

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXIV

No. 5

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

THE LIFE HEAVENS (Poem)	...	349
THE KARMAYOGIN: A COMMENTARY ON THE ISHA UPANISHAD	...	352

The Mother

‘IN FRONT OF THIS CALM SUNRISE . . .’	...	359
A CONVERSATION OF 19 APRIL 1951	...	360
A VISION (3)	...	366

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“POINTERS” AND “QUEST” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	368
--	-----	-----

Pavitra

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	372
----------------------------------	-----	-----

Manoj Das

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI		
CHAPTER II: INTRODUCTION 2		
— CONCEPT OF THE AVATAR	...	380

Gautam Malakar

DETERMINATION AND WILL (A Compilation)	...	388
--	-----	-----

P. B. Saint Hilaire (Pavitra)

ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY		
CHAPTER TWELVE: SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICAL TURBULENCES	...	398
ADDENDUM 1: THE RIDDLE OF THIS WORLD	...	405
ADDENDUM 2: NEWS ITEM FROM A.F.P.	...	414
ADDENDUM 3: MAURICE SCHUMANN RECOLLECTS	...	415

Pramila Devi

THE LUMINOUS PAST	...	418
-------------------	-----	-----

Satya Dayanand

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MOTHER	...	423
---------------------------------	-----	-----

Prema Nandakumar

THE KRISHNA WORLD		
1. PREAMBLE	...	427

THE LIFE HEAVENS

A life of intensities wide, immune
 Floats behind the earth and her life-fret,
A magic of realms mastered by spell and rune,
 Grandiose, blissful, coloured, increate.

A music there wanders mortal ear
 Hears not, seizing, intimate, remote,
Wide-winged in soul-spaces, fire-clear,
 Heaping note on enrapturing new note.

Forms deathless there triumph, hues divine
 Thrill with nets of glory the moved air;
Each sense is an ecstasy, love the sign
 Of one outblaze of godhead that two share.

The peace of the senses, the senses' stir
 On one harp are joined mysteries; pain
Transmuted is ravishment's minister,
 A high note and a fiery refrain.

All things are a harmony faultless, pure;
 Grief is not nor stain-wound of desire;
The heart-beats are a cadence bright and sure
 Of Joy's quick steps, too invincible to tire.

A Will there, a Force, a magician Mind
 Moves, and builds at once its delight-norms,
The marvels it seeks for surprised, outlined,
 Hued, alive, a cosmos of fair forms,

Sounds, colours, joy-flamings. Life lies here
 Dreaming, bound to the heavens of its goal,
In the clasp of a Power that enthrals to sheer
 Bliss and beauty body and rapt soul.

My spirit sank drowned in the wonder surge:
 Screened, withdrawn was the greatness it had sought;
 Lost was the storm-stress and the warrior urge,
 Lost the titan winging of the thought.

It lay at ease in a sweetness of heaven-sense
 Delivered from grief, with no need left to aspire,
 Free, self-dispersed in voluptuous innocence,
 Lulled and borne into roseate cloud-fire.

But suddenly there soared a dateless cry,
 Deep as Night, imperishable as Time;
 It seemed Death's dire appeal to Eternity,
 Earth's outcry to the limitless Sublime.

"O high seeker of immortality,
 Is there not, ineffable, a bliss
 Too vast for these finite harmonies,
 Too divine for the moment's unsure kiss?

"Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
 Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
 An unwall'd mind dissolved in the Infinite,
 Force one with unimaginable rest?

"I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;
 My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,
 A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven; —
 My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.

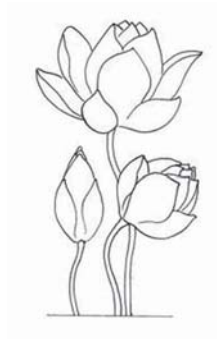
"By me the last finite, yearning, strives
 To reach the last infinity's unknown,
 The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives
 And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone."

Dissolving the kingdoms of happy ease
 Rocked and split and faded their dream-chime.
 All vanished; ungrasped eternities
 Sole survived and Timelessness seized Time.

Earth's heart was felt beating below me still,
 Veiled, immense, unthinkable above
My consciousness climbed like a topless hill,
 Crossed seas of Light to epiphanies of Love.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 549-51)



THE KARMA YOGIN

A Commentary on the Isha Upanishad

(Continued from the issue of April 2011)

Part II

Karmayoga; the Ideal

Chapter IV

X.

ORIGINAL consciousness, as distinct from Matter, is termed Spirit. Spirit must never be confused with the apparent manifestations of it, which are merely the action and reaction of Matter and Spirit on each other. The characteristics of true Spirit can be determined by distinguishing what is essential, characteristic and permanent in consciousness throughout all its stages from what is merely condition, form or function of consciousness affected by the medium in which it is working. There are three such characteristics which appear rudimentarily the moment consciousness itself appears and seem more and more pronounced as liberated Spirit develops to its highest self-expression. The first of the trio is the impulse of existence, the will to preserve self, to survive and be, not merely temporarily but unendingly. Showing itself at first physically in the instinct of self-preservation and the instinct of self-reproduction, it develops psychically in the desire to outlast death and become “immortal” by whatever way, by a book, a song, a picture, a statue, a discovery, an invention, an immortal act or remembered career no less than by psychical persistence of personality after the death of the body, and it culminates spiritually in the Will to surmount both death and life and persist eternally and transcendently. The second characteristic of consciousness is the capacity of knowledge or awareness, the Will to know. Showing itself at first physically in sensation and response to external objects, it develops psychically in personality with memory, its basis, and understanding, reason and intuition, its superstructure, and culminates spiritually in self-knowledge and the awareness of one’s own eternal and unabridged reality. The third characteristic of consciousness is the emotion of pleasure in existence, primarily in one’s own, sympathetically in all existence, the Will to enjoy. This is the most powerful and fundamental of emotions, — so powerful as to persistently outlast all the pain and struggle which the hampered existence of Spirit in Matter brings to the

personality. Showing itself physically at first in mere sense-pleasure and the clinging to life, it develops psychically in the emotions of love and joy, and culminates spiritually in the delight of our psychical personality in contact with or entering into the impersonal existence of our real and infinite Self. These three characteristics constitute the conception of Spirit, which by throwing its will-to-be, its power of awareness and its delight in existence into the medium of Matter sets evolution going. This is what Sankhya philosophy means when it says that Purusha imparts activity to Prakriti by its mere presence or propinquity without thereby becoming itself active. Spirit remains what it essentially is, pure existence, consciousness and delight; it is Prakriti that vibrating to the touch of this conscious delight in existence, begins to act, to move, change and evolve. The limitations of consciousness, the phenomena of consciousness are merely phenomenal results of the vibrations of Prakriti in Consciousness and not changes in Spirit itself. Purusha is the eternally immutable, immobile and singly real condition of Universal Evolution; Prakriti in action is its eternal motion, mutability, multiplicity.

Sankhya does not go beyond this conclusion which it finds sufficient for its purposes; it considers Purusha and Prakriti to be both ultimate eternal entities in the Supreme Reality and their propinquity a satisfactory explanation of the Universe. Vedic philosophy, going deeper, was driven both by philosophical reasoning and the ultimate experience of Yoga to the conception of the one Supreme Entity transcending the distinction between Spirit and Matter, Purusha and Prakriti, which are merely its noumenal self-expressions. Nor could Vedanta be satisfied with mere propinquity as a sufficient explanation of the manner in which immutability, stability and unity continually interpenetrate, surround and govern the infinite motion, mutability and multiplicity of Matter, still less of the manner in which Purusha identifies itself with the merely phenomenal changes of consciousness. But if Spirit informs, conditions and governs Matter, just as energy informs, conditions and governs substance, it would be possible for it to impress its own nature on the motions of Prakriti at every point of its evolutions without itself moving and acting. And if Spirit and Matter are not entirely different and separate entities but various expressions of a single supreme Ens, Matter a noumenon of apparent self phenomenally evolving as substance and energy, Spirit, a sense of Its real self supporting and therefore pervading and conditioning phenomena, it is then not only possible but inevitable that Spirit should be so constantly and closely aware of the perpetual activity of Matter as to attribute that activity to itself. In this interpretation of the Universe Vedanta consummated its analysis.

Time, Space, Condition reposing in the sense of actual Infinity and Immutability, — this is Prakriti, Origin-of-Matter working in Spirit; and all philosophic analysis of existence must inevitably culminate in this noumenon; for without it the Universe as it is, cannot be conceived; it is the very condition of thought and knowledge; it is the ultimate fact of cosmic existence. The triune noumenon of Time, Space, Condition

or, in one word, Prakriti, immediately generates the noumenon of motion characterized by change and relation of parts and we have at once motion, mutability, multiplicity operating in the Infinite and Immutable. The triune noumenon of motion, mutability, multiplicity or, in one word, Energy generates the noumenon of substance moving, changing, relatively shifting in the Infinity and Immutability of Spirit. The noumenon of energy-substance constitutes Pradhana, original matter, and nothing farther is needed for the evolution of the cosmos. Prakriti with its evolution Pradhana is the material cause of the Universe; the presence of Spirit containing, supporting and pervading Prakriti and its evolutions is the efficient cause of the Universe.

Noumenon leads naturally to phenomenon. Consciousness and Existence in the Eternal Self being one, every noumenon of Consciousness must translate itself into an Existence of which the Consciousness is aware. The conception of Time, Space, Condition creates the appearance of Time, Space, Condition by that fundamental power of Consciousness which shows itself physically as formation, psychically as imagination and spiritually as Avidya, the power of conceiving what is Not-Self. The conception of motion creates the appearance of energy at work. The conception of motion-intensity as substance creates the appearance of matter worked upon. All Matter is phenomenal; all evolution the result of Avidya. Spirit is not phenomenal, but owing to its continual immanency in matter, attributes phenomenal existence to itself, so creating the phenomenon of soul or spirit working in matter. Thus Cosmos originates.

It will be seen that in this explanation of the Universe Spirit is taken as nearer to the Supreme Reality of things than Matter; it is not absolutely the real Self of things, but it is the noumenon or sense of the real Self persisting throughout all the obscurations of Avidya. This view is triply necessitated by the truths of elemental, psychical & spiritual evolution. When we consider the relations of Spirit to elemental matter, we see that as the obscuration of Matter thickens, Spirit becomes more and more concealed until, in gross inanimate matter, it is utterly covered in; but as the obscuration of Matter lessens, Spirit is more and more liberated until in the origin of things Matter seems a mere appearance in the reality of Spirit. It is therefore through Spirit and not through Matter that we are likely to get nearest to the Supreme Reality. So too, when we study our psychical evolution and follow Consciousness in its progressive liberation until it becomes Will in causal matter, we find it characterized in this last stage by the Will to be, the Will to know, the Will to enjoy; and when we get behind will and matter to our pure unconditioned Self, we still envisage Consciousness as pure existence, awareness and bliss. But our pure unconditioned Self is, we have seen, the Reality of Things unaffected by Prakriti or its phenomena. We may therefore safely conclude that so far as the Supreme Reality can be positively envisaged by us in its purity, it is envisaged as existence, awareness, bliss, — in terms of Spirit and not of Matter. Lastly, when we analyse the evolution of Purusha in its three States, we find that it consists in the reflection of Prakriti as if by the

Spirit. Spirit follows Prakriti through her three stages of material evolution, informing and sustaining them and mirrors their changes in itself as the changes of the sky may be mirrored in a clear and motionless pool; but the changes of the sky are not changes in the water. Purusha is immutable, immobile and One, just as the Supreme Reality is immutable, immobile and One. Purusha or Spirit is therefore the noumenon of the true Self, Prakriti the noumenon of not-Self or apparent Self. It is in this true Self of Parabrahman that the evolutions of apparent Self take place. In It Matariswan ordereth the waters.

XI.

Long and difficult to follow as has been this account of the Nature of Things according to Vedic philosophy, it was necessary so that we might understand minutely and comprehensively the meaning of these two verses, which in the second chapter of this book we could only adumbrate. The verses describe Parabrahman in Its truth with respect to the Cosmos, not in the absolute reality which is Its truth in Itself, but at the same time they indicate that it is the absolute and real Self of things which manifests in the Cosmos and not any Other, for there is no Other. It is anejad Ekam, the *One* who moveth not. The root *ejri*, as Shankara points out, means to shake or vibrate, and the reference is obviously to those vibrations of Prakriti on the tranquil surface of Self which are the beginning and cause of matter and its evolutions. But the Self does not vibrate and is not affected by the vibrations of Prakriti, even when It is supporting the cosmos and seems to be moving in it. Throughout it remains the One and is not broken up into multiplicity; even when by its immanence in many forms it seems to be many. These opening words of the first verse identify the One Immutable Immobile Infinity called Self or Spirit in the Cosmos with the Supreme Entity, Parabrahman.

This Supreme Entity which, as Self or Spirit, is immobile and one, is yet, without moving, swifter than thought. Swiftiness implies motion; but the motion of Spirit in Cosmos is the illusory motion we see in the landscape as it whirls swiftly past the quiet watcher in the railway-carriage. The individual Self in Man is the watcher in the train, the train is Prakriti, the landscape the Universal Self in the Cosmos. The watcher is not moving, the landscape is not moving; it is the train which is moving and carries the sitter with it. In this second phrase of the verse the Parabrahman is identified with the Supreme Will in the Cosmos which without lifting a finger or stirring a foot creates and encompasses the Universe. This Supreme Will is simply Self or Spirit envisaging itself as the immanent Cause and Director of cosmical evolution in matter. The Will does not move but causes and conditions the infinitely complex cosmic motions; the Will does not act, but causes and determines actions; the Will does not divide or multiply itself, but plays with the multiplicity of cosmic

forms and energies and impresses or mirrors itself in each. Being essentially the Self, it is, like the Self, One and Immobile, but as seen in the moving Cosmos, pervading, informing and governing it, It is, even in its motionlessness, swifter than thought.

The Gods could not reach It going in front. In the terminology of the Upanishads the Gods are the Potencies of the Universe which govern the Mind and the Senses in the microcosm Man and the Elements and their manifestations in the macrocosm Universe. Brahman, the One, precedes all these multiple potencies. It existed before they came into being and is therefore beyond their grasp. The rapid and stupendous effects of Will, omnipotent and omniscient, are such that the Mind, Sight, Hearing, all the senses together cannot comprehend their origination; limited and finite, they cannot grasp that which transcends limit. To the finite intelligence reasoning within prescribed limits it appears that there is no Will in action; all that happens and becomes is the inevitable working of material cause and effect, or of the Elements combining and working on each other. But Will is the cause of Causation and the disposer of Effect; Will preceded and dictated the workings of the Elements and arranged their combinations beforehand. This is He that from years sempiternal hath ordered perfectly all things. But the mind and senses cannot come near to and apprehend the nature of the Will or realize the how of its workings, because the mind and the senses can only understand what is done through their instrumentality or within the elemental medium to which they are limited and confined. They can analyse the physical forces of Nature and formulate the laws under which they work; they can dissect thought and sentiment and classify the mental functions and the laws of reasoning. But Brahman, the Will, they cannot reach and analyse; for He does not work through them, nor does He act in phenomena. He has arranged the motions of Prakriti beforehand, from years sempiternal; He has mapped out the law of those motions before ever they began to stir; and He now abides concealed in them, not acting but simply by His presence necessitating that the Law shall be observed and His dispositions followed. Will creates effects, outside Time, Space and Condition in a way the Mind cannot comprehend, by *Ichha* or Wish, in other words, by Itself. Will by Will necessitates phenomena in Itself, *atmanyatmana*. But when Prakriti translates Will into phenomena in the terms of Time, Space, Causality, she does it under limitations and by limited instruments. The preordainment was immediate, unhindered and perfect, but the carrying out seems to be slow, imperfect and the result of ceaseless effort and struggle, a web of failures, incomplete realizations and transient successes, a maze of forces acting and reacting on each other, helping, hindering and repulsing and always with a partial and mechanical or only half-intelligent action. Somehow a result is worked out, progress is made, but nowhere is there any finality or completeness, nowhere the repose of consummation. This incompleteness is an illusion created by the nature of finite Consciousness. The Mind and the Senses, through whom we become aware of the workings of the

Universe, are themselves limited and imperfect; functioning only under limits and with effort they cannot envisage the work accomplished except in parts and with a restricted, disturbed and broken vision. To see life steadily and see it whole is only permitted to a Perfect and Infinite Consciousness standing outside Time, Space and Conditions. To such a divine Vision the working out of preordainment may present itself as a perfect, immediate and unhindered consummation. God said, "Let there be Light" and, straightway, there was Light; and when the Light came into being, God saw that it was good. But to the imperfect finite consciousness, Light seems in its inception to have come into being by a slow material evolution completed by a fortuitous shock of forces; in its operation to be lavished with a prodigal wastefulness since only a small part is used for the purposes of life; in its presentation to be conveyed to a blinking and limited vision, hampered by obstacles and chequered with darkness. Limitation, imperfection, progression and retrogression are inseparable from phenomenal work, phenomenal intelligence, phenomenal pleasure and satisfaction. To Brahman the Will who measures all Time in a moment, covers all Space with one stride, embraces the whole chain of causation in one glance, there is no limitation, imperfection, progression or retrogression. He looks upon his work as a whole and sees that it is good. But the Gods cannot reach to His completeness, even though they toil after it; for ever He outruns their pursuit, moving far in front.

Brahman, standing still, overtakes and passes the others as they run. While the Mind and Senses pressing onward through Time, look before and after and see sections of the past and dim apparitions of the future from the standpoint of their moment in the present, the Will from its position beyond the beginning of the past speeds beyond them into the future and to the end of things. It has in that moment apprehended, decided and accomplished in Itself all that is to be and leaves the mind and senses to toil after It and work out the preordained ideas and forms left impressed on the mould of that future which to It already exists. It does this standing still, because to the Will Past, Present and Future are but one moment and It lives in all of them simultaneously; they do not contain Brahman but are contained in Him. The Mind and senses hasten through Space, measuring the distance between star and star; but the Will passes them, traverses Space from one end to the other, knows it as a Whole and creates in Itself all its forms present, past and future; it leaves the Mind and senses to gather slowly, toilfully and by parts the single comprehensive knowledge It acquired without any process and to experience under the law of Time the immediately complete Universe It has perfected without any labour. It does this also standing still, for to Brahman here and there do not exist; all is here, since He is not in Space, but Space is in Him. While the Mind and senses run in the winding & twisted line of causation, the Will from the beginning of the chain passes them and has in a moment formed and surveyed it to its very end; It leaves them to count out the chain link by link by the imperfect aid of reason, piecing what is past to what is to come, and to trace out by the slow and endless process of work generating

work and life generating life the complete and single Evolution which is already a predestined and therefore an accomplished fact. This too It does standing still; for to Brahman there is no succession of cause and effect, since cause and effect exist simultaneously in the Will; cause does not precede Him nor effect follow, but are both embraced in the single and mere existence of Himself as Will.

In It Matariswan ordereth the waters. We have here Brahman in a third relation to Cosmos. Brahman is the stable and immutable Unity which is immanent in the Cosmos as its real self of existence, awareness and bliss and which supports all phenomenal objects and forces as their omnipresent substratum of reality. Secondly, Brahman, this immobile Unity, is also, as Will, that which stands still and is yet swifter than mind and the potencies of mind; for Will, the Ordainer, Disposer and Cause, traverses all Time, Space and Causation, without motion, by the mere fact of being. Lastly, Brahman, this Self and Omnipresent Lord of things, is also that which contains all evolution and determines every object and force evolved by Prana out of original matter. Brahman is Vaisvanor, the Waking Self, in whom is contained and by whom exists all this evolution of physical world; Brahman is Taijasa, the Dream Self, in whom is contained and by whom exists all the psychical evolution from which the physical draws its material; Brahman is Prajna, the Sleep Self, in whom all evolution psychical & physical is for ever self-existent and preordained; Brahman is the Turiya Atman in whom and by whom Prajna-Taijasa-Vaisvanor are. He pervades the Cosmos and contains the Cosmos, as ether pervades the earth and contains the earth, and not only the Cosmos as a whole but every particular object and force in the Cosmos. This tree is pervaded and surrounded by the Divine Presence, — not, be it clearly understood, by a part of It but by Brahman one and indivisible. The presence of God is as complete in one small flower as in the whole measureless Universe. So also the Spirit in man is not a fragment of Deity, but the Eternal Himself in His imminuable majesty. The Self in me is not merely a brother to the Self in you or of one kind with it but is completely and utterly yourself; for there is no you or I, but One Eternal Immutable in many names and forms, One Reality in many transient and perishable frames.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pp. 266-75)

‘IN FRONT OF THIS CALM SUNRISE . . .’

March 8, 1914

IN front of this calm sunrise which turned all within me into silence and peace, at the moment when I grew conscious of Thee and Thou alone wast living in me, O Lord, it seemed to me that I adopted all the inhabitants of this ship, and enveloped them in an equal love, and that so in each one of them something of Thy consciousness would awake. Not often had I felt so strongly Thy divine power and Thy invincible light, and once again total was my confidence and unmixed my joyful surrender.

O Thou who relievest all suffering and dispersest all ignorance, O Thou the supreme healer, be constantly present on this boat in the heart of those whom it shelters that once again Thy glory may be manifested!

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed. Vol. 1, p. 92)

A CONVERSATION OF 19 APRIL 1951

This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature.

Sri Aurobindo
Letters on Yoga, p. 1310

EVERYBODY knows this; those who do not want to change their way of doing things or their way of being always say, “Oh! What do you expect, it is human nature.” This is what is called a “wilful indulgence”. That is to say, instead of becoming conscious that these are weaknesses and difficulties on the way, one justifies these things, saying, “Oh! It can’t be helped, it is human nature.” One wants to continue to do what one is doing, without changing, one is full of a wilful indulgence of one’s demands. For the lower nature of man always demands things; it says, “These are necessities, these are needs, I can’t do without them.” Then, the instincts — a sort of instinct for one’s own satisfaction — and pretensions: the lower being claims that it has a considerable importance and must be given what is necessary for it, otherwise it won’t be able to live; it asserts that it alone is important, and so on. It is all this which creates obstacles, all these obscure, ignorant movements, all these justifications of the old ways of being: those who fly into a temper and say, “What do you expect, it can’t be helped”, and everything one does saying, “Oh! It is human nature”, everything one justifies saying, “What can be done, people are like that, there is nothing to be done about it.” It is the old idea that we are born with a particular nature and must get adjusted to it, for we cannot change it.

So Sri Aurobindo tells us that if one cannot change the nature it is not worth the trouble of doing yoga, for yoga is done precisely in order to change the nature, otherwise it has no meaning.

When the little ego is abolished, can’t one “find oneself in the Divine” directly?

But one can find oneself in the Divine even before having completely abolished one's little ego, for, to abolish one's little ego is not a small matter!

But how is it to be done?

How is it to be done? How to abolish the ego? — First of all, you must want to do it, and there are very few people who want to. And that is exactly what they say, it is this justification of their way of being, “That is the way I am made, I can't do otherwise. And then, if I change this, if I change that or if I do without this thing or if I get rid of that other, I shall no longer exist!” And if one doesn't say this openly, one thinks it. And all these little desires, these little satisfactions, these little reactions, all these small ways of being, one clings to them, clings hard — one sticks to them, one doesn't want to let them go. I have seen hundreds of cases where someone's difficulty had been removed (with a particular power a certain difficulty had been removed), but after a few days he brought it back with enthusiasm. He said, “But without that I do not exist any longer!” I have known people who had been given mental silence almost spontaneously and who, after a day or two, came back frightened: “Have I become an idiot?” — for the mental machine was not working all the time. . . . You cannot imagine it, you don't know how very difficult it is to separate oneself from this little ego; how much it gets into the way though it is so small. It takes up so much room while being so microscopic. It is very difficult. One pushes it away in certain very obvious things; for example, if there is something good and someone rushes forward to make sure of having it first, even jostling his neighbour (this happens very frequently in ordinary life), then here one becomes quite aware that this is not very, very elegant, so one begins to suppress these crudities, one makes a big effort — and one becomes highly self-satisfied: “I am not selfish, I give what is good to others, I don't keep it for myself”, and one begins to get puffed up. And so one is filled with a moral egoism which is much worse than physical egoism, for it is conscious of its superiority. And then there are those who have left everything, given up everything, who have left their families, distributed their belongings, gone into solitude, who live an ascetic life, and who are terribly conscious of their superiority, who look down at poor humanity from the height of their spiritual grandeur — and they have, these people, such a formidable ego that unless it is broken into small bits, never, never will they see the Divine. So it is not such an easy task. It takes a lot of time. And I must tell you that even when the work is done, it must always be begun again.

Physically, we depend upon food to live — unfortunately. For with food, we daily and constantly take in a formidable amount of inconscience, of *tamas*, heaviness, stupidity. One can't do otherwise — unless constantly, without a break, we remain completely aware and, as soon as an element is introduced into our body, we immediately work upon it to extract from it only the light and reject all that may

darken our consciousness. This is the origin and rational explanation of the religious practice of consecrating one's food to God before taking it. When eating one aspires that this food may not be taken for the little human ego but as an offering to the divine consciousness within oneself. In all yogas, all religions, this is encouraged. This is the origin of that practice, of contacting the consciousness behind, precisely to diminish as much as possible the absorption of an inconscience which increases daily, constantly, without one's being aware of it.

Vitally, it is the same thing. You live vitally in the vital world with all the currents of vital force entering, going out, joining and opposing each other, quarrelling and intermingling in your consciousness, and even if you have made a personal effort to purify your vital consciousness, to master in it the desire-being and the little human ego, you are constantly under a sort of obligation to absorb all the contrary vibrations which come from those with whom you live. One can't shut oneself up in an ivory tower, it is yet more difficult vitally than physically, and one takes in all sorts of things; and unless one is constantly wide awake, constantly on one's guard, and has quite an efficient control over all that enters, so as not to admit in one's consciousness unwanted elements, one catches the constant contagion of all desires, all the lower movements, all the small obscure reactions, all the unwanted vibrations which come to us from those around us.

Mentally, it is still worse. The human mind is a public place open on all sides, and in this public place, things come, go, cross from all directions; and some settle there and these are not always the best. And there, to obtain control over that multitude is the most difficult of all controls. Try to control the thought coming into your mind, you will see. Simply, you will see to what a degree you have to be watchful, like a sentinel, with the eyes of the mind wide open, and then keep an extremely clear vision of the ideas which conform to your aspirations and those which do not. And you must police at every minute that public place where roads from all sides meet, so that all passers-by do not rush in. It is a big job. Then, don't forget that even if you make sincere efforts, it is not in a day, not in a month, not in a year that you will reach the end of all these difficulties. When one begins, one must begin with an unshakable patience. One must say, "Even if it takes fifty years, even if it takes a hundred years, even if it takes several lives, what I want to accomplish, I shall accomplish."

Once you have decided upon this, once you are quite conscious that it is so and that the goal is worth the trouble of a constant and sustained effort, you may begin. Otherwise, after a time you will fall flat; you will get discouraged, you will tell yourself, "Oh! It is very difficult — I do it and then it is undone, I do it again and it is once again undone, and then I do it again and it is perpetually undone. . . . Then what? When will I get there?" One must have plenty of patience. The work may be undone a hundred times, you will do it again a hundred and one times; it may be undone a thousand times, you will re-do it a thousand and one times, until finally it

is no longer undone. And finally it is no longer undone.

Only, you see, if one were made all of a piece, it would be very easy, but one is made of many pieces. Then, there is one piece which is ahead, which has worked hard, is very conscious, altogether awake, and when it is there, all goes well, one does not allow anything to enter, one is on one's guard, and then . . . one goes to sleep and the next day when one gets up it is another part which is there and one tells oneself, "But where then is all the work I had done? . . ." And one must begin all over again. Begin all over again until all the parts, one after another, enter the field of consciousness and each one can be changed. And when you reach your limit, there is a change, you have made progress — afterwards, you must make another, but still that one is made. But it is completely made only when all the pieces of the being are brought like that, one after another, to the front, and upon all without exception you have applied the consciousness, the light, the will and the goal, in such a way that everything changes.

This is not to discourage you, but to warn you. I do not want you to say afterwards, "Oh! If I had known it was so difficult, I would not have started." You must know that it is excessively difficult and begin with great firmness and continue to the end, even if the end is a very long way off — there are many things to do. Now, I may tell you that if you do it sincerely, with application and care, it is extremely interesting. Even those whose life is quite monotonous, without interest (there are, you know, poor people who have to do utterly uninteresting work and always the same thing, and always in the same conditions, and whose mind is not sufficiently awakened to be able to find an interest in anything whatever), even those people, if they begin to do this little work upon themselves, of control, of elimination, that is to say, if each element which comes with its ignorance, its unconsciousness, its egoism, is put before the will to change and one remains awake, compares, observes, studies and slowly acts, that becomes infinitely interesting, one makes marvellous and quite unexpected discoveries. One finds in oneself lots of small hidden folds, little things one had not seen at the beginning; one undertakes a sort of inner chase, goes hunting into small dark corners and tells oneself: "What, I was like that! This was there in me, I am harbouring this little thing!" — sometimes so sordid, so mean, so nasty. And once it has been discovered, how wonderful! One puts the light upon it and it disappears and you no longer have those reactions which made you so sad before, when you used to say, "Oh! I shall never get there." For instance, you take a very simple resolution (apparently very simple): "I shall never tell a lie again." And suddenly, without your knowing why or how, the lie springs up all by itself and you notice it after you have uttered it: "But this is not correct — what I have just said; it was something else I meant to say." So you search, search. . . . "How did it happen? How did I think like that and speak like that? Who spoke in me, who pushed me? . . ." You may give yourself quite a satisfactory explanation and say, "It came from outside" or "It was a moment of

unconsciousness”, and not think any longer about it. And the next time, it begins again. Instead of that, you search: “What can be the motive of one who tells lies? . . .” and you push — you push and all of a sudden you discover in a little corner something which wants to justify itself, thrust itself forward or assert its own way of seeing (no matter what, there are a number of reasons), show itself a little different from what it is so that people may have a good opinion of you and think you someone very remarkable. . . . It was that which spoke in you — not your active consciousness, but what was there and pushed the consciousness from behind. When you were not quite on your guard, it made use of your mouth, your tongue, and then there you were! The lie came out. I am giving you this example — there are a million others. And it is extremely interesting. And to the extent one discovers this within oneself and says sincerely, “It must change”, one finds that one acquires a sort of inner clear-sightedness, one gradually becomes aware of what goes on in others, and instead of getting angry when they are not quite what one would like them to be, one begins to understand how things happen, how it is that one is “like this”, how reactions are produced. . . . Then, with the indulgence of knowledge, one smiles. One no longer judges severely, one offers the difficulty in oneself or in others, whatever may be its centre of manifestation, to the divine Consciousness, asking for its transformation.

On June 8, 1966, at the time of the publication of this talk, Mother spoke about the same question in terms of her present experience which forms the basis of the “yoga of the body”.

Precisely this is what I have been doing for the last two days. The last two days I have spent all my time seeing all this accumulation, oh! heaps of little sordid things which one lives constantly, very tiny sordid things. And so there is only one way — there is only one way, always the same: to offer.

It is almost as though this Supreme Consciousness were putting you in touch with things long forgotten, which belong to the past, which even are or were or seemed to be completely effaced, with which you no longer have any contact, all sorts of little circumstances, which yet are seen in the new consciousness, in their true place, and make such a poor, miserable, mean, sordid whole of the entire life, the entire general human life. And so, it is a luminous joy of offering all this for transformation, for transfiguration.

Now it has become the very movement of the cellular consciousness. All weaknesses, all responses to adverse suggestions (I mean the smallest things of every minute in the cells), are taken in the same movement of offering (and these come sometimes in waves, to such an extent that the body feels it will swoon before this assault), and then comes a light, so warm, so deep, so powerful, which puts everything back in order, in its place, and opens the way to transformation.

These periods are very difficult periods of the bodily life; one feels that there is now only one thing which decides, the Supreme Will. There is no longer any support — any support, from the support of habit to the support of knowledge and of will, all the supports have vanished — there is only the Supreme.

(Silence)

Aspiration in the cellular consciousness for perfect sincerity of consecration.

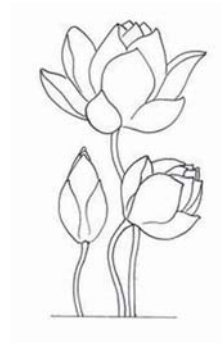
And the lived experience — lived intensely — that it is only this absolute sincerity of consecration which allows existence. The least pretension is an alliance with the forces of dissolution and of death.

Well, it is like a song of the cells — but they must not even have the insincerity of watching themselves do it — the song of the cells: “Thy Will, O Lord, Thy Will.” And the great habit of depending upon the will of others, the consciousness of others, the reactions of others (of others and of all things), this kind of universal comedy which all play with all and everything plays to everything, ought to be replaced by an absolute, spontaneous sincerity of consecration. It is evident that this perfection of sincerity is possible only in the most material part of the consciousness. It is there that one can succeed in being, existing, doing, without watching oneself being, watching oneself existing, watching oneself doing, with an absolute sincerity.

19 April 1951

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1950-51*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 331-39)



A VISION

(Continued from the issue of January 2011)

(3)

In this issue we are publishing the third of the seven visions.

I SLEPT and now I am awake.

I awoke in the great austere cathedral of the most intellectual of European capitals. I awoke to the sound of majestic organ strains, strains rising and unfolding in the huge nave like a puissant call, a noble aspiration. Looking up, I see seated at the manual a young fair-haired woman in white raiment. As her fingers touch the keys, the harmonies soar one after another, inspired and full of love.¹

Looking down, I see that gradually the cathedral is filling with an eager throng attracted by the ample strains which can be heard outside. At the same time I see the organ gallery filling slowly with an increasingly brilliant light; the light spreads throughout the edifice, dispelling the darkness. A great dazzling white light falls upon the altar, and when it has dispersed a little, the cross, the religious images, the objects of worship have disappeared, as if pulverized by an invisible hand.

All present are rooted to the spot, divided between surprise, curiosity and fear. Their amazement increases when they see a great violet veil forming and growing denser before the choir and, appearing on the veil, letters of golden light tracing the following inscription for all to read:

The Self is your God.
You are the living Temple of the Divine Inhabitant.
Awake, O evolving supermen.²
Evolve, develop your latent faculties
so as to realise the indissoluble union
of God, the Unthinkable Absolute,
with eternal Substance
through Man, regenerated and glorious,
immortal upon earth, his rightful home.

The wonderment reaches a climax; in the silence that none dares to break, rises a deep ringing voice, saying, "Hearken to the teaching of the music." I turn my gaze towards the organ, but no longer see the young woman, who is now completely

1. *Pathétique*: full of divinised love.

2. *Psycho-intellectuels*: men evolving into the divine supermen.

veiled by a brilliant light. At the far end, silhouetted against the multi-coloured rosette, I see a seraph thrice as tall as a man; he stands in his sapphire tunic with two of his wings crossed above his fine young head, two outstretched behind his arms, and two lying upon the ground and covering his feet.

Once more the organ strains rise, at first sombre and tumultuous, imaging the present condition of man in his misery and suffering and doubt; then suddenly a crystalline note is heard, piercing the sorrowful phrase as a spark of light pierces the gloom; the clear and pure melody unfurls, grows louder, stronger; a struggle begins between it and the fierce, disorderly strains, which gradually fade and die away, overpowered and drowned by the calm chant which spreads and ripples like a tranquil sea.

Suddenly a rich warm voice intones a powerful hymn: "Appear, O light, sublime intelligence, redeemer of the world!"

The billows of music roll with a growing force and rapture, filling the edifice with wonderful notes, shaking the stained-glass windows with their joyful, resonant waves. Once more the voice is heard: "Arise, O regenerated man, sublime man, manifest the divine intelligence, celebrate the grand eternal nuptials, radiate love, pure love, universal love — love, the supreme harmony; arise in thy strength and knowledge, O all-powerful master of thy physical realm, realiser of equilibrium! Honour, honour to thee, O man divine and human, man immortal and glorious!"

The last strains of the triumphal hymn loose forth their dazzling notes in a hush of rapt admiration. A deep calm broods over the congregation. The huge vault is draped in a luminous amethyst cloak and, spread beneath it, is a veil of living emerald: sapphire stars are scintillating and moving everywhere; near the organ, thirty-six winged beings have placed themselves beside the seraph, forming a sapphire circle around the brilliant white aura that veils the young inspired one.

Slowly and silently, the throng flows out in wonder; the sick are healed, the anxious and the uneasy are soothed and reassured, the weak are strengthened, the intelligent are enlightened. And as they depart, all carry away with them, indelibly impressed upon their memories, the magnificent inscription penned in letters of gold.

THE MOTHER

(Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, April 1983)

“POINTERS” AND “QUEST” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

Last night I wrote this poem:

POINTERS

Everything points now
Somewhere, somewhere,
Silverly straining
Through the dusk air.

The boughs have lifted
Pearl-tipped flames,
Tremulous, leafy,
Finding their aims.

From the sea rise up
Fingers of foam
Trying to pierce through
The veil of gloam.

The wind has drawn out
In calm cloud-streams
A beautiful pallor
Of guiding dreams.

And the lone crescent's
Two-horned light,
Where is it calling
The eyes of night?

Are they all pointing
Words to my mind,
Poems unwritten
Where I shall find

In each pure cadence
A fall of foot
Bringing earthward
A mystical mute

Ecstasy, lover,
Immortal mate
To the poignant sorrow
Of human fate?

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is a very melodious and delicate lyric — this is a new music for you and very successful.

25 August 1933

Sri Aurobindo —

Somehow the same measure as adopted in, or rather by, “Pointers” has got hold of the idea here. The inspiration, if any, seems also analogous.

QUEST

Long have I searched Him
Yet never could find,
In the heart's hollow
Or hill of mind;

Neither through lifted
Azure surmise
Nor the red darkness
Of calm shut eyes!

Will no ardour
Of solitude limn
My roving bareness
With image of Him?

Are His hair wayward
Gossamer-light
Or a cool heavy
Hanging night?

O once I knew joy
 In unborn years
 Ere the mist floated
 Of earthly tears! . . .

But sweeter than tangible
 Loveliness yet,
 This haloed absence
 I never forget!

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is a very successful lyric. But "are His hair" won't do.

30 August 1933

*

[Amal's suggestions written at the bottom of the page:]

"Forms" seems to me the simplest and least debatable means of avoiding the cacophony "is" would make in the context. But there are also other words to choose from — "seems, dreams, streams, keeps, fills, brings, stains, hues." Of these, "dreams" (Harin's suggestion) is the most poetic in my opinion, the one I would be most tempted to use, if you don't consider its sound a little inharmonious after "image" and "Him" in the line preceding.

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

Dreams is the only one of the lot that will do; it is very poetic.

31 August 1933

* * *

. . .

[*Version from The Secret Splendour — Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), 1993, p. 16:*]

QUEST

Long have I sought Him
 Yet never could find,
 In the heart's hollow
 Or hill of mind;

Neither through lifted
 Azure surmise
 Nor the red darkness
 Of calm shut eyes!

Will no ardour
 Of solitude limn
 My roving bareness
 With image of Him?

Dreams His hair wayward
 Gossamer-light
 Or a cool heavy
 Hanging night?

O once I knew joy
 In unborn years
 Ere the mist floated
 Of earthly tears! . . .

But sweeter than tangible
 Loveliness yet,
 This haloed absence
 I never forget!

AMAL KIRAN
 (K. D. SETHNA)

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of April 2011)

Saturday, 2 October 1926

There is nothing new to say about the last week. The same working goes on. At the evening sitting I feel above me the presence of a great peace; it is there but it does not come down, though my mind is quieter. I suppose it has to come down!

YES, it will.

My thoughts are then seen as happening below. There is not much difference felt between a thought of mine and the voice of somebody else. They all play before me, so to say.

Since my coming here, my mind has gone through a whole process. Now I don't feel much inclined towards space and time or towards reading books. The only thing that remains as a part of the mental activity is the business of ordinary life. This is sometimes troublesome; however, I generally succeed in keeping it away during meditation.

In the vital I feel the same working. Are there two centres, one below and one above the navel?

The vital centre is at the navel itself. There is a play of forces between this centre and the chest centre. There is a connection between that part and the more physical part of the mind, the material stuff of mind. Below the navel centre there is another centre, also a vital centre, which is in connection with life, outward life. The activities of the navel centre may be felt all around the waist. From that centre to the Muladhara, all is vital. At the Muladhara the vital connects with the physical.

It seems that all these centres are becoming active, though I don't distinguish very well their various activities. As for the physical consciousness, it appears to me as being somewhere at the level of the mouth.

It may be anywhere. The centres are fixed, but the physical consciousness may be centred anywhere. It is generally connected with the throat centre. This is the centre of speech and formulation, and most of the vital and physical activities are connected there.

I see the difference. From the Muladhara the Force proceeds downwards towards the legs and feet or permeates the whole physical consciousness. But the centre of this consciousness, which in meditation appears as separate from the higher consciousness, is felt where I said.

Now there is something I don't understand. When I meditated with the Mother last Tuesday, the divine Force came down. But what is the part either you or the Mother play in such a descent?

I don't understand.

Well, the divine Force comes from inside. How can it be brought down by somebody else? It is not a mere tuning of the instruments, a quieting of the mind which could be done from outside, but a real call.

The explanation? It is a fact, is it not?

Yes.

Then that is sufficient.

But I meant to say this. Suppose I had not come here, but remained doing Yoga elsewhere, God and I would have been the same, but this descent would not have happened.

Is there, for instance, some kind of intermediary centre of divine Force in the spiritual Force which is here above?

Even in the case of those who look only for liberation and try to merge into God, help from someone who has already realised it is generally necessary because the forces of ignorance are too strong. What is trying to come down here is a power for knowledge. In the past, knowledge has been attained, but a different kind of knowledge, a knowledge more abstract. Now it is a knowledge for effectuation, for the practical purposes of human life. That is what is in the spiritual Force above. And as you are in touch with it here, it is trying to manifest in you.

The Mother has spoken of the blue light of Sri Krishna.

Yes. Krishna is generally depicted as blue — it is his colour. This means that it is one aspect of the Divine. All these colours are aspects of the divine force.

Is it a force of knowledge?

Not exactly. Knowledge manifests more by a force whose colour is golden, though it includes many other things.

Then is it a force of divine love?

It is a force of true devotion that raises the psychic being to a state of pure aspiration; it also includes many other things. But names are always limiting — you must not hanker after naming things, but see what is behind them, realise and know them.

Has it any connection with the historical Krishna?

It does not matter, after all, does it?

* * *

Sunday, 3 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother)

Do not seek the truth with your mind! All that you have done so far, all that you have learned, has to be set aside. What holds you back is your education and your mental habits.

An Indian who had the profound experience you had last time would have drawn knowledge from it. That experience truly would have brought knowledge. It was beautiful enough, wasn't it, and you felt all its power, but your European mentality came in the way. Your inner being opened and put itself in a receptive attitude, which allowed the descent. Instead of trying to reason, plunge into the experience itself.

If I asked a question, it is not because my mind was anxious or wanted so much to convert everything into mental terms. My mind has suffered harsh rebuffs and it is no longer so demanding. I feel a truth quite near; there is a part in me that knows it. But from time to time a question comes up in my mind, without attaching much importance to it.

When you asked the question, it was on the point of speaking, but it cannot speak before the psychic being is open.

If that experience could have led to the desired change of attitude, everything would have been transformed. But it has to come, it is bound to come — you are on the verge of it. It depends on your opening to the Divine.

Next week you may come to the small meditation room. You may feel something — that is why I am asking you to come.

* * *

Saturday, 9 October 1926

The pressure is exerting itself more upon the mind now. It works at a complete quieting of the mind and for a separation of my consciousness from the working of the mind.

But is it always the mind that is working?

Yes. I feel in myself a consciousness distinct from the mind, behind me; but when working I come back to the mind.

What will happen is that the mind will no longer work, but all knowledge will come from above. The mind will receive it, of course, but it will no longer have to ascertain the truth by reasoning. And works, even the most outward ones like tuition, etc., will be directed from above.

Does it mean that the mind is perfectly still?

The mind is then nothing but a channel.

Why is it so difficult to bring the inner experiences into my active consciousness?

Because this consciousness has taken a habitual position from which it is very difficult to dislodge it. It can be done in two ways. The first is by the mind itself — but it is very slow, especially in cases where the mind has been rigidly trained and worked much, as in Europeans. In most Indians, in whom the mind is trained differently, it is easier. But this way is also not absolutely secure. When the mind, enlightened, begins to awake, the vital powers arise. In the practical use of these powers, the mind is capable of making mistakes, and even if it receives the Light from above, it may mistranslate the Truth.

On the other hand, the second way is shorter and surer: it is the opening of the psychic being. It is surer because it knows the truth, and if a mistake is made it feels uneasy until it is set right.

I feel in myself a partial awakening of the inner being.

(Smiling) That is true, but it has to come forward completely.

* * *

Tuesday, 12 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother after meditation with her at 11.45 a.m.)

It is difficult for me to distinguish everything that happens during meditation. I only know that a sweet and powerful and luminous Force descends into the vital right down to the physical. But a certain surface activity of the mind always remains. Is it that which prevents me from perceiving clearly?

What is its nature?

Creative thoughts come and try to enter. Sometimes they remain without penetrating very deeply. At other times I am obliged to throw them out lest they get hold of me.

Yes, that has something to do with it, but it is not so important.

Your receptivity is good. As soon as you are seated, the Force descends and you receive it. What is missing is something in the consciousness — you do not get sufficiently absorbed in the inner experience. If that were done, you would return with the full knowledge of what happened. Between your head and chest a line of light has been established, a column of gleaming light — not a round column but a square one, so to say. It is like a cage, the preparation of a dwelling-place for what is going to descend.

Yesterday evening, Sri Aurobindo spoke to you about the four aspects of the supermind. Did you follow? You see, this white light comes from Maheshwari; it is a light of knowledge and purity. It is she who is the great preparer of this Yoga. When that preparation is ready, then an aspect of power (Mahakali) generally descends; it takes a personal form, whereas the force of Maheshwari is impersonal, at least here. I was expecting to see this descent. But the work of preparation — of assimilation and isolation from the outside — was lengthy; it took almost the whole time. At the same time a third ring separated you, as if cutting you off from the world in which you lived outwardly and also from your past. This force comes from Mahalakshmi.

The force of purification is always there now, preparing, regulating. I am always following you, though I do not see you physically. As the preparation was very good, I thought something would manifest in your consciousness today. But we must not be in too great a hurry; it will come another time.

Before coming here, all my meditations were in a wrong direction — purely mental. I had no idea of what the inner experience was. That may be why I am having these difficulties. But perhaps that too was useful after all?

Yes, as a preparation of the instrument.

But what we are doing here is so different from what people are in the habit of thinking, even here in India, and much more so in Europe or in . . .

(Here, several pages of the notebook have been torn out.)

* * *

October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother. The beginning is missing)

. . . in the inner experience.

That I know very well. Even in meditation my mind remains active and my consciousness often gets carried away. I go back and forth, so to say, between the inner and outer movements. I cannot remain united for long with the inner movement. But I hope that when this inner experience becomes more lasting, I shall become more easily absorbed in it.

At present I have often the feeling of transparency. My mind becomes transparent and thoughts are like little centres of activity in this translucent milieu.

Yes, this is an experience that will develop.

* * *

Saturday, 16 October 1926

I feel the working of two forces. One goes straight to the psychic centre and remains there; the other comes from above and permeates the outer consciousness — the mind first, then the vital. The first is more inward, but it calls the second one into action.

These are two workings of the Force.

I have difficulty in keeping my mind concentrated upon the inner experience. When I am watching these movements, I don't watch the thoughts and they often carry me away.

But that is the correct movement that has to be made. The thoughts come and go without being noticed, without attention being paid to them. But you must watch the inner movement and not the outer one. At first you had to act upon the mind to quiet it to some extent, in order to allow the Force to begin its work. But now you must detach yourself from the mind itself.

Are there not two methods? One consists in looking at the thoughts as they cross the field of the mind, the other in losing consciousness of them by concentrating upon the inner movement?

I think you can now enter the second movement. And you must keep in mind that the more you can overcome the idea of working by yourself, the quicker you will go. Allow things to be done for you.

I think that means keeping always the inner connection with the Force within.

Yes, till you become one with the Force. All things will be directed from within. The inner consciousness will remain calm and peaceful, though for some work you may enter the outer movement and come back again.

I suppose this idea of self will also disappear, for it has no raison d'être and is troublesome.

Yes, it will.

I have at times the sense of transparency, the thoughts happening as local activities which I am looking at.

There are two ways: one by oneself — it is slow; another by allowing everything to be done by the Divine — it is quick.

Has the Mother told you about your taking part in her meditation with others?

I think I misunderstood. I thought she meant my meditation with the group here with you.

No. With them.

What I got in my meditations with the Mother is invaluable, and I know that much more has been received than I am conscious of. In fact, I am only a little conscious of what happened.

But the Mother told me that you received well enough.

Yes, certainly. But I only feel a deep and strong and luminous Force coming down. My knowledge is fragmentary.

Anyhow, you are able to follow the movement. Very few are conscious of all that happens.

I am most willing to participate in the meditation and I am grateful for it. But I will do what you decide, as you know better.

Now Mme. W told me of the possibility of my being invited to dinner by the British Consul. There is an architect from Madras here for some time. I don't think there is any reason to accept.

Neither do I. But I will speak with the Mother and answer later.

(To be continued)

PAVITRA

[From *Conversations with Sri Aurobindo* by Pavitra (Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire) published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry, 2007 being the English translation of *Conversations avec Pavitra*, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972.

The French text and the English translation first appeared in the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* starting in 1969.]

The idea of helping others is a subtle form of the ego. It is only the Divine Force that can help. One can be its instrument, but you should first learn to be a fit and egoless instrument.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 828)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of April 2011)

CHAPTER II

Introduction — 2

Concept of the Avatar

HISTORY bears ample evidence to some human phenomena that defy any logical or pragmatic explanation. For example, however one tries one cannot rationalise or psychoanalyse a character like Joan of Arc — an illiterate girl in her teens without even the least exposure to politics or military discipline — suddenly emerging from a remote rustic hamlet, coming over to the city and crowning the Dauphin (the Crown Prince) so that France could have a legitimate authority to give orders, take over the command of the army and fight and drive away the foreign occupants at a time when all the generals and feudal lords of the country had resigned themselves to a disgraceful fate.

On another scale we have baffling super-geniuses, a Leonardo Da Vinci, for example. The phenomenon is so convincingly explained by Sri Aurobindo,

Genius is one attempt of the universal Energy to so quicken and intensify our intellectual powers that they shall be prepared for those more puissant, direct and rapid faculties which constitute the play of the supra-intellectual or divine mind. It is not, then, a freak, an inexplicable phenomenon, but a perfectly natural next step in the right life of her evolution.¹

We see yet another surprising occurrence in what is termed ‘prodigy’, a bumper explosion of some element of Consciousness, for example, Heinrich Heineken, the 18th century German wonder-child who spoke fluently when ten months old and lectured on history and religion to select audiences at the age of three and died at the age of four — it is believed, out of sheer boredom, as he had no equal to talk to!² But the super-genius and the prodigy cannot be clubbed together. The prodigy, barring exceptions like Mozart, does not consciously choose his action; the genius consciously applies his power to accomplish a lofty goal. He remains as an example and an inspiration for generations to follow. All this only shows that myriad is the manifestation and play of consciousness.

When it concerns consciousness as spirituality views it, those who manifest a higher or hitherto ungrasped degree of it, become acknowledged, in the Indian tradition, as Avatars (Incarnations) or Vibhutis (Emanations). Often they are referred to as Mystics which is a general and universal term covering a large range of people, from a poet who believes in supra-sensory realities or a simple devotee of any Divinity, right up to the Incarnation.

The term Avatar generally arouses in us a religious association or something mythical, far removed from the contemporary understanding of life and its vicissitudes or the laws of social, intellectual and other kinds of progress governing it. No doubt we have to liberate our outlook from contemporary prejudices and any fear of feeling outdated if we have to comprehend the truth inherent in such ideas.

We do not need any pedantic philosophy to realise that there had to be a source or origin for all that is manifesting on our earth. We appreciate the beauty and fragrance, the harmony and delicateness in the numerous varieties of flowers around us. But we could neither create them nor create the faculty we are endowed with to appreciate and enjoy them. Man did not create his brain either — that “pinkish grey jelly containing more than 10,000 million nerve cells, all capable of signalling to one another inside your skull. Think of the colossal scale of the signalling — like five planets as densely populated as our earth, with a telephone or radio link between all and every person — what a problem for engineers that would be!”³ If we can appreciate the splendour of the flowers and the miracle of the brain, our sense and intelligence that do so must have also come from the very source that planned and produced them. It would appear that the creative power from that mysterious source which seems to descend into this phenomenal world only in a trickle and manifests in a prolonged process which we call evolution, also, once in a while, comes pouring down into a human medium, releasing a new ideal or a new truth, to be understood, accepted, absorbed and followed by the collectivity through a much longer process.

Individuals manifesting such powers are called Avatars while individual recipients of such downpours are known as Vibhutis. As Sri Aurobindo explains,

The word Avatara means a descent; it is a coming down of the Divine below the line which divides the divine from the human world or status.⁴

When we grow curious about the overt and obvious life of mystics — something the mystics themselves consider irrelevant — our scanty knowledge may play havoc with our theme. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa once compared those who tried to gauge the profundity of spiritual truth by their puny intellect to a doll made of salt venturing into the ocean to measure its depth. The irony is that in spite of that warning, people who are extremely sure of their own wisdom have attempted to do exactly that to the Paramahansa himself.

Once incarnated as a human being, the Avatar, like other humans, plays and

sleeps and may suffer from flu and fever. These are facts that could amuse us as well as cheer us up, showing the Avatar's proximity to us. But such occurrences can be looked upon by the cynic as quite non-Avatar-like. There is always a tendency in many to play down the extraordinary in a person and highlighting the ordinary in him. We can recollect how in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* Cassius succeeds in not only confusing but also influencing Brutus through his casually thrown out suggestion that since Caesar once failed to swim across the river Tiber and at another time cried like a baby girl when suffering from fever in his youth, he could not be fit to rule Rome.

What many commonly expect from the Avatar are miracles. We cease to appreciate that the whole creation — every aspect of it — is a miracle. Any demand for a feat like materialising a handful of earth or some such stuff out of nothing or tossing up a paperweight and keeping it suspended in the air should appear rather childish when we consider the infinite universe being materialised and the mighty great planets whirling in space since the beginning of time. An Avatar comes with a specific agenda to farther the process of consciousness manifesting on the earth, or at least to show the seekers the passage to enlightenment, not to dazzle them with something uncanny. Many of the miracles supposed to have occurred in pre-historic, ancient and even historically recorded times are symbolic. Even those that are not, do not represent the purpose for which the Avatar comes, but are the auxiliary functions of a mighty and free consciousness.⁵

Sri Aurobindo says,

The Avatar is always a dual phenomenon of divinity and humanity; the Divine takes upon himself the human nature with all its outward limitations and makes them the circumstances, means, instruments of the divine consciousness and the divine power, a vessel of the divine birth and the divine works. But so surely it must be, since otherwise the object of the Avatar's descent is not fulfilled; for that object is precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works, precisely to show that the human type of consciousness can be compatible with the divine essence of consciousness made manifest, can be converted into its vessel, drawn into nearer conformity with it by a change of its mould and a heightening of its powers of light and love and strength and purity; and to show also how it can be done. If the Avatar were to act in an entirely supernormal fashion, this object would not be fulfilled. A merely supernormal or miraculous Avatar would be a meaningless absurdity; not that there need be an entire absence of the use of supernormal powers such as Christ's so-called miracles of healing, for the use of supernormal powers is quite a possibility of human nature; but there need not be that at all, nor in any case is it the root of the matter, nor would it at all do if the life were nothing

else but a display of supernormal fireworks. The Avatar does not come as a thaumaturgic magician, but as the divine leader of humanity and the exemplar of a divine humanity. Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show, first, how that suffering may be a means of redemption, — as did Christ, — secondly, to show how, having been assumed by the divine soul in the human nature, it can also be overcome in the same nature, — as did Buddha. The rationalist who would have cried to Christ, “If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross,” or points out sagely that the Avatar was not divine because he died and died too by disease, — as a dog dieth, — knows not what he is saying: for he has missed the root of the whole matter. Even, the Avatar of sorrow and suffering must come before there can be the Avatar of divine joy; the human limitation must be assumed in order to show how it can be overcome; and the way and the extent of the overcoming, whether internal only or external also, depends upon the stage of the human advance; it must not be done by a non-human miracle.⁶

There are of course subtle miracles the Avatar performs — or they are performed by the spontaneous law of an individual follower’s opening towards him that are subjective and valuable for the inner progress of the individual. Innumerable seekers have benefited from their contact — be it at the physical plane or at some plane of consciousness — with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Their experiences could constitute volumes, even though only a part of them would have come to light because most of those having such experiences would not divulge them as they were their private treasures. The present state of psychological research is far removed from the truths of various planes of consciousness and the impact of consciousness on the material world of events. Nobody can deny the influence of a work like, say, the Gita, over generations of seekers. It had moulded the lives of so many, had guided so many as a lighthouse on the ocean of life and had brought solace and support to so many more at their moments of crisis. So too had the Sermon on the Mount. Needless to say, it is not mere words that could have performed that, but the power of consciousness behind the words. If consciousness could act through words, it could also act through other means and mediums, embodied or occult, in moulding events and affairs of the world. There is of course a natural evolutionary law at work in the world; a higher consciousness could accelerate that, but probably could not or would not arbitrarily violate it or skip a phase of it.

Miracles were not relevant to Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, or the aim of his Yoga, but neither did he dismiss their validity implying that power to perform them came quite naturally to some Yogis. An experience from the early life of one of his disciples, Dilip Kumar Roy, may throw some light on his attitude in this regard.

Roy prayed to Sri Aurobindo to be accepted as his disciple in 1924, but was told that he was not yet sufficiently ready for the path. Roy was disappointed. Back

in Kolkata he toyed with the idea of approaching some other guru for initiation. A friend of his led him to a renowned Yogi, Baradacharan, who had the uncanny power for prophecy and revelation of matters occult, to seek his advice as to who could be the right guru for him. The Yogi knew nothing about Roy's interaction with Sri Aurobindo.

This is how Roy narrates the interview, translated (literally) from Bengali:

As I reached Barada Babu with my friend, he received us courteously. He heard everything and made me sit before him and meditated. After a while he asked with some surprise, "What makes you look for another guru? Sri Aurobindo is your guru!"

Roy (*surprised*): How is that? He did not wish to initiate me!

Barada Babu (*firmly*): But he is your guru. You are lucky. There is no greater Yogi than him beneath the Himalayas.

Roy (*confused*): But he said that the time had not come for me. When I told him that I can give up everything but my music, he said that my quest was still at the plane of mind and hence he could not initiate me.

Barada Babu (*laughing*): Listen to me. He just now asked me, standing right behind you, to forbid you to go to any other guru and that he will call you when the time comes.

These are the words Barada Babu spoke, I am not rearranging them. I cannot forget them, more because of the fact that fallen into a sea of surprise I could not believe what he said. Sri Aurobindo himself came and stood behind me and spoke to him! I was confounded and after a brief silence, muttered, "But . . ."

Barada Babu (*smiling*): You cannot believe, right? You are not to blame. What I said is literally true. But you want a proof of my truthfulness — right?

I was truly thinking about his truthfulness and about some proof. Embarrassed, I kept quiet. Barada Babu said, "Listen. Maybe you will believe this time. Do you have a hernia problem on your right lower abdomen?"

Roy (*surprised*): Right. I suffered a rupture in a tug-of-war. But how did you know? Is it through Yoga?

Barada Babu: To some extent, but not in full. I saw Sri Aurobindo through Yoga, but I learnt this only from him. He said, "Dilip wrote to me about his hernia. I wrote back advising him to undergo surgery. I will call him after the surgery."

I was stunned. Where is the question of disbelief after this? Sri Aurobindo had written exactly this to me.⁷

Roy writes that he was deeply impressed by this miraculous power of Baradacharan. But when he reported this to Sri Aurobindo, the Master's only

comment was that Yogis had several such occult powers.

While Sri Aurobindo's tone indicates that he hardly laid any importance on an encounter that had overwhelmed Roy, the latter's observation for his readers is, he had never come across any such strange occurrence in Pondicherry! Roy, obviously, had temporarily forgotten that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga did not warrant predictions or revelations of this kind, though they had their legitimate place elsewhere.

But we feel grateful to Roy for this account, for it gives us a small hint of things behind or above our perceptive faculty where the Master's power has been active and responsive. Needless to say, that will probably ever remain unknown except for glimpses like this.

While Sri Aurobindo remained preoccupied with his momentous Yogic project, the Supramental transformation of man, he applied the power of his caring consciousness to help the world events proceed rightly as possible along the positive evolutionary path, for hostile forces were always active to create diversions and disruptions in that process. His role on the occult plane during the World War II requires a somewhat elaborate narration and that will come at the appropriate place. There he did not wait for the conscious opening in those who received his force, but there were occasions when some minimum receptivity was indispensable for the right Will to work against the divisive forces. Such receptivity could be the sign of an overall progress of a nation or of humanity. If it were not there, the higher Will would rather wait than impose itself on the course of events. Any arbitrary intervention, however well-meaning, does not go well with the process of total and collective progress of mankind and may cause imbalance. An instance that comes to mind is widely known: Sri Aurobindo's advice to the Indian leaders to accept the 'Cripps offer' or the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) that could have prevented the division of the country. Is it only a hypothetical proposition that the acceptance of his advice could have protected the unity of India? Times have changed and it is not easy for Indians of post-independence generations to re-live the spirit of the forties of the last century when even Mr. Jinnah was unsure of his dream ever materialising.

The Vedic tradition of the Rishis in ancient India shows that the Rishis were never involved in operational politics, but were ready to advise the rulers in accordance with their seer-vision. The advice of "the last of the great Rishis" as Romain Rolland termed Sri Aurobindo⁸ was of course not accepted.

It is not only those who adored Sri Aurobindo or only those among the national leaders of the time like K. M. Munshi nurturing special reverence for Sri Aurobindo who later declared that partition could have been avoided had Sri Aurobindo's advice been heeded. Even those who were keen observers of the situation, probably with no knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's attempted intervention at the time, agreed later that the rejection of the Cripps offer was an irreparable blunder. For example, the veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar, himself a victim of the partition tragedy, wrote:

Why Partition? Was it inevitable? The question is still as difficult to answer as it was when the British left 50 years ago after dividing the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. Perhaps the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 could have held the country together. It envisaged a parity between Hindus and Muslims in the Central Cabinet and divided the then India into zones with all the powers transferred to them except foreign affairs, defence and communications. The Congress rejected the plan.⁹

It is intriguing that traditional historians of India's struggle for freedom forget to record that even though Sri Aurobindo participated in the struggle for a brief period of time, it is the ideals popularised by him — Swadeshi, non-cooperation etc. — that were the driving force behind the struggle till the goal was achieved, though maybe their application was in a manner that differed from what he had envisaged. No mention is made of the fact that he was the first Indian leader on whom there was a prolonged debate in the House of Commons (1910) with the first leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay Macdonald (later the first Labour Premier of Britain) challenging the government to justify the warrant issued against Sri Aurobindo.

But absence of acknowledgements and the tributes for his deeds may be a reflection on the honesty and objective quality of factual history, but that does not matter much, for what he ultimately represents in the history of consciousness which, according to the Mother, is not a teaching, not even a revelation, but a decisive action direct from the Supreme. This too, in order to be realised, requires faith. But even at the purely intellectual plane, that includes philosophy, sociology and psychology, his vision of the destiny of man opens up before any thinker or seeker a new horizon of possibilities hitherto unthought.

Interest in and curiosity and fascination for the future go back to the dawn of the awakened phase of human consciousness evinced through prophecies, predictions, oracles and forecasts in different civilisations, long before the German sociologist O. Flechtheim coined the word Futurology. There is a voluminous lore on the subject in the Indian tradition, from astrology to the *Trikala Dristi* (the vision that could embrace the past, the present and the future) of the great sages, including an enigmatic famous work, the *Bhrigu Samhita*. While the science or at least the discipline of futurology in the West and lately in a few Indian universities is limited to the studies of the laws of the sociological, economic and technological development etc. and probabilities and conclusions drawn from them about the shape of things to come, a radically different horizon emerges when we study the works of Sri Aurobindo, presenting the destiny of man in terms of the demands of the evolution of consciousness and the mystery of involution that is implied in it. While our interpretation of the momentous events in history will need to change in the light of his analysis of the past, the 'evolutionary crisis' we are passing through at present and the great psychic possibility that remains inherent in man, waiting to unfold in

the future, psychology and the other disciplines as we know them would have to undergo a drastic change in their attitude towards as well as estimate of the human being.

And that is what matters. An outline of Sri Aurobindo's life on the surface may serve only as an inadequate preface to his vision.

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo: *The Synthesis of Yoga* — CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 13, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 11 (1960). For detailed account: *The Life, Deeds, Travels and Death of the Child of Lubeck*, by the prodigy's teacher, Schoneich.
3. Dr. Grey Walter in *Frontiers of Knowledge*; B.B.C. Talks.
4. Sri Aurobindo: *Essays on the Gita* — CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 156 fn, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
5. This is only a general statement. But even the liberated souls are not bound by any law, not to speak of the Avatars. Says Sri Aurobindo in one of his aphorisms: 'Great saints have performed miracles; greater saints have railed at them; the greatest have both railed at them and performed them.' *Thoughts and Aphorisms*; Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
6. Sri Aurobindo: *Essays on the Gita* — CWSA, Vol. 19, pp. 164-65, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
7. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Rachana Samgraha* (Bengali); Edited by Baridbaran Ghose; Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Kolkata, 1997. The friend who led Roy to Yogi Baradacharan was the noted Bengali writer Nolini Kanta Sarkar. He too reports this incident in his memoirs.
8. Romain Rolland: *India on the March*.
9. Kuldip Nayar: 'Partition: An Inevitability?' *The Hindu Special Anthology*, 15 August 1997.

There are two great forces in the universe, silence and speech. Silence prepares, speech creates. Silence acts, speech gives the impulse to action. Silence compels, speech persuades. The immense and inscrutable processes of the world all perfect themselves within, in a deep and august silence, covered by a noisy and misleading surface of sound — the stir of innumerable waves above, the fathomless resistless mass of the ocean's waters below. Men see the waves, they hear the rumour and the thousand voices and by these they judge the course of the future and the heart of God's intention; but in nine cases out of ten they misjudge.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 57)

DETERMINATION AND WILL

(Continued from the issue of April 2011)

[Let us now look at some quotations of the Mother on ‘determination and will’.]

Mother, where does determination come from?

Usually it is in those who have a will and bring their will to bear upon their actions.
(CWM, Vol. 6, p. 121)

*

Determination knows what it wants and does it. (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 160)

*

One must have a strong grip and an unshakable resolution. As in our Japanese story of the other day, that soldier who had a knife in his knee in order to make sure of not falling asleep . . . and when he felt very sleepy, he turned the knife in such a way that it hurt him still more. One must have something like that. This, *this* is determination: to know what one wants and to do it. There we are!
(CWM, Vol. 6, pp. 243-44)

*

But once you have set foot on the path of yoga, you must have a resolution of steel and walk straight on to the goal, whatever the cost. (CWM, Vol. 7, p. 200)

*

Having an aim is not sufficient. One must have the will to attain it by trying always to trace all one’s movements back to their origin. (CWM, Vol. 15, p. 302)

*

Of course the length of time depends on each individual, but it can be very much shortened if you make a really firm resolve. Resolution is the one thing required — resolution is the master-key. (CWM, Vol. 3, p. 127)

*

There is no one for whom it is impossible to realise the Divine. Only, for some it will take many, many lives, whereas there are others who will do it in this very lifetime. It is a question of will. It is for you to choose.

But I must say that at the present moment conditions are particularly favourable.
(*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 409)

*

It is not because a thing is difficult that one should give it up, on the contrary, the more a thing is difficult the more determined should one be to succeed in it.

(*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 160)

*

There is even a necessity for the existence of the hostile forces. They make your determination stronger, your aspiration clearer. (*CWM*, Vol. 3, p. 34)

*

. . . if the aspiration is there in you, if the will is there in you, it is absolutely certain that sooner or later you will succeed. (*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 53)

*

. . . this inner flame of aspiration which never dies out, which always burns, burns more and more; what in India is called Agni, you know, the will to progress, the power of aspiration; this is what you call the Divine. It is an aspect of the Divine, that's true, but it is not the Divine. (*CWM*, Vol. 7, p. 368)

*

The true Agni always burns in deep peace; it is the fire of an all-conquering will.
Let it grow in you in perfect equanimity. (*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 159)

*

Persist in your aspiration and your effort and you will succeed.

(*Ibid.*, p. 162)

*

It is best for each person to find his own path, but for this the aspiration must be ardent, the will unshakable, the patience unfailing. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 322)

*

. . . yesterday I chose this quotation from Sri Aurobindo to send to you:

“Aspiration, constant and sincere, and the will to turn to the Divine alone are the best means to bring forward the psychic.” (*CWM*, Vol. 17, p. 363)

*

. . . And then there are those who have no aspiration, they try and they cannot aspire; it is because they do not have the flame of the will, it is because they do not have the flame of humility. (*CWM*, Vol. 5, p. 92)

*

One may be born with a very slight aspiration and develop it so much that it becomes very great. One may be born with a very small will and develop it and make it strong. (*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 342)

*

The outer consciousness finds it difficult to keep the fire of aspiration burning always with the same intensity. But with your will you must watch over the purifying fire and revive it when it fails. (*CWM*, Vol. 17, p. 141)

*

First to become conscious of anything whatever, you must will it. And when I say “will it”, I don’t mean saying one day, “Oh! I would like it very much”, then two days later completely forgetting it.

To will it is a constant, sustained, concentrated aspiration, an almost exclusive occupation of the consciousness. (*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 244)

*

Whatever the fall, it is always possible not only to get up again but also to rise higher and to reach the goal. Only a strong aspiration and a constant will are needed. (*CWM*, Vol. 13, p. 129)

*

. . . But there is an absolutely indispensable first step that must be accomplished before anything else can be undertaken: the transformation of the consciousness. The starting-point is of course the aspiration for this transformation and the will to realise it; without that nothing can be done. (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 80)

*

An effort? One must, yes, one must want it. But is the will an effort? . . . Naturally, one must think about it, must want it. But the two things can go together, you see, there is a moment when the two — aspiration and passivity — can not only be alternate but simultaneous. You can be at once in the state of aspiration, of willing, which calls down something — exactly the will to open oneself and receive, and the aspiration which calls down the force you want to receive — and *at the same time* be in that state of complete inner stillness which allows full penetration, for it is in this immobility that one can be penetrated, that one becomes permeable by the Force. (*CWM*, Vol. 6, p. 113)

*

. . . But when you want the Divine with all your will, all your resolution, all your aspiration and intensity, it will surely come. (*CWM*, Vol. 3, p. 128)

*

. . . And if through aspiration, the inner will, self-giving and true surrender one can enter into contact with the higher regions or even the supreme region, from up there the supreme determinism will come down and transform all the intermediate determinisms . . . (*CWM*, Vol. 7, p. 361)

*

. . . those who have as a link between them the knowledge Sri Aurobindo has given and the will to live according to that knowledge — there remains for them the possibility of intensifying their aspiration, their will, their effort, to gather their energies together and shorten the time for the realisation. (*CWM*, Vol. 9, p. 170)

*

[When the Mother was asked how to light the psychic fire, she replied:]
By aspiration.

By the will for progress, by the urge towards perfection.

Above all, it is the will for progress and self-purification which lights the fire. The will for progress. Those who have a strong will, when they turn it towards spiritual progress and purification, automatically light the fire within themselves.
(CWM, Vol. 8, p. 251)

*

In each one the will to progress is the needed thing — that is what opens us to the divine influence and makes us capable of receiving what it brings us.
(CWM, Vol. 16, p. 249)

*

What is indispensable in every case is the *ardent* will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers the advance: to throw far away from oneself all that prevents one from going forward, . . . (CWM, Vol. 9, p. 159)

*

If you want to learn to work *really well*, you must be modest, become aware of your imperfections and always maintain the will to progress. (CWM, Vol. 17, p. 164)

*

I hope this new year [1964] will see the reawakening of your soul and the awakening in your consciousness of a will to progress. (CWM, Vol. 16, p. 293)

*

The attitude of the teacher must be one of a constant will to progress, . . .
(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 370)

*

Tiredness shows lack of will for progress. When you feel tired or fatigued that is lack of will for progress.

Fire is always burning in you. (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 248)

*

... but the greatest difference lies in the will they put into it, the consciousness they put into it. Walking to go somewhere and walking as an exercise is not the same thing. It is the conscious will in all these things which is important, it is that which brings about the progress and obtains the result. Therefore, what I mean is that the method one uses has only a relative importance in itself; it is the will to obtain a certain result that is important. (*CWM*, Vol. 9, p. 155)

*

Well, the surrender, that is, the self-giving to the Divine, must be happy, joyful, made gladly; it must be strong, one must not give oneself through weakness and impotence but with an active and strong will. (*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 357)

*

To achieve this total self-consecration, all means are good, all methods have their value. The one thing needful is to persevere in our will to attain this goal.

(*CWM*, Vol. 2, p. 43)

*

Surrender: to will what the Divine wills is the supreme wisdom.

(*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 109)

*

To will what God wills — that is the supreme secret. (*Ibid.*)

*

You don't need to have a strong will — you have only to use mine.

(*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 67)

*

To learn how to will is a very important thing. And to will truly, you must unify your being. . . .

And when you have a will, you will be able to say, say to the Divine: "I want what You want." But not before that. Because in order to want what the Divine wants, you must have a will, otherwise you can will nothing at all.

(*CWM*, Vol. 6, p. 348)

*

You were having these bad suggestions (that I do not love you and that you want to go away), because you were disobeying me. But now that you have taken the resolution to act according to my will, the bad suggestions will disappear.

(*CWM*, Vol. 13, p. 86)

*

You find it difficult to open because you have not yet made the resolution to allow my will, and not your own, to govern your life. As soon as you have understood the need for this, everything will become easier — and you will at last be able to acquire the peace you need so much.

I am always with you in this effort and aspiration. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 146)

*

It is only with the sadhana and a very persistent effort that one succeeds in having a conscious contact with his psychic being. . . .

In almost, almost all cases, a very, very sustained effort is needed to become aware of one's psychic being. (*CWM*, Vol. 7, p. 269)

*

Beyond all the emotions, in the silent and tranquil depths of our being, there is a light shining constantly, the light of the psychic consciousness. Go in search of this light, concentrate on it; it is within you. With a persevering will you are sure to find it . . .

(*CWM*, Vol. 12, pp. 83-84)

*

. . . the first contact with the force gives the psychic being the power to dominate the consciousness and govern the being. But gradually the other parts (mental, vital and physical) revert to their old activities and the good condition gets veiled. You must have a persistent will to regain it. (*CWM*, Vol. 17, p. 121)

*

The freedom I speak of is the freedom to follow the will of the soul, not all the whims of the mind and vital. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 274)

*

If you have a strong and conscious will and your will is centred around the psychic then you can have a taste of liberty, otherwise you are the slave of all the outside influences. (*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 188)

*

Will: power of consciousness turned towards effectuation. (*Ibid.*, p. 158)

*

A persevering will surmounts all obstacles. (*Ibid.*)

*

This work cannot be achieved in a day or a month or even a year. We must will, and will with perseverance. (*CWM*, Vol. 2, p. 93)

*

There must be a very great humility and a very great will to change one's Karma.
(*CWM*, Vol. 5, p. 92)

*

Will and energy can be cultivated just as the muscles are: by exercise. You must exercise your will to be patient and your energy to reject depression. I am always near you to help you with all my love. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 145)

*

The will is not in the head.

The will — what I call the will — is something that's here (*Mother points to the centre of the chest*), which has a power of action, a power of realisation.
(*CWM*, Vol. 6, p. 139)

*

If one persists, there comes a time when one is victorious.

Victory is to the most persistent. (*CWM*, Vol. 8, p. 42)

*

Our worth lies in the measure of our effort to exceed ourselves, and to exceed ourselves is to attain the Divine. (*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 18)

*

A discipline imposed by the will for any spiritual end is tapasya.

(*Ibid.*, p. 45)

*

Will, as it is usually conceived, is the elaboration of a thought, to which is added a force, a power of fulfilment accompanied by an impulse to carry it out. That is the description of human will. Divine will is quite another thing. It is a vision united with a power of realisation. Divine will is omniscient and omnipotent, it is irresistible and immediate in its execution.

Human will is uncertain, often wavering, always in conflict with opposing wills. It is effective only when for some reason or other it is in accord with the will of Nature — itself a transcription of the divine will — or with the divine will itself, as a result of Grace or Yoga.

So one can say that personal will is one of the means that God uses to bring us back to Him. (*CWM*, Vol. 10, p. 54)

*

To fulfil itself this truth must contain a will to fulfilment and an aim, a purpose, a project it wants to fulfil. In order to accomplish something, one must have the will to do it, and to have the will to do it, one must know what one wants to do. If one doesn't know what one wants to do, one can't do it. First one must *know*, have a plan, a purpose, a programme if you like; one must know what one wants to do, and then one must *will* to do it, and then one can do it. (*CWM*, Vol. 9, p. 259)

*

Even the most beautiful thoughts will not make us progress unless we have a constant will for them to be expressed in us through nobler feelings, more exact sensations and better actions. (*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 158)

*

The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being. (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 35)

*

It is not by fasting but by improving the will that one obtains the Truth.

(CWM, Vol. 14, p. 48)

*

But all those who feel themselves driven by a force and say, “I was forced to do it”, without the participation of their will, show that they are still deeply rooted in animality, that is to say, in the inconscient. (CWM, Vol. 8, p. 61)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Gautam Malakar)

It is ordinarily supposed by “practical” minds that Vedanta as a guide to life and Yoga as a method of spiritual communion are dangerous things which lead men away from action to abstraction. We leave aside those who regard all such beliefs as mysticism, self-delusion or imposture; but even those who reverence and believe in the high things of Hinduism have the impression that one must remove oneself from a full human activity in order to live the spiritual life. Yet the spiritual life finds its most potent expression in the man who lives the ordinary life of men in the strength of the Yoga and under the law of the Vedanta. It is by such a union of the inner life and the outer that mankind will eventually be lifted up and become mighty and divine.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 9)

ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

Pavitra's Correspondence with His Father

(Continued from the issue of April 2011)

CHAPTER XII

Spirituality and Political Turbulences

The war changed the relations between the colonisers and the colonised. Great Britain gave independence to her Indian empire. There was a stir among the political parties and politicians in Pondicherry for being among the gainers when the Settlement gained its autonomy which was about to happen. The members of the Ashram, particularly the Mother and the general secretary, could not be indifferent to this social development as will be seen in the correspondence of this chapter and of the next. However, one will also note that Sri Aurobindo did not choose to be, in the history of the young Indian republic, the leader that his past as a revolutionary and his position in Pondicherry would have entitled him to.

Philippe's health deteriorated, was it the effect of age, of a vegetarian diet or of the climate? For a man 1.80 m tall, he hardly weighed more than 59 kg! On the other hand he did not realise the parallel ageing of his parents and the impact of age on their manner of life.

How to find the words to be able to write to his son, without hurting his faith, "that a knowledge acquired in a state of trance or ecstasy" cannot be considered — by a western mind — as more convincing than that "acquired by the senses and the intelligence"? Such is the purpose of the last attempt at drafting that Paul has preserved in his dossier. And in the letter that he had finally sent, the sentence he had thus crafted, of what anxiety did he hint, so that Philippe had to reassure him in his reply of August 1948?

From 1947, moreover, a theme began to recur in Philippe's dispatches: the feeling of a state of communication with his father and a feeling of closeness and affection which occurred during waking hours or in dream during sleep.

* * *

Pondicherry, December 10, 1945

My dear Parents,

I have on my table, for quite some time now, your letters of the month of June without having the possibility of replying to them. They are precious to me because I found there the details of your daily life allowing me to follow you in thought.

I am happy about Papa's activity and I think that in spite of the worries that the management of the farm causes him, this occupation must, on the whole, be good for him. For Maman too, the supervision of the house is a good thing.

For the nights, I advise Papa not to run after sleep. The fact that his nights are interrupted must not deprive him of the necessary rest. Is it not above all the apprehension and the regret of not sleeping which keep him awake? I have learnt here that one can obtain rest in the waking state as in sleep; it is a question of physical relaxation and above all mental relaxation. The loss of waking consciousness which is truly indispensable is not long, even if it exists.

I suggest the following recipe to him. First of all, to understand intellectually that a long sleep is not necessary. One loses nothing by remaining conscious provided one knows how to relax and **bring into the silence the parts of the being which habitually experience that only in sleep**. Then, when sleep eludes one, instead of letting oneself be overwhelmed by regret and nervous agitation, to say to oneself: "There, I have all the time to enter into communion, in the calm and the silence, with the profound soul of the universe which, at the same time, is my own soul." **Listen to the silence**, physical silence, above all mental silence. **Enter the silence**. As soon as a perception of inner peace dawns, accept it with a happy and grateful joy, plunge into it and widen it. A vaster awareness and at the same time a calming euphoria will follow. If one can retain it for a while, it is equivalent to a long rest. Moreover, from there one slips easily into a peaceful and refreshing slumber. But, even if one remains conscious, the nervous exhaustion caused by the struggle against insomnia disappears and the morning comes without either bitterness or fatigue. I may add that a thought of profound union with Sri Aurobindo, through me if it is easier, has an indisputable effect.

Concerning Maman, the problem is not very different, because the freedom from harassing thoughts is the true remedy for her difficulties. It is not a battle that one has to wage as though one wanted to chase away the thoughts; they return more powerful than ever. One must learn to detach oneself from them, to slip out of their exhausting grip, in order to enter into a luminous and peaceful inner domain where one begins to know the real freedom. If one has had this experience even once, to remember it is already helpful! One can tell oneself: "I know now that it is a possibility, a truth. I know now that these thoughts which trouble me or pester me, are not me, that in my deep essence I am not these thoughts, but that my true ME is a luminous consciousness, peaceful, happy, which IS eternally, without change, in the joy of

the pure existence.”

Try for some time. I would be surprised if you do not have some good results to communicate to me.

I am as usual very busy. Many things require my attention. From now till the end of the year we are going to have the end-of-the-year exams in our school. There are now 80 students. They are sweet but not very disciplined. They are blossoming happily and joyfully with the minimum of external restrictions.

I am in charge of our workshop for mechanical repairs — machine tools, sheet-metal works, automobiles. Then there are the contacts with the authorities and the public services of the Colony. I have been given the post of president of the Council of administration of the Electricity Board which we have set up and which is now going to take over the municipal distribution. I had to study and work out the conditions of contract and the rules and regulations of the service. Apart from that, many small matters, visitors, correspondence, etc.

I am in good health now. My digestive problems have almost disappeared and I have again put on weight and got back my normal energy.

It is the end of the year. I do not know if this letter will reach you before the first of January. In any case it will soon follow. May it bring you, with my good wishes, my constant affection, in spite of the separation and the distance.

We have magnificent weather here in December and in January, like that of the Côte d’Azur. My thoughts naturally go to you and all those who, in France, in Europe and in so many places in the world, suffer from the cold and the privations. Can humanity understand in time that it must now choose between the end of the civilisation and the opening of a higher consciousness, or, to put it succinctly, between the destruction and the transformation?

I embrace you and request you to embrace Albert for me. Give him, Denise and the children, my wishes for the New Year.

Your affectionate son,

Signed: Philippe

* * *

...

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY
India

Christmas 1945

My dear Parents,

I am sending you a small brochure which contains the prayers that Mother has given us on the first day of each year, as the centre of our aspiration for the whole year. It is the first publication to come out of the Printing Press which we have just installed in the Ashram. Our machines, very modern, will mainly print the works of Sri Aurobindo and of Mother.

In this envelope you will also find the message on the Victory (August 16: Day of the victory over Japan) and the prayer for 1946.

I hope that the letter which brings you my best wishes for the New Year will reach you on time. This one will take much longer to reach you. It will tell you that in these days of Christmas and of the New Year, my faithful thoughts will be near you.

I embrace you very affectionately.

Your son,

Signed: Philippe

* * *

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY
India

July 22, 1947

My dear Parents,

I am sending you a kind of manifesto of a political party which is campaigning in favour of that which we would like to see realised in French India. It will better explain to you than a long letter the political situation and the state of the minds following the declaration of independence in British India. Our friend, the Governor Baron, is in Paris, to convince the ministries of the urgency of granting the autonomy to this country that it is demanding; otherwise, they run the risk of ruining for ever the French influence in India.

Unfortunately, in France they do not seem to understand anything of the evolution of the outside world. There is no co-ordinated view of the global problems; there does not seem to be a rational and decisive policy. It is a kind of alternation of sloppiness and contemptuous bitterness. Constantly one takes back with one hand what one gives with the other. We hope they do not again commit the mistake of Syria and of Lebanon, where they have lost everything by wishing to keep everything.

At the same time here is a reply, already old by now, of Sri Aurobindo to a question of Maurice Magre.¹ Perhaps I have already sent you a typed copy before the war.

I have been without any news from you for quite long. You must be in La Minelle. I am very happy that you have kept it in spite of all the troubles it has caused you. Despite all these changes, I imagine you there easily and, after all, you must be a little attached to it.

I knew that Henri Lang had been deported to a concentration camp in Germany and that nobody ever had any news of him. How sad!

I am as always very busy and have no complaint except for one thing: lack of time. I am quite well, but am unable to put on weight.

I embrace you affectionately, as well as Albert, Denise and the children. How everybody must have changed!

Your son,

Signed: Philippe

* * *

Pondicherry, October 4, 1947

My dear Parents,

I take the opportunity of sending Papa my loving wishes today on the occasion of his 85th birth anniversary. I think of you often and I have seen Papa several times in my dream, always with a great feeling of nearness and affection; I think that our thoughts are very close at times.

I have received Papa's letter written from La Minelle at the beginning of summer, and I have kept it near me to answer it. But all this time, I have been caught up by activities a little outside the usual ones. The political events of neighbouring India, her accession to dominion status, the religious and economic difficulties which she faces, have had their repercussions on our little territory. We are obliged to deal

1. This document was not part of Paul's dossier. [See *Addendum 1*. —MI Ed.]

with them up to a certain point. For the present, the political party which accepts collaboration with France, on the basis of complete autonomy within the French Union, is in power with the moral support of the Ashram. But the future depends on many factors — above all on France's understanding and on the manner in which the local French people will accept the new situation.

Maurice Schumann,² of the MRP (*Mouvement Republicain Populaire*), visited Pondicherry, sent by the French Government to pay his respects to Sri Aurobindo and to see on what basis the cultural co-operation between India and France, with this town as the centre and the Ashram as the heart, could be created. Sri Aurobindo met him and I suppose on his return to France he will write about his visit. Perhaps it will have some effect. He is a frank and intelligent man, capable of understanding Sri Aurobindo's aim; a Jew converted to Catholicism, but certainly broadminded, something of a politician already, but an idealist all the same.

The deputy from India, Lambert Saravane, is a friend, and if, during one of his journeys to France, you have occasion to meet him, I would be happy. I see him often; he could talk to you about the Ashram.

Political life has no attraction for me. Everything connected with it appeals very little to me; but the Ashram has never been an ivory tower and the work of Sri Aurobindo widens and touches diverse personalities. It is in France — after India — that the minds are most receptive and understanding. I am glad it is so. For me, it is manifested in the contacts, personal or epistolary, with quite a number of people. It is not quite my line, for, by temperament, I prefer seclusion, personal research and industrial organisation. But at present it is a part of my work.

From the economic point of view, we have our difficulties here, but they are less than in France, and Pondicherry is privileged from this point of view. All the same the future is uncertain and I expect India to pass through an even more serious economic crisis.

I am keeping well now, with precautions. Without yet being very strong, my body is recovering little by little and I think I have turned the corner.

You must be in Paris or on the point of returning there and it is there that I am writing to you. I am sending Papa (by ordinary registered post) the French translation of the first seven chapters of *The Life Divine*, which has just been published and which is Sri Aurobindo's *chef d'oeuvre*, the metaphysical base of his work.

I wonder if one of your letters has not been lost. I have not received the acknowledgement of receipt of *The Message of Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram*, nor of *The Essays on the Gita*. The typed copy of the Message had been sent to you earlier, and there is no need to say anything about it, but the part devoted to the Ashram and the photos could interest you. Also I thought that Papa would have something to say about the *Essays on the Gita*.

2. See Addenda 2 and 3. —MI Ed.

Concerning Weiss, his aunt, Madame Lafargue, General Weiss' sister, told me about his symptoms; he lacks a little equilibrium, I think. I quite remember Laval and his daughter, who was a little older than me. All these people must have changed and I would not recognise many people any more now.

I embrace both of you very affectionately. Sweet thoughts to Albert and Denise.
Your son,

Signed: Philippe

(To be continued)

PHILIPPE BARBIER SAINT HILAIRE

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

You seem not to have understood the principle of this yoga. The old yoga demanded a complete renunciation extending to the giving up of the worldly life itself. This yoga aims instead at a new and transformed life. But it insists as inexorably on a complete throwing away of desire and attachment in the mind, life and body. Its aim is to refound life in the truth of the spirit and for that purpose to transfer the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind. That means that in the new life all the connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present connections. One must be prepared to renounce at the higher call what are spoken of as the natural affections. Even if they are kept at all, it can only be with a change which transforms them altogether. But whether they are to be renounced or kept and changed must be decided not by the personal desires but by the truth above. All must be given up to the Supreme Master of the yoga.

The power that works in this yoga is of a thorough-going character and tolerates in the end nothing great or small that is an obstacle to the Truth and its realisation.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 803)

ADDENDUM 1

[We present here two questions that Maurice Magre had asked. To one of them Sri Aurobindo replied — it is the text we know as ‘The Riddle of this World’. To the other question the Mother replied in her letter to Magre. A letter of Sri Aurobindo where the ‘The Riddle of this World’ is mentioned has also been included.]

THE RIDDLE OF THIS WORLD

Question asked by Maurice Magre

The divine spirit, having embodied itself in form, has therefore foreseen and willed everything. But then why does it seem to pursue a goal, a consciousness, since it could have realised this at the very outset? Why has it allowed pain and evil which exist in its essence? If human evil can be attributed to men, the injustice that smites animals and plants can only be attributed to the divine order. Why has the divine order not organised everything in delight? Pain does not always lead us to perfection; more often, it casts us into incurable despair.

Sri Aurobindo’s reply to Maurice Magre

It is not to be denied, no spiritual experience will deny that this is an unideal and unsatisfactory world, strongly marked with the stamp of inadequacy, suffering, evil. Indeed this perception is in a way the starting-point of the spiritual urge — except for the few to whom the greater experience comes spontaneously without being forced to it by the strong or overwhelming, the afflicting and detaching sense of the Shadow overhanging the whole range of this manifested existence. But still the question remains whether this is indeed, as is contended, the essential character of all manifestation or so long at least as there is a physical world it must be of this nature, so that the desire of birth, the will to manifest or create has to be regarded as the original sin and withdrawal from birth or manifestation as the sole possible way of salvation. For those who perceive it so or with some kindred look — and these have been the majority — there are well-known ways of issue, a straight-cut to spiritual deliverance. But equally it may not be so but only seem so to our ignorance or to a partial knowledge — the imperfection, the evil, the suffering may be a besetting circumstance or a dolorous passage, but not the very condition of manifestation, not the very essence of birth in Nature. And if so, the highest wisdom will lie not in

escape, but in the urge towards a victory here, in a consenting association with the Will behind the world, in a discovery of the spiritual gate to perfection which will be at the same time an opening for the entire descent of the Divine Light, Knowledge, Power, Beatitude.

All spiritual experience affirms that there is a Permanent above the transience of this manifested world we live in and this limited consciousness in whose narrow borders we grope and struggle and that its characters are infinity, self-existence, freedom, absolute Light, absolute Beatitude. Is there then an unbridgeable gulf between that which is beyond and that which is here or are they two perpetual opposites and only by leaving this adventure in Time behind, by overleaping the gulf can men reach the Eternal? That is what seems to be at the end of one line of experience which has been followed to its rigorous conclusion by Buddhism and a little less rigorously by a certain type of Monistic spirituality which admits some connection of the world with the Divine, but still opposes them in the last resort to each other as truth and illusion. But there is also this other and indubitable experience that the Divine is here in everything as well as above and behind everything, that all is in That and is That when we go back from its appearance to its Reality. It is a significant and illumining fact that the Knower of Brahman even moving and acting in this world, even bearing all its shocks, can live in some absolute peace, light and beatitude of the Divine. There is then here something other than that mere trenchant opposition — there is a mystery, a problem which one would think must admit of some less desperate solution. This spiritual possibility points beyond itself and brings a ray of hope into the darkness of our fallen existence.

And at once a first question arises — is this world an unchanging succession of the same phenomena always or is there in it an evolutionary urge, an evolutionary fact, a ladder of ascension somewhere from an original apparent Inconscience to a more and more developed consciousness, from each development still ascending, emerging on highest heights not yet within our normal reach? If so, what is the sense, the fundamental principle, the logical issue of that progression? Everything seems to point to such a progression as a fact — to a spiritual and not merely a physical evolution. Here too there is a justifying line of spiritual experience in which we discover that the Inconscient from which all starts is apparent only, for in it there is an involved Consciousness with endless possibilities, a consciousness not limited but cosmic and infinite, a concealed and self-imprisoned Divine, imprisoned in Matter but with every potentiality held in its secret depths. Out of this apparent Inconscience each potentiality is revealed in its turn, first organised Matter concealing the indwelling Spirit, then Life emerging in the plant and associated in the animal with a growing Mind, then Mind itself evolved and organised in Man. This evolution, this spiritual progression — does it stop short here in the imperfect mental being called Man? Or is the secret of it simply a succession of rebirths whose only purpose of issue is to labour towards the point at which it can learn its own futility, renounce

itself and take its leap into some original unborn Existence or Non-Existence? There is at least the possibility, there comes at a certain point the certitude, that there is a far greater consciousness than what we call Mind, and that by ascending the ladder still farther we can find a point at which the hold of the material Inconscience, the vital and mental Ignorance ceases; a principle of consciousness becomes capable of manifestation which liberates not partially, not imperfectly, but radically and wholly this imprisoned Divine. In this vision each stage of evolution appears as due to the descent of a higher and higher Power of consciousness, raising the terrestrial level, creating a new stratum, but the highest yet remain to descend and it is by their descent that the riddle of terrestrial existence will receive its solution and not only the soul but Nature herself find her deliverance. This is the Truth which has been seen in flashes, in more and more entirety of its terms by the line of seers whom the Tantra would call the hero-seekers and the divine-seekers and which may now be nearing the point of readiness for its full revelation and experience. Then whatever be the heavy weight of strife and suffering and darkness in the world, yet if there is this as its high result awaiting us, all that has gone before may not be counted too great a price by the strong and adventurous for the glory that is to come. At any rate the shadow lifts; there is a Divine Light that leans over the world and is not only a far-off incommunicable Lustre.

It is true that the problem still remains why all this that yet is should have been necessary — these crude beginnings, this long and stormy passage — why should the heavy and tedious price be demanded, why should evil and suffering ever have been there. For to the how of the fall into the Ignorance as opposed to the why, the effective cause, there is a substantial agreement in all spiritual experience. It is the division, the separation, the principle of isolation from the Permanent and One that brought it about; it is because the ego set up for itself in the world emphasising its own desire and self-affirmation in preference to its unity with the Divine and its oneness with all; it is because instead of the one supreme Force, Wisdom, Light determining the harmony of all forces each Idea, Force, Form of things was allowed to work itself out as far as it could in the mass of infinite possibilities by its separate will and inevitably in the end by conflict with others. Division, ego, the imperfect consciousness and groping and struggle of a separate self-affirmation are the efficient cause of the suffering and ignorance of this world. Once consciousnesses separated from the one consciousness, they fell inevitably into Ignorance and the last result of Ignorance was Inconscience; from a dark immense Inconscient this material world arises and out of it a soul that by evolution is struggling into consciousness, attracted towards the hidden Light, ascending but still blindly towards the lost Divinity from which it came.

But why should this have happened at all? One common way of putting the question and answering it ought to be eliminated from the first, — the human way and its ethical revolt and reprobation, its emotional outcry. For it is not, as some

religions suppose, a supra-cosmic, arbitrary, personal Deity himself altogether uninvolved in the fall who has imposed evil and suffering on creatures made capriciously by his fiat. The Divine we know is an Infinite Being in whose infinite manifestation these things have come — it is the Divine itself that is here, behind us, pervading the manifestation, supporting the world with its oneness; it is the Divine that is in us upholding itself the burden of the fall and its dark consequence. If above It stands for ever in its perfect Light, Bliss and Peace, It is also here; its Light, Bliss and Peace are secretly here supporting all; in ourselves there is a spirit, a central presence greater than the series of surface personalities which, like the supreme Divine itself, is not overborne by the fate they endure. If we find out this Divine within us, if we know ourselves as this spirit which is of one essence and being with the Divine, that is our gate of deliverance and in it we can remain ourselves even in the midst of this world's disharmonies, luminous, blissful and free. That much is the age-old testimony of spiritual experience.

But still what is the purpose and origin of the disharmony — why came this division and ego, this world of painful evolution? Why must evil and sorrow enter into the divine Good, Bliss and Peace? It is hard to answer to the human intelligence on its own level, for the consciousness to which the origin of this phenomenon belongs and to which it stands as it were automatically justified in a supra-intellectual knowledge, is a cosmic and not an individualised human intelligence; it sees in larger spaces, it has another vision and cognition, other terms of consciousness than human reason and feeling. To the human mind one might answer that while in itself the Infinite might be free from those perturbations, yet once manifestation began infinite possibility also began and among the infinite possibilities which it is the function of the universal manifestation to work out, the negation, the apparent effective negation — with all its consequences — of the Power, Light, Peace, Bliss was very evidently one. If it is asked why even if possible it should have been accepted, the answer nearest to the Cosmic Truth which the human intelligence can make is that in the relations or in the transition of the Divine in the Oneness to the Divine in the Many, this ominous possible became at a certain point an inevitable. For once it appears it acquires for the Soul descending into evolutionary manifestation an irresistible attraction which creates the inevitability — an attraction which in human terms on the terrestrial level might be interpreted as the call of the unknown, the joy of danger and difficulty and adventure, the will to attempt the impossible, to work out the incalculable, the will to create the new and the uncreated with one's own self and life as the material, the fascination of contradictories and their difficult harmonisation — these things translated into another supraphysical, superhuman consciousness, higher and wider than the mental, were the temptation that led to the fall. For to the original being of light on the verge of the descent the one thing unknown was the depths of the abyss, the possibilities of the Divine in the Ignorance and Inconscience. On the other side from the Divine Oneness a vast acquiescence,

compassionate, consenting, helpful, a supreme knowledge that this thing must be, that having appeared it must be worked out, that its appearance is in a certain sense part of an incalculable infinite wisdom, that if the plunge into Night was inevitable the emergence into a new unprecedented Day was also a certitude, and that only so could a certain manifestation of the Supreme Truth be effected — by a working out with its phenomenal opposites as the starting-point of the evolution, as the condition laid down for a transforming emergence. In this acquiescence was embraced too the will of the great Sacrifice, the descent of the Divine itself into the Inconsience to take up the burden of the Ignorance and its consequences, to intervene as the Avatar and the Vibhuti walking between the double sign of the Cross and the Victory towards the fulfilment and deliverance. A too imaged rendering of the inexpressible Truth? But without images how to present to the intellect a mystery far beyond it? It is only when one has crossed the barrier of the limited intelligence and shared in the cosmic experience and the knowledge which sees things from identity that the supreme realities which lie behind these images — images corresponding to the terrestrial fact — assume their divine forms and are felt as simple, natural, implied in the essence of things. It is by entering into that greater consciousness alone that one can grasp the inevitability of its self-creation and its purpose.

This is indeed only the Truth of the manifestation as it presents itself to the consciousness when it stands on the border line between Eternity and the descent into Time where the relation between the One and the Many in the evolution is self-determined, a zone where all that is to be is implied but not yet in action. But the liberated consciousness can rise higher where the problem exists no longer and from there see it in the light of a supreme identity where all is predetermined in the automatic self-existent truth of things and self-justified to an absolute consciousness and wisdom and absolute Delight which is behind all creation and non-creation and the affirmation and negation are both seen with the eyes of the ineffable Reality that delivers and reconciles them. But that knowledge is not expressible to the human mind; its language of light is too undecipherable, the light itself too bright for a consciousness accustomed to the stress and obscurity of the cosmic riddle and entangled in it to follow the clue or to grasp its secret. In any case, it is only when we rise in the spirit beyond the zone of the darkness and the struggle that we enter into the full significance of it and there is a deliverance of the soul from its enigma. To rise to that height of liberation is the true way out and the only means of the indubitable knowledge.

But the liberation and transcendence need not necessarily impose a disappearance, a sheer dissolving out from the manifestation; it can prepare a liberation into action of the highest Knowledge and an intensity of Power that can transform the world and fulfil the evolutionary urge. It is an ascent from which there is no longer a fall but a winged or self-sustained descent of light, force and Ananda.

It is what is inherent in force of being that manifests as becoming; but what the

manifestation shall be, its terms, its balance of energies, its arrangement of principles depends on the consciousness which acts in the creative force, on the power of consciousness which Being delivers from itself for manifestation. It is in the nature of Being to be able to grade and vary its powers of consciousness and determine according to the grade and variation its world or its degree and scope of self-revelation. The manifested creation is limited by the power to which it belongs and sees and lives according to it and can only see more, live more powerfully, change its world by opening or moving towards or making descend a greater power of consciousness that was above it. This is what is happening in the evolution of consciousness in our world, a world of inanimate matter producing under the stress of this necessity a power of life, a power of mind which bring into it new forms of creation and still labouring to produce, to make descend into it some supramental power. It is further an operation of creative force which moves between two poles of consciousness. On one side there is a secret consciousness within and above which contains in it all potentialities — there eternally manifest, here awaiting delivery — of light, peace, power and bliss. On the other side there is another, outward on the surface and below, that starts from the apparent opposite of unconsciousness, inertia, blind stress, possibility of suffering and grows by receiving into itself higher and higher powers which make it always re-create its manifestation in larger terms, each new creation of this kind bringing out something of the inner potentiality, making it more and more possible to bring down the Perfection that waits above. As long as the outward personality we call ourselves is centred in the lower powers of consciousness, the riddle of its own existence, its purpose, its necessity is to it an insoluble enigma; if something of the truth is at all conveyed to this outward mental man, he but imperfectly grasps it and perhaps misinterprets and misuses and mislives it. His true staff of walking is made more of a fire of faith than any ascertained and indubitable light of knowledge. It is only by rising toward a higher consciousness beyond the mental line and therefore superconscient now to him that he can emerge from his inability and his ignorance. His full liberation and enlightenment will come when he crosses the line into the light of a new superconscient existence. That is the transcendence which was the object of aspiration of the mystics and the spiritual seekers.

But in itself this would change nothing in the creation here, the evasion of a liberated soul from the world makes to that world no difference. But this crossing of the line if turned not only to an ascending but to a descending purpose would mean the transformation of the line from what it now is, a lid, a barrier, into a passage for the higher powers of consciousness of the Being now above it. It would mean a new creation on earth, a bringing in of the ultimate powers which would reverse the conditions here, in as much as that would produce a creation raised into the full flood of spiritual and supramental light in place of one emerging into a half-light of mind out of a darkness of material inconscience. It is only in such a full flood of the

realised spirit that the embodied being could know, in the sense of all that was involved in it, the meaning and temporary necessity of his descent into the darkness and its conditions and at the same time dissolve them by a luminous transmutation into a manifestation here of the revealed and no longer of the veiled and disguised or apparently deformed Divine.

June 1933

A disciple's question

A. B. writes in an article that through sorrow and suffering God leads us to immortality; that there is a glory, even a bliss, in their conquest. I am afraid my mystic vision and chicken heart do not see much in this theory. Conquest of sorrow and suffering is all right for brave hearts like Vivekananda's and A. B.'s, or even for poor hearts like mine when they have a Guru like Sri Aurobindo and a mother like our Mother here to do the sadhana for them; but what about the people outside who are wallowing under the weight of their crosses?

Sri Aurobindo's reply to the disciple

I suppose you have not read my "Riddle of this World"; but it is a similar solution I put there. X's way of putting it is a trifle too "Vedantic-Theistic" — in my view it is a transaction between the One and the Many. In the beginning it was you (not the human you who is now complaining but the central being) which accepted or even invited the adventure of the Ignorance; sorrow and struggle are a necessary consequence of the plunge into the Inconscience and the evolutionary emergence out of it. The explanation is that it had an object, the eventual play of the Divine Consciousness and Ananda not in its original transcendence but under conditions for which the plunge into the Inconscience was necessary. It is fundamentally a cosmic problem and can be understood only from the cosmic consciousness. If you want a solution which will be agreeable to the human mind and feelings, I am afraid there is none. No doubt if human beings had made the universe, they would have done much better; but they were not there to be consulted when they were made. Only your central being was there and that was much nearer in its temerarious foolhardiness to Vivekananda's or X's than to the repining prudence of your murmuring and trembling human mentality of the present moment — otherwise it would never have come down into the adventure. Or perhaps it did not realise what it was in for? It is the same with the wallowers under their cross. Even now they wallow because something in them likes the wallowing and bear the cross because something in them chooses to suffer. So? —

July 20, 1935

SRI AUROBINDO

The Mother's letter to Maurice Magre

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry, 14 June, 1933

Your letter has been communicated to me and the questions you ask in it were for me, at a certain state of my development, of such intense interest that I shall take great pleasure in replying to them. Nevertheless, a reply which is formulated mentally, however complete it may be, can never be *the reply*, the one which silences every doubt and quietens the mind. Certitude can only come with spiritual experience, and the most beautiful philosophical works can never equal or replace a few minutes of Knowledge that is lived.

You say: "Should a man of average development, who is no longer tormented by earthly desires and who is linked to the world only by his affections, renounce the hope of not reincarnating? Is there not, beyond the human state, a less material state where one goes when one is no longer recalled by desire into the human state? This seems strictly logical to me. Man cannot be at the summit of the scale. The animals are very near to him; is he not very near to the following state?"

First of all, what maintains the relation with the earth is not only vital desire but any specifically human movement, and affections certainly form part of this. One is bound to the necessity of reincarnation as much by one's affections, by one's feelings, as by one's desires. However, in the matter of reincarnation as in all things, each case has its own solution, and it is certain that a constant aspiration for liberation from rebirth, together with a sustained effort towards the elevation and sublimation of the consciousness, should have the result of severing the chain of earthly existences, although it does not for all that put an end to individual existence, which is prolonged in another world. But why think that his existence in another, more ethereal world should be the "following state" which, relative to man, would be what man is to the animal? It seems to me more logical to think (and a deeper knowledge confirms this certitude) that the following state too will be a physical one, although we may conceive of this physical as magnified, transfigured by the descent, the infusion of Light and Truth. All the ages and millennia of human life that have elapsed so far have prepared the advent of this *new state*, and now the time has come for its concrete and tangible realisation. That is the very essence of Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the aim of the group he has allowed to form around him, the purpose of his Ashram.

For your second question, I intended to send you the translation of a few extracts from Sri Aurobindo's works. But when I told him that I wanted to translate some passages from *The Life Divine* to send to you, he told me that I would have to translate no less than two chapters if I wanted to convey a fairly complete reply to you. Seeing my perplexity, he of himself decided to write some new pages on this subject; he gave them to me very recently and I immediately began the translation.

I do not wish to spoil the freshness of the beautiful pages that I shall have the privilege of translating, but in the meanwhile, until I am able to send them to you, I shall give you, if I may, my too simple and succinct view of the problem.

It seems beyond question to me that the universe in which we live is not one of the most successful, particularly in its outermost expression; but it is also beyond question that we are part of it and that consequently, the only logical and wise thing for us to do is to set to work to perfect it, to extract the best from the worst and to make it into the most marvellous possible universe. For, I would add, not only is this transfiguration possible, but it is certain. May the peace and joy of Knowledge be with you.

14 June 1933

(Signed: *The Mother*)

(Sri Aurobindo's replies from *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 24-32, Maurice Magre's question and the Mother's letter from *Words of the Mother – III*, CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 244-46, originally published as *l'Enigme de ce monde*, and the disciple's question from Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, the Complete Set, pp. 276-77.)

The pessimists have made moksha synonymous with annihilation or dissolution, but its true meaning is freedom. He who is free from bondage, is free, is mukta. But the last bondage is the passion for liberation itself which must be renounced before the soul can be perfectly free, and the last knowledge is the realisation that there is none bound, none desirous of freedom, but the soul is for ever and perfectly free, that bondage is an illusion and the liberation from bondage is an illusion. Not only are we bound but in play, the mimic knots are of such a nature that we ourselves can at our pleasure undo them.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 6)

ADDENDUM 2

NEWS ITEM FROM A.F.P.

(Agence France-Presse)

Pondicherry, 27 September 1947

Governor Baron and Mr. Maurice Schumann meet Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo, “the greatest thinker of India”, interrupted his 21-year old seclusion to meet Governor Baron and Mr. Maurice Schumann.

Sri Aurobindo, now 75 years of age, took an active part in the first Indian National Revolutionary movement. He then took refuge in Chandernagar, and then in Pondicherry, where, in 1926 (*sic*), he started “his mystic life”. He has tens of thousands of disciples. An ashram similar to the Pythagorean schools of antiquity, has more than six hundred of his followers.

Only once, 19 years ago, Sri Aurobindo had come out of his seclusion to meet the poet Rabindranath Tagore.

He had a 45 minutes conversation with Governor Baron and Mr. Schumann, in the course of which he said:

“France, next to India, is the country for which I have the greatest affection and respect. Your idea of making Pondicherry a permanent meeting place of France and India has my full support.”

He then suggested the setting up in Pondicherry of a sort of University-Town which would have students from different countries study the Dravidian and Aryan civilizations (*sic*).

“This cultural centre could be the centre of synthesis between the East and the West,” he concluded.

ADDENDUM 3

MAURICE SCHUMANN RECOLLECTS

Maurice Schumann (1911-1988) was a French politician and writer who was the inspirational radio spokesman of Gen. Charles de Gaulle and the French Resistance in broadcasts to Nazi-ruled France from London during World War II; he later served as a political party leader, foreign minister. He became a member of the French Academy.

In this interview with Pournaprema he recollects his coming to work out the modalities of the transfer of the French controlled territories to independent India.

He met Sri Aurobindo — and it was that, he says, that ensured the success of his mission.

... So the question was to find out if there was a way to negotiate with the Government of India, not the perpetuation of our presence in the five enclaves, but a delay, a time for reflection which would enable later negotiations to enable these enclaves to attain independence.

At first, when I was sent to try to obtain this result, I was told, the diplomats explained to me that the chances were very, very meagre, not to say nil, given the fact that India in its entirety, at the time when she was torn by civil strife — which I personally witnessed and which made so much blood to flow, (mainly in Calcutta, and where ‘Mother India’, as Gandhi used to say, was broken in two by the birth of Pakistan, which at the time was a Pakistan itself split in two, as there was an East Pakistan and a West Pakistan,) it seemed inconceivable that a continuation of a French or Portugese colony was possible.

François Baron told me then that there was a strong French influence in the Ashram.

[. . .]

. . . She [The Mother] arranged a meeting with Sri Aurobindo which was all the more surprising because as a rule Sri Aurobindo was not seeing anybody . . . He made an exception for me. Given the stature he had, his immense moral influence, it was in itself an event. And from the moment he received me on this earth that his presence sanctified, the idea of use of force against a place where he had, pursued by the British police, taken refuge, was inconceivable. He had an opportunity to express his gratefulness to France, he did it immediately and the interview he gave

me, the audience he granted me, went even further. Actually, it is an important phenomenon that I have understood better since, that the colonisers of India, their more important figures, had the feeling, to use Kipling's phrase, that never would the East and the West meet.

[. . .]

Whereas the greatest Indians held the absolutely opposite opinion. That was the case with Gandhi when I met him. I met him after I met Sri Aurobindo. I went to Delhi and it is there that I met him. But Gandhi was fully aware of what he owed to English culture. And Sri Aurobindo was fully aware of what he owed to Western culture.

[. . .]

The political result, I have just spoken to you about it: I was received by Nehru, it could not have been otherwise after having been received by Sri Aurobindo, who had permitted that a report of it could be made, and so he [Nehru] could not but receive me, Gandhi could not but receive me, and both of them had to discuss with me, — mainly Nehru, for Gandhi had other concerns — the future of the decolonisation of the five enclaves, to discuss but not to think even for a moment, to take recourse to arms. That was then the success of my first diplomatic negotiation. I am not able to say the same for the others I had later as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

[. . .]

And do you think that, at present, if there is this French presence in Pondicherry, — for there are important French institutions in Pondicherry, — it is due to this.

It all started with that. For it was not possible to hold on to a colonial status. There was a deputy from French India who was an Indian, Saravan Lambert, in the National Assembly, my colleague; there was a Senator representing French India, — it was already the situation before the war and so it continued during the Fourth Republic, but we could not be happy with a colonial status as in the earlier days. Therefore we created, within what was then known as the French Union, a body consisting of the representatives of the five enclaves. The first meeting was held in Pondicherry. I was present. I spoke to the delegates, and there an idea came up, which was immediately developed further. It was this:

We salute Independent India. We know perfectly well that the whole of India will one day be independent. We would like that the departure of France as a power and as an authority should coincide with an agreement regarding Pondicherry which would become a window open to France, to the whole French entity, French culture and the French language.

A half-century later, there are definite signs for which I am infinitely grateful to Sri Aurobindo and to your grandmother [The Mother], for it is evident that without her the first stone of the edifice would not have been placed.

It is wonderful to hear that. I thank you very much.

[. . .]

After all these years, what do you still recollect of your meeting with Sri Aurobindo? An inner impression . . .

The extraordinary radiance of the divine life, the Life Divine. The radiance that was there on his face. I always thought that faith manifested as a breath. One feels, in certain circumstances, the Breath of God, *Spiritus* — it means ‘breath’ . . . and I felt it as soon as I saw him. One had the impression — there was no artificial light falling on him — one had the impression that he was himself a radiant centre.

How long did the interview last?

One hour. It was more philosophic than political, but its political importance was that it did take place. The single fact that it happened guaranteed the success of my mission.

And Mother, where did you meet her?

In the room where Sri Aurobindo meditated. It is because of her that the interview took place. The idea came from François Baron who was himself an adept of Sri Aurobindo whom he called ‘My Master’.

(Translation of a transcript of an interview in French.
Reproduced from the August 2009 issue of *Mother India*.)

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of April 2011)

DURING the Second World War the Mother would not sit on a chair. She remained standing while people did their *pranam*. With her head bent forward, repeating the gesture hundreds of times, untiringly and with a beautiful gentle smile on her face, she continued to bless with her soft hands the heads which were placed on her feet. Flowers used to be counted for which the Mother had to work endlessly in those days. Someone would, for example, come during the evening *pranams* and give her a plate full of *bokul* flowers while offering his *pranam*. The Mother would ask if the flowers had been counted or not. If the answer was “No” then Chinmayi would take the plate of *bokul* flowers and keep it apart from the other plates. At night the Mother and Chinmayi would together count the flowers and write the number on a piece of paper. One morning, I went into the Flower-room (which is now the late Pujalal-ji’s room) and asked, as soon as I got in, whether I could help in counting the flowers for an hour or so. Jyotin-da of the Flower-room happily gave me the permission. As I started counting the flowers I understood that all the flowers, however big or small, had to be counted. *Shafali*, button flowers, *bokul* flowers and many other flowers were there. After counting the flowers we had to write on a piece of paper the name of the flower and the number. Then the flowers had to be placed on a plate in a decorative way and sent to the Mother. If this was not done then the Mother and Chinmayi would stay up late at night and count thousands of flowers. There was an occult purpose for this. After the war was won by the Allied Forces this practice was stopped.

This Flower-room held a deep fascination for me. There were so many plates decorated with flowers as well as bouquets for birthdays and so many kinds of baskets of flowers. It was really a little flower show. I would go in and wander around and look at the flowers. Then I would go back to my work, having filled my heart with the intoxicating perfume.

*

It was in this Flower-room that something funny happened one day. As I have said earlier, on everybody’s birthday bouquets used to be prepared for them. In order to make it clear which one was for whom, there used to be a slip of paper with the person’s name on each bouquet. Once it was the birthday of a certain gentleman. He entered the Flower-room and took the bouquet which was marked for him. After that he said, “Jyotin-da, it appears, is partial to some people. The bouquets meant

for two persons have roses and golden *champa* flowers, and the rest of us have ordinary flowers.” Hardly had he said this that Jyotin-da appeared on the scene, coming in from the verandah at the back then handing him a rose and a golden *champa*, wished him “Happy Birthday” with a smile. After this he explained, “Actually, we give everyone the same flowers. These special flowers which you can see in some bouquets meant for others, have been given by some of their friends. They came here and added their flowers after checking the names.” The gentleman didn’t want to end the matter there. Fixing his gaze on two large bouquets he wanted to know why they were kept there. All the others were alike, only these two were different. Jyotin-da became a bit serious and said, “This has been done according to the Mother’s instructions. Two persons who are the heads of their departments are going to receive these from the Mother’s hands.” The gentleman felt ashamed of himself and suddenly bowed before Jyotin-da. Greatly embarrassed, Jyotin-da said, “What on earth are you doing? You are older than me in age. How embarrassing!” The man did not want to listen to Jyotin-da any further. He affirmed that he was smaller and felt humbled.

Jyotin-da had a beautiful smile. It seems Sri Aurobindo had once said that a person’s true nature could be understood from his smile. Apparently he used to say that Jyotin-da’s smile was very pure and beautiful.

*

From flowers my interest moved to gardens. Dada (Jyotin-da) gave me permission to start a garden in the courtyard of the bakery. If you want to create a garden, you have to see the gardens of others in order to train your imagination. That is why I began to visit gardens. When I saw Parichand-da’s garden I liked it very much. I also liked very much the garden attached to the Golconde Guest House. It was probably in February 1942 that Mona of Golconde invited Jyotin-da to see the garden. I was enchanted when I entered the Japanese-style garden. Wherever I turned my gaze there were green creepers. On the ground there were flowering plants of various sizes in beds. In the corners there were little rock gardens. From far they did not look like rocks at all. In the middle there were narrow water channels. Inside the channels there were tiny pebbles which were shining. In between the stones there were green creepers on the blue water, as well as tiny plants. Admiring the incomparable beauty of the setting sun, I did a *namaskar* and took my leave.

Many years later I went to Golconde again to see an exhibition. There were Japanese objects that had been used by the Mother. The exhibition and the surroundings went admirably well together. Everything was as in Japan: houses, gardens, objects, things of daily use, mattresses, flower arrangements, row upon row of clothes (kimonos) were exhibited, shoes, umbrellas and what not. I liked it so much that I went there three times. Most of the things belonged to the Mother. Some kimonos

and shoes belonged to Pavitra-da. The Mother's taste and the skilful execution of the Ashram artists had made the exhibition truly worth seeing.

*

Soon after my arrival here I came to know our beloved Sahana-di. She showered on me a lot of affection. One day I took courage and told her, "Sahana-di, I had heard records of your songs in Bengal. Now that I have found you so close to me, I have a great desire to hear you sing without accompaniments." Sahana-di, full of affection, immediately agreed and informed me that she was going to sing on a certain evening at eight at Ila-di's¹ house. She permitted me to be present at that gathering and to listen to her songs. On the appointed day, at the time indicated, I was there. After the lights were switched off, Sahana-di began singing in her sweet voice in a darkened room. The first song was

*"In lotus groves, thy spirit roves.
Where shall I find a seat for thee?"*²

That evening she sang three songs, all of which were very beautiful. I really enjoyed myself.

*

My introduction to the American President Woodrow Wilson's daughter, whose Ashram name was Nishtha, was as interesting as it was significant. After coming to the Ashram I received my first sari for a February Darshan. In those days the saris were given by Nolini-da. Since I was new, Nolini-da called me and said that I should come and take the sari from him. Just after me, Nishtha came to take hers. For some reason she wanted to exchange her sari with mine. Having overheard this conversation, Nolini-da came out and explained to us that in every sari there was a touch of grace which was put there by the Mother according to each one's need. These things are not to be exchanged. Of course, Nishtha happily accepted Nolini-da's words. The name "Nishtha" was given by Sri Aurobindo. A worthy recipient of the name was Nishtha. She suffered from asthma. One evening, she came to the Mother's *pranam* in great agony. Even though she could not climb the stairs, she did not want to take anybody's help. On hearing this, the Mother herself came down the stairs, then stretching out both her hands, and holding her, she led her upstairs. Of course, I don't know how she eventually came down. The next morning I heard that she had passed away in her sleep. She was an extremely luminous instrument.

*

1. Ila-di was Chitra-di's mother.

2. This song was written in Bengali by Anilbaran, and translated into English by Dilip Kumar Roy.

When the Second World War had spread to almost all parts of the world in a terrifying way, some families asked the Mother for protection. The Mother, remover of all fears, heard their prayers and gave shelter to many people along with their families. Many departments and the School were started in order to keep various kinds of people engaged and to fulfil the needs of the children's education. Our little Ashram then developed into a new and great, multifaceted institution by the grace of the Mother, the giver of many powers.

At first a school was opened for the children. However, the Mother also gave the opportunity to many of us adults who did not know English, to join the school. This is how, after studying in this school, I had the good fortune to see and to know so many new things. Nolini-da used to teach in the classroom next to ours. He was a child among other children. It was as if he was the children's friend. They used to listen happily to Nolini-da's stories. If they became a bit noisy, with their laughter and their clapping, Nolini-da used to make them conscious and brought them under control. In this way, within a year, they managed to learn many things. At the end of the year the Mother commented, "Nolini is the best teacher." After this, Nolini-da started teaching the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to the adults in the evenings. Amrita-da used to teach Tamil to the grown-ups. I used to learn English in the School.

*

After learning some French from my cousin, I had the opportunity to learn it from Vasudha at night. Priti, Tapati, Minu and one or two others used to attend Vasudha's class. Besides her other responsibilities, she was also given the work of teaching this class. Every evening, she returned from the Mother's room with a basket full of jasmine flowers. Placing this basket before us, she would wish us "*Bonsoir*" (Good Evening) with a radiant smile, and sitting down in front of us would start teaching.

One day, as she began the study of the book "*La Mère*" (*The Mother*), she noticed that many of us did not have a copy of the book. At that time, in the Mother's store, there was only one copy left of this book. She gave it for this class. We had a lottery to decide who would get that copy. It came to me. Everybody in the class was happy about this, as they knew that I did not have the means to buy a copy. We started the class with this book, "*The Mother*", and later other books were also taken up for study.

*

The Mother asked the students of our French class to enact a play by Racine. Vasudha, Priti, Tapati and Chitra used to rehearse after the class. Soon, the play was ready to be presented on stage. It was performed in the *Salle Jeanne d'Arc* in town. The

Mother was present during the performance. This was the first play staged by the Ashram. When we came to know that the performance was appreciated and that the Mother was happy, everybody's heart was filled with joy.

*

Once, for Vasudha's birthday, the Mother went to Cazanove and celebrated the birthday there. We, Vasudha's students, as well as some of her close friends and the ladies of the embroidery department were present. On the appointed day, in the evening, we went ahead with Vasudha in a car and waited there for the Mother's arrival. A seat was prepared for the Mother in a beautiful and clean open place in the shade. In front was a high path. Along this path were planted neat rows of papaya trees. The short trees were full of green leaves and green papayas. The papayas were growing barely a little above the ground. It was an enchanting sight. It was evident that the caretaker of the garden had put in a lot of care and was very knowledgeable about his work. We were all praising this work when we heard the horn of the Mother's car. Vasudha went up to the car and brought the Mother in. She spoke affectionately to Vasudha, then came and sat on her seat. Looking around her and seeing us she gave us her sweet and radiant smile. Then she shut her eyes and went deep into meditation. We also joined her. After the meditation she gave some *prasad* first to Vasudha with a smile and then to us. When the distribution of *prasad* was over, Vasudha bowed down to the Mother, and each one of us did the same. Then it was time to come back. Following the Mother's car, we too came back to the Ashram.

(To be continued)

PRAMILA DEVI

(Translated by Sunayana Panda from the original Bengali *Ujjwal Ateet*.)

"Who are you?" asks the adverse force.

"I am the impartial and truthful mirror in which each one can find his true likeness."

25 March 1952

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – I, CWM 2nd Ed. Vol. 13, p. 62)

Reflections on the way

[In August 2010, some of the former students of the Centre of Education were asked to share their experiences in short talks arranged in the Hall of Harmony in the School.

It is proposed to hold these talks in the period of the February and August Darshans.

We will be publishing short pieces under this heading from time to time.]

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MOTHER

THANK YOU for coming this evening at the start of this series of talks. As an ex-student I can honestly say that sitting here in the Hall of Harmony giving a talk gives me a tingle and for this I must thank Sunayana for encouraging me to speak.

When I was asked whether I would like to participate in this series of talks, I hesitated, not knowing how I could contribute and wondering who would be interested in what I had to say as I am no expert in any field of relevance here. The only thing I can speak about is myself and even here I am still learning! I then decided that the easiest way to speak would be to open up a bit about myself and talk about my relationship with the Mother.

I came here to the Ashram at the age of 2 back in 1965 and spent the next 12 years of my life in an environment of such carefree joy that I find it hard to describe.

Our family was blessed in getting a Darshan every Sunday with the Mother in Her room and I have been told that instead of sitting quietly I was more keen to wander around. It seems the Mother laughed and asked my mother to leave me alone and to allow me to play around in the room. Then one day, after a couple of visits, I suddenly rushed from my regular routine of looking around to place my head at Mother's Feet and was very smilingly and fondly blessed by Her. Ever since, this life has been in Her hands and I truly have been carried through life joyously.

I think the first time I knew there was something more to routine things was the manner in which a plant, Divine Presence, that my father grew at our home those days, delivered flowers exactly in time for us to take to Her Sunday after Sunday, it was truly magical and it filled my young mind with awe and glee to see it happen week after week after week.

Another distinct memory from those innocent days was of my parents eagerly writing down a dream of mine as I recounted it to them and sending it to the Mother and my receiving a precious response from Her which I must keep private. The

reason I recount this is to highlight how She got the time from the countless activities that kept Her occupied in this world and others to read and respond in Her own hand to a child's dreams with such tenderness and love.

Soon enough for reasons best known to the Mother, I left the School here in 1977 after the equivalent of the 10th standard. I did my usual exams and college, etc. During this period, I was struck by a rather serious illness and was bedridden for the better part of a year and even at this time, I do not remember any feeling of actually 'being ill'. . . time just went by and by Her Grace I grew well again.

Back on my feet, it was time to do my CA which was a period of real rapid growing up, being sent alone at the age of 20 to audit companies and rather wise adults who probably were delighted to see a green junior coming to audit them. There's nothing like being thrown in the deep end to learn rapidly and adapt and more than hold your own. The Internship was also a great morale booster to us young chaps as we went around seeing various qualified CAs and gaining confidence that if those people could pass, so could we! The problem being that during those days the pass rate for CA finals would be below 5% of those taking the exams . . . anyway, the hurdle was crossed and how! This whole short history is only to highlight again how Mother got me through! The finals those days consisted of 2 groups of 4 papers each and one needed to get at least 40 marks in each paper and at least 50% aggregate overall in each group to pass. I had taken both groups together and was truly blessed to find that I had been awarded 40 marks in a paper in one group and had got 50% overall marks in the other group!! So even one mark in a single paper across 5 papers could have resulted in problems for me! I also highlight this because ultimately, in the long run, as we have been told here, exams and marks count for nothing and in life once you are on the job, it is the contribution that matters and not how much you scored in the exams which unfortunately most parents outside the Ashram system seem to forget. Many years later, working in the Gulf, I found myself on par with an individual who had been my senior-in-charge and was a 'top-3' ranker in the intermediate and final of both the CA and CWA courses. Such was the continued Grace carrying me through life that it enabled me to become, at 39, the Chief Financial Officer of a bank in the Middle East with a balance sheet of a considerable figure across multiple countries and counting some 1500 staff which, by the time I resigned to return home to the Ashram, had grown even more.

In between I was with a bank in Bahrain and enjoying an extremely comfortable lifestyle for about 5 years with no real motivation to move ahead. For those who are not aware of it, the lifestyle in the Gulf is extremely comfortable and Bahrain offers some of the best in creature comforts. One could almost describe it as a 'slow' quicksand and it sucks one in without one realising it. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, matters came to a head between the Chief Executive Officer and me and as happens in such events, there can be only one winner and I was forced to move on. When this happened, there was a lot of uncertainty and I think, being only human, I was

quite upset about the turn of events.

However, as they say, when the Lord closes one door, He opens another, and I got the position in the bank I remained with till recently where I was treated with much respect and which valued my contributions. But more interesting than that was that within 18 months of my departure from Bahrain, the bank I was in got into some serious difficulties which I do not need to go into for the purpose of this narrative. . . . That's when I realised how true were Mother's words when She said that often one is very upset at the turn of events and it is only much later, when one looks back on one's life one realises what Grace was bestowed in those circumstances. Had the Grace not pulled me out despite my protestations, I may well have been in the same position as my colleagues still stuck in Bahrain!

It had been an interesting journey but I had been developing a strong urge to return home. However, when one gets used to a nice salary at the end of each month, it is not the easiest of decisions to take to leave and return. Many of my colleagues and friends thought I had lost it when I mentioned what I wanted to do for the rest of my life! I had worked on myself over the past few years and prayed regularly and sincerely that it would become possible — and sure enough, things worked out as they always do and here I am by the Grace of the Mother!

As you can see from what I have just said, the attitude I have tried to adopt is that of the baby cat; for those of you who remember the Mother's recounting of Sri Ramakrishna's description of the paths — you can either be the baby monkey and hold on tight to your mother or be the baby cat and be carried by your mother without worry. However, as She has also clearly said, being the baby cat does not mean that personal effort is not required since we are humans and not baby cats — so it is a daily challenge to honestly analyse one's thoughts and behaviour and have the courage to place sincerely everything before Them so that one may progress in one's sadhana with Their Grace and Blessings, for as Sri Aurobindo has said, it is up to the sadhak to analyse and place his faults consciously at the feet of the Guru and not for the Guru to change everything since He knows what is wrong with the disciple.

To end, I would like to read out two letters of Sri Aurobindo from the book *The Mother*. They are to be found in the section 'True Relation with The Mother':

True inner relation with the Mother

An inner (soul) relation means that one feels the Mother's presence, is turned to her at all times, is aware of her force moving, guiding, helping, is full of love for her and always feels a great nearness whether one is physically near her or not. This relation takes up the mind, vital and inner physical till one feels one's mind close to the Mother's mind, one's vital in harmony with hers,

one's very physical consciousness full of her. These are all the elements of the inner union, not only in the spirit and self but in the nature.

(SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 173)

The Mother's love

You are the Mother's child and the Mother's love to her children is without limit and she bears patiently with the defects of their nature. Try to be the true child of the Mother: it is there within you, but your outward mind is occupied by little futile things and too often in a violent fuss over them. You must not only see the Mother in dream but learn to see and feel her with you and within you at all times. Then you will find it easier to control yourself and change, — for she being there would be able to do it for you. (*Ibid.*, p. 176)

Thank You.

SATYA DAYANAND

A great misunderstanding has taken place.

You seem to believe that I say one thing when I mean another. This is absurd.

When I speak, I speak plainly and always mean what I say.

When I say: the first condition for yoga is to keep quiet and calm — I mean it.

When I say that talk is useless and leads only to confusion, waste of energy and loss of the little light one may have — I mean that and nothing else.

When I say that I have given nobody the right to speak in my name and to interpret my words according to his own fancy, I mean that and nothing else.

I hope that this is clear and decisive and this singular misunderstanding will now come to an end.

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – I, CWM 2nd Ed. Vol. 13, p. 98)

THE KRISHNA WORLD

1. Preamble

Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;
All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.

For this one moment lived the ages past;
The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.¹

(Sri Aurobindo, 'Krishna')

KRISHNA! Two syllables that have held us captive for millennia. Krishna has innumerable names, and we may use them according to our mood, the state of our consciousness, the need of the context. But Krishna is the term for the greatest, fiercest, the most incorrigible and definitely inescapable jailor of us all. We may recognise his presence or not, but he remains the Warden Divine. His is this creation, he is creation, he is in it and he is beyond. A truth difficult to comprehend, but easy enough compared to the other imponderables of a materialist, technology-oriented civilisation. We may not have a vision of Krishna in our own lives but we can understand the sense of comfort Krishna gives by just remembering the experiences of others. Krishna will never condemn us to loneliness and we know this for certain. He is the *sakha* throughout one's life and dons many disguises. When we recognise him and scream at him in our anger, he takes all that we say as our way of worship; when Yashoda binds him to the mortar he quietly submits himself to the rough ropes, and soon he has slipped out of our hands, the butter-thief! How can we reject him? He does not refuse help to any of us, does he? The hunch-backed Kubja, the helpless Draupadi, the sorrowing Kunti. Thinking of Krishna we feel we are in safe hands. Rather, we would hold his hands and enter the circular dance of life, take our place in the Ras and then enjoy life itself.

None of this sounds logical. But what has logic and reason done to help me face life? How has the denial of a guardian godhead lightened the weight of sad and bad experiences? But turning to the smile of Krishna with the peacock feather atop his crown has certainly taken the edge off a chilling disappointment or a seemingly unbearable loss. Somehow, the very term 'Krishna' brings an inward smile. Obviously as the Telugu poet Pothana described him, he is "the dark god, the lotus-eyed, the

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 608.

one who sprinkles compassionate friendliness on us” and we are relieved of misery.

For he is the Anandamaya Purusha, the conscious Being of Bliss in whom Sat, Chit and Ananda coalesce.

That is the sense of the supreme figure of the intensest Indian religion of love, Sri Krishna, the All-blissful and All-beautiful.²

When a mood of joy comes upon us, consciously evoked or quite unexpectedly, Krishna comes silently and sits beside us. Immediately an elation seizes us. We look here and there, sing or fall in step to dance. Sri Aurobindo distinguishes this mood from the mood brought on by the proximity of other gods, though technically they are all the same, as the Supreme is One, *Ekam Sat*. The experience we gain is the infusion of the Divine’s grace. But can Grace have many colours, many moods? Why not? We can gain a clue from Sri Aurobindo’s letter to a correspondent:

When the Ananda comes into you, it is the Divine who comes into you, just as when the Peace flows into you, it is the Divine who is invading you, or when you are flooded with Light, it is the flood of the Divine himself that is around you. Of course, the Divine is something much more, many other things besides, and in them all a Presence, a Being, a Divine Person; for the Divine is Krishna, is Shiva, is the Supreme Mother. But through the Ananda you can perceive the Anandamaya Krishna, for the Ananda is the subtle body and being of Krishna; through the Peace you can perceive the Shantimaya Shiva; in the Light, in the delivering Knowledge, the Love, the fulfilling and uplifting Power you can meet the presence of the Divine Mother.³

What did Krishna look like? Two images get circulated amongst us all the time. It is either the Flute-Player of Brindavan or the *Gita*charya on the Kurukshetra battlefield. Both images coalesce in Ezhuthacchan’s *Mahabharata* in the Malayalam language. In the Karna Parva, Karna asks his charioteer Shalya, “Where is Arjuna?” Shalya looks towards Arjuna’s chariot and points towards the Divine Charioteer instead:

The colourful peacock feathers fixed in a row
And brought together and tied up on the top
With the heavy tresses so like dark clouds
In the diadem with its glitter and glow
The tiny particles of dust on them,

2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 580.

3. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 173.

The tilak too moist with sweat,
 The beauty of the brows that keep moving
 To create, protect and destroy the world
 The eyes that reflect the changing sentiments
 With pity and compassion for the lowly
 Anger towards the cruel and the wily,
 Love for the lovely, wonder at the squabble,
 Garlands, swaying on the breast,
 Made of tulsi, and lotus and tender leaves
 Strings of rubies and kausthubha jewel
 Around the neck, the whip in hand
 The breast smeared with kumkum,
 The bright yellow clothes, the anklets
 The twin lotus feet, as in my heart
 So I clearly saw in the chariot to my joy.⁴

The Krishna of Brindavan, the strategist pleading with Dhritarashtra for peace, the compassionate guardian of people in distress, the Supreme Being: all are caught in the net of Ezhuthacchan's poesy. Prof. Ayyappa Panicker refers to the passage as a perfect example of contextualisation and says:

Is it Shalya, or is it none other than Ezhuthacchan? Can't it be that the poet felt that an individual voice would ring beautiful amid the impersonality and objectivity of an epic? The skill and attractiveness of the introduction by the poet of himself into the poem by interiorisation is something that the reader must discover by himself or herself — especially, *karuna*, pathos; *kopa*, anger; *raga*, love; *adbhuta*, wonder; *hasya*, comic and *bhayanaka*, fear. Doesn't the descriptive hymn, uttered in mid-battle but with no incongruity, actually present a complex vision? Doesn't Shalya in the poet — no, the poet in Shalya — how really does one get it right? see the cowherd lad, Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha and Krishna the charioteer seated in the chariot even as they — no, he, again how does one get it right? Who is seated within his heart? . . . Shalya's vision becomes the reader's vision. Sound and sense have been crossed and united here, and seem to function beyond the infinite possibilities of poetry.⁵

That is why I repeat that logic is not going to take us far in this Krishna world. Shalya was a contemporary of Krishna in the Dwapara Yuga. But writing about Krishna in the Kaliyuga, Ezhuthacchan's Shalya can only 'see' Krishna as we do.

4. Translated by Dr. Ayyappa Panicker.

5. See http://samukta.info/archives/vol_4_1.

For we cannot separate the elements in Krishna's personality, having grown up with Krishna from our birth. For the Diwali on 16.10.1944 my father gifted me with P. Sri's *Andal*. The 100-page book is for children, and narrates in simple Tamil the life of the Tamil hymnologist Andal who lived in the 7th century. This crumbling book on my shelf is intimately connected with memories of my mother as she must have read the book for me a hundred times and more. The rough-hewn black-and-white photographs have got etched in my mind. Andal and Krishna as newly weds; Perialwar finding a babe near a Tulsi bush; the grown-up Andal decorating herself with garlands meant for Krishna's worship and looking at herself in a huge mirror; a young girl self-lost in sleep, dreaming of Krishna; Andal sending a *kuyil* as her messenger to Krishna; the Flute-Player seen in her dream; the dream-marriage, a typical Vaishnava wedding where Andal weds Krishna, sporting a peacock feather in his crown, the flute elegantly tucked in the waist. With a patient mother who was prepared to answer all the questions of a five-year-old, my entry into the Krishna world was just perfect.

Experiences, happy, sad and bizarre have not dimmed those rosy introductions to Krishna. Nor has a constant reading of Krishna literature dulled my wonderment at this Darling of Humanity. Entering the *Mahabharata* world brought a certain maturity to my understanding of Krishna. He was not merely the joyous flute-player, nor the miracle-hero of one's childhood. Now he was both the *Gopijanapriya* and the *Gitacharya*.

Not that there were no moments of self-doubt. When I read Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Krishna Charitra*,⁶ I think I did find myself wobbling just for a moment. I had heard of Bankim's view vaguely, but came to read his book only when father gave it to me in 1992. It had just then been translated by Pradip Bhattacharya and I must say it was an experience. Not in reading it, but the few hours I spent in listening to my father's⁷ astonished reactions at the close arguments of Bankim who had prepared a Krishna shorn of the felicity of miracles. Father was then deep in the final stages of his last publication, the narrative poem, *Krishna-Geetam*. It was not easy for me to accept whenever he said, "... but then, Bankim has a point." Ultimately Bankim himself came to our rescue in his preface to the second edition of *Krishna Charitra*:

My final say is that the establishment of Krishna's divinity is not the aim of this book. It is the discussion of his human nature which is my intention. I myself believe in his divinity; that faith, too, I have not concealed.

Indeed, why should we cleave the Krishna phenomenon? If he were the

6. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee: *Krishna Charitra*, translated by Pradip Bhattacharya (1991).

7. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, author of *Krishna-Geetam* (1994).

incarnation of the Supreme, then he could be both! So argues the heart that is fiercely faithful to the *Gopijanapriya*. Faith in Krishna as the Flute-playing Cowherd came early to a female child in a Vaishnava community. Growing up in a remote village, the association with Krishna in the Margashirsha (December-January) month was a much-awaited event. Getting up early at dawn and going around singing the thirty verses of Andal's⁸ *Tiruppavai* along with elders was fun. Just as the skies were becoming clearer with the red streaks of russet in the east, the bells would ring in the Brihanmadhava temple, the screen of the sanctum get drawn aside and *arati* would start while the elders chanted sonorously the last 29th verse:

This is the significance of our waking early,
Coming to you and worshipping your lotus-feet;
Born in the cowherd clan,
You must accept our humble services.
Not for immediate boons have we come,
O Govinda! For seven generations seven,
We will be devoted to you and serve you alone.
Cancel all other desires in us.⁹

For a ten-year-old child, there was a kind of anxious devotion in the heart passed on by the elders, but the outstretched hands drew out the actual anxiety experienced by the senses: managing the very hot curd-rice in a leaf cup placed in my hands by the priest: "Little girl, be careful! It is hot! Hot!"

And then one grew up and was assaulted by various experiences. Studying Shakespeare in college, getting dew-eyed over romantic novels (*Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* were favourites, you could never read them too many times) and arguing with mother over the impossibility of the miraculous happenings in our traditional works . . . but somewhere the lamp of devotion remained safe. That is why I was deeply touched by Bankim's words: "I myself believe in his divinity; that faith, too, I have not concealed."

This faith running somewhere deep within oneself could not be shaken even when I came across Krishna Chaitanya's startling title *The Betrayal of Krishna*. His intent was good, of course. With plentiful regard for the Krishna of *Mahabharata*, Krishna Chaitanya had no sympathy for those devotees who made him a 'cult-god'. More and more ritualism to worship Krishna! His titles could be disturbing: "Demotion as Cult Deity", "Gross Concept of Grace". By now I was comfortably ensconced in the sunlit path of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother where there were no grey areas of quotes from various western scholars to begin to doubt oneself. Scholarship was

8. Seventh century Vaishnava hymnologist, the foster-daughter of another hymnologist, Perialwar.

9. Translated by R. Bangaruswami.

commendable and one could stand admiring the questions and cross-questions. However, for me Faith was enough. I was not prepared to set sail on the uncharted seas of Unbelief. Even when Krishna Chaitanya saw a Casanova in the poems of bridal mysticism on hand, and dealt with it all in detail, Krishna remained the Flute-Player of Brindavan for me. When all, all men had failed, had not Krishna come to the rescue of Draupadi? There you are!

Of course, we have nought to do with superstitious abracadabra; nor with debasing a received legend for secular purposes. The problem with any ancient tradition is the hijacking of it by a group to suit local purposes of later days. The *Shakuntala Upakhyaana* of Vyasa clearly shows that Dushyanta the king was behaving like a cad when he rejected Shakuntala. But when Kalidasa retold the legend as a court drama, how could he put on the stage a king who had behaved thus? Enter the signet ring, the curse of Durvasa, Dushyanta's forgetfulness. The ring incident was itself borrowed from the Dharmadatta episode in *Katthahari Jataka* of the Buddhist canon. When such norms prevailed, the *Gopijanapriya* was a natural hero for court romance.

Sri Aurobindo had already laid strong defence mechanisms in one's psyche for such criticisms against Krishna being made into a 'Casanova'. With his "vast, immortal look", he gave lessons on how to approach the Vaishnava poets (somewhat witheringly referred to as Bhagavatism by Krishna Chaitanya):

There is first the use of the psychical symbol created by the Puranas, and this assumes its most complete and artistic shape in Bengal and becomes there a long continued tradition. The desire of the soul for God is there thrown into symbolic figure in the lyrical love cycle of Radha and Krishna, the Nature soul in man seeking for the Divine Soul through love, seized and mastered by his beauty, attracted by his magical flute, abandoning human cares and duties for this one overpowering passion and in the cadence of its phases passing through first desire to the bliss of union, the pangs of separation, the eternal longing and reunion, the *lilā* of the love of the human spirit for God.¹⁰

Yes, the image of the Flute-Player has been a stroke of genius. It is actually a universal image, for we have in the western pastorals Pan playing the reed. As a student of literature sixty years ago, I had to wade through 'Colin Clouts Come Home Againe' by Edmund Spenser. More interesting was Milton's pastoral elegy, 'Lycidas'. But reading Keats' 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' was almost like seeing a picture of Krishna in the calendar hanging on the wall at home. The Greek figures and pipes were for me more like the cowherdesses and the flute of Krishna:

10. *The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 378-79.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare.

Keats may have been referring to a fadeless painting on a Grecian urn but I remembered that where Krishna is remembered and experienced, there is no old age, be it for human beings, animals, birds or plant life. Such is the power of the flute's melody which, incidentally, can be heard to great distances. Generally we speak of the lute and the flute in the same breath. The Tamil saying calls the flute a "*vettaveli vadhyam*" (an instrument for open spaces) and the veena a "*padukkai arai vadhyam*" (an instrument for the bedroom) as the sounds cannot be heard far. Naturally Krishna in Brindavan adopted the flute. He is being heard far and wide down the millennia. I have just now come in after watching 4500 devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness go around the wide two-kilometres long Chitra Street of Srirangam. The procession went by at a steady pace: singers, dancers, players of *dholak*, men, women, children, Indians, Westerners, Chinese, Japanese . . . and all of them repeating the Mahamantra . . . One could go on but it is time to rein back and get into our own Krishna world.

A question often discussed is whether originally there were two Krishnas. Personally speaking, I have never let myself be drawn into the conflicting theories. This again might be due to the innate avoidance of theories that might threaten my Vaishnava upbringing. Krishna was brought up in Gokula, came to Mathura to defeat the unscrupulous Kamsa and built his own capital of Dwaraka. For all his pranks and flute-playing and grazing the cows, he was apparently a strategist and a hero as well. If we try to raise Krishna's age year after year as in a lego set, Krishna might have reached his sixties when the Kurukshetra battle was on. But can any of us visualise an ageing Krishna at the reins of Arjuna's chariot? He remains a handsome youth when he commands Arjuna on the battlefield.

Just prior to Dhritarashtra asking Sanjaya to recount what is happening on the battlefield, Arjuna forms the Vajravayuha for the opening day of the Kurukshetra war in the 'Bhishma Parva'. Krishna calls upon Arjuna to decimate the Kaurava forces and asks him to pray to Durga first: Arjuna prays to the Supreme as the Goddess Durga in a sublime set of fourteen slokas:

Namaste siddhasenāni ārye mandaravāsini
Kumāri Kāli kāpāli kapile krishnapingale

Vyasa writes that Mother Durga appeared before Arjuna and assured him of success in the battle, as he is being assisted by Narayana. This is no doubt a poetic way depicting the assurance gained by Arjuna deep within his heart and the firm faith in Mother Durga that enclosed him. As Sri Aurobindo puts it simply in *The Mother*:

And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible.¹¹

Like Sri Aurobindo's assurance to us, Krishna had instilled the assurance of guardianship in Arjuna's heart. There is such a sage-like presence of Krishna in the battlefield. And yet, whether I am awake or asleep, I would rather see a young Krishna smiling lovingly at Arjuna as a friend, even as he holds the reins of the horses. His right hand raises the whip (*totra vetraika pānaye!*) but my eyes linger on the flute that is tucked in his waist, with its short tassel moving gently, challengingly in the war zone of Kurukshetra.

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

11. *The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 10.

*His bliss laughs to us or it calls concealed
Like a far-heard unseen entrancing flute
From moonlit branches in the throbbing woods,
Tempting our angry search and passionate pain.
Disguised the Lover seeks and draws our souls.*

Sri Aurobindo

(Savitri — A Legend and a Symbol, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 614)