatest weapons of the Asura at work when you are taught to shun beauty. It has been the ruin of India. The Divine manifests in the psychic as love, in the mind as knowledge, in the vital as power and in the physical as beauty. If you discard beauty it means that you are depriving the Divine of this manifestation in the material and you hand over that part to the Asura. (M13: 372-73)

The Yogin's Aim

For all must be done as a sacrifice, all activities must have the One Divine for their object and the heart of their meaning. The Yogin's aim in the sciences that make for knowledge should be to discover and understand the workings of the Divine Consciousness-Puissance in man and creatures and things and forces, her creative significances, her execution of the mysteries, the symbols in which she arranges the manifestation. The Yogin's aim in the practical sciences, whether mental and physical or occult and psychic, should be to enter into the ways of the Divine and his processes, to know the materials and means for the work given to us so that we may use that knowledge for a conscious and faultless expression of the spirit's mastery, joy and self-fulfilment. The Yogin's aim in the Arts should not be a mere aesthetic, mental or vital gratification, but, seeing the Divine everywhere, worshipping it with a revelation of the meaning of its own works, to express that One Divine in ideal forms, the One Divine in principles and forces, the One Divine in gods and men and creatures and objects. The theory that sees an intimate connection between religious aspiration and the truest and greatest Art is in essence right; but we must substitute for the mixed and doubtful religious motive a spiritual aspiration, vision, interpreting experience. For the wider and more comprehensive the seeing, the more it contains in itself the sense of the hidden Divine in humanity and in all things and rises beyond a superficial religiosity into the spiritual life, the more luminous, flexible,

deep and powerful will the Art be that springs from that high motive. The Yogin's distinction from other men is this that he lives in a higher and vaster spiritual consciousness; all his work of knowledge or creation must then spring from there: it must not be made in the mind, — for it is a greater truth and vision than mental man's that he has to express or rather that presses to express itself through him and mould his works, not for his personal satisfaction, but for a divine purpose. (C23: 142-43)

Expressing the One Divine

How can we “express that One Divine”?

It depends on the subject one wants to express: gods, men or things.

When one paints a picture or composes music or writes poetry, each one has his own way of expression. Every painter, every musician, every poet, every sculptor has or ought to have a unique, personal contact with the Divine, and through the work which is his speciality, the art he has mastered, he must express this contact in his own way, with his own words, his own colours. For himself, instead of copying the outer form of Nature, he takes these forms as the covering of something else, precisely of his relationship with the realities which are behind, deeper, and he tries to make them express that. Instead of merely imitating what he sees, he tries to make them speak of what is behind them, and it is this which makes all the difference between a living art and just a flat copy of Nature. (M8: 158)

Holding the Mirror up to Nature

If Art's service is but to imitate Nature, then burn all the picture galleries and let us have instead photographic studios. It is because Art reveals what Nature hides, that a small picture is worth more than all the jewels of the millionaires and the treasures of the princes.

*

If you only imitate visible Nature, you will perpetrate either a corpse, a dead sketch or a monstrosity; Truth lives in that which goes behind & beyond the visible & sensible.

*

O Poet, O Artist, if thou but holdest up the mirror to Nature, thinkest thou Nature will rejoice in thy work? Rather she will turn away her face. For what dost thou hold up to her there? Herself? No, but a lifeless outline & reflection, a shadowy mimicry. It is the secret soul of Nature thou hast to seize, thou hast to hunt eternally after the truth in the external symbol, and that no mirror will hold for thee, nor for her whom thou seekest. (C12: 440)

Art holds the mirror up to Nature that Nature may see her own image beside that of Art and realise her own deformity and imperfections.

*

Just as Socrates was nothing without his *daemon*, so the artist is helpless if he has not his daemon at his elbow. And who is the artist's daemon? The artistic conscience.

*

Inspiration means that the papyrus of your imagination is held to the fire of memory and reveals characters written in Indian ink by unseen compositors. (C1: 84-85)

Beauty is the joyous offering of Nature. (M12: 233)

When I had the dividing reason, I shrank from many things; after I had lost it in sight, I hunted through the world for the ugly and the repellent, but I could no longer find them.

*

God had opened my eyes; for I saw the nobility of the vulgar, the attractiveness of the repellent, the perfection of the maimed and the beauty of the hideous. (C12: 425)

All Art is Interpretation

All Art is interpretation. Creation is a misnomer; nothing in this world is created, all is manifested. All exists previously in the mind of the Knower. Art may interpret

that which is already manifest or was manifest at one time, or it may interpret what will be manifest hereafter. It may even be used as one of the agencies in the manifestation. A particular type of face and figure may be manifested in the work of a popular artist and in a single generation the existing type of face and figure in the country may change and mould itself to the new conception. These things are there in the type in the causal world with which our superconscious selves are perpetually in touch; they manifest in the psychical and become part of our thought. That thought we put out into the material world and there it takes shape and body, as movements, as institutions, as poetry, Art and Knowledge, as living men and women. Man creates his world because he is the psychic instrument through whom God manifests that which He had previously arranged in Himself. In this sense Art can create the past, the present and the future. It can remanifest that which was and has passed away, it can fix for us that which is, it can prophesy that which will be. (C1: 538)

The true painting aims at creating something more beautiful than the ordinary reality. (M12: 233)

There is a beauty on every plane of the being right up to the Divine himself. Material beauty is but a very poor translation of that beauty. (M17: 83)

I knew my mind to be conquered when it admired the beauty of the hideous, yet felt perfectly why other men shrank back or hated.

*

To feel & love the God of beauty and good in the ugly and the evil, and still yearn in utter love to heal it of its ugliness and its evil, this is real virtue and morality. (C12: 428)

True Beauty is Beyond Forms

In one of your writings you have said that beauty is universal and that one must be universal in order to see and recognise it.

Yes. I mean one must have a universal *consciousness* in order to see and recognise it. For instance, if your consciousness is limited to one place, that is, it is a national consciousness (the consciousness of any one country), what is beautiful for one country is not beautiful for another. The sense of beauty is different. . . .

Only those who have developed a little artistic taste, have travelled much and seen many things have widened their consciousness and they are no longer so sectarian. But it is very difficult to pull a person out of the specialised tastes of his race — I am not even speaking now of the country, I am speaking of the race. It is very difficult. It is there, you know, hidden right at the bottom, in the subconscious, and it comes back without your even noticing it, quite spontaneously, quite naturally. Even on this very point: the woman of your race is always much more beautiful than the woman of other races — spontaneously, it is the spontaneous taste. That's what I mean. So, you must rise above that. I am not even speaking of those who find everything that's outside their own family or caste very ugly and bad. I am not speaking at all of these people. I am not even speaking of those for whom one country is much more beautiful than another. And yet, these people have already risen above the altogether ordinary way of thinking. I am not even speaking of a question of race. . . . It is very difficult, one must go right down, right down within oneself into the subconscious — and even farther — to discover the root of these things. Therefore, if you want to have the sense of beauty in itself — which is quite independent of all these tastes, the taste of the race — you must have a universal consciousness. Otherwise how can you have it? You will always have preferences. Even if these are not active and conscious preferences, they are subconscious preferences, instincts. So, to know true beauty independent of all form, one must rise above all form. And once you have known it beyond every form, you can recognise it in any form whatsoever, indifferently. And that becomes very interesting. (M5: 329-30)

True art means the expression of beauty in the material world. In a world wholly converted, that is to say, expressing integrally the divine reality, art must serve as the revealer and teacher of this divine beauty in life.

*

In art also we must remain on the heights.

*

Good taste is the aristocracy of art. (M12: 233)

Supreme art expresses the Beauty which puts you in contact with the Divine Harmony.

*

If art is to manifest something in the divine Life, there also a vast and luminous peace must express itself. (M12: 232)

Beauty and Delight — Soul and Origin of Art

For the ancient Indian idea is absolutely true that delight, Ananda, is the inmost expressive and creative nature of the free self because it is the very essence of the original being of the Spirit. But beauty and delight are also the very soul and origin of art and poetry. It is the significance and spiritual function of art and poetry to liberate man into pure delight and to bring beauty into his life. Only there are grades and heights here as in everything else and the highest kinds of delight and beauty are those which are one with the highest Truth, the perfection of life and the purest and fullest joy of the self-revealing Spirit. (C26: 224)

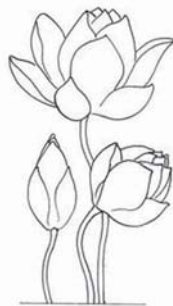
Great Art Seeks for Deeper Truth

There have been periods of artistic creation, ages of reason, in which the rational and intellectual tendency has prevailed in poetry and art; there have even been nations which in their great formative periods of art and literature have set up reason and a meticulous taste as the sovereign powers of their aesthetic activity. At their best these periods have achieved work of a certain greatness, but predominantly of an intellectual greatness and perfection of technique rather than achievements of a supreme inspired and revealing beauty; indeed their very aim has been not the discovery of the deeper truth of beauty, but truth of ideas and truth of reason, a critical rather than a true creative aim. Their leading object has been an intellectual criticism of life and nature elevated by a consummate poetical rhythm and diction rather than a revelation of God and man and life and nature in inspired forms of artistic beauty. But great art is not satisfied with representing the intellectual truth of things, which is always their superficial or exterior truth; it seeks for a deeper and original truth which escapes the eye of the mere sense or the mere reason, the soul in them, the unseen reality which is not that of their form and process but of their

spirit. This it seizes and expresses by form and idea, but a significant form, which is not merely a faithful and just or a harmonious reproduction of outward Nature, and a revelatory idea, not the idea which is merely correct, elegantly right or fully satisfying to the reason and taste. Always the truth it seeks is first and foremost the truth of beauty, — not, again, the formal beauty alone or the beauty of proportion and right process which is what the sense and the reason seek, but the soul of beauty which is hidden from the ordinary eye and the ordinary mind and revealed in its fullness only to the unsealed vision of the poet and artist in man who can seize the secret significances of the universal poet and artist, the divine creator who dwells as their soul and spirit in the forms he has created. (C25: 138-39)

Cult of the Spiritual and Cult of the Beautiful

This truth comes most easily home to us in Religion and in Art, in the cult of the spiritual and in the cult of the beautiful, because there we get away most thoroughly from the unrestful pressure of the outward appearances of life, the urgent siege of its necessities, the deafening clamour of its utilities. There we are not compelled at every turn to make terms with some gross material claim, some vulgar but inevitable necessity of the hour and the moment. We have leisure and breathing-time to seek the Real behind the apparent: we are allowed to turn our eyes either away from the temporary and transient or through the temporal itself to the eternal; we can draw back from the limitations of the immediately practical and re-create our souls by the touch of the ideal and the universal. We begin to shake off our chains, we get rid of life in its aspect of a prison-house with Necessity for our jailer and utility for our constant taskmaster; we are admitted to the liberties of the soul; we enter God's infinite kingdom of beauty and delight or we lay hands on the keys of our absolute self-finding and open ourselves to the possession or the adoration of the Eternal. There lies the immense value of Religion, the immense value of Art and Poetry to the human spirit; it lies in their immediate power for inner truth, for self-enlargement, for liberation. (C25: 147-48)



APPRENTICESHIP

Creating Happy Formations

We said at the beginning: one is surrounded by what one thinks about. You understand quite well what this means? (*Turning to a child*) Every time you think of something, it is as though you had a magnet in your hand and were attracting that thing towards yourself — you understand. Now, there are people who have a very, very bad habit of always thinking about all possible catastrophes, and are in a sort of constant apprehension about some calamity befalling them the next moment. I know many like that, there are some here. And so, those people have as though a magnet in their hands to attract calamities, not only upon themselves but upon others also. That lays a big responsibility upon them. And if one can't stop all the time from thinking about something — some have a head that runs on and they haven't found a way of stopping it — well, why not make it run on the right lines instead of letting it run on the others! . . . People always need to make their mind run, run, run, but then make it run on the right lines, you will see that it has an effect. For instance, let it go like this: that I shall learn better and better, shall know better and better, become healthier and healthier, and all difficulties will vanish, and wicked people will become sweet and good, and ill people will be cured, and houses which should be built will be built, and those things which should disappear will disappear, but giving place to better things, and the world will move in a constant progress, and at the end of that progress there will be a total harmony, and so on, and continue thus. . . . You can go on endlessly. But then you will have around you and around your head all kinds of pretty things. Those who perceive the atmosphere see certain inky stains, like an octopus there, yes, like that, with its tentacles to try and upset your mind — instead of that, one will see happy formations, formations of light or rays of sunlight or perhaps beautiful pictures, all that. One will see beautiful things — there are painters who do that and they always capture the thoughts. (M5: 385-87)

Effort and Will

There is a difference between the will and this feeling of tension, effort, of counting only on oneself, having recourse to oneself alone which personal effort means; this kind of tension, of something very acute and at times very painful; you count only on yourself and you have the feeling that if you do not make an effort every minute, all will be lost. That is personal effort.

But the will is something altogether different. It is the capacity to concentrate on everything one does, do it as best one can and not stop doing it unless one receives a very precise intimation that it is finished. It is difficult to explain it to you. But suppose, for example, through a concurrence of circumstances, a work comes into your hands. Take an artist who has in one way or another got an inspiration and resolved to paint a picture. He knows very well that if he has no inspiration and is not sustained by forces other than his own, he will do nothing much. It will look more like a daub than a painting. He knows this. But it has been settled, the painting is to be done; there may be many reasons for that, but the painting has to be done. Then if he had the passive attitude, well, he would place his palette, his colours, his brushes, his canvas and then sit down in front of it and say to the Divine: "Now you are going to paint." But the Divine does not do things this way. The painter himself must take up everything and arrange everything, concentrate on his subject, find the forms, the colours that will express it and put his whole will for a more and more perfect execution. His will must be there all the time. But he has to keep the sense that he must be open to the inspiration, he will not forget that in spite of all his knowledge of the technique, in spite of the care he takes to arrange, organise and prepare his colours, his forms, his design, in spite of all that, if he has no inspiration, it will be one picture among a million others and it will not be very interesting. He does not forget. He attempts, he tries to see, to feel what he wants his painting to express and in what way it should be expressed. He has his colours, he has his brushes, he has his model, he has made his sketch which he will enlarge and make into a picture, he calls his inspiration. There are even some who manage to have a clear, precise vision of what is to be done. But then, day after day, hour after hour, they have this will to work, to study, to do with care all that must be done until they reproduce as perfectly as they can the first inspiration. . . . That person has worked for the Divine, in communion with Him, but not in a passive way, not with a passive surrender; it is with an active surrender, a dynamic will. The result generally is something very good. Well, the example of the painter is interesting, because a painter who is truly an artist is able to see what he is going to do, he is able to connect himself to the divine Power that is beyond all expression and inspires all expression. For the poet, the writer, it is the same thing and for all people who do something, it is the same. (M5: 46-47)

Becoming the Thing One Wants to Express

You know this, I have already told you this: if you want to do something well, whatever it may be, any kind of work, the least thing, play a game, write a book, do painting or music or run a race, anything at all, if you want to do it well, you must *become* what you are doing and not remain a small person looking at himself doing

it; for if one looks at oneself acting, one is . . . one is still in complicity with the ego. If, in oneself, one succeeds in becoming what one does, it is a great progress. In the least little details, one must learn this. . . . That is why work is a good means of discipline, for if you want to do the work properly, you must *become* the work instead of being someone who works, otherwise you will never do it well. If you remain “someone who works” and, besides, if your thoughts go vagabonding, then you may be sure that if you are handling fragile things they will break, if you are cooking, you will burn something, or if you are playing a game, you will miss all the balls! It is here, in this, that work is a great discipline. For if truly you want to do it well, this is the only way of doing it.

Take someone who is writing a book, for instance. If he looks at himself writing the book, you can’t imagine how dull the book will become; it smells immediately of the small human personality which is there and it loses all its value. When a painter paints a picture, if he observes himself painting the picture, the picture will never be good, it will always be a kind of projection of the painter’s personality; it will be without life, without force, without beauty. But if, all of a sudden, he becomes the thing he wants to express, if he becomes the brushes, the painting, the canvas, the subject, the image, the colours, the value, the whole thing, and is entirely inside it and lives it, he will make something magnificent.

For everything, everything, it is the same. There is nothing which cannot be a yogic discipline if one does it properly. And if it is not done properly, even tapasya will be of no use and will lead you nowhere. For it is the same thing, if you do your tapasya, all the time observing yourself doing it and telling yourself, “Am I making any progress, is this going to be better, am I going to succeed?”, then it is your ego, you know, which becomes more and more enormous and occupies the whole place, and there is no room for anything else. And we said the other day that the spiritual ego is the worst of all, for it is altogether unconscious of its inferiority, it is convinced it is something very superior, if not absolutely divine!

There we are. . . .

What gives most the feeling of inferiority, of limitation, smallness, impotence, is always this turning back upon oneself, this shutting oneself up in the bounds of a microscopic ego. One must widen oneself, open the doors. And the best way is to be able to concentrate upon what one is doing instead of concentrating upon oneself. (M4: 362-64)

Training of the Instruments

You have said: “Sensations are an excellent instrument for knowledge and education.” How?

How? But it is through sensations that you learn: by seeing, observing, hearing. Classes develop your sensations, studies develop your sensations, the mind receives things through sensations. By the education of the senses the growth of one's general education is aided; if you learn to see well, exactly, precisely; if you learn to hear well; if you learn through touch to know the nature of things; if you learn through the sense of smell to distinguish between different odours — all these are a powerful means of education. In fact, they should be used for this, as instruments of observation, control and knowledge. If one is sufficiently developed, one can know the nature of things through sight; through the sense of smell one may also know the value, the different nature of things; by touch one can recognise things. It is a question of education; that is, one must work for it.

For example, there is a considerable difference between the vision of ordinary people and that of artists. Their way of seeing things is much more conscious and complete than that of ordinary people. When one has not trained one's vision, one sees vaguely, imprecisely, and has impressions rather than an exact vision. An artist, when he sees something and has learnt to use his eyes — for instance, when he sees a figure, instead of seeing just a form, like that, you know, a form, the general effect of a form, of which he can vaguely say that this person resembles or doesn't much resemble what he sees — sees the exact structure of the figure, the proportions of the different parts, whether the figure is harmonious or not, and why; and also of what kind or type or form it is; all sorts of things at one glance, you understand, in a single vision, as one sees the relations between different forms. (M6: 82-83)

With colours it is the same thing. The education in colours is tremendous — in both detail and complexity. If you learn how to distinguish all the colours, to know to what family of colours each belongs, what kind of harmony it can bring about — you can know, it is the same thing. You can keep the memory of the colour as you keep the memory of the form. You want to match all your things . . . for example, you want to match two things: you want to match a cloak with a skirt or a . . . well, anything at all . . . or maybe one kind of cloth with another. Usually you are obliged to take one and then go and compare it with the others; and finally, after many trials, if you are not too clumsy, you finish by finding it. But if you have the training in colour, you look at the colour once and go straight to what matches with it, without any hesitation, because you remember exactly the nature of this colour and go to a colour that can harmonise with it. (M6: 85)

You see, it is exactly the same thing as the woodland or virgin forest and the cultivated garden. Obviously, the woodland or virgin forest can have its beauty but in any case it is a chaos: it is the beauty of chaos. On the other hand, say you have a cultivated garden: you can in a given space have all kinds of flowers, for example, and produce the maximum number of things. Well, a human body is like that. If it grows up like that, as it wants, it is a woodland or a virgin forest, a jungle. But if you take it very young and take great care of it, well, it can become a very beautiful garden; and yet the elements are the same. You are not asked to change the nature of the ground, you are told to cultivate it, instead of letting it go its own way in disorder.

Some people, of course, will tell you, "Oh, the woodland is beautiful, it is more beautiful than a garden!" It depends on how one sees things; but then we shall not speak about education any longer, it is not worthwhile. We shall no longer speak of self-mastery, it is not worthwhile. We won't speak of discipline any more, we won't speak of yoga any more, we shall leave Nature to go her own way as she wants. It amuses her but doesn't amuse certain people. So these prefer to do otherwise. Those who are amused by it can continue if they like, but those who are not must have the power to do otherwise. There are some who find that everything is all right. They feel this until something fairly unpleasant happens to them; then, at that time the little ego says, "Oh, yes! It is no longer as good as I thought." Yet for a time some people say, "Why! But I have no fault to find with the world. It is quite charming." Let them enjoy their world. But otherwise, if we want to make something of it, well, we must cultivate our garden. (M6: 90-91)

The World Can Become the Supreme Beauty

If the world was not essentially the opposite of what it has become, there would be no hope. For the hole is so black and so deep, and the inconscience so complete, that if this were not the sign of the total consciousness, well, there would be nothing more to do but pack up one's kit and go away. Men like Shankara, who did not see much further than the end of their nose, said that the world was not worth the trouble of living in, for it was impossible, that it was better to treat it as an illusion and go away, there was nothing to be done with it. I tell you, on the contrary, that it is because the world is very bad, very dark, very ugly, very unconscious, full of misery and suffering, that it can become the supreme Beauty, the supreme Light, the supreme Consciousness and supreme Felicity. (M4: 119)

BEAUTY IN THE PHYSICAL AND OTHER PLANES

Expressing Physical Beauty is a Spiritual Problem

This is a thing very little known among mystics and religious people: in each part of the being the Divine manifests Himself differently. In the higher parts He manifests as Power, Love, etc., but in the physical He manifests as Harmony and Beauty.

Hence, the problem of the expression of physical beauty is a spiritual problem. (M4: 56-57)

On the physical plane the Divine expresses himself through beauty, on the mental plane through knowledge, on the vital plane through power and on the psychic plane through love.

When we rise high enough, we discover that these four aspects unite with each other in a single consciousness, full of love, luminous, powerful, beautiful, containing all, pervading all.

It is only to satisfy the universal play that this consciousness divides itself into several lines or aspects of manifestation. (M15: 6)

The Beauty of a Crow's Wings

It is not only that the sable blackness of the crow's wings has in it wonderful shades of green and violet and purple which show themselves under certain stresses of sunlight, but that the black itself, sable of wing or dingy of back & breast has itself a beauty which our prejudiced habits of mind obscure to us. Under its darkness, we see, too, a glint of dingy white. (C12: 410)

Flowers and Beauty

Is there a sense of beauty in flowers?

As soon as there is organic life, the vital element comes in, and it is this vital element which gives to flowers the sense of beauty. It is not perhaps individualised in the sense we understand it, but it is a sense of the species and the species always tries to

realise it. I have noticed a first rudiment of the psychic presence and vibration in vegetable life, and truly this blossoming one calls a flower is the first manifestation of the psychic presence. The psychic is individualised only in man, but it was there before him; but it is not the same kind of individualisation as in man, it is more fluid: it manifests as force, as consciousness rather than as individuality. Take the rose, for example; its great perfection of form, colour, scent expresses an aspiration and a psychic giving. Look at a rose opening in the morning at the first touch of the sun, it is a magnificent self-giving in aspiration. (M4: 166-67)

A Tree Growing

Have you ever seen a tree growing, a palm tree? There is one in the Ashram courtyard, in the Samadhi courtyard, quite close to the door by which you come up every day, have you never seen how it grows? This tree, you know, is some forty, forty-five or fifty years old perhaps. You see how small it is. These trees can become even much taller than the building. They can live several hundred years, easily, in their natural state, if there is no accident. Have you never seen what it does? I see it from above. It is quite pretty. It happens once a year. At first, you see a kind of small brown ball. Then this small brown ball begins to grow and becomes slightly lighter in colour, less deep. Little by little, you see that it is made of a mass of somewhat complex small lines, with their tips bent inward, as though turned back upon themselves; and that begins to grow, it comes out, becomes more and more limpid, until it begins to turn green, a little pale yellowish green and it takes the form of the bishop's cross. Then you see it multiplying and separating; it is yet a little brown, a little queer, something like a caterpillar. And suddenly, it is as though it sprang out, it leaps forth. It is pale green; it is frail. It has a delightful colour. It lengthens out. This lasts for a day or two; and then on the following day there are leaves. These leaves I have never counted, I do not know how many they are. Every time there is a new range of leaves. They remain very pale; they are exquisite. They are like a little child, with that something tender, pretty and graceful a child has. And you have still the feeling that it is fragile; and indeed, if it receives a blow, it is spoilt for life. It is very frail, but it is delightfully tender. It has its charm and you say: "But why does not Nature remain like that?" The following morning . . . pluff! they are separated, they are bright green, they look wonderful with all the strength and force of youth, a magnificent brilliant green. It should stop there — not at all. It continues. Then comes the dust, the deterioration from people who pass by. So it begins to fall, to become yellowish, another kind of yellow, the yellow of dryness until it is completely withered and falls away. It is replaced by the trunk. Every year the trunk increases a little. And it will take several hundred years to reach the end. But every year, it repeats the same thing, passes through all the stages of beauty, charm, attractiveness

and you say: "But why does it not stop there?" And the next minute, it is something else. You cannot say it is better, but it is different. And so it passes from one thing to another through all the stages of flowering. Then the accidents begin; with the accidents comes deterioration, and with deterioration there is death. (M5: 112-13)

Look at the Stars

... And so it is with every form of beauty that is not originally imperfect; to detract or add would be alike fatal; for alteration means abolition. Each syllable is a key-stone and being removed, the whole imposing structure crumbles in a moment to the ground.

Can we better describe this perfect blending of parts than by the word proportion? or is its entire effect anything but harmony? . . .

And this harmony runs through the warp and woof of Nature. Look at the stars, the brain of heaven, as Meredith calls them. How they march tossing on high their golden censers to perfume night with the frankincense of beauty! They are a host of wingèd insects crawling on the blue papyrus of heaven, a swarm of golden gnats, a cloud of burning dust, a wonderful effect of sparkling atoms caught and perpetuated by the instantaneous pencil of Nature. And yet they are none of all these, but a vast and interdependent economy of worlds. Those burning globes as they roll in silent orbits through the infinite inane, are separated by an eternity of space. They are individual and alone, but from each to each thrill influences unfathomed and unconscious, marvellous magnetisms, curious repulsions that check like adverse gales or propel like wind in bellying canvas, and bind these solitary splendours into one supernal harmony of worlds. The solar harmony we know. How gloriously perfect it is, how united in isolation, how individual in unity! How star answers to star and the seven wandering dynasts of destiny as they roll millions of leagues apart, drag with them the invisible magnetic cord which binds them for ever to the sun. We believe that those lights we call fixed are each a sun with a rhythmic harmony of planets dancing in immeasurable gyrations around one immovable, immortal star. More, is it extravagant to guess that what to us is fixed, is a planet to God? Perhaps to the inhabitants of the moon this tumbling earth of ours is a fixed and constant light, and perhaps the glorious ball of fire we worship as the Lord of Light, is the satrap of some majesty more luminous and more large. Thus we may conceive of the universe as a series of subordinate harmonies, each perfect in itself and helping to consummate the harmony which is one and universal.

Well may the poet give the stars that majestic synonym

The army of unalterable law.

But the law that governs the perishable flower, the ephemeral moth, is not more changeful than the law that disciplines the movements of the eternal fires. The rose burns in her season; the moth lives in his hour: not even the wind bloweth where it listeth unless it preserve the boundaries prescribed by Nature. Each is a separate syllable in the grand poem of the universe: and it is all so inalterable because it is so perfect. Yes, Tennyson was right, tho' like most poets, he knew not what he said, when he wrote those lines on the flower in the crannies: if we know what the flower is, we know also what God is and what man. (C1: 28-29)

A Supreme Beauty Acting on the Cells of the Body

If you compare the human body as it now is with a higher ideal of beauty, obviously very few would pass the examination. In almost everyone there is a sort of unbalance in the proportions; we are so accustomed to it that we do not notice it, but if we look from the standpoint of the higher beauty, it becomes visible; very few bodies would bear comparison with perfect beauty. There are a thousand reasons for this unbalance but only one remedy, to instil into the being this instinct, this sense of true beauty, a supreme beauty which will gradually act on the cells and make the body capable of expressing beauty. This is still a thing which is not known: the body is infinitely more plastic than you believe. You must have surely noticed (perhaps very vaguely) that those who live in an inner peace, in an inner beauty, a light, and perfect goodwill, have an expression which is not quite the same as of people who live in bad thoughts, in the lower part of their nature. When the human being is at his best, above his base animality, he reflects something which is not there when he lives in a state of bestiality.

If one tried to change one's form out of egoism or that famous thing, vanity, naturally, one would not succeed, for it is something deeper which has the power to act; but if one could refrain from having at all times bad will, wicked thoughts, one would see a kind of harmony beginning to express itself gradually in the forms and features, for it is a fact that the body expresses the inner states. (M4: 54-55)

Beauty Outside the Physical Form

Can beauty exist outside any form?

There is a beauty of feelings; unless you think that feelings also have a form. What you mean is: "Is there a beauty outside any physical form?"

Yes.

Ah! Yes, there is a beauty of thought, a beauty of feeling. This is something we

perceive very often; when someone has done a very noble deed, very generous, very unselfish, quite spontaneously we say, "It is beautiful!" And it's true, it gives the sense of beauty.

Beauty is not something purely physical. However, we have said that the best expression of the Divine in the physical world is beauty; but it is not exclusive, it does not mean that it is only in the physical world. (M7: 180-81)

Beauty of Action

I shall not speak here of material generosity which naturally consists in giving others what one has. But even this virtue is not very widespread, for as soon as one becomes rich one thinks more often of keeping one's wealth than of giving it away. The more men possess, the less are they generous.

I want to speak of moral generosity. To feel happy, for example, when a comrade is successful. An act of courage, of unselfishness, a fine sacrifice have a beauty in them which gives you joy. It may be said that moral generosity consists in being able to recognise the true worth and superiority of others. (M4: 30)

Unselfish Movement — a Beautiful Form of the Psychic Consciousness

The unselfish movement, uncalculating, is one of the most beautiful forms of psychic consciousness in the world. But the higher one rises in the scale of mental activity, the rarer it becomes. For with intelligence come all the skill and cleverness, and corruption, calculation. For instance, when a rose blossoms it does so spontaneously, for the joy of being beautiful, smelling sweet, expressing all its joy of living, and it does not calculate, it has nothing to gain out of it: it does so spontaneously, in the joy of being and living. Take a human being, well, apart from a very few exceptions, the moment his mind is active he tries to get some advantage out of his beauty and cleverness; he wants it to bring him something, either men's admiration or even much more sordid gains yet. Consequently, from the psychic point of view, the rose is better than human beings.

Only, if you climb a rung higher and consciously do what the rose does unconsciously, then it is much more beautiful. But it must be the same thing: a spontaneous flowering of beauty, uncalculating, simply for the joy of being. Little children have this at times (at times, not always). Unfortunately, under the influence of their parents and the environment, they learn to be calculating when yet very young.

But this kind of wish to gain by what one has or does is truly one of the ugliest things in the world. And it is one of the most widespread and it has become so widespread, that it is almost spontaneous in man. Nothing can turn its back on the

divine love more totally than that, that wish to calculate and profit. (M5: 240-41)

The Psychic Element in Man

In a human being, there is the divine Presence and the psychic being . . . this psychic element which in man, even in the most debased, makes him respect what is beautiful and pure; even the basest man, in spite of himself, against his own will, respects what is pure, noble and beautiful.

. . . the power to make light spring forth in the place of darkness, beauty in the place of ugliness, goodness instead of evil, that power man possesses, the Asura does not. Therefore it is man who will do that work, it is he who will change, it is he who will transform his earth and it is he who will compel the Asura to flee into other worlds or to dissolve. After that, all will be quiet. (M5: 98-99)

Beauty and the Psychic

What is the most effective means of awakening the psychic being?

But it is wide awake! And not only is it awake, but it acts, only you are not aware of it. It appears to you asleep because you don't perceive it!

Fundamentally, without this kind of inner will of the psychic being, I believe human beings would be quite dismal, dull, they would have an altogether animal life. Every gleam of aspiration is always the expression of a psychic influence. Without the presence of the psychic, without the psychic influence, there would never be any sense of progress or any will for progress.

Would there be a sense of beauty?

Yes. Perhaps not the highest sense of beauty, but in the vital one finds a complete sense of beauty and harmony. The beauty which is fundamental, profound, universal, constant belongs only to the psychic, but the sense of the beauty of form, of appearance, of colour, the educated, refined vital fully possesses. (M4: 165-66)

The Psychic — a Centre of Light and Truth and Knowledge and Beauty and Harmony

The psychic world or plane of consciousness is that part of the world, the psychic being is that part of the being which is directly under the influence of the Divine

Consciousness; the hostile forces cannot have even the remotest action upon it. It is a world of harmony, and everything moves in it from light to light and from progress to progress. It is the seat of the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Self in the individual being. It is a centre of light and truth and knowledge and beauty and harmony which the Divine Self in each of you creates by his presence, little by little; it is influenced, formed and moved by the Divine Consciousness of which it is a part and parcel. It is in each of you the deep inner being which you have to find in order that you may come in contact with the Divine in you. It is the intermediary between the Divine Consciousness and your external consciousness; it is the builder of the inner life, it is that which manifests in the outer nature the order and rule of the Divine Will. If you become aware in your outer consciousness of the psychic being within you and unite with it, you can find the pure Eternal Consciousness and live in it; . . .

For your psychic being is that part of you which is already given to the Divine. It is its influence gradually spreading from within towards the most outward and material boundaries of your consciousness that will bring about the transformation of your entire nature. There can be no obscurity here; it is the luminous part in you. Most people are unconscious of this psychic part within them; the effort of Yoga is to make you conscious of it, so that the process of your transformation, instead of a slow labour extending through centuries, can be pressed into one life or even a few years.

The psychic being is that which persists after death, because it is your eternal self; it is this that carries the consciousness forward from life to life.

The psychic being is the real individuality of the true and divine individual within you. (M3: 62-63)

A True and Beautiful Thing — Pure Love

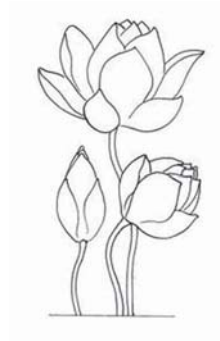
The Divine love of which I speak is a Love that manifests here upon this physical earth, in matter, but it must be pure of its human distortions, if it is to incarnate. The vital is an indispensable agent in this as in all manifestation. But as has happened always, the adverse powers have put their hold on this most precious thing. It is the energy of the vital that enters into dull and insensitive matter and makes it responsive and alive. But the adverse forces have distorted it; they have turned it into a field of violence and selfishness and desire and every kind of ugliness and prevented it from taking part in the divine work. The one thing to be done is to change it, not to suppress its movement or destroy it. For without it no intensity is possible anywhere. The vital is in its very nature that in us which can give itself away. Just because it is that which has always the impulse and the strength to take, it is also that which is capable of giving itself to the utmost; because it knows how to possess, it knows

also how to abandon itself without reserve. The true vital movement is the most beautiful and magnificent of movements; but it has been twisted and turned into the most ugly, the most distorted, the most repulsive. Wherever into a human story of love, there has entered even an atom of pure love and it has been allowed to manifest without too much distortion, we find a true and beautiful thing. And if the movement does not last, it is because it is not conscious of its own aim and seeking; it has not the knowledge that it is not the union of one being with another that it is seeking after but the union of all beings with the Divine.

Love is a supreme force which the Eternal Consciousness sent down from itself into an obscure and darkened world that it might bring back that world and its beings to the Divine. The material world in its darkness and ignorance had forgotten the Divine. Love came into the darkness; it awakened all that lay there asleep; it whispered, opening the ears that were sealed, "There is something that is worth waking to, worth living for, and it is love!" And with the awakening to love there entered into the world the possibility of coming back to the Divine. The creation moves upward through love towards the Divine and in answer there leans downward to meet the creation the Divine Love and Grace. Love cannot exist in its pure beauty, love cannot put on its native power and intense joy of fullness until there is this interchange, this fusion between the earth and the Supreme, this movement of Love from the Divine to the creation and from the creation to the Divine. This world was a world of dead matter, till Divine love descended into it and awakened it to life. Ever since it has gone in search of this divine source of life, but it has taken in its search every kind of wrong turn and mistaken way, it has wandered hither and thither in the dark. The mass of this creation has moved on its road like the blind seeking for the unknown, seeking but ignorant of what it sought. The maximum it has reached is what seems to human beings love in its highest form, its purest and most disinterested kind, like the love of the mother for the child. This human movement of love is secretly seeking for something else than what it has yet found; but it does not know where to find it, it does not even know what it is. The moment man's consciousness awakens to the Divine love, pure, independent of all manifestation in human forms, he knows for what his heart has all the time been truly longing. That is the beginning of the Soul's aspiration, that brings the awakening of the consciousness and its yearning for union with the Divine. All the forms that are of the ignorance, all the deformations it has imposed must from that moment fade and disappear and give place to one single movement of the creation answering to the Divine love by its love for the Divine. Once the creation is conscious, awakened, opened to love for the Divine, the Divine love pours itself without limit back into the creation. The circle of the movement turns back upon itself and the ends meet; there is the joining of the extremes, supreme Spirit and manifesting Matter, and their divine union becomes constant and complete.

Great beings have taken birth in this world who came to bring down here

something of the sovereign purity and power of Divine love. The Divine love has thrown itself into a personal form in them that its realisation upon earth may be at once more easy and more perfect. Divine love, when manifested in a personal being, is easier to realise; it is more difficult when it is unmanifested or impersonal in its movement. A human being, awakened by this personal touch, with this personal intensity, to the consciousness of the Divine love, will find his work and change made more easy; the union for which he seeks becomes more natural and close. And the union, the realisation will become for him, too, more full, more perfect; for the wide uniformity of a universal and impersonal Love will be lit up and vivified with the colour and beauty of all possible relations with the Divine. (M3: 73-75)



FROM THE MOTHER'S *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

As soon as all effort disappears from a manifestation, it becomes very simple, with the simplicity of a flower opening, manifesting its beauty and spreading its fragrance without clamour or vehement gesture. And in this simplicity lies the greatest power, the power which is least mixed and least gives rise to harmful reactions. The power of the vital should be mistrusted, it is a tempter on the path of the work, and there is always a risk of falling into its trap, for it gives you the taste of immediate results; and, in our first eagerness to do the work well, we let ourselves be carried away to make use of this power. But very soon it deflects all our action from the right course and introduces a seed of illusion and death into what we do.

Simplicity, simplicity! How sweet is the purity of Thy Presence! . . . (M1: 17)

*

Thy voice is so modest, so impartial, so sublime in its patience and mercy that it does not make itself heard with any authority, any force of will but comes like a cool breeze, sweet and pure, like a crystalline murmur that brings a note of harmony to a discordant concert. Yet, for him who knows how to listen to the note, to breathe that breeze, it holds such treasures of beauty, such a fragrance of pure serenity and noble grandeur, that all foolish illusions vanish or are transformed into a joyful acceptance of the marvellous truth that has been glimpsed. (M1: 23)

*

O Lord, inconceivable Splendour, may Thy Beauty spread through all the earth, may Thy Love be kindled in every heart and Thy Peace reign over all.

A deep and solemn chant, smiling and subtle, rises from my heart, and I do not know whether this chant goes from me to Thee or comes from Thee to me or whether Thou and I and the entire universe are this marvellous chant of which I have just become conscious. . . . Surely there is no longer any Thou or I or any separate universe; only an immense harmony is there, sublime and infinite, which is all things and of which all things will one day grow aware. It is the harmony of boundless Love, Love victorious over all suffering and all obscurity.

By this law of Love, Thy law, I want to live more and more integrally; to it unreservedly I give myself.

And all my being exults in an inexpressible Peace. (M1: 25)

*

Give them all, O Lord, Thy peace and light, open their blinded eyes and their darkened understanding; calm their futile worries and their vain anxieties. Turn their gaze away from themselves and give them the joy of being consecrated to Thy work without calculation or mental reservation. Let Thy beauty flower in all things, awaken Thy love in all hearts, so that Thy eternally progressive order may be realised upon earth and Thy harmony be spread until the day all becomes Thyself in perfect purity and peace.

Oh! let all tears be wiped away, all suffering relieved, all anguish dispelled, and let calm serenity dwell in every heart and powerful certitude strengthen every mind. Let Thy life flow through all like a regenerating stream that all may turn to Thee and draw from that contemplation the energy for all victories. (M1: 49)

*

Every moment all the unforeseen, the unexpected, the unknown is before us, every moment the universe is created anew in its entirety and in every one of its parts. And if we had a truly living faith, if we had the absolute certitude of Thy omnipotence and Thy sole reality, Thy manifestation could at each moment become so evident that the whole universe would be transformed by it. But we are so enslaved to everything that is around us and has gone before us, we are so influenced by the whole totality of manifested things, and our faith is so weak that we are yet unable to serve as intermediaries for the great miracle of transfiguration. . . . But, Lord, I know that it will come one day. I know that a day will come when Thou wilt transform all those who come to us; Thou wilt transform them so radically that, liberated completely from the bonds of the past, they will begin to live in Thee an entirely new life, a life made solely of Thee, with Thee as its sovereign Lord. And in this way all anxieties will be transformed into serenity, all anguish into peace, all doubts into certainties, all ugliness into harmony, all egoism into self-giving, all darkness into light and all suffering into immutable happiness.

But art Thou not already performing this beautiful miracle? I see it flowering everywhere around us!

O divine law of beauty and love, supreme liberator, there is no obstacle to Thy power. Only our own blindness deprives us of the comforting sight of Thy constant victory.

My heart sings a hymn of gladness and my thought is illumined with joy.

Thy transcendent and marvellous love is the sovereign Master of the world. (M1: 54-55)

*

. . . O Presence of ineffable beauty, thought of supreme redemption, sovereign power of salvation, with what joy all my being feels Thee living within it, sole principle of its life and of all life, wonderful builder of all thought, all will, all consciousness. On this world of illusion, this sombre nightmare, Thou hast bestowed Thy divine reality, and each atom of matter contains something of Thy Absolute.

Thou art, Thou livest, Thou radiatest, Thou reignest. (M1: 57)

*

. . . O Lord, I implore Thee! Grant that I may be perfectly conscious and master of all that constitutes this personality, so that I may be delivered from myself and Thou alone mayst live and act through these multiple elements.

To live in Love, by Love, for Love, indissolubly united to Thy highest manifestation. . . .

Always more light, more beauty, more truth! (M1: 86)

*

. . . O Lord, grant that all this beauty of affection and tenderness may be transformed into glorious knowledge.

Grant that the best may emerge from everything and Thy happy Peace reign over the earth. (M1: 90)

*

. . . Thou art the wonderful magician, he who transfigures all things, from ugliness brings forth beauty, from darkness light, from the mud clear water, from ignorance knowledge and from egoism goodness.

In Thee, by Thee, for Thee we live and Thy law is the supreme master of our life.

May Thy will be done in every place, may Thy peace reign upon all the earth.

(M1: 103)

*

. . . Some people, those who are called pessimists, perceive almost exclusively the dark side of everything. The optimists, on the other hand, see only the side of beauty and harmony. And if it is foolish and ignorant to be an unwitting optimist, is it not making a happy conquest to become a willing optimist? . . .

Since everything is necessarily mixed in the present manifestation, the wisest thing is to do one's best, striving towards an ever higher light and to resign oneself to the fact that absolute perfection is for the moment unrealisable.

And yet how ardently must we always aspire for that inaccessible perfection! . . .
(M1: 107-08)

*

O sovereign Force, O victorious Power, Purity, Beauty, supreme Love, grant that this being in its integrality, this body in all its totality may draw near to Thee solemnly and offer to Thee in a complete and humble surrender this means of manifestation abandoned perfectly to Thy Will, if not perfectly ready for this realisation. . . .

With the calm and strong certitude that Thou wilt one day accomplish the expected miracle and manifest in its fullness Thy sublime splendour, we turn to Thee in a profound rapture, and silently implore Thee. . . .

Immensity, Infinitude, Wonder. . . . Thou alone art and Thou shinest resplendent in all things. The hour of Thy fulfilment is near. All Nature is ingathered in a solemn concentration.

Thou answerest her ardent call. (M1: 192)

*

O Lord, Thou art the omnipotent Master of Thy own manifestation; grant to these instruments that they may escape from frames too narrow, from limits too fixed and mediocre. All the riches of human possibility are needed to translate even one atom of Thy infinite Force. . . . Open the doors that are closed, make the sealed fountains spring forth, that the floods of Thy eloquence and Thy beauty may overspread the world. Let there be amplitude and majesty, nobility and grace, charm and grandeur, variety and strength: for it is the will of the Lord to manifest.

O my sweet Master, Thou art the sovereign Ruler of our destinies; Thou art the omnipotent Master of Thy own manifestation.

Thine is all this world, Thine all these creatures and all these atoms. Transfigure them, illumine. (M1: 206)

*

At the rising of the sun I sang the praise of this world in which it is possible not only to desire Thee but to know Thee and even to become Thee. And I was astonished that there should be some who so ardently aspire to leave this universe and enter another world of perfection.

Thou hast placed such contentment in my heart that it has become impossible for me not to feel satisfied in all circumstances, inner or outer. And yet something in my being always aspires for more beauty, for more light, for more knowledge, for more love — in a word, for a more conscious, a more constant relation with Thee. . . .

But this too depends upon Thy will, and when it is Thy will, Thou shalt grant me the entire transfiguration. (M1: 210)

*

. . . O Lord, we know that it is an hour of great gravity for the earth: those who can be Thy intermediaries to it to make a greater harmony arise from the conflict and from its dark ugliness a diviner beauty, must be ready for the work. O Lord, O eternal Master, we entreat Thee, answer our endeavour, enlighten it, show us the way, give us the strength to break down all inner resistance and overcome every obstacle. (M1: 218)

*

O Lord, Lord, the whole earth is in an upheaval; it groans and suffers, it is in agony . . . all this suffering that has descended upon it must not be in vain; grant that all this bloodshed may produce a swifter germination of the seeds of beauty and light and love which must blossom and cover the earth with their rich harvest. Out of the depths of this abyss of darkness the whole being of the earth cries to Thee that Thou mayst give it air and light; it is stifling, wilt Thou not come to its aid?

O Lord, what must we do to triumph?

Hear us, for we must conquer at any price. Break down every resistance: appear!
(M1: 228)

*

Thy love is like a rising tide, invading the entire being and breaking upon all things. Lord, Thy love will penetrate all hearts and kindle in them the divine flame which never goes out, the divine beauty which does not fade, and, above every contrast and contradiction, it will establish in all that unchanging Bliss which is the supreme good. (M1: 244)

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. . . Truth is eternally beyond all that we can think or say of it. To endeavour to find the most suitable expression, the one best adapted to this truth, is of course a useful task, even an indispensable one for the integrality of one's own development and that of all humanity; but one must always feel free in front of this expression, have one's centre of consciousness above it, in the reality which, despite the grandeur, the beauty, the perfection of a mental formula, always eludes every formula.

(M1: 281)

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. . . A superhuman beauty has appeared upon earth.

Something more marvellous than the most marvellous bliss has brought a foretaste of its Presence. (M1: 310)

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. . . Gradually the vital being grew accustomed to find harmony in the intensest action as it had in passive surrender. And once this harmony was sufficiently established, there was light again in all the parts of the being, and the consciousness of what had happened became complete.

Now in the heart of action the vital being has discovered the perception of Infinity and Eternity. It can perceive Thy Supreme Beauty and live it in all sensations and all forms. Even in its every sensation, extended, active, fully developed to feel contrary sensations at the same time, always it perceives Thee.

It is not unaware, however, that this is only one stage, and it bows before Thee in a profound adoration and tells Thee: "Lord, Thou hast taken up Thy instrument again and willed to use it for action. The instrument knows its imperfection and impurity and implores Thy mercy to perfect and purify it, so that, day by day, through a progressive disappearance of all its preferences and limitations, it may be able to manifest Thee more integrally." (M1: 317-18)

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"May all who are unhappy become happy, may the wicked become good, may the sick become healthy!" Thus was formulated the aspiration within me concerning the manifestation of Thy divine Love through this instrument. It was like a request, a request a child makes to its father with the certitude that it will be granted. For the certitude was in me when I asked: it seemed to me so simple and easy; I felt so clearly in myself how it was possible. To grow from joy to joy, from beauty to beauty, is this not more natural and also more fruitful than always to suffer and toil in an ignorant struggle unwillingly undergone? If Thou allowest the heart to blossom freely at the touch of Thy divine Love, this transformation is easy and comes of itself.

Wilt Thou not grant this, O Lord, as a pledge of Thy mercy?

It is with the confidence of a child that my heart implores Thee this evening.

(M1: 349)

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Thou didst fill my being with so complete, so intense a love and beauty and joy that it seemed impossible to me that this would not be communicated. It was like a

glowing hearth whence the breath of thought wafted far many sparks which, entering the secrecy of men's hearts, kindled other similar fires, fires of Thy divine Love, O Lord, that Love which impels and draws all human beings irresistibly to Thee. O my sweet Lord, grant that this may not be only a vision of my enrapt consciousness, but indeed a reality, effectively transforming all beings and things.

Grant that this love, this beauty and joy which flood all my being that is hardly strong enough to bear their intensity, may also flood the consciousness of all those I have seen, all those I have thought of and all those also whom I have never thought of or seen . . . Grant that all may awake to the consciousness of Thy infinite Bliss!

O my sweet Lord, fill their hearts with joy, love and beauty. (M1: 351)

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In the world of forms a violation of Beauty is as great a fault as a violation of Truth in the world of ideas. For Beauty is the worship Nature offers to the supreme Master of the universe; Beauty is the divine language in forms. And a consciousness of the Divine which is not translated externally by an understanding and expression of Beauty would be an incomplete consciousness.

But true Beauty is as difficult to discover, to understand and above all to live as any other expression of the Divine; this discovery and expression exacts as much impersonality and renunciation of egoism as that of Truth or Bliss. Pure Beauty is universal and one must be universal to see and recognise it.

O Lord of Beauty, how many faults I have committed against Thee, how many do I still commit. . . . Give me the perfect understanding of Thy Law so that I may not again fail to keep it. Love would be incomplete without Thee, Thou art one of its most perfect ornaments, Thou art one of its most harmonious smiles. At times I have misunderstood Thy role, but in the depths of my heart I have always loved Thee; and the most arbitrary and radical doctrines could not extinguish the fire of worship which, from my childhood, I had vowed to Thee.

Thou art not at all what a vain people think Thee to be, Thou art not at all attached exclusively to this or that form of life: it is possible to awaken Thee and make Thee shine in every form; but for that one must have discovered Thy secret. . . .

O Lord of Beauty, give me the perfect understanding of Thy Law, so that I may no longer fail to keep it, so that Thou mayst become in me the harmonious consummation of the Lord of Love. (M1: 353-54)

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Each time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the Earth, the air is embalmed with a sweet perfume, all

becomes more friendly.

How great is Thy power, O Lord of all existences, that an atom of Thy joy is sufficient to efface so much darkness, so many sorrows and a single ray of Thy glory can light up thus the dulllest pebble, illumine the blackest consciousness!

Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and un hoped for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath.

At these blessed hours all earth sings a hymn of gladness, the grasses shudder with pleasure, the air is vibrant with light, the trees lift towards heaven their most ardent prayer, the chant of the birds becomes a canticle, the waves of the sea billow with love, the smile of children tells of the infinite and the souls of men appear in their eyes.

Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial powers can equal this wonderful gift!

O Lord, never have I implored Thee in vain, for that which speaks to Thee is Thyself in me.

Drop by drop Thou allowest to fall in a fertilising rain the living and redeeming flame of Thy almighty love. When these drops of eternal light descend softly on our world of obscure ignorance, one would say a rain upon earth of golden stars one by one from a sombre firmament.

All kneels in mute devotion before this ever-renewed miracle. (M1: 361-62)



*NOTES ON SOME PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS
BY THE MOTHER*

P. 124 BLANK

Sri Aurobindo

(Pencil. 1935. Pondicherry)

Self-portrait

(Pencil. 1935. Pondicherry)

The Divine Consciousness Emerging from the Inconscient

The title was given by the Mother.

There is an interesting story behind this painting.

During the early 1920s Sri Aurobindo's brother, Barin, was doing some oil painting under the Mother's guidance. As is the common practice of artists, a small board was kept for depositing the surplus paint left on the palette after each session. A random mixture of colours covered most of the surface of this board. One day when Barin had finished his work the Mother asked for the palette and, with the remaining paint, gave a few deft brush strokes to the centre of the board covered with old palette-scrapings. Thus the painting was completed.

Evidently, something had struck the Mother in the swirl of colours on the board. The suggestion of a face may have been already visible in the midst of it. In the finished painting, a face resembling Sri Aurobindo's emerges from the chaos of colours which appropriately represents "the Inconscient", according to the Mother's title. The Mother herself confirmed that the face is Sri Aurobindo's. It is likely, as is reported in one version of the story, that Sri Aurobindo was present at the time of this incident and she took the opportunity to paint a quick portrait of him. The Mother liked the painting enough to have it printed along with the title she gave it.

Mural in the Church at Pau

This mural in the church at Pau, a town in the south of France, is signed "H Morisset". The lower part of the painting was done by the Mother. The painting depicts a battle between Christians and Moors. Saint James of Compostela, patron saint of the church, appears on a white horse. 1898. France.

The Mother has narrated:

I remember a good-hearted priest in Pau who had a church — a very small cathedral — and he wanted to have it decorated (he was an artist). He asked a local anarchist to do it — this anarchist was a great artist — and the anarchist knew André's father and me. He told the priest, 'I recommend these people to do the paintings.' He was doing the mural decoration: there were panels, eight panels, I believe. He said, 'I recommend these people to do the paintings because they are true artists.' So I worked on one of the panels. It was a church of Saint James of Compostela about whom there was a legend in Spain: he had appeared in a battle between the Christians and the Moors and because he appeared, the Moors were vanquished. And he was magnificent! He appeared

in golden light on a white horse, almost like Kalki here. And there were all the slain Moors at the bottom. It was I who painted the slain and struggling Moors, because I couldn't climb up; one had to climb high on a ladder to paint, it was too difficult, so I did the things at the bottom. . . . Then, naturally, the priest received us and invited us to dinner, the anarchist and us. And he was so kind! Oh, he was really a good-hearted man! I was already a vegetarian and didn't drink. So he scolded me very gently, saying, 'But it is Our Lord who gives us all this, so why shouldn't you take it?' I found him charming. . . . And when he looked at the paintings, he tapped Morisset on the shoulder (Morisset was an unbeliever), and said, with the accent of Southern France, 'Say what you like, but you know Our Lord; otherwise you could never have painted like that!'

Portrait of a Loving Friend

This portrait of Mme Valentine is done on a small piece of ivory. The Mother presented it to one of her disciples, in whom she recognised a reincarnation of her friend. Mme Valentine was a close friend of the Mother's during her days in the art studio. 1897. France.

Roof of Daiunji Temple

The Mother visited the Daiunji temple in Sarashina, about 200 km northwest of Tokyo. 1918. Japan.

Nobuko Kobayashi

(Brush and Ink. c. 1917-18. Japan)

Mother's friend in Kyoto. Madame Kobayashi spoke to V. K. Gokak about the Mother. Here is an extract from an article he wrote:

And I asked Madame Kobayashi: tell us what you know of the Mother. And she said candidly: she came here to learn Japanese and to be one of us. But we had so much to learn from her and her charming and unpredictable ways.

She was a sweet friend. She was clever, very clever. An artist to her fingertips, she would not mind drawing a colour-sketch of mine, which I have treasured to this day.

Both of us were young. And both of us were peering to glimpse a lovelier landscape and gaze at a bluer sky. She revered a master from the ancient land of Buddha. And she felt sure that his was the gospel of the morrow, the Veda of the dawning day. Her eyes glistened with a new delight and wonder when she spoke to me of him.

But I was a Buddhist. . . .

But your Mother said that the land of the spirit was one. She meditated with me in her lovely attic. We sat together and explored our inner depths, each in her own way. She made me realise that we thought the same thoughts and beheld the same vision.

I loved her dearly. Have you seen those lovely wisteria flowers trailing down the

roof of the Kasuga shrine at Nara? We call them hooji. My friend loved those flowers. She was one with them. She called herself hoojiko, when she thought of having a Japanese name. My first name is Nobuko. Nobu means 'faith'.

My friend left Kyoto. . . .

Yes, I should love to come to India and go to Pondicherry. . . .

I think, now and again, of writing to my friend. I wish to send her a copy of my journal. Do you think she will read my letter? Will she reply? I do not know, for now she has become the Mother!

And when I see her again, I will put both my arms around her and cling to her, feeding my starved love of thirty-seven long years. Will the members of your Ashram be angry with me if I behave that way? For, she is now — the Mother!

Yes. She is the Mother to you, but always a dear, dear friend of mine. It was my great good fortune that, in this strange but explicable world, I should have met this jewel of my heart and this friend of my soul. The perfume of those two years, when we lived like twin roses on the same stalk, lingers like incense around the divine altar and sways serenely in the sanctuary of my mind.

Vasudha

(Charcoal. 1931. Pondicherry)

Pranab

(Pencil. 1949. Pondicherry)

Nolini

(Charcoal. 1931. Pondicherry)

Ascent to the Truth

(Brush and Ink)

Lion

(Brush and Ink. Pondicherry)

[All notes and information have been taken from the book *THE MOTHER Paintings and Drawings*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1992, and the essay 'Three Prose Poems' by V. K. Gokak in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* 1958, published from Calcutta.]